Some Thoughts On Delivery

If there's a common theme that runs throughout much of the literature on "delivery" it's that the term is best conceptualized as performance. As the website Silva Rhetoricae points out, delivery in Greek is actually "hypokrisis," which literally means "acting." And when Garr Reynolds writes in appreciation of Steve Jobs, he says what made him so effective is that "he [was] able to seemingly forget the seriousness of the situation and just 'perform'" (188). To help you think about your performance, then, I thought I'd share some of the aspects from our course texts – specifically Chapters 8-9 in Presentation Zen (PZ) and Chapter 19 in Technical Communication (TC) -- that I think are most relevant and will help you deliver when get back to work after Thanksgiving.

Be completely present. Chapter 8 of *PZ* sounds flakey, but there is something to Reynolds' advice when he says you should let your other responsibilities go and completely focus on your audience. This is not easy and takes experience. No matter how much you read these books and practice your specific speech beforehand, it takes dozens of presentations to become better at delivery. (Take it from the guy who could never get higher than a B- in his Speech class sophomore year.) So for now, just try to be mindful of your 7-10 minutes. The best thing you can do is to know the assignment and your content well and be genuinely excited to share your work with others.

Teach us something. On page 195, Reynolds argues that your presentation should focus on "making a contribution." In that vein, I want to encourage you to think about what your thoughtful feasibility studies can offer the class. Even if your classmates are not directly affected by your report, the work you've done could help them in their current or future organizations. Maybe there will be an opportunity to collaborate? Think about how we might encounter your client or organization. Do they represent something larger? How is your presentation "listener-centered"? Are you getting past the obvious? Are you doing more for us than just narrating what you did?

Get away from the podium. This tip is practical. Move. Don't glue yourself to the teaching station. Since most of you don't have remotes for your laptops, *consider asking a classmate to advance slides for you*. As Reynolds mentions, it's easy to become secondary to your slides if you are in the background. Get in front and direct your content. Make eye contact. Talk to us.

Check out TED. TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is an annual conference of world-class thinkers. Speakers' presentations are often blogged about and their arguments tend to influence entire industries. The TED website (http://www.ted.com/) has an archive of old, searchable talks. It might be worthwhile to have a look at a few. How do speakers connect with audiences? How do they structure their content? Do they have slides? How do they conclude?

Use a simple structure. One of the easiest things you can do to make your presentation more enjoyable for your audience is simply tell them *what* you're going to do and *how* you're going to do it. Since the structure for this presentation is laid out for you on the assignment sheet, fill in how you plan to address all the bullets in your allotted 7-10 minutes. Better yet, use a handout to map the talk for us. Page 485 in *TC* also lists some ideas on how to signal organization within the presentation itself.

Involve your audience. This can be as simple as looking at your listeners, or as planned as asking them to do or say something (this works especially well as an intro). Certainly, you should invite questions and consider creating a handout for their take away. Don't think of this handout as part of the assignment. Think of it as a chance to make that contribution last.

Have a back-up plan. What if your slides don't work? What if the projector blows a fuse? What if you forgot your adapter? What if a file is corrupted? What of the images don't come through? Plan to have multiple versions of your slides somewhere, including a print version, and be prepared for something bad to happen. It happened to a few of you with the tech briefing.

Accept your nervousness. While many of you looked confident during the tech briefings, it doesn't hurt to mention this one. Of all the bullets our textbook mentions here, I think it's prudent to take a deep breath before you start and think about what you are about to do. And remember, it's just a performance.