introduction
Imagine you have been assigned to a group for a project requiring a presentation at the end. “Now is the busiest time in my schedule and I do not have time to fit all these people into it,” the voice in your head reminds you. Then you ask the question: “Is there ever a non-busy time for assembling a group together for a presentation?” These thoughts are a part of a group presentation assignment. The combined expertise of several individuals is becoming increasingly necessary in many vocational (related to a specific occupation) and avocational (outside a specific occupation) presentations.

Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.
~ Vince Lombardi

Group presentations in business may range from a business team exchanging sales data; research and development teams discussing business expansion ideas; to annual report presentations by boards of directors. Also, the government, private, and public sectors have many committees that participate in briefings, conference presentations, and other formal presentations. It is common for group presentations to be requested, created, and delivered to bring together the expertise of several people in one presentation. Thus, the task of deciding the most valuable information for audience members has become a coordination task involving several individuals. All group members are responsible for coordinating things such as themes, strong support/evidence, and different personalities and approaches in a specified time period. Coordination is defined in the dictionary as harmonious combination or interaction, as of functions or parts. This chapter focuses on how the group, the speech assignment, the audience, and the presentation design play a role in the harmonious combination of planning, organization, and delivery for group presentations.

A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.
~ Margaret Mead

chapter objectives
After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify the differences between a small group, a team, and a speaking group
2. Evaluate your individual presentation skills
3. Describe the four coordination elements of group presentations
4. List the four common types of group presentations
5. Apply chapter concepts for coordinating group communication
6. Discuss techniques for coordinating a group assignment
7. Plan speech organization for the intended audience
8. Practice effective group delivery

chapter outline
- Introduction
- Communicating about group interaction
  - Interaction Roles
  - Decision Making
  - Conflict Resolution
- Preparing all Parts of the Assignment
  - Type of Group Presentations
  - Establishing Clear Objectives
  - Logistics for Group Members
  - Agreed Outcomes & Debriefing
- Organizing for Your Audience
  - Content
  - Structure
  - Packaging
  - Human Element
- Delivering Your Presentation as One
- Conclusion
- Review Questions and Activities
- Glossary
- References

communicating about group interaction
Just say the two words separately “group” and “presentation.” Note which word comes first—group (the process) and not presentation (the product). In group presentations, there is often a tendency to put the focus on “presentation.” Thus, the group interaction often falls short to only include exchanging contact information and schedules before diving straight into the presentation assignment. Successful group work begins with something more than simply exchanging contact information. It begins with acknowledging the layers of “group interaction.” Small group
**interaction** is “the process by which three or more members of a group exchange verbal and nonverbal messages in an attempt to influence one another” (Tubbs, 1995, p. 5). Notice that the definition includes both verbal and nonverbal messages. Thus, all your individual actions and words, including silence or no response, communicate something to others. This is why group members are disappointed when other members do not attend group meetings. Their absence from the group communicates a nonverbal message.

Although “group” and “team” are often used interchangeably, the process of interaction between the two is different. Beebe & Mottet (2010) suggest that we think of groups and teams as existing on a continuum. On one end, a **small group** consists of three to fifteen people who share a common purpose, feel a sense of belonging to the group, and exert influence on each other (Beebe & Masterson, 2009). On the other end, a **team** is a coordinated group of people organized to work together to achieve a specific, common goal (Beebe & Masterson, 2009). Many—perhaps even most—vocalional and avocational group members and size are determined by those who requested the group presentation. Whereas, vocalional and avocational teams are guided by defined responsibilities for team members. For example, a public relations campaign team typically includes an account executive, research director, creative director, media planner and copywriter/copy editor. This chapter will not use the two terms interchangeably. It will focus on the interaction process of a group.

You may be most familiar with casual groups and social groups such as your fraternity or sorority or even your neighborhood. However, there are many types of groups formed everyday including committees, educational groups, problem-solving groups, task forces, work groups, and even virtual groups. In presentational speaking it is important to view the group as a **speaking group**, which is a collection of three or more speakers who come together to accomplish message content goals. The emphasis on “speakers” is critical because audience members come to a presentation for the speaker content and not necessarily the group’s relationship. Speaking groups require all members to discuss and gain an understanding of one another’s basic speaking skills related to preparation, organization, and delivery. In short, all groups require individuals to build harmony and rapport with one another but successful speaking groups are known more for their message continuity between speakers not the harmony between group members.

Group coordination is key in building message continuity. At its most basic level, group coordination focuses on **group communication**, “the process of creating meanings in the minds of others” (Tubbs, 1995, p. 186). Such coordination requires establishing shared meanings about interaction roles, the decision-making process, and conflict resolution. In short, the purpose of group coordination is to assist you in establishing a communication plan.

