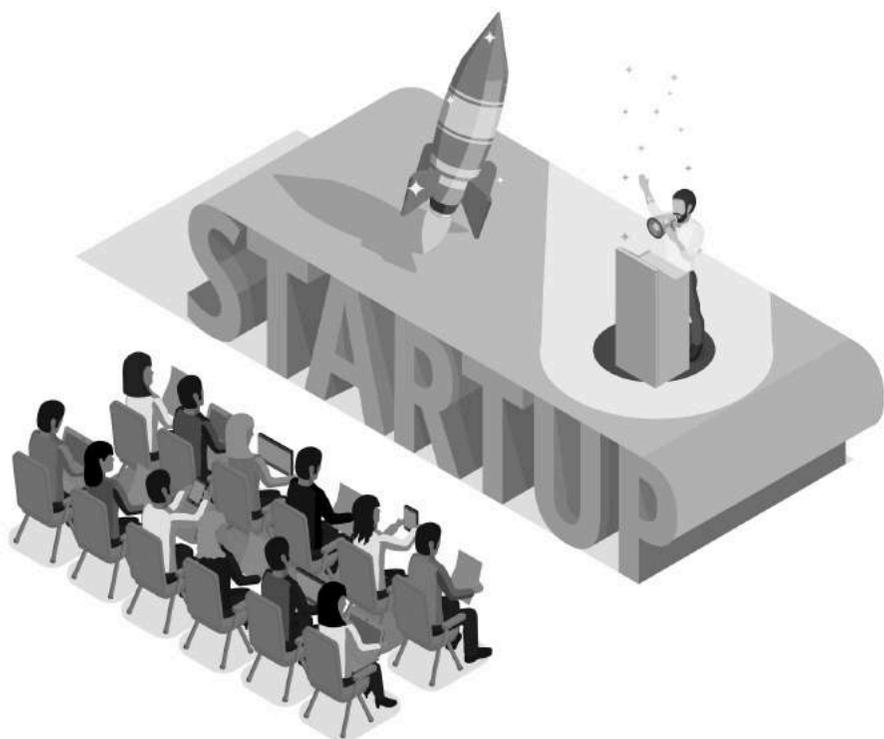

THE FOUNDER'S GUIDE TO PRESENTING



CLAUDIO SENNHAUSER

THE

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This book is dedicated to YOU,
the entrepreneur with a burning desire to improve
so you can become the best version of yourself.

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INTRODUCTION

Every day, founders and entrepreneurs all over the world attempt to convince audiences to take some kind of action.

Some of them succeed — many do not.

Presentations that succeed in getting the audience to take a desired action are a pleasure to watch. They are well organized, touch our emotions, and lead the audience on an engaging journey to a clearly defined destination.

While presenters who get consistent results may look like they were blessed with a golden tongue, nobody is born with a gift for public speaking. Even the most elegant and savvy presenters learned it at some point, either consciously or unconsciously.

Those with the ability to convince audiences have simply had a chance to develop a mindset, acquire knowledge, and learn techniques that get results. And they had opportunities to practice and refine their approach.

This book is designed to help you gain the mindset, knowledge, and techniques that will help you persuade your audience with ease and elegance. It will help you to convince your listeners and motivate them to take action.

IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?

Whether you are a novice presenter looking to get a solid foundation or an experienced presenter with the goal of pitching your company to investors, *The Founder's Guide to Presenting* can help you.

This book is for founders and entrepreneurs who want to persuade with ease.

- It is for entrepreneurs who want to present products and services more effectively.
- It is for thought-leaders who are seeking to inspire and change people's beliefs.
- It is for founders looking to convince investors and prospects about the validity of an idea.

If your goal is to deliver presentations that will change minds and move people to take action, this book is for you.

WHY DID I WRITE THIS BOOK?

I wrote this book after many years of using the knowledge and techniques outlined here with remarkable success. I have worked as a technology evangelist for two decades before I started helping others improve communication skills through training and coaching.

As a technology evangelist I got people excited about mobile computing. Nowadays we take notebook computers, tablets, and smartphones for granted. However, not too long ago, they were

so revolutionary that people had to be convinced of their usefulness.

My role included presenting upcoming products and concepts in board rooms, at trade shows, and at industry conferences. I did this with confidence and a high level of enjoyment.

As a coach and trainer, I have helped people improve presentations since 2008. I have trained professionals at companies of all sizes and in many different industries.

A few years ago, I discovered that I tremendously enjoy working with founders and entrepreneurs helping them get ready for those can't miss opportunities that require thorough planning and practice.

I have coached startups as part of accelerator programs and helped get founders ready for demo days, pitch competitions, and Shark Tank appearances. These coaching sessions are usually spread over three or more months because it takes time to craft a message and deliver it authentically and with passion in a situation where every word counts.

Some of these clients have encouraged me to write this book because they are convinced this kind of information will help other founders successfully transfer enthusiasm for an idea to an intended audience's hearts and minds. Naturally, I agree.

So let's get started.

CHAPTER 1

IT'S ALL ABOUT EMOTIONS

“The only way to change someone's mind is to connect with them from the heart.”

Rasheed Ogunlaru

The role emotions play in presentations cannot be overstated because they make your words so much more memorable. When your message evokes feelings, it will stick in the minds of your audience. As a result, your listeners are more likely to take action, especially when those feelings are intense.

Emotions are the driving force even when millions of dollars are on the table. A bank deciding to invest in a new IT solution, an airline purchasing new planes, a car manufacturer retooling an assembly line, or an investor backing your startup — behind all of these decisions are people. And these people are motivated by emotions.

With this in mind, the underlying goal of every persuasive presentation should be to get customers and investors to *feel* something. The ideal outcome of your presentation is for your audience to *love* your product, *like* you, and *trust* your company.

So how do you influence people's emotions?

The answer is surprisingly simple: you already do it whenever you communicate. You might not be aware of it at all times and so the feelings you evoke may be random and unintentional. Nevertheless, your words and how you deliver them impact other people's feelings. Whenever you present, you can't help but influence your listeners' emotions in some way. Just as you cannot *not* communicate when in the presence of others, you cannot *not* make them feel something as a result of your communication.

The questions then becomes: how do you evoke the specific emotions you want your audience to experience?

The first part of this answer is also surprisingly simple: go first. Experience the feelings you want your audience to have, first. When you do, your listeners will sense that, but only when your emotions are truly authentic.

EMOTIONS ARE CONTAGIOUS

Some people are highly charismatic. When they enter a room, all eyes turn to them. They attract people's attention magnetically. But how do they radiate confidence even before they begin talking?

Think of a time when you were in the presence of a highly passionate and energetic person: Did you *feel* this person's excitement? Did you *start feeling* excited as well? Chances are you answered "yes" to both questions because authentic emotions are contagious.

Is it possible that emotions, while we only experience them internally, also have an external quality that escapes our awareness?

When you sit in front of a TV and switch channels, you can't see a beam coming out of your remote control. You can't hear it, feel it, smell it, or taste it. Yet it is there because the channels are changing. Emotions seem a bit like that beam. They escape our senses or the signals we receive are not processed consciously. Yet they still transfer from one person to another.

What happens to a remote control when the batteries are drained? It doesn't work. When a presenter's emotional batteries are not charged, a transfer of emotions will also not happen. If *you* are not excited about your message, how can you expect others to be? That's why it is so important that you actually feel the emotions you want others to experience.

A recent discovery in neuroscience provides a possible explanation as to why emotions are contagious. While not fully understood yet, mirror neurons are thought of as helping us imitate others, including their feelings, on a subconscious level.

Mirror neurons were discovered in 1990 by a team of Italian researchers. Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team at the University of Parma found individual neurons in the brains of monkeys that fired equally when the monkeys grabbed an object themselves and when the monkeys watched another primate grab that object.

This is a profound discovery: the same neurons fired no matter if the action was performed or observed!

When you feel the urge to yawn after seeing someone else yawning, mirror neurons are at play. This is not just a psychological phenomenon. Several researchers have found that seeing someone else yawn leads to an actual change in blood oxygen in the observer.

While the signals we send out when we are excited are perceived subconsciously by the observer, we do send them. This could help explain why we are able to “read” others and feel empathy for them. It would also explain why highly passionate presenters can lead an audience to become as excited about something as they are about it themselves.

When you are truly excited about your message, it will show. When you convey a happy story and feel the happiness in your own heart, it will be on display for all to see. It will show in your body language. It will be expressed with your words. It will be heard in the tone of your voice. And this is also the case when you feel nervous or anxious. Your words, your body language, and your voice are channels to transfer your emotions.

THE MAGIC OF ADJECTIVES

In his keynotes, Steve Jobs instilled tremendous excitement about upcoming products. As a result, lots of people set up camp outside Apple stores to be among the first to buy a new device.

They never saw the actual product. They never had a chance to touch it, let alone use it. Yet they would wait in line for days! They made this decision based on a keynote presentation, its media coverage, and word of mouth. That is the result of persuasion at its finest.

Many highly successful Apple products were announced to the public in one of Steve Jobs’ keynote presentations. In these keynotes, he conveyed his tremendous enthusiasm for Apple products in many ways. One of them was by deliberately using

colorful adjectives. He peppered his product descriptions with adjectives like *awesome*, *incredible* and *insanely great*.

Jobs didn't just choose suitable adjectives to induce excitement. He also articulated each of them with great care. He would stretch their syllables and vary his tone and tempo for emphasis.

Finding appropriate and even flamboyant adjectives also affects your own feelings. You can't help becoming more enthusiastic when you describe your product with words like amazing, appealing, astonishing, astounding, awe-inspiring, awesome, beautiful, breathtaking, brilliant, charming, cool, delightful, exceptional, exquisite, extraordinary, eye-popping, fabulous, fantastic, fascinating, game-changing, good-looking, gorgeous, ground-breaking, important, impressive, incredible, magnificent, majestic, marvelous, mind-blowing, outstanding, phenomenal, powerful, remarkable, revolutionary, sensational, significant, spectacular, splendid, stunning, super, superb, tremendous, and wonderful.

Your delivery automatically will be perceived as more enthusiastic when you use adjectives with purpose to describe things. Choose fitting adjectives and pronounce each syllable with the emphasis it deserves to make these words an effective tool to convince and persuade.

When you prepare your presentations, take some time to find the most appropriate adjectives. Don't settle for the first and most obvious ones. Consult a thesaurus. It's a fun exercise to try out many different words to describe a product, its features, or the components of an idea.

Be careful though: there is a fine line between genuine enthusiasm and annoying overuse of adjectives. One is contagious, the

other perceived as an attempt to manipulate. Do not overuse adjectives or you will appear fake and insincere.

Using adjectives deliberately will make your sentences more exciting and helps to transfer your own emotions more easily. And when you deliver these sentences as part of an overarching narrative, your entire message becomes more captivating and memorable.

THE HIDDEN VALUE OF FRUSTRATION

You don't want to keep your audience in a positive, uplifted state of mind during your entire presentation. It is more useful to let your audience experience negative states when thinking of their current situation and positive states when thinking of a possible future.

After studying hundreds of persuasive presentations, best-selling author Nancy Duarte found that the most effective presenters create and maintain a level of tension by comparing 'what is' with 'what could be'.

