



PD Week 2019

Speaker Guide

November 18–22

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Your handbook for engaging and memorable presentations

Speaking at a conference is both an honour and a responsibility to your audience.

This guide will help you have the best possible experience by sharing expert advice from several sources, including world-famous TED Talks.

Think of it as a collection of helpful advice; there's no rigid structure you need to stick to and we know there are many ways of delivering an engaging presentation. Most importantly, we want to encourage you to be creative and deliver your message in the most impactful way possible.

If you have any questions about your session, or ideas about how you could promote it in advance, do not hesitate to get in contact with your FMI Contact.

We would like to wish you the best of luck with your FMI session and hope you enjoy your experience with us.

Thanks,
The FMI National Team

In this guide:

» Plan your narrative

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» Practice your delivery

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» Better panel sessions

» Formats for high levels of audience participation



» Raise your profile pre-event

» Craft the most impactful presentation

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» 11 tips before you go on stage

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**Plan your
narrative**

Understand your audience



If you would like background information on your audience and advice on how to pitch your presentation, consult your FMI Contact

Before you think about writing your presentation or firing up PowerPoint, start by considering your audience. What do you know about them? What challenges do they have and what would be helpful for them to learn?

It's often worth speaking to industry and public sector colleagues about your presentation too; ask them what they would find interesting and what challenges they would like help solving.

Write a punchy title and abstract

When you're drafting your title and abstract remember to think about the core message you want to deliver. Again, focus on the needs of your audience and show how attending your talk will help them. A good idea is to summarize the elevator pitch like a tweet, in no more than 280 characters.

Build your presentation as a journey of where you started and where you ended up. This provides a framework for your session and gets rid of any details that do not progress that narrative.

Many of the best sessions have a narrative structure that loosely follows a detective story. The speaker starts out by presenting a problem and then describes the search for a solution. Finally, there's an "aha" moment, where the solution is presented and the audience's perspective shifts in a meaningful way.

Like any good story, presentations should have chapters to help the audience (and the storyteller) keep focus. Make the direction of your presentation clear at the beginning, perhaps with a quick contents page/brief presentation outline. Then verbally or visually give your listeners signposts throughout so they know where in the story you are at.



**“90% of how well
the talk will go is
determined before
the speaker steps
on the platform.”**

— Somers White



Crafting your presentation

Find your story & put structure around it

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of narrative in a presentation. Humans don't learn by listening to strings of facts. We learn from stories and examples.

The structure can be simple, but it needs to be there to help you build your narrative. Once you do that, the structure will often be invisible to the audience, but will make all the difference.

Put the audience first

Even when we are "telling our story" we are really telling their story. If designed and told well, our story is really their story. Yes, the plot—the events and facts and the order in which they are arranged—may be unique to us, but the theme is universal. The message or the lesson must be accessible and useful for your particular audience. The advice may not be new and it may not sound exciting, but it's true: Know your audience.

Talk about what you know

One of the differences between great presentations and mediocre is the presenter's knowledge of their material. A great presenter not only knows what points they are making but knows why those things are important.

Have a clear theme

What is your key message? What is it you REALLY want people to remember? What action do you want them to take? Details are important. Data and evidence and logical flow are important. But we must not lose sight of what is really important and what is not. Often, talks take people down a path of great detail and loads of information, most of which is completely forgotten (if it was ever understood in the first place) after the talk is finished. The more details that you include and the more complex your talk, the more you must be very clear on what it is you want your audience to hear, understand, and remember. **If the audience only remembers one thing, what should it be?**

Share something new

There's nothing worse than hearing the same case studies you've heard before, so always challenge yourself to talk about something different, not the same talk you have presented before.

Be helpful

Try to solve a problem that the audience will probably have by demonstrating a strategy, method, or approach other individuals can use. The more practical, real-world examples that your audience can take away and action, the better.

One of the most helpful things you can share is failures and what you have learned from them, so don't be afraid to show some vulnerability.

