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Ira J. Morrow
Pace University

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by

Ira J. Morrow, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Management
Lubin School of Business
 Pace University

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Ira J. Morrow, Department of Management, The Lubin School of Business, Pace University, New York

ABSTRACT

This paper presents and discusses the use of two instruments which have been developed to provide students with structured and constructive quantitative feedback regarding their performance in class presentations that are frequently required in business school courses. The content of the instruments is described in detail, and suggestions for using and adapting the instruments to maximize student learning are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Requiring students to prepare and deliver presentations to their classmates has become a common feature in many business school courses. This requirement is based on the assumption that students need as much practice as possible in this important, and frequently stressful activity, that employers expect some degree of expertise in this area, and that one's upward career movement can be facilitated by demonstrated skill in this area or hampered by the lack of such facility. Typically, students receive a grade from their instructor on their performance in this task, as well as some additional feedback. In some cases, audience members may be asked to provide their feedback as well. Unfortunately the impact and value of such feedback, either from instructors or from classmates, may be attenuated by lack of familiarity with how to provide informative and constructive feedback to presenters. Instructions to classmates in the audience to provide anonymous feedback to a presenter often results in vague and general comments of

minimal use to the recipient such as "It was interesting", "I enjoyed it", "Good work", "Nice effort", "Keep up the good work", or "Your slides looked great". This paper describes and discusses two instruments that have been developed and used successfully in management classes to facilitate and improve the feedback process and student learning associated with in-class presentations. These instruments offer a structured and uniform framework that all parties, the audience, the instructor, and the presenters themselves can use for providing detailed, specific, informative, constructive, developmental, and quantitative feedback to presenters.

INSTRUMENT 1: RATING FORM FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS

The first instrument, the Rating Form for Team Presentations (see Appendix A for the full instrument) consists of a set of criteria used for the evaluation of students' performance in team presentations. Such criteria can of course be adapted by each professor to better suit their own instructional needs. The instrument offered here consists of fifteen such criteria including: mastery of topic, apparent effort, preparation/rehearsal, relevance/interest, organization of material, coordination between sections and members, time management, teamwork, audience involvement/participation, audience rapport, inviting/fielding questions, clarity/communication skills, outline quality, visuals quality, and impact/persuasiveness. Two of these items (coordination between sections and members, and teamwork) pertain specifically to team presentations, and the rest of the items are applicable both to team oriented or to individual

presentations. For individual presentations therefore, the same instrument can be used

with the elimination of these two items. Each item is then followed by a traditional five-

point Likert style rating scale ranging from 1=Far below standards, to 3=Neutral or

undecided, to 5=Far above standards. Additional space is provided at the end of the

instrument for open-ended comments.

To maximize the effectiveness of this instrument, faculty should consider the

following recommendations. In order to allow students to prepare to their utmost, it is

recommended that the instrument should be distributed to them and discussed several

weeks prior to the presentation, perhaps as early as the first session of the course when

course requirements and expectations are being discussed with the class. This will

provide students with a clear and precise sense of the criteria that will be used by the

faculty member and by their peers to evaluate their performance, and will enable students

to gear their efforts accordingly. When the instrument is being distributed, faculty should

lead an in depth discussion of the meaning of each criteria. This can include reference to

specific examples that illustrate relative degrees of effectiveness on the criteria, as well as

recommendations for how to improve performance on the criteria.

To illustrate how this discussion might proceed, we will focus here on several

criteria, beginning with the one that students generally have the most difficulty with,

namely audience involvement/participation. A discussion of this criteria could begin by

asking students how they can make presentations more involving for their audience.

Students may offer several ideas, but from this author's experience, the one that is cited

the most frequently is for presenters to make use of visual aids. This should lead to a

discussion of the use of misuse of visual aids in presentations, and may lead to the point

that although visual aids such as Powerpoint are useful, by themselves they do not necessarily enhance student involvement or participation. Frequently, presenters must take other steps if they wish to enhance audience involvement/ participation. The next most frequently cited way to enhance audience involvement/participation is for presenters to ask their audience questions. This can lead to a discussion of different ways that presenters can ask questions in order to enhance audience involvement, including asking rhetorical questions to get audience members more engaged with the material, asking for a show of hands in response to questions, asking questions of selective members of the audience, or putting questions in writing in the form of a survey to be administered to the class several sessions prior to the presentation followed by feedback and discussion of the results with the class. Examples of each of these techniques can be provided. Other recommendations for enhancing audience involvement that could be discussed and illustrated include having presenters role play certain scenarios relevant to the topic and combining this with asking the audience questions at certain points about what is being acted out, or dividing the audience into groups for the purpose of discussing a short case or engaging in an exercise related to the topic, and then soliciting input from the groups that have been formed.