Your goal as a presenter is to help your audience realize the unpleasantness of 'what is' and embrace the thought of 'what could be'. After all, you want them to buy your product or adopt your idea. To consider that, the members of your audience need to feel a burning desire to make a change to the status quo. As a presenter you assist them at arriving at that desire. What emotional state could you evoke to get there?

Think of a moment when you decided to take action. Perhaps you replaced an old clunker with a more reliable car. Perhaps you started exercising in earnest. Perhaps you quit a bad habit, or you

decided to make a career move. Whatever change you made, you went through a series of emotional states that eventually led you to take action. What was the last emotion you felt before reaching that burning desire to take action? Was there perhaps some level of frustration in the mix?

Frustration often precedes our decisions to take action. The more intense the frustration, the higher the chance we actually will take action. As soon as we realize how fed up we are with the status quo, the desire to make a change becomes strong.

Your role as a presenter is to make your audience realize their frustration. Then, amplify that feeling to the point they want it to go away. Follow that by presenting your solution as a means to end their suffering.

Almost any unpleasant emotion can be a gateway to frustration including anxiety, impatience, fear, annoyance, anger, pain, and sadness. What kind of unpleasant emotions does your audience associate with their current situation?

THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF STORY

We like stories. We like to listen to them, read them, watch them, and we like to tell them. Stories have been educating and entertaining us for ages. It is no wonder that researchers are exploring the impact of stories on our nervous system. The understanding we gain from these studies can help us deliver more compelling presentations.

Neuroscientist Paul Zak discovered that when study subjects listen to a story, brain scans show more parts of the brain active compared to watching a slide presentation which only covers

facts and figures. We are literally using more of our brain when we listen to stories. These additional areas of the brain process sensory information. They process images, sounds, touch, smell, and taste. And these areas influence emotions.

Emotions do not operate in a vacuum. They are linked to memories. For example, many people have at least one special song that brings back memories. Perhaps you do as well. Whenever you hear this song, you remember a time in the past vividly, including the emotion you felt then. Hearing this song brings back feelings.

This link between feelings and memories is not exclusive to music or sounds. It includes all of our senses. A particular smell might trigger feelings. Looking at photos triggers feelings.

Stories trigger feelings because your audience processes the stories you tell by making internal images and sounds. These internal representations then evoke the emotions linked to them.

Research also shows the brain doesn't distinguish much between an actual experience and an imaginary one, which adds even more power to your storytelling potential. The activity in the brain is identical, especially when the images, sounds, and touches of the imagined situation are vivid.

Dreams, for example, can feel extremely real. Have you ever had a dream that felt so real, it took you a moment after waking up to realize that it was, in fact, just a dream?

This also explains why we can have extremely intense emotional reactions when reading a book or watching a movie. We cry, we laugh, we feel sad, and we feel happy. However, we are not there. In reality, we are not experiencing what the characters in the story are experiencing. But our emotions are nevertheless engaged,

sometimes to an intense degree, because certain areas in our brain were activated.

Your job as a presenter is to tell stories in a way that activates your audience's imagination in such a way that the feelings you want them to experience follow automatically.

THE REAL PURPOSE OF STORY IN PERSUASION

Storytelling in presentation has been taught as a secret ingredient to make presentations memorable for years. As a result, some presenters tell stories just to tell stories. They simply adorn their message instead of using story with a clear purpose: to make an offer irresistible.

The message you really want to convey in any persuasive story — the message others find irresistible — is that *transformation is possible, and you have the stuff to make it happen.*

The setting, the characters, and the conflict in your story are there not just for the sake of being there. They are there to create a context in which the listener learns something about themselves and their own situation. It is therefore crucial you tell stories and anecdotes that help the audience understand that transformation is not only possible but that you have the expertise to guide them through the process.

Your audience recreates in their minds what they hear. When a story matches their experience exactly, they can't help putting themselves in it. Seeing themselves in place of your story's character marks the beginning of their own transformation. They get to become a different person; someone who has had their challenges met and their problems solved. They see themselves as

someone who has succeeded. Someone who has overcome obstacles and made their dreams come true.

If you can get your listeners to see themselves transformed at the end of the story, they want to make it reality. That's why an appropriate story is such a powerful tool to introduce new possibilities and change minds.

Make “transformation is possible, and I have the stuff to make it happen” the underlying theme for all the stories you tell in your presentations and your words will resonate with your audience at a whole new level. And they will motivate your listeners to take the action you want them to take.

A STORY TEMPLATE THAT RESONATES

One of the most captivating story formats is *The Hero's Journey*. Stories based on this format are narratives that follow a hero on a journey of transformation. Many popular stories are based on this template, including *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Matrix*.

The Hero's Journey was introduced by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a study of comparative mythology first published in 1949. He discovered that journeys of transformation have been told in all societies throughout the ages following a remarkably similar pattern.

There is a good reason this structure resonates so deeply with us: they are metaphors for our own journeys of transformation. Subconsciously we identify with the heroes who are facing challenges and obstacles along the way to an improved version of themselves.

Every project we undertake, no matter how big or small, can be mapped to the structure of *The Hero's Journey*. We can easily compare our own journeys to that of Neo in *The Matrix*.

CALL TO ADVENTURE

Every journey starts with a call to adventure that presents itself in our normal daily life. For Neo, that call to adventure came late at night, when he dozed off at his computer, only to wake up to see the words “Wake up Neo... Follow the white rabbit,” on his screen.

In our own lives, that call to adventure may come during a discussion with a friend or colleague. It could be a post we see on social media. Or it might simply be an idea seemingly out of nowhere that makes us consider new possibilities.

INITIAL REFUSAL

The call to adventure is usually met by an initial refusal. Neo doubted his own abilities when he stood high up on the ledge of his office's skyscraper, looking down into the city and told himself “I can't do this.” We also often hesitate before embracing an opportunity to start a new journey. Perhaps we have doubt in ourselves, just like Neo. Or maybe we don't have time to entertain the thought of a new project.

While the initial refusal might slow down the start of the journey, we typically get a nudge that moves us in the right direction. For Neo, that nudge came when he saw a tattoo of a white rabbit. He remembered the original message and thus followed it. The journey began.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

In the Matrix, Neo moved from the world he knew into the unknown when he accepted the red pill in his meeting with Morpheus. This is simply a metaphor for accepting the call and committing to the journey. In our case, this step might be a signature on a contract or announcing your plans to the world.

OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

No adventure is without challenges along the way. Neo's big obstacle was Agent Smith and his colleagues. For us, it might be technical issues that slow down our progress. It could be personal issues that make us want to give up. Or it could be a severe case of imposter syndrome that makes us doubt our chances of success. Whatever the reasons, the good news is that we are surrounded by people who can and will help us.

MENTORS AND GUIDES

Neo would not have been able to successfully reach the destination of his journey of transformation if it weren't for Morpheus and Trinity who served as guides and mentors along the way. They taught him knowledge, skills, and a mindset that helped him tackle the challenges and prepared him for the big event ahead, the final showdown with Agent Smith.

We, too, can count on those around us. The world is full of those who can help us gain knowledge, skills, and a mindset that will guide us to our desired destination.

THE EPIC EVENT

The highlight of every hero's journey is marked by an epic event. Perhaps it is a final battle against the enemy. Maybe it is a last showdown to once and for all deal with the villain. Or it could be

a major task that shows off our newly acquired skills and knowledge.

For Neo, it was his final fight with Agent Smith. For us, this is often marked by the completion of a project. For founders, these events include the release of a new product, a strategic customer meeting, or presenting at an investor conference or an accelerator's demo day.

THE TRANSFORMED HERO

At the end of these journeys is a new and improved hero, regardless of the final event's outcome. In the first Rocky movie, Rocky didn't win the fight with Apollo Creed. Nevertheless, he exited the ring as a transformed hero and his life took on a different meaning after that.

In some sense, we are all heroes on some kind of journey. Whenever we are working toward some kind of goal, it can be mapped to the structure of the *Hero's Journey*.

When you start looking at the world as a collection of intersecting journeys, it becomes easier to recognize the role you play in other people's stories: you are not the hero that saves the day, but rather a guide that help others transform. Each member of your audience is the hero of their own journey; you are merely their guide.

GUIDING THE HERO

One of the greatest stories ever told is *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. It is the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an aging business owner who is very tight with his money and his feelings.

One night, just before Christmas, Scrooge is visited by three ghosts who each accompany him on a visit to his past, his present, and his future.

Seeing himself as others saw him had a profound impact on Scrooge. At the end of the story, he transformed into a kinder man. A man who had learned to be more generous with his money and his feelings.

The three ghosts built a solid foundation for Scrooge's transformation when they made him part of the story. They also did their best to evoke intense emotions in Scrooge while he watched himself at various points in his life story. The ghosts skillfully progressed him through stages of emotional states that ended up with a strong desire to change. And Scrooge did change and thus became the hero of the story, at least in his own eyes.

When audience members identify with the hero, their emotional reaction becomes more intense, more personal. It is tempting to position yourself as the hero who comes in to save the day with your solution. However, the real hero needs to be your prospect. You are merely the guide who helps the hero on a journey of transformation.

This leads to an excellent blueprint for a presentation that transfers enthusiasm and motivates audience members to take action:

- Demonstrate an understanding of their current reality to build rapport, credibility, and trust.
- Make them realize the negative aspects of this reality and make them aware of just how much frustration the status quo causes and will continue to cause if they don't take action.

- Excite them about what could be and help them embrace that vision by seeing themselves as the hero who overcomes a significant challenge.
- Link your offer to that vision of a better future.
- Close with a call to action by letting them know what they need to do next to make it happen.

You can put your audience members into the story directly like the three ghosts did with Scrooge, or you can put them into the story indirectly through a relatable character, for example another customer that had the same problems to solve.

Many stories are told by using a relatable character with whom we can identify. Charles Dickens did this with his lead character in *A Christmas Carol*. Scrooge is relatable. Haven't we all had moments in our lives when we were less generous than we could have been?

When listeners relate to and identify with the hero in your narrative, they experience the story with an increased emotional reaction. Letting your audience see themselves in your story will open them up to feel the emotions you want them to feel. Your character's feelings become your audience's feelings. You can then lead your listeners along a path from a state of indifference, or just slight interest, to a massive desire to take action.

Your approach changes when you design your presentations around your audience's feelings and use stories to evoke those feelings. You think less about the features of your product or idea. You think more about what these features really mean to your audience. You deemphasize facts and figures, and you put more weight on stories that evoke emotions.

Your product's features and the technical details of your idea are still important and need to match the expectations you set. But that data is really only needed so people can rationally justify their emotionally influenced decisions and confirm that your offer meets their set requirements.

STORIES CAN BE SHORT

The good news is that you don't need to tell lengthy stories. Short stories can have a profound impact as well. Consider the following tale of Ernest Hemingway betting he could write a story in just six words:

Apparently Ernest Hemingway was lunching at Luchow's with a number of writers and claimed that he could write a short story that was only six words long. Of course, the other writers balked. Hemingway told each of them to put ten dollars in the middle of the table; if he was wrong, he said, he'd match it. If he was right, he would keep the entire pot. He quickly wrote six words down on a napkin and passed it around. Papa won the bet. The words were "For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn." A beginning, a middle, and an end!

Here we actually have two stories, the story of Hemingway winning a bet and his six-word story inside the bet story.

Take a look first at Hemingway's super-short story, "For Sale: Baby shoes, never worn." Does this story evoke images in your mind? Do you consider it a happy story or a sad story?

