Oral presentation skills

The Basics

Dr Kevin Coward

- Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health
- Director, MSc in Clinical Embryology
- Research Group Leader

- Tutor, Divisional Skills Programme (Presentation Skills)
- Tutor, Divisional Skills Programme (PLTO)

kevin.coward@wrh.ox.ac.uk

Basic aims

- Introduction to public speaking
- Basic principles
- Presentation software (PowerPoint)
- Content development
- Useful tips
- Dealing with questions
- Further training

Oral presentations are omnipresent!

- Job interviews
- Scientific conferences/meetings
- Laboratory/team meetings
- PhD/Research fellowship applications
- Applications for research funding
- Departmental seminars
- Teaching/lecturing
- Conferring technology/science to public

Fundamental method of scientific communication

ClipArt

Transferable skill!

Applicable to all vocations

Doctors do talks!

- Patients
- Colleagues
- Conferences
- TV
- Newspapers
- Teaching

DR. TIM CHILD
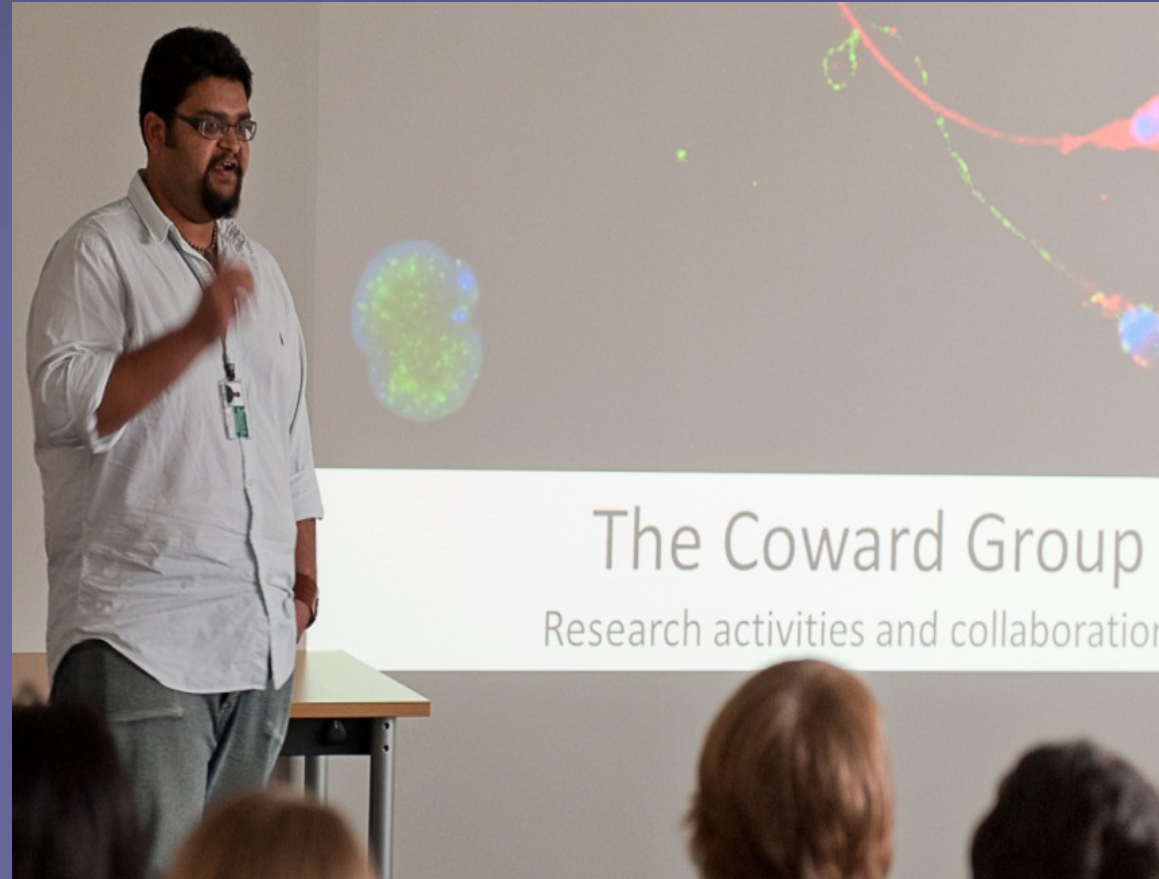FERTILITY SPECIALIST, JOHN RADCLIFFE HOSPITAL

cbsnews.com

Scientists do talks!