For many people, the mental image that forms when they hear they have been assigned to a group features some of their worst experiences or a quick private slideshow of their best group experience. Whether a negative or positive mental image, the image may be accurate of the past, but may have nothing to do with the current assignment. So when you first meet in your group, begin by coordinating an icebreaking conversation about each other’s past experiences working in groups and more specifically experiences of working on previous group presentations of the same nature. This icebreaking conversation can play a powerful role in your group, establishing a communication plan for **cohesiveness**, or the tendency for a group to stick together and remain unified in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998) and minimizing **social loafing**, the decreased effort of each individual member as the number of a group increases (Tubbs, 1995, p. 103). The conversation also will aid your group in a discussion concerning what communication vehicles and content will have priority for this speaking group.

*Review your work. You will find, if you are honest, that 90% of the trouble is traceable to loafing.*

~ Ford Frick

**interaction roles**

Next, remember that groups are cooperative and require each member to participate in different interactions. Benne and Sheats (1948) proposed a classification of roles in three broad categories: (1) task roles, (2) group-building and maintenance roles, and (3) individual roles. Your group will need to discuss **how** they will communicate about and assign tasks related to preparation, organization and delivery (POD).

Task roles deal with a variety of logistics. Communication related to preparation include such things as guidelines for electronic information retrieval, sharing research information and visual aid content, and the scheduling of milestone appointments such as draft due dates and rehearsal
Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. 
~ Warren G. Bennis

In addition to task roles, group maintenance roles also play a vital role in the group’s progress. Relationships within a group must be built and maintained simply because they are composed of individuals with different personalities, work styles, expertise, and availability. Your job as a group is to determine the best communication strategies for this speaking group. The strategies should support and enhance learning about and working with the differences. Although time restraints may limit the sophistication and quantity of your strategies, a communication plan for interaction roles should not be skipped. The best place to start is by selecting a group leader with the most appropriate leadership style to help the group maintain credibility within the group, among the audience, in the assignment and its assessment, and during the delivery. Selection success hinges on everyone being familiar with leadership styles. Thus, all group members should be aware of three small-group leadership styles --- highly directive, participatory, and negligent (Brilhart, Galanes & Adams, 2001). A highly directive leadership style is where a leader uses an authoritarian method of dealing with group members. The participatory leadership style centers around a designated leader who offers guidance, suggestions, listening, and concern for members while also showing concern for completing the task. A negligent (or laissez-faire) leadership style is characterized by a leader who offers little guidance or direction. The group leader may guide the communication planning by first initiating a conversation about what communication media are accessible to group members. Some group members may not have access to a smartphone, text capability or all social networking sites such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook; and may not have consistent access to email or the Internet. For example, it is not uncommon for a student in a class to have Internet access only during open lab or library hours. You should not assume everyone wants to use text messaging or email. Finally, keep in mind that some individual schedules or user-styles do not allow them to check email at the same daily frequency or dictate the same response style. All members should be careful not to criticize, judge or insult nonusers, limited users, and even overusers of technology. The focus of the conversation should be about commitment, that is, for this speaking group which communication vehicle(s) will each group member commit to using with some frequency in order to meet the group’s assignment. The gathering of contact information may be accomplished within the context of this conversation. The group leader can facilitate communication about member experience in the areas of presentation planning, organization, and delivery (see Table 18.1).

Table 18.1 Leaders’ Responsibilities in Group Presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Help build and maintain group communication about:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familiarity with the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfort level with research in this specific content area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language and terminology barriers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Assist members in solidifying commitments to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A group meeting schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rehearsals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honest status updates (establish a group atmosphere where members can indicate when they are behind; do not understand how to do something, or simply need a deadline extension)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Let members self-disclose about:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What types of presentations each member has done in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual anxiety levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successes, failures, and no experience in group presentations in a similar setting (this may be related to different majors, topics, or modes of delivery)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although a group leader is beneficial, each group member has a responsibility for his/her part of all interactions (refer to Table 18.2). See yourself as a co-equal partner in the group experience. Kelley (1992) suggests individuals be “skilled followers” who engage in two critical activities: (1) they are independent and critical thinkers, and (2) they actively engage in the work, rather than waiting to be told what to do.

You can contribute best by being aware of and monitoring your strengths and weakness and the effect they have on group members. You will always have to apply and modify your individual knowledge, skills, and techniques to be appropriate for the different stages of group presentations.

Further, you will need to maintain ethical relationship boundaries with group members as appropriate to your interaction roles. Thus, when interacting as a member of a new or returning group it is important to think about your familiarity with and use of participatory communication modes such as a preparedness to listen, assertiveness, clear verbal and nonverbal communication, confidence and empathy.

