Giving Great Technical Talks

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Why Giving Good Talks is Important

- ISSCC audience ratings show that perceived technical content and originality correlates very well with presentation quality!
Great Technical Talks

• Are like adventure films
• They have a beginning (the problem)
• And an end (your solution)

• There is a hero (you!)
• But also bad guys (scientific challenges)
• And previous heroes (prior art) who didn’t quite succeed

• Finally, there is a worthwhile goal (the Ark of the Covenant)
Your Goals

Make your audience **care** about your work

- Explain its relevance and importance
- Explain the major challenge/question
- Explain the significance of what has been achieved
  \[ \Rightarrow \text{benchmarking, benchmarking, benchmarking, benchmarking} \]
- Convey your excitement about your work
- Note: your goal is NOT to impress your audience!
Preparation Tips

• Take the time to understand your audience
• Before diving into PowerPoint, define your main message and develop a story-line (not more than 1 or 2 ideas per slide)
• Plan for roughly one slide per minute

• A picture is worth more than a thousand words (or lots of maths)!
• Use bullet points instead of sentences
• KISS \(\Rightarrow\) If you don’t talk about it, don’t show it!
• Be consistent everywhere: if it’s called a crocodile on slide 3, don’t call it an alligator on slide 5

• Don’t go over time \(\Rightarrow\) Practice your talk!
• Have some back-up slides to answer “obvious” questions
Use Metaphors ...

- (Michiel’s) finger in the wind = thermal wind sensor
- Go from the **known** to the **unknown**
Presentation Tips

• Test all animations, movies etc beforehand!
• Test all equipment (pointer, computer, microphone) beforehand!

• Introduce yourself and the title of the talk
• If you’re nervous, memorize your opening sentences
• For a short (< 15 min) talk, skip the traditional outline
• Connect with your slides ⇒ use some kind of pointer
• When showing a graph, begin by describing the axes

• Project your voice (speak to the back of the room)
• Connect with your audience: make eye contact, smile, make jokes
Common Mistakes

• Not enough introduction
• Not enough introduction
• Not looking at your audience
• Going into too much technical detail
• Presenting too many (chemical) equations
• Rushing through too many slides
• Using too many PowerPoint effects
• Taking more than the allotted time
• Making grammatical and spelling mistakes
• No benchmarking, no awareness of prior art
• Omitting slide numbers
• Introducing new points in the conclusions
• Becoming defensive or evasive during the Q & A
Summary

• Your goal is to make your audience care about your work

So you must clearly explain
• Why its worth doing ⇒ relevance and importance
• What the goal is ⇒ research question(s), target specification
• How you did it ⇒ research plan, design methodology
• The significance of your result ⇒ benchmarking

And show them that you care

• Its not rocket science! You can do it too!