- Group meetings
- Dept seminars
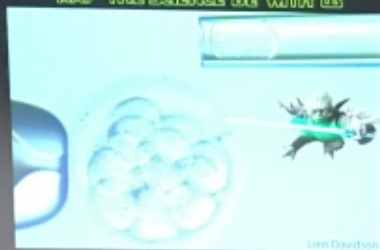- Conferences
- TV
- Newspapers
- Teaching

PhD students do lots of talks!

- Group meetings
- Dept seminars
- Conferences
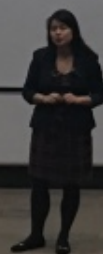- Teaching
- Confirmation
- Viva (maybe!)

- Interviews for post-docs/fellowships
- Future career (academia?)

Some basic principles

ClipArt

The ABC of communication

- To avoid audience confusion, use the ABC:

  - Audience-adapted

  - Brief

  - Clear

ClipArt

The three R's of public speaking

- Reflect

- Rehearse

- Rewrite

Reflect

- Plan carefully

- Give appropriate thought to all sections

- Consider content

- Treat as a story
  - Introduction
  - Main body
  - Summary/Conclusion

Rehearse

- Rehearse often

- Familiarize with content and delivery speed

- Practice timings carefully

- Rehearse alone/with an audience

- Strive to know well enough to be confident

Be careful how you rehearse!

Talk environment is DIFFERENT than your rehearsal environment!

Rewrite

- Be prepared to modify
  - Content
  - Delivery style
  - Delivery speed

- Consider:
  - Your own thoughts/criticism
  - Comments from friends/peers
  - Be honest with yourself!

# Expression is important

Common errors

- Speaking too quickly (nervousness)
- Reading notes/ignoring audience
- No eye contact
- Inexpressive, impersonal or indistinct style
- Distracting mannerisms
- Poor structure, little emphasis on key information
- Too complex (overload on facts)
- Too few visual aids

Delivery

- Engage audience – eye contact

- Ad lib (if you are confident to do so!)