Don't give a sales pitch; it absolutely turns the audience off. Delegates attend presentations for thought leadership and one of the most common complaints Conference Producers get is when speakers abuse their position to pitch a product or service.

Don't pack too much in

One of the biggest problems presenters have is trying to cover too much ground. This applies to the content of your talk and also to the visuals you use (if any). If you try to cram in everything you know, the point(s) you are trying to make risk becoming lost. What is included must be included for a good reason.

A woman with glasses is smiling and holding a white cup and a small cake. She is wearing a lanyard. The background is a blurred crowd of people. A teal overlay covers the right side of the image.

“The success of your presentation will be judged not by the knowledge you send out but by what the listener receives”

— Lilly Walters

Remember minds drift after 10 minutes

During the first 10 minutes of a presentation the audience's attention will be at its peak, so it is a good idea to make your main points early in the presentation. When putting the presentation together include something at every 10-minute mark that will re-grab their attention.

Grab the audience's attention early

Hook the audience early. Don't waste time at the beginning with formalities or filler talk. Start with a bang. Get their attention and then sustain that interest with variety and unexpectedness, built upon structure that is taking them some place. Audiences usually remember the beginning and the ending the most—don't waste those important opening minutes. Too many presenters—and writers for that matter—get bogged down in back stories or details about minor—or even irrelevant—points at the beginning and momentum dies as audience members begin scratching their heads in confusion or boredom.



**Don't know the Twitter hashtag we're using
for the event?**

Ask your FMI Contact

Make it tweetable

Modern audiences have their smartphones in their hand while they listen to you, so help them find quotes or stats to tweet by writing these stats on the screen. You can keep your twitter handle and the event's hashtag at the bottom of the screen to make it easy for them.

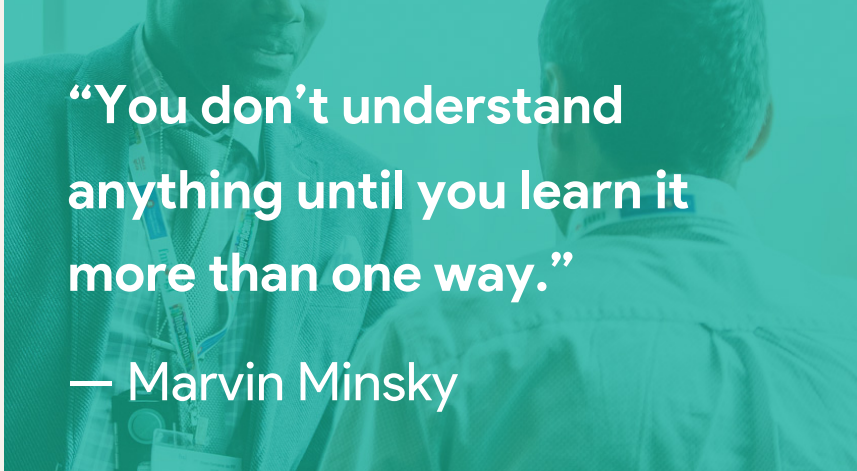
The more you can get your audience to participate in your session, the more likely they are to remember it. Here are some ideas to create more interactive styles of learning.

Crowd polling presentation

Bring the audience into your presentation with real-time polls. Pose a series of multiple-choice questions throughout your session and get the crowd's collective response instantly using realtime polling tools.

Practical exercises

Share the theory behind the practice in a university-style seminar. Integrate a lecture, practical exercises and group/table discussion for a well-rounded session. You might also bring hand-outs for the audience.



**“You don’t understand
anything until you learn it
more than one way.”**

— Marvin Minsky

Lightning talks

Be one of several speakers with five minutes each to expound your views on what’s hot, what’s not and what’s next in your chosen topic. Presentation content and format is entirely up to individual speakers.

