



Presenting Skills

Aesthetics talks to recognised public speakers and trainers within the specialty to learn their top tips for being a good presenter

'Just picture the audience in their underwear' is common advice given to those less comfortable at taking the spotlight and speaking in front of a crowd.

However, is this tactic realistically going to help you present?

Even if you are the most experienced medical professional in your field, public speaking doesn't come naturally to everyone and there are many difficulties associated with standing upon a podium and voicing your expertise, clinical techniques and performing live treatment demonstrations.

Presenting to a medical aesthetics audience has its own set of challenges, explains CEO and founder of Harley Academy, Dr Tristan Mehta, who regularly speaks on training and regulation at conferences and other industry events. This is especially true if you are new to presenting to your aesthetic colleagues.

"I remember the first time I presented at a conference; even though I was very confident in what I was delivering, I was nervous. I felt like an imposter because there is a sense that the aesthetics specialty is quite insular and often it's the same people presenting every time," Dr Mehta says.

Being a 'newbie' in the aesthetics presenting arena can definitely be intimidating or even terrifying, according to ENT surgeon Mr Simon Ravichandran and aesthetic dentist Dr Emma Ravichandran, founders of Aesthetics Training Academy. Each have been presenting for more than 10 years;

however, say that even experienced and skilled presenters have challenges and can improve or refine their skills.

"Many advanced practitioners can overthink and over anticipate what the audience really know and have the tendency to pitch the presentation a little too high, so I think it really is important to know your audience and select what you want to be most impactful to that audience," Dr Ravichandran states.

So how can aesthetic practitioners who are new to presenting learn the ropes, or how can those with experience refine their skills? What should every presenter take into account when they are asked to speak at a conference or trade event? Or even when they are speaking at a patient educational session?

"For presenting, the bottom line is self-awareness. You need to be aware of yourself, know how you are acting and be able to pick up on how the audience is reacting to you"

Mr Dalvi Humzah

Money should be no motivator

The practitioners interviewed all agree that one of the most important things presenters in aesthetics should do is ask themselves 'What is motivating me to present on this particular topic in the first place?' They all note that in aesthetics, this is especially important if you have been asked to speak on behalf of a company with the offer of financial reward. Dr Mehta states, "Good presenting comes down to motivation and why you are doing it. I think there are almost certainly going to be people in aesthetics who love to be on stage for the wrong reasons, like money and fame. You need to be passionate and should be motivated by the genuine impact that you can have on people that are listening."

Consultant plastic reconstructive and aesthetic surgeon, and lead tutor and director of Dalvi Humzah Aesthetic Training, Mr Dalvi Humzah, adds, "It's not about money or getting people to give you a standing ovation. You should have a drive and ambition for teaching and engaging people. The best presenters will light a spark in the audience and make them want to learn more, and that's the beauty of a good presenter."

Dr Ravichandran adds, "Make sure you choose to talk about something that you are passionate about, are skilful at, and understand well."

So, how can you present your points in the most effective way?

Know your audience

As mentioned, this is a challenge for even the most experienced presenters. According to the practitioners interviewed, first and foremost, every presenter should ask the event organiser who their audience is, every time.

Dr Mehta explains, "You've got to truly understand why it is people have come to see you. A presenter is like a sales person



who has a message to sell and you must understand why your customer – who is your audience – is interested in receiving that message. You can then target your message accordingly to make it as engaging as possible.”

Mr Humzah explains that the biggest challenge in aesthetics is knowing what level to pitch your talk. He says, “You will have novices and experts in the same room and it can be challenging for anyone presenting to grab the attention of the whole audience so that everyone is engaged. What I normally do is acknowledge when something might be quite simple and straightforward or when something might be quite complicated.”

Plan and practise

Although it may look easy, a huge amount of preparation, effort and practise goes into a good presentation.

When planning, Dr Mehta says that simplicity is key, “Get three learning points together that you think are important about a certain topic and build your conversation around those.”

Mr Ravichandran also advocates this technique, and recommends preparing an explanation of why you are best suited to talk on a particular topic. “Always start by telling the audience why you are here, what your skill set is and what the audience is going to get out of your presentation,” he advises.

Dr Ravichandran adds that this honesty also helps your confidence, “If you don’t set the benchmark and tell the audience what level of experience you are speaking at from the beginning, then they will assess this during your presentation and, for me, that can cause a bit of anxiety.” She adds, “I often get anxious about speaking. One thing that works well for me is to have the first three sentences in place. This helps me get over the first 15 seconds and I am comfortable to go from there.”

