GIVING CONFERENCE

TALKs

Rainer Gemulla

Oct 3, 2012

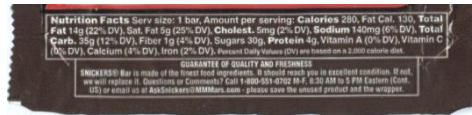Teaser **Talk**

Content **Paper**

Details **Tech Report**

The purpose of a conference talk is to whet appetite.

# The purpose of a talk…

Is not

- To flood the audience with every detail of your paper
- To convince the audience to not read your paper
- To be as incomprehensible as possible hoping to impress people
- To embarrass or punish you
- To get over with it

Is

- To whet appetite
- To demonstrate that your work is interesting and significant and that your paper is worth reading
- To be noticed by the community
- To discuss problems
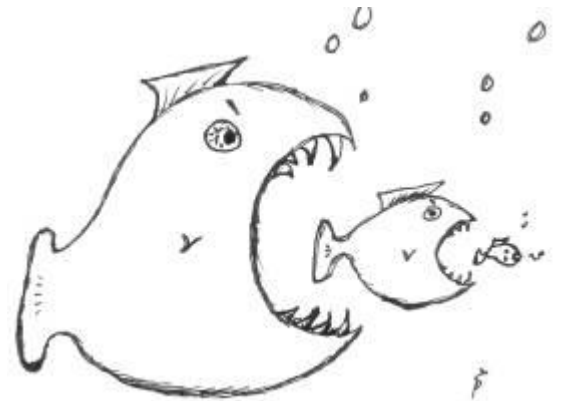- To practice giving talks
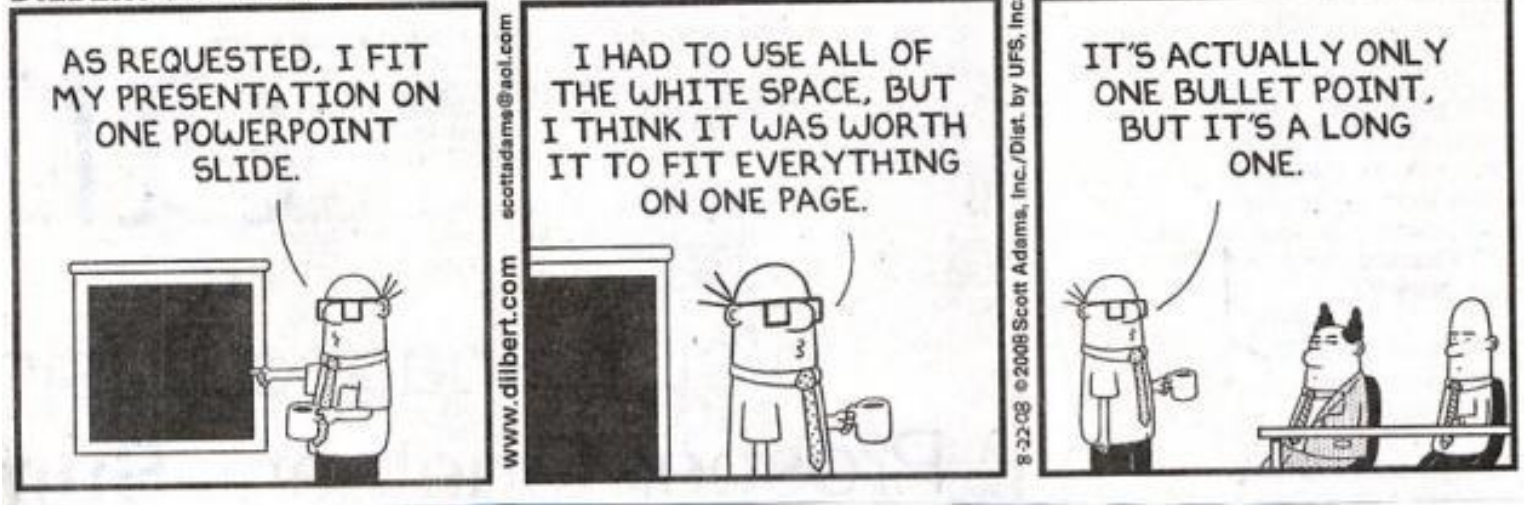
PURPOSE

