

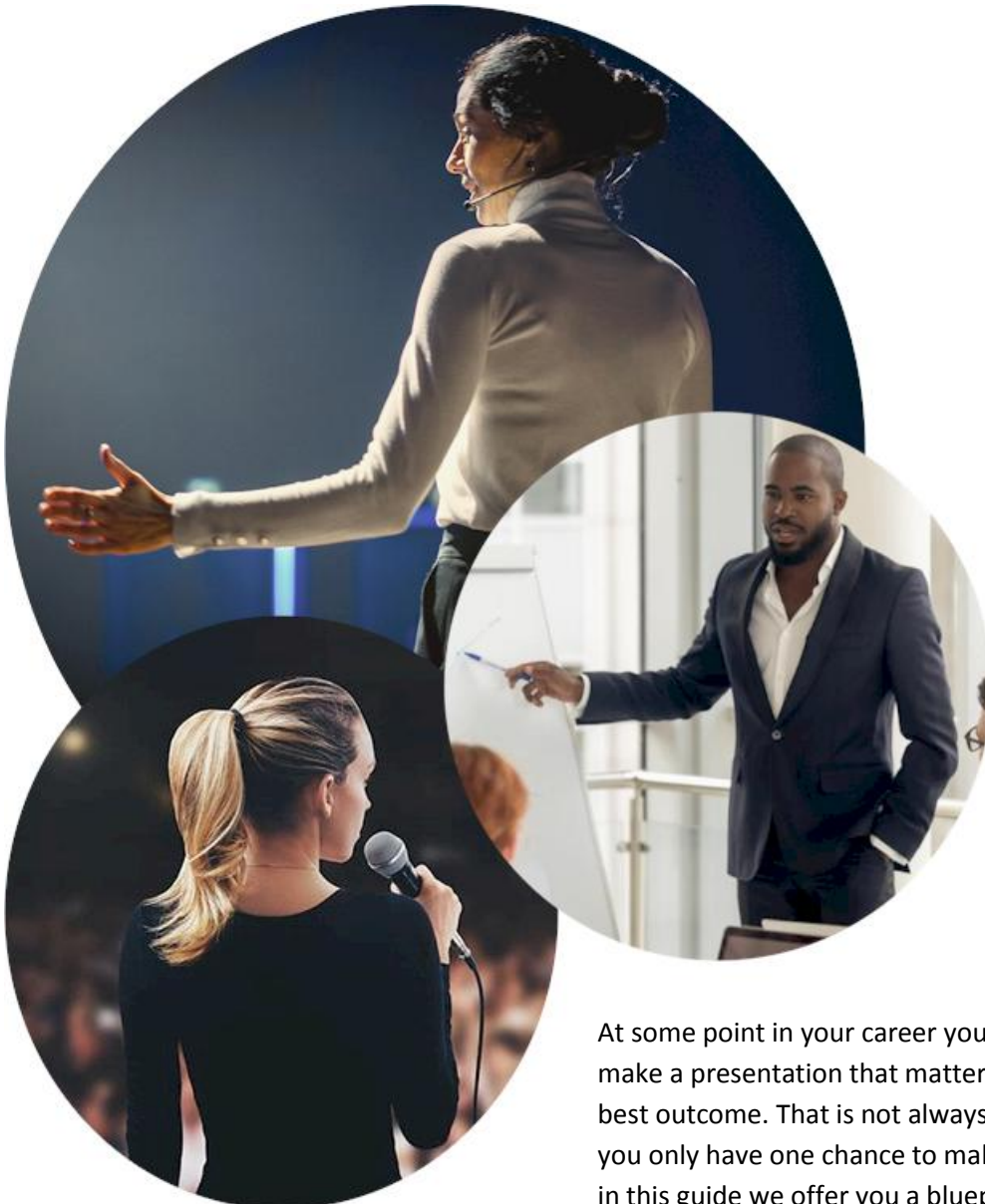


# COWORKING

*by Corvo*

A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.

## A POWERFUL PRESENTATION CONNECTS WITH AN AUDIENCE TO WINS THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS



At some point in your career you will be called upon to make a presentation that matters and you will want the best outcome. That is not always an easy task. Since you only have one chance to make a point and do it right in this guide we offer you a blueprint for designing and rehearsing a powerful presentation.

## ***A POWERFUL PRESENTATION CONNECTS WITH AN AUDIENCE TO WINS THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS***

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At some point in your career you will be called upon to make a presentation that matters and you will want the best outcome.

We could start out by saying that effective presentations are informative, inspiring, entertaining, and above all convincing, when what we really want to emphasize is that your presentation is your one chance with your listeners to make a point and do it right. Whether you are speaking in person or online, whether you are making a sales pitch or planning a promotional road show, to deem your presentation a success you must be able to win the hearts and minds of your audience.

That is not always an easy task. It's really easy to get all caught up in your expertise, the data, or the ease of your delivery. All the while your listeners dread that you will not be interesting and relevant. When you make a presentation you are engaging in a communication, a human-to-human connection. What you say to your listeners must be meaningful, credible and memorable to them personally. Then, how genuinely you say it is the connection that clinches the deal.

The audience is giving you an opportunity to make your point and convince them of the merits of your message. You cannot do that effectively with a haphazard or lazy approach. Putting in your best effort on presentation day actually begins way before you step in front of a microphone. There is significant groundwork and rehearsal that goes into delivering a presentation that grabs your listeners' attention, shows them value, and remains etched in their minds.

As a presenter, you cannot hide your lack of preparation because it seeps out through your message, your voice and non-verbal language cues. Impromptu presentations can sound informal, conversational and relaxed. However, your presentation could all fall apart if you neglect to prepare and then try to wing the delivery. If you lack knowledge of your subject matter your speech can sound unprofessional. If you lack awareness of the make-up of your audience you cannot establish a relationship with them. A canned presentation can come across as arrogant. It says that you didn't care enough to tailor your recommendation because you think your client should just buy into what you're saying. The audience can sense when you cared enough to be prepared to meet them face to face. The bottom line is that a well-practiced delivery is more engaging and persuasive than one you adlib.

Since you only have one chance to make a point and do it right and because we also want you to achieve the best possible outcome, in this guide we offer you a blueprint for designing and rehearsing a powerful presentation that connects with your audience to win their hearts and their minds.

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Is there a Secret for Success?

## YOUR ONE-SHOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE A POINT

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You only have one opportunity to make your pitch and a lasting impression. The aim is to make your message understood early and compelling enough to be well received and remembered. The main problem with this objective is, of course, the people who will be listening.

- ✓ Audiences differ and so do their expectations. One time you might speak to a group of similar people and the next time you face combinations of different ages, genders, education, economic status, or political/social/religious beliefs. You may be tempted to rely on a previously prepared presentation. The presentation that works for audience #1 may not be as effective for subsequent audiences. You well know, that meeting with a customer is a waste of time if he or she does not understand how the value of your product or service will serve his particular needs at this particular time. Assume then, that you will have to make adjustments in your presentation to suit each audience's expectations.
- ✓ Within any audience – whether they number five, fifty or five hundred – viewpoints are at variance. Familiarity with the subject matter can vary from expert knowledge to no awareness.
- ✓ Certainly not everyone is in the same headspace nor will everyone be 100% engaged. The average audience is very busy - they have spouses, children, schedules, mortgages, and everyday problems to cope with. They will try hard to concentrate on your speech, their minds will inevitably wander.
- ✓ Not everyone will have the same attention span. People can be overwhelmed by too much information. The average human being has a very short attention span. They have a million other things on their minds and are easily distracted. In fact, most individuals retain less than 20% of what they hear and about 40% of what they see.



Your job, then, is to reach through this cerebral fog to connect with your listeners and hold their attention long enough to make your point in a way that has big impact.



## FOR AN AUDIENCE TO BE RECEPTIVE, YOUR PRESENTATION MUST MAKE SENSE TO THEM

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There are five reasons that a presentation fails:

- 1) The speaker misjudged the audience's level of interest. So many times we see presentations prioritized by what the presenter wants to say rather than what the audience wants to hear. This is a failure of research.

*If you do not have a strong idea of what your client or audience wants or needs, then you have to work harder to find out.*

- 2) The speaker did not frame the talk correctly to suit the audience. Framing sets the tone and outcome.

*If you don't have several moments in your presentation where you say, "What this means to you (your family, your business) is....." then you didn't do the work to connect the dots for them.*

- 3) The speaker did not connect with the audience.

*Your listeners have to have confidence or trust in you. A powerful presentation is based on content that you believe in.*

- 4) The speaker failed to make it interesting or important for the audience.

*Aim to create and deliver a talk that is appealing and meaningful to your next audience.*

- 5) The speaker spoke for too long, way too long. If you try to give them too much information, you can overwhelm an audience and then none of what you say is memorable.

*Make it easy for your audience to enjoy your presentation.  
Refine your message to three or four concise takeaways.*

When you talk face-to-face with a person, you can automatically adjust your speech to accommodate the listener. For instance, with toddlers, you might use simpler words or shorten the sentences. With professionals your language is more formal than with friends. You change what you say and how you say it because you know who is listening.

To connect with an audience and effectively convey your message you need that kind of astute perception, which is a keen understanding of their mindset, pain points, concerns and needs. It is difficult to achieve that keen insight if you cannot wrap your mind around what it is like to walk in their shoes.



## A MEMORABLE PRESENTATION IS MORE THAN A BRILLIANT IDEA

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Compare your presentation to the momentum of a good song that sticks with you – the tempo, refrain, or easy-to-remember melody that stirs your emotions and makes it stand out from other songs. It resonates for days. Just a few notes transports you to the moment you first grasped the emotion to make it your song. Your presentation can stick in the minds of your audience in much the same way.

We have seen many passionate presenters confuse and lose an audience when all they had to share was their vision of a good idea. They wandered off point, over-explained an idea, or used terminology the audience could not comprehend. They fired off a shotgun of information at the audience and hoped they would absorb the relevant bits and somehow figure out what to do with that information.

Today, people don't need to go out of their way listen to you to get more information. The device in their pocket can potentially do that anytime and anyplace. One of the most difficult things to understand and accept is that the audience does not truly care about you. They do not enter the room to listen to your credentials or what you have overcome.

On the other hand, audiences care plenty about themselves. They entered the room because they seek have a problem they truly care about solving, and they need direction on how to solve it.

Speaking Coach Neil Gordon explains it well:



They need you because they aren't selling enough, or they aren't losing weight, or their dating life is a fiasco, or they aren't driving traffic to their online store. They need change. By the end of your speech they need to feel empowered enough to be an active participant in making it happen.



They will listen to you to get practical directions they can use to enhance their own situations.