- Don't let electronics distract you

- Use an appropriate pace

- Allow 1 – 2 min per slide

ClipArt
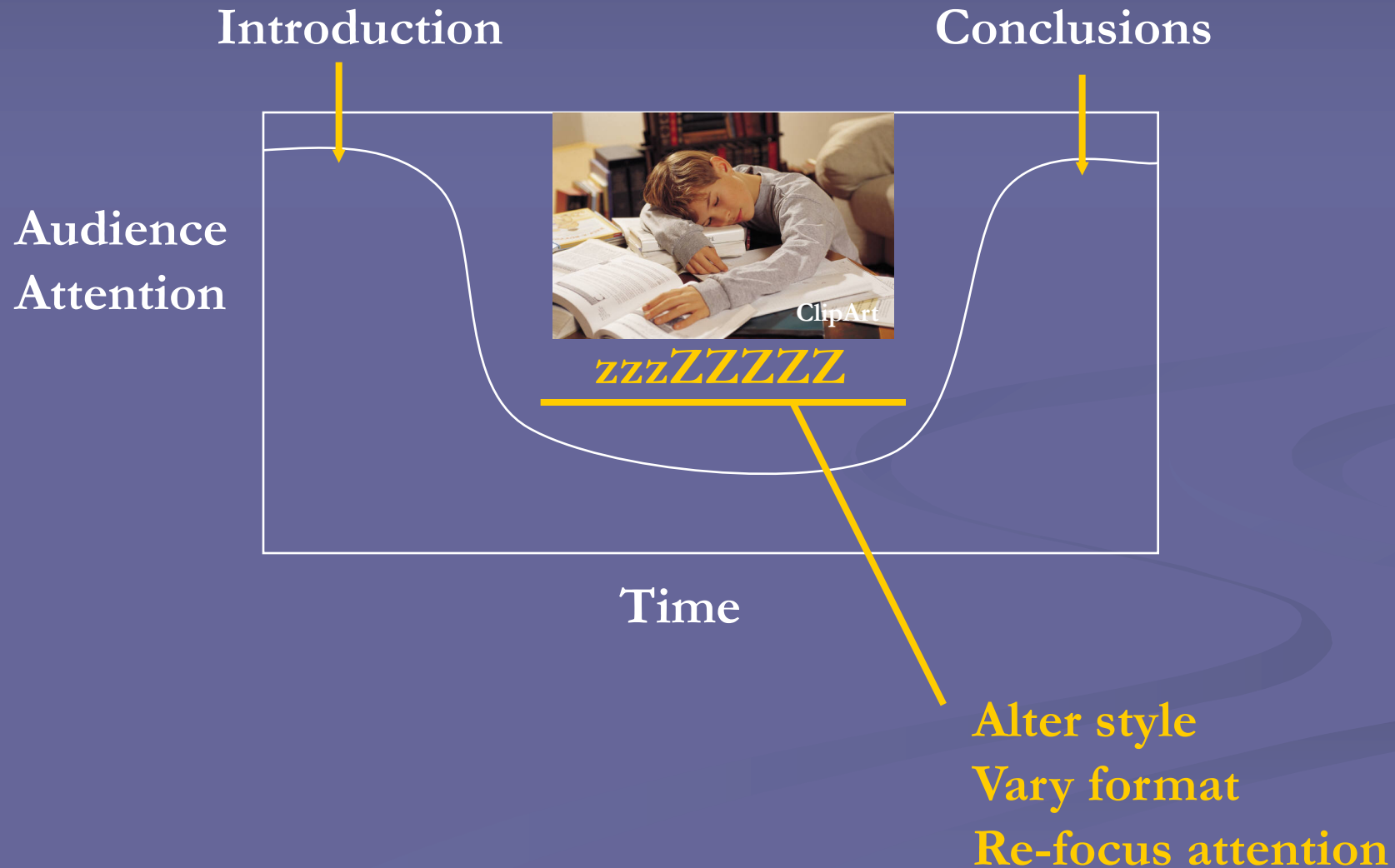
Laser pointer etiquette

ClipArt

- Can focus audience attention

- Do not overuse – can be very distracting

- Do not point at audience!

- Practice with use

Room lighting is important

- Illumination needs to be dim but is important
- Allows you to glance at notes
- Easier to make contact with audience

With room illuminated, audience can:

- See to make notes
- See you better
- Not get so tired!
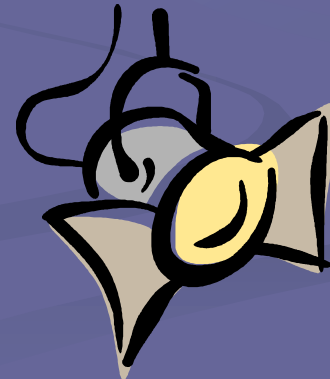
Preparation

Ascertain basic provisions

- Duration of talk

- Questions? (time allocated?)

- Size and location of venue

- Projection/lighting facilities/controls

- Computer format/compatibility

- Provision of pointers

- Worth visiting venue if possible

- Get in your comfort zone!

Know your audience!

- Vital if you are to 'pitch' at the correct level
- Can you assume a certain level of knowledge?
- How much background material do you need?

- Audience dictates content <u>and</u> speed of delivery
- Consider audience as a whole (presence of a few experts should not alter your overall judgement)

- Do not over-estimate background knowledge
- Build up content from basics

Presentation software

ClipArt

Select presentation software

- PowerPoint (the 'gold' standard)

  - Part of Microsoft Office Package
  - Professional presentation software
  - Text, images, animation, sound, video

- Other packages: Impress, Keynote, Prezi

[only PP supported in detail by IT services]

Principles of basic layout

ClipArt

Presentation software

Important points to consider:

- Background
- Layout
- Font
- Text
- Images
- Animation
- Use headings to help with structure
- Consistency
- Justification

Background

- Light font on dark background (restful)?

