Oral Presentation Best Practices

- Plan the presentation to have a logical flow depending on the situation.

  Is it a phase review of project status and path forward? Does it have a sub-theme of a proposal? Is it a final report?

  Make an outline first, which ideally can be extracted from the written form of the communication process for which the oral form is intended.

- <u>Speak clearly, and confidently</u> (but not so confidently as to appear "cocky")

  The best way to achieve the above is to '<u>know your subject</u>' thoroughly, and through <u>practice</u>

- Visual support materials should be just that: "<u>support</u> for you message" vs. the message itself

- Visual support materials should be kept as <u>simple as possible</u> in helping you to make your key points and tell the story you want to tell.

  - One key point per slide is sufficient. *Know what the key point is!*
  - A rule of thumb for word slides is "the 6x7 rule" : no more than 6 lines per slide and 7 words per line. *If you don't talk about a point don't include it on a slide.*
  - Too many colors, font changes, and automation can be a <u>distraction</u>.
  - Make sure your audience can actually see what's on the slide. *Check the venue for the presentation and adjust font size, etc. accordingly.*

- Speak to the audience, but when referring to specifics on a support slide, clearly identify the place on the slide that contains the information you are speaking about.

  Pointers, including electronic pointers help, but if you are nervous, a shaky "point" can be a distraction.

- Plan overall timing given schedule constraints. *Allocate about 1 minute per slide on average, but allow more time for conceptual slides; less for transition slides. Conceptual slides include design concepts; graphs and tables; etc.*

- Have professional but friendly bearing - especially when answering questions. Have straightforward and honest answers. If you don't know - say so.

- Some things not to do:

  - *Talk excessively to the blackboard/screen*
  - *Apologize frequently*
  - *Read your presentation*

- sit down while talking
- Talk in a monotone voice
- Say "um" or "uh" or "like" repetitively
- Discuss things you don't understand
- Speak too fast, or mumble
- Try to BS your way through an answer to a question

Adapted from ppt presentation: "Delivering Effective Technical Presentations" by Dr. James Glancey
University of Delaware circa 2007

There are many references on the internet on this subject that provide similar information. Listed below are a few examples. The first two are particularly extensive:

- *http://www.presentation-pointers.com/showauthor/authorid/1001/*
- *http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/EE/ENGR695?Oralpres2000/*
- *http://www.me.udel.edu/old-meeg401/05/orals.pdf*
- *http://web.princeton.edu/sites/mcgraw/oral_presentation_skills.html*
- *http://www.catherineseo.com/cc/mmg508/powerpoint/oralpresentations.pdf*