PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. X, Issue V – May 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Speaker Guidance
Converting to Online Teaching
by John H. Cable

Converting to Online Teaching [1]
A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions

Speaker Guidance: Present Like a Pro [2]

By John Cable, Director

Project Management Center for Excellence
A. James Clark School of Engineering
University of Maryland, USA

Introduction

Eight years ago, when we launched our successful annual Project Management Symposium, we rapidly learned that while many speakers had very good content, they were not necessarily up to speed in preparing their visual support, which is generally PowerPoint, so, we began to offer some guidance. Over the past several years, the guidance has been refined and I believe is now applicable for any presentation, virtual or in person. This article is a modified version of that guidance.

Preparing Your Presentation

This section may be adjusted for the specific time allocation of your event, but the timing is what we are currently using. Each individual speaker session is scheduled for 45 minutes. It breaks down to a 5-minute introduction, 30-minute presentation and 10 minutes for Q&A. Your 30-minute presentation is your opportunity to showcase your ideas to your peers. Model your 30 minutes like a TED Talk. TED talks are generally 18 minutes, not 30, but if you use the techniques used to develop a TED Talk, it will keep your presentation focused and your audience more engaged. One way to break things up in your presentation is to use polling or show a short video.

---

[1]This series of articles by the Director of the University of Maryland's Project Management Center for Excellence provides information and advice for converting from traditional in-person classes to online teaching, based on their experience before and during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. See Professor Cable's background at the end of this article.

[2] How to cite this paper: Cable, J. H. (2021). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Speaker Guidance, *PM World Journal,* Vol. X, Issue V, May.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. X, Issue V – May 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com

Series Article

Speaker Guidance
Converting to Online Teaching
by John H. Cable

Develop an Idea.

Think about what you want the audience to take away from your presentation. You should not have more than 3 big ideas, but one is certainly enough. A good idea takes evidence or observations and should lead to a conclusion.

Share What You Know.

You do not need to be the world's foremost expert, but you do need to be an expert on your topic. The audience relies on you to give accurate information – be sure to check and verify your facts! If you are presenting research, make sure your idea is backed by the facts. Give relevant examples, concisely presented. Identify opinion or developing ideas as such.

Prepare, Outline and Script

There is no single theory that offers the best structure for your talk, but we recommend that you follow the guidance for TED Talks. This is the structure that they have found to work particularly well:

1) "Start by making your audience care, using a relatable example or an intriguing idea.
2) Explain your idea clearly and with conviction.
3) Make the persuasive case about how, and why your idea should be implemented.
4) End by addressing how your idea could affect your audience if they accept it."

The primary goal of your talk is to communicate an idea effectively, so I recommend that you follow this structure:

Introduction

A strong introduction is crucial. Draw in your audience with something they care about, make them curious and answer the question, WIFM (what's in it for me). Get your idea out as quickly as possible. Do not focus on yourself. Do not open with a long string of statistics.

Body

Make a list of all the evidence you want to use. Think about items that your audience already knows. Define what you want to convince them of: the new knowledge, research, or practice you believe will be valuable to them. Prepare your list based on a logical sequence. Then see if you can cut out items and still make the point. Ask yourself again, "what are the key takeaways I want the audience to know." Don't use jargon or explain any new terminology. Don't let citations interrupt the flow of your talk. Place them in the fine print on your slides. Note anything that is best conveyed visually - use slides or videos for this. Only use slides for key points and visualizations, not a lot of text.

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. X, Issue V – May 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Speaker Guidance
Converting to Online Teaching
by John H. Cable

Conclusion

Find a landing point in your conclusion that will leave the audience feeling positively toward you and your ideas. Don't use the conclusion to simply summarize what you have already said – tell your audience how this information might impact their lives, if implemented.

Script

When you have developed your outline to the point you are satisfied with the logic sequence, start writing a script. Be concise. Use present tense, strong and interesting verbs. Your script is likely to be revised many times until you are comfortable with it.

Create Slides

Power Point slides can be very helpful, but they are by no means necessary. White boarding is better if you have the software to do it! If you decide to use slides, please remember:

Use as little text as possible – if your audience is reading, they are not listening.

Font size should be 32 points or larger.

A picture is worth 1000 words – this old adage is true!

No single slide should support more than one point.

When you do use text, there are a few techniques that can help keep the audience's attention:

a. use key words rather than sentences
b. use SmartArt located in the paragraph box at the top of the PowerPoint screen
c. use color and vary the use of color
d. use animation and transitions to liven up the delivery of text
e. Only use images or graphics that you have created OR have permission to use. Always cite the source.
f. Have someone review your slides to see if they make sense and check for glitches.

Engaging the audience is the goal. The above points will help you get and keep the audience's attention, but you also may want to try using one of the interactive presentation tools available to do polling if your virtual platform does not have that feature. We use Mentimeter to get quick audience feedback (www.Mentimeter.com).

Presenting Using a Virtual Platform (We are using WebEx or Zoom)

Basic protocols include:

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. X, Issue V – May 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Speaker Guidance
Converting to Online Teaching
by John H. Cable

1) Make sure the camera is at eye level and look straight into the camera. If you are using a laptop you are going to need to prop it up on something to get the camera at your eye level (a stack of books works fine).