Fire-starter brainstorm

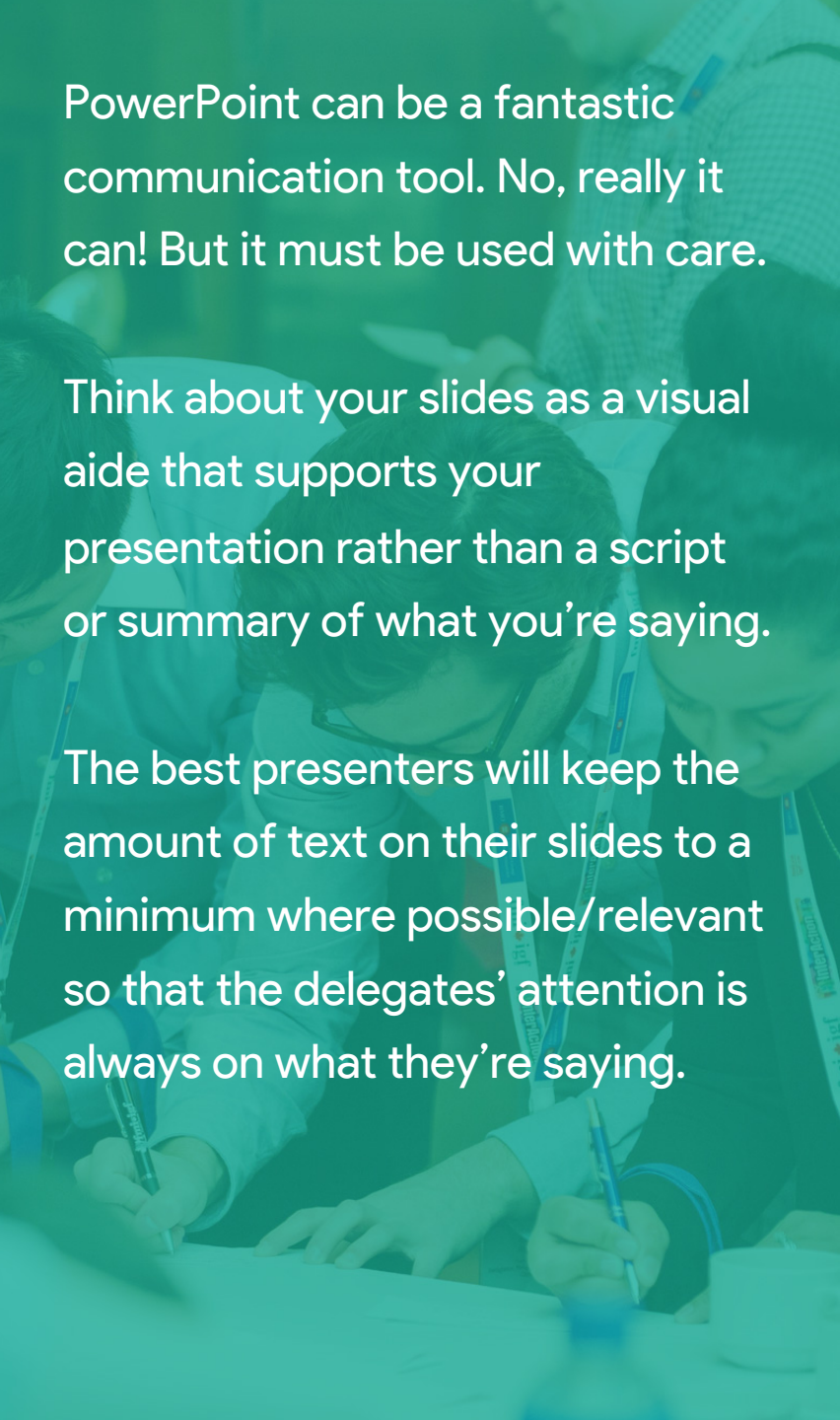
Give a short introduction to your thoughts on your topic and then encourage the audience to brainstorm ideas with you. A good way to get delegates to open up is by making them discuss each question on the agenda for a few minutes with others at their table. Make a note of everyone’s ideas on a board at the front of the room.

