

Toastmasters CTM-08 – Get comfortable with visual aids

Post-Mortem of a Presentation

Bill Howell, 15Aug06

Introduction - Value of Toastmasters

- Framework for improving presentation skills
- Practice
- Recognize & correct weakness – feedback from others
- Strive for excellence

So how did I do?

Sub-Title: **How NOT to give a presentation**

1. WAIVER - I forgot! (show Paul Werbos' waiver)
2. Know your subject –
 - a. Good basis (wrote a paper), but huge, relatively unknown subjects
 - b. Explosion of related material (OK, at least three or four other papers at conference, recent Scientific American) - Lamarckian heredity mentioned at least twice that I heard
3. Know your audience – (SHOW: DNA Secret Sharing, Lofti Zadeh's presentation, My presentation)
 - a. Extremely articulate crowd – even though it was very international
 - b. (circulate books)
 - c. Very diverse - some very strong in genetics, Evolutionary computation, others not so
 - d. Style – math versus pictures, but sometimes both
4. Know your weaknesses!
 - a. Stay within the time – I did skip a number of slides
 - b. Clarity of ideas – get to the point
 - c. Vocal variety
 - d. Gestures
 - e. **Lack of Fear** -
- 5. Practice!!**
 - a. Only went through part of my presentation once – 1.5 hours before giving it, and before running around at the conference to get some stuff done.
 - b. Why?
 - i. Other priorities come first, or consume my time – eg I was scrambling to do publicity and organize things
 - ii. I kept changing the presentation (refining the wording, exchanging concepts)
 - iii. Reactions to the rest of the conference
 - iv. I can't stand seeing the same movie, reading the same book, twice?

- c. If I was to give the presentation ten times, I would change it each time, and would probably still try to squeeze new things in during each presentation.
6. Anticipate tough questions (missing in Toastmasters)
 - a. Nobody asked them (well two “tougher questions”, but not the bombshells) – and I wasn’t really ready even though I know that they will come sometime!
 - b. Two “relatively easy issues”:
 - i. Polish scientist – rat neurons driving a robot (what if they were human neurons?)
 - ii. Paul Werbos – reaction to robot supremacy

Conclusion

Although I make a bit of a joke of this, in actual fact Toastmasters was important to my presentation. Most of all, it got me presenting again, after a very long absence. Moreover, it has provided a more systematic focus on key components of presentations, and provides suggestions for different styles and approaches so that if you get stuck in a rut, at least you know that you are in a rut.

BIG PLUS - Practice with 6 minute presentations!!

My own experience is that the biggest challenges of all is trying to “destroy” personal habits that cause problems. I wasn’t entirely successful and I don’t expect to be. The main thing is to avoid over-commitment on other priorities, and

Visual Aids

- Computer projector
 - DNA Secret Sharing – minimal visuals, theorems & concepts
 - Lofti Zadeh – longgggg presentation, graphs, math, concepts
 - Bill Howell – presentation for WCCI06 Vancouver
 - Swarm-bots chain formation ciro4-web.mov (couldn’t show movie...)
- Bring books from conference

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