

Tips for Better CLE Presentations

1. Begin your presentation with a relevant story, case study, difficult question, cartoon, quote, short scripted role-play, or having the learners recall a past experience that pulls your learners in both cognitively and affectively. Recent studies show that our brains are hardwired for narrative storytelling and learning begins with this emotion-laden, “here and now” type experience.

2. Build time into your presentation for learners to engage in reflection. Be comfortable with a few moments of silence for your learners to reflect upon their experience. Create opportunities for learners to share their reflections with others by formulating questions in dyads or sharing perceptions in small groups.

3. Take a break from the slide show. Incorporate activities and techniques that involve the learners in your presentation. We retain only 10-20% of what we hear during a lecture or talk. But if the learning is experiential, giving us opportunities to apply the new knowledge or skills in an active way, we retain up to 80% of the material. Lasting learning means knowledge creation through active participation, not knowledge consumption through passive observation.

4. Create a conducive learning community by connecting with your learners, by having your learners connect with each other through small group discussion and interactive exercises, and by showing respect at all times for your learners and your subject matter. Research and our own experience demonstrates that an environment that fosters learning is relaxed but stimulating, collaborative rather than competitive, and is free from excessive stress, fear, humiliation, and ridicule. Consider the use of nametags, table tents, room setup, etc., to create this environment.

5. Provide handouts that are useful, practical guides for the new information in the presentation, such as checklists, flowcharts, top ten lists, “attorney’s toolbox,” etc. Do not photocopy cases or websites (we can download and print those ourselves if we are interested), but do provide citations, website addresses, resource lists, etc. Don’t confuse PowerPoint slides with a handout. Think **FORC**: forms, outlines (annotated), resources, and charts.

6. End every session with an application exercise that involves the learners.

- Role play (unscripted this time)
- Individual or group projects
- Video-taping of practice session
- Hypothetical or "What if" situations
- Devising plans of action
- Problem-solving activities
- Debates by the learners

7. Use the evaluation as part of the learning process itself. Ask questions that require the learner to reflect upon and apply the material. Examples include: What is the most important thing you learned at this session? What will you do differently as a result of this session?

8. Divide your agenda into 30 minutes modules. Write an objective (see below) for each module. Limit mini-lectures to 20 minutes or less.

9. Use Learning Objectives. Learning objectives focus your attention on the learners. They are targeted learning outcomes: What will the learners be able to do after the learning event? What do you expect from your learners in terms of change of attitude, knowledge, and skills?

Using Faculty Wisely:

Consider the following in choosing someone to ...

- 1. give a lecture:** subject matter expert, understands the interests and skill level of the learners, good presentation skills, comfortably engages the audience in dialogue.
- 2. moderate a panel discussion :** sufficiently knowledgeable to ask good questions, tactful but not shy about interrupting to clarify or move discussion; listens well enough to draw contracts and comparisons and connections among panel perspectives.
- 3. facilitate discussion among learners:** very good listener, knowledgeable but won't impose "right" answer, skilled at asking questions that make people think.
- 4. teach a skill:** models the skill well, breaks skill into component parts and teaches sub-skills, good coaching skills, gives constructive feedback.

Technical Tips:

- 1. Take control of your technology and space.** Take the time to set-up an arrangement that is comfortable for participants and allows you to move around effectively and comfortably. Make sure your participants have clear sight lines to you and the screens and the seating is arranged in a way conducive to learning and participation.
- 2. Keep you and your message center stage.** Remember that you are the most important audio-visual aid you have. Do not allow your technology to interfere with the clarity of the information you are presenting and never let your PowerPoint over-power the point. Avoid cutesy bells and whistles, flying slides, and other distracting transitions. Do use, when appropriate, highlighting to draw the eyes to the most relevant text, colorful graphs and charts, visual representations of abstract ideas, photos, artwork, video clips, etc.--the things that PowerPoint can do powerfully.
- 3. When using audiovisuals,** be sure the material is readable from the back of the room. Use upper and lower case letters for text--research shows that this combination is easier to read. Avoid hard-to-read color combinations (red against blue or green), full sentences, and too much text per slide.
- 4. Never read your paper or PowerPoint slides.** Be confident enough in your material to present it in a conversational way.
- 5. Use a final slide.** Always have a final slide to mark the end of your slide presentation.
- 6. Practice your presentation.** Be sure you have enough time for each activity, especially your application exercises. Also practice advancing the slides, blanking the screen, etc.
- 7. Have a copy of your slides with you.** Present from a numbered copy of your slides so you always know what comes next.
- 8. Know Plan B.** Always have a back up plan. Technology, although a wonderful tool, can fail. Always have a plan B (and C) to fall back on and be ready to punt.

9. Online teaching: Determine that your learning objectives (how you want the learners to change in terms of knowledge, attitude, behavior), are appropriate for online teaching.

Web-based instruction is appropriate for:

- Memorizing terms and concepts
- Applying rules
- Analyzing or synthesizing data
- Evaluating information
- Solving a problem

Web-based instruction is problematic for:

- Changing attitudes
- Reflection on values
- Exploring alternative perspectives

Web-based instruction is not appropriate for:

- Practicing a skill
- Engaging in physical activity

Caveats When Using PowerPoint:

PowerPoint's popularity is beginning to wane because of the cautions listed below. Consider these before you decide to use this tool in your presentation.

1. It's inflexible. When using PowerPoint, the pace and order is set for you. This can minimize the spontaneity that can happen in a less prescribed format.

2. It's risky. Technical difficulties can arise that can either delay the time you start your presentation or interrupt the presentation itself, which make you nervous!

3. It can be a substitute for teaching. Some presenters hide behind their technology and rather than learning the material and developing teaching skills, they create bullet points and read them to the audience.

4. It's tempting to overdo it. There is almost no limit to the number of slides you can place in your slide show, which makes it tempting to include too much information. Audience members cannot become experts in one day, so it is best to edit your presentation and your slides carefully to include only the most salient points. If you try to "cover" too much, you may just do that: "cover" also means to obscure.

5. It can be boring. Don't allow the fact that you are using PowerPoint to signal to the audience that it is their time to sit back and relax. Involve participants so they are not bored and plan time within the presentation schedule for them to be active participants.

6. Don't confuse your slides with your handout. There are four parts to a presentation: what you're going say, what the learners will be doing, your handout, and your slides. Outline your presentation off-line, prepare your handouts, and then think about your slides.

References

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