

## **Communication Skills: Planning and Giving a Group or Team Presentation**

### **Description**

Group or team presentations are logical assignments to accompany either a collaborative project or a large project that is more practically divided among a number of individuals. The group or team presentation is presented by several individuals, with each individual presentation contributing to one common goal. However, each member's presentation should also be able to stand alone as an independent presentation.

### **Learners**

The assignment is expedited if learners are familiar with methods of working in groups or teams. The Reflective Thinking Sequence is a process for group members to follow when planning a presentation. When following this process, learners discuss the requirements of the assignment, delegate tasks to explore sources of relevant information and conduct research, pool the resulting information, and plan, practice, and give the presentation.

Additionally if learners have knowledge in the construction of presentations (See "Communication Skills: The Briefing" or "Communication Skills: Planning and Giving a Presentation") their task will be facilitated.

### **Equipment**

No equipment is required to plan, develop, and present a group or team presentation. Equipment is needed if visual aids are incorporated.

### **Facilitator**

An initial, important decision is determining the purpose of the group or team presentation. If the purpose is to provide practice in presentation skills, everyone within the group or on the team should be required to speak. If the purpose is to present information resulting from a group or team project, it is possible that not everyone will need to present, depending on the nature of the information to be presented. That is, if the information logically organizes itself into two or three major areas, it might not be practical for everyone to present. If the purpose is to influence the audience to take up an action or embrace a viewpoint, it might make sense that only the most skilled presenters on the group or team would assume the responsibility for speaking. As the assignment is constructed, the purpose should guide requirements.

The Reflective Thinking Process ("Communication Skills: Problem Solving Pairs" or "Communication Skills: Problem Solving in Groups and Teams") is not only useful as a framework for approaching group or team problem solving tasks, it can also be used as a guide to planning a group or team presentation. By following the process, members are guided to share information; the collaborative nature of the process allows identifying

potential problem areas early in their development; and there are built in checkpoints within the process that allow revisions to occur, if necessary.

## **Instructions**

Step One: Identify and agree on the goal of the presentation. In some instances, the presentation assignment includes a statement of the goal of the presentation. For example, if the presentation assignment is to discuss “ways a clean water supply can be maintained in space” the goal of the presentation has been determined in advance and students are ready to begin planning their presentation around that goal. However, if the assignment reads: “Select the major problem facing humans for survival outside of the earth’s biosphere and tell why you see it as the major problem,” students would need to first identify and agree on the major problem before proceeding with the planning of the presentation.

Initially, then, based on the nature of the assignment, students might be given a more general description of the presentation necessitating them to identify a viewpoint that will become their goal, or students may be assigned a goal around which to develop their presentation. If students are required to identify a perspective, that in itself becomes an exercise in problem solving.

Step Two: Gather information to explain and support the goal. Based on the goal of the presentation, students identify information needed to develop a presentation to meet their goal. If they have determined that maintaining a clean water supply is the major challenge of living in space, they must decide what information is needed to inform and persuade their listeners that their view is likely to be correct, or most acceptable.

In the process of gathering information, speakers should identify information already available to them such as lecture notes, textbook readings, journal articles, reports, guest presentations, websites, or other information that would assist in developing the presentation.

After identifying relevant and available information, students determine additional information that is needed and identify sources from which to acquire that information. Step two is a dynamic area because as students acquire information to support and illustrate their presentation goal they might discover the need for additional information or the nature of the new information might necessitate modifying their speaking goal.

Step Three: Identify and agree on criteria for a solution. There are two types of criteria students should keep in mind when developing their presentation.

The major criterion for a presentation is the presentation goal. Students should review the information they have gathered and delete any information that is irrelevant to their goal. In addition, depending on the nature of the assignment, if students are to advocate a particular viewpoint, they will need to develop a criterion that demonstrates their chosen viewpoint is the most desirable. Criteria might be based on resources, i.e. budget, time,

or equipment; it could be based on human needs ( ex., the best choice of method for adequate clean water is the one that delivers a sufficient supply of clean water to sustain human life), etc.

Based on the terms of the assignment, there might be other criteria such as length of time of the presentation, the number of sources that must be used in developing the presentation, a requirement to use visual support, etc. Step Three is a check point at which students should determine they understand and have taken into account all of the criteria for the presentation.

Step Four: Identify possible solutions. The group or team considers information that has been gathered and identifies solutions that emerge as a result of the information. If the assignment is to determine the major problem facing human survival in space, a number of possible issues might have emerged as a result of the group or team's research. These issues would be identified during this phase of the Reflective Thinking Sequence. In addition, the fourth step is a point at which students should take stock of the information they have acquired. Irrelevant information must be identified and discarded; "holes" in the information need to be identified and steps taken to find needed material.

Step Five: Match possible solutions to criteria and select best solution. When a presentation assignment goes beyond being merely informative and requires a group or team to support a position, students match the possible solutions they have identified from their research to their criteria and make decisions regarding the solution they will propose in their presentation.

Step Six: Generate an implementation plan. During this step, to develop the presentation in its entirety, students discuss and agree on issues such as these:

- In what order should pieces of information be presented to enable listeners to understand and/or accept the presentation goal?
- What needs to be said in the introduction to prepare listeners for those points?
- In what memorable manner can the presentation be concluded?
- What visual support, if any, is needed and who will prepare it?
- What, if any, equipment will be used and who will arrange for it?
- Which members will present which parts of the presentation?
- If the assignment does not require all members to present, who will present?
- If a question/answer session is planned, who will facilitate?

Step Seven: Create an assessment plan and schedule. Once the content and organization of the presentation is determined, group or team members should create a timetable for completing their presentation assignments and scheduling practice sessions. A mechanism for giving feedback to presenters should be developed. Videotaping a practice session to enable presenters to view their performance and discuss strengths as well as consider ways to overcome weaknesses is a beneficial part of practice. Enough time should be allowed for scheduled practice sessions to enable any glitches to be identified and remedied. Whenever possible, practice should occur in the environment in which the

presentation will be given and should include visual support and use of the technology that will be used during the presentation.

### **References and Resources**

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