PREPARATION

DELIVERY

SUMMARY

Assembly of material

- Cannot present everything
- What should the audience remember?
  - Gather potential ideas
  - Select important point(s)
  - Drop the rest
- Create a script, tell a story
  - Context of your problem
  - Minimum of details necessary for understanding
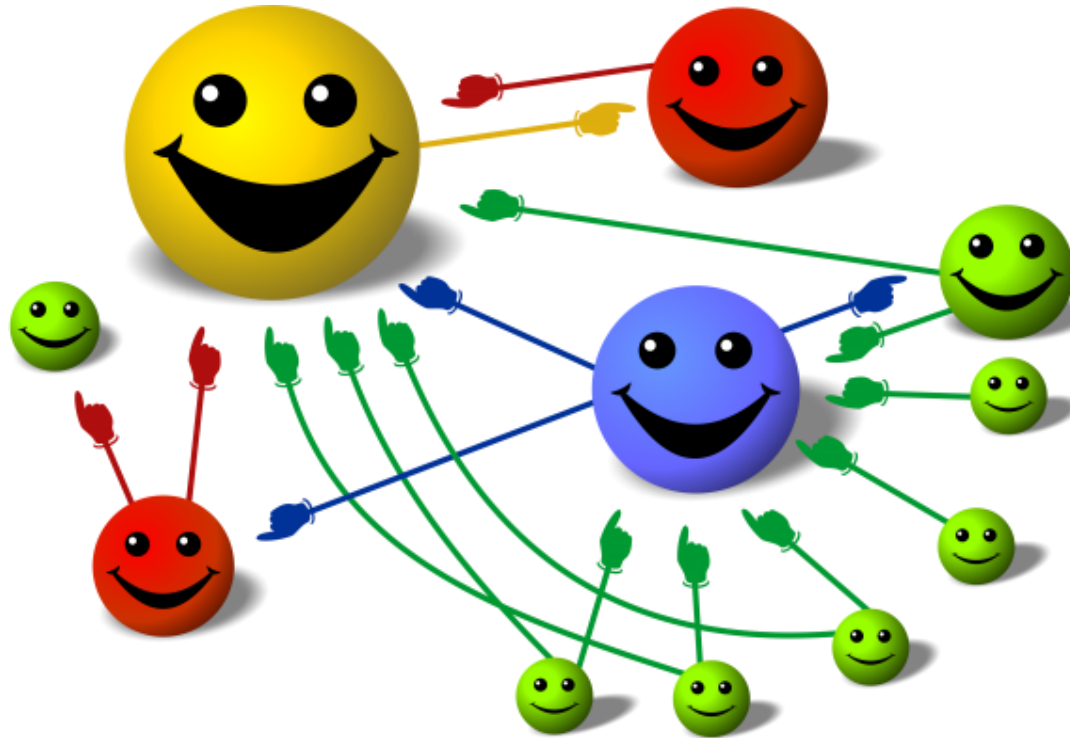 - Key points and results
  - Conclusions and outlook

Why is each part included?
Why at this position?

Explaining pagerank to your grandmother (V1)

- *N* pages + hyperlinks
- Create *N*x*N* matrix **A**
- $\mathbf{A}_{ij}=0$ if page *j* does not link to page *i*
- $\mathbf{A}_{ij}=1/(\text{#distinct links o}$
- Add "small" constant
  divide by $(1+N\alpha)$
- Pagerank of page *i* = *i*–
  principal right eigenve

Explaining pagerank to your grandmother (V2)

Text provides structure.
Figures and examples help grasping ideas.

Legibility, simplicity, relevance

- Small fonts are hard to read

- Minimize *Font* variations

- Animated entry is fun… for kids

- Unnecessary animations distract

- Ornaments don't add to your talk

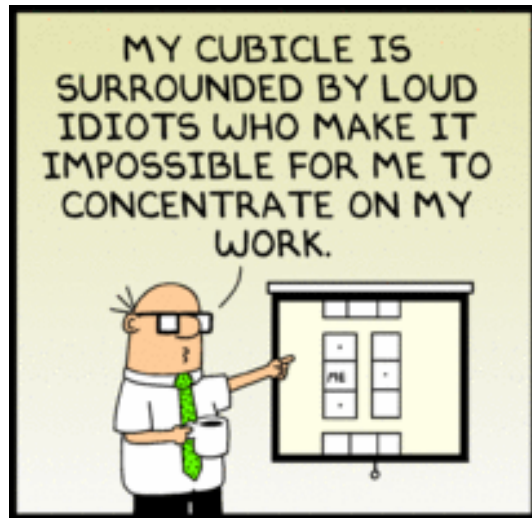- White background, black text is just fine