Team competition

After a brief intro, give delegates a task or problem-solving activity to work on in teams. Once their collaboration time is up, have each group pitch you their ideas and convince you they should win the competition. You judge the best team and present the winners with a prize.



What to put on your slides

A background image showing a group of people at a conference or meeting. They are wearing lanyards and looking at documents or devices. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

PowerPoint can be a fantastic communication tool. No, really it can! But it must be used with care.

Think about your slides as a visual aide that supports your presentation rather than a script or summary of what you're saying.

The best presenters will keep the amount of text on their slides to a minimum where possible/relevant so that the delegates' attention is always on what they're saying.

Don't use too many words

The number one error that almost everyone makes with presentation slides: **too many words**. Don't use them as a memory trigger for what you want to say — that's what speaker notes are for. We use the same parts of our brains to process spoken language and written language. So, if you show someone a slide containing more than a few words, they have to choose between reading your slides and listening to you speak.

We are physically incapable of doing both at the same time. If you must use words on your slides, use very few. No complete sentences.

One thing per slide

Whatever you have on the screen should serve to emphasize whatever you are saying at that moment in time. If it illustrates something else, it could confuse people rather than help them understand what you are saying.

“If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time — a tremendous whack.”

— Sir Winston Churchill

The importance of images

The brain processes visual information 60,000 times quicker than words. Well chosen, strong visuals can be the perfect accompaniment to the message you are trying to verbally convey. Find images to help explain, give context to your story or amplify points that you are making with your voice and your body language.

No matter what, your slides should serve to enhance your presentation, not to distract from it. Don't be terrified of text and bullet points.

The importance of images

Videos

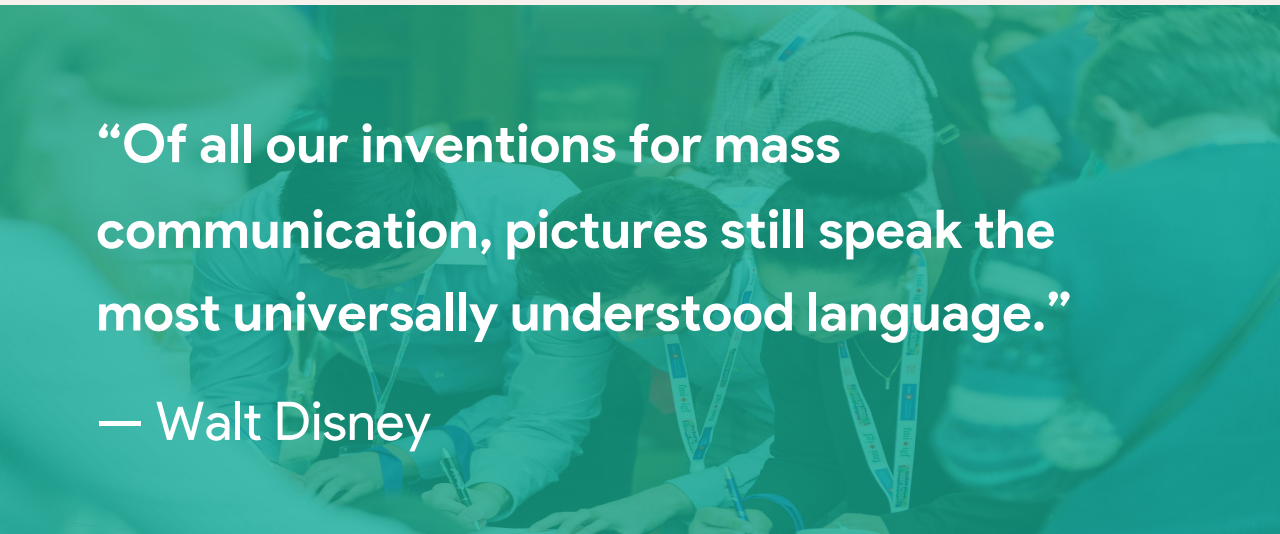
During the first 10 minutes of a presentation the audience's attention will be at its peak, so it is a good idea to make your main points early in the presentation. When putting the presentation together include something at every 10-minute mark that will re-grab their attention.

