

Stand and Deliver: Presentation Skills for RPMs

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Course Objectives

- ◆ To understand how people evaluate presentations
- ◆ To review best practices for presentations
- ◆ To develop a game plan for presentations

Agenda

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Overview of the research
- ◆ Overview of presentation skills
- ◆ Putting it all together

INTRODUCTION

Who Am I?

- ◆ Facilitator with a decade of experience teaching difficult topics around Diversity and Inclusion
- ◆ Quantitative social scientist with teaching experience across a variety of classes and over 50 conference talks, invited lectures, and academic talks for the general public
- ◆ Performer with background playing music professionally

Who am I?

- ◆ My career consists of communicating scientific ideas to the general public through presentations, relying on the platform skills we will discuss shortly

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Why bother?

- ◆ There is a wealth of research that indicates that platform skills affect perceived credibility
- ◆ You are public-facing
- ◆ Your work is important, and it is important that it is communicated effectively
- ◆ Platform skills are skills, not inherent – you can learn, practice, and improve

The research

- ◆ We can tell when people believe what they are saying, and when they are confident in it.
 - Verbal vs. nonverbal (Tenney et al 2019)
 - Sounds of confidence and doubt (Jiang & Pell 2017)
 - Professionals lower vocal frequency when giving expert advice (Sorokowski et al 2019)

The research

- ◆ The clues to confidence are measurable
 - Pitch, intonation, and speed influence perceptions of speaker confidence (Guyer & Vaughn-Johnston 2019)
- ◆ We are more likely to believe and cooperate with people who send signals of confidence
 - Even when we later think it wasn't about presentation skills (Clark 2008)

The research

- ◆ Not only can we measure, we can improve with training
 - Communication training improves presentation skills (Siebold & Rude 1993)

The takeaway

- ◆ Presentation skills matter
 - Presentation skills and confidence affect speaker believability, and audience confidence
 - The better your presentation skills, the easier your presentations will go!
- ◆ We can improve communication skills with training and practice
- ◆ You have an important message

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION SKILLS

Presentation Competencies

- ◆ Content management
- ◆ Visual aids
- ◆ Platform skills
- ◆ Participant management

Content Management

◆ Effective speakers:

- Connect subject matter with objectives
- Analyze participants' needs, current level of expertise, and expectations
- Identify and organize key points that support the objectives and meet participant needs
- Identify potential problem areas and strategies

Content Management

- ◆ What is the key point of your talk?
- ◆ What do people need to know to understand that point?
- ◆ Where can they go astray?

Content Management

◆ Basic organization:

- Introduce the topic
- Provide a motivation
- Describe the necessary context
- Explain the research question or point you want to make
- Lay out the data and analysis strategy

Content Management

◆ Basic organization (continued):

- Document the findings
 - Point by point, or,
 - Laying out the necessary pieces to make your argument
- Provide comments to explain findings or implications of the argument
- Wrap up

Visual Aids

- ◆ Effective speakers prepare visuals that are:
 - Legible/Readable
 - Clearly related to content being presented
 - Organized
 - Consistently formatted

Visual Aids

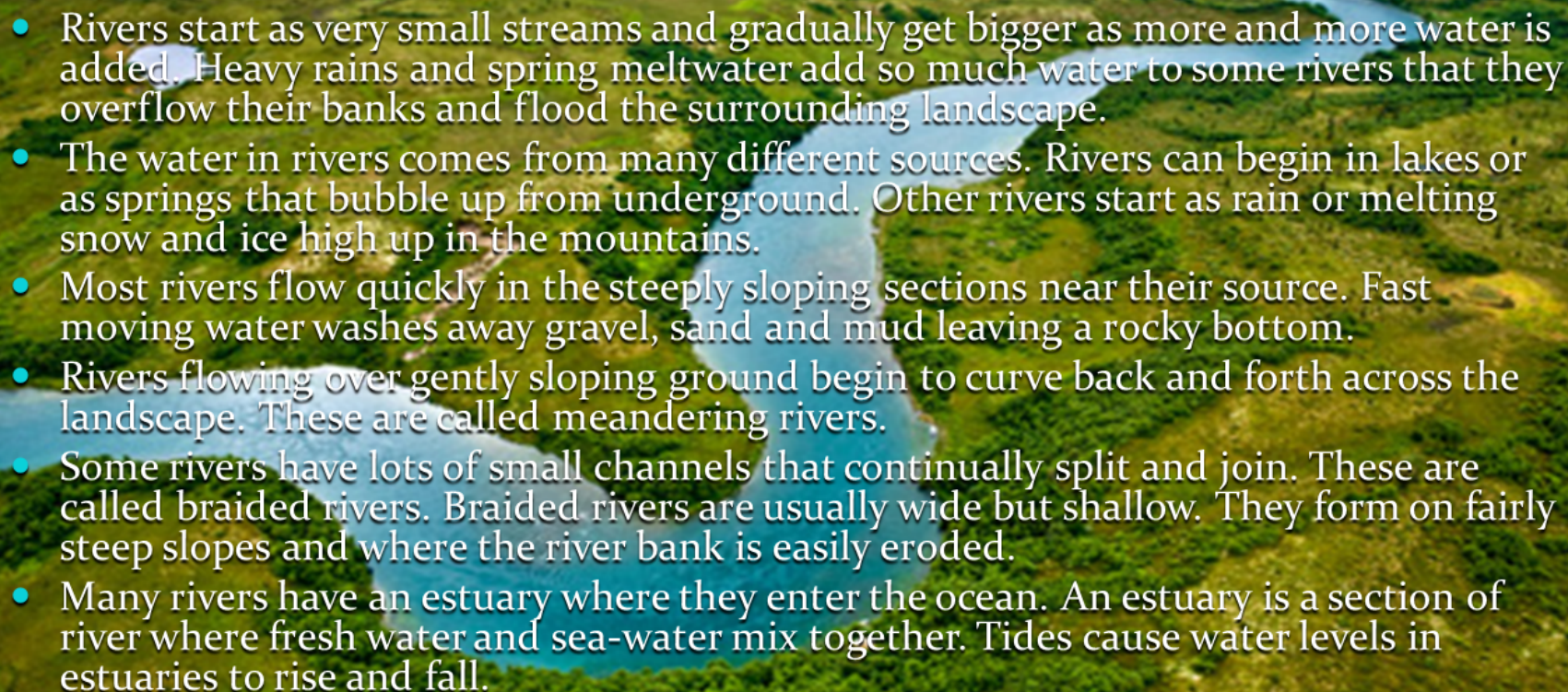
- ◆ Effective speakers manage the visual aids by:
 - Testing equipment/having contingency plans
 - Positioning the body to avoid blocking participants' view
 - Speaking to participants rather than to the visual aid

