

Course: Corporate Communication and Public Relations

Lecture 6: Smooth presentation of arguments in a style appropriate to the context

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Objectives

By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Define well an argument.
2. Describe clearly the qualities of an argument.
3. Explain the styles of presenting an argument.
4. Describe the impact of smooth presentation of arguments on a business.

Introduction

The ability to make a smooth and persuasive presentation of arguments is crucial for professional growth and effective service delivery in various fields and professions. It is important because it contributes to the growth of the organization, institution, or company and the professional growth of employees.

In fact, the ability to present arguments smoothly and persuasively is a valuable skill that can contribute to professional growth and enhance service delivery across various industries and professions. It enables professionals to communicate effectively, influence decisions, and navigate complex situations, ultimately leading to career advancement and improved service outcomes.

A smooth presentation of arguments is a tremendous tool for leveraging up organizational growth.

Definition

An argument, in the context of communication and rhetoric, is a structured and coherent presentation of reasons or evidence used to support a particular point of view or a claim.

Arguments are a fundamental part of human communication and are used to persuade, inform, or engage in reasoned discourse.

An argument can be defined as a complex symbolic structure where some parts, known as the premises, offer support to another part, the conclusion. Alternatively, an argument can be viewed as a complex speech act consisting of one or more acts of premising (which assert propositions in favor of the conclusion), an act of concluding, and a stated or implicit marker (“hence”, “therefore”) that indicates that the conclusion follows from the premises (Hitchcock 2007).

Argumentation can be defined as the communicative activity of producing and exchanging reasons in order to support claims or defend/challenge positions, especially in situations of doubt or disagreement (Lewiński & Mohammed 2016).

Elements of an argument

- ✓ **Claim (or Thesis):** The central point or assertion that the argument aims to prove or persuade others to accept. It is the main idea or conclusion.
- ✓ **Reasons:** Supporting statements, evidence, or premises that are presented to justify or explain the claim. Reasons are used to provide a rational basis for accepting the claim.
- ✓ **Evidence:** Factual information, examples, statistics, expert opinions, or data that supports the reasons and reinforces the argument's validity.
- ✓ **Counterarguments (Optional):** Acknowledgment of opposing viewpoints or potential objections to the claim. Counterarguments are sometimes included to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the issue.
- ✓ **Conclusion:** A restatement of the claim, often summarizing the reasons and evidence provided. The conclusion reinforces the argument's main point.

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Arguments can take various forms and are used in a wide range of contexts, including academic essays, debates, persuasive speeches, discussions, legal proceedings, and everyday conversations. The effectiveness of an argument depends on the quality of its reasoning, the relevance and strength of the evidence, and the ability to persuade the audience to accept the claim.

It's important to note that not all arguments are persuasive or intended to change someone's mind. Some arguments aim to inform or clarify, while others may engage in a dialectical exchange of ideas without seeking a clear resolution. The quality of an argument is often assessed based on its logical validity, factual accuracy, and the persuasiveness of the reasons and evidence presented.

Qualities of a good argument

A good argument is characterized by several key qualities that make it persuasive, logical, and effective. These qualities help ensure that the argument is well-structured and capable of convincing others of its validity. Here are the qualities of a good argument:

- ✓ **Clarity:** A good argument is clear and easily understood. It uses straightforward language and avoids unnecessary complexity or ambiguity. The main claim, reasons, and evidence should be presented in a straightforward manner.
- ✓ **Logical consistency:** The components of a good argument, including the claim and the reasons, should be logically consistent with one another. There should be no internal contradictions or logical fallacies.

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- ✓ **Relevance:** The reasons and evidence presented in the argument should be directly relevant to the claim being made. Irrelevant information can weaken an argument's effectiveness.
- ✓ **Sufficiency:** A good argument provides sufficient reasons and evidence to support the claim. The support should be strong enough to make the claim reasonable or convincing to the audience.
- ✓ **Credibility:** The evidence and sources cited in the argument should be credible and reliable. This enhances the argument's overall persuasiveness. Citing authoritative experts or reputable research can boost credibility.