- Focus your message on their problem
- Guide them to a reasonable solution
- Keep it simple
- Make sure it is understandable to them personally
- Make your audience feel something

When you are done speaking they need to feel empowered enough to go back to their desks or their home and feel like they can do something actionable to make change happen. Even the next day, and the next week, your audience will still be thinking about your message because, like a good song, what you say sticks in their mind.

## Make your Audience Feel Something

Inspiring your audience is all about helping them see their own vision, not yours. You just need to understand them, their dreams and the things that give them hope.

This doesn't mean you can't tell stories, share things you've learned, or talk about your products, services, features, and benefits. In fact, there is no substitution for speaking from first-hand experience. But, most importantly, it does mean you have to make your listeners feel something.

But what is it that gets someone in the audience to be empowered? What get them to put their doubts aside and seek you out after you have spoken?

Make them feel that your message is resonating, or more simply answered: when you can make the audience feel better off when they leave than when they walked into the room.

A memorable presentation is more than a brilliant idea. It requires groundwork, careful attention and time to make your brilliant idea come to life for your listeners. Every decision you make in planning, organizing, creating content, and delivery must be designed to be music to the ears of the people who will be listening.



### ➤ I will gear content to the listeners' knowledge, experience, and interests...

But, your work doesn't stop there. Even the best written argument or story will not win over an audience if you do not use your verbal skills to communicate it effectively. You can lose an audience through lack of eye contact, mumbling, wild gestures, or struggling to remember what to say next. If you look listless or distracted then your listeners will be listless and distracted. If you are tentative, your audience will also be uncertain. You can eliminate those types of difficulties through practice and the feedback of an observer.

Rehearsals culminate in your actual presentation being delivered with fewer gaffes: a momentum and rhythm that keeps an audience tuned in, a variance of volume that heightens interest, and a resounding quality, depth, and energy that your listeners can listen to for a long time.

### ➤ I will have delivered a powerful presentation if I can make the audience feel emotional about what I am presenting even if they have little knowledge on the topic.



## The FIRST MINUTE IS KEY

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Nothing is more important to a powerful presentation than what you say in the first minute.

If you can win the audience over in the first minute, you have a better chance of keeping them interested for the remainder of the presentation.

If you miss that deadline listeners will spend the next 29 minutes looking at their phone, sending texts or playing games. The polite ones will stare at you like they are paying attention but actually they are daydreaming.



**You are not putting yourself out there to be ignored...**

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## Crucial 15 Seconds to Engage

Seasoned executive communications coach Neil Gordon says,



*An audience forms its impression of you in just fifteen seconds. As soon as you open your mouth, can make or break your whole presentation. What keeps people listening and engaged is curiosity about what's coming next, and that suspense is at its peak right at the start. It can be a powerful tool. Don't waste it.*

*The biggest mistake you can make is to spend the first fifteen seconds, or even longer, thanking the person who introduced you, and the audience for their time, and saying how glad you are to be there.*

Speakers do that because they want to be polite and friendly. The thing is the audience has heard the niceties before, heard it so many times they tend to tune the speaker out and go back to their phones or plans for the weekend.

Think about this. The sound of a plane catches your attention. You look up. You have 15 seconds before that plane fades visibly and audibly. It is gone and you go back to whatever you were doing. However, if the pilot performs aerial stunts, banks a circle around you, sends out green and purple contrails, or drops packets of money you would look up attentively for a long time.

## So how do you make the most of those crucial seconds?

Gordon advises that you give them a silver bullet, the most relevant point in your speech that will make or break whether your audience feels empowered.



*Smile and nod briefly at the person who introduced you, take a beat and a deep breath, and launch right into the most compelling part of your talk. Distill your most important point down to one big idea. I call it the silver bullet. Convey your main idea in one powerful sentence.*

*People operate on self-interest, and they're most likely to listen closely, and remember you and what you said, if you address what concerns them most. So start there. You can add your own perspective later.*



## 15 seconds equals 4 sentences...

### What can you accomplish in four sentences?

The first few sentences of your message can actually achieve four things:

1. Grab their attention.
2. Tell them why they want to listen. Make a connection between their needs and your goals. Tell people what problem you can solve and what key benefit they will get that will give them some combination of happiness, success, and freedom.
3. Explain to the listeners why they should listen to you on this subject.
4. Get them to believe you.



A good understanding of your audience will help you shape a memorable opening that means something to them.

Accomplished speakers often start with an honest warm-up question (no answer expected) that sets the stage for the presentation. They turn their audience from listeners to active participants from the get-go. The question allows pause for the audience to think about how they might respond and it also helps you to get over your early jitters before you direct your attention to your main point.



## The right question can also serve to state the most compelling point of your talk...

*If you decide you would like to use a question there are examples in this guide that you can use for inspiration or feel free to use it as is if it suits your purpose.*



**That leaves you another 45 seconds to advance your connection with your listeners and establish your credibility...**

1. Smiling and making eye contact.
2. Establish your relationship to the audience
3. Engage the audience with an emotional tug.



### **Smiling and Eye Contact Enhance Connection**

You can show your audience your smile between sentences and if you are truly enjoying their company your eyes will convey that you are smiling on the inside.

Make eye contact while you speak. Your eyes can convince the audience of your honesty, openness and confidence. Of course, in smaller groups it is very easy to make eye contact with everyone. In large auditoriums the audience is further away from you and it is harder for them to tell precisely where you are looking. Thus, by simply staring at a group of people at the back of a lecture theatre it is possible to convince each of them individually that he or she is the object of your attention. Mentally divide a large room into several sectors and make eye contact with one person in each sector.

### **Establish the Relationship**

The key is to determine beforehand exactly how you wish to appear to the audience and use the first minute of your talk to establish that relationship. Whatever approach you choose, as their friend, as an expert, perhaps even as a judge, you must establish it at the very beginning.

### **The Emotional Tug**

You would not be keen to give a talk unless you have something worth talking about. It's highly probably that its significance to you has a story, a rhetorical question or a head-turning statistic. Each has emotional impact.

An emotional tug is a way for your listeners to relate to your story or message. You need that kind of connection because you want them to feel curious and stay for the whole story. If a reader doesn't feel a tinge of curiosity about what happens next, you may as well walk off the stage.



## Stories stimulate more parts of the human brain which intensifies engagement...

One of the best ways to engage your audience early is to employ narrative elements, especially one with an emotional tug. After all, your audience is human and we are hardwired to look for meaning in the world around us. A strictly professional approach with just facts is not as interesting or convincing as stories. It can be a personal anecdote or a fable that illustrates your point, as long as it's not too obvious or familiar. A story can capture the attention of the audience. It can be entertaining and engaging because people want to find out what happens next.

Stories stimulate more parts of the human brain which intensifies how the audience will engage with you. Chris Anderson curator of Ted Talks explains it this way:



*We all know that humans are wired to listen to stories, and metaphors abound for the narrative structures that work best to engage people. When I think about compelling presentations, I think about taking an audience on a journey. A successful talk is a little miracle—people see the world differently afterward.*

Telling a story allows the audience to glimpse more of your personality which makes you more relatable to them. A little bit of sincere emotion could be just the connection you need to make the ensuing facts of your message more meaningful as well as make your presentation more memorable.



## A rhetorical question makes listeners ears perk up because our brains are hard-wired to come up with answers to questions...

Why do rhetorical questions work so well? You have an objective, a mission. Asking rhetorical question or presenting a puzzle with no obvious answer places immediate focus on the one answer you are trying to get your audience to grasp. They know they are not expected to give you an answer, but they will be thinking about your topic. They expect you to provide the answer and they will be engaged and tuned in so they do not miss it.

A graduation speech answers the question: What are the graduates to understand and believe about themselves and how they are to fit into the hope, excitement, and responsibility of their future in a bigger world.



A sales pitch focuses on answering how the product will solve the problem, so you listeners will much more likely join you in your quest for an answer. And when, of course, you've answered the question your speech was designed to cover, you'll have earned credibility with the audience.

Experienced presenters craft rhetorical questions where the answer is a clearly a “yes. You can ask such a question more than once during the speech to trigger emotional reactions and make the audience feel the same way you do about something. Once the audience begins agreeing with you they are more likely to continue agreeing.

You can use rhetorical questions consecutively to highlight the complexity of a topic by asking questions in which the answers provide conflicting viewpoints. For example if your speech is focused on an element of criminal justice you might ask:

- How can we reduce the crime rate in our city?
- Should we rehabilitate offenders?
- Should criminals be punished with longer sentences?
- Should we create initiatives targeting at-risk children?
- What are the challenges in recruiting police officers?



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### **One head-turning statistic can startle an audience to sense that what they are about to listen to is a gigantic sweeping issue worth their time...**

Statistics can be boring. But, if you cite a statistic that astonishes, shocks, or somehow catches an audience unaware, it will be something that sticks in their mind throughout the presentation and be one they will be anxious to share with their friends, family and coworkers. A head-turning statistic can be more persuasive because it shows that you have done your research and establishes you as a credible authority. When you reveal something that an audience hasn't heard before, they are eager to learn more.

Don't rely on your audience to understand the enormity or significance of how the statistic is relevant. Try to make the statistic come alive with a meaning that your audience can visualize. For example, which statement below has more impact or imagery?

**OR**

- A. Google gets over 2 trillion searches a month.
- B. Say each search phrase entered into Google is 2 inches in length, and say we print those phrases on a ribbon. How long would that ribbon be? We could stretch a ribbon to the moon and back more than 11 times every month. Let's look at it another way. On average we take 14 breaths per minute. That just over 20,000 breaths in a day. That means that every time you and I take a breath 280,000 people enter a Google search.



## **Make them cry, make them laugh, get them excited, do anything that touches an emotional chord...**

Once you've tapped these emotions in a truthful, compelling way, your audience will be thinking, *what are you going to give me? I want to see it!* They will be captivated.

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### **What about an Ice Breaker?**

What do you do to help an audience to settle in and feel comfortable?

In any room a certain level of awkwardness is to be expected. Having a room full of people who feel awkward around each other can create an unreceptive atmosphere and be detrimental to your presentation. Certainly, you want the opposite to happen – for people to lower their barriers and defense mechanisms, be at ease, have fun and be receptive to entertain new ideas.

Depending on the event, the person making the introduction should have already helped an audience to settle in which means your cheery hello, sincere smile, and eye contact with the audience is all you need before you launch into your first minute.

If you are leading a workshop you can employ an activity that helps people get to know each other and feel more comfortable participating. However, do that after you have engaged and won the audience over with your first minute or two of setting the tone. In a large crowd, with no introduction, you too can use an ice-breaker if it is brief, attention grabbing, and relevant to your topic.

The beauty of an icebreaker is that it has a way of giving your listeners an energy boost, be it fun, silly or thought-provoking.

