

# PRESENTING TO PARTNERS

Sometime, you're going to have to tell people what you've been doing, and maybe even get their feedback. This guide walks you through preparing, presenting, and processing feedback on your work.

## SET A SCHEDULE

*A good presentation comes from good work, and good work comes from having sufficient time.*

- As early as possible, set the dates, times, and locations for all presentations. Decide who will attend each presentation.
- Communicate presentation dates to partners and stakeholders as early as possible. It's important to make sure all key decision makers can attend the presentations.
- Create a schedule that allows sufficient time to complete your work and prepare for the presentation. Schedule in time for practice and, if needed, external review.
- Consider if any stakeholders need additional information before or after a presentation. For example, a pre-meeting with facilities staff for a design/build can help clarify questions that would otherwise be raised during a review, when you hope to focus on other issues.

### PRESENTATION VENUES

Booking the right room for your presentation can take time. Identify your needs and schedule a room as soon as possible. Consider parking for your guests, as well as acoustics, pin-up space, and set-up time.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

*When working with partners, the audience may be different than a typical review or critique. Understand their needs and expectations beforehand.*

- Investigate the expectations, background, and experience of all participants prior to your presentation. Why are they attending? What do they already know about your project? Why do they care? What might they be concerned about?
- Understand who will be making decisions and which opinions matter. Consider what information decision-makers will need from your presentation, and their timeline for making decisions.
- Consider the words you use in your presentation, and if they will connect with your audience. What jargon might you use? What language would the audience use? Are there things you need to define upfront?
- If you will have an audience from multiple places (for example, partners and faculty) at your presentation, how will you ensure they are both able to understand and respond to what you are presenting? What might be different about their expectations?
- What guidelines should you give to your audience on feedback? What do you want to learn from them?

## CONSIDER YOUR FORMAT

*There are many ways to present. Choose an option that makes sense for your audience and purpose.*

*Some possible formats include:*

- Pin-up: presentation accompanied by visuals on the walls.
- Powerpoint/Slides: linear presentation of words and images with an explanation.
- Walk-through: presentation of concepts using a model or a set of prototypes.
- Report: comprehensive document that communicates findings.
- Work Session: collaborative interaction with participants responding to and engaging with work.

*Once you've selected a format, consider the following:*

- What kind of space do you need to implement this presentation?
- What should the agenda for the presentation be?
- What size, resolution, or fidelity do images, models, or words need to be for participants to view them?
- Will everyone be able to participate? Is that important?
- What tools, materials, or preparation do you need to implement this format?

## TELL A COMPELLING STORY

*Once you know who you're talking to, then you need to tell the story of your work.*

- Know the purpose of this presentation. What do you hope to learn from your audience? What questions do you have? Frame your story so the audience has the information to respond to these questions.
- Outline your presentation. What are the key points you need to hit? You may want to consider creating a storyboard of the presentation so you can identify what visuals, data, or information would help make your case.
- Sometimes it can be helpful to flip-flop the order of your presentation from what might be expected. Start with your proposal, and follow-up with how you got there, or tell the story of your user before you reveal your design.
- Utilize your visuals to support your story. Consider if the figures represented in your images look like the people at the site. Think about the tone in your aesthetics and how you might support your story.
- You don't need to include everything you created or considered in a presentation. Tell only the parts that support your story or main point, but be prepared to answer questions about things you didn't cover.

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## PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

*Once you have your presentation ready to go, make sure you spend time practicing and refining what you have to say.*

- Recruit your friends, classmates, and faculty to listen to you practice.
- Make eye contact with the audience. Look around and identify the people who are paying the least attention. Focus your energy on them. Try to always face the audience, even when you want to point to something on the wall.
- Be mindful of body language. Find confident poses, and be aware of how you are moving around the space.
- It's OK if you mess up! As the presenter, you are in control of the presentation. Feel free to take time to collect yourself if you lose your place.
- Decide if you will use notes or not. Monotone reading may not be interesting, but there are times when reading can allow you to be more impactful with your intonation or gestures.
- Know your topic! The best way to be able to speak clearly in a presentation is to know what you're talking about. Review your details, and maybe even have a cheat sheet for additional information.

## HAVE A STAGE PRESENCE

*Giving a presentation is being up on stage, and you want to think about lights, sets, and costumes.*

- Dress for the audience **and** for your own comfort. Determine how formal you should be, and dress consistently with others who are presenting with you.
- Project your voice. The worst presentation is one that no one can hear. Sometimes it can help to check with the people in the back before you start. Consider using vocal warm-ups.
- Notice how the space is lit, and make sure that you are standing in the light. The audience will listen more closely if they can see you.
- Think about the objects that may interfere with your presentation. Podiums can be helpful to hold computers, but can block the audience's view. Move extra chairs out of the way, and avoid getting caught in the light of a projector.
- Minimize outside distractions for the audience. Redirect traffic, close doors, turn off phones, turn off fans, and help them focus on your presentation.
- Pay attention during others' presentations. Stay off your phone, stay awake, and watch the reactions of the audience.

## DOCUMENT, REFLECT, AND FOLLOW UP

*Presenting your work should give you valuable information about how to move forward — either with this project, or with future work you take on.*

- Determine how you will keep track of questions and comments. Ask a classmate to take notes, or ask the audience if they are comfortable with you audio recording.
- As a group, determine how you will follow-up with your audience. What information will you provide to them after the fact? What deliverables should they have access to?
- Ask for feedback on your presentation from faculty and peers. How could you improve your delivery? This input can help in future projects.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Consider these additional resources for storytelling and presentations.*

[Pixar Storytelling Rules](#)

[Making Your Presentation Stick](#) by Chip Heath & Dan Heath

## PRESENTATION VENUES

*Consider these options for presentation venues.*

[Event Management - Find a Space](#)

[T-REX](#), 911 Washington Ave, St. Louis

[CIC-St. Louis](#), 4240 Duncan, St. Louis

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