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- ✓ **Balance:** A well-balanced argument acknowledges counterarguments or opposing viewpoints and addresses them fairly. This shows a comprehensive understanding of the issue and strengthens the argument by addressing potential objections.
- ✓ **Coherence:** A good argument has a logical flow and organization. It should be structured in a way that is easy to follow, with a clear introduction, well-organized reasons, and a compelling conclusion.
- ✓ **Factual accuracy:** The information and evidence presented in the argument should be factually accurate. Misrepresenting facts can weaken the argument and damage credibility.
- ✓ **Persuasiveness:** Ultimately, a good argument is persuasive. It should appeal to the audience's reason and emotions, providing compelling reasons and evidence that lead them to accept the claim or viewpoint being presented.

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- ✓ **Clarity of assumptions:** If the argument relies on certain assumptions, these should be made explicit. Assumptions should be reasonable and justifiable.
- ✓ **Use of logic and reasoning:** A good argument employs sound logic and reasoning. Deductive reasoning should lead to a conclusion that follows logically from the reasons presented. Inductive reasoning should be supported by evidence that makes the conclusion probable.
- ✓ **Avoidance of fallacies:** Fallacies, such as ad hominem attacks, straw man arguments, or appeals to emotion, should be avoided in a good argument. Fallacious reasoning weakens the overall quality of the argument.

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- ✓ **Consideration of counterarguments:** A good argument anticipates and addresses potential counterarguments. This shows a willingness to engage with opposing viewpoints and strengthens the overall case.
- ✓ **Conciseness:** While providing sufficient information is important, a good argument avoids unnecessary verbosity. It conveys its points concisely and directly.
- ✓ **Engagement with the audience:** A good argument considers the needs and perspectives of the audience. It adapts to the audience's knowledge, values, and interests to be more persuasive.

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✓ **Empathy and respect:** When addressing opposing views or counterarguments, a good argument does so with empathy and respect, avoiding personal attacks or disrespectful language.

By embodying these qualities, a good argument is more likely to effectively convey its message and persuade others to accept or consider the claim being presented.

Organising an argument

Organizing an argument is crucial for presenting your ideas coherently and persuasively. Whether you're writing an essay, giving a presentation, or engaging in a debate, a well-organized argument enhances your ability to convey your message effectively.

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to organize an argument:

- 1. Determine your main claim (thesis):** Start by identifying the central point or claim you want to make. This is the core idea or conclusion of your argument. Your entire argument will revolve around this claim.
- 2. Identify your audience:** Consider your audience's knowledge, values, and beliefs. Tailor your argument to resonate with your target audience.
- 3. Gather supporting evidence:** Collect relevant evidence, examples, facts, statistics, or expert opinions that support your main claim. Ensure that your evidence is credible and well-documented.

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4. Outline your argument: Create an outline that provides a clear structure for your argument.


Introduction:

- Present your main claim (thesis statement).
- Provide context or background information.
- Preview the main points of your argument.

Body:

- Present your reasons and evidence in a clear, logical order.
- Start with your strongest or most compelling points.
- Address counterarguments or opposing viewpoints if necessary.
- Use clear transitions between points to maintain coherence.

Conclusion: Summarize the main points of your argument, restate your main claim, reinforcing its importance, and close with a call to action or a thought-provoking statement (if applicable).



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5. Write or Present Your Argument

- Use the outline to guide the writing or presentation of your argument.
- Develop each point in a clear and concise manner.
- Use persuasive language and rhetorical devices to engage your audience.

6. Consider Counterarguments: If there are opposing viewpoints or counterarguments, address them within your argument. Acknowledging and refuting counterarguments strengthens your position.

7. Use Transitions: Employ transitional phrases and words to ensure a smooth flow between ideas and points. Transitions help your audience follow your argument.

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- 8. Provide Examples and Illustrations:** Use concrete examples, anecdotes, or illustrations to make your points more vivid and relatable to your audience.
- 9. Cite Your Sources:** If you're using external sources, provide proper citations to give credit to your references and enhance the credibility of your argument.
- 10. Revise and Edit:** Review your argument for clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness. Ensure that your main claim is supported by compelling evidence and that your argument is free from grammatical and typographical errors.

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11. Provide Examples and Illustrations: Use concrete examples, anecdotes, or illustrations to make your points more vivid and relatable to your audience.

12. Cite Your Sources: If you're using external sources, provide proper citations to give credit to your references and enhance the credibility of your argument.