Table 18.2  Group Member Responsibilities in Presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Individually address questions such as:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do I prepare as an individual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is my experience with group work (limited, excessive, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is my familiarity with participatory communication modes in this setting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Keep the focus on yourself by asking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is my knowledge related to the specific assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What expertise do I have that can help the group within the time constraints?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Clearly think about:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What degree of confidence do I need to develop about my own abilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do I need to do to develop an interesting presentation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do I need to know about the audience to assess my comfort level?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What increases or decreases speech anxiety?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do I need to do to forego a lengthy presentation and integrate simplicity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What might I need to do in terms of dress?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The great gift of human beings is that we have the power of empathy.

~ Meryl Streep

decision-making

Decision-making is not dictatorship. Plus, decision-making isn’t the sole responsibility of a group leader. Decision-making is a group process of making choices among alternatives. In an individual presentation you made a lot of decisions on your own. Now it is time to come together as a group to make decisions (see Table 18.3). When you think about group coordination, decision-making is primarily about setting protocols—mutually agreed upon ways of interacting. As a group be very clear about how you will procedurally make decisions within this speaking group; and how the group will make decisions that require assimilating large amounts of information, exploring different ideas,

Table 18.3  Most Common Types of Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes/No &amp; Either/Or:</th>
<th>Focus on whether a group should do something or not:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should we have handouts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should we pay for color copying?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This-or-That:</th>
<th>Deciding between options:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should we use this inductive argument or that deductive argument?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should we use an operational definition or a logical definition to define this concept?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contingency:</th>
<th>Decisions put on hold until after certain decisions are met:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should we wait to determine visual aids until after we decide on how much technical language we use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should we wait to determine the binding for the written document until after we know how many people will attend?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or drawing on the many strands of experience represented among group members.

The group may have to make decisions about the flow of information among members, proposed solutions, the quality of work, or even interpersonal relations among members. The goal is not to anticipate every possible decision your group may encounter. The goal is to know how this speaking group will make decisions. Successful principles to employ include group decisions always providing (1) a process for every group member’s opinion to be heard within an explicit and articulated time period (deadlines are important); (2) a face-to-face voting method (rather than electronic); and (3) a procedure for prioritizing a set of options, ranking them, and choosing the best fit.

Finally, each group member should remain flexible and learn how to accept newness, incompleteness, and how not to blame others. Thus, choose to be aware of three things. First, some decisions come in increments. Second, the amount of knowledge, understanding, and quality underlying a decision varies. Third, some things are discovered en route to the group’s final outcome.

Too many problem-solving sessions become battlegrounds where decisions are made based on power rather than intelligence.

~ Margaret J. Wheatley

**Conflict Resolution**

Perhaps the greatest interpersonal skill needed is the ability to work compatibly with others, regardless of whether or not you like them personally (Lahiff & Penrose 1997). Just because you have worked in groups before does not guarantee you have experienced all types of conflict. The conflict of ideas and conflict of feeling (personality conflict) are most common among members. The causes of conflict are many. They include incompatible personalities or value systems; competition for limited resources especially in a harsh economic climate; inadequate communication; interdependent tasks (where one person cannot complete his or her task until others have completed their work); organizational complexity and departmentalization; unreasonable or unclear policies, standards or rules; time pressure; role ambiguity; change; and inequitable treatment (Kreitner & Kinicki 1995):

Foundational to successful group communication is each person’s willingness to abide by some simple do’s and don’ts of conflict (see Table 18.4). Successful conflict resolution also involves developing a sound negotiating strategy, which involves the overall approach you take when you exchange proposals and counterproposals with another person when discussing a settlement to a conflict (Beebe & Mottet, 2010, p. 195). By articulating a specific plan that addresses both conflict categories appropriately for this speaking group, group members gain a feel for what it will mean to balance between actively listening, doing his/her fair share, and soliciting comments throughout the process. The communication plan also may help your group reach consensus rather than engage in groupthink, which refers to a faulty sense of agreement that occurs when group members seemingly agree but they primarily want to avoid conflict (Beebe & Mottet, 2010, p. 239).

**Table 18.4 DOs and DON’Ts of CONFLICT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOs:</th>
<th>DON’Ts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Be open to compromise</td>
<td>- Avoid unpleasant or undesirable group activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be willing to cooperate with others on their ideas</td>
<td>- Dominate group conversation and/or assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be willing to discuss both strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>- Sidetrack group meetings off the task at hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be willing to vote on disagreements</td>
<td>- Fail to complete agreed upon tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Destroy group harmony with attitudes about previous group experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn’t thinking.