Some people find it useful to have their whole presentation written as a script, especially as a beginner. “I used to memorise my whole presentation word for word, down to my stage movements and gestures,” Mr Ravichandran states. Others, Dr Mehta explains, use lecture notes and spend lots of time rehearsing. “This is what I did for my first two years of presenting and teaching. Now I have got to the stage where I almost prefer to just go and see what comes out; I think this can make you appear more authentic,” he says.

Dr Ravichandran and Mr Humzah add that they also find practising on the go, such as in the car or in the gym, useful to fit it into a busy

Speaking for companies

Have you ever been asked by a company to speak about its products, techniques or services? Some practitioners will be paid to share their expertise, whilst for others it may be voluntary. However, it’s important to note that often in aesthetics the presentation may have an agenda that’s purpose is more than educating the audience.

First and foremost, Dr Mehta advises to consider whether your values align with the company. He says, “You’ve got to love the company’s products and their services.” Dr Ravichandran adds, “Only speak for companies that have products which get you good results. If you don’t already, go and learn everything about it because the most important lesson is that you know your subject inside out.” When presenting for companies, you need to be explicit in what your role is, Mr Ravichandran says, explaining that you have an obligation to let the audience know when you are speaking on behalf of a company, especially because delegates sometimes won’t know the talk might have some promotional elements to it. Mr Humzah adds, “Be open and honest; don’t try and fool people in regards to why you are there. Acknowledge that you are there on behalf of the company and explain what that means and what you’re trying to achieve from that. You should also explain why you are limiting the talk to that product and not discussing any competitors.”

Presenting for companies means that you may have restrictions on what you can say and do, explains Dr Ravichandran, explaining, “You have to know what you can and can’t talk about, especially if you are speaking for a pharmaceutical company.” Mr Ravichandran adds, “You need to familiarise yourself with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry¹ and you have to talk about their pharmaceutical products only in relationship to their licences in the UK. For example, I might not be able to talk about some types of toxin injections, other than using the correct doses for that particular product and injecting in the correct areas for which you have prescribed. You have to be careful with your language and your slides to ensure you do not make any unsubstantiated claims about a product or device.” This is in accordance with Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) regulations, so Mr Ravichandran advises to use terminology such as, “Using this technique may reduce the risk of a complication,” as opposed to, “This technique is safer.”² Not doing so, Mr Ravichandran explains, may have potential repercussions for breach of guidelines.

schedule. “A good rule of thumb is that for every minute of a presentation that you do, you need to spend an hour of preparation – I don’t think you should sit down for a whole day for one presentation, but I will prepare and practise whilst I’m doing other things,” Mr Humzah says.

Mr Ravichandran agrees that practise makes perfect, saying, “In the early days, Emma and I would have a recording spot in our kitchen and we would record ourselves and watch it over. It wouldn’t be unusual for us to practise something 30 times before a presentation.”

Read the audience and seek engagement

However, a good presenter, Mr Humzah says, is one who has the ability to deviate from their planned presentation, read the audience and assess whether or not the content is being accepted well.

He explains, “For presenting, the bottom line is self-awareness. You need to be aware of yourself, know how you are acting and be able to pick up on how the audience is

reacting to you. You might think that you will be speaking to a novice audience so have planned a really simple talk, but suddenly you get in there and you realise it’s not the case or the agenda has changed and you have to change your approach and pitch at a higher level.”

Mr Ravichandran describes this as ‘a really advanced and good skill to have’. He believes you can identify whether your audience is accepting your presentation well if they are doing things like maintaining eye contact with you, nodding and sitting on the edge of their chair.

Of course, if you can’t get your audience to listen to what you are saying, what’s the point? Mr Humzah explains, “Someone who is sitting in the audience must be engaged, otherwise they will just fall asleep.” He advises that one way to promote engagement is to be dynamic and keep moving. “Instead of standing behind a lectern, try to stand to its side so that people can see all of you, especially if you are short. I always think it’s good to be expressive with your hands and

I walk around the stage. This engages you and it engages the audience – it makes their heads and eyes move, which helps them stay alert and listening.”

Dr Mehta agrees that body language impacts engagement; he says, “You should open and expose your body, don’t cross your arms and make sure to stand in a fluid and natural way. You’ve got to portray your body language as if you are a leader with interesting things to share.” He adds, “I also think clarity and voice are important for engagement; making eye contact with the audience and asking if there are any questions as you go along can also be useful.”

