

Requirements for the COBAE Options Oral Presentation

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Course: BUS 302

Title: *The Gateway Experience* (3 units)

“Making a presentation is a moral act as well as an intellectual activity.”

---Edward Tufte (1942-)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to enumerate the requirements for the “COBAE Options” oral presentations in this course, except as indicated differently by the instructor in class. Students will gain points for following the instructions below.

If this document is unclear, please contact the instructor.

Electronic Submission

There is no electronic submission of any deliverable for this assignment. However, at least one member from each team should arrive to class at least 10 minutes before class starts in order to have her or his team’s presentation loaded on the PC in the room. Students can bring a USB stick or log onto Google Docs (or whatever) to retrieve the presentation. Students can use their own notebooks/laptops too, but even then, this setup needs to be tested.

Print-based Submission

Each team must submit a printed document. The printed version of the presentation (e.g., Powerpoint) is to be submitted immediately at the beginning of class. The beginning of class should be interpreted to mean no later than 1 minute after the class starts. Again, strong teams incorporate this deliverable requirement into their planning structures.

Section I. Content Elements

1.1. Opening Capture

Does the presentation start off with a salient, relevant quote or humorous appeal? Does the opening part of the presentation “pull” the audience in? Does the initial part of the presentation capture the audience’s attention and lead them to want to learn more? Is this “capture” of the audience’s attention not just interesting but compelling and actionable?

1.2. Quality of Research

A “secondary source” means information provided a third-party that the team has used and cited. Student teams need to conduct some substantive research on the team’s COBAE option/major. This requires everyone in the team to participate and contribute. Also, it’s good to know about other majors; you’ll be working with nearly all of them at some point in your business career. Finally, adequate research is partly evidenced by multiple, strong references. *Breadth* of sources refers to the quantity of sources over the range of the presentation. *Depth* of sources refers to the sources’ authority, educational value, intent, originality, and quality.

Students can interview an individual keenly knowledgeable about the team’s COBAE Option/Major, such as working professional in that field, but this is not required.

1.3. Technical Information

Most of the students in the audience will not be intimately familiar with each major. Your team needs to define each major well, and provide an informative overview of the field.

Business students need to be familiar with important current events. Teams should provide an example—most likely from the Wall Street Journal (or a source of quality reputation—of a current issue in the field, and perhaps how the unique perspective of the team’s COBAE option helps address that current issue.

What are the starting salaries? What are the mean salaries, say after 10 years? Do the salaries vary by region of the country? Can someone who starts in this field become CEO (or the senior executive) of a firm in the industry? Does the salary vary so much that it is hard to generalize (that is, it’s really more a function of how hard a COBAE graduate wants to work)? Is this field a good major/option for entrepreneurs?

What are the course requirements for this major? What *unique* courses would students in this option/major take that students in other options/majors be unlikely to take? Don’t just use course numbers. What is the course about? Is a minor available in the field to complement a student’s primary major?

What are some of the local, regional, national, or international companies that employ these majors? Be specific. Your team should be able to name a few specific companies. Which firms recruit on campus? Which firms require you to contact them? Which firms have internships?

What is the primary student-run organization for this major? How does one sign-up? What is the club’s web page? What other majors are members of this organization too? What leadership opportunities are there in the organization?

There is likely much more technical information that each team can obtain. Each team needs to do extensive research and then prioritize what they are going to talk about.

1.4. Affective Characteristics

In your team's view, what type of student would be attracted to this type of option/major? Which MBTI personality profile(s) might summarize such a student's personality? Why and how does an individual in this field interact with individuals with other fields? How do students in this major balance technical acumen with interpersonal skills?

Section II. Presentation Elements

2.1. Platform Skills

Is it apparent that the team practiced extensively? Do all team members have a comfortable disposition? Is each student confident but not arrogant?

People do what you want them to do when you make firm and frequent eye contact (but not staring)? This can be especially hard at CSU Northridge because of the wide variety of cultures represented on campus. Different cultures have different norms for all aspects of communication, including business communication. Think of eye contact as similar to way you were taught to drive—look through the front window but also the rear-view mirror and the side mirrors on a regular basis. Also, the Gateway rooms are relatively wide. Each student will need to stand approximately in the middle of room and therefore, each student will need to turn her or his head (and perhaps her or his the whole body) to make recurring eye contact with everyone in the room. Don't just look at the instructor; everyone in the room (either a classroom or a boardroom) is important and is at the meeting for reason.