## IT IS A BALANCING ACT TO WIN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF AN AUDIENCE

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Generating ideas is usually the easiest part of creating a presentation. The hard part is winning both the minds and hearts of an audience.

It is a balancing act because you are not just there to present facts that make sense. Your presentation is doomed to failure if the audience does not hear or understand you properly. You cannot expect the audience to do whatever you ask of them if they are not convinced of the merits of your message. Your presentation will have no lasting effect if the audience does not respect and remember you.

With the right approach, you can turn a skeptical audience into an enthusiastic group anxious to do whatever you ask of them. First, you need to get the listeners attention. Second, you need to create a persuasive focused message that mixes facts and logic to help an audience see an issue from a new perspective.

Just because a fact technically lends support to your claim doesn't mean it will sway your audience. You might list a dozen product features, but if are not able to put yourself in the client's shoes and demonstrate the top benefits or offer direction to solve a problem, he or she might just say, "So what!" The best evidence needs to not only support your claim but also have a connection to your audience. You have to know what your key points mean to your listeners. For instance, if you are selling yourself and a service you provide, the audience may be concerned with how you will make things easy or save them time or money. They need it to make sense.

The audience not only has to comprehend the value of the facts that you present they have to believe in what you say. You cannot capture the heart of a listener if he or she does not have confidence or trust in you. Whatever you say and whatever you show, you are the focus of the audiences' attention. You are not there to impress them with how you dress, walk, or tell cute jokes. If you strut and fret your hour upon the stage and then are gone, no one will remember what you said.



You do not need a high energy presentation or extremely funny speech to connect to the audience. The most powerful presentations are based on content that the speaker believes in. You would not be making an ambitious presentation if it was not important to you.



**Still, you must aspire to make it extremely important for the listeners too...**

At the same time you need to fill the listeners with a sense of urgency so that they will make a decision to act.

You have a message to deliver, so ensure that everything you say, every word you choose supports that message. Say things because you mean them. Vibes of honesty and compassion are easily detected by an audience. Whatever approach you use, when you package your speech with truth and double-wrap it in sincerity you will win your audience over.



## **CAN YOU WIN THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS**

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Are you the type of individual that can deliver a message with punch and pizzazz?

How much energy have you got?

How many risks are you willing to take to deliver your message?

Are you aggressive, tenacious, daring?

Can you talk and walk among your peers?

***"Hold it!" Are you saying,  
"None of those words describes me!"***

### **GUESS WHAT? IT DOESN'T MATTER!**

The most vital attributes you can possess are enthusiasm and sincerity. If you know your business and genuinely believe in your idea or cause, your passion and zeal will shine through to win the hearts and minds of any audience.

## Characteristics that Exemplify a Model Presenter

Well-seasoned presenters share a few qualities that actually exist in all of us in one form or another. Look at these characteristics to see what areas you can strengthen:

- **Enthusiastic:** Show your audience that you are happy to be there. You don't have to be wildly exuberant to communicate that you are cheered or excited to be speaking to this particular audience.
- **Dynamic:** Wow your audience with your ingenuity, sense of style and delivery.
- **Sincere:** Be forthright and believable through your words and actions.
- **Confident:** Know your topic, know your audience, know your message, know your strengths and use them – that's the formula. More than memorizing stats or a fascinating list of features, it is the ease at which you can speak about them that is persuasive.
- **Passionate:** Don't be afraid to show your fascination or strong feelings for the idea or thing you are promoting or selling.
- **Articulate:** Use your skills to speak fluently and coherently. Choose your words carefully and learn to speak at a pace and intensity that can be clearly heard and understood. Vary your voice levels and use pauses for impact, but make sure that your diction, phraseology expressions, and delivery sounds natural. You want to deliver your message effortlessly and confidently.
- **Organized:** Plan and write your presentation in advance. On the day of delivery have everything you need at your fingertips. Prepare a logistics checklist and review it. Anticipate everything that could affect your presentation and prepare for it.
- **Flexible:** Be prepared to go with the flow, or react to emergencies or interruptions. If the audience is pumped up can you use their energy within the framework of your presentation? Be alert to the audience's reactions so you can work with them, not ignore their questions or comments.
- **Sense of Humor:** Inject humor into your presentation. A joke is not the only way to make an audience laugh. Valuable information can be imparted with a dose of humor.
- **Focused:** A good presentation has no room for ambiguity, rambling or guessing at what might be the next best thing to say. Concentrate on your topic and your audience. If you have to deviate from your plan to handle a question or interruption that cannot be ignored always return to the topic and resume where you left off. Use a notepad if you need to keep track.
- **Energetic:** Audiences love speakers who aren't glued to the podium and can show their personality.

The most crucial attribute you can possess are enthusiasm and sincerity. Those two powerful qualities stand out when you share something meaningful with an audience.

## **Powerful presenters share these tips for reaching the hearts and minds of an audience:**

1. Never set out to give a speech. Instead, share your ideas honestly and intelligently. Communicate as if you were talking to a friend. Play to your strengths and never try to be something you are not because the audience can tune into a fake faster than you can get ten sentences out. In other words, be yourself, let your personality shine through, and enjoy your time with the audience.
2. Aim for originality. The audience has heard the overused quotes and canned speeches before; they have sat before men and women with no facial expressions and eye contact. Your listeners want to be taken away to some terrain where they have never been before.
3. Work on stage presence but remember that your story or message matters more than how you stand or the visuals you display.

## **Public Speaking as a Profession**

There are a few individuals, expert presenters who can put on a show. If you are able to entertain your audience while you inform, inspire, influence, promote and help people change their lives then you may have a gift. While style and speaking ability are certainly influential, the best speakers are drawn to the profession because they have something truly compelling to say! If you aren't bursting at the seams with something truly compelling to share with a group, you're probably not ready for professional speaking.

## DETERMINE YOUR APPROACH

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There's no way you can give a good talk unless you have something worth talking about. Unfortunately, many speakers dive into developing content with no real direction. They fully understand their subject matter, but neglect to conceptualize how best to present it in a way that the audience will grasp.

Developing your approach and framing what you want to say is the foundation of a persuasive presentation.

Preparation of your approach is essential and consists of three key elements that must be undertaken before one word of your actual speech is written:

- 1) Establish your purpose.
- 2) Develop your goals.
- 3) Know your audience.



### Establish your Purpose

#### *Why are you delivering this presentation in the first place?*

Most presentations can be categorized as informational, inspirational or influential.

In an informational presentation, you share knowledge, provide details, teach skills, or explain a situation from a neutral position. Your objective is to inform and your focus is on the facts. At the end of the presentation the audience should have comprehensive knowledge that they did not have before they started listening. They should be able to understand or do something new, and thereby, be

empowered to make their own decisions about what to do with the information you present. College lectures, how-to demonstrations, status updates are examples of an informational presentation.

In an influential presentation, you take the role of an advocate. Your objective is two-fold. First, you want to stimulate your listeners to change an attitude or belief, and second to set the stage for the listener to act in a certain way. Your focus is on sharing an issue or identifying a problem that your audience will care about so they are motivated to take action, to be part of the solution or actively support whatever actions you take. You do that by offering the audience evidence and a logical solution; by presenting your views, reasoning, and line of attack; and establishing an emotional connection because you want the listener to believe something he did not believe before he started listening. The influential presentation is evident in politics, advertising and sales marketing.



In essence, every speaker, whether giving an informative or influential presentation, wants to speak well enough to inspire people to think or act in a certain way. The inspirational presentation, however, involves more than eloquence or persuasiveness. It is how you use the power of words to transform a straightforward talk into a highly emotional message - a characteristic means of inspiring people to take action in uncertain or difficult times. Those kinds of speeches can change minds and change history.

Decide your purpose so you will know what approach to take.

## Verify your Goal

### *What do I want to accomplish by making this presentation?*

A common mistake in the preparation of a presentation is concentrating on, "What to say?" instead of, "What do I want to achieve?"

Whatever your overall purpose is to inform, persuade or inspire you must determine the specific objective that you want to achieve with this particular audience. It may be the single most important step in planning your presentation.



You must be able to succinctly answer one of these four questions:

- A. What do I want the audience to know, think or feel?
- B. What do I want the audience to do as a result of this presentation?
- C. Why will they take this action?
- D. What is in it for them?

If you are not sure about what you are trying to accomplish and do not focus upon that objective it is unlikely that the audience will grasp your message.

You may ask, "What is the harm in having more than one objective?"

Here's a good question for you. How many different objectives can you achieve in a fifteen or thirty minute presentation? The answer is – not many. At the end of the day, you may find it is more productive to achieve one goal than to blunder over several. Identify, plan around, and concentrate on the essential objective. You may have a lesser objective and it may be incorporated providing it does not divert the attention from the main one.



## Your Objective Must be Specific

No generalizations, such as, “I want my speech to be memorable.”

Your objective must be obtainable and afterwards you must be able to measure your results.

*For example: I wish to persuade my audience to donate their organs and tissues when they die and to act upon their decision to donate by signing a donor card, and by talking to family to make sure loved ones know their wishes.*

Write down your objective in statement form. Keep that statement visible as a reminder for everything you choose to say.

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## Know Your Audience

***What do I really know about the people that will be listening to me?***

For any audience to be receptive, the planning, organization, content and delivery should be geared, not to you as the speaker, but based on an analysis of the people who will be listening and trying to make sense of what you are saying.

You are not speaking to teddy bears or paper dolls. You are facing a mix of viewpoints and personal aspirations, each driven by individual needs and emotions. Though they have different motivations, there are commonalities among them.

One of those commonalities is often very tough for inexperienced presenters to accept. It is about you. The audience probably does not want to know how marvelous you are, or how brilliant your product is. What they do want to know is something that will help them.

That means that every decision you make in creating your presentation must be based on what you know about your audience and how well you understand what they will grasp as important.

At the very least you should know these basics about the people who will sit before you:

- What are the age groupings, education levels, occupations, and income level?
- What are their common needs, values, beliefs, likes, dislikes, problems, challenges, fears, or attributes?
- How well do they know the subject, the business at hand, or you?
- What are their goals or expectations?
- What are their reasons for attending the presentation?
- Do they have any biases about the subject you will be speaking about?
- What is taboo with them?
- Why is this presentation important to your audience?
- Why will investing time in experiencing your presentation benefit them?
- Why is your content important to them?
- Will your audience want to know things like:
  - a) How do you save them time?
  - b) How do you save them money?
  - c) How do you help them avoid mental stress?
  - d) How are you going to give safe, secure, service?
  - e) How do you make things fun for them?
  - f) How do you make this easy for them?

Study the make-up of your potential audience to identify their aspirations and aims to figure out the overlap with your objectives. Frame your presentation on that overlap to convince the audience they are achieving those goals and you will find that you are interacting with a helpful and receptive audience.

