Features of effective final presentations

The Final Presentation event in 2.009 is the big show. A diverse and enthusiastic audience, in a major MIT venue, creates a demanding yet exciting presentation situation.

To begin preparing, first read the description on the 2.009 site here: http://web.mit.edu/2.009/www/assignments/FinalPresentation.html

Also look at the review form, distributed to all audience members, to anticipate how they will evaluate your team’s presentation: http://web.mit.edu/2.009/www/assignments/FinalPresentationImages/finalReviewForm.pdf

There are many touches that make a final presentation engaging and persuasive, and your team’s presentation should be unique to your product and consistent with your vision. Still, there are some noticeable features common to compelling 2.009 presentations. We bring them to your attention as examples and inspiration.

Pleasing overall structure. The Nov. 8 lecture showed a time allocation for the presentation components http://web.mit.edu/2.009/www/lectures/27_FinalPresentation.pdf (see slide 15). Keeping this balance in mind, the arrangement of sections is up to your team. Think: what order of information about our product tells its story and builds its case most powerfully? Remember, as in all product presentations, to describe and demonstrate the product itself early on.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2012-Ferno.html (three-part structure is signaled at the beginning in both a slide and first speaker’s remarks, and middle segment on the product is further structured and shown in words above the stove image and spoken by second speaker as he advances through his section. All three speakers and their sections are built around a unified message that unfolds with the presentation. Tagline is conveyed as last line, after audience has come to understand product, its user-centered design, and the business case)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2012-riderguider.html (begins with a gag -- a bike crash that happens off stage that is evoked by sound – and segues into a clear description of the problem or gap that motivates the product; the first speaker is credible and sincere – the choice of first speaker is also important)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-helmetHub.html (clear beginning, middle, and end with graceful transitions between speakers and narration of product demo; beginning and end are ‘in conversation’ with each other)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2008-elika.html (invites audience to the party, and then takes audience step by step through the world of its product, and its product’s business)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-aquAIRius.html (starts by educating audience about water rescues and the purpose of backboards, goes right into a demo of the product in this scenario, then an extended description of the technology, a comparison to benchmark products, and a realistic business case)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-Komera.html (sustains audience’s attention on a social health scenario in Rwanda, describes what is needed, introduces its product and the use cycle, explains the micro businesses its product will enable, and summarizes its business case)

Engaging beginning. The first line of your presentation extends an invitation to your audience. Captivate them with a specific and intriguing story. 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?  A strong, original, and evocative beginning primes the audience’s interest in your product and may cue them how to think and even feel about the need for it.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2012-Clydesdale.html
(begins emphatically, with a welcoming gesture and friendly statement, and audience is invited to consider the physical problem of beer delivery in Boston. Speaker uses vivid language and physical action to convey how beer kegs are “knead or dollied down the stairs,” and repeats action as the video demo of the problem beer delivery is shown and more vivid words are spoken: delivery men “feel each jerk in wrists… shoulders… and chest”)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-helmetHub.html (begins with a relevant anecdote, broadens the story with more context on the problem, and then funnels audience’s attention to the focused problem: low helmet use associated with bike rental stations)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-thermAssist.html (begins with a clear and compelling summary of the physiological problem experienced by people with paraplegia that the team’s product addresses, amplified by audio-taped testimony from a potential user)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-Fortrus.html (begins with a brief dialogue that introduces a mountain rescue scenario that is picked up later in the demo)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-airware.html (begins with dramatic footage from a big wave surfing video and remarks on a safety risk involved in surfing that the product addresses)

**Fluent description of technological challenges or innovations.** While it is critical to convey what your product does and who uses it, your presentation should go deep into your product and communicate -- through careful choice of images and remarks -- how it was designed and built. It’s challenging to do this in a way that informs and engages engineers and non-engineers alike. Teams who do this effectively link a visible part of the design or functionality to a technical part, use a precise and stable terminology, and work their way from big picture to details.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-phil.html (the presentation uses animated Solidworks images well, first in a segment that summarizes details of design and operation in a way carefully tied to user needs, and second in a segment that focuses on engineering, that incorporates images of a hand, sink, and water to show the use context)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-dash.html (the slides and remarks specify the three areas of innovation; focus audience’s attention on the function; and then explain the engineering behind each)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-spence.html (nice pairings of photographs and Solidworks images to describe product’s form and technology at once)