Practice, practice, practice

- Prepare thoroughly (think early, slides later)
- Don't write out, don't memorize
- Rehearse alone
  - Take timings (after 5, 10, 15, … minutes)
  - Stand (no mirror, maybe tape/video)
- Rehearse before people
  - Big favor → prepare
  - Encourage, take and work in feedback

"Thanks for letting me rehearse my presentation."

PURPOSE

PREPARATION

DELIVERY

SUMMARY

Be you

- You are nervous? That's good!
  - Shows you care
  - Adrenaline helps
- No need to be funny
  - Need to be certain that your joke is actually funny
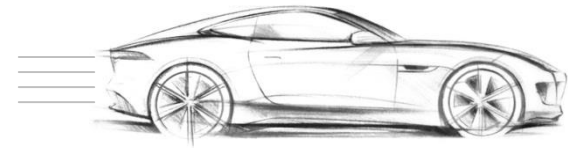 - Don't laugh at your own jokes

Style

- Slow down (but do not go over time)
- Preview-do-review
- Do not diminish or suggest unimportance
  - "I'm so nervous"
  - "This is *just* another of our results"
- Do not show off

Your algorithms

My algorithm

Questions are good

1. Acknowledge (every) question
2. Repeat or clarify the question
3. Answer the question
   - To the audience
   - *Do not bluff, be honest*
   - Take questions offline
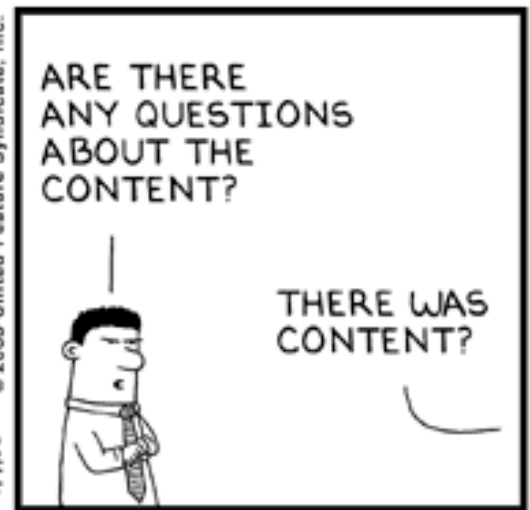4. Check back whether question has been answered

© 2003 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

PURPOSE

PREPARATION

DELIVERY

SUMMARY

Conference talk = teaser

Focus on key point(s) to be remembered

Legibility, simplicity, relevance

Being nervous is good

Practice, practice, practice

Thank you!

Pointers

- Justin Zobel, *Writing for Computer Science: The Art of Effective Communication*, Springer 2004.
- http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/people/simonpj/papers/giving-a-talk/giving-a-talk.htm
- Garr Reynolds, *Presentation Zen*, New Riders, 2008
- MPII's presentation skills seminar

Checklist (1)

- What is the key thing the audience should remember?
- Is there enough background material for the intended audience?
- Is any material unnecessary?
- Could so of the material be left for people to read about later?
- Is the talk self-contained?
- Does the talk have a motivating preamble?
- Have complex issues been explaind in gentle stages?
- Are the results explained?
- Are the numbers necessary (e.g., experimental results)?
- Are more diagrams needed?
- Are the slides simple? Do they have unnecessary ornamentation or distracting use of color?
- Is there any unnecessary animations?

Checklist (2)

- Is the font size reasonable?
- Are there enough examples?
- Have you rehearsed your talk?
- Have you prepared something to say about each slide?
- What are the limitations of the research?
- Do you explain why the research is interesting or important?
- Is there a clear conclusion?
- Have you memorized your talk?
- If you are asked a question you can't answer, how will you respond?
- Have you rehearsed your manner? Will your enthusiasm show?
- Do you know how to use the equipment?