If you approach your sales pitch or presentation from the perspective of your audience, not yours, and put yourself in the audience's position at all times, your presentation is more likely to succeed.

## PLANNING THE FRAMEWORK OF YOUR PRESENTATION

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Most speakers and audience members would agree that an organized speech is both easier to present as well as more convincing. That means that before you write your speech you need to decide on how you will organize your main ideas and supporting information. This is the outline which can also be used during your speech to keep you on track.

Even if the topic is important and familiar to you, random pontification without a planned narrative is can be deeply unsatisfying to your audience. When there is no obvious progression, the audience easily loses interest because they do not feel like they are learning anything new.

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### Identify and Refine your Message to Three Crystal Clear Takeaways

As we said before, generating ideas is the usually the easiest part of creating a presentation. Many of your ideas may be fascinating or clever, but you can have so many ideas it is counterproductive to squeeze them all in. A presentation is not meant to explore a topic in its entirety. Focus your points on your main objective.

Whether you are selling an idea or a thing, it has features – the main points.

**Use The Rule of Three.** Most people can remember an average of three ideas from a presentation. While some people can easily remember more than that, why push it to the limit?



***Make it easy for your audience to enjoy your presentation...***

State your main points in a logical sequence. Identify the feature and tell your audience something about it. Then immediately tell them how that feature will fulfill a need or be a benefit. Keep it simple and use clear concise language.

Each idea you suggest or argument you make should:

1. Have a conclusion or end result
2. Achieve an objective
3. Be interesting

If you struggle to reduce your message to three key points, try grouping similar ideas together until you have no more than three categories that summarize your most important ideas. Bear in mind that your audience does not want to hear them all, just the main points that support your position. To hone it down to the most salient points, it will help you to ask yourself these two questions:

- ✓ What ideas will best lead to your objective?
- ✓ What ideas do you want your audience to remember?

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## Decide on Supporting Information

Identify what information will support your main ideas but be careful because if you dare to include too much information the presentation can become too complex, unmanageable, or too difficult for even an astute audience to track and understand. For each bit of supporting information you gather, ask yourself if it essential to the achievement of your fundamental objective. If it is unnecessary, discard it.

The size of your audience, the topic, and the time frame will also influence what types of material you should use. Some of your choices might be:

- Examples
- Comparisons
- Quotations
- Statistics
- Graphs
- Audio-visual aids
- Documentation or reports from experts

Consider that variety will keep your audience more interested while also appealing to different personalities or learning styles among your audience members. However, do not make the mistake of including so much information that you overwhelm, bore or annoy your listeners. Remember that the people in the audience are intelligent. Let them figure some things out for themselves. Let them draw some of their own conclusions.



***In other words, say only what is necessary...***

You may want to prepare a separate package of supporting information and make it available after your presentation. That way, individuals who are keen to learn have the option. If you plan for questions after the presentation you may be able to use supporting information in that time.



## Anticipate Questions, Reservations, Opposition, or Concerns

To make the best possible case for your presentation, you want to be strong in your command of the facts, the strengths and shortcomings, supporting and opposing arguments, and benefits and disadvantages. After all, the audience expects you to be an authority and the last thing that they want to hear from you is uncertainty.

Experts know the plus and minuses of every column. Consequently, we tend to believe they have also put a lot of strategic thought and planning into how to successfully circumnavigate or avert various challenges or difficulties.

It is safe to assume that as you make your points, an astute audience will have questions and be speculating on the downfalls. You can preclude negative assumptions by being proactive. Simply address these potential issues in your presentation with each relevant point.

By answering unasked questions or offering smart solutions you dispel any reservations or concerns the audience may have before they can voice their questions. Again visuals are handy to lend additional support. This is one way to demonstrate how conscientiously and judiciously you have approached the subject and how seriously committed you are to thoroughness and getting it right.

The stronger your command of the facts, the more prepared and proactive you are the more confident, credible, and persuasive you will be.

Brainstorm with your team to analyze potential opposition, challenges, or questions that could arise in the minds of the audience.

If your presentation includes a question period, prepare responses to tough questions and practice them. Do not shy away from audience questions or comments. Regard them as a sign that your listeners are interested in what you are saying. Your listeners want your advice and want to be involved in the presentation. View questions as opportunities to reinforce your ideas.

## Connect and Communicate Your Ideas

Once you identify the main points and supporting information that you will utilize, you should have the basic points of your speech.



*Give careful thought to devising some original way to communicate these ideas to build audience interest and make them stick in the minds of your listeners...*



Remember, as you write your speech that a good presentation has no room for ambiguity or rambling. Say what is necessary, simply and clearly in words everyone will understand.

Arrange your main ideas and supporting information into a logical format that has a beginning, middle and closing that your audience can follow, comprehend and remember. Create a natural flow by using transition statements to link your key points in a way that leads your audience to the conclusion that achieves your objectives.

Many of the best talks have a narrative structure that loosely follows a detective story.

1. The speaker starts out by presenting a problem,
2. Then describes the search for a solution.
3. There's an "aha" moment, and
4. The audience's perspective shifts in a meaningful way.



## Create an Opener

In the first minute you have to sell your audience on the idea of listening to you and it has virtually everything to do with how you start your speech.

Your opening is the most significant of all. In the first minute you have to make your audience sit up and take notice.

Once you are introduced, the audience will still be occupied – adjusting their coats and finishing the conversation they were having with the person next to them. Some will be drifting in with coffee, waving to colleagues, and trying to find a seat.

If you start your speech just like everyone else, the audience has no need to pay attention because you

are basically saying the same as everyone else they have heard before. It is an automatic response for the audience to assume your speech, too, will be like everyone else's so they will tune out while you waste time thanking people they don't know. Worst of all, a drab opening of niceties tells the audience that you do not respect people's time.



### ***With a limited amount of time, I will have to make every second count...***

- ✓ Your first words and actions should get their attention and distinguish you above everyone else in the room, above anyone else the audience has encountered that day.
- ✓ At the same time you need to start the audience thinking about the subject matter.
- ✓ They will each have some experience or opinions related to the subject and you must make them bring that experience into their own minds.
- ✓ To add to your opening challenges you have to establish rapport and credibility using appropriate words and body language.

Having one minute to accomplish all four goals stresses the importance of planning your opening carefully, investing time to pool your resources, wit, imagination and inventiveness in creating a mighty opening.



### ***If you can win the audience over in the first minute, you will keep them interested for the remainder of the presentation...***

### What not to do in your opening statements. Never:

- Open with a joke.
- Apologize for anything.
- Move or speak slowly.
- Make any statements that are obvious or ask any questions that are trite.
- Tell stories that have no relevance to your topic.
- Make remarks about gender, age, religion, and politics.

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### Plan Your Close

You need a memorable finish. The conclusion is the strongest part of your presentation. Never end your presentation without having summarized the key points and objectives. Repetition adds weight to your closing statement. Your closing statements should be a call to action. Therefore the takeaways should be about:

What the listeners can do RIGHT NOW to improve life for themselves or their organization in some way.

Briefly reexamine the purpose of the entire presentation, the benefits where appropriate, and ask the audience to act.

As with the beginning, it may be necessary to get their attention again, as it will have wandered. To do this you can change your pace, employ a new visual aid or perhaps introduce one final culminating idea, a memorable finishing assertion or observation. Strong endings can be an unexpected vital phrase that resonates in your listeners' memories.



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### Check for Meaning and Flow

Once it's written, make sure that your speech flows. Sometimes it is more difficult to say things aloud than it is to silently read what you wrote. Once you are satisfied with the organization and wording, take time to read it out loud.

- Sometimes things that are written well can be awkward or unnatural to speak aloud. If you find yourself stumbling over some sentences, rework those sections.
- Read it aloud again. Record it. Listen to your voice to determine if you need to improve your language, enunciation, tempo, or inflection.
- Make sure you time your presentation, especially if you have a designated limit.



## Improve your Language

Sometime we do not know if we are using incorrect grammar or overusing words and phrases. In trying to be expressive word choice can be inaccurate or inappropriate to the subject matter or audience. Do you need advice on your use of language? If you are unsure of your use of language and verbal skills have someone you trust analyze your speech to spot such errors.

One aspect of your speech that should be scrutinized by an objective person is whether your phrasing flaunts too much ego? Too imposing? Too wise? Language that is too condescending or pompous estranges you from your listeners. If you're a salesperson or an entrepreneur or a leader of any kind, the spotlight is often on you. But no matter how much the spotlight is on you, it's essential to stay humble and keep the conversation about the other person or people in the room, not about you.

- Are you using imagery, words that your listeners can picture? Words that appeal to the senses or evoke an emotional response are more memorable and more persuasive.
- Are you using rare words or exaggerated vocabulary that may confuse or intimidate your audience?
- Are you using words that can alienate your listeners? Technical jargon, fad words, slang, degrading words, profanity, foreign phrases and made up words are turn-offs.

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## Listen with a Fresh Ear

When the presentation flows and feels just right, record your presentation so you can listen to it. Sometimes it is best to leave it for a couple of days and listen to it again with a fresh ear.

- Are you enunciating words incorrectly?
- Are you placing emphasis on the key points by changing the pace of your speech?
- Are you generating interest by varying your pitch?
- Are you changing volume to accentuate contrast?
- Are you inserting deliberate silence to build anticipation?
- Do you sound too passionate?
- Are you rushing? Pausing to breathe?

If you struggle with finding your own voice or finding inspiration, watch TED Talks or even the news, because they provide you with some of the best examples of public speaking and story-telling.





## View Yourself with a Critical Eye

Video allows you to see your performance the way your audience will. You must expect that every audience – from a sales presentation to giving a keynote address – will be tuned into your every word and they will pay close attention to your non-verbal cues as well.

### Instant Feedback Using a Mirror or Video

You can critique yourself either by recording (video/audio) and self-evaluation. Watching a recording of your entire practice presentations can give you instant feedback about how relaxed, natural or uncomfortable you look. Watch yourself with a critical eye to gain insight into what areas of your delivery may be a struggle and figure out what aspects of your body language may be distracting from your message.

- Are you struggling to remember the sequence of your presentation? Missing key points?
- Are you using transition statements with ease?
- Are you swaying, fidgeting or moving around too much or maybe not enough?
- Are you using the microphone to your advantage?
- Are you a starved statue with a permanently etched facial expression or are you smiling and making eye contact with the audience?
- Are you glued to the podium?
- Are you sending conflicting signals with your non-verbal language cues?



Seasoned speakers will tell you that the single most important thing to remember is that there is no exact formula that ensures your speech will succeed. They also warn that inexperienced speakers tend to want to be authoritative or powerful and underestimate the importance of being authentic. They also say:

- The worst talks usually come across as robotic or emotionless.
- What works for you may not be the same as works for someone else.
- The best speakers do not simply moralize or lecture; they sound conversational.