**Well-choreographed product interaction.** Show what you learned during your market research, user interviews, and ergonomics testing. Interact with the product using some of the behaviors that potential customers or users mentioned. Show off features that make the product particularly attractive, powerful, and even fun to use. Show through demonstration how you met the product’s specifications. Let the product command the audience’s attention.
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-helmetHub.html (the product interaction of two kinds of users – the bike renter and the vendor employee – is described by the speaker as a team mate demonstrates interaction, at the same time slides showing design + engineering are shown)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2008-Point-Guard.html (presenter introduces basketball player to demo product, and intermittently narrates the demonstration, with helpful pauses, while player shoots, waits for basketball to return, and shoots again)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-groceryMate.html (presenters and demo-er, a person in a wheelchair, share remarks. presenter coordinates remarks with both product demonstration and description of the technology)
also: http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2012-Clydesdale.html and http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2012-Ferno.html

**Full use of the set.** The physical location for your product is a very important element in telling your story. If the world of the product feels real, the scenario you present will be credible. Become familiar and comfortable with the set’s design. Brainstorm some storytelling opportunities the set itself presents: How might the set help you describe or role-play the customer, show the use cycle of your product, or even showcase your product's technical advantage over other products? Incorporate your use of the set at various points in the presentation.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-cobalt.html (the bike rack in an urban setting is returned to several times in the presentation as features of the bike lock is described)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-noribo.html (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)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-iceTec-scraper.html (in the demonstration, students demoing product wear costumes that go with the set and communicate the use scenario for the ice scraper that is also illustrated by the winter scene in the set)

**Credible business case.** A lot of work goes into preparing a believable case for your business. Referring to the principles presented in lecture on Nov. 20 http://web.mit.edu/2.009/www/schedule/LectureList.html, draft a business case for your product that is reasonable and grounded in fact. Only a distillation of your research, however, goes into the presentation of your business case: the market, competitiveness of your product, and viability of the business. There is no one-size-fits-all business case -- communicate a business case that is well researched and consistent with your product.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-cobalt.html (the speaker and slides illustrate clearly how the innovative bike lock will fit into the “specialty” portion of the existing market, and use the comparison to competitors to reinforce key design + manufacturing details about Cobalt)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-happyEgg.html (business model makes sense for their product; carries graphic details pertinent to product through even their data slides)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-airware.html (niche business, honestly presented)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2008-DOTit.html (nonprofit partnership proposed)
also: http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2012-Clydesdale.html

**Relevant and gentle humorous touches.** Use humor, but use it sparingly and in service of your product. Whenever you cross cultures or speak to a diverse group that may not share your particular view of the world, humor can be risky. Still, humor makes ideas memorable. Because it’s easy to think of funny moments that come from ad-libbing, improvising, and generally winging it, the temptation is to avoid giving the humor too much thought. Resist that temptation. Practice, and let your teammates comment. Cut out lines that make anyone groan. Avoid humor if it’s even potentially tinged with sarcasm, teasing, or a laugh at someone’s expense.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-cobalt.html (notice the bike thief around 2 min 48 s into the presentation; good use of visual and physical humor, well acted)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-happyEgg.html (demo section is engaging because Grace, the speaker, had a light, almost ironic touch when describing the product, and subtly acknowledging that there was something funny about it)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-ixa-walker.html (describing their product’s intended users and drawing on their research, the team evokes the “fashion-conscious elderly” who want to be cool. the speaker says this with complete sincerity, and the audience enjoys the surprise in these remarks)

**Definitive ending.** Endings -- the final line in a poem, paragraph in novel, image in a movie, message in a presentation -- are challenging to compose. (This may be why so many presentations simply end with a reminder of the topic or a generic appeal for questions.) And yet 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 2.009 final presentation, decide on the key message about your product 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. The message may be implied or made explicit, but you must be conscious of what that message is.

Note: In the 2.009 final presentations, there is no need for a “Questions?” slide because the event moderator will call for questions.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-helmetHub.html (after a clear presentation of a compelling and unique business case, the speaker returns to key message about HelmutHub that resonates with the presentation’s beginning)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2009-iceTck-scaper.html (at the end, ideas for long-range product development emerge from business development component of presentation, and conveys longevity for the product)
http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2008-elika.html (a photo montage economically conveys the process of designing the product, and the happiness of a user interacting with the product)
And about those thank you slides: You can design them interestingly -- more than a list.

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2011-cobalt.html (uses the icon of a bicycle as animation to reveal each line of acknowledgments – fits well with product, so animation is logical)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-spence.html (overlays acknowledgements on a team photo, and conveys it takes a village to design a flour dispenser)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-noribo.html (carries graphic touches from the presentation through to the acknowledgements)

http://designed.mit.edu/gallery/view-2010-happyEgg.html (photograph of prototype filled with eggs, perhaps representing the many helpers who helped incubate the product)