~ George S. Patton

Effective conflict management requires interpersonal and communication competence and draws on group members’ active listening, assertiveness, empathy and clear communication skills. Keep in mind that any conflict is easier to create than resolve (deVito 1992). Overall group coordination will play a role in helping you reflect on group dynamics, plan for communication during group work, reinforce relationships, and establish a unified commitment and collaborative climate.

**Preparing all parts of the assignment**

Now it is time to think about the what of your presentation—the expected content. Many speaking groups are derived from an invitation to speak, and inherent in the invitation many times is a prescribed speaking
Assignment—or topic. In group presentations, you are working to coordinate one or two outcomes—outcomes related to the content (product outcomes) and/or outcomes related to the group skills and participation (process outcomes). Therefore, it is important to carefully review and outline the prescribed assignment of the group before you get large quantities of data, spreadsheets, interview notes and other research materials.

Types of Group Presentations

A key component of a preparation plan is the type of group presentation. Not all group presentations require a format of standing in front of an audience and presenting. According to Sprague (2005), there are four common types of group presentations.

A structured argument in which participants speak for or against a pre-announced proposition is called a debate. The proposition is worded so that one side has the burden of proof, and that same side has the benefit of speaking first and last. Speakers assume an advocacy role and attempt to persuade the audience, not each other.

The forum is essentially a question-and-answer session. One or more experts may be questioned by a panel of other experts, journalists, and/or the audience.

A panel consists of a group of experts publicly discussing a topic among themselves. Individually prepared speeches, if any, are limited to very brief opening statements.

Finally, the symposium is a series of short speeches, usually informative, on various aspects of the same general topic. Audience questions often follow (p. 318).

These four types of presentations, along with the traditional group presentation in front an audience or on-the-job speaking, typically have pre-assigned parameters. Therefore, it is important that all group members are clear about the assignment request.

Failure comes only when we forget our ideals and objectives and principles.

~ Jawaharlal Nehru

Establishing Clear Objectives

In order for the group to accurately summarize for themselves who is the audience, what is the situation/occasion, and what supporting materials need to be located and selected, the group should establish clear objectives about both the process and the product being assessed.

Assessment plays a central role in optimizing the quality of group interaction. Thus, it is important to be clear whether the group is being assessed on product(s) or outcome(s) only or will the processes within the group—such as equity of contribution, individual interaction with group members, and meeting deadlines—also be assessed. Kowitz and Knutson (1980) argue that three dimensions for group evaluation include (1) informational—dealing with the group’s designated tasks; (2) procedural—referring to the ways in which the group coordinates its activities and communication; and (3) interpersonal—focusing on the relationships that exist among members while the task is being accomplished. Groups without a pre-assigned assessment rubric may use the three dimensions to effectively create a group evaluation instrument.

The group should determine if the product includes both a written document and oral presentation. The written document and oral presentation format may have been pre-assigned with an expectation behind the requested informative and/or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18.5</th>
<th>Sample Product Assessment Guide:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy:</td>
<td>Did we edit and proofread to eliminate redundancy, grammatical, spelling and/or punctuation errors in all pieces including PowerPoint?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach:</td>
<td>Is the tone appropriate to the purpose, audience and content?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity:</td>
<td>Is the central purpose clearly stated and maintained as the focal point?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development:</td>
<td>Is the material arranged in a coherent and logical sequence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style:</td>
<td>Did we use action verbs, active voice and correct MLA or APA style?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
persuasive content. Although the two should complement each other, the audience, message, and format for each should be clearly outlined. The group may create a product assessment guide (see Table 18.5). Additionally, each group member should uniformly write down the purpose of the assignment. You may think you can keep the purpose in your head without any problem. Yet the goal is for each member to consistently have the same outcome in front of them. This will bring your research, writing and thinking back to focus after engaging in a variety of resources or conversations.

Once the assignment has been coordinated in terms of the product and process objectives, type of presentation, and logistics, it is important for the group to clearly write down the agreed outcomes. Agreed outcomes about the product include a purpose statement that reflects an agreement with the prescribed assignment (i.e. “at the end of our group presentation the audience will be informed or persuaded about the prescribed assignment”). It also includes the key message or thesis to be developed through a presentation outline, a full-sentence outline of virtually everything the speaker intends to say. The outline allows the speakers to test the structure, the logic, and persuasive appeals in the speech (DiSanza & Legge, 2012, p. 131).

