

*Presentations depend less on technical expertise or experience and more on personalities and planning. Presentations can be in many different formats, from simple meetings to multimedia events.*

session. The session should start with a data dump—everything everyone knows about this client and this project. Next, the session should devote time to determining the overall message of the presentation. The team should worry about delivery style and visuals *only* after it has decided on the message. The advertising firm of Hill and Knowlton used to call this message the SOCO—the *single overriding communications objective*. What is the *one* thing that the presentation team wants the client to remember about the designer and the firm? Everything the presenters say must support this overall message. The team must figure out what the client does not need to be told. Remember, no one can retain more than three or four key ideas. Some presentations (lectures, for instance) are informational, and happen in a logical and sequential order. Sales presentations are motivational, intended to persuade the audience. The order of topics and time allocated to each are determined by the issues of the audience.

In determining the media and tools, the presenters must consider the message, the audience, the room, and the cost (versus the resulting commission). Experts say that visual aids can raise the effectiveness of a speech some 40 percent. Visual aids must support your message; they will *never* take its place. Presenters may choose to use presentation boards, slides or photographs, electronic media such as PowerPoint, videos (on their own or embedded in a PowerPoint show), or models. Less is more, so presenters should not feel compelled to use visuals all the time. These aids should be used only when they add value to the message or to the designer's and the firm's image.

The presenters should consider the quality of their visuals. They should be sure that their visuals remain uncluttered. If they use only bulleted topics and simple graphics, they allow the audience to concentrate on them and their topic. If they use graphics and color, they can draw the audience's eyes to their most important points. Bigger is definitely better. If the audience can't see it, the point will be lost.

For all presenters, rehearsals are *mandatory*. Preparing for presentations involves three key elements: coaching, team building, and motivation. Rehearsals are to benefit the entire team, so individuals should allow enough time for the entire group to rehearse and receive coaching. The first go-around is strategic, as each presenter determines what he or she will say and receives the concurrence of the group. In the next round, the presenters should determine time frames for their portion of the presentation, and do one