Guidelines for Presentations

First impressions are the strongest.

A. Dress for the occasion - coat and tie for men or dresses for women are not always required, but are always appropriate; however, tee shirts, jeans and tank tops are on any list of inappropriate attire.

B. Exhibit an air of confidence. Remember, that even though the purpose of your presentation may not be to convince someone to pay good money for the product, you are still selling a product. If your audience (e.g., supervisor, potential customers) senses that you are unsure of yourself or your products, you are probably wasting your time and their time by continuing, regardless of the merits of your product.

Be prepared.

- Know what you want to say and say it in the most straight-forward manner possible. Support your presentation with visuals (e.g., power point slides or transparencies) that outline or list the major ideas of your discussion and are free of "clutter" (unnecessary information). Do not put details on the slides or transparencies except where the details are the focus of your discussion. Graphs and illustrations that summarize information are appropriate and often desirable.
- Practice your presentation at least twice: once by yourself, delivering your material to any empty room just as you plan to do at the formal presentation; present your material a second time to someone who can intelligently critique your presentation as to content and manner of delivery. Your delivery will become shorter with practice.
- Be informed about the details of your product so that you can assertively answer any questions regarding it.
- Check out the equipment that you will be using for the presentation. Go through the steps required to prepare for the delivery. This includes making sure that overhead projectors work (to the extent of assuring that an extra lamp is available in case the one in place burns out), loading software onto the computer if one is to be used, executing any presentation scripts to assure that all software is present and running properly.
- Remember, if something goes wrong that could have been prevented, then the responsibility for the failure lies on the shoulders of the presenter. Be prepared to continue even in the event of equipment failure.

Hints for presentation.

- Introduce yourself (first and last name), clearly identifying your title or relationship to the purpose of the presentation (e.g., team leader, lead designer, programmer) and the organization that you represent.
- You are communicating with the audience. Therefore, face them and speak directly to them in a manner that is audible to the one furthest for you. Speak clearly and at a pace that can be easily understood by all.
- Do not read from your notes. Notes are acceptable and are generally required in order to maintain the sequence of the material being presented and to refresh your memory on details, but references to them should be minimal.
- Do not read from the slides. The visual aids are intended for the audience, not the speaker. Do not stand in front of the screen. If you must reference something on a slide or projection, do so
with a pointer (physical or optical), standing to one side of the screen so that the audience can see the entire screen.

- Speak to the background of the audience, but do not "speak down to them". Avoid technical terms that would clearly have no meaning to the audience. When speaking to laymen most computer terms are technical; however, do not address them as if they were unintelligent. When speaking to an audience of technically prepared individuals many application terms will have no clear meaning.