Usually, the speech that makes you feel comfortable will be what works to your best advantage. Whatever approach you use, make the talk your own. Get the words and substance right in a way that ensures you can just be yourself.



***When I have something meaningful to say I will be sincere and the audience will know it...***

## TWEAKING AND REHEARSING A DELIVERY TAKES TIME

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No one is born with a knack for delivery. The ability to speak in front of an audience is learned through study and earned through experience.

Experienced speakers will tell you that in between they practiced and had plenty of feedback. That is the only way they can take the stage on presentation to speak effortlessly and authentically.



### Aim for an Effortless Presentation

An effortless presentation is more convincing than one that you read or regurgitate from memory. Either of these deliveries can appear insincere or robotic and an audience can usually tell when a person is not being spontaneous.

While reading may increase your level of confidence and allow you to use precise language, reading can sound robotic which will certainly cause your audience to lose interest. When you read what you have written, even a dramatic performance, allows little eye contact which distances you

from your listeners. Even if you established trust and intimacy with your audience with a great opening, once you shift your attention to reading the bullet points from Power Point slides or other visuals the vibe in the room shifts to something more formal. Your connection to your listeners evaporates and they withdraw.

Some parts of your presentation may require reading, especially when you do not want to say something incorrectly, like when you are using a long quote or making a point that involves a legal or extremely technical issue. Otherwise do not rely on reading.

A presentation that is memorized can be impressive as long as it does not sound like you are droning or empty of emotion.

## Evaluate Your Delivery

Keep these points in mind when you evaluate your delivery:

- Your audience expects you to hear you. There is nothing worse for an audience than not being able to hear the speaker or understand parts of a speech because he mumbled, spoke too quickly, slurred words together, or used poor diction.
- Your audience expects you to be focused on subject matter. Rehearsal is important to avoid rambling, having to apologize for forgetting a point, or stumbling over poor phrasing or word choice that could be offensive. You may want to use cue cards or notes to keep you on track, but you do not want your delivery to come across like you are reading a script and afraid to lose your place.
- Your audience expects you to be ready to focus on them.
- Your audience expects you to move. You will not appear confident if you are clinging to the lectern or sitting with your arms crossed in front of a microphone. Move from time to time and use gestures because it is the natural thing to do. Novice speakers are often told to keep their arms at their sides, or to restrict their movement to only that which is absolutely necessary. This is not normal human behavior. You want to come across as comfortable and natural, and your use of your arms and hands contributes to your presentation. Unless you are being covered by a stationary camera, some walking, arm movements and expressive gestures are expected and sometimes absolutely necessary. When a movement is comfortable for you, it certainly can be engaging for your audience as well. Place your emphasis on what your audience would find normal.

You can move strategically to indicate temporal changes in your message, demonstrate purpose, or reinforce the pros and cons of your subject. Deliberate movement or a well-chosen gesture can make a point memorable or lead the audience to the next point. They can be used to regulate an audience's response to your message. Check our section guide devoted to movement and gestures.

- Your audience does not expect you to be perfect. Nobody is perfect. Your clients and audiences respond well when you are comfortable with yourself. Comfortable does not mean being smug or self-important. Neither does it mean timid. It does mean at ease with your body and in control of your delivery. An audience is far more likely to forgive your occasional "umm" or "ahh," or the non-verbal equivalent of a misstep, if you are comfortable with yourself and your message.



## Instigate a Feedback Process

Experienced speakers will be the first emphasize how important it is to get feedback. Yes, you can critique yourself either by recording (video/audio) and self-evaluation. However, to strengthen your delivery and identify areas you might need to improve, ask someone to be an objective observer and give you honest feedback. When you are making an important presentation or speaking often before a live audience you may seek advice from a coach or better yet, when you have an opportunity to practice in front of a live audience you actually get to see and hear how your listener's respond to your presentation. You and your coach can fine-tune your delivery.



It is important to be choosy about the people you ask to be your test audience and those you ask to provide feedback. Feedback from too many people can cause confusion and hinder you from making progress.

You should test the presentation in the actual room if it is possible. Have your observer(s) sit in different areas to ensure you can be heard. Aim to get critiques that are specific. An observer who makes comments like, "Not clear!" generally doesn't help. You need to pinpoint problematic areas of your speech or your delivery. Seek answers to these specific questions:

### Communication

- Were the key points of your message clear?
- Did you speak in clear and concise language?
- Did your voice the carry in the presentation space? Figure out if you are speaking loud enough, but not too loud.

### Delivery

- Was your presentation engaging? Fun? Suspenseful. Too technical? Boring?
- Did you capture the attention of your listeners?
- How interactive was the presentation?
- How approachable did you appear?

### **Body language and presence**

- Did you make eye contact with the audience?
- Were you speaking confidently? Did your non-verbal communication cues appear confident?
- How did you stand or move? Too much? Too little?
- Was any of your body language distracting or annoying? (Too many hand gestures? Facial expressions, etc.)

If you are rehearsing in front of an audience have a couple of observers pay attention to how the audience reacted.

- Did they look bored? Inattentive? Confused?
- Did that laugh, smile or nod in agreement in the appropriate places?

If possible, ask attendees to fill out a questionnaire aimed at how well you got your message across and the effectiveness of your delivery.



## Rehearse and Rehearse Again

It takes time to tweak the wording and refine your delivery. It takes significant time to memorize the talk and get over the awkwardness.

There are thousands of presentations on TED Talks with more than a billion views, says their curator.



*The best and most popular talks have been memorized. If you're giving an important talk and you have the time to do this, it's the best way to go. But don't underestimate the work involved.*

*Obviously, not every presentation is worth that kind of investment of time. But if you don't have time to learn a speech thoroughly and get past that awkward valley, don't try. Go with bullet points on note cards. As long as you know what you want to say for each one, you should be fine. Focus on remembering the transitions from one bullet point to the next.*

Practice is only productive when you make a positive effort to improve. So, rehearse, assess, make changes where necessary, and rehearse again. Each rehearsal helps to smooth out your speech and delivery so it becomes natural to you. It will be effortless for you to move from a dynamic opening to the meat of your speech and transition to your closing, and improvise through question period. Your speech will not sound memorized or crafty. It may require more preparation but the benefits are worth the investment of time in shaping your presentation to be the best it can be.

Of course, even if you have spent a lot of time in rehearsal and memorizing your speech, you can still refer to notes. It is natural; it demonstrates to your audience that you are human and also that you do not want to miss telling them what is most important.

Practice helps you to develop the self-assurance you need to adapt to the audience, and carry on with smooth spontaneity no matter what happens. On the day that you deliver the speech the only thing you should have to worry about is being yourself and sharing your message – planned, rehearsed but delivered effortlessly and with genuineness.



## Confidence Matters

Since presentations are an integral part of many careers paths you may benefit from taking public speaking classes or joining a Toastmasters group. Peer-based interactive learning environments help you gain skills by doing, get feedback and evaluations in a supportive atmosphere, and have access to mentors – great for combating fear or learning how to improvise. You derive the proficiency and confidence to effectively and persuasively express your ideas, which improves your presentation skills as well as your interpersonal communication. Not to mention new opportunities for sharpening your leadership abilities and expanding your discovery network.

## **CREATE CALM BEFORE YOU TAKE THE STAGE**

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It can be very distressing to make a presentation to a group of people. If you feel nervous, you are not alone. Few people, including actors and seasons professionals, can step on the stage and not experience some edginess. It is normal and leads a list of fears among business people who are anxious about making embarrassing mistakes, looking nervous, being criticized, or injuring careers and reputations.

This type of nervousness cannot be eliminated. In fact it can be a good thing. It can give you the boost you need to excel.

Good preparation and rehearsal feed your confidence and go a long way to reducing stress. One thing you can do is anticipate the worst case scenario and practice how you will deal with it. There are a variety of exercises that you can do beforehand that have proven effective: relaxation methods, isometric exercises, and vigorous work-outs before the presentation.

Still you know when you are too jittery to perform well. Alleviate some of the excess nervousness with these tips and strategies:

### **Ensure a Trouble-Free Start**

On the day of your speech you want to make sure you have an unproblematic start.

#### **Check the details:**

- On the day of your speech you should ensure the sound system is functioning properly. If there is no sound system, ensure the seating arrangements are favorable for everyone to hear.
- Make sure that everything you need is.
- Find out if there are any administrative details which need to be announced at the beginning of your speech. This is not simply to make you popular with the people organizing the session. When this type of preamble is overlooked the audience may become distracted as they wonder what is going to happen next.
- Determine if there is a quiet space for you to do your final preparations.
- You may want to enlist help to take care of these details.

#### **Arrive early:**

- Allow yourself time to get acquainted with the facility before the audience arrives. Use some of that time to walk around the presentation room. Stand on the stage, amble down the aisles, take a seat and put yourself in the role of a listener.
- Get in the zone. Listen to music, read, or any other activity that helps you to get into the right headspace.

### **Participate in meet and greet:**

When the countdown to speech time looms, anxiety mounts. Rather than watch the clock and fret in some corner, it could be much more comforting and a lot less pressure to greet people as they enter the room. A simple hello and polite conversation as you mingle, removes the anonymity of the faces that would usually be a blur in a crowd. It puts you more at ease. This creates an ideal situation. Though you may be in a position of authority your presence and receptiveness puts you on level ground with the audience. When you join them on the floor, people feel that you honor their presence. You make an impression which helps to build respect and goodwill which can be the impetus you need for achieving the support of the audience.



### **Breathing with intention:**

Focus on breathing might not be the first thing that comes to mind. Yet, mindful breathing is a handy built-in stress-reliever that calms your mind and relaxes your body to help you focus your thoughts and feel more grounded. It's great because you can use it anywhere. It is very helpful a couple minutes before you take to the podium. The simple act of placing attention on your breath slows down your respiration rate and puts your focus on your breathing rather than the nerve tension. When you change the pattern of your breathing to feel your abdomen move as you breathe deeply and slowly exhale, it gives you more energy.

### **Accept your humanity:**

Stop. Find a quiet place to talk out loud to yourself. Tell yourself why you are afraid. "I am afraid of saying something foolish and having people laugh at me."

Then tell yourself why you should not be afraid. "I have never seen a speaker get laughed off the stage. I've never been laughed at during a presentation."

Use the adrenaline rush to your advantage. Channel it to energize yourself. "I am capable and talented. I know what I am talking about. I've prepared and rehearsed a good speech. I am happy to be here. I am enthused and the audience will know it. I am ready. I will wow this audience."

Similarly, if happen to hit an anxious moment during your delivery, keep it uppermost in your mind that the audience will never notice your nerves nearly as much as you think. Simply smile, take a moment to look at your notes and get your bearings. While the silence may seem long, it is not to the audience. A moment of silence adds sincerity to what you just stated and serves to give the audience time to process the importance of what they just heard.