Important technical note

If you are planning to use video content within your presentation, we recommend you also provide the video file separately to the presentation. AV technicians can then re-embed this for you if there are issues when transporting the file.

Graphs and stats


If you're using statistics or graphs in your slides, ask yourself, what do they actually mean? What am I actually trying to tell the audience? Make sure anything you use supports your message, rather than confuse it. And if you're using graphs, make sure they're clear and easy to read.



“Of all our inventions for mass communication, pictures still speak the most universally understood language.”

— Walt Disney

Slide format



Remember to send your FMI Contact your presentation slides by the due date to ensure a smooth onsite experience!

PowerPoint's 16:9 aspect ratio is what most AV technicians recommend. If you send a PowerPoint presentation with 4:3 aspect ratio it will still work, however the presentation might not fit the whole screen and could result in black bars at either side of your presentation.

Prezi is a great alternative to PowerPoint. It can let you be more creative and has lots of free templates which can make your slides really stand out. If you haven't used Prezi before and would like advice on using it, contact your FMI Contact.

Fonts

It might sound obvious but use clear fonts and colours for the most effective slides. (Anything below 20pt is probably too small.)

Bookend your presentation

Your first and last slides could be onscreen for up to 5 minutes each, before and after you're onstage, so use that to your advantage.

Create an eye-catching cover slide and title to attract the delegates attention. The first slide should intrigue the audience, and your final slide should end with a call to action. Put your contact details and social media links on both so that the audience can easily follow up with you afterwards.



**Practice out loud,
at least once**

Make sure you build in time to rehearse the presentation several times either to yourself or in front of family or friends. It's a great way to practice your stories and figure out your pace. Then when you present for real, your brain doesn't have to figure it out from scratch.

Don't feel like you have to talk constantly — allow the story, and the slides, time to breathe.

Be conscious of your 'errs' and 'umms'; it's surprising how many repeat these noises without realising, but you can be sure your listeners will be distracted if you do it much.

Tone and projection

Work on your tone of voice and make sure you aren't monotone. Think of your speech like a piece of jazz music — use plenty of inflection and add pauses for dramatic effect.

A little trick for hearing how you sound to other people: cup one ear with one hand and use other to create tunnel to your mouth. Then when you talk you'll hear your own voice just as it sounds to everyone else.

You should also project your voice loudly and clearly. Even though you'll have a microphone, speak louder than you normally would — imagine you're throwing your voice to the back of the audience, not the front, and you'll sound more confident. Again, practising in front of someone else will be the best way to get this right.

Prompts and memory - the best presentations have been memorized, but if you don't have time to learn a talk thoroughly, go with bullet points on note cards. Practise so that you don't have to read from your notes. Instead have a series of prompts — the first line for each slide, say — so that you stay on track, but natural in delivery.

Speakers' minds often go completely blank just before they go on stage or when they make first eye contact with the audience. Overcome this by preparing a few prompts to get you going. Have your first 90 seconds memorized or absolutely nailed, and you should soon find your rhythm.

Practice out loud, at least once

Timing

There will be a room host, in your room, who will let you know when you're coming to the end of your allocated slot. If you are running out of time, and know you're not going to be able to cover everything, stop. Jump past a couple of slides if you need to make one last point.



“It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.”

— Mark Twain

Q & A

It's generally recommended that you leave around 5-10 minutes of time for questions from the audience — questions give you a chance to elaborate on something that wasn't clear, and help the audience feel like you are approachable and a peer.

You might not get any questions though, and it's good to have a back-up just in case. You might want to ask the audience a question, leave them with your final thought or give them something tangible to leave with.



**Raise your profile
pre-show**

Leading up to the event, we will be looking for opportunities to promote you across our website, email campaigns and social media; this is a prime opportunity to get people excited about hearing you speak.

To do this we require content that demonstrates your expertise. It shouldn't give too much of your presentation away but should act as a teaser to make the people who could potentially attend think 'This sounds good. I'm going to make sure I'm there'.