13. Revise and Edit: Review your argument for clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness. Ensure that your main claim is supported by compelling evidence and that your argument is free from grammatical and typographical errors.

Note: The effectiveness of your argument not only depends on the strength of your claims and evidence but also on how well you organize and present your ideas. A clear and logical structure will help your audience follow your argument and be more likely to accept your point of view.

Presentation of arguments

Presenting arguments smoothly and in a style appropriate to the context is crucial for effective communication, whether it's in a formal presentation, a meeting, an academic paper, or a casual discussion. Here are some tips to help you present your arguments effectively:

- ✓ **Know Your Audience:** Understand your audience's background, knowledge level, and expectations. Tailor your style and level of detail accordingly. Use language and terminology that your audience can easily understand.
- ✓ **Organize Your Thoughts:** Structure your arguments logically. Start with an introduction that provides context and outlines your main points. Then, present your arguments in a clear and organized manner. Finish with a conclusion that summarizes your key points and reinforces your main argument.

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- ✓ **Use a clear and concise language:** Choose your words carefully. Avoid jargon or technical language that your audience may not understand. Be concise and to the point, eliminating unnecessary words or phrases.
- ✓ **Provide evidence:** Back up your arguments with credible evidence, examples, data, or research. Use specific examples to illustrate your points and make your arguments more convincing.
- ✓ **Use visual aids:** If appropriate, use visual aids like charts, graphs, images, or slides to supplement your arguments. Visuals can enhance understanding and engagement.

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- ✓ **Maintain a professional tone:** Adapt your style to the formality of the context. In formal settings, maintain a professional and respectful tone. In more casual situations, you can be more relaxed but still respectful.
- ✓ **Engage your audience:** Encourage audience engagement through questions, polls, or interactive elements, depending on the context. Engaged listeners are more likely to follow your arguments closely.
- ✓ **Address counterarguments:** Acknowledge potential counterarguments or opposing views. Address them thoughtfully and respectfully, demonstrating a well-rounded understanding of the topic.

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- ✓ **Control nervousness:** If you're nervous, practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing before your presentation. Nervousness can affect the smooth delivery of your arguments.
- ✓ **Vary your tone and pace:** Avoid a monotonous speaking style. Vary your tone, pace, and volume to emphasize key points, maintain audience engagement, and add expressiveness to your arguments.
- ✓ **Seek feedback:** After your presentation or argument, ask for feedback from colleagues or peers. Constructive feedback can help you improve your style and effectiveness.

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- ✓ **Be open to questions:** Be prepared to answer questions or address comments from your audience. This demonstrates your knowledge and reinforces your arguments.

Remember that effective argumentation is not just about winning debates but about persuading others and fostering understanding. Adapt your style and approach to the specific context and audience to achieve your communication goals successfully.

Argument presentation styles

The style for presenting an argument can vary depending on the context, audience, and purpose of your argument. However, there are some general guidelines and styles you can consider to effectively present your argument:

1. Formal style
2. Convectional style
3. Academic style
4. Persuasive style
5. Visual style
6. Legal style
7. Policy style

1. Formal style

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Use of standard language:** For instance in formal contexts, use standard English with proper grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary.
- ✓ **Structured and organized:** Present your argument in a structured and organized manner with clear headings and sections.
- ✓ **Citing sources:** If applicable, cite reputable sources using a recognized citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) to support your claims.
- ✓ **Avoid contractions:** Avoid using contractions (e.g., "don't" instead of "do not") for a more formal tone.

2. Conversational style

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Accessible language:** Use plain and accessible language that is easy for your audience to understand. Avoid jargon or technical terms unless your audience is familiar with them.
- ✓ **Engage the audience:** Make your argument relatable and engaging. Use anecdotes, examples, or personal stories to connect with your audience.
- ✓ **Conversational tone:** Write or speak in a friendly and approachable tone, as if you were having a conversation with a friend.
- ✓ **Interactive elements:** Encourage audience participation or questions, especially in presentations or discussions.

3. Academic style

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Objective and Impersonal:** Maintain an objective and impersonal tone. Avoid using first-person pronouns (e.g., "I" or "we") unless required by the assignment or publication guidelines.
- ✓ **Citation and Referencing:** Follow academic citation and referencing styles meticulously. Properly cite sources to support your claims and ideas.
- ✓ **Structured and Well-Defined Sections:** Organize your argument with clear sections, including an introduction, literature review, methodology (if applicable), findings, discussion, and conclusion.

