



No.1: It takes time to sound spontaneous

Preparation is the foundation of any good speech or presentation. You've got to think about your audience, how you want them to think or feel differently after you've presented to them, and what the best ways of getting your message across are.

Don't open PowerPoint straight away. Stop and ask yourself a few simple questions:

- Do you know what you want your audience to think, do or say differently once they've seen and heard your presentation?
- Do you know what your two or three top messages are, and have you written them down yet?
- Have you considered how the audience will respond to your key messages, do you think they will be friendly to them or will your points cause confrontation or, at least, a lively discussion?
- It's important that you work out what's in your presentation for the audience: what's the benefit to them?
- Check who else is presenting. Are you speaking alone, or with other presenters? Are you first, last or somewhere in between?
- Is there an overall theme to the event at which you are speaking, what's the mood and tone of the theme and can you use it to illustrate your message?
- Have you checked how long you have to present and what time of day you will be doing it? Is it first thing after the night before's sales party? If so, think about how to engage and energise the audience!
- Have you considered what the presentational environment will be like? Is there a big set or a flip chart? Think about how you can stand out by using the stage and environment differently without relying on buckets of charts to do the job for you.