

In the ATD article, “Great Presentations”, Sturges shares the most likely reason for failed presentations is lack of preparation. He emphasizes the need to “prepare, prepare, prepare...”, suggesting that spending the time upfront will pay off in the end. While he suggests the use of basic questions, we discovered throughout this course there are many tools available that are designed to guide presenters in building an engaging and dynamic presentation. Tools such as Instructional Systems Design models like SAM or ADDIE, Lesson Plan templates, or job aids like “Preparing to Present” or “Preparing your content” from ATD (Sturges, 2016). In this essay of my final instructional video I will reflect on how training design tools like those mentioned by Sturges, along with content from this course allowed me to facilitate an engaging training that was rich with content and structured in a way that made sense.

Formal analysis of the audience and topic is encouraged in both the ADDIE Model and the article by Sturges. Prior to this course, and even this assignment I had no experience formally assessing or analyzing my audience or my topic. The use of the assigned lesson plan and “Preparing Yourself to Present” form forced me to spend quality time on the analyze phase and avoid rushing into building content. In this exercise, I took the time to identify the true objective of my course, what I expected my participants to be able to accomplish when we finished. By analyzing my audience, ranging in age and experience with event planning, it became evident I needed to take my course down to the basics for beginners and allow the experts share their expertise in using planning tools and the chapter plan to execute successful events. To further assess or analyze my audience I considered what Kolovou, in her webinar on “Creating and Giving Business presentations” suggested, to consider the potential reactions of my audience so I could prepare ahead of time should they seem apathetic or resistant to my training (2019). This allowed me to brainstorm ideas on how I could respond or adjust my delivery to reconnect with

lost participants. The final aspect of formal analysis I did was on the presentation location, Microsoft Teams. In consideration of the virtual format, I elected to build in constant interaction with the participants through discussion, activities, and games with the hope of keeping them engaged with cameras on.

The planning stage or “Design”, I discovered to be somewhat of a living document that is ever changing, before, during, and after the presentation. Kolovou, talks about logical appeal and organizing content in a way that flows (2019). The lesson plan worksheet and ATD job aid provided a guide for organizing a more logical delivery of my content. Sturges used the acronym “KISS for keep it simple and successful”, suggesting content points should be limited to no more than five and that you focus on what you want the audience to retain (Sturges, 2017, p4). Reflecting on the KISS concept I took a look at my original steps and began cutting out content that was too much for one session or was irrelevant the main objective of my course. Prior to this course, I may have left that content in, and ran the risk of overloading my participants and veering away from my main objective. As a living document this lesson plan and bullet points can and was repeatedly rearranged or edited as I created materials and gained new information about my audience. As part of the design of presentations, Sturges and Kolovou both encourage presenters to, “open with a bang”, however identifying the right attention getter has historically been difficult for me (2017, p.3). The ATD Job Aid “Preparing your Content to Present” was helpful in generating ideas on creating an appropriate opener to engage both experienced and unexperienced planners as well as identify a way to tie the opener to the content of my presentation. The consistent reinforcement of the importance of evaluation in both the ADDIE model and ATD articles, provoked me to embed evaluation activities into my content that allowed me to gauge participant understanding. With an outline clearly

identified, I was ready to put the tools and content to good use building content for my presentation.

The development phase is the most fun phase of presentation development for me and where I identify the most growth in my presentation preparedness and. In the ATD article “Great Presentations”, Jonathan Halls introduces the concept of cognitive load. He identifies three ways to streamline presentations so they are quick and easy to understand; using familiar language, aiming for one objective, and building rapport (2017, p. 6) Upon reading his article, I had already cut down my presentation to focus on one objective, however, I had originally planned to use an example in my content that did not relate at all to the finished product I was expecting them to make. By tailoring my content examples to their finished product, I minimized their cognitive loads by saving them from having to create the connection on their own. To build a rapport with participants I purposely structured my presentation in a way that allowed them to do more talking and me to do more listening. The concepts surrounding emotional intelligence provided some valuable insight into building a rapport with my audience. For example, being self-aware of any unconscious bias, open to various perspectives, capable of communicating openly and encouraging collaborations are all essential to building a rapport with your audience and leaving them receptive to the content. In the article “Basic Training for Trainers”, Russo states, “adults need active involvement” and “a participatory training style-in which the trainer guides the learners to discover what they need to learn” (2016, p. 3). I had learned from my first presentation that I needed to adopt a more facilitative style so that my audience could fully engage and contribute to the content. I had also identified a need for building in interactive training methods, so for my final presentation I shifted away from lecture towards a facilitative style comprised of group discussions, demonstrations, and a game.

Following a shift towards facilitation, the implementation phase went much smoother in my final presentation. The formal lesson plan helped me arrange material in way that allowed for smoother transition from one bullet to the next. I took the advice of Sturges and limited the material on my slide deck to only the items I wanted them to remember. The open dialogue between specialists sharing ideas and best practices allowed them to generate their own understanding of the materials and begin applying it to their own experiences. I also believe that a consistent reinforcement of some of the key concepts in the beginning, middle, and end was key to making sure they had a full understanding of the material. In reference to implementation, Kolovou and Sturges both emphasize the importance of practice, stating “the more you practice the material, the better you know it and the more relaxed you become” (Sturges, 2017, p.9). I absolutely agree with this statement. I spent a fair amount of time practicing both the delivery of my content and the use of the virtual platform prior to the official presentation to become familiar with the tools and flow of my presentation. This practice gave me the confidence to try things I enjoy as a participant such as party music at the intro and during breakout sessions, and kept me from having to constantly revisit my notes to figure out what I wanted to say next. One struggle I did have with the implementation phase was my conclusion. Sturges had stated, “the closing is the part of the presentation your audience is most likely going to remember”, and he suggesting giving them “a plan of action to implement what they learned” (2017, p. 7). It was with that in mind, that I ended the presentation by tying back to how the staff could use the tools they provided to go back to their students and begin developing their plans. The ending seemed a little awkward to me, so given the opportunity to do it over again I would most likely summarize the key points again with a slide and actually assign a task tied to the main objective that I could follow up with them on after the training.

In conclusion, the greatest lesson learned for me following this course is the importance of preparation and practice when developing presentation. Those two phases of presentation creation will make or break your presentation. In my opinion, because I followed that model and invested a fair amount of time preparing for the presentation and practicing ahead of time the presentation turned out well and feedback from participants was positive. I suppose you can refer to the saying “you get out of something what you put into it.” If I want my participants time to be well spent and I want to make sure that the purpose of having the training in the first place has been met then it is in my best interest to invest the time in preparation and practice. It just might me time and energy in the long run to invest time on the front end.

References

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