



Seven Steps for Presentation Success at Tradeline

These Seven Steps for Presentation Success were gleaned from 50 years of experience watching and listening to more than 7,000 professionals engage with peers in over 300 finely tuned knowledge-exchange events.

STEP 1: YOUR AUDIENCE

Experienced doers with needs

STEP 2: PRESENTATION STRUCTURE

Memorable, simple, clear, effective, smooth

STEP 3: CONTENT

Substantive, deep, numerical

STEP 4: PRESENTATION STYLE

Conversational, candor, smooth, engagement

STEP 5: IMAGES

Relevant, bold, readable, word-minimal

STEP 6: GAME DAY – Rules of the Road

Staging, time, AV, other speakers, straight talk

STEP 7: YOUR PRESENTER'S CHECKLIST

Summary, ten checkmarks, done, ready to go





Step 1: YOUR AUDIENCE

Peers and colleagues with varied experience

The experience scale – peers and colleagues

You will likely be talking to a mix of newly minted facilities folks along with knowledgeable owners, planners, and operators who have years of experience. Tailor your material and your presentation style for both ends of the spectrum and never lecture or talk down to this audience. Regardless of where they are on the experience scale, they are your peers and colleagues.

The information needs of doers

Tradeline audiences consist of leaders who are engaged in the planning and implementation of new project initiatives. Their needs are centered around being on top of the information, data, resources, tools, news, insights, findings, and lessons learned that will shape their plans, processes, and the success of their projects. The highest-rated presentations of the past have been those that have strongly focused on meeting those needs.

Step 2: PRESENTATION STRUCTURE

Memorable, simple, clear, effective, smooth

Importance of Your Presentation Structure

The structure of your presentation (segments, organization, images, flow) will account for 50% of your success. It will shape your content, serve as the delivery chute for getting your information into the minds of your audience, and it will make you and your presentation memorable.

Simple and effective

The highest-rated presentations have been those with simple structures that are clear to their audiences and effective relative to the objectives of the speaker. Here are some examples: Problem(s)/Solution(s), Compare/Contrast, Story (personal drama), Lessons Learned, Causes/Effects, New Ideas/Implications, Issues/Responses, Great vs. Not-So-Great, The Tale of Two Projects, New Solutions/New Metrics.

How Many Presenters?

The fewer the better. If you don't want to go it alone, make sure each member of your speaking team contributes a unique perspective. For example, if you represent a design firm, always try to co-present with an owner representative. If you're an engineer, present with an architect. Decide who will deliver which parts of the presentation. Have a plan for smooth transitions, and stick to it.



Step 3: CONTENT

Substantive, deep, numerical

Narrow and Deep is Better Than Broad and Shallow

Concentrate on a manageable number of key issues—issues that are controversial, often overlooked, or represent the latest developments in the area. Then dive into them.

Be True to Your Topic

The publicized summary of your topic is what will be drawing people to your presentation. Review that summary and plan to stick to that advertised subject matter. During your presentation, refer back to the topic and how your content relates to it. If you can't make that connection, then you have strayed off course.

Serve Up Key Pieces of Information

Highlight takeaways that are easy for your audience to jot down, digest, and remember. Try to include as many as you can in your presentation. But takeaways must be tangible and specific, not generalities.

The Rule of Numbers: Use Them—Lots of 'em!

People like numbers, and there are many metrics to choose from—cost per square foot, annual cost per worker, cycle-time, square feet per worker, net-to-gross, square feet, air changes per hour, watts per square foot, occupancy costs, floor-to-floor dimensions, planning module size, the added cost of flexibility features.

Acronyms: Just Don't

Not everyone hangs around with the same crowd that you do. Acronyms common to you might be meaningless to your audience. If you must include them, define them first. Then define them again the second time you use them. Try to use as few as possible.

Last Slide: “The Tradeline Three”

What are three unique ideas, findings, or key pieces of information from your presentation that you want your audience to walk away with and remember you by? Not broad platitudes, but three details or highlights from your report that could become tangible action items for others. Just before you open it up for final questions from the audience, tell them, “Here are my Tradeline Three.” And make that your final slide.



Step 4: PRESENTATION STYLE

Conversational, candor, smooth, engagement

Be Informal and Conversational

A Tradeline conference is not a forum for professional papers or prepared written scripts. Instead, work from an outline, speak conversationally, and work to create dialogue between you and your audience.

Position Yourself as a Peer

Send the message, "We're all in this together." To avoid creating a barrier between you and your audience, mention client institutions by name rather than calling them "clients."

Be Personal

Your audience is interested in what you think. Don't just present the facts; share your opinions. And give them the opportunity to disagree—these conversations can be very instructive.

Get a Fast Start

Good speakers capture their audiences in the first 30 seconds. You risk losing them if you ease into the topic with lengthy introductions and the history of your 200-year-old institution.

Give Them the Road Map

You've developed a clear structure and outline for your presentation. Don't keep it to yourself. At the outset, tell your audience how you've organized your presentation, what you hope they will get out of it, and how you plan to go about it. Part way through your presentation you may find it useful to show that outline again and point out where you are and what's left to be covered.

