

TASCHEN GUIDE

Einfach! Praktisch!



In englischer
Sprache

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Presentations in English

 Haufe
...

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Preparation

Whether you have five minutes, five hours or five months to prepare, these are the most important points:

- developing an international viewpoint (page 6),
- preparing yourself, the person (page 14),
- putting yourself in your audience's shoes (page 25),
- organising facilities (page 29),
- your presentation structure (page 33),
- preparing good slides (page 39).

Developing an international viewpoint

You have to do a presentation in English, maybe abroad or in your home country. Your audience may be from another country, or from many. What will they be like? What will they expect?

Things can be different

You want to do a good (or at least reasonable) presentation. You know your own idea of a good presentation but what's their idea of a good presentation? From an international viewpoint, a great many things can be different to presenting to a "home" audience. These can include:

- timing,
- content detail,
- how people listen,
- how / if they ask questions,
- eye contact (if any),
- conversation making,
- clothing,
- body language or
- even the question of whether a presentation is at all suitable or if everybody should have a good discussion over a 3-hour lunch with a bottle of wine instead.

It's a question of culture. A question of the way things are done in that situation, in that place, with those people.

Example



Chinese and other cultures, where the group is more important than the individual, may come to a presentation as a group of ten to twenty or more people, depending upon the importance to them. They may then be surprised to see only you (with maybe one or two colleagues) and wonder where the others are.

The best way you can develop an international viewpoint and avoid a lot of misunderstandings, is to always keep the following four points in mind.

1 Accept that differences exist!

Think perhaps of a bottle standing next to a glass. From your point of view, the bottle may be in front of the glass. From someone on the other side it is behind the glass. From another person's viewpoint it's on the right. And, yes, from another person's viewpoint it's on the left.

Everybody can have a different viewpoint, a different view, but everybody can be right. Compare this to different places in the world. Presentations are done differently in France, in Germany, in Japan, in the US. Each of these ways of doing presentations is right, in those places, in those situations, with those people.

Examples: Starting a presentation



Presentations in the US often start with a joke, in the UK with an apology, in Germany with the background details.

This does not mean that you should start with a joke in the US or an apology in the UK. It does mean that you need to think about the differences. How does your style suit the setting you are dealing with? You can then decide if you shorten the introduction and / or reduce the number of slides in total. You may then need to be more prepared to "go with the flow" – letting your audience point you in the direction they want to go to with their questions.

2 Opposite behaviour may not mean opposite values

Realise that differences in behaviour and differences in the importance of values can lead to a lot of misunderstanding. Opposite behaviour does not necessarily mean opposite values.

Example: Direct and indirect speech



Germans tend to speak directly: "You made a mistake." This direct behaviour is often based on values of openness, honesty and the desire not to waste the other person's time.

The British tend to speak indirectly: "It seems that something wasn't quite right": This indirect behaviour is often based on values of politeness and respect for the other person and the desire not to hurt the other person's feelings.

The Chinese may say nothing at all.

The translation "opposite behaviour = opposite values" here often leads to Germans thinking that the Chinese and the British are not open, not honest and waste time and, conversely, to British and Chinese thinking that the Germans are impolite, lack respect for other people (arrogant!) and don't care if they hurt other people's feelings.

This means that you shouldn't always let your reactions be led by how you interpret specific behaviour. Keep more of an open mind during a multinational or international presentation.

3 Use cultural generalisations with care

A generalisation is something that applies to 55% or more of a group of people – not a stereotype (100% of the people in that group, all of the time) and not a prejudice (a stereotype plus positive or negative judgment). A group can be a nationality group (e.g. French, Italian, Japanese), a regional group (e.g. north German, south German), a gender group (men, women), a professional group (IT people, sales people, commercial people, marketing people), as well as corporate, religious or age.

Example



"All French people interrupt presentations to ask questions" is a stereotype. "All French people interrupt presentations to ask questions – this is very rude" is a prejudice. The French people that you present to may not interrupt at all, and if they do, they will probably see it as positive.

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