

8 Keys to Proper Oral Preparation

1. **Align your slides clearly with the narrative so that the audience can easily find the key points**
2. **Identify Key Personnel with your oral presentation in mind...and get them involved early in the slide development process**
3. **Practice, practice, practice — frequent rehearsals help speakers become less robotic when presenting**
4. **Wean speakers from notecards to shift from “script” to “conversation”**
5. **Assign tasks to non-speakers, freeing up your presenters from worrying about time keeping or advancing slides**
6. **Get your SMEs to generate hard practice questions — the questions in rehearsal should be harder than any the Government will ask**
7. **Rehearse potential challenges to make sure the team works well together in the heat of the moment**
8. **Make contingency plans for “day of” logistics — a key presenter stuck in traffic will ruin everyone’s day**

Irish Oral Traditions

- 🐾 Innovative acquisition shops are increasingly incorporating in-person, oral components into their evaluation processes
- 🐾 Like written proposals, oral presentations must consistently present your win themes and clearly define your offerings
- 🐾 Preparing for an oral presentation, demonstration, or challenge requires greater focus and coordination than written proposals
- 🐾 A good orals coach helps with content creation, game theory, and role playing, not just Public Speaking 101
- 🐾 Most oral presentations involve a Question & Answer session – how you answer questions is just as important as the answer you provide
- 🐾 Having the right solution will not matter if you choose the incorrect or unprepared people to present it

The Oral Tradition

The government’s “oral tradition” dates to at least the early 90s and enables a government evaluator to meet the potential team to support their requirement and assess their capabilities in person. Lately, the government has developed innovative ways to engage offerors during evaluation. More acquisition shops deploy interviews, demonstrations, or challenges to evaluate competitive proposals. No matter the format, presentations require contractors to sharpen their oral storytelling to demonstrate the strength of their approach/solution, not just regale evaluators with corporate experience and assurances of commitment. When proposals require written and oral components, your team must work on both simultaneously to ensure consistency and flow. The difference between oral presentations and written proposals is as vast and as between a Guinness and green beer.

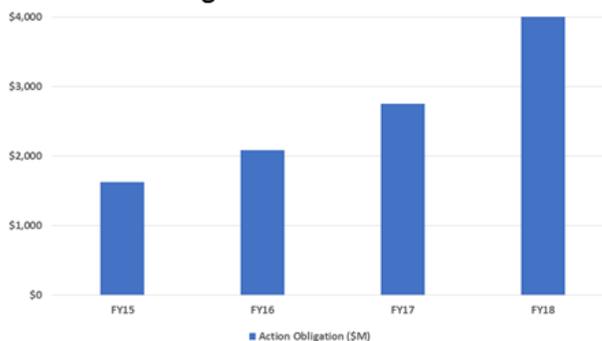
The Four Ps: People, Practice, Pain, and Passion

Identifying the right People and working with them to develop compelling content is only half the battle. While your team can develop some initial scripts for presenters, no evaluator wants to see speakers robotically reciting canned remarks. The team must be ready to Practice, practice, practice. Frequent rehearsals, both individually and as a team, with an experienced coach who understands the subject matter, will help convert scripts into flowing conversations. Like a bard telling his tale at the pub, your presenters should connect with their audience. Demonstrate that you know their Pain Points. Wow the customer with Passion for their work and paint a picture of the better world that your solution will create: a world in which customers’ lives are easier and their mission is accomplished efficiently, effectively, and with minimal risk.

Leave the Blarney in Ireland

Many contractors mistake an oral presentation for a sales pitch. While key personnel must present the solution effectively, they need strong, focused content. Speakers must clearly delineate win themes, proposal strengths, key discriminators, and a solid understanding of the customer’s environment. The government does not expect an IT Security Manager to sound like Liam Neeson but does expect them to know their FISMA from their FedRAMP. The best presenters show the vital combination of technical mastery, deep understanding of the customer, and passion for the mission. Slides must both convey a lot of information and tell a story effectively. Eschew conventional public speaking adages about number of bullets and font size, recognizing that balance is key. Slides can be confusingly detailed or too superficial without a strategic approach.

FEDSIM Obligations and Awards FY15-18



While oral evaluations are not tracked as an official statistic, we can use FEDSIM obligations (26% CAGR over the period) as a proxy, given their overwhelming preference for oral evaluations.
Source: FPDS and Wolf Den Analysis

May the Road Rise to Meet You

Like Irish whiskeys, there are many types of oral presentations, each with its own unique flavor. The government is constantly experimenting with formats beyond the standard “present X slides in Y minutes.” As always, the government seeks to understand the capabilities of the people you guarantee to deliver: the Key Personnel. They may subject them to questions like in a job interview. They may ask your team to respond to a challenge, sometimes sitting in on the high-pressure session, providing time for both solutioning and presentation of the solution. Understand the rules of the road, anticipate the types of questions that might be posed, and ensure the team is prepared for all contingencies. Be ready for anything so that an ill-timed “day of” fender bender does not derail weeks of rehearsals. Done well, you will be raising your glasses at the victory party down the road!