Effective Technical Presentations

Lawrence O. Hall
Department of Computer Science and Engineering, ENB118
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Ave. Tampa, FL. 33620-9951
**hall@cse.usf.edu**

What is the Message?

- **For this talk, tools, tips and techniques towards making a presentation that is**

    - **Well received. If people don't like it they may miss the importance of the message**

    - **Well understood. You want people to walk away with a concept, idea, algorithm, theorem, etc. that they followed well enough to restate**

What is the Right way?

- **There are different approaches that best fit you.**

- **Know your audience (as well as you can).**

- **Always cover your summary.**
  - **A well known speaker starts with the conclusions and shows how to get them.**

Some Universal Rules (Ding)
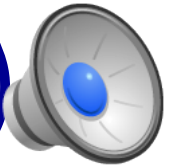
- Always finish within your allotted time!

- If you are talking about a paper, the goal is to have people read the paper.
  - Tell a good story

- Consider color on your slides
  - Bells and whistles? Maybe just a bell or whistle.

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Preparation

- **Practice the presentation**
  - **Out loud**
  - **With an audience if you can**

- **Try to take a look at the room**

- **Have a plan for equipment failure**

- **No live Demos (EVER)**

Some Basics

- **Stand outside the viewing lines of the audience (so they can see).**

- **Speak loudly and/or use a microphone (so they can hear).**

- **Be ready to start on time.**

Always Add Value to Your Slide

- **If you read the slide it will bore the audience as they can read it too.**

- **You cannot be spontaneous with a strict script (though the spontaneity should be practiced).**

- **Complex equations are best explained rather than read. People can read in depth later.**

Get your audience involved
(if you can)

- **What font is easiest on the eye should be considered.**

- **What layout might be best for this talk?**

- **Does this slide look better in black and white or color?**

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  - **Please vote for Black and White by raising your hands**

Make a simple presentation

- **Provide an outline of the ideas**

- **Provide some details/important content**
  - **Excite people to go find the rest of the details**

- **Reinforce the message with the Summary**

In the beginning…

- **Cover basics. Sure people might know them or of them, but what of the few newbies or interlopers**

- **It is great if someone thinks "I could have done this" (they didn't), but they must have understood you**

Keep slides from being busy

- **Just a few bullets per slide is O.K.**
  - **Lots of text can be unreadable**

- **Good: more slides each with less text**

- **Should you show just one bullet at a time?**
  - **Yes and sometimes.**

Size the font

- Small room -> smaller font

- Big room -> bigger font

- Keynote -> really big font and keep the info   the slide" for thos

Speaking

- **Speak loudly and clearly**
  - **You're in charge so keep it moving without silences**

- **If you need a microphone, be sure it is working**

- **Remember, if you are moving people look at you and not the slide (exploit if you want)**

- **If you have equations, explain them**

Speaking

- **Look at your audience**

- **Speak slowly so you can be understood**

- **Always try to improve your speaking style, remove uh, um, etc.**

What is the Takeaway?

- **Try to leave the audience with at least one piece of useful information**

- **Some people will like one thing and others will have a different perspective**

- **Example: A keynote speaker several years ago said the last several prediction contests (Netflix $1M US prize included) had been won by classifier ensembles**

Sell your idea(s)

- **Let your excitement show.**

- **A good talk will leave you expecting more than you get from a paper, for example.**