2) Avoid backlighting that puts your face in silhouette and have a warm light source in front of you so that the face is clearly visible to the community.

3) Have a good mic. The mic's that come with computers are not very good and pick up a lot of ambient noise. We suggest that at a minimum you use a lavalier mic (we like the Purple Panda) but there are many good ones on the market.

4) Pay attention to your background and be sure you are the main focus. If you want to use a virtual background it is a very good idea to put a green screen behind you to minimize distortion. Two YouTube videos that address presenting in a virtual environment that you might enjoy are shown below:

How to Look Better on Zoom (How to Light & Angle Your Screen to Look Your Best)

How to Set up a Webcam and Microphone

Rehearse

So, once you have built your presentation the next crucial step is rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Rehearsing will undoubtedly lead to minor refinements in your draft presentation. It doesn't matter how many times you have gone over your talk in your head, stand up, look in the mirror, and rehearse. Check your timing, pay attention to your posture, repeat, repeat, and repeat until you are totally comfortable. Then, you are ready to present!

These guidelines have proven helpful to many of our speakers over the years. I hope they are useful to some readers, especially those new to the virtual teaching process. If you have a question or comment, please send an email to me at jcable@umd.edu.

References

Cable, J. H. (2021). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Managing Effective Meetings: Virtual or In Person, *PM World Journal,* Vol. X, Issue IV, April. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/pmwj104-Apr2021-Cable-managing-effective-meeetings-converting-to-teaching-online-series.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2021). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Individual Time Management, *PM World Journal,* Vol. X, Issue III, March. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/pmwj103-Mar2021-Cable-individual-time-management-converting-to-teaching-online-11.pdf

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. X, Issue V – May 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Speaker Guidance
Converting to Online Teaching
by John H. Cable

Cable, J. H. (2021). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Can you Increase Student Engagement? A Beta Test of Yellowdig! *PM World Journal,* Vol. X, Issue II, February. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/pmwj102-Feb2021-Cable-increase-student-engagement-with-yellodig-FINAL.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2021). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – **Do You** M**OOC?** *PM World Journal,* Vol. X, Issue I, January. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/pmwj101-Jan2021-Cable-do-you-mooc-converting-to-teaching-online-9.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Video Production Guidance, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue XII, December. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/pmwj100-Dec2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-8-video-production-guidance.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Can Virtual Classes be Better than in Person? *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue XI, November. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/pmwj99-Nov2020-Cable-can-virtual-classes-be-better-than-in-person.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Facilitating Virtual Classes, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue X, October. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/pmwj98-Oct2020-Cable-facilitating-virtual-classes.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Blended Learning Classroom Guidance, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue IX, September. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/pmwj97-Sep2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-5-blended-learning.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – The Future of Academia in a Virtual Environment, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue VIII, August. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/pmwj96-Aug2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-4-future-of-academia.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Tips for Working at Home, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue VII, July. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/pmwj95-Jul2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-3-working-at-home2.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions – Video Conference Etiquette, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue VI, June. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/pmwj94-Jun2020-Cable-teaching-online-series-2-video-conference-etiquette.pdf

Cable, J. H. (2020). Converting to Online Teaching: A series of short guidance articles for educators and institutions - Introduction, *PM World Journal,* Vol. IX, Issue V, May. Available online at https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/pmwj93-May2020-Cable-converting-to-teaching-online-1-introduction.pdf

PM World Journal (ISSN: 2330-4480)
Vol. X, Issue V – May 2021
www.pmworldjournal.com   Series Article

Speaker Guidance
Converting to Online Teaching
by John H. Cable

About the Author

John Cable

Project Management Center for Excellence
University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA

John Cable is Director of the Project Management Center for Excellence in the A.James Clark School of Engineering at the University of Maryland, where he is also a professor and teacher of several graduate courses in project management. His program at the University of Maryland offers masters and PhD level programs focused on project management. With more than 1,300 seats filled annually with students from many countries, including more than 40 PhD students, the program is the largest graduate program in project management at a major university in the United States.

John Cable served in the newly formed U.S. Department of Energy in 1980, where he was involved with developing energy standards for buildings, methods for measuring energy consumption, and managing primary research in energy conservation. As an architect and builder, Mr. Cable founded and led John Cable Associates in 1984, a design build firm. In 1999 he was recruited by the University of Maryland's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering to create and manage a graduate program in project management. In his role as founder and director of the Project Management Center for Excellence at Maryland, the program has grown to offer an undergraduate minor, master's degrees, and a doctoral program. Information about the Project Management Center for Project Management at the University of Maryland can be found at www.pm.umd.edu.

In 2002, PMI formed the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Educational Programs (GAC). Mr. Cable was appointed to that inaugural board where he served as vice chair. In 2006, he was elected as chairman, a role he held through 2012. As Chair of the PMI GAC, John led the accreditation of 86 project management educational programs at 40 institutions in 15 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Asia Pacific Region. John was awarded PMI's 2012 Distinguished Contribution Award for his leadership at the GAC. He can be contacted at jcable@umd.edu.