

LDSPMA Speaker Best Practices

Congratulations on being part of our great presentation team. In an effort to provide LDSPMA conference participants with insightful, high-impact learning opportunities, we offer below some guidelines, reminders, and best practices to help you prepare and deliver your best talk.

Opening Tips

- Use a hook: You have 30 seconds to capture attention.
- Use a teaser, agenda, or glimpse of what is to come in your presentation.
- Give housekeeping information at about 5 minutes into your talk.

Presentation Tips

- **How** you present the message (and yourself) will determine your effectiveness.
- Your nonverbals will influence people much more than what you say.
- Address the audience, not the slides. Look at people, not over their heads.
- Use large type and summary words—no full sentences—in a sans serif font.
- Use uppercase sparingly; emphasize words with **boldface** or high-contrast color.
- Avoid flying text, distracting transitions, and complex charts.
- Prepare a summary slide in case you run out of time and need to finish quickly.
- Keystrokes: If you are in Presentation mode in PowerPoint, you can type the slide number and hit Return to go directly to that slide. If you want to briefly “mute” the slides, B turns the screen black and W turns the screen white.
- For a more modern presentation, use Prezi or Prezi Video instead of slides.

Q&A Tips

- Before answering a question, repeat it into the mic so everyone can hear it.
- Kindly consider the question, asking for clarification if needed. No judgment!
- Use questions as an opportunity to reinforce key points but keep responses short.
- Close with a summary of key points.
- If you have a combative questioner, don't get into a debate. Look at the person in the eye, while briefly addressing the question, then move eye contact to others and ask if there are other questions. If the combative person continues, take two steps toward the person, keeping a cordial demeanor. Kindly close off discussion by saying something like, “We need to move on, but I'd be happy to discuss it with you after the session.”

Resources

- The best way to keep the connection is to offer a takeaway—a free download, access to slides, or another gift—to establish a relationship and make learning memorable.

Self-Promotion

- These are teaching sessions; please keep self-promotion to a minimum.
- Turning the session into an hour-long commercial for your latest product is tacky and will turn people off. Let meaningful content sell for you, not a sales pitch.
- Reserving a table at our expo is the best way to sell your product or service.
- Your promo information may appear on the screen during Q&A time.

10 Ways to Shine during Your Presentation

1. Eye Contact

- Address the audience, not the slides.
- Look someone in the eye for an entire sentence, then move on.

2. Facial Expressions

- Convey a positive, confident emotion.
- Smile, even if you're nervous!

3. Voice

- Voice trumps eye contact for impact.
- Keep your voice calm. If you feel nervous, pause and take a deep breath. Slow down.
- Avoid the nervous habit of saying “um” or “ah” or other stalling sounds.
- Vary your sentence lengths and voice inflection (no monotone).
- Be appropriately animated and passionate about the topic.

4. Rate of Speech

- Speak at a comfortable rate.
- Avoid the common tendency to speed up.

5. Vocal Pauses

- Take silent pauses, even for 5–7 seconds after a question. The audience welcomes them.
- Avoid using filler words to fill silence.

6. Gestures

- Use hands naturally and comfortably; avoid distracting or repetitive hand gestures.
- Avoid repeated movements or motions, keeping your voice as the focus.

7. Posture

- Stand up straight with your feet hip-width apart. Don't hug the podium.
- Keeping your shoulders high, chest slightly out, and chin up will automatically command attention and respect. Practice beforehand so this is second nature.
- For online presentations, sit up straight or stand; avoid swivel chairs, overstuffed chairs, or chairs with grippy fabric that make you stand up to reposition yourself.

8. Content

- Content is king. Make sure you prepare and deliver valuable advice.
- Tell them what you're going to say; say it; and tell them what you told them.
- Stories and personal experiences are wonderful. Keep them relevant and focused.

9. Organization

- Content should flow and be easy to follow. Use transition words.

10. Word Choice

- Select audience-appropriate vocabulary and explanations.
- Vary word choice; avoid using the same word or phrase over and over (e.g., “Does that make sense?” or “. . . and things of that nature.”).