The criteria of coordination between sections and members generally warrants further elaboration as well. Faculty could indicate here that although team-members may decide to do some of their work alone, the final presentation should be coordinated into an overall coherent package. Hence, the subtopics should be related to each other, visuals should have a certain uniform look rather than appearing as if they were made by three or four different people, team-members should appear to be familiar with each

others' material, the first speaker should introduce the entire team, and each speaker should smoothly "pass the baton" to the next speaker in a seamless manner. Regarding the criteria of time management, students can be reminded that they are being granted a precious resource namely class-time, and that they are expected to make full and effective use of this gift. It is this author's practice to set a firm time limit for presentations, and to inform student in advance that their presentations will be timed by an electronic device that will buzz when the established time limit is reached. (Having an electronic timer perform this function enables the faculty member to concentrate on the presentation rather than on a clock, and to avoid the distasteful task of having to interrupt students in the middle of a sentence. Students are told that when the device sounds, they can finish their sentence if they are still speaking, but then must end the presentation and open the floor to questions.) The rationale for establishing a firm time-limit is to keep all students playing on a level-field by the same rules, and to avoid students trying to impress the instructor or the class by going on much longer than the time-limit, which can lead to things getting out of hand. Students are told that they should rehearse together in order to make sure that their presentations will not go over the limit. On the other hand, presentations should not be too short either, suggesting a lack of effort and depth on the team's part, and a failure to make use of the class-time gift that has been provided to them. Moreover, teams are told that each member of the team must present, not just the most fluent, articulate, or polished communicators, and that the amount of time they are each presenting should be roughly equal. Hence, they have some difficult balancing acts to attend to when it comes to managing their time. Similar discussions about each criteria can ensue as the instructor sees fit, so that this instrument can actually form the basis for

a class learning module on making effective presentations, in addition to serving as an evaluation, feedback, and personal development tool.

Since the five-point Likert scale provided in the instrument refers to "standards" (as in far below, somewhat below, somewhat above, or far above standards), a class discussion of what is meant by standards is in order. This author tells students that they may each approach this rating scale from their own perspective as to what is meant by standards, and that they should use whatever experience they have had delivering and listening to other presentations to provide the frame of reference for handling this task. The faculty member can point out that the problem of using different frames of reference in responding to a rating scale of this sort is certainly not unique to this instrument, but commonly occurs in other surveys including course evaluation instruments. Furthermore, if some audience members approach the rating task with an overly stringent frame of reference and others with a more liberal one, these are likely to balance out for the audience as a whole. Finally, if several different presentations will be heard during the same class session, audience members can be advised to provide an initial set of ratings after each presentation, and that these can be modified by them after they have the benefit of having heard more than one presentation allowing for an enriched frame of reference for approaching this rating task.

Aside from having audience members complete the instrument, and the faculty member make use of the same instrument, the instructor can ask the presenters to make use of the same instrument at the conclusion of their presentation, and to keep the set of self-ratings separate from the audience ratings that will be provided to them. The instructor can point out that this will enable the team to make fruitful comparisons

between how they have been evaluated by the audience and how they evaluated themselves. This instructor points out that he will not ask to see the raw scores provided by the audience on this instrument, but rather that some overall summary information will be provided by the team to the instructor by the next session. The summary information that is requested from each team derives from the second instrument which is described and discussed in the next section of this paper.

INSTRUMENT 2: RATING FORM WORKSHEET FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS

The second instrument described here, the Rating Form Worksheet for Team Presentations (see Appendix B for the full instrument) is to be completed by the team of presenters upon completion of the presentation for submission to the instructor at the next class. The raw scores needed to complete this instrument are provided by the set of ratings submitted to the team of presenters by the audience on the Rating Form for Team Presentations instrument described above. The criteria included on this second instrument exactly match the criteria on the first instrument (with again the possibility of eliminating two criteria – coordination and teamwork- for use by individual presenters rather than by teams). For each criteria, the team, working together, are asked to calculate mean scores and score ranges from the ratings provided by the audience. To help them focus on their developmental needs and their greatest strengths, they are asked to list those criteria scoring means 2.99 and below, and those scoring means of 4.0 and above respectively. Next, to help them focus on those criteria about which there was the least and greatest consensus from the audience, team members are asked to indicate the criteria with the biggest and smallest range of scores respectively. Team members are

then asked to calculate the sum of mean scores and the mean of mean scores, either of which can be thought of as a summary quantitative indicator of their team's overall performance on the presentation as perceived by their audience. All of the above calculations are then performed again in a parallel column using the team's own self-evaluation scores. (If the presentation was delivered by an individual rather than by a team, these second calculations would just consist of the person's self ratings on the instrument described above.) Team members are then asked to list those criteria that they over-rated (when compared to the audience's ratings) by 0.5 points or more, or under-rated by 0.5 points or more, and to comment on the degree of correspondence between the audience's ratings and the team's self-ratings. They are also asked for their self-assessment of their overall team functioning and of their presentation's quality using the same five-point rating scale described above and to indicate their rationale for these scores. (This item can be revised for individual presentations.) They are then asked to reflect on what the team did well this semester, and how the team could have functioned more effectively this semester. (These items too can be revised to suit individual presenters.) Finally, if presentations are video-taped to provide presenters with visual feedback (as is the case in the author's classes), respondents are asked what they noticed about their performance from viewing the videotape.

