

Presenting as a critical skill

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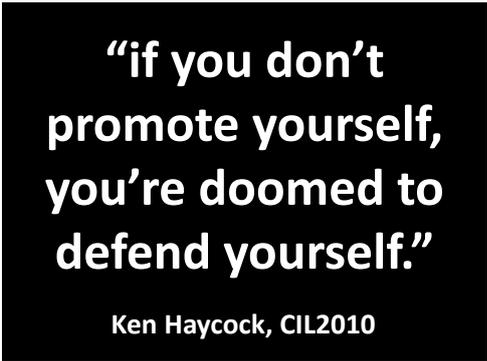
BMF 30st anniversary

Introduction

Librarians are doing presentations every day. For example when:

- Picking up the Phone “good afternoon, library, this is Ronald, how can I help you?”
- Helping staff who come to your desk with all kind of questions;
- Providing training classes and database instructions;
- Encounters in the restaurant or at the coffee machine where you bump into staff and answer ad hoc questions;
- Delivering presentations at conferences like today or at a conference like EAHIL.

But when we have to do presentations in front of a group or an large audience we get nervous, hide behind PowerPoint or simply tell the wrong story.



**“if you don’t
promote yourself,
you’re doomed to
defend yourself.”**

Ken Haycock, CIL2010

That way your message is less effective or even not heard. This is very dangerous in times when our budgets are under pressure and libraries are under threat. So delivering an effective presentation must be seen as a critical skill.

WHY

Every presentation should have a central theme. The central theme of my presentation is the **WHY** question? **Why?** Because answering this question is not only needed for your next and upcoming presentation but also for your daily activities in your library.

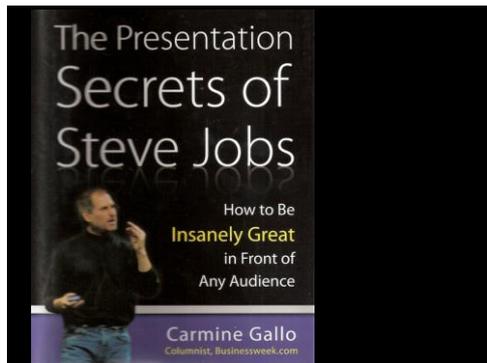
Why was I invited to give a presentation here at the 30st anniversary of your association BMF?

I gave several presentation workshops at EAHIL conferences over the past years. The one last year in Dublin resulted in invitations for other workshops in Oslo, Dublin and now your anniversary. I am invited to help you become aware of the critical skill of presenting and give you tips which you can put in practice immediately, starting tonight during the gala dinner.

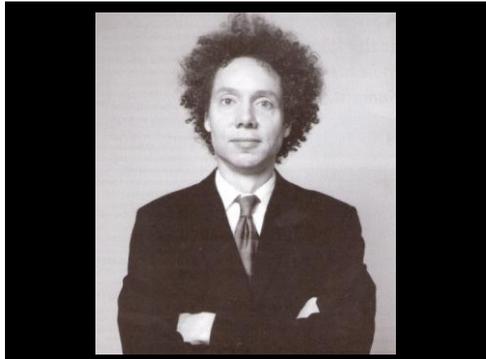
Why did I say yes and as a result I am now delivering this presentation to you?

Always ask yourself am I the right person to give this presentation. For today my answer is yes. I know I can help you move forward on your essential presentation skills and I know quite a lot about (medical) libraries. So moving you all forward is my goal for this afternoon.

At the end of my talk you will know how to make a good first impression; what you can do to become more confident and master your nerves; and how to tell the right story on stage and in your library.



I don't have the illusion that everybody here will be on the same level as Steve Jobs though. Nor do I expect anybody to write a book about my presentation skills.



Malcolm Gladwell says based on his research published in his book "Outliers" that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to truly master a skill. So we all need to practice a little bit more.

There are 3 points I cover this afternoon:

- Making the first impression
- Nervousness
- Telling the right story.

1. Making the first impression

To start with the gala dinner, the most important event of today ☺... What do you do after you leave this room and prepare for the gala dinner?

You will probably refresh yourself, perhaps take a shower, brush your teeth, dress up, look in to the mirror to check if you look good, if you need to comb your hair, if there are no spots of toothpaste on your shirt, add some make-up etc.

So why is not every presenter doing this? You can only make a first impression once and people make up their minds within 7 seconds. In this very short period of time your audience will decide if they continue to listen to you or not.

It is not only how you look and dress which influences peoples decision if they want to listen to you, there are more triggers:

- The title of your presentation;
- The introduction;
- The start of the presentation;
- How you use the equipment, starting up PowerPoint for example.

This all builds on your credibility.

