

8 Bringing it alive!

As you become more confident with the basic approaches to presenting, you will want to experiment and try new variations and techniques. There are three ways you can improve a presentation and make it come alive.

Involving your audience with interaction

Many presenters mistakenly think that a presentation is a one-way communication: the presenter talks and the audience listens. This is wrong! Audiences become more interested when you actively involve them in your presentation. Here are some simple ways to create genuine interaction with your audience.

- **Show of hands:** This is a simple technique which reminds the audience of the relevance of the presentation. For example, ask who has experienced a certain situation or how many people are concerned about a certain issue.
- **Discussion in pairs and groups:** Be silent for a few minutes and ask your audience to discuss and reflect on the issues in your talk.
- **Ask for contributions directly:** If you know your audience well, ask them questions directly.

Stimulating the audience's imagination

It might not always be appropriate to involve your audience directly, perhaps because it is a large audience or they come from a culture which does not expect that kind of approach. However, there are many ways in which we can present information so that it stimulates the audience's imagination.

- **Stories and anecdotes:** A story does not need to be long and complicated. Often it can be just a couple of sentences, for example a story about what you were doing last week when you discovered something.
- **Real-life examples:** Giving a good example works in a similar way to a story and can often get your message across more easily than a complex explanation.
- **Analogies:** Analogies create images in the minds of the audience. They are especially good for making sense of figures, quantities and measurements.
- **Rhetorical questions:** These are questions which do not require an actual response from the audience. Just by asking the question, people's minds automatically engage with the issue.
- **Repetition:** The occasional use of repetition, especially in threes, can create a spoken rhythm which is exciting and satisfying to hear.
- **Visualize the future or reflect on the past:** By describing a vision of the future, our audience starts to be inspired by possibilities (see also the 'Dream & Disaster' approach in Unit 4). If we ask our audience to remember the past, we can put them in touch with how it feels now compared to then.

Showing your attitude

The most interesting presenters make the audience feel that they really want to communicate with them. Consider the following:

- **Body language and eye contact:** Presenters mainly show their attitude through their body language and voice. Audiences like presenters with energy who move around. Maintaining eye contact with the audience is also very important.
- **Show belief and conviction:** Many audiences will be more convinced when they see that you believe in something personally or have real conviction. So sometimes you can give a sincere personal opinion instead of being too factual.
- **Big language:** Look for appropriate opportunities to use extreme language. Words like 'excellent' or 'dreadful' will interest the audience more than words like 'good' or 'bad'.