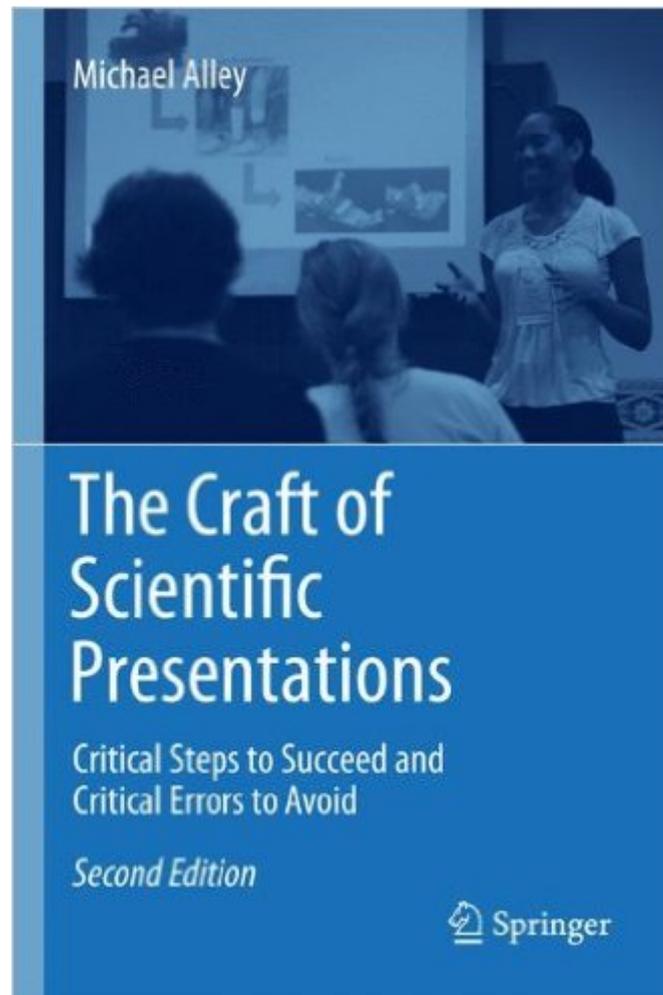


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The Craft Of Scientific Presentations: Critical Steps To Succeed And Critical Errors To Avoid



Synopsis

The Craft of Scientific Presentations, 2nd edition aims to strengthen you as a presenter of science and engineering. The book does so by identifying what makes excellent presenters such as Brian Cox, Jane Goodall, Richard Feynman, and Jill Bolte Taylor so strong. In addition, the book explains what causes so many scientific presentations to flounder. One of the most valuable contributions of this text is that it teaches the assertion-evidence approach to scientific presentations. Instead of building presentations, as most engineers and scientists do, on the weak foundation of topic phrases and bulleted lists, this assertion-evidence approach calls for building presentations on succinct message assertions supported by visual evidence. Unlike the commonly followed topic-subtopic approach that PowerPoint leads presenters to use, the assertion-evidence approach is solidly grounded in research. By showing the differences between strong and weak presentations, by identifying the errors that scientific presenters typically make, and by teaching a much more powerful approach for scientific presentations than what is commonly practiced, this book places you in a position to elevate your presentations to a high level. In essence, this book aims to have you not just succeed in your scientific presentations, but excel. About the Author Michael Alley has taught workshops on presentations to engineers and scientists on five continents, and has recently been invited to speak at the European Space Organization, Harvard Medical School, MIT, Sandia National Labs, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Simula Research Laboratory, and United Technologies. An Associate Professor of engineering communication at Pennsylvania State University, Alley is a leading researcher on the effectiveness of different designs for presentation slides.

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Customer Reviews

The 2nd edition of Alley's "The Craft of Scientific Presentations" is an important modernization of his original work. I was keen on getting this edition because the 1st Edition was written in 2002. Alley wrote about transparencies and slide carousels then and while these technologies are not entirely obsolete, the ubiquity of projected slides has pushed them to the sidelines. In this edition, Alley deliberately focused on the projected slide, courtesy of Microsoft PowerPoint or your favorite slideware. Although Alley's discussion of the pros, cons and appropriate use of older technologies in the 1st edition was greatly appreciated, he completely omitted it in the 2nd. I find this a wasted opportunity as the short discussion could have still been substantial material for the Appendix. Despite today's technology, carousels and transparencies still have some advantages over LCD projectors. If the 1st Edition cautioned the reader on 10 Critical Errors, the 2nd Edition cautioned on 13. Notably, Alley dedicated 2 (new) Critical Errors to criticizing Microsoft PowerPoint and its role in perpetuating poor presentations as we know them today. Furthermore, he blasted PowerPoint's topic-subtopic default and advocated the assertion-evidence format. He defends his advocacy and strengthens his credibility by citing his work as a multimedia learning specialist--a task he did not do in the 1st edition. The 3rd (new) Critical Error is simply an older chapter broken down. If it weren't for the 2 substantially new Critical Errors, the 2nd Edition would only have been a reorganization of the 1st. Although I have to say the 1st Edition felt more coherent, professional and organized.

Michael Alley and his team of researchers bring together experience, research, practical applications, and well-thought out perspectives that will help even the most challenged technical presenter improve performance. With verbal communication, specifically presentations, being the cornerstone of how cutting edge information is currently shared, it is imperative that technical communicators (scientists, engineers, analysts, technical professionals, and others in related fields) impact listeners with their critical messages. Alley's book will bring along even the most unwilling of practitioners. With examples and stories all through, Alley's approach is a gentle prodding look at how technical work gets done and the gets communicated. He doesn't lecture the reader. He doesn't chide. He does, however, provide a collection of less-than-optimal practices that many technical people make when presenting. He addresses the mistakes, writes about how they are understandable, and then provides solid ways to work your way out of the mistakes. Too many people believe that scientific and technical topics are dry...always dry...and have no way to redeem

themselves. In truth, these are the very talks that can change the way that we interact with the world, the ways that we see the world, and the ways that we move through the world. Whether a speaker needs to address issues with o-ring degradation or the design for a new roller coaster, that talk can be compelling or be a failure. Michael Alley's techniques will help that speaker to succeed. Alley's methodology is not theoretical.

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