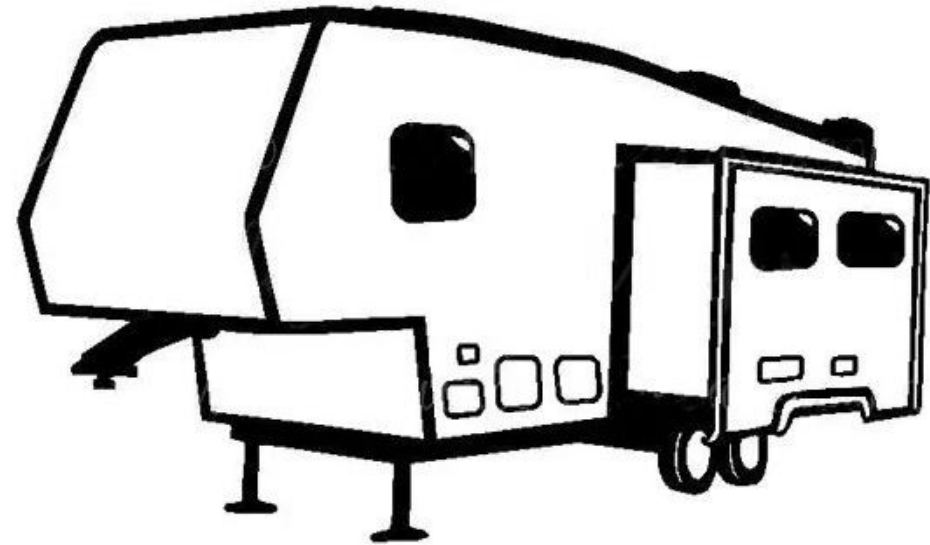


Aaron N. Cutshall, DHA, MSHI

SQL RV <http://www.sqlrv.com>



# How to Give a Technical Presentation

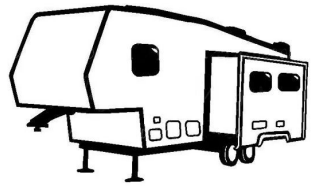


“According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”

*- Jerry Seinfeld*



# Just who is this guy?



SQL RV



Director, Data Services



Since 2023



Since 2025



Speaker – various events



B.S.  
Computer  
Science



M.S.  
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Information  
Systems



M.S.  
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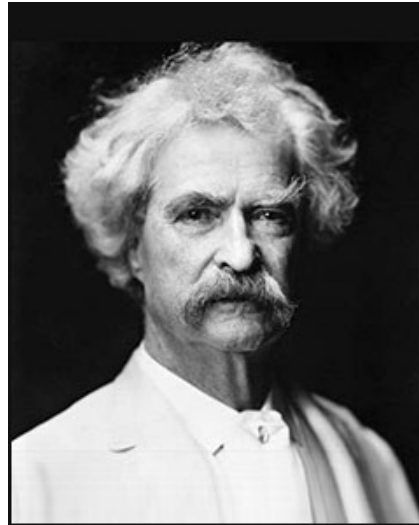


Doctor of  
Healthcare  
Administration



# Something to consider...

---



[credit](#)

“There are only two types of speakers in the world: the nervous and the liars.”

-- Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) 1835 - 1910



# Me? Speak?? Are you kidding??

---

- Why should I speak?
  - One of the best methods for personal growth
  - Helps to build extra confidence
- But I don't have anything to tell!
  - You have something unique to teach
  - You will also learn during the process
- Some great benefits:
  - Meet really interesting people
  - Learn more about your topic
  - Learn lots more about yourself!
  - It's tons of fun!!



# How do we do this?

---

- How to create a presentation
  - Select a topic
  - Create an abstract
  - Create an outline
  - Gather materials
  - Create the presentation
- How to give your presentation
  - Prepare for the presentation
  - Overcome speaker anxiety
  - Give the presentation
  - Get and use feedback
- Make it happen!