Failing to plan is planning to fail.
~ Alan Lakein

logistics for group members
As a group, be very clear about the length of your presentation and its preparation. The length of the presentation refers to your time limit, and whether there is a question and answer period involved. Assignment preparation may or may not have a prescribed deadline. If the assignment does not have a deadline, then set one as a group. If there is a deadline, then the group begins by creating a schedule from the final deadline. As a group, create an action timetable explicitly listing all processes and outputs, as well as communication update points. As a group decide the best way to leave enough time at the end to put all the pieces together and make sure everything is complete. If there is a written document, it should be completed prior to the oral presentation rather than at the same time. As a group, realize not everyone may work off a physical calendar. Thus, do not hesitate to require each member to write down all deadlines. Next, the group can strategically add meeting dates, times, and venues to the action timetable. A meeting is a structured conversation among a small group of people who gather to accomplish a specific task (Beebe & Mottet, 2010, p. 219). For group presentations, meetings do not always include the entire group. So a schedule of who meets with whom and when is useful for planning work and agendas. In addition, all meetings do not serve the same purpose. For example, informational meetings may be called simply to update all group members; solicitation meetings are called to solicit opinions or request guidance from group members; group-building meetings are designed to promote unity and cohesiveness among group members; and problem-solving meetings result in making decisions or recommendations by the time the meeting convenes.

Once the group is unified about the assignment objectives and time frame, it is vital to predetermine the type of note-taking required of each group member (which may vary) and the variety of information exchange. The more systematic a group is in these two areas, the more unified the process and the product. The system begins with each group member writing down the message, specific purpose, and central ideas for the group presentation. If these are still to be determined, then have each group member identify the areas of background information needed and basic information gathering. Next, simply create a general format for note-taking—whether typed or handwritten and what types of details should be included especially sources. Also with the increasing use of electronic databases be very clear on when related articles should be forwarded to group members. The email inbox flooded with PDF files is not always a welcome situation.

True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information.
~ Winston Churchill

The group should be clear on the explicit requirements for locating recent, relevant and audience-appropriate source material for the presentation. All of this leads to the foundation of clearly defining the responsibilities of each group member. All tasks should be listed, given deadlines, and assigned people. A means for tracking the progress of each task should be outlined. The group should be clear on what are individual, joint (involving more than one group member), and entire group tasks. Throughout the entire process, all group members should be supportive and helpful but should not offer to do other people’s work.

organizing for your audience
In an earlier chapter, you learned about audience analysis. The analysis helps you create a profile. Organizing for your audience relates to the how the gathered content can be best arranged for them. According to Patricia Fripp (2011), a Hall of Fame keynote speaker
and executive speech coach, any presentation can be intimidating but the key is to remember “your goal is to present the most valuable information possible to the members of the audience” (p. 16). Now what you think is most valuable and what the audience thinks is most valuable must be coordinated because of differences in perception (the process by which we give meaning to our experience). Therefore, organizing for your audience is focused on content, structure, packaging, and human element—not for you, not for the assignment, but for the audience. A customized plan of organization will assist your group in creating relevant messages that satisfy others’ personal needs and goals (Keller, 1983).

*Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.* ~ William James

**content**

Audience members are interested in your expertise that has been developed from solid research and preparation. Audience members may have expectations about what foundational literature and key sources should be contained within your presentation. Therefore as a group you need to go beyond providing a variety of supporting material within your presentation to considering who will be present, levels of expertise and their expectations. In general, organizing the content should be focused on usage, knowledge levels, and objectives. First, *usage* refers to how audience members expect to use your presentational content which will help the group transform ideas into audience-centered speech points. Second, *knowledge level* means the audience’s knowledge level about the topic within the audience which assists the group in developing supporting material for the entire audience. Third, the *objectives* are linked to how the content serves the audience’s needs and assists the group in being intentional about helping the audience see the reason for their involvement and receive value for the time they devoted to attend. Overall, the content is coordinated in a way that keeps at the forefront who the decision makers are and what specifics they need to know, would be nice to know, and do not need to know.

**structure**

Next professionally packaging a presentation for the audience deals with the structure or how you arrange points. The structure takes into consideration a strong opening, logical order, relevant key points, conciseness, and use of supplementary visual aids. In addition, the linking of points involves conversational language and the appropriate use of acronyms and technical jargon for inclusion or exclusion. The focus is geared to the perception of trustworthiness. Three strategic questions to answer include:

1. *What qualities as a group will demonstrate your trustworthiness to this audience?*
2. *What content order needs to be achieved to give the consistent perception of fairness?*
3. *What content requires repeating and how should that be achieved—through comparisons, examples, illustrations, etc.?*

**packaging**

The packaging of successful group presentations revolves around the type of relationship with the audience, the division of time, and enthusiasm. An important dynamic of group presentations is for your group to know if audience members will be required to give an internal presentation or briefing from your presentation. As a group, know if you are packaging a one-time presentation, bidding for a long-term relationship, continuing a relationship for offering expertise, or if the presentation is tied to internal pressures to performance appraisals. Such knowledge will aid your group in developing talking points which can be re-presented with accuracy.

