

Presentation Skills for Engineers

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Abstract

In today's cutthroat competition in the job market, proving one's competency is essential and transferable skills fall under this category. Transferable skills are the most desired in an Engineering graduate. An entity of this unique skill set, public speaking skills is considered the most valuable because effective communication is an asset to cherish. Enhancement of speaking skills or presentation skills can be achieved through time, perseverance and practice. Upon gaining expertise one could speak efficiently addressing an array of scenarios portraying heterogeneity.

Keywords: Transferable Skills, Engineer, Public Speaking, Practice.

Introduction

Students are very often anxious about public speaking because of the fear of being judged for being laughed at for any mistakes they would commit if at all. They begin to experience anxiety at the very first sight of a crowd waiting to listen to them. This is a very natural response and also signifies the alertness of the brain. Exceptional speakers also experience nervousness and inhibitions at the prospect of speaking. Any simple conversation, whether formal or informal, employs at least three different techniques: intonation, modulation and body language (non-verbal communication).

Being an engineer, several situations may arise during student life as well as a professional where it is necessary to demonstrate prowess in communication and presentation. The paper throws light on several important aspects of presentation skills. With the appropriate amount of practice, presenting in front of an audience can be mastered.

Important Aspects of Presentations

Certain attributes of human voices may sound pleasing to a few and not very appealing to some. A harsh tone reflects an agitated and aggressive state of mind while a very soft and feeble voice which may be soothing to the ears causes the listeners to concentrate too hard in order to catch the words being spoken rather than understanding the true essence of what is being spoken.

The tone of our voice can convey a million meanings. A simple ‘thank you’ can sound grateful and appreciative of someone who has undergone troubles on your behalf. But it can also prove to be a sarcastic comment suggesting a feeling of ungratefulness. These diverse emotions could be conveyed with clarity through proper modulation of tone.

The next important aspect, non-verbal communication (NVC) has been deemed as both ‘important’ and ‘dangerous’ as it can easily give away cues that we rather wish to keep to our selves. NVC can effortlessly contradict the words and facts that we are putting across. Gestures, postures, walk, talk, maintaining eye contact, facial expressions are few aspects that come under this moiety.

Above all this, choosing the most apt and accurate words that reflect upon our idea out of the ocean of English words, is a herculean task. This intricate task entirely depends upon the meaning we want to deliver with its authentic zest and aroma untarnished to the audience at the receiving end. In a nut shell, the choice of words will determine the speaker’s ability to influence an audience.

The choice of words is double conditioned by the recipient or audience and the state of affairs that we find ourselves in. Talking to a friend can be informal with not much emphasis on the words, while on the other hand, talking to a prospective employer during an interview requires a careful selection of words and formal nature of speech.

Scenarios that involve Presentation skills

For an engineer, several circumstances may arise that requires him/her to demonstrate their presentation skills. Listed below are a few scenarios where one has to exhibit presentation skills.

- **Day-to-day classroom activities:** Language classes comprise of various activities where one may be asked to express his/her opinion in the form of a solo speech or a debate. Both these activities require proper practice and different strategies. A narration or speech may require the speaker to be very informative about the topic with a mild and moderate tone. In a debate, however, the speaker has to possess an assertive tone and the arguments made should be counteractive in nature.

- **Personal interviews:** Confidence is key in personal interviews. The ability to convey an idea or thought coherently, fluency in English with clarity in speech are also some of the components that a recruiter will be looking for in a prospective candidate. Entities of non-verbal communication (NVC) such as posture, gestures, eye contact etc will also be judged.
- **Telephonic interviews:** A recruiter may be able to analyze the abilities of a candidate through a telephonic conversation. We are aware that people tend to speak loudly when they are annoyed and irritated, rapidly when they are agitated and slowly with a slight stammer when they are unsure about conveying an idea.
- **Group Discussions (GD):** Several skills of the candidate such as communication, NVC, listening, speaking, leadership, decision-making, reasoning, analysis, problem-solving, critical thinking, attitude and confidence are put to test at a group discussion. Appropriate exhibition of all these skills will help to ace a GD.
- **Paper/ Poster/Model presentations:** One of the most commonly occurring events in the itineraries of college events, this category requires the speaker to be clear and crisp in his/her communication within the stipulated time. Selecting the apt points such as the striking features of the prototype for explanation will seek attention from the judges. Maintaining eye contact with the judges and the audience in addition to expressing eagerness to clarify doubts at the end of the session is also needed.

Conclusion

With the ever rising demand of being recruited in a reputed company increasing exponentially day by day, possessing a good level of communication skills has become extremely crucial especially for engineers. The ability to communicate clearly, concisely and convincingly is a major asset in today's professional scenario. The paper also highlights the importance of enhancing one's ability to communicate and present in front of an audience, especially for an engineer. But this skill cannot be mastered within a day's time. Persistent practice and perseverance will help greatly to achieve this tough feat. The various sub-skills that are involved intricately with presentations should also be taken into consideration and be addressed appropriately. Additionally, the tutor or teaching faculty in charge should provide adequate assistance to the students in identifying the areas that require further improvement and also provide proper timely feedback to attain success.

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