# Select a Topic

---

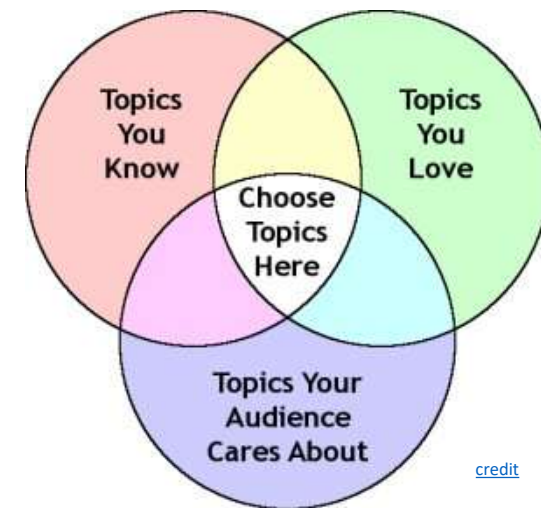
- Pick something useful that you can share
  - “I just learned something really cool!”
  - “I wish someone had taught me that a long time ago!”
  - Make sure it’s applicable to your audience
  - Personal experiences with the topic really help your audience relate to both you AND the topic
- Don’t worry if it’s already been done
  - Your perspective is unique from other speakers
  - You will help someone who needed your viewpoint
  - Otherwise there would be a lot fewer presentations and speakers!



# Select a Topic

---

- Ask yourself these questions:
  - Do I have knowledge about this topic?
  - Am I passionate about this topic?
  - Does my audience care about this topic?
- Establish goals
  - Want to teach a technique?
  - Will you solve a problem?
  - Plan to demonstrate a solution?
  - What are your objectives?
  - What do you expect from the audience?





# Create an Abstract

---

- Business card of your presentation
- It needs to “sell” your presentation
  - Event organizers – which sessions to include
  - Event attendees – which sessions to attend
- An abstract **MUST** match the presentation
  - Faulty abstract results in unhappy attendees
  - If attendees are in the wrong session, it’s your fault
  - A clear, concise abstract improves selection and success!



# Create an Abstract

---

- Title
  - Descriptive but brief (usually a character limit)
  - Catchy is OK, but not too obscure
  - Often, quick decisions are made based on the title only
- Description
  - Descriptive but brief (usually a word limit – 250 words or so)
  - Describe the issue your presentation addresses
  - Identify how the issue impacts an attendee
  - Include 2-3 key learning points for attendees



# Create an Outline

---

- An outline is your plan for the presentation
  - It ensures a logical progression from topic to topic
  - It keeps you focused on your goal
  - It helps the audience to know what to expect
- A presentation without a plan
  - Loses focus of the audience
  - Loses focus of the speaker
  - Wastes everyone's time
- An outline ensures your presentation will:
  - Cover all the points needed and only what's needed
  - Keep your audience engaged
  - Fulfill the goal of teaching your audience



# Create an Outline

---

## I. Introduction

A. Opening Remarks

Ice breaker and speaker introduction

B. Purpose Summary

The primary reason for the presentation

C. Preview

1. Topic 1
2. Topic 2
3. Topic 3

Give a preview of your main topics as an agenda

## II. Body

Here is the "meat" of your presentation

A. Topic 1

1. Point 1
2. Point 2

Go into more detail for each topic

B. Topic 2

1. Point 1
2. Point 2

Each topic should have at least two or more items as further detail



# Create an Outline

---

## C. Topic 3

1. Point 1
2. Point 2
3. Point 3

The items should be comprehensive enough to cover the material without getting too detailed

## III. Conclusion

### A. Review

1. Topic 1
2. Topic 2
3. Topic 3

Review what you covered and include highlights

### B. Purpose Fulfilled

Show how you fulfilled your primary purpose and make a call to action

### C. Closing Remarks

Tie everything together from beginning to end



# Gather Materials

---

- Select material that supports your outline
  - Draw upon your own knowledge & experiences
  - Research for gaps or missing information
- Make use of reputable sources
  - Industry vendors and renowned industry leaders
  - Published works (books, magazines, etc.)
  - Be wary of blogs and Wikipedia
- Give credit by providing source references
  - Quotes, paraphrases, or major contributions
  - Photos, images, graphics, charts, etc.