Even just six words, perfectly sequenced, can have a powerful effect because the reader fills in the blanks. Hemingway's short sto-

ry conjures up strong feelings because the reader makes these six words meaningful. Why would someone sell baby shoes that were never worn? What happened? And then it hits the reader and emotions begin to bubble up.

We process language unconsciously and with astonishing speed. When we listen to someone, we don't pay attention to the words consciously. We don't say to ourselves: "Ah, here comes a pronoun... Oh, and here's a verb, followed by a preposition and a noun. Ooh... how I love the sound of diphthong." No. We typically listen to words, strung together as sentences, and assign meaning according to our past experiences. And to that meaning, emotions are attached. This is why you cannot *not* make your audience feel something as a result of your communication.

The surrounding story, the story about Hemingway's bet told by a friend of the author, also gives us some interesting insight. What if this bet never happened? What if Hemingway's friend made this story up? Would it be any less effective if it weren't true? It could be an urban legend, but that doesn't really matter, because the lesson it teaches doesn't depend on the truth.

You could simply state: "*Stories can be short. They just need a beginning, a middle, and an end.*" It would make the same point and teach the same lesson. However, such a direct approach is less memorable than a story of an improbable bet proposed by a respected and world renowned writer.

The story about Hemingway's bet also contains a practical example, the six word story, which makes the lesson even more memorable. In addition, the writer leads up to it by building curiosity. The audience wants to know who won the bet and how, and so they keep listening until their curiosity is satisfied.

Curiosity is an extremely useful state-of-mind. It's the key to capture and maintain attention, thus increasing the chances of your audience remembering your message. There is even a physical explanation why curiosity is such a great attention getter: it helps increase the release of dopamine.

THE KEY TO ATTENTION

Dopamine is a hormone that works as a neurotransmitter with many functions. One of these functions is to help us pay attention and keep focused. We release dopamine whenever we anticipate something, when we are curious.

Have you ever wondered why social media can be so addictive? It is partially because social media satisfies our desire for stories. On social media, we witness the stories of our friends and family unfold up close and personal. We can even participate. When you combine this with the anticipation of a reward in the form of a Like, Share, or Comment, dopamine starts flowing. That is a recipe to get people hooked.

The makers of social media platforms know this and they continually create new ways to keep your dopamine flowing. They engage their users in a state of anticipation. And the more active a user becomes, the more anticipation builds up. Even if some of these platforms serve more ads than we like, we keep coming back for more because our curiosity is so strong. We want to know how our friends' stories unfold. Never mind that little intrusion. We want to know how things end. We want closure. Dopamine is a powerful elixir.

ADOPTING AN EMOTION-CENTERED MINDSET

Emotions are incredibly important to get your message into the hearts and minds of your audience. Understanding the underlying principles is the first step, the second is to make emotions the foundation of all your persuasive communication. The following exercises will help you adopt an emotion-centered mindset.

ELICIT EMOTIONS

Come up with a short story in which a character experiences at least three distinct emotions: a negative emotion, frustration, and a positive emotion.

Then, tell this story to a few friends. Before you tell your story, ask your friends to pay close attention to the feelings your story evokes. Compare their observations with the emotions you had in mind and see how close they came.

Repeat this exercise a few times over an extended period of time to train yourself to automatically consider emotions when you craft your messages.

YOUR ORIGIN STORY

As a founder, you are on a truly epic journey. Describe your call to adventure.

- Why did you start your business.
- What feelings were involved?
- Did you have some initial doubt and were nudged in the right direction?

A well crafted origin story has the potential to resonate deeply with your audience and makes it clear why you do what you do.

WHAT'S THE TRANSFORMATION?

Describe how your product helps customers transform from the current situation to a more ideal one.

- How specifically will their life change?
- What feelings do you expect your customers to have as a result of that transformation?

If you already have customers, talk with some of them to find out, in their words, how your solution has impacted them emotionally.

CHAPTER 2

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.

Rudyard Kipling

Your own state of mind, the flow of your information, and the stories you tell build the foundation of your presentation. The words you use and how you deliver them will make the ultimate difference.

Highly effective presenters are conscious of the effect words and phrases have on the listener. They know that even changing one word can have a massive impact.

For example, rather than greeting your audience with “I’m delighted to be here and talk to you about...” change one word to make this sentence more inclusive: “I’m delighted to be here and talk *with* you about...”. While this may seem trivial at first, changing just this one word creates a more pleasant atmosphere. It puts you and your audience on the same level and helps build rapport.

There are several techniques to deliver your message so that it resonates and will be easily remembered. Let’s start with a few rhetoric devices and then turn our attention to non-verbal ele-

ments that will make your presentations more effective and more memorable.

METAPHORS AND SIMILES

Sometimes we need to communicate complex ideas, controversial information, or concepts that may be unfamiliar to the audience. Instead of offering a lengthy explanation, use an analogy in the form of a metaphor or simile that will be more familiar to your audience.

Metaphors help the listener understand a subject by replacing it with something else. We use them often in the English language and the listener understands that they are not literally true: *a fork in the road, a sacred cow, the elephant in the room.*

Metaphors are effective at communicating conceptual as well as tangible information. They equate one idea to another: A is B. They are effective because they are direct. They substitute one concept with another while allowing the listener to immediately draw a link.

Similes are similar to metaphors. They also compare two different ideas, but in a less direct way. Similes use the words *like* and *as* to make a comparison and often require an additional explanation to get their meaning across.

An often quoted simile is Forrest Gump's "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." The explanation is needed for the comparison to make sense.

To exercise your own analogy-creating muscles, start with the above "Life is like..." and then replace "chocolate" with some-

thing else. For example: “Life is like a rose. Beautiful but it can sting from time to time.” Come up with four or five of your own similes for life and you will realize how easy it is to create interesting and sometimes humorous ways to describe something. Then, repeat this exercise but replace “life” with your product or idea.

Metaphors and similes are extremely powerful. Using them strategically in your presentations can be highly persuasive because they help the listener understand even unfamiliar concepts with some degree of familiarity.

REPETITION

An effective technique to make a message memorable is repetition. Repetition helps amplify a key part of your message. It adds emphasis to your words.

You can repeat a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences. This can be highly effective because you can lead up to a climax. Martin Luther King Jr. used this type of repetition with great effect in his famous speech: “*I have a dream* that my four little children will... *I have a dream* that one day the red hills of Georgia... *I have a dream*, today!”

You can repeat the first or last words in each sentence or you can repeat the last word of one sentence at the beginning of the next: “This is a benefit. A benefit so great that...”

You can use repetition in various ways to make your key message memorable. As with any powerful technique, however, use it sparingly for maximum effect. Use it for the one key message you

want your audience to remember long after your presentation, like Steve Jobs did when he announced the iPhone:

“Today, we are introducing three revolutionary products. The first one is a widescreen iPod with touch controls. The second is a revolutionary mobile phone. And the third is a breakthrough internet communications device. — So three things: a widescreen iPod with touch controls, a revolutionary mobile phone, and a breakthrough internet communications device. — An iPod. A phone. And an internet communicator. An iPod. A Phone... Are you getting it? These are not three separate devices. This is one device. And we are calling it iPhone.”

Jobs did something really clever here. He started out listing three different products, and repeated those in various forms three times before wrapping them into one product. It was the one message he wanted the audience to remember and he succeeded big time as was evident by the subsequent media coverage and online buzz.

HIGHLIGHTING THE KEY MESSAGE

Another powerful technique is to highlight a specific message directly. Simply tell your audience what you want them to remember. You can do this in a variety of ways:

- This is my most important point: ...
- This is what you need to remember: ...
- You can forget anything I say, but do remember this: ...
- Do you want to know the most important thing? ...

You might think this is too direct. However, when you have solid rapport with your audience and gained credibility, this approach works extremely well. So make sure you establish credibility first and then your instruction will be accepted more readily and make your message more memorable.

JARGON AND ACRONYMS

Jargon and acronyms by themselves are neither good or bad. While it may be easy to dismiss jargon and acronyms, there are moments when they become useful.

When you have done your homework and know exactly who is in your audience, jargon can help establish credibility and authority. It can help you build rapport quickly with those in the audience who are ‘tuned in’, and it can help make communication more direct.

However, when you are presenting to customers and industry outsiders, it is important to avoid jargon. Presenters using jargon often come across as less approachable and their concepts aren’t easily understood.

Messages that do not rely on jargon are also perceived as more true, which was documented in a study by New York University studying the impact of jargon. The study subjects read two sentences conveying the same information presented with different words. One sentence was clear and concise, the other used more specific terminology and jargon. The goal was to find out which statement the audience perceived as more accurate.

The result was that subjects preferred the clear and concise statements — and even considered them to be more truthful —

because people can picture the ideas in simple sentences more vividly. And when something is easy to picture, it also becomes easier to recall, so it seems more true.

While jargon in itself isn't bad, unless you have a good reason to use it in your presentation, look for a clearer way to communicate your message.

CONGRUENT BODY LANGUAGE

Body language is a means to transmit information — just like the spoken word — except it is achieved through gestures, facial expressions, and physical movement. Body language is often perceived at a subconscious level.

One of the most often taught principles of communication is the *7%-38%-55% Rule* based on Prof. Albert Mehrabian's work. This rule supposedly expresses that words account for only 7%, voice tone accounts for 38%, and body language counts for 55% of all communication.

These numbers are often taken out of the original research context making them misleading. This can be easily demonstrated by the fact that you don't understand even close to 93% of a message communicated in a foreign language you don't speak.

Prof. Mehrabian's research was studying likability in situations in which people were confronted with *incongruence*. His research has shown that when the words we hear mismatch the body language we see, we trust our eyes more than our ears.

Whenever we are faced with an incongruent message, for example a person slightly shaking their head while saying "yes" or

frowning while telling you how happy they are, we believe the non-verbal signals more than the actual words. This is why it is so important for presenters to be authentic. Your body language needs to be congruent to enable a transfer of emotions.

PAUSES

Perhaps the most effective tool in your skill collection is a well placed pause. Pauses are important to let people absorb your message. Use pauses whenever you want your audience to really consider a point you make. Also use pauses when you transition from one topic to another.

Many speakers, especially when they are nervous, rush through their presentation. They speak faster than usual and without any pauses. They remind us of a jockey on a racehorse. A presentation, however, isn't the Kentucky Derby and speed isn't the most decisive factor.

Outstanding presenters are more like equestrian show jumpers. The objective of this sport is not just speed but also form and technique. Successful show jumpers need lots of variety. Depending on the situation, they need to speed up, slow down, and even pause briefly before tackling the next part of the course. Just like effective presenters.

So when should you pause and for how long? If you write out your script, let punctuation be your guide. Make mini pauses for commas, longer ones for periods, and even longer pauses for paragraphs. You can also mark any meaningful pause in your script.

Also use pauses whenever you want to emphasize the previous sentence and after asking a question. This will give the audience time to process your message or reflect on your question.

Here are a few examples of when and how to use pauses effectively:

LET THE AUDIENCE ABSORB YOUR TALKING POINTS

The most obvious place for a pause is after an important talking point. Whenever you want your audience to really consider an idea, use a pause.

Example: “A well placed pause in speech is one of the most important tools for effective presenters. <pause> Whenever you...”

While we can listen faster than we can possibly speak, our brains still need time to process the incoming sentences. When we rush from one message to the next, we cut short the time the brain needs to assign meaning to our words.