5. Persuasive style

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Appeal to Emotion:** Use emotional language and storytelling to appeal to the emotions of your audience. This can be effective for persuasive arguments.
- ✓ **Rhetorical Devices:** Employ rhetorical devices like ethos (appeal to credibility), pathos (appeal to emotion), and logos (appeal to logic) to persuade your audience.
- ✓ **Strong Call to Action:** If your goal is to motivate your audience to take action, end your argument with a strong and clear call to action.

5. Visual Style (Presentation Slides)

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Visual Elements:** Use visuals such as graphs, charts, images, or videos to complement your argument and engage your audience.
- ✓ **Simplicity:** Keep slides uncluttered, with limited text per slide. Use bullet points or concise phrases.
- ✓ **Consistency:** Maintain a consistent visual style throughout your presentation, including fonts, colors, and formatting.

6. Legal or formal argument style:

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Precise Language:** In legal or formal contexts, use precise and specific language. Define terms and concepts as needed.
- ✓ **Citing Legal Precedents:** If relevant, cite legal precedents, statutes, or regulations to support your legal arguments.
- ✓ **Structured Legal Briefs:** In legal writing, use a structured format for legal briefs, which typically include a statement of the issues, the facts, the law, the argument, and the conclusion.

7. Policy or business proposal style

It is characterized by:

- ✓ **Executive Summary:** Begin with an executive summary that provides a concise overview of your proposal.
- ✓ **Clear Objectives:** Clearly state the objectives of your proposal or policy changes.
- ✓ **Practical Recommendations:** Provide practical, actionable recommendations with a focus on outcomes and benefits.

The style you choose should align with your goals and the expectations of your audience. Always consider who you are addressing, the context of your argument, and the desired outcome when determining the appropriate style for presenting your argument.

Impact of smooth presentation of arguments on a business

A smooth and effective presentation of arguments in a business context can have a significant impact on the success and growth of a company.

Here are several ways in which a well-presented argument can benefit a business:

- 1. Influence Decision-Making:** Smoothly presented, well-structured arguments can influence decision-makers within the organization. Whether you're proposing a new strategy, marketing plan, or product development idea, a persuasive argument can lead to decisions that drive the company forward.
- 2. Enhanced Problem Solving:** Effective arguments can help identify and address business challenges more efficiently. When employees and teams are skilled in presenting their arguments, they can collaborate to find innovative solutions to problems.

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3. Improved communication: A culture of effective argumentation fosters clear and open communication within the organization. Employees feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns, leading to better collaboration and problem-solving.

4. Better stakeholder relations: When dealing with external stakeholders such as clients, partners, or investors, the ability to present arguments coherently and persuasively can help build trust and strong business relationships.

5. Successful sales and marketing: Sales and marketing teams benefit greatly from effective argumentation skills. Persuasive communication can help in presenting products or services in a compelling way, ultimately leading to increased sales and revenue.

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9. Risk Mitigation: When business leaders can present arguments that assess potential risks and provide strategies for mitigating them, the company is better prepared to handle challenges and minimize negative impacts.

10. Increased Employee Engagement: A culture of open communication and the ability to present arguments can lead to higher employee engagement. Employees feel valued when their opinions are heard and considered.

11. Effective Change Management: In times of organizational change, smooth argumentation can help employees understand the reasons behind changes and embrace new processes or strategies more readily.

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12. Successful Project Implementation: Arguments presented in favor of project proposals can secure the necessary resources and support for successful project implementation. Clear communication is essential for project success.

13. Cost Savings: Efficiently presented arguments can lead to cost savings by avoiding unnecessary delays, misunderstandings, or errors.

14. Innovation and Creativity: A culture of effective argumentation encourages employees to think critically and creatively, leading to innovative solutions and ideas that can drive business growth.

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In summary, a smooth presentation of arguments is a valuable skill in a business context. It can lead to better decision-making, improved communication, increased efficiency, and overall business success. Organizations that foster a culture of effective argumentation tend to be more adaptable and better equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the business world.

References

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Thank you!