

## **Preparing for progress reports, informal reviews, team meetings or other briefings**

There are many times when we must brief professors, advisors, colleagues or supervisors about project status, and in these cases, the formal oral presentation structure is not appropriate. Here, we point out some of the issues you must address in these situations.

**Informal briefings not necessarily less substantive than formal briefings.** Informal briefings generally have more questions, interruptions, and discussion. You **MUST** have specific, substantive content ready, and you must also be prepared to discuss it.

**Informal briefings are almost always time-limited.** This means you must get to your point, and you must prioritize which information to show. The shorter the time is, the more prepared you must be in terms of content, especially in an informal situation where the discussion may not be predictable.

**Informal briefings (progress reports in particular) report on work that is in process.** This means that your listeners know something (usually) about the project and want to hear what's happened since the last time they were briefed on it.

### **Strategies:**

**Think about what your listeners already know and what they need to know at this point.** If they are new to your work, they need background. If they are not new to your work, they don't. For example, in the first team meeting of the term, it is useful to give a description of the HOS. By the second team meeting, the staff is familiar enough with the project that this may not be necessary.

**Get to the point that is of greatest concern to your listeners quickly.** In the first or second slide after the title, address the key point. In 16.622, for example, the team is concerned about how students are faring in terms of time as they approach the last day to take data.

Example: *"We are glad to report that our project is on schedule although our budget has increased by \$200. We'll describe some of the design changes that were necessary and explain our rationale."*

**Use the simplest presentation technology possible.** A few viewgraphs or a simple handout may be all your listeners need to follow your reasoning. Perhaps they require not even that.

**Remember what you know about presentation style.** Speaking clearly and loudly, restraining nervous mannerism, being courteous and non-defensive, and maintaining eye contact are part of the way you present yourself professionally.

**Specifics for .621 team meeting:**

The purpose of the final .621 team meeting is to be as sure as we can that you have designed your project, are ready to write Version III, and to conclude .621.

DO. . . .

1. Describe the overall status of your project in 1-2 sentences.
2. Summarize what you've completed in a few sentences.
3. Summarize what needs to be done in a few sentences.
4. Be precise about your work breakdown structure. Estimate time requirements as realistically as possible.
5. Think about the questions your listeners are likely to ask. Think through your possible responses.
6. Consult the syllabus pp 25-27. These pages describe the sections or items the 62X team needs to see in Version III. You should be prepared to report your progress terms of these tasks.
7. Be open to your advisor's and the 62X team's suggestions.

DON'T . . . .

Don't start with more background and context than the listeners need.

Don't compose a big PPT presentation when what's requested is 2-3 viewgraphs.

Don't conclude your part of the meeting with vague generalities.

Example "*We're in good shape.*" "*We think it'll be OK.*"