CUE SOMETHING IMPORTANT

Pauses are just as effective before an important talking point as they are after.

Example: “A highly effective tool for effective presenters <pause> is a well placed pause. It...”

Adding a brief pause before the point you want the audience to remember signals that something important is coming and increases the attention of your listeners.

CHANGE OF TOPIC

When you move from one topic to the next, add a longer pause to clearly separate the two blocks of information.

Example: “As we have seen, pauses are a tremendously effective tool for a presenter to deliver memorable messages. Messages that stick. <pause> Another effective tool is repetition. Repetition lets...”

Pauses in between topics can be slightly longer and offer an opportunity to move to a different location (if you are presenting on stage) or take a sip of water.

ASKING QUESTIONS

When you ask your audience questions, even if you don't want them to answer out loud, you need a sufficiently long pause to give the members in your audience enough time to answer your question internally.

These pauses can easily stretch for a few seconds. While this may seem a really long time for you as the presenter, to your audience it will feel natural.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Whenever you answer a question from the audience, even if you have heard it many times before, pause briefly before responding. This shows confidence and also respect for the person asking the question. It demonstrates that you are willing to give a thoughtful answer instead of jumping on the answer with a canned response.

A few more tips to improve your own pausing:

- Watch politicians deliver important speeches. You don't even need to pay attention to the content. Simply focus on the rhythm of spoken words and pay close attention to the placement and duration of the pauses.

- Record yourself while delivering your presentation. When you listen to the recording, pay attention to the pauses. Are they placed well? Are they timed well?
- Get feedback. Ask a trusted source to listen to your presentation and provide specific feedback to your pauses.

Use pauses deliberately — well placed and well timed. Your audience will thank you by remembering your specific talking points long after you wrapped up.

VOICE

Like any instrument, the more you practice your voice, the better you will play it. You don't have to sound like James Earl Jones, but having some control over your voice can go a long way when you present. You will be able to add vocal variety and make your words sound more interesting.

The way you sound has a tremendous impact on your audience. You will influence your audience differently if you speak with a nasal voice — or in a high pitch — than when you speak with a resonating voice that comes from a lower location in your body.

The quality of your voice influences how your audience feels about you. Higher pitch usually denotes excitement and enthusiasm while a lower pitch is associated with confidence.

According to researcher Casey Klofstad, who studied the influence of political candidate voices on voter choice, men and women consistently prefer candidates with lower-pitched voices. We seem to instinctively like people with deeply resonating voices more.

Record yourself to find out if you could improve this aspect of your delivery. If needed, start exercising your vocal cords frequently to give them more range and your voice a deeper resonance with the following tips:

BREATHE DEEPLY AND RELAX

Your voice is typically lower after you just wake up in the morning because your larynx is relaxed. Stress, on the other hand, tightens muscles including those that influence your voice. The more relaxed and loose your vocal cords, the more deeply your voice will resonate.

To relax your vocal cords, take a deep breath to completely fill your lungs. Then, slowly exhale with a long, stretched Ahhhh... sound in a falling tone. The kind of sound you would make when you finally get to sit down and relax after a long and busy day. Place one hand on your chest and feel how the vibration is getting stronger as your voice lowers. Repeat this a few times and feel how your vocal cords relax and make your voice more resonant.

STRETCH YOUR VOCAL CORDS

Drop your head down so your chin is just above your chest. Then hum in a low register. While you continue humming, raise your head to face the ceiling. This will stretch your vocal cords and allows them to vibrate more. Also stretch your neck muscles by moving your head in a circular motion a few times in each direction.

MOVE YOUR MOUTH

When you don't open your mouth completely, you constrain the sounds coming out of it. Move your mouth fully to help the

sound waves travel from your vocal cords to your listeners' ears without any obstruction.

KEEP HYDRATED

Drink lots of water in the hours leading up to your presentation to keep hydrated. During your talk, if needed, drink room-temperature water. Cold water tightens the muscles of your vocal cord, making them less flexible.

STAND WITH GOOD POSTURE

Your overall posture also has an impact on your voice. When you stand slouched over, you impact your breathing and restrict the flow of air. To speak in a resonating voice, stand tall and keep your head up.

ADD VOLUME TO YOUR VOICE WITH A WINE CORK

Speaking with a wine cork between your front teeth encourages you to open up the back of your mouth which adds more volume to your voice. It also improves articulation.

Stage actors have been using this exercise to warm up and add volume to their voices for ages because it works so well. It conditions your mouth and tongue to work extra hard to pronounce each syllable, similar to a baseball player warming up with weighted bats to exercise relevant muscles.

Put the cork between your front teeth and say a passage a few times before removing the cork. Try your best to say the words as clearly as possible while having the cork in your mouth. Then say the same passage again without the cork.

Notice the difference?

Use this trick to warm up before delivering an important talk. Exercise your mouth and tongue with a wine cork for a few minutes before taking the stage with words that have long, open vowels. Or simply cycle through each vowel like this: Wah, Weh, Wee, Woh, Woo.

Give it a try and you will notice just how much you improve your pronunciation and voice — and most likely have lots of fun doing it.

TEMPO

Just like vocal variety makes your words sound more interesting, a deliberate change in tempo makes a presentation more engaging. Combine the two and your delivery will be perceived as energetic and passionate.

In normal conversation, most people speak between about 120 to 140 words per minute. To find your own baseline, record a few minutes of speech and then divide the number of words spoken by the number of minutes.

Presentations and public speeches are often delivered at a faster rate. Sir Ken Robinson's popular TED Talk "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" came in at 165 words per minute, while Simon Sinek delivered his TED Talk "How Great Leaders Inspire Action" at 170 words per minute. Speakers delivering a prepared speech or presentation typically deal with time constraints we don't have in conversations. Speaking faster also comes across as more energetic and enthusiastic and therefore captures the attention of an audience.

To keep things interesting for your listeners, vary your speed depending on the emotion you want to get across. If you want to project enthusiasm, passion, urgency, or excitement, speak slightly faster than your baseline. On the other hand, speak slightly slower to project calmness, control, and formality.

When you vary your pace, stay within a bandwidth of plus/minus ten to twenty words per minute of your baseline. If you speak too fast, you may be perceived as nervous, tense, and anxious. If you speak too slowly, the audience may become bored and drift off.

SPEECH HABITS

Filler words like *uhm* and *ah* are part of communication. So much so that software engineers are now adding them to computerized speech to make it sound more human. While such disfluencies are often heard in regular conversation, in a presentation they give the impression of a speaker that is not sufficiently prepared.

People who use these filler sounds are often not aware of it. It's an unconscious sound that bridges the time used thinking. If you detect disfluencies in your speech, make an effort to replace these utterances with... nothing. Simply add a pause instead of an *uhm*.

A much less frequent speech habit that some find annoying is uptalk. It seems to have its origin in Australian and Californian accents, but it is now a rising trend anywhere English is spoken, especially with younger generations.

Uptalk is the act of rising the voice at the end of a sentence. It makes a statement sound like a question. Because a rising pitch at the end of a sentence indicates a question, it makes speakers

sound insecure when they use it for regular statements. It can even keep people from taking a speaker seriously. According to UK publisher Pearson, which did a survey of 700 individuals in leadership roles, 71 percent consider uptalk a particularly annoying trait. 85 percent found it a clear indicator of insecurity or emotional weakness.

Getting rid of speech habits can be challenging because they are unconscious. Many presenters are not even aware that they may have a problem. Record your next talk and ask people who have seen it for their honest feedback to find out if you could improve it by eliminating those pesky habits.

Then, practice. A well rehearsed presentation will make your message flow more smoothly as you won't need to think on your feet about what to say next.

Record each of your rehearsals and listen if your speech habits are still present. Repeatedly rehearse your presentation until you are satisfied that it flows well, is free of filler sounds, and uses correct voice inflection.

BREATHING

Breathing is something we do so unconsciously. Unless we take a moment to bring it into our awareness, we usually have no idea at what rate and how deeply we breathe.

When we are nervous, a change in breathing is almost inevitable. We typically breathe faster and not as deeply as when we are relaxed. We might even forget to breathe altogether for a brief moment.

Not getting enough air increases anxiety even more — a vicious cycle that greatly impacts our voice. It becomes monotone and dull. Taking deep breaths, on the other hand, allows us to stretch out words, emphasize syllables, and play with the sounds we produce.

So how can you habitually take deeper and slower breaths?

Take just a few minutes each day to exercise your breathing. You don't have to learn yoga or meditation if that's not your thing. Performing a simple breathing exercise that takes just a few moments each day will already help.

This exercise is called box breathing:

1. Sit or stand with your spine straight.
2. Close your mouth and exhale all the air.
3. Inhale slowly through your nose while counting from 1 to 4 – fill your lungs completely from top to bottom.
4. Hold your breath while slowly counting from 1 to 4.
5. Exhale completely through your nose while slowly counting from 1 to 4.
6. Hold your breath while counting from 1 to 4.

Repeat steps 3 to 6 a few times and notice how you are becoming more relaxed with each breath.

In addition to rewiring your breathing permanently, this exercise also has tactical application. That's why military personnel and first responders learn box breathing not only to improve unconscious breathing patterns but also to deal with increased anxiety in any fight-or-flight situation. It is an ideal exercise to calm nerves.

The next time you feel a bit anxious, do a few rounds of box breathing to relax and become more grounded. It only takes a few moments and the impact on your emotional state will be noticeable.

GESTURES

Some people are naturally more animated than others. They use their hands to support the words they speak and as a result, their communication appears more dynamic and often clearer.

There are three types of gestures:

SYMBOLIC GESTURES

These gestures communicate words, numbers, and positions. Examples of symbolic gestures include a thumbs up to signal approval and or holding up fingers when counting. Some gestures are culture specific. For example, the thumbs up gesture is offensive in some places. So use symbolic gestures with caution.

DESCRIPTIVE GESTURES

These gestures communicate an idea or movement. Examples include using your hands to demonstrate waves, your stretched out arms to demonstrate the size of a fish you caught, or your thumb and index finger to show how tiny something is. Pantomimes demonstrate the use of descriptive gestures effectively to tell entire stories without using any words.

EMOTIONAL GESTURES

These gestures communicate feelings. These expressions of emotion go well with a strong facial expression to express fear, anger,

joy, or any other emotional state. A good example of an emotional gesture is Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream*.

When you use gestures, they need to be supportive and precise. Don't be afraid to make your gestures big and pronounced, especially when you present to a larger audience, so even those in the back of the room can see them clearly.

USING SPACE

When you present in front of an audience, you typically have some room to move around. Use it with purpose. Using the available space during your presentation will enhance your authority.

When you take control of the space around you, you signal that this is your territory, at least for the moment, and you gain more respect than if you stand in just one location during your entire presentation.

Avoid pacing aimlessly though. Move with purpose. For example, when you describe the status quo and the frustration it causes, stand to one side of center so you mark the feelings you evoke not just with your words but also spatially.

In most cultures, people draw timelines from left to right by putting the past on the left side and the future on the right side. During your presentation, you can mark different points in time on such an imaginary timeline. Because your audience's perspective is mirror-imaged, talk about the past when standing to the right, talk about the future when standing to the left, and use the center as a neutral zone and to deliver your call to action.

