

## Allocating the Right Amount of Time to Prepare the Presentation

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There is always a temptation to underestimate the amount of time required to prepare a presentation. When this happens you can end up having to do lots of overtime, or you have to rush the finished product, which can make the presentation less effective. However, to determine the amount of time you will need, there are almost an infinite number of variables. That being said, you can get a good indication of the time it will take, by using the four graphs described in the following sections. These graphs have been refined over many years of experience, and they generally give a good indication once you've used them a few times.

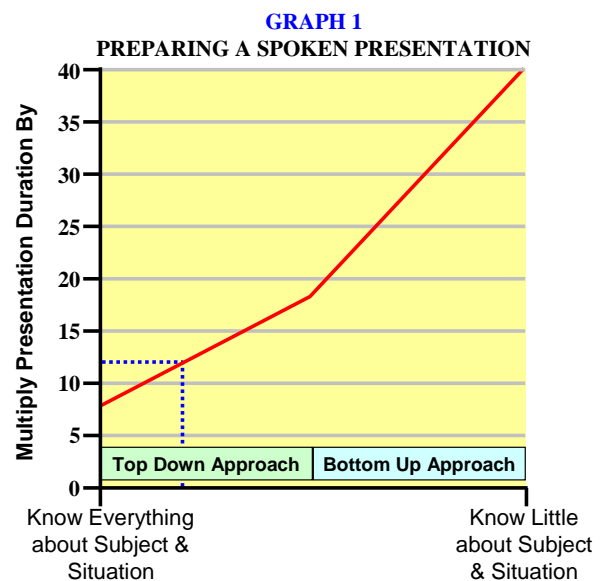
### 2 Graph 1 – Spoken Presentation Only

The first of these graphs is used to determine the amount of time it will typically take you to prepare a spoken presentation, where presentation aids are not being used.

The bottom axis (X Axis) is aligned to the amount you know about the subject of the presentation, and the situation (*e.g. your knowledge of the audience*). This axis also shows the transition between the use of either the Top-Down, or Bottom Up approach<sup>(i)</sup>.

The left hand scale (Y Axis) shows the number of times you would multiply the duration of the presentation, to determine the likely preparation time. At the very top end of the Y Axis scale you could of course go to an almost infinite number, but in practical business terms, anything over a 40 to 1 ratio will often be wasted effort. The three steps needed to use this graph are:

- ✓ **Step 1 - Determine how much you know about the Subject and Situation.** To use this graph begin by working out how much you know about the subject and situation. This is pretty subjective, but you will normally have a feel for this, and you will probably be surprised how accurate your guess is, after you have used this technique a few times.
- ✓ **Step 2 – Run a Vertical Intercept.** Once you have figured out roughly how much you know about the subject and situation, run a vertical line up from the appropriate point on the X Axis, until you intersect with the red line. For example, you might know virtually everything about the subject, but you also believe that you will need to do some general research. As you have decided you will be using the Top-Down approach, you could start your vertical intercept about 1/5th of the way along the lower axis, as shown by the blue dotted line in the first graph.



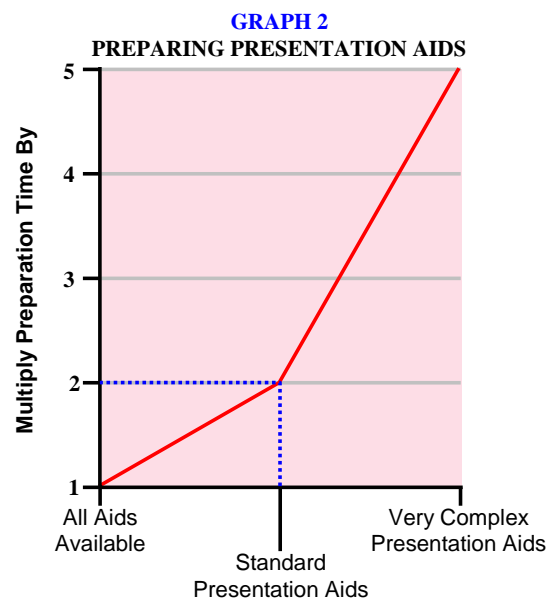
i. These concepts are described in the book 'Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation', which is discussed later in this document

- ✓ **Step 3 – Run a Horizontal Intercept.** From the intersection of your vertical intercept and the red line, run a horizontal line across until it touches the left hand scale. This shows the ratio between the preparation time and the duration of the presentation. For instance, in this example, you would probably need about a 12 to 1 ratio between the amount of time it will take you to develop the presentation, and the duration of the presentation. In other words, it would take you about 12 hours to properly prepare a one hour spoken presentation.