- Dark font on light background (lively)?

- Avoid dull backgrounds (boring)

- Avoid brightly coloured backgrounds (distracting)

- Consider pre-set backgrounds throughout?

- Be careful of using coloured text!

Layout

- Maintain a general 'theme'

- Designate areas for text/images?

Font sizes

- Default headings are large (size 44)
- Do not reduce < 28 point (this is 28 point!)
- If you have too much material – use another slide

- Font sizes:
  - 28 point 28 point 28 point 28 point 28 point 28 point
  - 24 point 24 point 24 point 24 point 24 point 24 point
  - 20 point 20 point 20 point 20 point 20 point 20 point
  - 18 point 18 point 18 point 18 point 18 point 18 point

Basic Text

- Try to use no more than 40 words per slide

- Try more than one font colour (levels of hierarchy?)

- Ensure colours are complimentary with background

Text

- Use keywords/short catchphrase

- Try and talk 'around' your text

- Don't read monotonously

# Use titles banner to convey main message and link from last slide!!

Images are good

- Images liven up a presentation

- Source: digital camera, scan, web

- Web – beware of copyright

- Can produce your own diagrams

- Various web-based image collections (free)

Source of images online

- ClipArt

- www.freefoto.com

- www.123.rf.com

- www.cellimagelibrary.org

- Be careful! Some sites have costs!

ClipArt
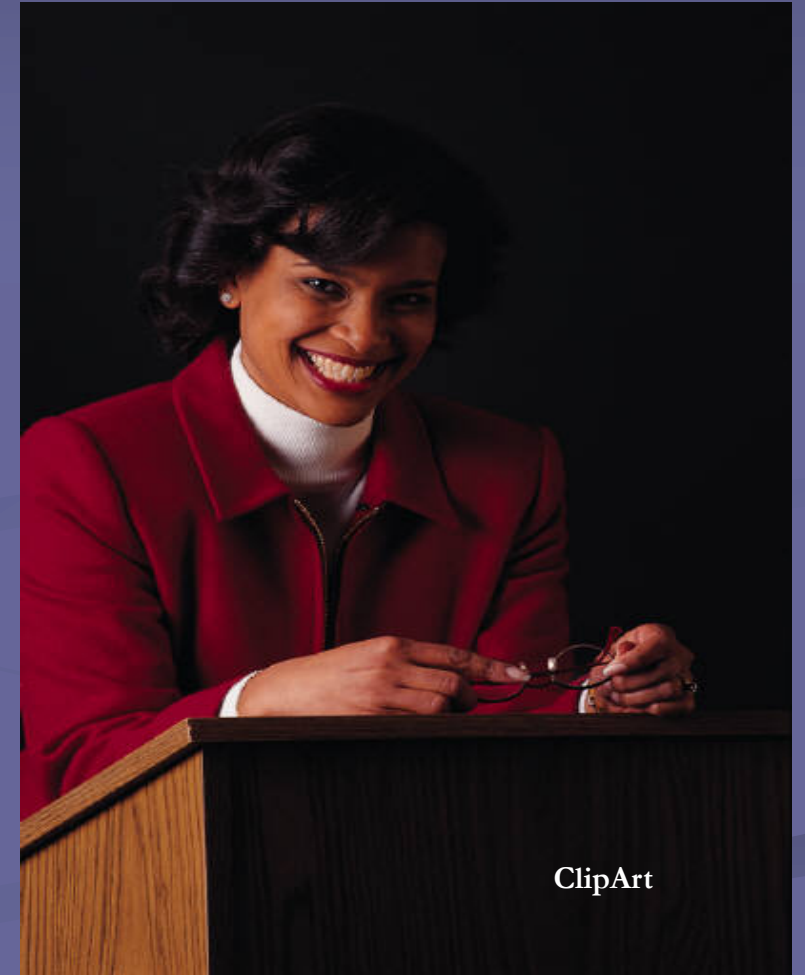
Animation

- Useful at times

  (e.g. revealing different topics)

- Can prevent audience 'reading on'

- **Avoid excessive use**
  - **Distracting to you/audience**
  - **Can go wrong (upset your rhythm)**

Videos often go wrong!