Marking space in this way has a side effect. By talking about the dreadful past and present, you evoke feelings. When you consistently evoke negative feelings from one side of the stage and positive feelings from the other side, your audience unconsciously associates these feelings with the occupied space on stage. Therefore be extra careful after you have established a spot for the dreadful past. Stay away from it when you talk about your delightful solution to avoid sending mixed signals.

CHAPTER 3

AN AUDIENCE-CENTERED APPROACH

“Designing a presentation without an audience in mind is like writing a love letter and addressing it: To Whom It May Concern.”

Ken Haemer

The Golden Rule, *do unto others as you would have them do unto you*, is quoted often in business books. It has been adapted to advice like *present to others as you would have them present to you*. Unfortunately, there is a flaw in this advice; it creates a presenter-centered presentation.

Wouldn't it be much better to adopt the Platinum Rule: *Present to others as they would have you present to them?*

Start by verifying and validating your audience's current experience. Demonstrate that you both stand on common ground by describing their problem and your understanding of the emotions it causes.

Describe your understanding of their situation. Show empathy for their pains and you gain a tremendous credibility. Because

when you prove that you understand the frustration they experience, the audience begins to trust you.

When they look at you and think: “Oh, you really know my situation. You totally get what I’m going through and fully appreciate the feelings I experience,” your audience will develop trust. And when they trust you, your proposed solution will carry much more weight.

After you have gained your audience’s trust, begin painting an image of what could be. Paint a picture of a point in the future when their problem will be solved. Describe this future with all the pleasant emotions they will experience. Put into words what your solution will do for them emotionally and create a stark contrast to the status quo.

Having built rapport by demonstrating your understanding of their current problems, by now your audience will think: “You were right about all the other things before, so you are probably also right about how this solution will affect me positively.”

FEATURES TELL, BENEFITS SELL

Many presentations are created with the assumption that the audience is asking, “Who are you? What is your product? How does it work?”

While your presentation needs to answer these questions, what’s initially on the minds of the audience members is “Why should I care?” They want to know what benefits they will get from listening to you.

Deep down, we are selfish creatures. We do things because of how they affect us, how they make us feel. Even the most altruistic individuals help others because it makes them feel good about themselves. They do things because they have learned to associate a good feeling with their actions. That's their reward. Feeling good about ourselves is sometimes the most precious reward.

Whenever we have to make a decision, we ask ourselves how the different choices will affect us. We want to know what we will gain or lose. We want to know the pros and cons and whether we will experience pain or pleasure.

We ask this with a variety of questions:

- What does this do for *me*?
- What do *I* get out of this?
- What does this mean to *me*?
- How will this change *my* life for the better?

This is not new knowledge. The importance of answering *What's In It For Me?* has been preached in business books for decades. Yet when we look around us, we still see too many sales pitches and advertisements that put the offer and the seller in the center. A more effective approach is to put your audience in the center.

During his keynote presentation that launched the original iPod in 2001, Steve Jobs answered these unspoken questions by telling people what the product would really mean to them, not just what the product was. And he did it in the shortest possible way.

Jobs could have announced *a new portable music player that weighs only 6.5 ounces, is the size of a cigarette pack, and has 5 GB storage*. This tells you exactly what you are getting.

Steve Jobs didn't announce the device like that. He first told the audience what these features and technical details will do for them and what that meant. And he did it with just a few words. He announced it as *The iPod — 1,000 songs in your pocket.*

At another point in his keynote, he told the audience what that means: *your entire music library in your pocket*, giving further meaning to a number. That made it immediately clear: "If I buy this gadget, I can bring pretty much all my music with me."

Simply the prospect of such a pleasant addition to one's life made people line up to buy this revolutionary device on the day it came out. They stood in line for hours even though they have never actually seen the device, touched it, or listened to the sound quality. That's the result of persuasion at its finest.

Features vs. benefits is taught as one of the first lessons in any marketing course. Yet few really master the art of translating a feature into a benefit to make the offer irresistible. Many presenters still lead with features because they might be too familiar with their business. They assume their knowledge is common knowledge, which all too often it isn't.

When you are on the inside, it's easy to think "Well, everyone knows that!" But not everyone does. It's an easy trap to fall into, and the most knowledgeable individuals seem the most likely victims. So how can you avoid making statements about features and instead lead with benefits?

Train yourself to silently answer the question "What does that mean?" for each feature you want to highlight. In the iPod example, one of the features is the 5 GB storage. What does that mean? 5 GB allows a user to store roughly 1,000 songs. Another feature is the small size and weight. 6.5 oz. and the size of a cig-

alette pack. What does that mean? You can put it in your pocket. And all of a sudden, the perfect positioning statement is staring right at you.

So, for each feature you address in your presentation, answer “What does that mean?” to distill the actual benefit... and then lead with that. You will still need to cover the features that offer these benefits to satisfy the logical part of your audience’s brains, but the focus needs to be on what your offer means rather than what it is.

To come up with descriptions that resonate, an intimate knowledge of the desires, values, and motivations of your audience is needed. So let’s look at some universal principles of persuasion before moving on to your specific audience.

THE SIX UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION

In his classic book *Influence — The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert Cialdini outlines six powerful principles that help convince others. When you apply these principles to your persuasive presentations, you activate automatic responses. You initiate behavior that is triggered unconsciously.

Some of these persuasion principles are required ingredients to make your presentations highly effective. When you add them to your message, you will introduce a dimension that will help move your audience to action.

RECIPROCITY

Have you ever felt obligated to do something for someone because they first did something for you? Reciprocity is a type of

social norm that can have a powerful influence on our behavior. Reciprocity recognizes that people feel indebted to those who do something for them or give them a gift.

In an episode of the hit sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, Sheldon explains why he doesn't like to receive gifts when he sees that his neighbor Penny bought him a present. He asks in his typical socially awkward manner: "You bought me a gift? Why would you do such a thing?"

Even Penny, who is quite familiar with Sheldon's eccentricities, was seemingly baffled by the question and responded: "I don't know... Maybe because it's Christmas?"

And then comes Sheldon's explanation why he despises receiving gifts: "Oh Penny! I know you think you are being generous, but the foundation of gift giving is reciprocity. You haven't given me a gift. You have given me an obligation."

Most people, of course, don't interpret gift giving this way. At least not consciously. Unconsciously, however, we feel obligated to reciprocate something that is given to us.

The rule of reciprocity explains why free samples at your local grocery are so effective. People who receive an unexpected gift, especially if it is useful or valuable to them, are more likely to listen to a sales pitch, donate to a cause, or end up buying what they are offered, whether they need it or not.

The gifts do not have to be expensive or even material; information and favors work equally well.

SCARCITY

Scarcity relates to supply and demand. The less there is of something, the more valuable it becomes. When something is limited and uncommon, people want it even more. A Limited Edition sticker can increase the price of an otherwise more or less equal product significantly.

The scarcity principle is the reason hotel and airline booking sites display how many rooms or seats are still available. Once a potential guest sees only 2 rooms available at this price, they are much more likely to take immediate action.

AUTHORITY

People instinctively follow the lead of credible, knowledgeable experts. In fact, we seem to have an urge to actively seek authority to follow. We are trained from birth to obey authority, and the concept of authority seems deeply rooted in societies worldwide.

Authority is the result of high perceived status. Research identifies three factors that lead us to grant authority to another person: titles, clothing (not just expensive suits, but also vocational items like uniforms and lab coats), and trappings (luxury symbols and items denoting status).

Those are just initial factors though. They need to be confirmed by behavior to establish true authority.

Body language, tone of voice, and a relaxed and confident demeanor as well as knowledge and experience need to fit the title, clothing, and trappings to command authority.

CONSISTENCY

People do not like to back out of commitments made. We strive to follow through. We want to keep promises made.

As a result, whenever we agree to do something, we are more likely to do it. We were taught from a young age to keep promises and stay true to our word.

Getting an audience to commit to something makes them therefore more likely to follow through with an action. Getting people to answer 'yes' makes them more committed to an action.

For instance, instead of telling your audience: "Please consider doing this or that," ask them "Will you consider doing this or that?"

The difference here is quite subtle, but the reaction you get is different. When asked — instead of being told — to consider doing something, most people naturally will say "yes" and thus commit more deeply to doing it. Because of their unconscious desire for consistency, they are more likely to follow up by actually doing it.

LIKING

We prefer to be around and do business with those we like. Of course. But why do we like some people more than others? Research identifies two factors which are of interest to presenters: similarity and mutual goals.

We are naturally attracted to people who have something in common with us. We like those who have a common interest, background, or knowledge.

Have you ever traveled somewhere and bumped into someone from your hometown? Or perhaps you attended a meeting and

connected with someone who attended the same university from which you graduated? Or you found out your prospect roots for the same sports team you support.

When that happens, we establish rapport quickly. We instantly like the other person because they have something quite major in common when they come from the same place, made similar experiences, or support the same cause.

We also feel drawn to people with mutual goals, and this is key for presenters. When you deliver a presentation, show that you and your audience not only have some things in common, but also that you are working toward the same goal and envision the future in similar ways. This will elevate you from a supplier to a real partner, which practically guarantees a long lasting business relationship.

SOCIAL PROOF

When people are uncertain about a course of action, they tend to look to those around them to guide their decision. Some people habitually want to know what everyone else is doing, especially those in their own social network, before making a decision.

This explains why testimonials and referrals from satisfied customers woven into your presentation as stories can be very effective. They show your target audience that people who are similar to them have enjoyed the benefits of your product or service.

These six persuasion principles are universal. They apply to most people and most situations. Some of them are also ideal vehicles to transfer your enthusiasm: give freely, demonstrate that you stand on common ground and have the expertise to help, and show how your offer has helped others.

While our actions may be governed by these underlying principles, each of us is also vastly different. We all have our personal likes and dislikes, our values, and our beliefs. We all are motivated differently. Some people have intensely good feelings when attending a heavy metal concert, while for others, even the thought of it seems like torture.

We also take on ideas in different ways. Some of us embrace new ideas immediately, while others take a wait-and-see approach, and still others resist them with all their might.

NOT EVERYONE NEEDS SOCIAL PROOF

To understand what motivates people to embrace a new technology or idea, we'll take a quick journey back to 1957, when researchers at Iowa State University created a model called *The Diffusion Pattern* to track purchase patterns. This model has been adopted and slightly changed over time. It is now most widely known as *The Technology Adoption Life Cycle*.

We all fall somewhere on the technology adoption life cycle. For example, there is a paradigm shift happening right now in the automotive industry.

Electric cars have become more practical and have therefore begun selling in increasing numbers. How do you feel about these new cars? Do you perhaps already drive one? Will you consider buying one in the near future? Do you wait and see how things develop first? Or do you dismiss the idea of electric cars as a fad to avoid? Your answer places you in one of the categories of the technology adoption life cycle.

The technology adoption life cycle is represented as a bell curve, with its members going from left to right: innovators, early

adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Each member shares demographic and psychographic attributes with the others in their group.

The biggest difference, and the one you are most interested in as a presenter, is found between two groups: Innovators/early adopters in one group, and people belonging to the majority adopters and laggards in the other.

If your audience consists mainly of innovators and early adopters, there is no real need to provide social proof. Those visionaries like to imagine how they will benefit from your offer.

On the other hand, members of the early and late majority groups want to know what experiences others have made. They want to see evidence that your offer will benefit them.

