

Features of effective final presentations

The Final Presentation in 2.009 is a demanding yet exciting situation. The diverse and enthusiastic audience in Kresge Auditorium wants you to succeed, but they also have high expectations. To begin preparing, carefully read the detailed description of the final presentation on the 2.009 site. There are many ways to tell an engaging and persuasive story in your presentation, and below are some of the more effective features with examples.

1. Logical and engaging overall structure

The order of information you present about your product should tell a story and build momentum. An uninterrupted flow between the various presenters and sections of the presentation can also contribute to a cohesive whole.

Petra (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=yellow#final>

The presentation opens with a demonstration that shows the audience the need that Petra, the automatic rappelling and ascending device, was developed to address. The two demonstrations grab the audience's attention and set the scene for the next speaker to explain how the device was designed. The value proposition follows and its argument is strong because the need for this particular product has been convincingly established.

Up-Beat (2014) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2014&team=purple#final>

Variation on an otherwise routine structure can be captivating. This team altered the chronology of a typical product presentation by showing the "magic" of the product (i.e. the "end of the story") before explaining the details (i.e. the current problem and need). The drummer begins with an exciting drum solo, and then the audience learns how he got to that skill-level by using UpBeat.

Terrainer (2014) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2014&team=blue#final>

After a short, attention-getting opener comparing indoor bike training to outdoor training with the product, the presentation unfolds around three clear segments: a demonstration of the product with live results, a verbal and visual description of the technology, and a compelling business case. Interactions among the three presenters and the cyclist are seamless, and the handoffs are smooth, particularly between last two presenters.

BitDex (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=silver#final>

The opening of the presentation describes the use context and technical problem with precision, and invokes the environment of a machine shop. After the brief demonstration, the business case presentation follows logically, with a graceful bridge linking the demo to primary customers. The design and engineering description concludes the presentation, with an emphasis on the drill bit, at the center of the product use.

2. A clear and captivating opening

A strong, original, and evocative beginning primes the audience's interest in your product and may cue them on how to think and even feel about the need for your product. How can you get the audience to connect with your product? How can you make its use, or the need for it, vivid? Who, specifically, are your potential customers?

LaserKites (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=blue#final>

The presentation opens with a very upbeat kite flyer running across the stage as the first speaker tells the audience, "When I was a kid, I loved that magical moment when the wind

would catch my kite and it would just soar off into the sky.” The excitement about the product is palpable.

Koach (2014) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2014&team=orange#final>

The scenario for the product demonstration is well designed and engaging, as it immerses the audience in both the use and the feel of the product. Two students compete with each other using Koach’s punching bags and electronic app.

EquiTemp (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=purple#final>

Short, staccato phrasing narrates vivid images to convey the core problem. The product description, at 29 sec in the video, punctuates an opening that fully describes the use context.

Verda (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=pink#final>

In introducing the product, the speaker advocates powerfully for food access in underserved urban neighborhoods, fully describing the context.

Clydesdale (2012) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2012&team=silver#final>

The presentation begins emphatically, with the first speaker’s welcoming gesture and friendly statement, as the audience is invited to consider the physical problem of beer delivery in Boston. The speaker uses performative actions, vivid language, and an accompanying video to show how beer kegs are “kneaded or dollyed down the stairs,” while delivery folks “feel each jerk in wrists... shoulders... and chest.”

3. Accessible descriptions of technological challenges and innovations

While it is critical to convey what your product does and who uses it early on, your presentation should go deep into your product and communicate – through careful choice of images and remarks – how it was designed and built. It is challenging to do this in a way that educates and engages both engineers and non-engineers alike. Using accessible terminology and metaphors, clearly narrating all images and video, defining key terms, and sharing the purpose of the components within the product can help achieve inclusive and meaningful explanations.

SleepTight (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=silver#final>

At nearly five minutes into the presentation, the technical discussion of SleepTight features a clear image of the device’s internal mechanisms, and the audience sees its components move to simulate actual operation. The speaker’s narration guides the audience.

Mira (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=orange#final>

The technical portion of the presentation begins at 4:45 in the video with an overview of the technology. At 5:00 in the video, the speaker engages the audience in an experiment that illuminates the need for a core component of the technical design. The accessible remarks are well paced and coordinated with the Solidworks images.

4. Well-choreographed product interaction

The products are the stars of the show. Proudly present features that make the product particularly attractive, powerful, and even fun to use. Show through demonstration how you met the product’s specifications, and what you learned during your market research, user interviews, and testing. Interact with the product using some of the behaviors that potential customers or users mentioned.

Animo (2017) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2017&team=purple#final>

Similar to Petra's presentation in 2015, the Animo team worked with a potential user to provide the audience with a live demonstration of performing a task with and without their product, enabling us to see the powerful difference Animo can make in a user's life. The demonstration with an actual user generates an memorable, heartfelt response that brings the product and its purpose to life for the audience.

Glow (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=yellow#final>

The relationship among the speaker's narration, the demonstration by the student yogi, and the slides is smoothly coordinated and timed so that the audience can fully observe and experience the product use cycle.

Orion (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=pink#final>

The relationship between the automated spotlight and the needs of the lighting designer was punctuated by a taped interview with a real potential user. The user's words and a number of examples, live and on tape, allowed audience members to see for themselves the ability of Orion to meet marketplace needs.

