

Effective Presentations - A Bad Example

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Abstract

Does this title leave you wondering if this will really be a bad presentation as in 'unfavorable' or an 'excellent' presentation and I'm using the word 'bad' as slang for 'good'? This paper will not be presented in the traditional format. All of you could simply read the conference proceedings to know your visual aides must be a minimum size, you shouldn't use slang and other helpful hints.

As a Section Chair last year, I started noticing patterns in the evaluations and decided to give this presentation. I will give a short presentation and then there will be AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION. I will intentionally give a 'bad' presentation and you get to tell me the 'unfavorable' or 'excellent' reasons why it was 'bad'. Obviously, one comment will be my use of slang in the abstract!

Part of the intent of this presentation is to help presenters see themselves through the audience's eyes. For example, maybe you think the text in my presentation is large enough because you used the same size but did the rest of the audience? While the focus is on MWSUG presentations, I hope this presentation will be valuable for any presentation you may do.

Proceedings vs. Presentation

The proceedings (or other handouts) and the presentation should complement each other rather than duplicate each other. However, don't think this means there is no overlap between the two. It just means the audience should get more from attending the presentation than if they simply read the proceedings in their hotel room before the conference starts. If this paper gave you all the good and bad points in my presentation, then you would no reason no attend it.

This is also one of the rare cases where a handout distributed at the end of the presentation is best. Normally, you want to provide the handout as another visual aid for the audience and a place to take notes. If you are presenting detailed code or results, it will be much easier for the audience to follow the handout than to try to read from the screen. This is especially true in large rooms such as those used for Tutorials or at SUGI.

Level of Presentation

Is your presentation intended for beginning users with no SAS® experience or an advanced user with years of experience? Do you expect some prior knowledge of the subject matter even if you don't expect SAS knowledge? Such information should be in the abstract. It should also be repeated as part of the introduction in your presentation. Of course, no two people will always agree on what is 'beginning' and what is 'advanced'. One presenter often says he presents beginning information on an advanced topics so what level is his presentation?

It's also important to indicate in your abstract whether you are presenting code or just the concept. This will help ensure you are placed in the right section. People attending tutorials usually expect actual code and 'how-to-do-it' information but they don't for other sections. For example, one year a speaker submitted a paper on writing a macro system to generate reports. It was originally planned for applications development but was moved to tutorials due to space availability. Since he talked more on the general development of the macro rather than on actual code, the audience gave him very low marks on his evaluation. However, I also heard the same presentation at a local user's group where it was considered an excellent presentation. The audience had different expectations. If you have been moved, you might want to mention that or have the session coordinator do so in your introduction.

Introduction

Besides mentioning the level of your presentation and whether it is a code or concept presentation, you should give a brief outline of what you will cover. If you need to provide some background information that should also be part of the brief introduction. Remember, 'brief' is important. You only have 25 or 50 minutes so the introduction really shouldn't be more than a minute or two. That may sound too short but time yourself. You may be surprised how much you can cover.

What else?

Well, you'll need to attend the paper to know what else. If you can't attend, please contact me and I'll send you the post-presentation version of this paper. This will also include information about the good and bad points the audience noticed.

Suggested Reading

Here are some papers from past SUGI and MWSUG conferences. Some people will say this isn't the correct way to write bibliographic citations but remember this paper is a 'bad' example so I took a short-cut. Most SAS manuals include the formal method of writing a bibliographic citation in the front of the manual. The important thing is to remember to cite any sources you've quoted so readers can learn more.

Creating Course Notes from an Annotated SAS Program, K. Malley, SUGI 16

Maximizing SAS Training, J. Dingwerth, SUGI 16

Training and Supporting Nontechnical People Who Use the SAS System, K. Kolbe, SUGI 17

Classroom Presentation Techniques, J. Ussery, MWSUG 91

There are also numerous books available at bookstores.

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Believe it or not, many people leave this out. There are some people who do not wish to be contacted or can't receive 'personal' calls at work. However, you are strongly encourage to provide a mailing address even if you can't provide a phone, fax and e-mail address. It's up to you if you include both home and work information.

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