## ***WRITE A THANK YOU LETTER***

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Write a thank you to your host. Maybe you have to recap a discussion or provide follow-up as part of your presentation. Include your perceptions or list actions you or they may have to take. Write the letter while the meeting is fresh in your mind and send it promptly.

This is especially important if, as a result of your presentation, there is ongoing communication, negotiation, unfinished business or more presentations to be arranged. When it comes to spelling out what is expected of participants in a business arrangement there is nothing like the written word to dispel confusion.

## EVALUATE YOUR PERFORMANCE

Once the speech is over and you have calmed down, you should try to honestly evaluate your performance. Either alone, or with the help of a coach or friend in the audience, determine what the least successful aspect of your presentation was and resolve to concentrate on improving it for the next talk you give.

Here we offer you two evaluation tools. One is checklist for an observer and the other is an audience questionnaire

### Oral Presentation Evaluation Checklist

Your observers should pay attention to specific aspects of your presentation: delivery, content, organization, clarity, interaction, rapport, and resources/visuals. Ideally, you would like to your observers to give you a positive response for all aspects of your presentation.

#### Mannerisms and Delivery

My body language was alert and relaxed.

My voice varied in pitch. It was not a monotone.

My voice was energetic.

I used meaningful gestures.

My body language matched the tone of my speech.

I used notes sparingly. I did not read from them unless presenting a quote.

I used conventional grammar.

I did not hesitate or lose my place.

I didn't use filler words (e.g., uhm, uh, ah, like, mm).

I did not call attention to my errors by apologizing.

I didn't fidget, rock back and forth, or pace.

I avoided unnecessary motions that could distract listeners from the message.

I maintained good posture.

I maintained eye-contact with the audience most of the time.

I spoke to the entire audience, not just one or two people.

My pronunciation was clear and easy to understand.

My rate of speech was neither too rapid nor too slow.

My volume was neither too loud nor too soft.





### **Content and Clarity**

I used a strong attention-getting opening and was able to grab the attention of the audience right away.

I established no more than three or four main points?

I used words that the audience could understand.

My vocabulary was strong and unambiguous.

I used facts and logical appeals where appropriate.

I used opinions or emotional appeals where appropriate.

I used supportive details.

The information I gave was valuable.

I stayed focused; I did not stray off my topic.

I was well-informed on my topic.

I presented information that others didn't know.

I was able to answer questions from the audience.

### **Organization**

The audience could predict the presentation's basic structure from the introduction.

I organized ideas in a meaningful way.

My topic was stated clearly in the introduction.

My introduction included a statement of the main points.

My introduction was clear and easy to understand.

I included necessary background information.

The body or the presentation contained support for the main points.

I used helpful transitions between main points (e.g., "First of all...", or "Similarly...")

Ideas flowed logically from one point to the next.

My presentation had a strong conclusion.

The conclusion had a clear call to action or belief.

The conclusion summarized what I thought about the topic.

The audience could distinguish the introduction, body and conclusion.

### **Presentation Aids**

I used visuals efficiently.

The visuals I used were relevant to the topic.

I used effective visuals.

Presentation aids enhanced the speech or helped people remember the main points.

Visual aids were easy to read or see.

Audio aids were easy to hear.

Handouts and/or visual aids contained no spelling or grammar errors.

I used credible resources.

I cited my resources and gave credit to the resources in my speech.

I put information from the resources in my own words and they were understandable.

### **Interaction**

During a question and answer period I was able to interact comfortably with the audience.

I allow the questioner to finish before offering an answer.

I repeated the question so that everyone in the audience understood what was being asked.

### **Rapport**

I demonstrated enthusiasm about the subject.

I did make the audience laugh.

I used humor appropriately?

I used a story to engage the crowd?

I adjusted my presentation and delivery when I gauged an unfavorable reaction from the audience.

## **Audience Questionnaire**

Questionnaires can also be given to the audience to obtain feedback on your voice, delivery pace, engagement with the audience, coherence, language choice, and persuasiveness:

- Did you understand the speaker?
- Was the speaker loud enough (but not too loud)?
- Was the speaker's pace comfortable, not too fast or too slow?
- Did the speaker take time to allow for questions?
- When asked to clarify information, did the speaker repeat complex or confusing concepts?
- Did the speaker seem relaxed and comfortable?
- Did the speaker avoid most meaningless filler words such as uh or um? (Do not nitpick, but was the number of "ums" distracting?)
- Did the speaker simply read his or her paper?
- Did the speaker make eye contact?
- Was the speaker aware of the audience's responses or reactions?
- Did the speaker adapt the material well for this particular audience?

- Did the visual aids help you understand the speaker's message?
- Were the visual aids well designed and free of distracting or confusing elements?
- Did the speaker direct your attention to key points or visuals?
- Did the speaker adequately explain their significance?
- Was the subject clearly expressed?
- Did it make sense?
- Can you restate it in your own words?
- Was there one apparent theory or purpose?
- Did all of the main ideas go together?
- Did the speaker avoid using jargon?
- Did the speaker define key terms and unfamiliar words?
- Did the speaker address the audience using an appropriate and effective tone?
- Did the speaker clearly and smoothly link ideas and sections of the presentation?
- Were transitional words and phrases used correctly? For example, sometimes speakers overuse or misuse certain conjunctive adverbs (therefore, however, furthermore) to sound more formal.
- Did the evidence or supporting material make sense?
- Were the examples appropriate and credible?
- Did they mean what the speaker says they mean?
- Did the examples and evidence support the speaker's claim(s)?
- Did you come to a similar conclusion based on these examples?
- Did the speaker mention other possible conclusions?
- Did the speaker avoid logical fallacies?
- Did the speaker seem credible and convincing?
- Did you agree with the speaker?
- Did the presentation make you change your opinion? Why or why not?
- Even if you disagree with the speaker, did the speaker adequately explain and defend his or her position?

## HOW WILL YOUR AUDIENCE SEE YOU – MAKE SURE YOU SOUND, LOOK AND SPEAK LIKE A PROFESSIONAL

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Your job is to use the potential of the presentation to ensure that the audience is informed, motivated and inspired. Therefore, sound like a professional, speak like one and look like one. Actually, your whole body is as a dynamic tool to reinforce your rapport with the audience.

There are seven key facets of how the audience sees you. These deserve attention in the delivery of your presentation: the eyes, the voice, facial expressions, head movements, elements of speech, appearance, and how you stand.

### Eyes

Your eyes will be the most effective in convincing the audience of your honesty, openness and confidence. Your eyes create rapport. Even in casual conversation, your feelings of friendship and intimacy can be evaluated by the intensity and duration of eye contact. During your presentation you should use this knowledge to enhance your rapport with the audience by establishing eye contact with each and every member of the audience as often as possible.



Of course, in smaller groups this is very easy to do. However, it can also be achieved in large auditoriums. Since the further the audience is away from the presenter the harder it is for them to tell precisely where you are looking. Thus, by simply staring at a group of people at the back of a lecture theatre it is possible to convince each of them individually that he or she is the object of your attention.

- Move your eyes gradually and naturally across the audience, both close to you and toward the back of the room. Try to look for faces that look interested and engaged in your message.
- As you settle your eyes on a new line of sight give a slight smile – it will convince each person in that direction that you have seen and acknowledged them.
- Try to hold your gaze fixed in a specific direction for five or six seconds at a time.
- Move your eyes in slow smooth cycles to cover the entire audience, especially the corners of the room.
- Do not wear dark glasses and do not spend your time reading to the audience. Look at them and talk to them.
- Avoid looking over people’s heads, staring at a point on the wall, or letting your eyes dart all over the place.
- Never stare at the floor, ceiling or your notes.



## Voice

After the eyes comes your voice. The two most important features of your voice are projection and variation. Few people can take their ordinary conversation voice and use it on stage. The main difference comes in the degree of feedback which you can expect from the person to whom you are talking. In ordinary conversation, you can see from the expression, perhaps a subtle movement of the eye, when you speak to loudly or when a word or phrase has been missed or misunderstood.

In front of an audience you have to make sure that this never happens. The simple advice is to slow down and to take your time. Remember the audience is constrained by good manners not to interrupt you so there is no need to maintain a constant flow of sound. A safe style is to be slightly louder and slightly slower than a fire-side chat with a slightly deaf aunt. As you get used to the sound, you can adjust it by watching the audience.

A monotone speech is both boring and soporific, so it is important to try to vary the pitch and speed of your presentation. At the very least, each new sub-section should be preceded by a pause and a change in tone to emphasize the delineation. If tonal variation does not come to you naturally try making use of rhetorical questions throughout your speech, since it is quite natural to hear a slight rise in intonation at the end of a question.

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## Facial Expressions

The audience will be watching your face. If you are looking listless or distracted then they will be listless and distracted. If you are smiling, they will be wondering why and listen to find out. In normal conversation, your meaning is enhanced by facial expressions. Thus in a speech you must compensate both for stage nerves and for the distance between yourself and the audience. The message is quite simply: make sure that your facial expressions are natural, only more so. A constant smile or overusing the poker face may affect the audience adversely. Avoid tense facial muscles.

If you are using humor in your speech, you will likely smile, wink or make a gesture to complement the amusement expressed in your words. Smiling will be much less appropriate if your presentation involves a serious subject such as crime in your community or car accidents. Consider how you want your audience to feel in response to your message, and identify the facial gestures you can use to promote those feelings. Then practice in front of a mirror so that the gestures come naturally.





## Head Movements

Head movements convey a message. Nodding is an affirmation, shaking your head is a denial, tilting means curiosity or uncertainty, and holding your head high shows confidence. Do not overdo it.

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## Elements of Speech

Pitch – conversational, natural and low.

Pace – consider your audience, not too fast, you want to properly enunciate your words and slow your pace for important phrases.

Volume – loud enough so that everyone can hear and try varying the volume to heighten interest.

Resonance – appropriate quality and energy. Think of the effects of listening to an excited rock star groupie screeching and giggly as compared to a fireside chat with your favorite actor – both may be energetic but one has a resounding quality or depth – a vibration that you can listen to for a long time.

Pausing – conveys that you are relaxed and confident, while allowing the audience time to think about what you say – pausing also signals that you are transitioning from one idea to another, which creates impact or emphasis.

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## Vocal Problems to Avoid

Filler words – do not speak to yourself and please avoid repeating words like "and, ah, um, so, okay" between your thoughts or sentences. If you are struggling to remember what to say next it is better to be quiet. Writing your presentation out, rehearsing it, and having it handy for reference will help you to avoid using unnecessary words.

Harshness – do not be sarcastic or bad tempered.

