Short (Technical) Talks and Elevator Pitches

CS 390 Collaborative Projects – From Concept to Delivery

Why talks (presentations) matter

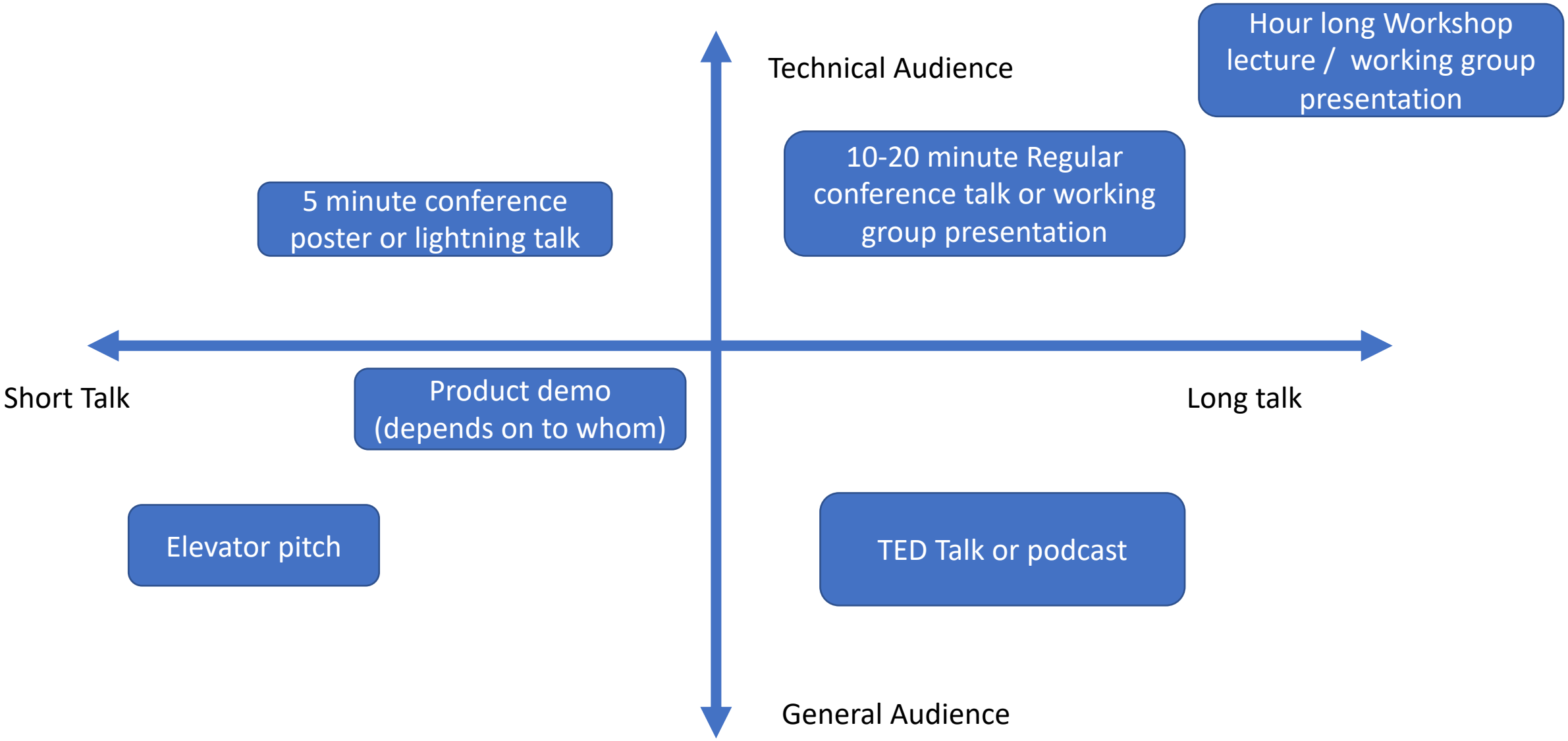
Most of us are used to doing projects in order to get a grade.

But in the real world? Projects should communicate value.

- To customers, — Why should I pay for this?
- Researchers, — What can I learn from this?
- Investors, — Why should I support this?
- Colleagues, — Why / how should I work on this?
- Friends? — What is exciting about this?

https://www.nsta.org/q-if-tree-falls-forest-and-theres-no-one-around-hear-it-does-it-make-sound

Genres of talks



Audience

Questions to consider:

- Who am I talking to?
- What do they already know?
- Of what do I need to convince them?
- What is the most important thing to show them?
- How do I want them to respond?

Examples

- Pitch new idea to a peer, get them to join the team.
- Pitch work in progress to someone new, want them to be excited and learn more.
- Show demo to client, want them to see what works and provide feedback.
- Conference presentation, convince listener to read paper / reach out to you.

Short talks vs. long talks

- Elevator pitch: 0.5-2 minutes.
  - One slide or no slides. No demo.
  - Problem & motivation, idea, invitation.
- Lightning talk: 4-6 minutes.
  - < 5 slides or a short demo.
  - Shows the solution instead of mentioning the idea, but without technical details.
- Conference talk: 10-20 minutes.
  - Slides or demo, includes most important technical ideas but not all details.
- Lecture: 30+ minutes.
  - Slides, demo, needs an outlined structure, walk through technical details.

Content Tips

Do…

- Tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end
- Explain your problem clearly
- Motivate your project
- Use pictures where possible
- Demo features you talk about

Do not…

- List everything you did
- Provide details with no motivation
- Write too much on a slide
- Have too many points
- Animate / color things for no reason

Delivery Tips

Do…

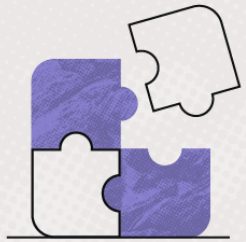
- Look at the audience
- Speak slightly louder than you would in conversation
- Pause occasionally
- Watch the time

Do not…

- Read slides
- Speak faster than in normal conversation
- Face the projection / screen

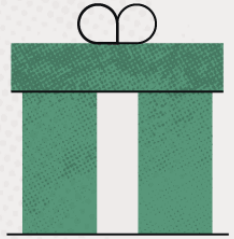
A foolproof elevator pitch template

01 Introduce yourself



02 Present the problem

03 Present your solution



04 Share your value proposition

05 Add a call to action

https://asana.com/resou[illegible]elevator-pitch-examples

And why it matters!

The most important idea(s), not the details!

Why is this the right solution? How is it different? What is the impact?

What is the takeaway? If you're interested then….