# Create the Presentation

---

- Abstract
  - Used as your “sales pitch” for your presentation
  - Introduces your topic and why it’s important
  - Identifies the goals and what the audience should get
- Title Page
  - Establish the purpose of the presentation
  - Title should be short, sweet, and to the point
  - Sometimes catchy titles can be helpful if not obscure
- Biography
  - Establish your credentials (experience, training, etc.)
  - Do not include personal information (vacation, kids, pets, religion, politics, etc.)



# Create the Presentation

---

- Purpose
  - The presentation goals (“What’s in it for me?”)
  - Helps to set appropriate audience expectations
- Major Topics
  - Further refine each topic into further detail
  - Include supporting material as needed
- Midpoint Review
  - Serves as a logical break when using lots of material
  - Used as a transition from between main portions





# Create the Presentation

---

- Closing
  - Review major topics
  - Include important take-aways
  - Provide references for further study
  - Present your call to action
    - Without this, nothing will happen
    - Remember: This is the whole purpose of your presentation
- Questions slide
  - Give opportunity to ask additional questions
  - Provide complete contact info



# Create the Presentation

---

- Use simple designs
  - High contrast
  - Easy to read fonts
  - Minimal animation
- Consistency is paramount
  - Slide style, transitions, fonts, animation, etc.
  - Delivery method and flow of slides
  - Sets audience expectations
  - Your message is the star, not your PowerPoint skills!



# Create the Presentation

---

- Some caution is warranted
  - Avoid flashy or overly dramatic animation
  - Too much flash will reduce the impact of your message
  - Be mindful of using too many colors
    - Lots of bright colors can be distracting
    - Be considerate of those who may be color blind
    - If colors are needed (ex. bar or pie charts)
      - Keep them simple with stark contrast
      - Label them appropriately
  - Simple and effective is more important



# Demonstrations

---

- If critical to your presentation, have backup screenshots if needed
- Use test data readily accessible to anyone (ex. AdventureWorks)
- **NEVER** use real data or work environments
- Script wherever possible – typing in demos increases the chance of something going wrong
- Consider using a VM, if possible, for an easy restart
- Use a special Demo slide
- Improve font visibility
  - Use a larger size (14+ point)
  - High contrast (dark color on light background)
- Get and use [ZoomIt!](#)



# ZoomIt

---



[credit](#)



# Mid-Point Review

---

- Here's what we covered so far:
  - Selecting a topic
  - Creating the outline
  - Gathering materials
  - Creating the presentation
- Coming up next:
  - Preparing for the presentation
  - Overcoming speaker anxiety
  - Giving the presentation
  - Getting and using feedback



# Prepare for the Presentation

---

- Practice, Practice, Practice!
  - Really practice out loud, standing in front of a mirror
  - Be mindful of timing and how long each portion is
  - Try it with an audience and record a video if possible
- If you have demos
  - Practice many times from beginning to end
  - Have backup screenshots just in case
  - Remember Murphy's Law: If anything can possibly go wrong, it will, and at the most inopportune time!



# Prepare for the Presentation

---

- Be prepared – things WILL go wrong!!
  - Laptop won't start
  - No Wi-Fi or internet
  - Presentation file gets corrupted
  - Bad cable or adapter
- Before you leave your office (in person)
  - Multiple backups of slides, scripts, demos, etc.
  - Pack every cable & adapter needed; include extras
  - Include extra batteries for your remote & mouse
  - Don't forget business cards!





