

# Our Art Space

**To:** Rich Freed

**From:**

**Date:**

**Re:** Assignment #3 Grade Recommendation Report

---

## Background

Anyone who seeks to persuade others to their point of view must hone their public presentation skills. The written document – the proposal – can be left behind to provide detail and remind people why the idea is sound and why the presenter is the best qualified to achieve the goal. However, standing up and speaking to your potential client or funder is far more powerful and perceived to be more representative of one's personal and professional capabilities.

The purpose of this memo is to recommend my grade for the oral presentation my group SMARUM – and I delivered for assignment 3. To determine my grade, my group and I developed a set of criteria based on the assignment itself and your suggestions. Reflect both the priorities of the group and the effectiveness of the overall presentation, the criteria we selected are embedded within the following questions.

## Was the presentation logically organized and engaging?

To be understood, an oral presentation must have a strong organizational structure. Unlike a written document, the audience cannot scan back to a previous or later section to ascertain where they are being led and why. An oral presentation must make this organizational structure absolutely transparent to the audience.

## Was I well-prepared and confident, and did I use appropriate volume and tone throughout the presentation?

An audience responds best to presenters who seem excited about their topic and confident of their abilities to speak effectively. Even the best prepared and written presentation will fall flat if the delivery is inept.

## Was the slide design effective, professional, and creative?

A thoughtful and consistent slide design goes a long way in creating the professional and credible impression critical to persuading an audience. You gave a lot of time in our meetings to this issue, and we strove to incorporate your advice and feedback into the design.

## Did I function as an effective team member and contributor throughout the completion of Assign. 3?

The greatest achievements are never made alone. Throughout a professional career in communications, teamwork is essential to reach the highest goals. The key to effective teamwork is to respect the abilities and efforts of others and to trust that they are giving their professional best to accomplish the project goals, accept critiques/suggestions without personalizing, and stay focused on the project.



### **Group Performance**

Judged solely by the quality of the presentation, the team performed very well. Considering the above criteria and as evidenced by audience feedback,

- Our presentation was well organized and engaging
- Each team member spoke well, used good eye contact, and communicated excitement about the project
- The slide design was professional and effective
- Team members appeared to work together easily and seamlessly

In reality, the team was somewhat dysfunctional. I enjoy this kind of collaborative work, but I think it would have been more interesting with a group of more varied strengths. We didn't have a strong "Team Builder," and it really showed. There were tense moments when people arrived at team meetings unprepared. One team member in particular, Jane D, refused to work without detailed instructions on how to accomplish her tasks and showed up with shoddy or completely untouched drafts if I did not give her step-by-step instructions. I think she had some confidence issues, and she expected me to fix it. Except for me and Jennifer Y, team members became highly territorial about "their" section and failed to work on the project as a whole. By the end of the project, most of these difficulties were worked through, but not without some hurt feelings and a lot of whining.

On the positive side, our team worked very well together on many tasks and did achieve an excellent end result. While Jennifer and I chose to share the Methodology section and present it together, it was Mort's idea to switch back and forth as much as we did. Alan always offered to do the extra tasks, such as providing the first draft of the class prep memo, and was a very good sport about my editing his draft into a more consistent voice. Jennifer was highly responsible about deadlines, never shirked working on a draft, and even tried to work out our messy "trees." After a fairly unpleasant conversation or two, Jane really put forth a strong effort to contribute more actively to the group and revised my draft of the overview into her own vision.



### **Grade Recommendation**

In light of the criteria listed previously, I recommend that I receive [grade] on Assignment #3. I deserve this grade because

- I contributed substantially to the organization and style of the presentation and its delivery
- I spoke well, sharing my excitement about the project and thus engaging the audience
- I created and executed the design of our slide presentation
- I made significant contributions to the presentation's preparation and was an effective team member



### **I contributed substantially to the organization and style of the presentation and its delivery**

To achieve organizational transparency, I designed a lot of repetition into the slide program. I used an agenda at the beginning, and then repeated the agenda at every major shift in the presentation. This showed the audience where we were going and reminded them often along the way. I also used footers on each slide to reinforce the location of the presentation throughout. In the Methodology section I repeated a mini-Gantt chart in each header to help the audience locate the presentation.

I strove to use clear, vivid, and precise words throughout the presentation. I wanted there to be no doubts about what I was trying to do and who was acting to do it.

### **I spoke well, sharing my excitement about the project and thus engaging the audience**

After viewing the tape, I was pleased to see that I spoke clearly and at a reasonable pace. From the tape and the audience feedback, I believe I communicated my excitement about the project through voice inflection, volume, and body language and that I engaged the audience successfully. Jennifer and I also executed the partner-style presentation section very well, which was a big factor in keeping the audience engaged during the long, technical Methodology section.

### **I created and executed the design of our slide presentation**

Although I sent many drafts of my slide design to the group, the only feedback I got was from Mort who didn't like my initial design (he was right). So, I developed the design almost single-handedly. Mort developed the framed graphic for the agenda and the easel slide, and other team members developed graphic inserts for their sections, but the rest of the design was my work: the colors, fonts, active area, bullet treatment, footers, headers, background, transitions, Gantt charts, background washes, etc., were entirely created (or stolen) by me. I believe my design was professional, creative, and effectively engaged the audience's attention.

### **I made significant contributions to the presentation's preparation and was an effective team member**

The contributions I made to the team are substantial. Besides the contributions listed previously, I came up with our concept, found our donor (the John Deere Foundation), and spent time drafting all of the sections. Frankly I felt at times it would have been easier to have done the project myself, but I conscientiously trusted my teammates to step up and work through their drafts. I even took unpopular stances to urge team members both to take responsibility for the overall project and to reach beyond their comfort zone. This was not particularly fun, but I believe it contributed greatly to the high quality of our presentation and let my team members learn a lot about the proposal process. Also, throughout the drafting process, I would switch sections to help someone else who was having trouble with theirs. I spent a lot of time offering detailed suggestions for improvements on my team members' drafts without totally taking over or giving step-by-step instructions. I backed away from the design of the final document so that others in my team could shine. In the end, I was very impressed by my team members' skills and work. We all did a great job, and I am proud of my contributions to the team.