Visual Aids

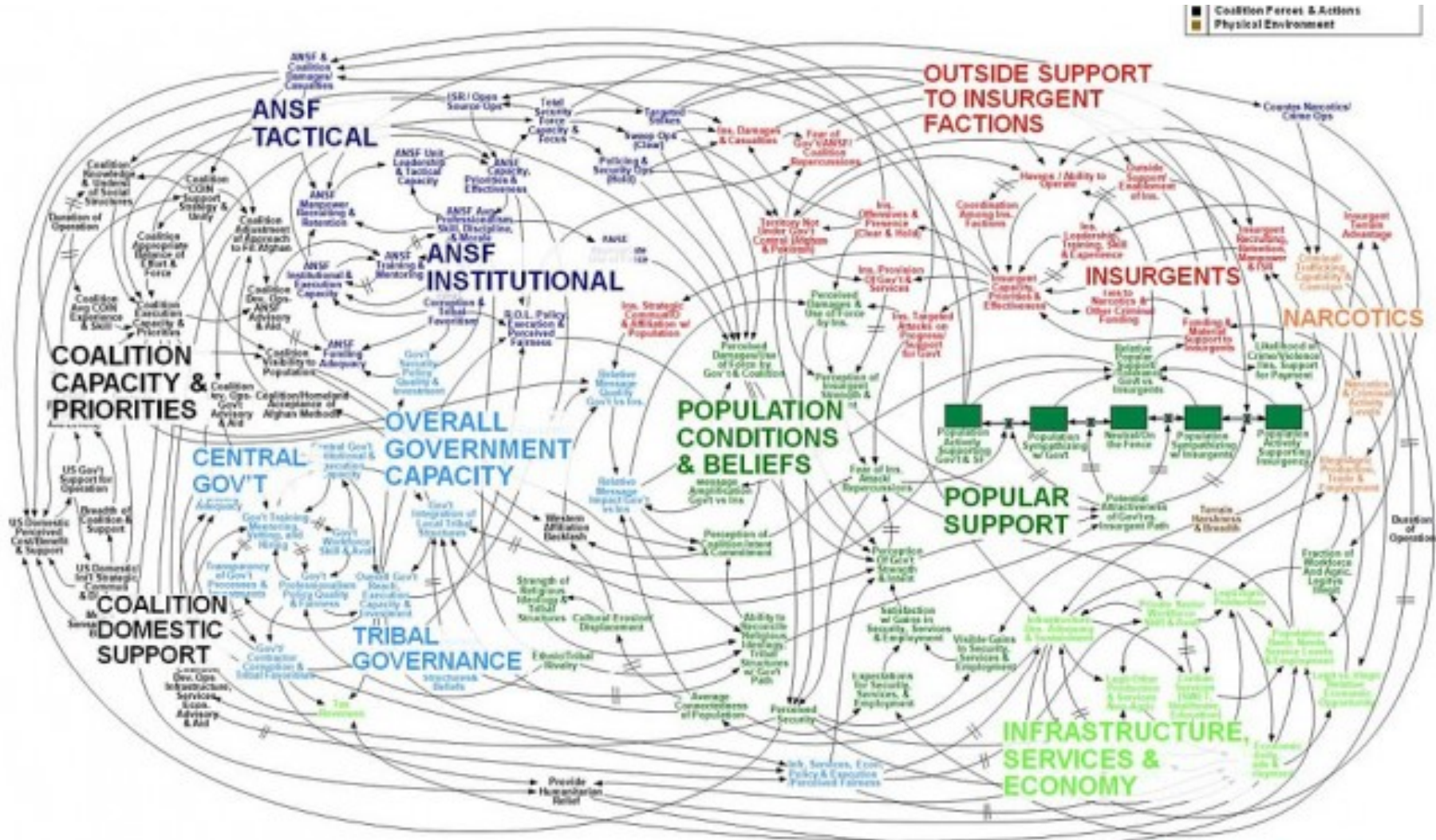
◆ What makes a slide bad?

