

## Kingbridge/MaRS

### Alliance

The Kingbridge Conference Centre and Institute and the MaRS Collaboration Centre both believe in effective convening. We share a passion in helping clients obtain meaningful results from meetings, conferences, seminars plus improve collaborative skills. This shared vision, combined with facilities in diverse yet truly unique settings, is structured to enhance the value for our clients. Our venues are committed to providing exceptional service. We consider that this strategic collaborative alliance strengthens both our missions and provides more options for our clients'.



Great organizations are great communicators, learners and collaborators. We will nurture communication, learning and collaboration within our organization and our client's organizations with tools and approaches that stimulate, challenge and provoke in an atmosphere of trust, respect and accountability.

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MaRS is a non-profit innovation centre connecting science, technology and social entrepreneurs with business skills, networks and capital to stimulate innovation and accelerate the creation and growth of successful Canadian enterprises.

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## Difficult Presentations

### Process checklist for giving difficult presentations to difficult audiences

Part of the job of any leader requires talking about difficult issues and ideas to a skeptical or hostile audience. They may be employees, clients, investors, regulators or colleagues with control over your destiny.

Important presentations need to convey clear understanding of the topic to be discussed as well as confidence and trust in the presenter. Overcoming the challenges of facing an audience with a wide range of understanding, unrealistic expectations, vested (and competing) interests along with political power and rhetorical skill demands great planning and presentation zen.

*This checklist is the outcome of the collective intelligence of the participants at the Kingbridge/MaRS "Difficult Presentations" workshop held in October, 2008.*

# Difficult Presentations - Process Checklist

## Pre-work

### Establish your Goal

What is the problem/challenge you need to solve?

What are the Desired Outcomes?

- Establish trust?
- Create understanding of facts and implications?
- Recruit help?

### Profile the Audience

Prior to giving a difficult presentation you must know your audience so that you may effectively tailor your message to meet their needs.

Key information you should acquire:

#### Who are they?

- Your presentation will be different depending on whether the audience is primarily financial, technical, marketing, clients media, etc, or a combination.
- What is their history with the organization?
- Be prepared for hidden biases

#### Level of understanding:

- What does your audience already know about what you are presenting?

#### Audience assumptions:

- What does your audience 'think' they know about what you are presenting and how are you going to address possible misconceptions?

#### Expectations:

- When presenting bad news consider what they may expect:
  - Facts?
  - Insight?
  - Solutions or action?
  - Empathy?

## Analysis

Based on the information you ascertained from your audience you must now analyze this information in order to create a successful strategy.

#### Vested interest:

- Is this presentation integral to success or survival for your audience?
- Does your organization's success or survival depend upon this presentation?
- If you can't make your case at this time, can this presentation earn you the opportunity to make another presentation when you have more information? In other words create an expectation for continuing updates.

#### Ability to influence the audience:

- Do you have the expertise to address the potential questions your audience will ask? If not, how will you mitigate this limitation?

## Strategize

Using your analysis of the situation you now have to establish a plan of attack.

#### Set the stage:

- How will you open your presentation in a way that establishes trust?
- Will a relevant story be helpful?
- Can carefully placed humour be helpful?
- Be humble, but confident.
- With interviews or questions, be prepared with short clear answers.

#### Format:

- Will written material be important?
- Will graphics or slides be helpful? Or appear slick?
- How long should it be?
- Timing: how do you balance too soon (inadequate

information) versus too late (loss of relevance and credibility)?

- Don't promise what you can't deliver.

#### Establish metrics of success:

- How will you measure the success of your presentation?

#### Anticipate questions:

Based on the analysis of your audience you will be able to anticipate the questions that your audience will have. Determine how you will address these questions within your presentation and 'beat them to the punch' wherever possible.

## Execution

#### Be authentic!

- Take ownership and responsibility for what you are presenting.
- Be mindful of your audience and be ready to adapt to their needs.

#### Engage your audience:

- Ask them questions and request input
- Let them know you value their expertise
- Allow them to take part in the process

## Follow up

- Assess metrics
- Consider all feedback and use this information to alter your approach for your next Difficult Presentation.