One thing you never should do is to start with an apologies. Don't apologies for being nervous or not speaking the language. Talking yourself down will ruin your credibility.

Title of your presentation

At conferences with many parallel sessions there is competition. Based on the title of your presentation in a conference programme book, people will decide if they will attend your presentation or the one in the other parallel session in the room next door. A small trick is adjusting your title to make it active. Try to trigger people, for example when you have a PubMed training announced, why not call it “How PubMed can save lives” that sounds much better than just another (boring) “introduction to PubMed” course.

The introduction

I have been at many conference presentations where a presenter started by introducing himself, showing pictures of the building he or she is working in, talking about their working experience. Don't do that, please.

If possible, have somebody else introduce you. This will change the impact dramatically. For example in your library when your colleague tells a customer to go to you, because you are the expert to answer the question. Or just like today at the conference where all speakers are introduced by the chair of the conference. So there is no need for me to repeat it.

After all it is not about me, it is about you and the story I share with you for your benefit. I should not be wasting your time.

The start of the presentation

Do you use notes when you do a training or a presentation? If so, that's fine when it gives you confidence, but for the first impression, when you start the introduction, do it without notes, step in front of the desk and start there. This takes a little bit of courage, but you know your name and you can learn your introduction by heart. Together this will make the right impression on your audience, that you know your subject and the stuff you are talking about. You can do the same at the end when taking questions. As you don't have all the answers written down, try to connect with your audience by stepping forward.

As stated before the first impression is so important, so better start telling **WHY** people should listen to you, before they have made up their mind not to do so. *“What's in it for you”*. Too often at conferences people tell about a project they have done, but forget to tell why their project or the outcomes are so interesting for others. The risk is that you might lose your audience before you have reached the conclusions.

Salespeople use this technique too. In sales this is referred to as the SPIN method.

You recapture the **Situation**.

Identify the **Problem**.

What is the **Impact** of the problem.

Need to take action by solving the problem.

Example:

S: you subscribe to many e-journals and databases.

P: other libraries have problems providing home access. How have you solved that problem?

I: How does not having home access impact your library, your users and perhaps the usage of your e-resources? What would be the value of the impact?

N: So if I can solve this problem, the impact will be reduced or disappear? I have a product which can solve your problem and it costs just a fraction of your impact value.....



Using equipment

In the same way starting up your PowerPoint presentation the right or wrong way, will influence the decision of your audience and the way they will remember you and your presentation. Using equipment can be practiced and rehearsed very easily. Also at conferences, you just have to be there early to check the equipment and the facilities of the venue.

So as Eve Hollis, a retired hospital librarian from the UK who you might know from the EAHIL conferences, used to say, “Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance”.

2. Nervousness

How do you recognize a nervous presenter?

A nervous presenter keeps holding the desk; is not looking at the audience and thereby preventing eye contact; speaks as fast as possible just to get over the presentation as soon as possible.



Everybody is nervous when doing a presentation, especially for a large group of people. People recognize it when you are nervous. This affects your credibility and thereby influences the impact of your presentation. Being nervous is very natural, don't fight it but embrace it as you can use it as performance energy.

A few tips to overcome your nervousness:

- Imagine that you are among friends in a pub or at a table (tonight at the gala dinner) and you speak about a project you are undertaking.
- The people who come to listen to you are not there to give you a hard time. They came to your presentation because the subject of your presentation was appealing to them, so they want you to succeed.
- Don't put animation in your slides. Too much clicking and remembering when you have to click is not good for your focus which should be at delivering your story. The other disadvantage might be that you have to be close to the computer instead of connected to the audience. Also animation is causing distraction for your audience while they should pay attention to you and your story.
- Don't be afraid that you forget anything. Nobody will notice as they are not aware of what you were supposed to tell them.

Eye contact

Eye contact is so important and yet so many presenters think it is very difficult. I highly recommend that you truly try to connect to somebody, look him/her in the eyes and then move on to another person. Don't behave like a lighthouse or as if you are watching a ping-pong match, moving your head left to right to pretend you are looking at everybody.

Some tips for eye contact:

- Ask somebody you trust to sit in the audience so you have a kind of coach with you. That person can give you hints to slow down etc.
- Make eye contact with the people who are paying attention, they will give you energy.
- Don't waste your energy in trying to engage the people who are not paying attention. They might have their own reasons which do not necessarily have anything to do with you.

You

The most important point in overcoming nervousness is to stay genuine. Be close to yourself, be you. People prefer an authentic speaker over a polished own. Conversational is better than formal or slick.

3. Telling the right story (applies to presentations and our daily work environment)

The problem is that we often tell the wrong story, because we don't have a clear picture why we/librarians are doing all the things we do every day.