A Bad Slide

How Rivers Are Formed

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- An aerial photograph showing a river meandering through a lush green landscape. The river is a light blue color, contrasting with the surrounding green vegetation. The river's path is not straight, showing several curves and bends. In the background, there are some small, irregularly shaped water bodies or ponds. The overall scene is a natural, undisturbed landscape.
- Rivers start as very small streams and gradually get bigger as more and more water is added. Heavy rains and spring meltwater add so much water to some rivers that they overflow their banks and flood the surrounding landscape.
 - The water in rivers comes from many different sources. Rivers can begin in lakes or as springs that bubble up from underground. Other rivers start as rain or melting snow and ice high up in the mountains.
 - Most rivers flow quickly in the steeply sloping sections near their source. Fast moving water washes away gravel, sand and mud leaving a rocky bottom.
 - Rivers flowing over gently sloping ground begin to curve back and forth across the landscape. These are called meandering rivers.
 - Some rivers have lots of small channels that continually split and join. These are called braided rivers. Braided rivers are usually wide but shallow. They form on fairly steep slopes and where the river bank is easily eroded.
 - Many rivers have an estuary where they enter the ocean. An estuary is a section of river where fresh water and sea-water mix together. Tides cause water levels in estuaries to rise and fall.

Another Bad Slide



Other Technology

- ◆ Arrive early and find your point of contact for tech, if any
- ◆ Test microphone setup, if present
 - If it is present, use it. Do not assume everyone can hear you!

Basics on Platform Skills

- ◆ Prior preparation
- ◆ Posture and movement
- ◆ Breathing
- ◆ Speed and pacing
- ◆ Asking questions
- ◆ Answering questions

Prior Preparation

- ◆ Is there a preferred format?
- ◆ What is your timeframe for providing secondary materials (e.g., slides, poster)?

Prior Preparation

- ◆ Decide if you want or need a script
- ◆ Practice
 - Decide if you need to time yourself
 - Nobody likes going over time
- ◆ Brainstorm possible questions
 - Don't focus only on the smart questions; how might people "not get it"?

Platform Skills

- ◆ Effective speakers will manage:
 - Nerves: transformation into positive energy
 - Voice: volume, pace, and intonation
 - Eye contact: range and focus
 - Body: posture, stance, and movement

Platform Skills

- ◆ Effective speakers will manage:
 - Gestures: hand and facial
 - Language: inclusive and technical
 - Transitions and segues

Soliciting Questions

- ◆ Assume that there will be questions
 - Ask: “What questions do you have?”
 - Avoid: “Any questions?”
 - After you ask for questions, STOP TALKING, wait several moments for them to think
 - Perfect time to take a drink of water

Answering Questions

- ◆ Let the questioner finish
- ◆ Rephrase the question
- ◆ Respond to everyone
- ◆ Refer to the central theme of the speech
- ◆ Feel free to postpone an answer or throw the question back to the group
- ◆ Respect the questioner

Answering Questions

- ◆ Sometimes, you can let the audience answer for you

Participant Management

◆ Effective speakers:

- Use participants' names (where possible)
- Reinforce desired and appropriate participant behaviors
- Refer to previous contributions made by participants

Participant Management

◆ Effective speakers:

- Respond appropriately to questions
- Manage “challenging” participant behavior
- Make the experience enjoyable

Participant Management

◆ Contentious participants:

- Attempt to take their question in the best, most charitable light
- Thank them for their feedback
- If they are wrong, thank them for bringing up the topic and allowing you the chance to clarify
- Do not get stuck repeating or clarifying – cut it and offer to discuss offline later
- If their comment is not relevant, thank them for participating and refocus (with the option of discussing more after the presentation)

The Gift of Feedback

◆ Effective feedback is:

- A GIFT – given to be helpful
- Specific rather than general
- Focused on behavior, not on the person
- Descriptive rather than evaluative
- Concise
- Well-timed
- Checked

Wrap-up

- ◆ What have you learned?
 - About presentations?
 - About yourself?
- ◆ What will you do differently?

Thank you!



Culture point