There are several different types of content you could produce, including:

Blog

Write 600-750 words related to the topic you will be discussing, an interesting opinion you hold or a case study you've worked on. Think about including images, a couple of slides from your presentation or graphs to illustrate.

Interview

Answer around 5-10 questions related to the content of your talk either via email, over the phone or on video.

Whitepaper

If you have any research papers related to the content of your session, send them to us and we will post it on our website.

Twitter Q & A

Use a live twitter 'event' as a way to build an audience in the weeks ahead of your session.

Raise your profile pre-event



Content promotion

Once your blog or interview has been published by FMI, we also encourage you to share it widely with your own networks, via: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, any association newsletters you are a part of, or any other channels you deem suitable. We can supply you with event banners for use on websites, emails and social media to help you with this.

The more pre-show 'buzz' we can create together, the more delegates we will be able to get in front of you when you come to give your presentation.



11 tips before you go on stage

Gina Barrett, a TED speaker coach shares 11 public speaking tips for right before you go on stage

Start drinking water 15 minutes before you start talking

If you tend to get a dry mouth start drinking water 15 minutes before you go onstage. Why? Because the microphone will pick up that sticky, clicky sound. “When you close your mouth, don’t let your tongue hit the roof of your mouth,” Barnett offers as a pro tip to avoid popping audio. “Imagine a half a plum on your tongue, which will keep a vacuum from forming.”

Psych yourself *up*, not *out*

Barnett warns that negative self-talk can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. So, don’t stand backstage thinking, “What if I mess up?” Think more like an athlete before a big game, she says. Psych yourself up with phrases like, “I’m so excited!” “It’ll be great!” “I can’t wait to share this idea!” Basically, whatever key phrase makes you feel happy. “Even just thinking the word ‘YES!’ over and over — feel how the thought enters your body and boosts your confidence,” she says.

Use your body’s nervous energy for good

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of narrative in a presentation. Humans don’t learn by listening to strings of facts. We learn from stories and examples.

The structure can be simple, but it needs to be there to help you build your narrative. Once you do that, the structure will often be invisible to the audience, but will make all the difference.

Focus on your breath when you feel the adrenaline

What should you do if you feel the panic of nerves? “Breeeeeethe,” says Barnett, extending the sound. “We’re often not aware of how shallow our breath becomes when we’re nervous or stressed.” The exercise Barnett recommends: “Take three or four conscious, evenly paced, smooth inhalations and exhalations. Let the belly go and let the breath go all the way down into your abdomen. This can center your energy and focus your thoughts.”

Beware of repetitive motion

On stage, people often deal with adrenaline by unconsciously swaying or shifting their weight from foot to foot. This is not good. “Repetitive movements are distracting and set up a lullaby pattern in the audience’s brain,” says Barnett. The best way to make sure you aren’t doing this? Rehearse in front of people, who can point it out to you. And rehearse out loud in front of a mirror to self-diagnose.

Think about how to use movement wisely

“You can walk,” says Barnett, “but not pace. You can step forward and or back, but not rock.” These are just as bad as swaying — they create that lull. Barnett has a great tip for how to make sure that you move in a way that adds to your talk rather than detracts from it. “Practice moving to make a new point,” she says. “Try coming closer to the audience when the content of your talk calls for it.”

One technique she likes for this — rehearse while standing on newspapers spread out on the floor. You’ll be able to hear your movement as the paper crunches so you can really move “with intention and purpose.”

Use your tone to strengthen your words

Merge your tone with the topic of your speech, says Barnett. Don't deliver great news in a monotone voice or serious news too excitedly, as disjunctions like that will distract the audience. Barnett recommends going through your script and tagging what each piece of news means. By doing that, you can focus on how your tone can strengthen the message, rather than undermine what you are trying to get across.