# Prepare for the Presentation

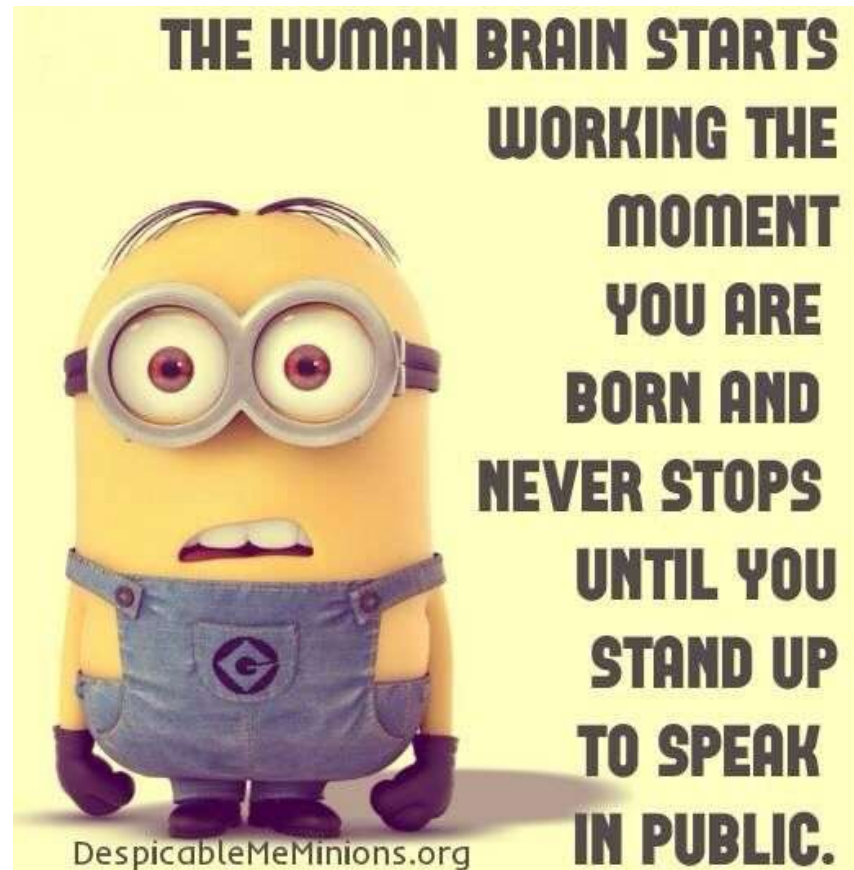
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- Before your presentation (virtual)
  - Have slide deck and demos primed and ready
  - Connect to the presentation session early
  - Perform headset check
  - Check in with the session moderator/assistant
- Self-promote your presentation!
  - LinkedIn – include event and location info
  - Twitter – use special hashtags where applicable
  - Personal Blog – a good place for the abstract as well



# Overcome Speaker Anxiety

---



[credit](#)



# Overcome Speaker Anxiety

- Glossophobia
  - Come from fear of being judged
  - No one gives a perfect speech
  - Ralph Waldo Emerson: “All the great speakers were bad speakers at first.”
- Face your fears
  - Don't focus on real or imagined mistakes
  - Don't worry that your audience will be critical
  - Preparation is key, but it's OK not to be perfect



[credit](#)



# Overcome Speaker Anxiety

---

- Know your material, slides, and demos
  - Practice, practice, practice!
  - “Surprises” increase stress
  - Anticipate questions and have answers ready
  - Be willing to say “I don’t know”
  - Go easy on yourself! We are often our worst critics.
- Relax!
  - Go to the bathroom 20 minutes before your presentation
  - Stretch and walk around to relieve tension
  - Most important: Breathe! You’re going to need your brain, and it needs oxygen!