Another tool is humour, which Mr Humzah believes is a good aspect of teaching and presenting. However, he notes that it’s not for every audience, particularly for international delegates who may not have the same sense of humour.

inside-out and be ready to present at any medium and in any format,” he advises. Although for many it could be obvious, Mr Humzah also states that some presenters get their clothing wrong. “Presenters need to dress accordingly; I recommend smart formal business attire – it’s not a fashion show. For live demonstrations, wearing scrubs shows that it’s a clinical setting. If someone is presenting on stage then going backstage to do a live demonstration, then I think a white coat can be a good idea so you can easily take it on and off.”

Another element of professionalism is time keeping, as presenters that run over can cause frustration for both the audience and other presenters. “This is a pet hate of mine,” Mr Humzah declares, adding, “It is very important to keep to time. Find out what your timeframe is and always prepare a presentation that’s a little bit shorter than

drugs we may be using.” Mr Ravichandran also advises all presenters who are performing live demonstrations to check they are adequately insured. Mr Humzah’s advice is for presenters to make clear in their live demonstrations to aesthetic professionals what its aim is and what you are trying to achieve. “You need to be clear to your audience that it’s just a short demonstration and that you are not presenting a technique that will allow them to leave the presentation and do it tomorrow,” he explains.

Continue to learn

As most aesthetic practitioners know, there is never an end to learning and even the best presenters can improve or discover new techniques.

To learn to become a better presenter, Mr Ravichandran and Dr Ravichandran encourage practitioners to attend courses. “They don’t have to be specific to aesthetics, there are so many courses available to teach or refine presenting skills. Just search presentation skill courses online and go on as many as you can because they will each teach you something different – there is no right way of doing it.”

Mr Humzah adds that you should watch and critique recordings of yourself, as well as asking other people to give you constructive criticism.

Mr Ravichandran, notes that he regularly gets told that he speaks too fast. To help with this, he says, “I ask someone to stand at the back of the lecture theatre and use hand signals to to slow me down.”

Find your own voice

Practitioners agree that when successful, presenting at aesthetic conferences and events can be extremely rewarding. Dr Ravichandran’s final advice is to, “Stay honest, find a style that works for you and don’t try and replicate something that’s not natural to you,” while Mr Ravichandran adds, “Never agree to talk about something that you are not interested in or won’t learn about.”

Dr Mehta concludes, “The tip is to find your authentic voice and to accept that it won’t please everyone. If you believe in what you are talking about and present it in an effective way, you will eventually be heard.”

REFERENCES

1. The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, 2018. <<https://www.abpi.org.uk/>>
2. MHRA, The Blue Guide ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION OF MEDICINES IN THE UK, 2014. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/376398/Blue_Guide.pdf>

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Mr Simon Ravichandran

Dr Ravichandran points out that something that even experienced presenters sometimes forget is that delegates at conferences will often see you present several times, so she advises to never present the same thing. “Care about your audience. If you have a presentation that you may use several times, make regular changes. Keep your content fresh and up-to-date; aesthetics changes constantly so your talk has to change too,” she advises.

Stay professional

“I think it’s very important to be professional in all aspects of presenting,” explains Mr Humzah, adding, “Unpredictable things do happen, technology issues are very common and I have seen people shout at others when this happens. Keep your cool; people will remember if you don’t.”

Mr Ravichandran explains that there can be all kinds of last-minute circumstances that will affect your presentation. “I once left my computer on a train and was lucky that I had emailed a PDF to someone, but this meant that I had to present from a PDF, which wasn’t ideal. Make sure you know your subject

expected – if you have been given 20 minutes, prepare a 15-minute presentation.” He advises presenters always keep an eye on the clock or chairperson, if there is one. He says, “Too many people get engrossed in their presentation and have a chairperson waving their hands at them saying they are running over but don’t notice them.”

Presenting live demos

Presenting live treatment demonstrations, practitioners agree, is another separate challenge. Dr Ravichandran’s top tip is not to change what you do in clinic every day to impress a crowd. “It’s easy to tell when a presenter is doing something for the first time or if they are doing something they are not used to. If you use needles in clinic, don’t demonstrate with a cannula just because it might be the fashion at the time. Do what you are confident doing, it’s the best and safest way to do it.” Both Dr and Mr Ravichandran will always bring their own clinical supplies with them. Mr Ravichandran explains, “We always bring things like needles, cannulas and emergency medication so we can ensure we are familiar with the devices and