These universal principles build only a foundation for your persuasive presentation. They give you insight into the general human psychology at play in persuasion. To make your words resonate deeply with specific audiences, you also need to understand the personal wants and needs of your particular audience. You need to know what they value, what they believe, and how they are moved to action. This will allow you to align your message with their goals, dreams and hopes.

THE AUDIENCE AVATAR

Marketing professionals and copywriters often create a buyer persona or customer avatar that describes their ideal buyers in detail, including their values and beliefs, their likes and dislikes, and their

underlying motivations. This helps them formulate messages that resonate with their targeted audience.

Creating an audience avatar, a clear description of the ideal audience member, works for presenters as well. While identifying the main issues of your ideal customer, you will discover those words that will resonate the most when you describe how your solution will solve their specific problem.

Members of your audience have at least two things in common. They all showed up to your presentation and deep down they wonder how listening to you will benefit them.

Each audience member is also vastly different from each other. They think differently, they are motivated differently, and they make decisions differently.

Since you cannot please everybody equally, it helps to focus on those that you can serve best. Make your message appeal to those members of your audience.

Politicians know this very well. In the past, voters chose their representatives. Today, politicians choose their audiences. Then they tailor their message to evoke thoughts and feelings that will move voters to action.

To clearly define your ideal audience members and how you can help them, answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.

- Who could use your help?
- What is the problem, specifically?
- Why hasn't the problem be solved yet?
- What if the problem could be solved?

- What if they don't accept your offer?

Your answers will lead you to perfectly match your offer with your audience member's desires. They will help you formulate a message that answers the question "What does this really mean to me?" with words that will resonate deeply.

Let's look at each question in more detail.

WHO COULD USE YOUR HELP?

A mistake some presenters make when defining their target audience is to think too broadly. To communicate your message with words that will strike a cord, it helps to think of just one person, the one person whom your product, service, or idea will help the most. This will be your ideal audience member, an avatar that best encapsulates who benefits most from your solution.

Be very specific when you write down this person's defining traits and characteristics. Add as much detail as you can think of, including education, profession, position, and background as well as their likes and dislikes, desires, emotional pains, and hopes and dreams. You can even personify this avatar with a name to make this as personal as possible.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM, SPECIFICALLY?

The purpose of your presentation is to convince listeners that your product, service, or idea will solve a pressing problem for them. What exactly is the problem? Is the problem a physical one? Is it emotional, financial, or mental?

You also want to think about how the problem manifests itself. Does it cause pain, insecurity, worry, discomfort, fear? A detailed

description of the problem, including its indirect affect, and how it is being experienced builds the foundation for your message.

WHY HASN'T THE PROBLEM BEEN SOLVED YET?

Have they tried to solve the problem before, but failed? What have they attempted without success? What made any previous solution ineffective?

The answers to these questions will help you gain credibility by demonstrating a clear understanding not only of the problem but also of those alternatives that are available — and why they are vastly inferior to your solution.

WHAT IF THE PROBLEM COULD BE SOLVED?

How would your ideal audience member's life be different if they could solve their problem? When you answer this question, don't settle for the first and most obvious answer. Describe all the benefits they will get, even indirect ones, the ones addressing the domino effects caused by the problem.

For each answer, ask yourself “and what does that really mean for them?” When you start digging deeper and look beyond the obvious, you may find ways to describe your benefits that you haven't thought of before.

WHAT IF THEY DON'T ACCEPT YOUR OFFER?

Getting your audience to imagine a world in which their problem has been solved may not be enough. You may also need to remind your listeners of their current pain and suffering and how not taking action will continue the current situation and has the potential to make things even worse.

If they decline your offer, how does the problem persist or get even worse over time? The answer to this question will lead you to describe what will happen if they don't take action now.

The answers to all of these questions will give you a crystal clear picture of the ideal recipient for your message and how your offer can help them. You will gain insight into their motivation. It will help you better understand why they are sitting in your audience and what they expect to get out of your presentation.

It is important to not just imagine the answers to these questions, but research them. Ask a currently satisfied customer how they benefit from your solution. Listen carefully to their description. Pay close attention to the words they use to describe how your solution has made their life better. Then, use this information in your presentation.

Also read forums, product reviews, social media comments, and blogs as part of your research. Some of these sites are pure gold mines to learn more about your target audience's values and beliefs — and the words they use to describe them.

Once you have created a clear image of your audience avatar, define the one question this person has in mind. That is the question your presentation will answer. In other words, take on this person's point of view and ask the most pressing question: "How can you help me to...?"

Your answer will become the foundation for your entire presentation. It will be its common thread and the one message you want your audience to take home.

CHAPTER 4

DELIVERING YOUR PRESENTATION

“If you think presentations can’t enchant people, then you’ve never seen a really good one.”

Guy Kawasaki

Delivery is crucial. How you say something is as important as what you say. First, keep it simple. Avoid complex words and complicated slides with lots of text. Simplicity goes a long way in helping your audience understand your message. The structure of your presentation, the words you choose, and the design of your slides, all that needs to be easy to digest if you want it to be memorable.

In its most basic form, a persuasive presentation starts out by getting the audience’s undivided attention. It then leads them to contemplate the status quo and highlights all the pain, suffering and frustration it causes. It presents the solution, including the great feelings that the solution will cause, and a call to action to embrace a more pleasant future.

The high-level framework looks like this:

1. Evoke curiosity to get attention.

2. Establish credibility and rapport by demonstrating an intrinsic understanding of the problem.
3. Describe a better future and how it is made possible with the help of your solution.
4. End with a call to action to guide the audience to take the next step.

Let's explore each of these steps in detail.

GETTING ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY

How long does it take to form a first impression of someone? Depending on the research you consult, you'll find numbers between two to three seconds all the way to thirty seconds. That's not a long time. It often takes an average presenter that long just to get going. They feel the need to introduce themselves (even though their host already introduced them) and talk about how nervous they are, how they would rather be somewhere else, or they begin with a monotone introduction of their company.

As a savvy presenter, you know the value of time, especially the first few seconds, and make the best of it. Reduce your first words to a simple greeting and forget all the small talk. Rather bring out a hook immediately. Start with a statement that grabs the attention of your audience and makes them want to know more. By far the best mental state to evoke in your audience right at the beginning is curiosity. Curiosity practically guarantees attention.

ASK A THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTION

One way to evoke curiosity is to start your presentation with a question without immediately revealing the answer. Ask thought-provoking questions; otherwise, this technique won't be effective. Rhetorical questions like "Who wants to be happier?" or questions with obvious answers like "Who in the audience carries a mobile phone?" won't move the emotional needle. If you open your presentation with a question, do it with a thought-provoking or surprising one.

STATE A STARTLING FACT

Another way to grab the attention of your audience immediately is with a startling fact — a statistical value or a personal observation that isn't obvious yet has the potential to be news to your listeners or put something into a fresh perspective. The potential here is limitless and when you combine a startling fact with a question, you're almost guaranteed to captivate your audience immediately. You can do this by preceding your startling fact with "Did you know that...?" or "Have you ever wondered why...?"

TELL A JOKE

Yet another method to evoke curiosity is to start your presentation with humor. Jokes often evoke curiosity in the lead up to the punch line, especially when delivered in a suspenseful manner. They also can make your audience laugh, which releases hormones that are conducive to learning and focus.

However, humor is also often cultural and jokes can backfire. Unless you are a natural comedian, or you have a proven joke or humorous line for your audience, there is a risk they won't perceive it as all that funny. That can lead to an awkward moment at

the very beginning of your presentation. Not the best way to start your talk.

SURPRISE THE AUDIENCE

The most effective way to immediately get dopamine flowing is through shock or surprise. Do or say something so unexpected or shocking that your audience will wonder, “How is this related? Where is this going?” They become extremely curious to find out the link between your surprise opening and your message.

The 2015 World Champion of Public Speaking, Mohammed Qahtani, demonstrated a shock opening beautifully in his winning speech *The Power of Words*. He took the stage, waited a moment, and then took out a cigarette and lighter and proceeded to almost light the cigarette. Just before the flame hit the cigarette, he paused, looked around, and with shifting eyes asked “WHAT???” like a child caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

Such an opening is totally unexpected and the audience begins to wonder how this could possibly be related to a speech about the power of words. Curiosity is induced. Dopamine starts flowing. Attention is focused.

In most business settings, it will not be appropriate to start your presentation with such a theatrical performance. You don’t need to. Simply start with a surprising or shocking statement that makes your audience wonder how this could possibly be related in any way to the topic at hand, and you’ll have their attention. During your talk, you will need to provide an answer to the question how your opening statement is related. You need to somehow link back to the opening at some point in your presentation, otherwise it will come across as a simple gimmick without much merit.

DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATUS QUO

After you have captured your audience's attention, you need to demonstrate that you understand their world. You need to prove that you have empathy for their current situation. You need to show how you have solved their problem. Only when you have gained your audience's trust can you establish your product or idea as the solution to end their frustration.

This is the part of your presentation when your hard work creating an audience avatar pays off. Use that information to highlight all the unpleasantness the status quo causes. Use stories and anecdotes that allow your audience to identify with those who experience similar pain and suffering. Make your audience not only realize but actually *feel* the negative emotions linked to the problems of their current situation. Guide your audience to think about these issues vividly, and the emotions associated with these issues will follow.

If you have created a detailed audience avatar, you know your audience extremely well. You will be able to match their reality with stories, anecdotes, and descriptions that resonate. As a result, you gain a position of credibility and authority. Once the members in your audience think, "This presenter is right on about all the things I'm experiencing," they will eagerly listen to your recommendations.

DESCRIBE A BETTER FUTURE

After you have built solid rapport by matching your audience's reality, it is time you lead them to imagine a better future — a future made possible by your offer — and see themselves in it. You

can do this in various ways and the best words to use can be found in your audience avatar description.

Include social proof if possible and highlight not just the most important benefits of your solution, but the positive ripple effects as well. Show in clear and logical fashion how others have benefited and how they feel about it. If your product is brand new or not even available yet, you might not be able to provide social proof. You will need to paint such a vivid picture of the future, your audience will find it easy to see themselves in it.

Describe in detail how to use your solution. Explain how they apply it, step-by-step. Keep in mind to answer their unspoken question: “How does this help me?” Paint images that make it easy to understand what your offer will do for them, what it will mean in their lives, and how it will make them feel.

Even if your solution provides lots of benefits, limit them to just three or four in your presentation. More than that and your audience might not remember any. Focusing on your three strongest benefits and describing them so your audience can see how it will make their life better increases your chance they remember all.

Once you have demonstrated your understanding of the audience’s reality and convinced them that your solution is the answer to end their frustration, it’s time for your call to action. Tell them what to do to create a better future. Tell them what specific action they need to take.

CALL TO ACTION

The goal of your presentation is for the audience to take some kind of action. If you want them to contact you, visit your web-

site, buy your product, or simply give you more time, you need to clearly ask for it.

Your call to action are the last words of your presentation and therefore offer an excellent opportunity to reiterate your key message. For example, if your key message is *we help turn your trash into someone else's treasure*, you could end with something along the lines of “And if you want to turn your trash into someone else's treasure, visit our website and sign up today.”

KEEPING ATTENTION

John Medina is a developmental molecular biologist and research consultant. In his book *Brain Rules*, he outlines his discoveries about the human brain. One of these discoveries is especially relevant to every presenter: the brain has a tendency to tune out after 10 minutes.