Last month I asked medical librarians in the Netherlands what they do in the library and I got answers like:

We provide :
- PubMed trainings;
- current awareness;
- interlibrary loan etc.

But when I asked them **WHY** they provide these products or servicessilence.

Elevator Pitch

Do you know the principle of the elevator pitch? Imagine, 30 seconds in the elevator with the director of your hospital. When the director asks who you are and what you do in the hospital. What is your answer?

Only when you start by answering the why question you can answer the question the director asked you in the elevator.

The best answer I have ever heard was from an English college library. Their mantra is "save time, better grades". You could easily adopt this with a little adjustment and make it "save time, save lives".



Wow says the director in the elevator "and how do you do that?" Well by providing these services....

After I asked the Dutch librarians what they did I asked them "who is your customer". Reply: "Well of course the doctors and nurses who use the library".

No, wrong answer. Your organisation is your customer. Your hospital or your university is your customer. So when you provide your services you should always ask yourself, what is the benefit for the hospital when I do this. Why do I do this. Always ask yourself **WHY**.

When I worked in a medical library I often got a "thank you" mail after sending (a PDF of) an article requested through interlibrary loan to a doctor.

Has anybody received a thank you note or mail from one of your users?
What did you do with it?

My suggestion is to ask once in a while (to different users of course) why the article or service you provided is so important for them. You need stories to make your point.

Last week there was a webinar about usage statistics were the presenters also made the point of telling stories. It makes no sense to send just the plane data or graphs to your manager, without telling the story behind the data. You need to tell your manager what to look for and why this is significant or important to mention.

It is important to know your audience and the language they speak. For example managers like business talk and methodologies.

A taskforce from the Medical Library Association did some research if and how the balanced scorecard methodology is applicable to medical libraries. Besides two published articles in the Journal of the Medical Library Association, they made this taxonomy.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS	CONTRIBUTIONS OF LIBRARY	LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES						
		Access to Databases (e.g. EBM resources, MEDLINE)	Access to Materials (e.g. interlibrary loans, checking out materials)	Reference/ Consultation Services (e.g. assistance with database searches)	Training & Education (e.g. classes, curriculum liaison)	Current Awareness Services (e.g. clinical alerts)	Support Services (e.g. photocopy services, access to computer lab)	Library as Place (e.g. quiet study areas, group meeting facilities)
PROMOTE CLINICAL LEARNING	Inform users about current developments in clinical practice	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Provide new knowledge and substantiate prior knowledge about clinical practice	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
PROVIDE AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Provide information about developments in information technologies and resources	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Support professional development of staff	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
PROVIDE RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING	Provide easy and convenient access to information resources	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Support preparation for licensing, certification and re-certification examinations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
FOSTER RESEARCH	Support research-related needs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Provide information necessary to prevent duplication of research efforts	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
FOSTER INSTITUTIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS	Enhance institutional attractiveness to prospective clinical staff	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
PROVIDE EXCELLENT CLINICAL CARE	Support informed and timely clinical decision-making	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Support the development of policies and procedures relating to clinical care	○	○	○	○	○	14762462	12113510

This taxonomy can help you in your daily practice, supporting and clarifying why the product and services are so important for your organisation.

One librarian in the Netherlands who is using this taxonomy, was facing budget cuts and he then said to the board of directors: “if you force me to offer less products or services, you have to adjust your mission statement, because I cannot support them any longer!” can you imagine the impact of his message.

Presentations

Answering the why question also applies to presentations.

Why should the audience listen to you?

Why should they care?

When I come back from conferences and talk about my experiences with my colleagues in the office I sometimes mention that we stayed in the pub until 3 am talking about our profession. (Nobody believes me). When talking to fellow professionals, sharing experiences and practices is very stimulating and inspiring for everybody. But then you very naturally ask the WHY question. “Why have you chosen this method? How have you solved that problem?”

With your next presentation try to imagine the questions you will get after your presentation and put some effort in the preparation to answer them upfront in your talk.

At the same time, the audience is your customer, so you better be interesting otherwise you are wasting the time of the audience and that is disrespectful!

Why didn't I talk about PowerPoint? Remember the elevator pitch with the director? No PowerPoint! It is about you, your story! Nobody care about your slides. So don't prepare your next presentation by starting up PowerPoint, but by thinking what you want your audience to remember after your presentation. There are many tools and websites available for guidance. (ie. A presentation planner).

Conclusion

JFK said that the only reason to give a presentation is to change the world. I don't think that I have changed the world with this presentation but I sincerely hope that you will be able to use some of the tips and insights I just shared with you, starting tonight at the gala dinner.



I am ready to answer your questions now, tonight during the gala dinner or afterwards via mail. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

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