

Important presentation? If you remember nothing else...

 By [Douglas Kruger](#)

8 Apr 2011

By the end of a day's training in presentation skills, many of my delegates are slightly cross-eyed. It's a lot to take in and, frankly, you can spend years studying the craft.

The other day, a financial director who spends a great deal of time speaking in road shows, asked me to identify the most important points to remember, something of a 'quick check-list' for cobbling together impactful presentations under tight time-constraints.

Interesting query. So I sent my mental librarian rummaging through the cabinets. This is what she came back with...

1. Position the problem *before* you sell the solution

Public speaking is essentially the art of persuasion. Persuasion is the art of connecting with human interests and showing why your way is better for them.

That said, to get your delegates emotionally invested in your point, don't start with the point itself. Build interest and emotional tension by starting out with the problem. The more effectively you get them to relate to the problem - and feel the discomfort it creates - the more receptive they will be to your proposed solution.

The ability to frame the issue in this manner is one of the marks of a truly polished speaker. Also, it provides you with an easy, logical structure to follow when preparing your talk.

2. Pausing provides punch for your point

You cannot overrate the importance of a well-placed pause. Those sweet chunks of verbal vacuum are the single most effective way to emphasise the critical bits.

It takes confidence to execute a pause. A good one leaves you standing idle in front of a room full of eyes, which is monumentally uncomfortable for the inexperienced speaker.

From the audience's perspective, however, it looks masterful. It gives them time to digest your point and it also acts as a psychological flag that 'this part matters.'

3. Stories trump statistics

PowerPoint graphs are the bane of my life. I spend more hours coaching executives out of this stillborn, kill-everyone-in-the-room habit than any other. It often surprises me how desperately they will cling to their precious squiggly lines.

"But how will I show that there's a 43.7% difference?!"

Answer: No one cares.

Having the information is only half of the job. Communicating what it *means* makes up the balance.

By way of a death-knoll to the PowerPoint desperados, I always ask: Do you remember the chart that Winston Churchill showed to rally England into winning the war? No? Exactly.

If you care to be more contemporary: do you remember the last time you saw a professional motivational speaker using a graph? That should tell you something.

A well-told story, that illustrates the essence of the point, will *always* trump those mind-numbing charts and graphs. It just requires that you not be lazy when planning your presentation.

4. Dead voice = dead audience

Yes, you should practice body language. Yes, you should work on posture, gestures and even the way you walk. And, of course, eye contact is incredibly important. So is your dress code.

But, even when all of these elements are imperfect, your presentation can still be a success... if your *voice* is good! Without a lively and engaging voice, no amount of body language can save you.

And it's not the quality of your instrument, either. It is, as they say, how you use it. If you weren't born with a set of Anthony Hopkins Windpipes, don't worry. Just make sure you know how to change your pitch and pace, convey excitement, speak louder and softer... in other words, sound *alive*!

5. (Contrary to the dictates of the mammalian ego): Shorter is better than longer

The most dangerous speeches are the ones in which a person is asked to 'say a few words'. They usually end up saying quite a few.

Don't get hung up on doing long presentations. You're not impressing anyone. Say it, say it well, and then sit down.

And don't ever extend a speech to fill the time slot on an agenda. That's backwards. The agenda must bend to your needs. It is not a living, breathing organism to whose dictates thou shalt adhere. If you only require 10 minutes to get the job done well, then so be it. More would be worse.

Of course, there's more to learn than just these five fundamentals. Public speaking is an ancient and intricate art. I know of one public speaking world champion who, the day after winning the title, went out and bought a book on public speaking.

But bear these basics in mind, and you'll be working from a dependably solid foundation. After all, a few thousand years of human oratory tradition have shown that they work!

ABOUT DOUGLAS KRUGER

Douglas Kruger is the bestselling author of nine business books with Penguin, including the global release: *Virus-Proof Your Small Business*. Meet him at www.douglaskruger.com, or

email info@douglaskrugerspeaker.com

▪ *GOT surprise-factor?* - 28 Sep 2017

▪ The growth mindset: Four ingredients for creating a high-performance culture - 6 Jul 2017

▪ Lessons in agile culture from French bikinis and ritualistic shrines - 29 Jun 2017

▪ Banking the win of simple business innovation - 22 Jun 2017

▪ [Relentlessly Relevant] 7. To innovate, train yourself to think: 'That's awesome! Now imagine if ...' - 27 Nov 2015

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>