Most rooms where business is conducted are air-conditioned, and air-conditioning isn't always quiet. Some rooms have the back-door propped open, and there is often noise outside. Sometimes, individuals in the audience are tapping away on an electronic device or shuffling papers. Some rooms have a microphone, and some do not (and sometimes, the microphone may not work). Also, some individuals you will work with are older than you, and older individuals have usually lost at least a little of their hearing. Sometimes people sit in the back of the room, so they are physically further away from you than you might think. For all of these reasons and more, each presenter needs to speak at a volume slightly higher than she or he would do in a regular conversation. It takes practice to automatically adjust your voice volume level to a level appropriate for either a formal presentation or a personal conversation. It is the responsibility of the team to ensure that all students *speak up*. In speech and theatre classes, this technique is called *projection*. Not a single individual in the audience should need to strain to hear you or ask that you repeat anything. Finally, students should practice pronouncing and enunciating all words, but especially words that are new, unique, or particularly important (such as proper nouns or words that aren't writing on a presentation slide) to the content of the presentation.

Students need to remember to smile. This tends to be instinctive for some students, especially Marketing majors or students that are relatively extroverted. Again, this is partly a cultural issue. As an educated person and business professional, you have a

responsibility—in everything that you do academically and professionally—to raise the overall morale and positive psychology in the room. Also, men often tend to put their hands in their pockets, and since women often wear pants at work, they do too occasionally. You need your hands to communicate non-verbally; that is, you use your hands to support your verbal comments. Your hands should be moving relatively often (just as your speaking utterances are moving—that is, they have *verbs* in them). Experienced presenters can do this instinctively; the rest of us need to practice and to be conscious of this behavior proactively. Some business students are good speakers often because of their work experience or leadership roles in on-campus or community organizations. Most individuals are afraid of public speaking; we just need to practice because it's a critical skill in COBAE and beyond.

2.2. Team Collaboration

Is the time for each student relatively balanced (it doesn't have to be perfectly equal)? At a minimum, does each student on the team know each other team member's name? Does it appear that the team practiced together? Or put differently, does it look to an outside observer that the student-professionals are functioning as a tightly-coupled, cohesive, world-class team?

2.3. Presentation Technology Skills

Is the time for each student relatively balanced (it doesn't have to be perfectly equal)? Does each student on the team know each other team member's name? Does it appear that the team practiced together? Or put differently, does it look to an outside observer that the student-professionals are functioning as a minimalist group or a world-class team?

As people get older with age, focal acuity becomes more difficult (especially for those at the back of the room—which is where the instructor will be located). Presenters should also be careful about selections of color. There needs to be enough color contrast (on both the screen and any printouts) to be entirely readable. These recommendations aren't difficult to follow; they just require acknowledgement of the differences between individuals, practice in different presentation contexts, and diligent attention to detail.

Be very careful in the selection of font size and color. In the Gateway rooms, there should not be any font smaller than 18 point. The only exception might be for a large, numeric table copied-and-pasted from, say, Excel. In general, use sans-serif typefaces for *visual* presentations on an LCD projector. Examples of sans-serif typefaces are Arial, Calibri, and Corbel. Serif-based typefaces are generally used for *printed* presentations. For example, this document uses Times New Roman.

Your presentation should contain at least one well-designed figure—chart, table, or diagram. For the COBAE Options/Majors presentation, the figure will most likely be about course requirements, or perhaps salary by geographic region or management level. After displaying a chart, give the audience a chance to scan the image (again, a presenter

will know this task has been done by scanning the eyes in the audience). You can't just "copy-and-paste". Nowadays, it's really "copy-and-paste-*and-slightly edit*" to improve presentation quality.

Your presentation needs to be printed and given to the instructor. The printed Powerpoint (or similar) must not contain more than 1 or 2 slides per page. The reason for this is that although printing more slides on a single page conserves paper, it also correspondingly reduces the typesize enough that the content can be difficult to read easily.

2.4. Time Management

Your presentation needs to be no less than 7 minutes and no more than 10 minutes. So you need to incorporate this element into your practice. One option some of my students have found helpful in the past is to aim for the middle—8 ½ minutes. This provides a time buffer on either side. Again, it's practice that makes all the difference in the world.