Content development

Vivien Sieber

The "presentation mantra"

- Tell them what you are going to tell them

- Tell them

- Tell them what you have just told them

A talk is like a story

ClipArt

ClipArt

- Beginning (introductory remarks)
- Main body (main points to deliver)
- Ending (concluding remarks/summary)

Introductory remarks

- Capture audience attention
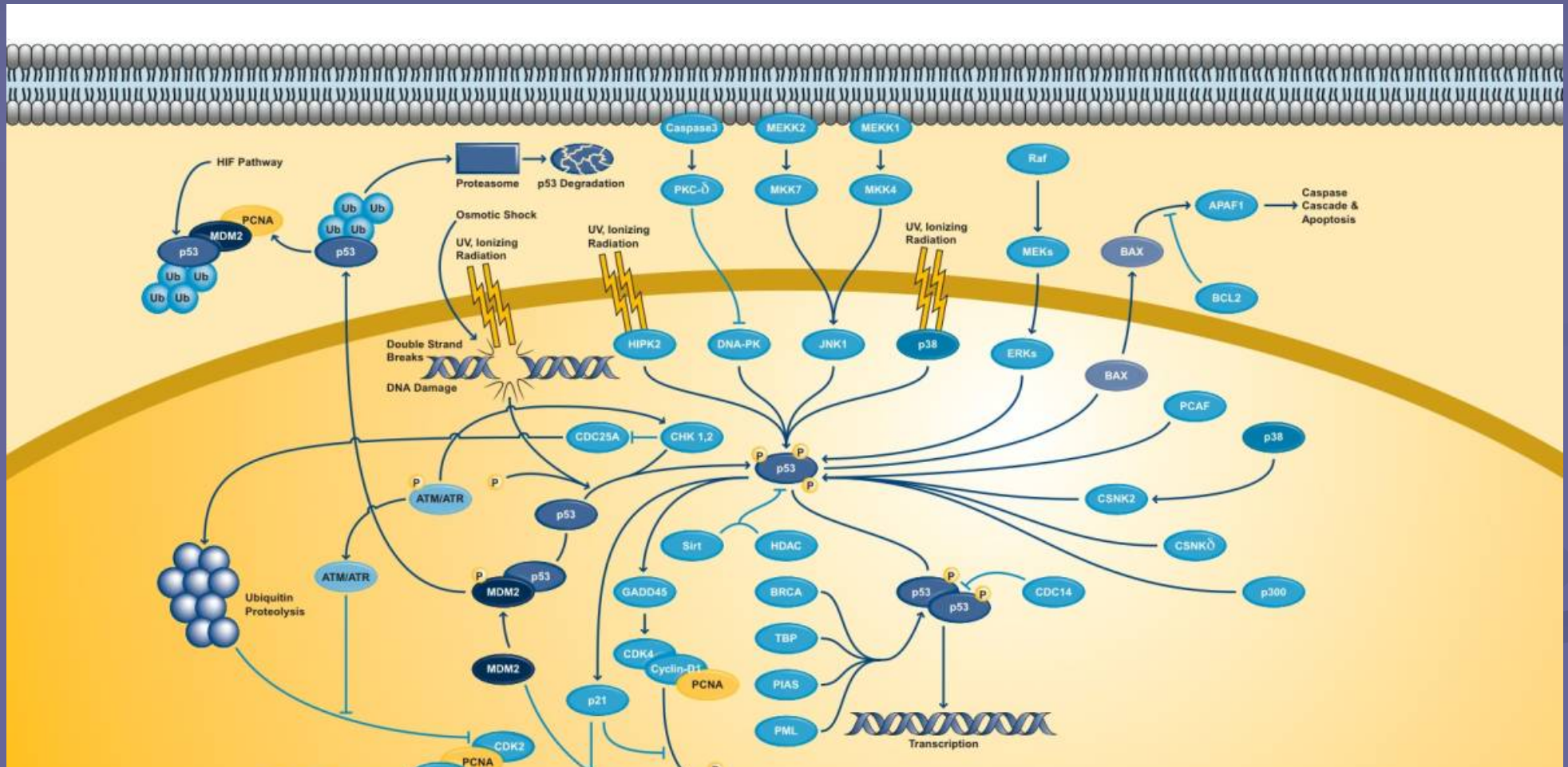- Strong opening comments
- Ensure the opening section flows well

'Structure, aims & objectives'

Occupies ~10% of talk

Avoid complicated openers!