Nasal sounds – those should be self-explanatory. No audience wants to hear snorting or grunting or wheezing.

Breathlessness – take regular deep breaths between sentences or thought. Breathe to the tips of your toes so to speak.

Mumbling or slurring – the audience needs to hear every word.

Exaggerated superlatives – do not go overboard by overstating or exaggerating your ideas.

Weak or wishy-washy statements – avoid using phrases like "I guess" or "I suppose".

Over explanations – keep it simple and short.

When you rehearse and get feedback it gives you an opportunity to work on your problem areas.

## Stance

A strong posture is a significant aspect of your presentation. It helps you to feel calm and confident on the inside and look calm and confident on the outside. It is actually a useful presentation tool.

1. Whether sitting or standing good posture helps you to breathe easily and speak normally. It helps you to naturally project your voice so you do not have to shout to be heard.
2. You can use your presentation posture to project high status. Rightly or wrongly, human nature drives us to follow (and trust) high-impact or “high-status” individuals. To your audience, a composed confident stance demonstrates that you have something worthy of their attention.

When an actor initially learns a new character part, he or she will instinctively adopt a distinct posture or stance to convey that character. It follows therefore that while you are in front of an audience, your stance sitting or standing will convey a great deal about you. Use a confident stance as an influential and persuasive tool.

- Be comfortable and amicable.
- Stand straight and poised. Make sure your stance does not convey boredom.
- Avoid a low-status bearing when you sit. Occupy the chair all the way to the back. Do not sit on the edge or sideways.
- Don't swing, shift or jump.
- Don't make rocking or swaying motions.
- You can walk around but do not pace.
- Don't rest your weight on the podium.
- Slouching or slumping is not allowed - body at attention, hands and feet at ease is general the best.



## Gestures

The perennial problem is what to do with your hands. Please, avoid nervous gestures like fiddling constantly with a pen, or worst of all, juggling change in your trouser pockets or playing with your hair or jewelry. Certainly, you should not wave your arms aimlessly through the air.

The key is to keep your gestures normal because gestures using your arms and hands while communicating are normal.



Watch people in everyday conversations. They frequently use their hands to express themselves. Do you think they plan how they use their hands? Their arm and hand gestures come naturally as part of their expression, often reflecting what they have learned within their community.

Actually, gestures provide you a way to channel your nervous energy into a positive activity that benefits your speech and gives you something to do with your hands. Well-chosen gestures and body movement can be strategically used to demonstrate purpose, reinforce key points, make a point memorable or lead the audience to the next point. They can even be used to regulate an audience's response to your message.

Gestures add effect to your speech. They should augment your words and not detract from what you say.

### Here are some suggestions on using gestures from professional speakers:

- If you are overflowing with nervous energy, here's a tip to help you quiet your hands still. It's called, 'Closing the circle'. Touch your thumb to your index finger. Do this with both hands.
- They make a habit of starting a speech with hands held lightly in front and visible to the audience.
- Pointing – shows direction or makes a point (but, do not point at the audience)
- Palms up – is a gesture for giving or receiving, soliciting help.
- Palms down – indicates rejection

- Palm facing audience – means stop
- Chopping palm – shows division
- Clenched fist – demonstrates strength or anger
- Shaking finger – acts as a warning sign
- Moving toward audience – builds receptiveness

Watch out for body language that sends a negative message to the audience, such as

- Hands in pockets
- Crossed arms
- Wringing hands
- Hands draped in front of you like a fig leaf
- Tugging your ear

The only thing worse than using no gestures, is using too many gestures.

### **Annoying Movements**

- Licking and/or biting your lips
- Constantly adjusting your glasses
- Playing with facial hair
- Avoid thumping or tapping on the podium, table, or charts.

Once you have rehearsed your speech, including gestures, you will feel more comfortable and this will allow your hands to be more naturally free.



## Appearance

When you are giving a presentation you must dress for the audience, not for yourself. If they think you look out of place, then in their mind you are.

There are many guides to presentation styles which emphasize the way you dress and in the final analysis this is a matter of personal choice. That choice should, however, be deliberately made. It should be comfortable for you and comfortable for the audience too. How you dress should suit the occasion. Find out from the organizers how others will be dressed – formal or informal. The majority of professional speakers recommend that the simpler the better.



## TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

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Seasoned speakers have a set of "tricks of the trade" which they like to employ. The following words of advice are taken from various sources.

### **Repetition Rallies the Stragglers**

Because the average audience has a lot going on in their lives, they can easily get distracted or miss an important part of your message. Sometimes the listener is simply thinking more seriously about a previously made point that relates to a personal experience. Repeating important points of your message makes them take notice. You do not have to overstress a point; you can simply restate it more than one way.

### **Send a Signal**

If the audience knows when to listen, they will. Practiced speakers introduce the central points by changing the inflection of their voice and say to the listeners, something such as: "The important point is ..."

### **Use Imagery to Punch Home Meaning**

We humans love metaphors to make sense of our lives. When you are connecting to your audience you can make a dull idea or factual statement more interesting or comprehensible by using imagery to compare it to something the audience will recognize and construct meaning from. Imagery will grab the listener's attention and evoke an emotional response which can have memorable impact.

### **Fit in Time for a Few Hits of Oxygen**

When you make a speech to an audience that has had a long busy day – some of that time spent sitting and listening to a parade of presenters – their level of concentration can wane. To stay alert our brains and bodies need to be recharged. Just a few moments of movement can do that. Depending on the situation, the length of your presentation, or the needs of an audience you may want to fit in a stretching break. A weary audience will appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Depending on the nature of your subject matter a one minute refreshing activity may even be a way to transition from one key point to the next. You could ask your audience to stand and introduce themselves to the person that sits behind or two seats down.

### **Plain Speech**

Yes!

### **Short and Sweet**

Want to polish your speech to narrow down the wording? Imagine yourself in this scenario: The day before your presentation, you are told: "Okay, we hear you have got something to say, we'll give you 30 seconds, GO".

Can you do it? If you can crystallize your thoughts and present your main message with a memorable phrase or imagery in 30 seconds then you have either the perfect ending or the basis for a fine presentation.

### **Watch for the Audience Reaction**

If you have done your job right, you will know the moment when the audience is nodding in agreement with you. You may not have to waste any more words trying to convince them. When you have faith that the audience will do as you expect, draw your remarks to a close, and thank them.

## HANDLING INTERRUPTIONS

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Things can occur to interrupt your presentation – mishaps, disasters, critics. Most disruptions are minor and infrequent. If something does happen, always stay in control and deal with it right away.

Are you prepared to answer questions?

What will you do if the people at the meeting interrupt your presentation?

Can you accommodate an early question that someone in the audience is overly keen to ask?

Can you keep your presentation flowing and still be cognizant of what's happening in the room?

What happens if the power fails?

What do you do if someone's cell phone goes off?

What do you do if the people do not understand what you are saying, or can't hear you?

### Prepare for Common Objections

Know your subject matter and be prepared to answer questions. There will always be someone that will want to voice concerns. You want to appear confident fielding any questions or rebuttals during a question and answer session or while mingling with the audience afterward.

Always remember that while "I'm sorry, I don't know" is a perfectly acceptable answer, it is better to have the answers and be decisive. It is not wise to evade the question and trying to bluff your way through a tough question that catches you unprepared can end in disaster. Besides, having the answers to hard questions is a perfect opportunity to underscore the key points in your message. You may find it helpful to enlist the assistance of one of your colleagues when necessary.

### How to Respond to Questions

- As someone makes a comment or asks you a question the most important thing you can do is listen.
- Look at the person while he or she is speaking.
- Make sure you understand the question. Repeat it.
- Think before responding.
- Use the same manner and tone of voice as you were using before the question.
- When responding you should look first at the person who spoke to you and then involve the whole audience in your response.

## Mishaps and Emergencies

- Remain calm.
- Be prepared with plan "B"
- Concentrate on the other people in the room, not on yourself.

## Critics or Hecklers

If you are reacting to an interruption that is off the subject, stupid or hostile it is imperative that you do not show anger or react unprofessionally.

- Maintain your perspective.
- Stay in control.
- Do not embarrass anyone in front of the others.
- Use humor where appropriate.
- Be assertive.
- No matter what happens, keep your cool and above all be courteous and friendly.

## Moods Swings

Not all interruptions are abrupt. Sometimes the conditions in the room change. These may be minor and gradual, but they can become infectious if not handled promptly and properly. No matter how well organized your presentation is, you should be prepared to alter it to adapt to the people and surroundings. Be alert to the atmosphere in the room. Assess the mood of the participants. You may find it helpful to enlist the assistance of one of your colleagues – he or she can signal you if it is necessary to make a change.

## Problem Personalities

It is very seldom that you will have to deal with problem personalities, especially in larger groups. You may encounter the loudmouth, egomaniac or sniveler more often in groups of 5-25. Here how to handle the problem immediately:

- When someone persists in talking to you or someone else while you are speaking – you can request his or her opinion on the topic and then quickly move on. You could simply stop talking and casually stare at the intruder.
- When someone contradicts or offers opinions at inopportune times – detect this type of individual early in your presentation and call on them for an opinion early in the program.

Acknowledge that they made a good point and invite him to follow up with you during a break. Then immediately state that there may be other opinions on the subject and ask for other opinions from other people. If this person persists in interrupting you may have to mention that their interference is unproductive behavior.

- When someone arrives late, conveys irritation, looks occupied and inattentive, or conveys irritation – be tactful, involve this person in a task or ask them a question that you will follow-up so they will be on the alert.
- When someone complains, gives negative feedback, or acts dissatisfied – take the initiative. Address and handle the complaints; be patient and tactful.
- When someone is authoritative, full of self-importance, and wants final say – acknowledge his or her status, thank them for attending, and ask them to "share" their experiences or opinions. Use extreme care in handling this individual.



## PRESENTATION AIDS

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A Harvard University study determined that people comprehend about ten per cent of what they hear. But, if the information is delivered both verbally and visually they comprehend over eighty per cent. So, it makes sense to include visual (or auditory aids as appropriate) in your presentation to increase your persuasiveness as well as enhance retention.

### Images as a Short-Cut to Establishing an Emotional Connection

You can use a visual aid that remains visible to an audience throughout your presentation. The image can convey the title of your presentation, a key question, a slogan, a simple message or that serve as a reminder and reinforcement of your reason for speaking to the audience.

You can use an image as a powerful symbol that augments your message to build an emotional connection to your audience.



### Switching to a Visual Helps to Keep an Audience Engaged

Visual aids are perfect for turning even the duller of topics with tons of statistics into an interesting presentation. A visual aid can shed more light on any key aspects of your presentation and choosing the right visual can serve as an attention-getting tool just in case your audience got distracted.