Give people a chance to adjust to your accent

Everyone has an accent — at least, when someone else is listening. Luckily, TED has a global audience and is very comfortable with hearing different varieties of speech. That said, speakers can make their accents more accessible to listeners all over the world. Barnett's advice: keep your opening sentences slow and over-enunciated, so the audience can adapt to the way you speak. "Our ears are trained to adjust to accents," says Barnett.

Focus on something outside of yourself

Barnett has a favourite exercise for someone who is just about to go onstage: she calls it "focusing out." She explains: "Pick anything — like the color green — and look all around you to see where you spot it in the room. Or pick an object to observe. Notice what shoes people are wearing, or who's wearing a watch. Or try paying attention to how light reflects off surfaces." Doing something like this will shift the focus from what's going on in your body and mind to something outside. It can definitely help you relax.

Remember that the audience likes you

As Barnett says, “The audience — as big, scary and remote as they may seem — is totally on your side. They want you to have a good time up there, they want to hear your ideas, even if they don’t agree with them, and they want you to succeed.” Enough said.

And finally...

No matter how well you prepare, be okay with the unexpected

You may forget a word; someone may drop something backstage; there might be a technical difficulty. Take a moment, breathe deeply and just roll with it. As one TED speaker laughed as her slides spiraled out of order in rehearsal: “It’s just about having fun, right?”



Better panel sessions

Being part of a panel is a different experience to a standalone presentation. Without the safety net of a pre-prepared script, you will be expected to use on-the-spot intuition, charm, and a few killer quotes if you are to perform well.

Prepare & understand your role

Even though you won't be delivering a formal presentation you must prepare for a panel discussion. What's the best way to start preparing? By understanding the audience and by understanding your role on the panel.

You were invited to join the panel because of a specific perspective you can offer, and you should find out a bit about the other panelists, so you know what you can contribute that they can't. Speak to fellow panelists, if possible, to establish a rapport before you go on stage. Your FMI Contact will ensure there is a conference call in advance of the live session to introduce everyone and review the session overview.

Know your audience

The better you know your audience, the more relevant your contribution will be. So work with the moderator to understand the context of the event, who the audience is, and what they know about the topic. And find out about their concerns, doubts, expectations and mood. That will be critical to shaping both the content and tone of your remarks. Do some research of your own if you have to.

Brief, relatable stories

Stories resonate like nothing else. If you want to be remembered and you want your ideas to stick, few things beat a well-told story. Come prepared with anecdotes, examples and stories that capture your points. That will be a lot more effective than dumping a ton of data and information on your audience. Remember to be succinct, though. Keep your stories short and focused so you don't dominate the panel.

Own your moment

Unlike a standalone session, you do not have total control as a member of a panel. A panel is an exercise in navigation and requires a panelist to build perspective through smaller sound bites. You have to spot the opportunities and grab them. Opening introductions is your first chance to offer a short summary of your point-of-view, and you're likely to be designated a slot of time that is entirely yours.

Other moments you can own include relating your story to a question from the moderator, providing a build from another panelist, or using a question from the audience as a way to launch another dimension of your story.

Listen to the other panelists

When the other panelists are talking, listen to what they have to say and extend the conversation. Refer to points a fellow panelist has made and build on them (or point out areas where you respectfully disagree — everyone likes a panel where speakers argue different points of view).

Using bridging phrases like, "I'd like to address that question..." "Let me add something to that idea..." or "We take a different perspective at my company..." to make for a more fluid and engaging discussion.



Stay pumped up!

Keeping your energy up is essential. If you are seated, don't slouch or lean back as that will drain the energy right out of you. Lean in and stay physically engaged.



**We hope you
enjoy your
experience
with FMI!**

With thanks to the following information sources:

[TED Blog A TED speaker coach shares 11 tips for right before you go on stage](#)

[Presentation Zen: 10 Ways to Make Better Presentations: Lessons from Storytellers](#)

[Harvard Business Review: How to Give a Killer Presentation - an interview with Chris Anderson](#)

[Speaker Magazine: 7 Tips to Take Your Panel Session from Terrible to Terrific](#)

[Ketchum: Five Tips on Being an Effective Panel Speaker](#)