Slide 1?

Main body – keep it simple

- Conveys the bulk of your message
- Use title banner to convey main message
- Split into clearly divided sub-sections with separators
- Keep details of methods minimal
- Present results in clear format (tables/figures)
- Do not include huge amounts of data – summarise
- Label and describe each diagram and table
- Avoid complex and convoluted story lines

Occupies ~80% of talk

Concluding remarks/summary

- Occupies ~10% of talk

- Do not end weakly

- Provide a clear 'take home message'

- Signal the end of your talk…' Finally/In conclusion..'

- Thank the audience for their attention

- Invite questions (if appropriate)
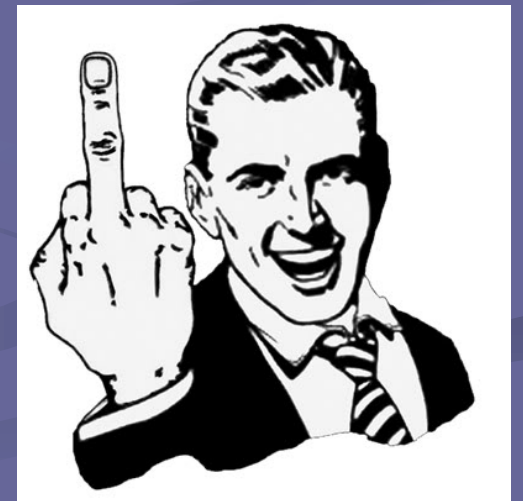
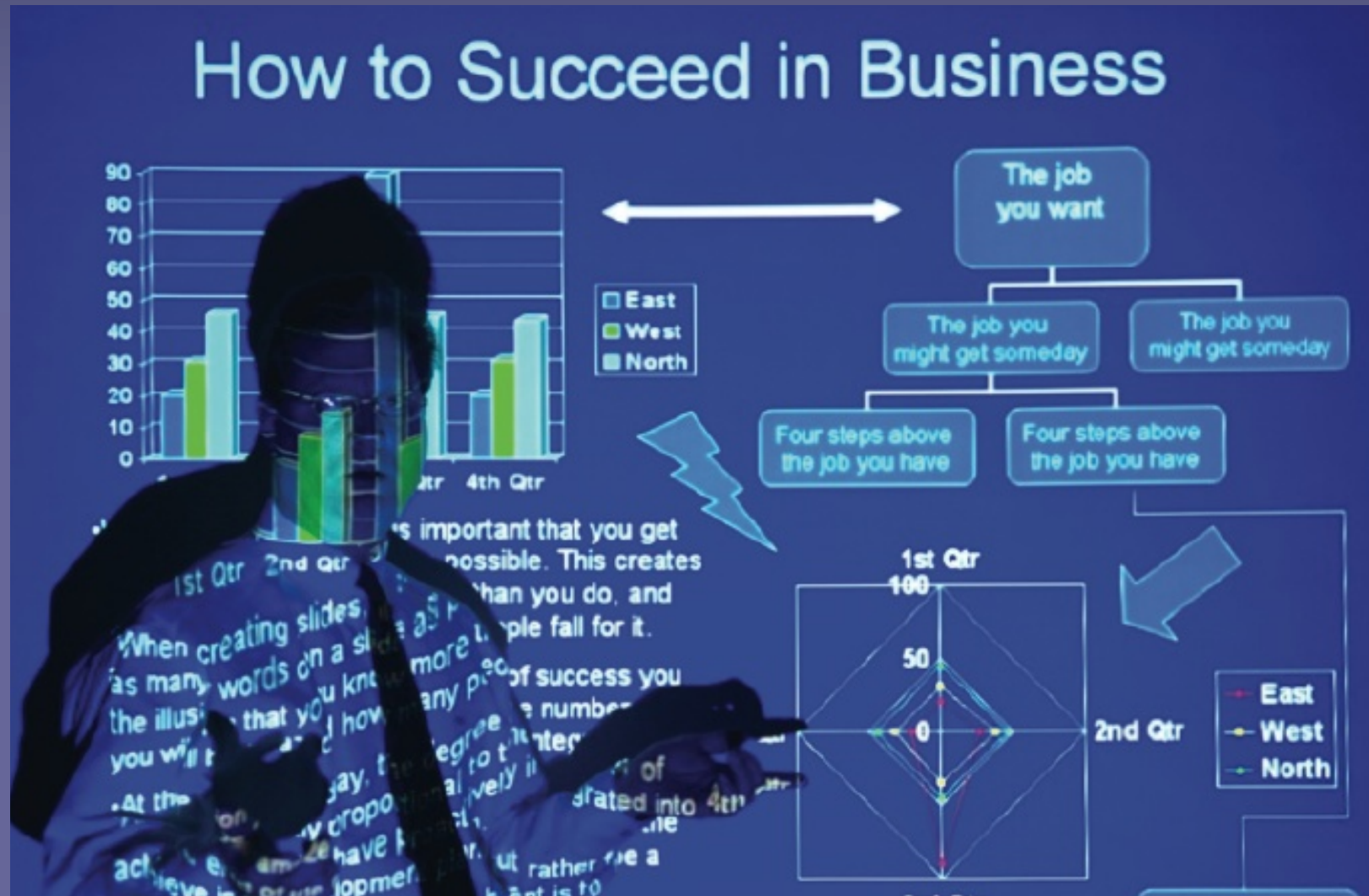Source: Google Images

