



# How to Outline Your Business Presentation

By Dr. Linda Hancock

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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The King in Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" had good advice that all of us should follow. He stated "Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

This formula will work for any project that you are planning but particularly so for a business presentation. The key is to know what to begin with, what to include until you come to the end and when to stop. Following is an outline that will work well for any presentation.

1. Introduce yourself - Do not assume that anyone in the room will know you or your background. Be humble but, at the same time, make sure that you outline your credentials so that the people will know that you are qualified to speak on this topic.
2. Do some "housekeeping" - Provide information that will help the audience such as the break times, length of presentation, and location of the bathrooms. You might also have handouts which can be distributed at this point.
3. Find out who is in your audience - If there is a small group, you might choose to each person do a brief introduction that includes their name, occupation or department, and why they wanted to attend the presentation.
4. Describe the topic and why a presentation is being given about it - You can be brief as most people already know these facts but it is a good idea to remind them, from your perspective, as to why this is important.
5. Lay out the parameters - Name what will be covered and remember to identify the things that will not be covered during the presentation.
6. Define key terms - When you are speaking to a group, you need to begin by having them all start at the same level. This is done by eliminating assumptions and making sure that there is understanding of the basics.
7. Go into your teaching points - Every presentation is a learning opportunity for those who are attending. Make sure that you have created three to seven good, strong sub-headings that will help you to present the concepts and those in the audience to understand. By putting things together in groups, you will be most successful and the participants will be able to follow you easily. Divide the time that you have for all the concepts into equal parts and make sure that you stick to the timeframe.
8. Summarize - Once you have completed teaching the concepts within the presentation, you will need to briefly (in one or two sentences) review each. At this point, you might also want to review the strengths and weaknesses of each.
9. Provide resources for further study - Give websites, dates for further presentations or any other information that will assist the crowd with further learning.
10. Accept and answer questions - You may choose to either take questions during the presentation or at the end. Either is acceptable, as long as you have outlined your preference in the "Housekeeping" section. It is best to also tell how long you will be answering questions before you take the first one.

Preparing for presentations can be a demanding task but if you follow the ten steps outlined above, you will soon find that it will become easier and easier to do. And your audiences will be comfortable, knowing that you have mastered the process!

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