The type of presentation will help you divide the time for your presentation. The majority of the time is always spent on the body of the speech. A typical 30-minute speech might be divided into four minutes for the introduction, ten minutes for the body, and four minutes for the conclusion. The remainder 12 minutes is for the audience to ask questions, offer objections, or simply to become part of the discussion. It is important to leave enough time for the audience to contribute to the intellectual content. Therefore, always design group presentations with the intent not to run out of time before the audience can participate. All group presentations should have enthusiasm. Group members should be enthusiastic about the audience, message, and occasion. Planned enthusiasm should play a role
in the creating the introduction, conclusion, and body of your presentations. The consistent use of enthusiasm can be planned throughout the speech outline.

**human element**

Now it is time to focus on compatibility. As a group consider what will it take to get this audience to pay attention to your presentation. Answer questions such as:

1. **What can your group do to develop an introduction, transitions, and conclusions in a way to connect with this audience?**
2. **What types of stories are common or relatable to this audience?**
3. **What are the attitudes, beliefs, and values of this audience?**

What is success? I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing; knowing that it is not enough, that you have got to have hard work and a certain sense of purpose.

~ Margaret Thatcher

**delivering your presentation as one**

By completing the other three levels of coordination, the group will have decided on the key message, thoroughly researched the supporting material, developed logical conclusions, and created realistic recommendations. Therefore all that stands between you and success is the actual presentation—the vehicle that carries the facts and the ideas to your audience. Here it is important to recognize that if an assignment required both a written document and an oral presentation then be sure one effectively complements the other. Although you can reference the written document during the oral presentation, the oral presentation should be planned with the thought in mind that not everyone is given the written document. Therefore, the oral presentation may be the only content they receive. Since you will not always know who receives the written document, it is best to coordinate the presentation as if no one has the full written document, which can serve as reference tool for gaining content requiring further explanation or accessibility to detailed information. At the same time, if the entire audience is provided written material keep in mind different decision makers may be in the audience. For example, the creative director may be only interested in your creative concepts, whereas a vice president of finance may be only interested in figures.

The presentation preparation primarily focuses on your group’s ability to develop a clear plan and execution of delivery. A delivery plan includes essential elements such as (1) purpose, (2) oral content, (3) dress, (4) room, (5) visuals, (6) delivery, and (7) rehearsal to ensure that the group presentation is both captivating and useful to your audience, as well as worth their time.

**purpose**

Group members should keep at the forefront of their minds the answer to the question “Was the general purpose—to inform or to persuade—achieved?” As a group, practice keeping the purpose of the presentation explicit for the audience. The purpose should never become hidden during the presentation. Each group member’s awareness of the purpose is important in maintaining the right kind of delivery. It is possible to have great content for a presentation and miss the entire purpose for the presentation. For example, say your group had been asked to do a presentation about Facebook and how it could be used in the financial industry. You could take an informative or persuasive approach. However, if the audience—banking professionals—attends a presentation where the content is focused on Facebook rather than having a focus on its use in the financial industry, then the purpose was not achieved.

The delivery plan will help you evaluate if the purpose of the presentation is clearly aimed at the primary audience. In addition, the group can determine when and how clearly they are articulating the explicit purpose of the presentation. The purpose is complemented by a clear preview, the audience members’ awareness of what decisions are at issue, and the audience’s desire to get important information first.

**oral content**

Up to this point the majority of the group’s engagement with the content has been in terms of reading and writing. It is time to orally interact with the selected content to ensure that it has been developed for this audience, properly structured, and clearly articulated. The delivery plan is a time to evaluate word choice, idioms, and antidotes. When working with this content, make sure that it is suited to the purpose, and that the key message is explicit so the audience remembers it well.

The introduction of group members, transitions, and internal summaries are all important elements of the delivery plan. A proper introduction of group members and content will not happen automatically. Therefore, it is important to practice it to determine if introductions fit better at the beginning of the presentation, if names need to be emphasized through the wearing of name tags, or if names are better used as a part of transition content. The use of name only may not be effective in some speaking situations. Therefore, it is important for the group to determine what a proper group member introduction includes beyond the name.
Plus, be consistent; that is, determine if everyone is using first name only or full name, do they need to know your positions, some background, or can you simply state it in a written format such as a team resume. Speech content is not useful if the audience does not accept your credibility.

I dress to kill, but tastefully.
~ Freddie Mercury

dress

As in all presentations, an awareness of your physical appearance is an important element in complementing the content of your speech. Do not hesitate to talk about and practice appropriate dress as a group. It is important to look like a group. Really consider defining a group’s speaking uniform by deciding how formal or informal the dress code.

