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Conference Presentations: Tips on Organizing with Confidence

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Peer Reviewed Conference Presentations: Where to Begin?

Your research has been submitted and accepted for a conference presentation-Congratulations! Your next step is to prepare your presentation. Are you presenting a paper or a [poster](#)? Is the presentation format a roundtable talk or individual presentation? You have more than likely been asked to submit an abstract of your research. This is usually approximately 200-350 words and will be used as the "advertisement" of your presentation on the conference materials (Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005).

Depending on the kind of presentation your research has been accepted for, you will have particular parameters that the conference board will ask you to follow. More often than not, you will be required to produce an accompanying file to your presentation like a PowerPoint or Slideshare. Even if there is not a slide show requirement, it would be a good idea to have a visual aide to present your research, and PowerPoints are really effective ways to break down your research into more digestible bits of information-slide by slide.

Some tips as you develop your PowerPoint:
1. Create a title page with all relevant information, including the institution you are affiliated with.
2. You should have a table of contents, so the audience knows what to expect.
3. Your slides should reflect the standard breakdown of an academic paper including, but not limited to (Rowley, 2012):
   a. An overview of the significance of the research;
   b. An overview of the present literature on the topic;
   c. Present study (yours);
   d. Conceptual/Theoretical framework;
   e. Research site/ participant demographics;
   f. Your research questions guiding your inquiry;
   g. Breakdown of the methodology;
   h. Results (if applicable).

It is important to note that your research can be presented even if it is "in medias res," meaning in the middle of things. If you do not have data collected or analyzed yet, your study is still valuable as part of the discourse around the topic and discipline. You are

essentially presenting your rationale for the study and why it is important to fill in the gaps of the current literature.

Organizing the material

A good rule to follow is that presentations should take about 10-15 minutes. That comes to approximately 1-2 minutes per slide, depending on your speaking style. You should practice your presentation to understand pacing and cadence. You should not use your slides to teach, but rather to highlight important points.

Slides should be simple (Rowley, 2012; Jamjoom, 2020):
1. Do not clutter the slide.
2. Use the "6 x 6" rule: No more than 6 lines of text per slide. No more than 6 words per line.
3. Include main points on each slide, save the details and citations for the discussion/ questions portion at the end of the presentation.
4. Do not use abbreviations unless you are delineating those abbreviations at the beginning of the presentation.
5. Use "standard" academic fonts like Arial or Times New Roman.
6. Do not use ALL CAPS.
7. Avoid sounds or distracting graphics. If you are using graphics, they should be tied to your research and original to your study.
8. If you are embedding a video, be sure that it is embedded correctly and will work during your presentation.
9. If you are using graphs and/or tables, be sure that they are clear enough without a lengthy description.

Things to consider as you organize:

Your conference presentation will be scheduled in a particular time slot, which you will get prior to the conference convocation. You should rehearse your presentation within the confines of the timeslot to make sure that you have enough time to present all of your findings to the audience. Obviously, if you find that your presentation runs over the time limit, you will have to cut back on slides and the amount of information you are presenting (Jamjoom, 2020).

It is very probable that there will be a "Question and Answer" period at the end of your presentation. Often, conference organizers leave between 5 and 20 minutes for the audience to ask questions. It might be a good idea to brainstorm the kinds of questions

you might be asked. Questions on methodology and framework are usually posed by the moderator or an audience member. Having a water-tight understanding of methods and framework would be beneficial as a presenter. Additionally, if you are presenting with one or more partners, division of labor should be discussed prior to the presentation, meaning who is presenting which slides, and so on.

Final thoughts

You have this! This presentation is YOUR research. So, stand in your professionalism. Stand in your confidence. You are contributing to the discourse. You do not always need to have the right answer, you just have to be open enough to admit that you are still learning. If you need some support, this blog is a really fantastic resource filled with humor and helpful tips. Good Luck!

References

Jamjoom, L. A. (2020). A spectacle of otherness: An autoethnography of a conference presentation. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *16*(1), 261-277.

Rowley, J. (2012). Six steps to successful academic conference presentation. *The Marketing Review*, *12*(4), 435-448.

Rowley-Jolivet, E., & Carter-Thomas, S. (2005). The rhetoric of conference presentation introductions: Context, argument and interaction. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *15*(1), 45-70.