# Overcome Speaker Anxiety

---

- Work with your audience (live)
  - Talk to people – helps you to relate to your audience
  - Don't focus too much on individual expressions
  - Interact with the audience as much as possible
- None of us are professional speakers
  - Remember: You are NOT on trial to be judged!!
  - You are NOT the focus – your subject matter is
  - We all have empathy for speakers who are trying
  - Your audience will have the same empathy for you!
  - With practice and repetition, speaker anxiety will diminish but may never completely go away



# Before Your Presentation

---

- Set up ahead of time and check everything out
- Shut down distractions (email, IM, phone, etc.)
- Queue up your presentation and get demos ready
- “Customize” your area, even if a little
- Make sure you have extra water bottles
- Enlist someone to help (live)
  - Pass around any handouts (not usually suggested)
  - Give a 15-minute and 5-minute warning
- It’s OK to chat with folks before the presentation to help everyone (including you) relax!



# Give Your Presentation! (Live)

---

- Step away from the podium or laptop
  - Make use of a presentation device
  - Move around to keep both you and your audience engaged
- Repeat questions asked
  - Not all may hear it initially
  - Helps to ensure that you understand the question yourself
  - Time permitting, before answering, give the question to the audience to answer



# Give Your Presentation! (Virtual)

---

- Remember that you do have an audience
  - Keep your focus on the camera
  - Speak clearly and don't get rushed
  - Don't get "robotic" – remember that you do have an audience
- Make use of the chat feature
  - A moderator can help with questions
  - Periodically stop to answer questions just as with a live audience
  - If possible, allow the audience to participate





# Give Your Presentation!

---

- Be flexible
  - Be ready to focus on certain slides as needed
  - Be ready to skip slides to adjust for time
- Have fun!!
  - Your audience will enjoy it as well
  - You will grow from the experience
- Things to Avoid
  - Don't read your slides!!
  - Hot Topics: Politics & Religion
  - Be Prudent: Gender or racial bias
  - Be Sensible: Profanity, inside jokes



# Answering Questions

---

- Set guidelines about questions
  - Set a time limit on questions and keep to it
  - Make the answers succinct to answer as many as possible
  - Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out and let you know."
- Paraphrase the question rather than merely repeat it
  - It ensures the audience that you understand the question
  - You can typically shorten it to the essential question
- Listen carefully to the entire question
  - Don't interrupt even if you know what the question will be
  - Maintain eye contact to show you're focused on the question
  - Address your response to the entire room



# Get Feedback

---

- On subject, presentation skills, etc.
- In person at end of your presentation
- Session Evaluations
  - Written or electronic, formal or informal
  - Throw out extremes – focus on the most common
- Winston Churchill: “Criticism may not be aggregable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.”



# Use Feedback

---

- Constructive criticism should always be welcome
  - Hillary Clinton: “Take criticism seriously, but not personally. If there is truth or merit in the criticism, try to learn from it. Otherwise, let it roll right off you.”
- Criteria for effective feedback:
  - Credible, Trusted, Instructive, Appropriate, Interactive, Clear, Helpful
  - Learn what to ignore and what to consider
  - Don’t let compliments go to your head
  - Don’t let criticism get to your heart



# Closing Thoughts

---

- Pulling it together
  - Select a topic – That's appropriate and helpful
  - Create an outline – The plan for your presentation
  - Gather materials – To support your presentation
  - Create the presentation – To deliver your topic
- Putting it on
  - Prepare for the presentation – To avoid surprises
  - Overcome speaker anxiety – To relieve stress
  - Give the presentation – The whole purpose!
  - Get and use feedback – To improve for the next time



# Make it Happen!

---

- Where to speak?
  - Local/Virtual User Group or Conference
  - National/International Conference (many are virtual)
  - Many other venue choices
- Jot down notes
  - Presentation ideas, main points or an abstract
  - Create an outline and flesh it out over time
  - Practice creating your presentations
  - Ask for feedback before you present
- **Set a date and just do it!!**