Dr. Medina began teaching in 1993 and since then, he has asked all of his students the following question: "Given a class of medium interest — not too boring and not too exciting — when do you start glancing at the clock, wondering when the class will be over?"

The answer consistently has been 10 minutes. According to Medina, peer-reviewed studies confirm his observation. He writes, “Before the first quarter hour is over in a typical presentation, people usually have checked out.”

Knowing this 10-minute rule is highly important for any presenter. If you want to hold your audience's attention throughout your entire presentation, you need to build in an attention getter

shortly before each 10-minute segment — or keep your presentation shorter than ten minutes.

An attention getter doesn't have to be anything too drastic – an interesting and relevant story might do the trick. Engaging your audience with a question at that point is also a great way to keep them from drifting off. Or show a brief video, one of the most effective tools to add more dimension to your delivery. Videos reset your audience's attention span immediately.

ADD A TOUCH OF HUMOR

Humor is like a superpower that can break tension and disarm people instantly. It can put entire audiences in a state of mind that is conducive to absorbing new information. And the more we use this power, the more likable we become.

Can't tell jokes? Don't worry. You don't need to tell jokes to be perceived as funny because humor is the result of an attitude rather than a collection of tools and techniques. It starts with habitually looking for the funny in every situation. And it requires some practice to deliver your observations in a way that causes smiles or laughter.

Here are three ways to add humor to a presentation:

PERSONAL ANECDOTES

In some sense, our journey through life is a massive collection of stories which is a gold mine of humor. You undoubtedly have experienced funny things at work, at home, while shopping, while traveling, and pretty much in every other situation.

You may have noticed that some of our darkest moments provide a humorous twist later on. While we might only see the unpleasant side of negative experiences when they happen, with the passing of time, they become a wonderful source of funny stories.

The best thing about these personal anecdotes is that you already know how to deliver them well. You have been doing so for years. Search your memory and you are bound to find some anecdotes that help you make a point while bringing a smile on the faces in your audience.

ANALOGIES

Much of the humor we encounter when listening to stand up comedians or watching sitcoms includes analogies. These are comparisons between two things or concepts, expressed as either a metaphor or a simile. Analogies themselves aren't necessarily funny. They become funny when the comparison is either illogical, far fetched, or incongruent.

To create a metaphor or simile, compare two totally different things within a similar scope: a process to a process, an activity to an activity, a thing to a thing. You don't always have to stay within the same scope though. Sometimes a sentence comparing a person to a thing, for example, can be funny as well.

Funny metaphors often rely on an element of surprise: "The ballerina rose gracefully en Pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant."

Describing the comparison in much detail also adds humor as Douglas Adams demonstrated in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Gal-*

axy: “He had a look on his face like he’d been staring at a clock with all the numbers backwards and in the wrong places.”

In the same book, Douglas Adams also demonstrates how to use an implausible comparison to create funny mental images in the minds of an audience: “The ships hung in the air, much in the same way that bricks don’t.”

SELF-DEPRECATATION

Making fun of yourself, either a personality trait or a physical characteristic, can immediately warm up an audience to you and make you more likable. We all appreciate when a speaker is showing some vulnerability. A great example of this was J.K. Rowling’s commencement speech at Harvard University.

Rowling opened her speech with these lines: “The first thing I would like to say is thank you. Not only has Harvard given me an extraordinary honor, but the weeks of fear and nausea I have endured at the thought of giving this commencement address have made me lose weight. A win-win situation.”

She delivered this opener so well, she got not just one laugh out of it but three. She also positioned herself as a human being, a person the audience can identify with.

Whenever you add humor to your presentation, be aware that the word order can have a big impact as well. Always put the funny bit at the end of a sentence. For example, “I wanted to cross the road when I noticed a dog driving a car.” This is a funny scene that can be made even funnier when it is told like this: “I wanted to cross the road when I noticed a car... driven by a dog!” Always put the funny bit at the end and then pause long enough to let the audience laugh.

You don't have to turn yourself into a stand-up comedian to be funny. Your goal is not to provoke laughter but simply to entertain your audience with a bit of humor and your unique personality.

MANAGING SURPRISES

Presenting to a live audience always comes with the potential to experience something unexpected. Two of them come up frequently, so it is easier to anticipate them:

LESS TIME THAN PLANNED

You arrive at the meeting, ready to delight your audience with a 30-minute presentation only to be told by the host that there was a last minute change and you now have just 10 minutes to deliver your talk. Oh shock and horror!

But not for the prepared presenter who anticipates this situation and has an abbreviated version, including slides, ready as a back-up. It will require more planning and preparation to create a compelling presentation which is shorter and more concise. Apparently Mark Twain once wrote to a friend: "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." This applies to presentations as well. The shorter the presentation, the more effort to distill your thoughts.

Shortening your presentation may seem like a daunting task. You might even think that there is no way to communicate everything in your presentation in a fraction of time. No worries. Distilling your message to the absolute essentials will help you think about it more clearly. That is why the audience avatar is such a useful tool. It will help you create highly scalable presentations.

TECHNICAL FAILURE

As a presenter, you experience all kinds of issues, from faulty equipment all the way to a total loss of power in the room. While you cannot anticipate every possible challenge during your presentation, you need to be prepared at least for some. You need to be prepared to present without slides. Perhaps you are lucky and there is a flip chart or whiteboard in the room to use as replacement. But sometimes, you need to be able to deliver your message without any visual aides. Make sure you're prepared.

Online meetings pose an additional challenge that cannot happen in a physical meeting: loss of or intermittent internet connection. Make sure that your backup plan for online meetings includes a way you can rejoin via telephone and have the number ready.

A BLANK MIND

Failing to recall a talking point, or losing one's train of thought, can happen in presentations. Even when we are well prepared and fully in the moment, sometimes distractions throw us off for just a split second.

When we draw a blank with many eyes on us, it often leads to an adrenaline rush that puts us in a less than ideal state of mind. Heart rate increases, hands get sweaty, and we can feel our face getting hotter and starting to blush.

So what can you do when it happens? How can you recover? First, take a deep breath and don't be too hard on yourself. Engaging in negative internal dialog with yourself won't help. Also, do not apologize as soon as it happens because the audience won't immediately realize that you lost your train of thought. You are way ahead of them with this knowledge and can use this time trying to find back on track.

Sometimes, all it takes it to take a look at the screen if you're using slides. Or calmly take a sip of water to gain some extra time. If you're still faced with a blank mind, paraphrase your previous message. Depending on the situation, this can underline the importance of the point you just made or become a summary of what you have already covered. And it will most likely trigger your memory to remember what comes next.

You can also use this moment for some audience interaction. Ask the audience what your major talking points were so far.

All these techniques will give you some time to remember and get back on track. If you still can't find back, don't dwell on what you wanted to say. Remember and refocus your mind on those elements that you do remember. Continue from there, even if it is out of order, and your audience might never even notice what happened.

DEALING WITH SPEAKING ANXIETY

Some people have no problem expressing their thoughts in an email, report, or in an informal discussion. Yet as soon as they learn they have to speak in public, anxiety creeps in. Just the thought of it increases their heartbeat and turns their stomach into knots... sometimes for weeks before the actual presentation.

While a majority of presenters, even seasoned ones, experience some level of anxiety, for some it is so intense that it becomes limiting. It doesn't have to be this way.

You can learn how to make speaking anxiety work for you not by fighting it but by using this energy in a constructive way.

WHO CONTROLS YOUR BRAIN?

You make an impression on your audience even before you speak your first words. So you want to start your presentations with confidence that radiates. That poses a challenge for many people. Speaking anxiety, or even outright fear of speaking in public, gets in the way.

This fear is often instilled early in our lives. In school, teachers all too often put students in the spotlight for negative reasons or to test them. They seldom get students to the front of the room to have fun. And facing one of the toughest audiences there is, your classmates, can be extremely intimidating. After all, children are not really known for holding back criticism, laughter, or even ridicule.

Many people have therefore learned to associate negative emotions to standing in front of people and being the center of attention. Speaking anxiety simply signals that an unpleasant experience may be ahead.

If you experience speaking anxiety, it helps to understand what is going on inside your head that leads to this unpleasant feeling. You don't need to search for the cause because that only provides an explanation, not a solution. Asking *why* is therefore much less useful in overcoming anxiety than asking *how*. How do you do it? What happens inside of your head that triggers your emotions? Once you understand what you do in your mind, you can make adjustments.

Take a moment to think about how specifically you scare yourself when faced with the prospect of presenting to others. What exactly is going on in your head? What images do you see with your mind's eye? What internal dialogue or sounds do you hear?

Some people report imagining an unfriendly audience with big heads and critical eyes staring at them, waiting for them to make a mistake, waiting to laugh and ridicule them. They vividly imagine worst case scenarios. While doing so, they feel themselves getting more nervous, shaking, and sweating.

Some people also report talking to themselves. They say things like “don’t embarrass yourself; don’t make a fool of yourself” in their most critical voice. Naturally, the more they focus on what they don’t want, the more intense their negative emotions become. No wonder anxiety follows. Anybody would become nervous or even scared with such internal images and sounds in the background of their mind.

AN EASY WAY TO REDUCE SPEAKING ANXIETY

The cool thing about your brain is that you can use it in any way you want. You can make images that induce fear, or you can make images that induce calm. You can speak to yourself in a high pitch and nagging tone, or you can do it in a most pleasant voice and tempo.

It’s your brain. You control it. Just because you once learned to associate bad feelings with presenting doesn’t mean you can’t change that now and associate great feelings to being the center of attention.

Try this for a change:

- See yourself on a stage or in front of a room giving a presentation, like an observer would see you.
- How would you look if you had the time of your life up there?
- How would you stand if you were absolutely confident?

- How would your voice project?
- How would you gesture?
- What kind of facial expressions would you use?
- How would you breathe?
- And how would you feel?

See yourself facing the audience with confidence; graceful, vibrant with energy, and in total control. Then, inside your mind, slip into that image of your own self on stage and look at a friendly audience that smiles and nods in approval.

Take a deep breath and while exhaling, say to yourself with a most pleasantly resonating voice: "This is great. This is where I'm meant to be. Let's have some fun!" Notice a good feeling bubbling up and spreading through your entire body. Now, isn't this better?

It's your brain. You control it. Whenever you start to feel anxiety bubble up, take a deep breath and acknowledge it. Realize at the same time that you can manage it by shifting your inner focus.

Also understand that the audience is not there to test you or to evaluate your presentation skills. They are there to learn how you can help them. Focusing on that will minimize anxiety.

To further reduce your anxiety, it also helps to get to know a couple of audience members before your talk. If time permits, mingle with your audience. Approach a few people and learn more about them. Ask them what motivated them to attend and also what they expect to get from your presentation. The people you meet before your presentation become those friendly faces in the audience that give you an additional boost of confidence during your presentation.

A certain level of tension also signals that you care. You want your message to resonate. You want to do a god job. And that is often reflected in some level of anxiety. But don't talk about being nervous in your presentation. Ever! Most of the time, people won't even notice if you don't tell them how you feel. If you feel some nervous energy before giving a talk, simply embrace it as a positive sign and make it part of your own ideal presentation state.

YOUR IDEAL PRESENTATION STATE

For children, playing make-believe is easy. They love to pretend to be somebody else. They can become a princess, a warrior, a detective, or any other character they can imagine. And they do it in the blink of an eye. This is a practical skill that you haven't lost, even if you haven't exercised it all that much lately.