5. Creative use of the stage set

The physical location of your product within your set is an important element in telling the story. If the world of the product feels real, the scenario you present will appear credible. Brainstorm some storytelling opportunities that the set itself presents: How might the set help you describe or role-play the user, show the use cycle of your product, or even showcase your product's technical advantage over other products? Incorporating your use of the set at various points in the presentation will inspire the audience's imagination.

Petra (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=yellow#final>

After the initial product demonstration, even audience members who had never rappelled could understand Petra and its value. The presentation is notable for using every dimension of the stage – horizontal and vertical. Yet, importantly, the demonstrations do not overshadow the product and the technology it incorporates.

Cobalt (2011) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2011&team=blue#final>

The bike rack in an urban setting is revisited several times during the presentation, as features of the bike lock are described.

Noribo (2010) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2010&team=silver#final>

The set is a sushi bar, and the speakers take turns interacting with the product while one of them narrates. The sushi bar is "open for business" throughout the presentation.

6. Credible business case

A lot of work goes into preparing a believable business case for your product. To prepare, you can refer to the principles presented during lecture and in tutorials so you can present a fact-based, plausible case. Keep in mind that only a distillation of your research goes into the presentation, rather than the calculations or minutiae.

Orion (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=pink#final>

The path to market that the team lays out in their presentation connects with the user

context. The team, understanding the “reluctance of the lighting industry to adopt untested technologies,” planned to loan Orion to a small number of Boston-area theatres in exchange for valuable data to help them refine the product. In year two, production would grow to 1,000 units and to 5,000 units in year four. Revenue projections seem believable, and scaled to the roll-out plan the team has devised with an obvious understanding of the lighting community.

Animo (2017) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2017&team=purple#final>

Rather than presenting how many units they plan to sell, the team shares the challenges ahead and the need for further testing. This openness shows the team’s understanding of the complex, highly regulated market, and the care with which they plan to further develop Animo.

San-X (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=blue#final>

The business case begins with the product’s cost and safety benefits, enumerates potential customers, summarizes pricing and a business plan, and indicates a clear plan for expansion into other user populations.

7. Relevant and gentle humorous touches

Humor, if used at all, should be used deliberately in service of your product. Of course, whenever you speak to a diverse group that may not share your particular perspective, humor can be risky. Yet, humor can make ideas memorable. Because it’s easy to think of funny moments as being improvised, the temptation might be to avoid planning and rehearsing the humorous moment. Resist that temptation. Practice, practice, practice, and let your teammates comment. Cut out lines that make anyone groan, and avoid sarcasm, teasing, or laughing at someone’s expense.

Glow (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=yellow#final>

The opening line: “How’s it... glowing?” Notice the presenter’s deliberate pause before the “punchline”, which alerts the audience that they should pay attention to the next word.

Orion (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=pink#final>

The presentation opens with a teammate standing in the back of the audience. Then, to the very recognizable theme of Pink Panther, he travels the aisles. He even hands flowers to a woman seated in one of the aisles. All the time the automatic spotlight tracks him before the focus returns to the stage. Then at about 6:40 into the presentation, Justin returns eating popcorn from the audience and Orion again tracks him. The effect is warm, gentle humor under the more serious message that the device is able to deliver a pool of light that can accurately surround a performer without human intervention.

Cobalt (2011) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2011&team=blue#final>

There is a bike thief around 2:48 into the presentation. Overall, the presentation employs good visual and physical humor, well acted.

Happy Egg (2010) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2010&team=blue#final>

During the demo the speaker has a light, almost ironic touch when describing the product and subtly acknowledging that there was something almost whimsical about it.

8. Definitive ending

Endings are critical because they leave an audience with a way to think about what they’ve just seen. In crafting an ending for your presentation, decide on the key message and feeling that you’d

like to leave the audience with. The message should be specific to your product, and it should logically emerge from the presentation story itself. And of course, two magic words – “Thank you” – make it absolutely clear to your audience that your presentation is indeed over... and they can start applauding! Note: In 2.009 final presentations, a “Questions?” slide is unnecessary because the event moderator will call for questions.

TouchLess (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=purple#final>

Touchless ends its presentation just as it started it – with a petri dish full of bacteria collected from bathroom stall doors. It makes the point very clearly that with Touchless installed, people will never again touch bacteria as they wave in and wave out of restroom stalls.

Poseiden (2013) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2013&team=green#final>

In the summary of the business case, the final presenter takes an opportunity to educate the audience more about the user – triathletes who are “not professional athletes, but are serious athletes.” She ties the product to the theme, “Be well!” and ends on an original tagline, “Chase the laser.”

HelmetHub (2011) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2011&team=pink#final>

After a clear presentation of a compelling and unique business case, the speaker returns to key message about HelmetHub that resonates with the presentation’s beginning.

Elika (2008) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2008&team=green#final>

A photomontage economically conveys the process of designing the product, and the happiness of a user interacting with the product.

9. “Thank You” slides

You can design them in interesting ways that aligns with your product.

Vantage (2015) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2015&team=orange#final>

Because the product is aimed at children, and was actually tried out at a local elementary school, the “Thank You” slides feature photos of the children and of the Vantage team.

Cobalt (2011) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2011&team=blue#final>

The “Thank You” slide uses the icon of an animated bicycle to reveal each line of acknowledgments, which fits well with the product.

Spence (2010) <http://designed.mit.edu/new/view.html?year=2010&team=pink#final>

The acknowledgements overlay a team photo, and convey it takes a village to design a flour dispenser.