### 3 Graph 2 – Preparing Presentation Aids

The second graph is used in conjunction with the results of the first graph. This graph determines how long it will typically take to develop a presentation using presentation aids.

The bottom axis (X Axis) is a subjective scale; where the left side the scale indicates that all of the visual aids are already available. The middle of the scale represents what is known as the standard presentation. This would be a presentation where the presentation aids are not too complex (e.g. a predominantly text based PowerPoint® presentation without excessively complex diagrams or animations). The far right of this bottom scale represents having to develop very complex presentation aids (e.g. a PowerPoint® presentation with a large number of complex diagrams and animations).



The left hand scale (Y Axis) shows the number of times you would multiply the spoken presentation preparation period, to cover the time needed to also develop the presentation aids. There are occasions when the preparation of aids can far exceed the five times ratio shown in this graph (e.g. building a computer program for demonstration). However, these situations are not particularly common, and they are handled as indirect development, which does not bear directly on the preparation of your presentation. The three steps required to use this graph are:

- ✓ **Step 1 - Determine the complexity/amount of Presentation Aids Needed.** Begin by selecting the amount of development you think is required in accordance with the lower scale. For example, you might know that all of the presentations aids are available. Alternatively, you might know that you have to develop a standard PowerPoint® presentation from scratch.
- ✓ **Step 2 – Run a Vertical Intercept.** From your starting position on the X Axis, run a vertical line up until it intersects the red line. For instance, the dotted blue line in Graph 2 shows the vertical intercept for developing standard presentation aids.
- ✓ **Step 3 – Run a Horizontal Intercept.** Run a horizontal line from the intersection of the vertical intercept and the red line, until it touches the left hand axis. This gives you the factor by which you need to multiply the preparation time for the spoken presentation. For instance, in this example, you would need 24 hours to prepare the

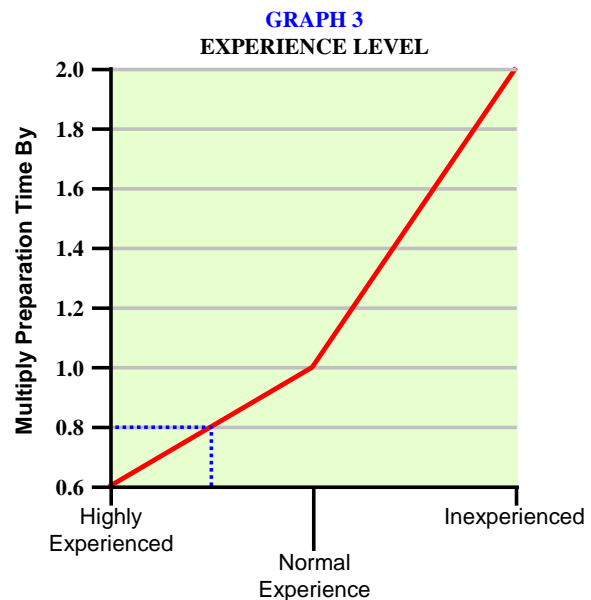
one hour presentation, which included the use of standard presentation aids (e.g. 12 hours multiplied by a factor of two).

#### 4 Graph 3 – Accounting for Experience

The third graph in this series takes into account the experience of the person developing the presentation.

The bottom scale (X Axis) on the graph uses a subjective scale related to the expertise of the person developing the presentation. The far left of the scale relates to a person who is highly experienced, while the far right hand side equates to someone who is inexperienced. The middle of this bottom scale equates to a person with normal experience. For example, this would equate to a person who has:

- ✓ developed presentations before, and understands the concepts described in the book *'Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation'*; and
- ✓ a sound understanding of any tools that will be used to develop the visual aids (e.g. *the person has a clear understanding of the use of PowerPoint®*, so they can readily show text and graphics using the types of animation that will be used).



