



Mastering Presentation Analysis

Key Areas for Effective Evaluation

In the world of public speaking, the effectiveness of a presentation hinges significantly on its audience understanding, content organization, and delivery techniques. Analyzing these components is essential for both speakers and evaluators alike, as they lay the foundation for a successful communication experience. Objectives serve as the guiding light for any presentation, determining the speaker's goals – whether to educate, motivate, or entertain – and shaping the audience's connection to the message.

Equally important is the context in which the speech is delivered. Factors such as audience size and demographics can drastically influence how techniques are applied. Furthermore, the content and structure of the presentation play a pivotal role in achieving the objective; a well-organized speech that focuses on relevant information resonates more effectively with the audience.

This guide delves into the critical areas of presentation analysis, offering insights into objectives, audience dynamics, content organization, and delivery skills. By understanding and evaluating these elements, speakers can refine their approach and create impactful presentations that leave a lasting impression.

Objectives

Objectives are the most important thing to analyze. Knowing the speaker's objective is critical to analyzing the speech and should certainly influence how you study it. Without clearly defined objectives it will be difficult for the audience to connect with and buy-in to the message being delivered.

- What is the speaker's goal? Is it to educate, to motivate, to persuade, or to entertain?
- What is the primary message being delivered?
- Why is this person delivering this speech? Are they the right person?
- Was the objective achieved?

Audience and Context

A speaker will need to use different techniques to connect with an audience of 1500 than they would with an audience of 15. Similarly, different techniques will be applied when communicating with teenagers as opposed to communicating with corporate leaders.

- Where and when is the speech being delivered?
- What are the key demographic features of the audience? Technical? Students? Elderly? Athletes? Business leaders?
- How large is the audience?
- In addition to the live audience, is there an external target audience? (ie: on internet or media)

CONTENT & STRUCTURE

The content of the speech should be selected and organized to achieve the primary speech objective. Focus is important — extraneous information can weaken an otherwise effective argument.

Before Speech

- Were there other speakers before this one? Was their messages similar, opposed, or unrelated?
- How was the speaker introduced? Was it appropriate?
- Did the introduction establish why the audience should listen to this speaker with this topic at this time?
- What body language was demonstrated by the speaker as they approached the speaking area? Body language at this moment will often indicate their level of confidence.

Presentation Introduction

Due to the **Primacy Effect**, according to The Decision Lab, an individual's tendency to better remember the first piece of information they encounter than the information they receive later on. words, body language, and visuals in the speech opening are all critical to speaking success.

- Was a hook used effectively to draw the audience into the speech? Or did the speaker open with a dry "*It's great to be here today.*"
- Did the speech open with a story? A joke? A startling statistic? A controversial statement? A powerful visual?
- Did the speech opening clearly establish the intent of the presentation?
- Was the opening memorable?

Body of Presentation

- Was the presentation focused? i.e. Did all arguments, stories, anecdotes relate back to the primary objective?
- Were examples or statistics provided to support the arguments?
- Were metaphors and symbolism use to improve understanding?
- Was the speech organized logically? Was it easy to follow?
- Did the speaker bridge smoothly from one part of the presentation to the next?

Presentation Conclusion

Like the opening, the words, body language, and visuals in the speech conclusion are all critical to speaking success. This is due to the **Recency Effect**, as explained in an article by Science Direct. The recency effect is a cognitive bias in which those items, ideas, or arguments that came last are remembered more clearly than those that came first.

- Was the conclusion concise?
- Was the conclusion memorable?
- If appropriate, was there a call-to-action?

DELIVERY SKILLS & TECHNIQUES

Delivery skills are like a gigantic toolbox — the best speakers know precisely when to use every tool and for what purpose.

Enthusiasm and Connection to the Audience

- Was the speaker enthusiastic? How can you tell?
- Was there audience interaction? Was it effective?
- Was the message *you and we focused*, or was it *I and me focused*?

Humor

- Was humor used?
- Was it safe and appropriate given the audience?
- Were appropriate pauses used before and after the punch lines, phrases, or words?
- Was it relevant to the speech?

Visual Aids

- Were they designed effectively?
- Did they complement speech arguments?
- Was the use of visual aids timed well with the speaker's words?
- Did they add energy to the presentation or remove it?
- Were they simple and easy to understand?
- Were they easy to see? e.g. large enough
- Would an additional visual aid help to convey the message?

Use of Stage Area

- Did the speaker make appropriate use of the speaking area?
- Was the speaker's movement purposeful?
- Were any stage props or visuals utilized effectively?

Physical – Gestures and Eye Contact

- Did the speaker's posture display confidence and poise?
- Were gestures natural, timely, and complementary?
- Were gestures easy to see?
- Does the speaker have any distracting mannerisms?
- Was eye contact effective in connecting the speaker to the whole audience?

Vocal Variety

- Was the speaker easy to hear?
- Were loud and soft variations used appropriately?
- Was the pace varied? Was it slow enough overall to be understandable?
- Were pauses used to aid understandability, heighten excitement, or provide drama?

Language

- Was the language appropriate for the audience?
- Did the speaker articulate clearly?
- Were sentences short and easy to understand?
- Was technical jargon or unnecessarily complex language used?
- What rhetorical devices were used? e.g. repetition, alliteration, the rule of 3, etc.

Intangibles

Sometimes, a technically sound speech can still miss the mark. Likewise, technical deficiencies can sometimes be overcome to produce a must-see presentation. The intangibles are impossible to list, but here are a few questions to consider:

- How did the speech make you feel?
- Were you convinced?
- Would you want to listen to this speaker again?
- Were there any original ideas or techniques?

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