Useful tips

ClipArt

General tips

- Keep structure simple

- Sub-divide large sections

- Memorise opening remarks to help you start

- Use title banners to provide links between slides

- Rehearse by yourself and with friends

- Be careful how your rehearse – vary your routine

- Keep notes to help you – but do not hold/read!

- Monitor your timekeeping (wall clock)

Ensure your image is appropriate

- Consider what to wear (respectable/comfort)

- Good posture (helps voice projection)

- Make eye contact (across audience)

- Use expression (avoid extreme gestures)

- Identify and control distracting habits
  - 'happy with that?'
  - 'OK?'

Don't stand in front of the projector!

Don't read from expansive text!

RELAX & BE NORMAL!

* You can get worked up!

* Sick?

* Can't breathe

* Voice waivers

* Shake

* Pass out/collapse? (make sure you eat!)

VERY UNCOMFORTABLE FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

Dealing with questions

Pre-prepare

- Consider the questions you may be asked (implications of data? methods? future?)

- Ask friends/colleagues

- Prepare stock answers

- Be confident and assertive in your answers

Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"!

- Audience will appreciate honesty

- Uncomfortable to watch someone 'squirm'

- Do not attempt to create 'something from nothing'

Avoid arguing

- Do not argue with a questioner

- Rather, suggest a discussion afterwards

- Do not debate on stage – unpredictable outcome!

Expect the unexpected

- Sometimes things happen that you cannot control!
    - Computer failure
    - Power failure
    - Audience falling asleep!
    - Audience looking bored/distracted
    - Audience eating

Summary

- Know your audience
- Prepare well
- Consider font, size, background, colours
- Know your content
- Rehearse
- Pre-empt lines of questioning
- Relax – eye contact, gestures, body language
- Pace yourself
- Monitor timekeeping

Learn from others

- Keep an open mind in lectures & presentations

- Take mental notes of good and bad points

- Keep notes (presentation journal?):
  - Things to incorporate in your own presentations
  - Things to avoid in your own presentations

Presenting is a skill

- Your skills will develop in time

- Constantly adapt and develop your style

- Listen to feedback

- Academic lecturers are not necessarily good presenters!

Further training

- Presentation skills (Divisional Skills Programme)

- Large group teaching & lecturing (Divisional Skills Programme)

- PowerPoint courses (IT Services)

- Take any opportunity you can to present!