People are usually attracted by images and videos. For you these visuals can relay additional information. For the audience it is a more dynamic atmosphere. When you use visuals to create a positive atmosphere it improves the overall mood of your audience which in turn makes them more receptive your speech.

Use visual aids to highlight key aspects of your presentation:

- 1) open your presentation
- 2) emphasize key points
- 3) direct the thought paths
- 4) present statistical data
- 5) make comparisons
- 6) explain new ideas

The audience should not be trying to read and listen at the same time. You want your visual aid to augment what you say and help your listeners to retain the information. This is especially important when you are presenting something complex. Do not rely on too many presentation aids as they will turn your presentation into a jumbled mess.

## Tips for Creating Visuals

- Visual aids must be clear, concise and of a high quality.
- Makes visuals neat, professional, and proofread them for accuracy.
- The tiniest of details, such as font and color matter.
- Use the latest technology when using any presentation aids. Be sure it works in the chosen environment.
- Before the audience arrives make sure all necessary equipment is handy and arranged for easy access in the order of use. Test the equipment for focus, sound level, and visibility.
- Always rehearse and practice handling a visual before using it in your presentation. You want to make sure you know how to handle it correctly and that it works well. Because it is best to keep your talk going while you are accessing, changing or handling your visual aids, practice will make you adept. If it is cumbersome for you and interruptive enlist help and make sure you practice together to ensure your presentation has flow.
- Avoid busy looking visuals. Use one idea for each visual and make sure it has a headline or caption.
- Visuals must be big enough to see from the back of the room.
- Visual should be shown to the group as a whole or displayed after your presentation.
- When you use visual aids the audience's attention is divided between you and the visual. You will have to speak with more volume than normal, especially when you are in a darkened room.
- Do not talk to the visual. If you need to reference a visual, do so by standing to one side of the visual. Use a pointer to direct the audience's attention to specific points, but keep your focus on the audience.
- Never stand between your audience and the visual.
- The visual aid is supposed to augment your message. Your message is not meant to support the visual you are using. If your slides are full of words, you don't need to be there giving a presentation.
- Never let a visual aid distract your audience while you are speaking. Your presentation aid should be turned off, removed or covered when not in use.
- Visuals that you pass around should be distributed after your presentation. Do not pass them around during your talk, as they will distract the audience.

## **DOUBLE-CHECK LOGISTICS**

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It is important that you make time to check the logistical arrangements.

- Confirm date, time, attendance, time limitations, and other restrictions.
- Who is handling administrative tasks, admittance, greeting, introductions, etc?
- Who is in charge of audience comfort – seating, temperature control, refreshments?
- How soon can you gain access to the facilities to set-up and test audio and visuals?
- Is there a loading dock? Parking? How close? Will you need a dolly or elevator?
- Do you need security?

### **The Facility**

- When the choice is yours select a comfortable environment where constraints can be loosened.
- Make sure the meeting area can be isolated from interruptions.
- Is the ceiling high?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Is there adequate electrical outlets?
- What about temperature controls? Set the climate control at least an hour before the meeting.
- Make sure there is adequate and comfortable seating.
- Select a seating arrangement so that everyone can hear and participate.
- Where possible have the refreshments available – supply plenty of fresh water, napkins.
- Always prepare the room in advance, lay-out chairs, set-up audio visual aids, put hand-outs in place, and set a table for refreshments.
- Is there signage or people to help direct audience to right the area?
- Do you need to make arrangement for extra people to direct traffic in and around the facility?
- Make sure room is neat and tidy - put away extra supplies, boxes, etc. so they are not visible to the audience.
- Meet with your staff in advance to make sure they are available and ready.

## Equipment & Supplies

- Set-up and test the sound system. Have someone stand in several areas of the room to be sure the sound of your voice clearly reaches every part of the room.
- Is everything you need within reach and laid out in order of use?
- Do you need help to operate lights or sound?
- Do you have enough handouts? Do you need someone to hand them out?

## ICE BREAKERS QUESTIONS FOR EVERY OCCASION

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The goal of an icebreaker is to make everyone feel comfortable. Here are four tips for asking good icebreaker questions:

1. Choose icebreaker questions that allow for self-expression, don't have a wrong answer, and anyone can answer.
  2. Answer your own icebreaker question first to create a psychologically safe space.
  3. Keep it simple because you need to keep the conversation moving.
  4. Have fun so you can build better and stronger relationships
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Please use the following example questions for inspiration. However, if a question suits your subject and your audience, please feel free to use it without obligation.

### Questions for Any Audience

All these questions are inclusive, can reveal valuable insights, and encourage self-expression. None of them have right or wrong answers or are likely to make anyone feel inadequate. None of the questions require an answer, but are a good lead into a personal story that introduces your subject matter.

- What's the weirdest thing in your fridge right now?
- If you were setting off to Mars and could take only one luxury item with you, what would it be?
- If your home was packed full of golf balls, how would you remove them?
- What's the worst haircut you ever had?
- If you could be famous for one silly thing, what would it be?
- It's your first day on the job as an evil villain. What's the first piece of mischief you commit?
- What would you do if you came home and found a penguin in your freezer?
- What is your greatest skill?
- What is your deepest fear?
- If you could be a superhero what superpower would you choose?
- What's the title of your biography?
- If you could play one instrument perfectly, which would it be?



- What is one superstition you have?
- What is your dream job?
- What's a cause or purpose you deeply believe in?
- What are you excited about this week?
- What's got your attention today and why?
- You've been chosen to represent your country in a global competition. What sport or activity are you doing?
- What's a book that affected you so profoundly that you still regularly think about it?
- What's something that doesn't deserve the hate it gets?
- What's a piece of advice that has stuck with you?
- What is a small act of kindness you were once shown that you'll never forget?
- What's something you wish you'd learned earlier in life?
- What was the last thing you did that gave you child-like joy?
- What's one activity that grants you pure escapism?
- What's a food that always reminds you of childhood?
- What is one thing you wish you'd been taught in school?
- What's an adult problem nobody prepared you for?
- Tell us about a stranger you still remember. What made them memorable?
- What's a personal side project you're working on or want to work on?
- What's something you wish you understood better?
- Look at the person to your left...what is his or her dream job?
- In one word, how do you feel about today's event?
- How would you go about tackling the climate crisis?
- What's one thing you are unbeatable at?
- What's something new you've learned about yourself in the last three months?
- What would happen if the internet ceased to exist?
- What's something on your desk, a wall, or out the window that cheers you up during the day?
- You've been teleported to the Middle Ages. How do you make a living there?
- If you could go back in time 10,000 years ago and make a cave painting to confuse everyone in the future, what would you draw?
- What is your proudest achievement?

## Deep Icebreaker Questions

When you've developed psychological safety with your team, it's nice to go a bit deeper. These questions are designed to help you take relationships with others to the next level.

- What's something you've recently learned about yourself?
- What's a new habit or practice you're trying to cultivate?
- What's the most important thing to remember every day that you haven't been able to?
- What sparked your curiosity in whatever you're most curious about now?
- Which question can you ask to find out the most about a person?
- If you could do something that you don't because it's bad for you, but you could do it without repercussions – what would you do?
- What's one small thing or practice that has vastly improved your quality of life?
- How do you approach learning something new?
- What's something you find soothing?
- If you had a time machine, would you go back in time to meet your ancestors or forward to meet your descendants?
- What's one thing many people hate but you love?
- What's something you would change if you ran the world?
- If you could rid the world of one thing, what would it be?
- What is your favorite habit?
- What do you enjoy most about what you spend your time on?
- If you could go back in time and make a minor change in your childhood, what is one thing you'd learn, so you could be an expert at it today?
- What does friendship mean to you?
- What are you doing when you feel most alive?
- How have you changed in the last year?
- What's the quality you cherish most about one of your closest friends?
- What's something that's considered socially acceptable now but won't be in 100 years?
- Who is one person who changed your life but doesn't know it?
- If you walked into a room with everyone you've ever met in it, which person would you look for?
- What's something you learned the hard way over the past year?

## Questions for those with Competitive Spirit

If you're going to ask a question, why not ask one with the right answer. Many of us have a bit of a competitive spirit so what better way could there be to liven up the start of your next presentation than by tapping into that competitiveness. There's plenty of fun facts, insightful trivia, and enjoyable brain twisters out there for you to choose from but we have put together some of our favorites here.

- What word is always spelled incorrectly in every dictionary? Incorrectly
- What is the Cookie Monster's name? Sid
- The planet Mars was named after the Roman God of what? War
- What occurs once in every minute, twice in every moment, yet never in a thousand years? The letter M
- Who owns all of the swans in England? Queen Elizabeth
- Where is the only place that today comes before yesterday? The dictionary
- What country has the most islands? Sweden
- What company made the first mobile phone? Motorola
- What instrument has the largest range? Organ
- What is a group of pandas called? An embarrassment

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## Team Building Icebreakers

Bring your team closer together and make them a more efficient and cohesive machine. Great team building is all about interpersonal relationships, these icebreakers will help get your team in the right frame of mind.

- What aspect of your personality adds most to the team?
- How do you prefer to work in a group?
- What makes a good boss and why?
- What do you value most in a good teammate or co-worker?
- What is one thing do we do well as a team?
- What is one thing we as a team could do better?
- How many meetings per week do you think is optimal?
- What do you think is the first thing you need to do when starting a new project?
- What is the main quality of a good leader?
- Is there anyone here you think deserves special recognition for their work?

## Icebreakers for Students

Using an icebreaker to start a new year or to introduce a new topic can be a nice way of gathering your students' opinions and listening to what they have to say. Moreover, from the outset you are highlighting that your classes and lectures will be an interactive and engaging experience, unlike others they may be used to.

- What aspect of this class are you most looking forward to learning about?
- On a scale of 1-10 how tough did you find last semester's class?
- What makes an interesting class in your opinion?
- What is the best way for you to learn?
- If you could recommend one author to your fellow students, who would it be?
- Why did you choose to take this class / course?
- What is the most difficult thing to understand about this subject?
- What type of examination do you prefer?
- Do you prefer online resources or textbooks and journals?
- What makes a good teacher / professor?

## ***IS THERE A SECRET TO SUCCESS?***

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Successful presentations are understandable. When your message makes sense to the audience, you win their minds. Successful presentations are memorable like a song you cannot get out of your head and, they have an emotional tug. When you can make your listeners feel something, you win their hearts.



***Create it, believe it, rehearse it and share it – there is no better way to achieve success with your audience...***



## **Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey**

At CORRO, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In our commitment to helping you achieve long-term personal development and use your organizational platform for positive impact, we celebrate the journey of lifelong learning while fostering an all-inclusive community driven environment of meaning, personal connection, and fun.

**CORRO is not just a Work Space – Our Aim is Helping the Community Thrive through People Success**