There are several advantages associated with using this instrument. First, it requires the team to continue working together even after completion of the presentation in order to discuss their performance as presenters. Moreover, in order to complete this requirement, presenters need to actually take the time and invest the effort needed to study, perform calculations on , and reflect upon the feedback they have received.

Students have the opportunity to carefully consider concrete, detailed, and specific feedback from their audience about their performance as presenters, to consider how they themselves felt about the presentation and their performance as a team, and to reflect further upon how their self-assessment compares to the ratings received from their audience and their instructor who are using the same evaluation instruments. The feedback can provide the basis for improving either the team's or individual's presentation skills, and enriches the learning and skill-building value of the presentation experience. Moreover, students have an opportunity to develop a more realistic self-image by thinking about and trying to account for differences or similarities in the way they perceived their own performance versus how their performance was perceived by others. The process of working together on this instrument, and discussing intra-team score similarities and differences, as well as self versus audience versus instructor ratings can further strengthen the team, build cohesiveness, and serve as a vehicle for sharing concerns and suggestions for improving skills. These outcomes can provide additional benefits particularly to teams that will continue working together on other projects in the class.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented two instruments that when used in conjunction with one another, and when discussed in class can increase the value and learning associated with delivering presentations. The instruments provide a uniform set of criteria and a common frame of reference that all parties - presenters, audience, and faculty - can use to provide or receive systematic, quantitative feedback about a qualitative phenomenon, namely the

quality of one's presentation skills. Such feedback is likely to provide a more informed

basis for improving these skills in the future.

APPENDIX A: RATING FORM FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS

Team Number:

Topic:

Date:

Name of rater (optional):

Instructions: Please circle the appropriate number on the rating scale provided for each of the criteria listed below.

CRITERIA	Far Below Standards	Somewhat Below Standards	Neutral or Undecided	Somewhat Above Standards	Far Above Standards
A. Mastery of topic	1	2	3	4	5
B. Apparent effort	1	2	3	4	5
C. Preparation/rehearsal	1	2	3	4	5
D. Relevance/interest	1	2	3	4	5
E. Organization of material	1	2	3	4	5
F. Coordination between sections and members	1	2	3	4	5
G. Time management	1	2	3	4	5
H. Teamwork	1	2	3	4	5
I. Audience involvement	1	2	3	4	5

| J. Audience rapport | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | | | | |

| K. Inviting/fielding questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | | | | |

| L. Clarity/communication skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | | | | |

| M. Outline quality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | | | | |

| N. Visuals quality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | | | | |

| O. Impact/persuasiveness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | | | | |

How can the presentation have been improved?

Additional comments:

APPENDIX B: RATING TEAM WORKSHEET FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS

Team number:

Team members:

Presentation topic:

Presentation date:

Instructions: Using the information from the rating forms collected from the class and of your team's self ratings (kept separate from the audience's ratings), please perform the requested calculations and respond to the questions indicated below. Your team should work together to complete this instrument to be submitted to the instructor at the next class.

CRITERIA	Audience's Mean	Audience's Score	Team's Self	Team's Self

	Score	Range	Mean Score	Score
Range				

A. Mastery

B. Effort

C. Preparation/rehearsal

D. Relevance/interest

E. Organization

F. Coordination

G. Time management

H. Teamwork

I. Audience involvement

J. Audience rapport

K. Inviting/fielding questions

L. Clarity/communication skills

M. Outline

N. Visuals

O. Impact/persuasiveness

Criteria scoring means of 2.99 and below:

Criteria scoring means of 4.00 and above

Criteria with biggest range of scores:

RATING FORM WORKSHEET FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS (continued)

Criteria with smallest range of scores:

Sum of mean scores:

Mean of mean scores:

Criteria over-rated by the team by 0.5 points or more (compared to audience ratings):

Criteria under-rated by the team by 0.5 points or more (compared to audience ratings):

The team's comments on the degree of agreement between the audience's ratings and the team's self ratings:

The team's self-assessment of the quality of the presentation (on 1-5 scale used in rating form):

Rationale for this rating:

The team's self-assessment of its overall effectiveness as a team (on 1-5 scale used in rating form):

Rationale for above:

What did your team do well in regard to this project?

How could your team have functioned more effectively on this project?

What did your team notice about its performance from viewing the videotape?

Any additional comments:

INSTRUMENTATION FOR THE EVALUATION OF BUSINESS STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Ira J. Morrow, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Management
The Lubin School of Business
Pace University
New York, NY 10038

Tel: 212-346-1846
Fax: 212-346-4528
e-mail: imorrow@pace.edu