As a group, the overall question you want to be able to answer is: Did our dress provide an accurate first impression not distracting from the content? So what kinds of things can be distracting? The most common are colors, busy patterns, clothing that can be interpreted as seductive, and large or clinking jewelry. As a group determine what type of dress is effective in coordinating your group’s credibility. It is important to take into consideration cultural, occupational and regional norms. In addition, it is important to think about branding choices. Often groups want to brand themselves for the audience. It is not necessary to mimic your audience. For example, a sales presentation to cranberry association members may entice a group to wear red. However, the cranberry association may not be the only sale your group needs to make so you will be forced to ask the question: Will each sales presentation audience determine the color we accent in dress? In short, do not let the speaking occasion brand you. Simply know what is considered professional for this presentation. You have spent a lot of time on preparing the content for this audience so do not detract from it.

facilities

It is not always feasible to practice your delivery in the actual room where you will deliver your speech. However, it is extremely important that you actively plan your delivery for the room by recreating the speaking environment. If prior access to the room is not available, then you will need to do your planning by asking a series of questions of the presentation planner. Some common things to find out include the size of the room; if a projector is available and its location within the room; is there a platform and/or a stationary lectern; is there a sound system and how many microphones; where the group will be seated before being introduced; will the presentation be recorded; what is the availability of the room in advance of the presentation; and what is the number of seats and seating arrangement so the group can plan for the zone of interaction.

visuals

The term visuals refers to both non-technology visual aids (handouts, posters, charts, etc.) and presentation technology. Visuals should not appear as though several individuals made them but rather as uniform to the group’s presentation. All visuals should blend smoothly into the speech. All group members should be clear on what visuals or documents were pre-requested (so you do not eliminate them as unnecessary during rehearsal). Many times it is better to simply project or display visuals. At other times, visuals may need to be assembled in a presentation packet for all audience members. Bohn & Jabusch (1982) suggest that there are several researched-based reasons why visual aids enhance presentations including (a) enhanced understanding—helps audience comprehend what they hear and see; (b) enhanced memory—serves as a visual reinforcement; (c) enhanced organization—visually displays your organizational strategy; (d) enhanced attention—grabs and maintains audience interest; and (e) enhanced sequencing—shows rather than describes.

delivery

The four modes of delivery—memorized, impromptu, manuscript, and extemporaneous—are all valuable in group presentations. However, the most common mode of delivery is extemporaneous. Earlier in the chapter, developing a script was discussed. The step of transforming the script into a delivery outline—an abbreviated version of the preparation outline (DiSanza & Legge, 2012)—is a significant part of planning delivery. The ultimate goal is to figure out how the group can be confident that the entire presentation stays together and does not just exist in pieces. The delivery outline may go as far as to stipulate vocal and gesture instructions. The delivery outline is not created to be read from, therefore, the group also should determine how speaker notes will be used. The delivery outline should be provided to every group member so everyone is familiar with the entire presentation. It is important to set up contingency plans for who will present content if someone is absent on the day of the presentation—the presenter who gets stuck in morning traffic or the professional who had a flight delay.

The key is for all group members to remain conversational in their delivery
style. This may be best achieved by utilizing effective delivery strategies such as appropriate gestures, movement and posture; appropriate facial expressions including eye contact; and appropriate vocal delivery—articulation, dialect, pitch, pronunciation, rate, and volume. Group members should evaluate each other on audibility and fluency.