- **Help people see the idea is easy to build upon and utilize (if it is).**

Good Illustrations - Helpful

- **A picture is worth a thousand words.**
  - **Gold prices are sharply up since 2000.**
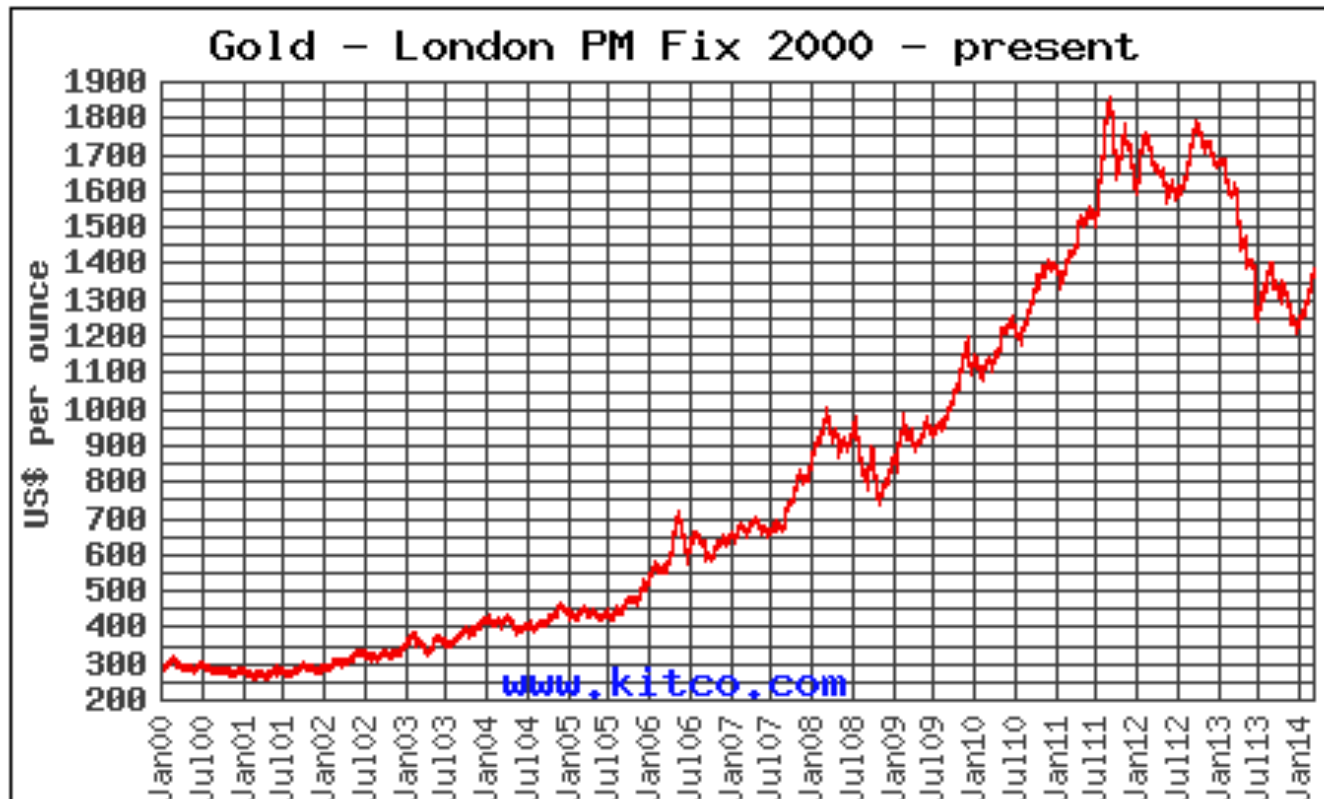
Practice

- **Good presenters have practiced multiple times.**

- **Sometimes you see a great presenter going over slides just before a presentation.**
  - **Just small upgrades/changes**

- **Give talk to friends, mirror, record and/or listen to it.**
  - **Recite silently (n times)...**

Talk is ready, but too long?

- **My students often give me, say, 36 slides for a 12 minute talk.**

- **Then they cut it to 33, because it can't be shorter.**

- **Try 12-15 and put the rest away for questions.**
  - **Let me know if they get used.**

Summary

- **Be prepared. Practice.**

- **Stay within your time**

- **Know the audience**

- **Have some slides for expected questions**

Questions

Prepare for Questions

- Have a slide or two prepared for likely questions.

- Have a slide or two for more details, if you feel uneasy about leaving some details out.

Handling Questions

- Decide, beforehand, if you will take questions during the talk (I like to)

- When should you leave time for questions?
  - Always!

- How much time? At least a couple of minutes
  - So always finish a little early

Practice How?

- **Give the presentation to colleagues or family.**

- **Talk to the mirror.**

- **Listen to the slides (make them PDF and have the computer speak them).**

- **What else?**
  - **Silently recite the presentation.**

Controversies

- Color or no color. Need contrast surely. Some are color blind.

- Outline of slides or not?
  - Maybe for each section. Maybe not. In the beginning some will have no idea what it means

- Questions during talk or not?

Other Ideas

- Try videotaping a practice presentation

- Have slides build on one another where feasible

- If a picture is worth 1k words, use figures