# Helpful Resources

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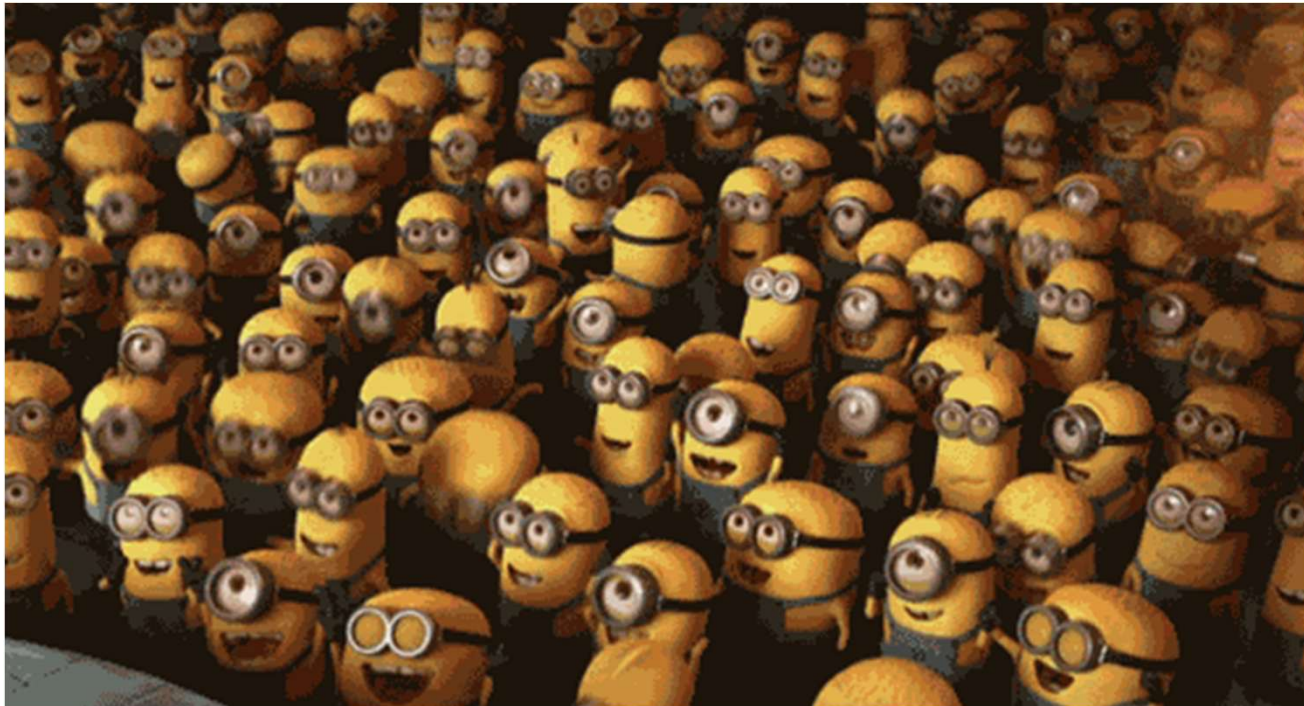
- [The Secret of Choosing Successful Speech Topics](#)
- [The Complete Guide To Creating A Captivating Professional Presentation](#)
- [Presentation Zen Design: Simple Design Principles and Techniques to Enhance Your Presentations \(2nd Edition\)](#)
- [How to Overcome the Fear of Public Speaking in 5 Minutes](#)
- [How to Give and Receive Feedback at Work: The Psychology of Criticism](#)



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# Questions & Comments

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## **BONUS:**

A **TON** of free eBooks from [Microsoft](#), [RedGate](#) and [others!](#)

## **PRESENTATION FEEDBACK:**

- Your thoughts needed
- Improve presentations
- Make this event even more valuable!!!

## **Aaron N. Cutshall**

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