*One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation.*

~~~~Arthur Ashe~~~~

**rehearsal**

Rehearsals are for the final polishing of your presentations. It is a time to solidify logistics of how many group members are presenting, where they will stand, and the most appropriate transitions between each speaker. Group members should grow more comfortable with each other through rehearsals. A key aspect of polishing involves identifying gaps in content and gaining feedback on content (oral and visual), style, and delivery. The rehearsals are good time to refine speaker notes and to practice the time limit. The number of scheduled rehearsals is dependent on your group and the amount of preparation time provided. The most important element for the group is to adapt their rehearsal timetable based on an honest evaluation of the speaking skills represented within the group.

The only part of a group presentation that you may not be able to rehearse is responding to the *actual* audience members’ questions and objections. However, you can anticipate the types of questions and practice a simple strategy of how you will respond—repeating the question, stating who from the group will respond, and answering succinctly. Four of the most common types of questions are follow-up questions; action-oriented questions focused on what would you do if; hypothetical questions focused on different scenarios; and information-seeking questions. A primary way to practice is to think of at least three questions you would like to answer, prepare the answer, and practice it during rehearsal(s).

**conclusion**

The foundation of a group presentation is constructed from all the guidelines you use in an individual presentation coupled with additional strategies for working effectively with others. Group presentations primarily entail group communication, planning, organization, and delivery. Effective groups communicate about interaction roles, decision making, and conflict resolution. Such communication helps the group reflect on group dynamics, customize communication for this speaking group, and establish a unified commitment and collaborative climate.

After a group receives an invitation to speak, they begin by establishing clear objectives related to the group process and/or product. In addition, they direct their preparation by developing a unified understanding of the type of presentation, logistics, and agreed outcomes and debriefing. Preparation is foundational in guiding group research, writing, and thinking back to focus after engaging in a variety of resources or conversations.

The audience is at the core of the organizing content. A plan helps group members determine what to put in as well as leave out of the selected content. The group members work to establish group credibility and trustworthiness among their audience. In addition, the plan will assist the group in packaging for various types of *audience-centered presentations*—one-time presentations; presentations bidding for a long-term relationship; presentations continuing a relationship for offering expertise; or presentations tied to performance appraisals. The plan guides the group in determining the most compatible words, narratives, and enthusiasm to support their relevant messages.

Finally, presenting as one focuses on areas such as (1) purpose, (2) oral content, (3) dress, (4) room, (5) visuals, (6) delivery, and (7) rehearsal(s). The delivery plan allows the group to collectively be aware of their own communication and the communication of others. Also, the plan guides the group in transforming a written script or preparation outline into a delivery outline. Group members unify in elements of vocal and bodily delivery and style. However, most importantly together they identify gaps in content and gain feedback to polish oral and visual content.

Remember “delivering a dynamic presentation is not rocket science; however, it is a lot more complex than most people realize” (Fripp, 2011, p. 16).
chapter review questions and activities

review questions

1. List and explain the four coordination elements.

2. Define the three types of interaction roles.

3. Describe the difference between a group, a team, and a speaking group.

4. List and explain a characteristic of the three small-group leadership styles.

5. Define a skilled follower.

6. What are the two most common categories of conflict?

7. Describe the difference between process and product assessment.

8. What are the four common types of group presentations?

9. Define relevant messages.

activities

1. In small groups of 3-4 people, create a presentation about a social media (Facebook, Twitter, music downloads, Linkedin, photosharing, etc.) for a particular industry.

2. Describe in your journal an instance when you were both successful and unsuccessful in using participatory communication—participatory communication modes such as a preparedness to listen, assertiveness, clear verbal and nonverbal communication, confidence and empathy.

3. Before two focus groups, deliver a two-minute group presentation of a topic of your choice to a vocational audience and one to an avocational audience. Discuss the differences.
glossary

**Avocational Presentations**
- Presentations outside of a specific occupation in which one engages.

**Cohesiveness**
- The tendency for a group to stick together and remain unified in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives.

**Debate**
- A structured argument in which participants speak for or against a pre-announced proposition. The proposition is worded so that one side has the burden of proof, and that same side has the benefit of speaking first and last. Speakers assume an advocacy role and attempt to persuade the audience, not each other.

**Delivery Outline**
- An abbreviated version of the preparation outline.

**Forum**
- Essentially a question-and-answer format. One or more experts may be questioned by a panel of other experts, journalists, and/or the audience.

**Group Communication**
- The process of creating meanings in the minds of others.

**Groupthink**
- A faulty sense of agreement that occurs when group members seemingly agree but they primarily want to avoid conflict.

**Meeting**
- A structured conversation among a small group of people who gather to accomplish a specific task.

**Negotiating Strategy**
- The overall approach you take when you exchange proposals and counterproposals with another person when discussing a settlement to a conflict.

**Panel**
- A group of experts publicly discussing a topic among themselves. Individually prepared speeches, if any, are limited to very brief opening statements.

**Preparation Outline**
- A full-sentence outline of virtually everything the speaker intends to say. It allows speakers to test the structure, the logic, and persuasive appeals in the speech.

**Protocols**
- Mutually agreed upon ways of interacting.

**Small Group**
- Consists of three to fifteen people who share a common purpose, feel a sense of belonging to the group, and exert influence on each other.

**Small Group Interaction**
- The process by which three or more members of a group exchange verbal and nonverbal messages in an attempt to influence one another.

**Social Loafing**
- The decreased effort of each individual member as the number of a group increases.

**Speaking Group**
- A collection of three or more speakers who come together to accomplish pre-assigned message content goals.

**Symposium**
- A series of short speeches, usually informative, on various aspects of the same general topic. Audience questions often follow.

**Team**
- A coordinated group of people organized to work together to achieve a specific, common goal.

**Vocational Presentations**
- Presentations related to a specific occupation.
Chapter 18  Group Presentations

references


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