The vertical axis (Y Axis) shows a factor that can be multiplied by the assessed preparation time, to determine the actual time it is likely to take to develop the presentation. There are three steps required to work out this factor. These steps are:

- ✓ **Step 1 – Gauge the Expertise of the Presentation Developer.** Firstly, work out where the expertise of the developer fits into the bottom scale. For example, you might have read the book and understand the processes needed to develop the presentation. This would move your starting position towards the left of the bottom scale. Additionally, in this case, you also believe that your skills with PowerPoint® are above average, so this will also speed up your efforts. You could therefore pick a position about a quarter of the way along the X Axis as your starting point, as shown in Graph 3. After you have done this a couple of times, you will typically get very accurate in your own skill assessment.
- ✓ **Step 2 – Run a Vertical Intercept.** From your starting position, run a vertical intercept upwards until it intersects with the red line, as shown in Graph 3.
- ✓ **Step 3 – Run a Horizontal Intercept.** From the intersection of the vertical intercept and the red line, follow a horizontal line across until it touches the left hand axis. This gives you the factor you will apply to your assessed preparation time, to determine the most likely amount of time you really need. For instance, in this example, the assessed

time for development was 24 hours. Because you are more expert at presentation development you can multiply this factor by 0.8, which means it should really only take around 19.2 hours to prepare a presentation and effective visual aids.

## 5 Graph 4 – Team Development

From past experience you can expect that team preparation will take a lot more time than doing it on your own. You can work out how much extra time by selecting the appropriate factor from the graph in Figure 1. This factor will then be multiplied by the total time for development that was deduced from the first three graphs.

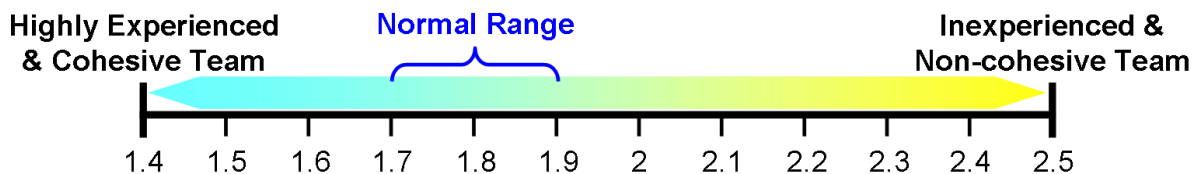


Figure 1: Use this Factor to determine how long it will take a Team to develop the presentation

In making your selection, the factor at the left of this graph equates to situations in which you are using a highly experience and cohesive team. The right hand side of this scale equates to circumstances in which you have a fairly inexperienced and non-cohesive team. In my experience, most teams actually seem to require a factor of about 1.7 to 1.9. Therefore, if we deduced that we would take about 19.2 hours to personally produce the one hour presentation, and felt that we had a fairly normal team, we could deduce that the team would take about 34.5 person-hours to develop the same presentation ( $19.2 \text{ hrs} \times 1.8 = 34.56 \text{ hrs}$ ).

Once again, the selection of the appropriate factor is somewhat subjective, but you will typically become quite accurate in assessing this after you have used this process a couple of times.

## 6 Using the Information from the Graphs

Although this example used all four graphs, you don't necessarily have to do so. For example, if you are not producing presentation aids, you might just use Graphs 1 and 3. This takes into account preparation of a verbal presentation and the experience of the developer. In other situations, you might use Graphs 1, 2 and 3, but not Graph 4 (*e.g. you are producing the presentation on your own*). Just use the graphs that are appropriate to your situation. Most people find that they get quite familiar with them after a few tries, and they can be very accurate.

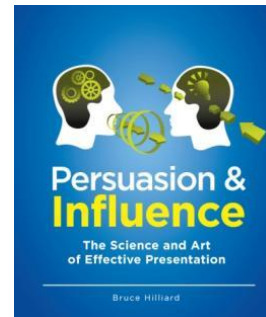
Once you know the expected time you are likely to need to develop the presentation, you can use this information to:

- ✓ **Set Aside the Right Amount of Time.** If you have an important presentation to deliver, make sure that you set aside the right amount of time. This often means that you will have to prioritise your other work, as discussed in Chapter 7 of the book '*Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation*'.

- ✓ **Explain the Timing to Others.** If your boss has asked you to develop a presentation, you can show him the results of these graphs, so it is clear how much time is really needed. This avoids the all-to-common problem, where your boss wants the presentation yesterday, and also wants all the other work done as well. With these graphs you can use a proven process to show just how much effort is really required. You can then use this information to explain why the other 27 jobs given to you can't be done.

I hope that this information will be of assistance to you. After you get used to them, you can become very accurate in defining the likely development time for effective communication. This is particularly true if you are using the advanced approach described in the book '*Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation*'.

This ground-breaking book simplifies wide-ranging research into the psychology of effective communication, so anyone can apply the powerful techniques needed to communicate more effectively and influence other people. In practical terms, this means that you can readily use this information to optimise any message, whether you need to teach others, sell something, or just generate personal success.



You can order a copy of this book online at the following web site: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00GWC00AA>.

You can also download other free (*and very useful*) documents from this web site: [http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion\\_influence.html](http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion_influence.html)

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