

High-consequence presentations - be seen as an industry expert

 By [Douglas Kruger](#)

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Some presenting is high-consequence. You're the head of a prestigious law firm; CEO of a bank; the grand, high lama of World Domination & Sons; and you have ten minutes to speak at a catalyst event that will remain in the industry consciousness for years. Your job is to be the thought leader. You need to know how to handle it.

Let's begin with a few 'thou shalt not's':

1. Thou shalt not speak to slides. That's for junior members of the sales team, who can't remember the company's name. Make a strong impression by knowing your content, connecting with the audience, and delivering your speech without visible notes.
2. Thou shalt not do data dumps. This is all about creating impressions of strength and leadership, not about reciting every possible dot and dash in your litany of facts. Your message matters more than the facts that support it.
3. Thou shalt not indulge in long, waffling 'thank you's'. Lists and formalities dilute your impact. Leave them for the MC. Speak strong.

And now, a thou shalt:

Thou shalt think 'tone.'

Randy Gage, a high-level US speaker specialising in prosperity, says that he thinks 'Miami Vice,' before standing up to speak. That show captures the emotional 'tone' that he wants to achieve on stage, and so it becomes a sort of mantra for him.

What's yours? What gets you into a mental space that says authority and ease? Perhaps it's the Mercedes Benz tagline: *Serene agility*. Perhaps it's the command and confidence of Alan Shore, delivering his closing summations in Boston Legal. Find your tone and turn it into a mantra.

A different approach

The nature of thought leadership presentations differs from speeches you've done in the past.

For starters, this is a presentation with a strong point-of-view. Don't try to be gentle, euphemistic or neutral. This is the forum for bold ideas, strong suggestions and a powerful sense of voice. Your brand will not benefit from an overly cautious

presentation.

I'm not suggesting you champion the death penalty or dance through the abortion minefield, but you should pioneer passionate views about your industry.

You should also bring a dash of something personal to the mix. If your goal is to stand out, there is nothing quite as unique as you.

The structure

Now let's get practical. Here is your basic structure for a thought leadership presentation. You should:

- Tell them how things used to be
- Tell them what things they should be paying attention to now and why
- Tell them what it means to them; including the pitfalls and opportunities
- Tell them what things will work going forward
- Tell them how things will turn out
- Leave them with the implied message: 'Follow me'

Follow this structure and you will create a strong impression. It contains all the nuts and bolts of a solid thought leadership presentation, and plenty of room for your own personal interpretations.

Bear in mind, though, that this is merely an outline. Your task is to make it come alive, with humour, stories, word-pictures and memorable phrases.

To that end, here are some of the oratory devices that I strongly recommend you use:

1. Create a metaphor

Metaphors make complex ideas easy to process. The best are visual in nature. In one of my presentations I speak about how we inherit ideas concerning work and wealth from previous generations. To make the concept easy for the audience to grasp (and see), I explain it using a metaphor that I call, 'The Wheelbarrow Way.' It goes like this:

'My son, pick up your wheelbarrow and fill it with bricks. To earn a coin, you must push your wheelbarrow for a number of hours. If you want more coins, you must push your wheelbarrow for more hours. If you aren't breaking even, you must get a second wheelbarrow, and push it in the evenings for more coins.'

I then explain that wealthy individuals have learned to raise the value of their labour and offerings, so that they can earn more coins while pushing the wheelbarrow for less hours. In other words, I explain, wealthy individuals learn to *dump the bricks and carry gold*.

You can use metaphors to make your ideas come alive. Use the incredible power of 'It's like...'

2. Extend your metaphor into a theme

A theme is an idea that you continually reiterate throughout your presentation.

Take the conclusion from my metaphor above: *Dump the bricks and carry gold*. The more often you say that phrase, in various incarnations and backed up by various story-examples, the more you will drive your point home.

There is something very polished and professional about repeating a theme throughout a presentation. It adds a

certain cohesiveness.

3. Leave them with memorable sound bites

Sound bites are short, poignant segments of your speech that are easily remembered and repeated. They are generally the small portion played or quoted by the media, as representative of what you were saying.

Your goal in using sound bites is to achieve what US speaker Brian Walter describes as 'going verbally viral.' You want your phrases quoted, used as tweets, inscribed upon memories, and in a best case scenario, emblazoned as article headlines.

When George Bush senior said, *Read my lips: no new taxes*, he created a memorable sound bite. So did Franklin D. Roosevelt when he declared, *The only thing we have to fear - is fear itself*. Some are created quite by accident, as in Bill Clinton's, *I did not have sexual relations with that woman*.

Sound bites are so powerful that they may enter into the public consciousness. Hollywood tries to capitalize on the self-perpetuating power of sound bites by creating them for their characters. Phrases like, *I'll be back*, and *Show me the money!* spring to mind.

For your presentations, the repeated theme from your metaphor will work as a sound bite. But you're by no means limited to just that. You can have any number of sound bites in your speech; a clever turn of phrase here, a memorable line there.

You can create sound bites by:

- Being dramatic: "I have nothing to offer but blood, sweat, toil and tears."
- Twisting a common phrase: The cooking show that said, "this is a country with no time to stop and stir."
- Using alliteration: as in the phrase 'verbally viral,' or 'the wheelbarrow way.'
- Being novel: 'Now go crush the Cinderella in your financial thinking!'
- Using musical phraseology: "Never and never and never again..."

So, if we put it all together, a thought-leadership presentation might start like this:

- **Tell them how things used to be:** Introduce the idea that previous generations held certain beliefs about work and wealth. Make it come alive by using specific story examples that include humour and emotion. Introduce the wheelbarrow metaphor.
- **Tell them what things they should be paying attention to now and why:** Explain, using specific story-examples, how this thinking no longer works. Explain why we need to 'dump the bricks and carry gold.' Give practical examples of what that means and how to do it.
- **Tell them what it means to them; pitfalls and opportunities:** Provide strong views on dangers and opportunities for modern thinking about wealth. Reiterate the phrase: 'Dump the bricks and carry gold,' so that it develops into a theme.

...and so on.

Thought-leadership presentations are immensely self-actualising. You get to use creative techniques to express your strongest opinions to an audience that will thank you for not playing it safe. You get to benefit their lives by telling them what you think they should do. Few things make you feel as alive.

Ultimately, they are about impressions. Speak with conviction. Speak strong. Own the stage and they will feel your energy.

Watch the video blog on '[The Wheelbarrow Way - Unraveling Working Class Ideas About](#)'.

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