Engage With Your Audience – Questions

Conference participants generally enjoy presentation sessions in direct proportion to how much they get to talk, so be sure to give them a chance to ask questions and offer input from their own experiences.

Repeat the Question (and we say again, "Repeat the Question!") When you get a question from the audience, repeat the question back to the entire group. That serves as a compliment to the question asker, because it shows that you value the question. But more importantly, it clarifies the question and ensures that everyone in the room hears the question that you are answering. When you respond, speak to the entire room, but keep your answer short and sweet. And offer to speak with individuals anytime during the conference if they have further questions.

End with Audience Dialogue

Plan to end your presentation with audience questions, answers, and responses. Think of audience questions as audience applause—they have been tracking with you, consider you to be a useful source, and want to know more.



Step 5: IMAGES

Relevant, bold, readable, and word-minimal

Put the Brakes on Word Slides

Word slides (ones that are entirely or mostly text) force your audience to choose: "Should I attempt to read the slide or listen to the speaker?" They can't do both, and you never want them to stop listening to you.

Be a Word and Number Minimalist: The 20-20 Rule

20 point type, 20 words (or numbers) max. To be decipherable at 90 feet (main ballroom, 16' screen) and 45 feet (breakout rooms, 8' screen) the smallest character (letter or number) should be bold and no smaller than 20-point type. And that means that you can't put very many words on one slide. (Try 20 words maximum.)

Prepare Images That Will Enhance Your Talk

This means bold, bright images that convey ideas and information. To show a floorplan for example, keep it simple, bold colors, and zoom in (or use call-outs) to signal where you want audience eyes to focus. The same goes for photos and renderings.

Every Slide, Substantive Commentary

Every slide demands an answer to the questions, "Why am I showing you this image, what do I want you to look at, and what's the take-away idea here?" If you don't provide answers to those questions for the slide in question, cut the slide from the presentation. Otherwise, your audience will wish you had.

Sell Your Information and Images

Build anticipation when you're about to share something significant in your talk or in your next slide or slides. For example, "In these next images, you are going to see two radical departures from tradition," or, "This next set of numbers is key to flex-space planning—write these down!" These kinds of lead-in phrases effectively punctuate and vary the pace of a presentation, help people stay alert and engaged, and establish that you are in command of the material and not simply a slide-show operator.

Step 6: GAME DAY – Rules of the Road

Staging, time, AV, other speakers, straight talk

Staging—Flexible, energized, and engaging

For presenters speaking in Tradeline's main ballroom, you will find a broad, elevated stage with a podium at the center and a chair for a possible tag-team presenter, if needed. For breakout sessions, there is no podium at the front of the room, just a small table for your laptop—so you can roam around, stand wherever gets you the most attention, and interact with your audience and the images on the room's projection screen.

Multi-speaker protocol

Tradeline recommends that for multi-presenter presentations that presenters stand when they are speaking and sit when they are not. The reason for that protocol is that active speakers should be the center of attention and non-speaking members should not be a visual distraction.

Time—Schedules matter: Start on time, end on time

Arrive at your designated presenting space early to get wired up and test the visual and sound systems. Starting your session late is impolite to your audience. Ending early can make your audience feel shortchanged. And going overtime can frustrate people who are trying to get to their next session.

Audio Visual—We've got your technical presence covered

Tradeline's AV Team will personally wire up each speaker and double-check the AV gear to ensure smooth sailing on the technical side. Tradeline provides projectors, a PowerPoint slide changer with a green laser, and personal microphones connected to the room speaker system. For those presenting in a breakout forum setting, the rule on personal microphones is to leave your microphones on—don't turn them off—until the very end of your session, including the Q&A time. Breakout forum speakers bring their own laptops to their presentation rooms. For plenary session presenters, Tradeline will run your presentation on Tradeline's computer from the ballroom's AV controls desk, but you will have slide-change control.

Other Speakers—Support your fellow speakers, we're a team

We encourage all speakers to attend and participate in other conference sessions. But do not join a session if you know that you have to leave that session part way through for a meeting, flight, or phone call. Doing so can convey the mistaken impression that you, having been identified as a leader in this conference, don't consider the content of that session worth your time. You are welcome to refer to other presentations that have gone before you, but do so in a positive and charitable manner.

Straight talk—Language and decorum

Tradeline is committed to delivering high-value information to conference participants, and it is our view that profanity, blasphemy, and off-color stories are distractions and barriers to communication.

Step 7: Your Presenter's Checklist:

Summary, ten checkmarks, done, ready to go

- 1. Do I have a clear and memorable structure?
- 2. Is my content appropriate to both senior, experienced people and those new to their positions?
- 3. Have I included useful metrics and takeaways?
- 4. Am I staying true to my advertised topic?
- 5. If multiple people are presenting, have we coordinated smooth transitions between speakers?
- 6. Do I have a plan to engage with the audience and get them into a question-asking mode?
- 7. Have I eliminated word slides?
- 8. Are all my images bold, relevant, and readable?
- 9. Do I have my Tradeline Three?
- 10. Am I confirmed with Tradeline for my hotel room and my attendance at the pre-conference speakers-briefing dinner?

Notes:

We look forward
to your next
Tradeline appearance.