Great presenters often take on a different personality during their presentations. They realize that their presentation is a performance. They slip into a different version of themselves. They slip into a version that speaks more energetically, gestures more, moves with purpose, and smiles from the heart. They change into a version of themselves in an ideal emotional state that combines confidence, enthusiasm, and excitement.

To find your own presentation personality, think of a time in your past you would describe as exhilarating. A time when you felt at your very best, psyched, and ready to conquer the world. Perhaps you just won something, or maybe you engaged in an activity that brings you ultimate joy.

Whatever it is that got you into a state of sheer excitement, go back to that moment in your mind and remember it in detail. See what you saw at that time, hear what you heard, and notice the

feeling spreading through your body. Then, use this feeling as a baseline for your ideal presentation state.

The good news is that this baseline feeling is as easy to access as vividly remembering a past moment that caused this feeling previously. The even better news is that the more you do this, the quicker you'll access this state until you eventually enter it automatically whenever needed.

When you access past memories that include intense feelings, also change your posture accordingly. Doing this will further aid a change in your level of confidence.

To get into an ideal presentation state, many professional speakers have a ritual they follow before stepping on stage. These rituals have a practical purpose. They help the speaker focus on the moment.

Some of these rituals include taking breathing exercises. Some of them include making vivid images of a happy and supportive audience that is cheering the speaker on. Some speakers might go through their opening lines or listen to an uplifting and energizing song in their mind. Many of these rituals include focusing on what really matters: your audience and how you can help them.

We are all different and what works for some people might be counter-productive to others. Following somebody else's ritual might not work for you. Experiment to find out what works best for you to get into a most resourceful state. Then, create your own ritual and use it in the moments before you present.

Practice getting into your ideal presentation state on purpose whenever you have a chance, not just when you present but also in one-on-one conversations. Over time you will gain the ability to enter this state in a flash.

ADDING VISUAL APPEAL

As with all other aspects of your delivery, simplicity rules when it comes to slide design. Your slides should enhance your message delivery, not duplicate it.

Think of your slides as either adding signal to your presentation or noise. Are they an element that adds another dimension to your message, or do they merely repeat what you are already expressing verbally?

SLIDES ARE A BACKDROP

In the days before personal computers and presentation software, presenters used 35mm slide projectors to add visuals to their words. Adding text to slides required special equipment and took extra time. Presenters therefore often just displayed related images to enhance their message.

When presentation software like PowerPoint entered the market, this all changed. Adding text became easy and many presenters began (ab)using this ability. All of a sudden, the world had to endure slides that displayed tremendous amounts of text.

You have probably seen presenters showing one slide full of bullet points after another. Often these bullet points include every word the presenter says.

The problem with this is that people cannot read and listen at the same time. As soon as a slide appears, people automatically look at it. When they see text, they start reading. And when they read, they listen to their inner voice and not the presenter's.

Today's best presenters know the power of images. They create picture dominant slides that use images and very little text, if any.

Here are a few more tips to enhance your slide deck.

ONE SLIDE PER MESSAGE

Avoid putting two or more ideas on a single slide and then walking the audience through it. Always keep in mind that your slides are a backdrop to add one more dimension to your message, not an infographic. Whenever you feel the urge to use a laser pointer to highlight any part of a slide, take a step back and think about how you can represent that piece of information on a separate slide.

EDGE TO EDGE IMAGES

If you use only one image on a slide, make it a high quality photo or graphic art. To add impact to your slides, make your images as large as possible. There is no need for a frame to contain the images and text on your slides. The screen's edge already serves that purpose. Extend your images all the way to the edge of the available display space to make them the backdrop of any words you might add.

EASY TO READ TEXT

When you add text to your slides, make the text as large as possible and use a contrasting color. One way to make your text pop out is to make its background dark or light, depending on the font color, with anywhere from 20% to 80% transparency to still see the background slightly bleed through. Use all-uppercase letters only for titles or acronyms and avoid vertical text as that is hard to read for many people. And only use key words instead of sentences. If you do have longer text, such as a quotation, keep it to a few lines.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

Remove transition effects and animations that don't serve a purpose. Choose a smooth transition between slides and keep it uniform throughout your slide deck. And unless you expect your audience to take photos of your slides that will take on a life of their own, there is no need to put your company's logo or other repetitive elements, like a conference name or presentation title, on each slide. Use these elements only on your first and last slides and keep the slides in-between as clean and focused on your point as possible. Also pay extra attention to the consistency from one slide to the next. Use consistent transitions, fonts, consistent colors, and layouts.

APPROPRIATE CHARTS

To bring numbers to life and represent them visually, choose an appropriate chart style: Use *Line Charts* to show progress or quantity over time with the dates at the bottom and the values on the side. Use *Bar Charts* to display a snapshot of how different values relate. Use *Pie Charts* for numbers that add up to one hundred percent.

You don't have to be a graphic designer to make good looking slides. Consider these tips and you are already well equipped to produce slides that are a useful backdrop rather than the centerpiece of your presentation.

Always review your slides as thumbnails. When you look at each slide in such a reduced size, it quickly becomes obvious which slides add signal and which ones add noise. This is even more important if you expect the audience of an online presentation to tune in on their phones.

One last tip for presenting on a stage with slides: do not turn around and look at your slides. Make sure the device from which you project your slides is placed in front of you. If you have practiced your presentation sufficiently, you know your deck by heart anyway. Think of presenters you've seen that constantly turn around to look at their slides? Do they make a confident impression on you? Do you think they really know what they are talking about... or need constant reminders from their own slides?

THE POWER OF FLIP CHARTS

While flip charts do not require electricity, they can be considered a power tool in the arsenal of savvy presenters because there is a lot of value in the good old flip chart.

Flip charts are so effective because the audience becomes more involved and attentive when they watch someone write or draw right in front of them. Flip charts also offer a higher degree of flexibility than slides. Because you create them in real-time to visually support your ideas, you can add or leave out parts as needed.

There are a number of reasons some people do not like to use flip charts or whiteboards. Perhaps the strongest of these reasons is poor handwriting or drawing skills. This doesn't really matter, as long as your writing is generally legible because nobody in the audience expects you to create a masterpiece. As long as they can follow your thoughts, it's all good.

Using a flip chart requires a little extra planning to use it well. Here are a three tips to maximize their effectiveness.

BE PREPARED

Do not rely on the markers your host may have ready for you. Always bring along your own set of fresh markers and an eraser, just in case.

USE DARK COLORS

Especially from a distance, light colors are difficult to read on white paper. Stick with colors that provide a high contrast, like black, blue, green, and red.

MINIMIZE WRITING/DRAWING TIME

When you write or draw, you are momentarily losing connection with your audience. Make sure to keep this time to an absolute minimum and immediately move to the side and re-focus on your audience when you're done writing/drawing.

For an excellent example of using a flip chart, check out Simon Sinek's TED Talk *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*, in which he introduces his audience to the golden circle in a highly engaging way.

PROPS – A SURE WAY TO BE MEMORABLE

One of the best ways to capture the attention of your audience and leave a memorable impression is by using props. Audiences are entertained by props. They break up a presentation and give the audience something else to process than just your words and slides.

If you use a prop, choose one that links to your message. It has to be relevant. Using a prop just for the sake of using it, even if it

is a novelty item, will not be as powerful as using a prop that directly supports your message.

Using a prop adds a level of complexity to your presentation. Complexity adds risk. Before you use a prop, practice when and how to use it in your presentation. You want to appear natural when you demonstrate your key message with a prop.

If your prop is small enough, hide it in your pocket or behind the podium. If it is big, hide it behind the curtain or off stage if possible. Otherwise, your audience might pay more attention to your prop, trying to figure out what you will do with it, than to you and your talk. Hiding the prop until needed will also increase the surprise factor once you reveal it.

When you bring out your prop, build up anticipation. Don't immediately launch into using it, but lead up to it. Create a moment of suspense. You might do this with questions or talking briefly about what you are going to demonstrate with your prop.

Once you are done with your prop, put it away — for the same reason you should keep it hidden until you need it: you don't want to distract your audience. If they still see your prop, they will be focused less on your message than when you signal to them that you are done with it by putting it away.

If you want to leave a memorable impression with your customer presentations and investor pitches, consider using a relevant prop. One of the masters of using props was Hans Rosling. If you want to see how he used anything from Lego blocks to toys to make his message memorable, search for his name on YouTube.

CHAPTER 5

PITCHING TO INVESTORS

“A business has to be involving, it has to be fun, and it has to exercise your creative instincts.”

Richard Branson

Of all the presentations you deliver as a founder, investor pitches are special. It is not enough to get investors merely excited about your solution to a pressing problem. You also need to help them envision the profitable opportunity it represents and make them feel confident about you and your team.

As the saying goes, you won't get a second chance to make a first impression, and your investor pitch is often the first real opportunity to make that impression. Its purpose is *not* to help investors make a decision whether to invest in your company, which may seem counter-intuitive. But convincing them to invest in your company will come later. The actual purpose of your first pitch is to get to the next step. Your goal is to open doors, create interest, and start a dialogue. It is to help an investor get excited about an opportunity and wanting to know more about it.

An initial investor pitch is often just a few minutes long, which means you need to keep your message concise and on point. Es-

pecially at investor conferences and pitch competitions, you might only have two or three minutes to deliver your message.

A 3-minute pitch might seem like an extremely short time to get people excited about your business, but keep in mind that this is the equivalent of six 30-second television commercials. Long enough to transfer your enthusiasm and position yourself in the best light possible, especially if you are not getting lost in the details.

QUESTIONS ON AN INVESTOR'S MIND

Your pitch needs to answer a different set of questions than your customer presentation. Investors want to clearly see the opportunity. They need to understand the problem, how you solve it, and why now is the best time to do so.

Once investors envision the potential, they also need to feel comfortable that you are uniquely qualified to make this idea a profitable reality, and they want to know how you plan to use their investment.

Specifically, your pitch should answer the following questions:

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

For your business to be considered viable, it needs to solve a problem in a new and better way. Investors want to immediately see how your solution improves the world and for whom.

HOW BIG IS THE MARKET?

Investors are interested to know just how big the opportunity really is. They want to get a good feel for the overall size of the market and your projected share of it.

WHAT IS YOUR SOLUTION?

Once investors understand the problem and the opportunity it represents, they want to know what your solution is and how your customers will use it to improve some aspect of their lives.

WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS MODEL?

You can have a great product representing a huge opportunity, if investors are not convinced that you have a winning strategy, they won't be interested.

WHAT IS YOUR COMPETITION?

Even if your product is absolutely new and unique, there still is competition. Your potential customers are using something to solve the problem today. Investors want to know how you position your offer in the current competitive landscape.

HOW DO YOUR FINANCIALS LOOK LIKE?

Are you already generating revenue? Are you making any profit? If not yet, when will you? And how do your future projections look like? These are the most pressing questions investors want answered before they decide if your business is worth their time and money.

WHY YOU AND YOUR TEAM?

Investors do not only rate an opportunity by its size and the innovative solution you offer. They also need to be convinced that

your team has the right background and attitude to have impact and can pivot if necessary.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

How can an investor help your company scale? What do you need to grow and how will you use the needed funds? The answer to these questions will help investors determine if your opportunity is a good fit for them.

Your pitch needs to answer these questions in a way that investors look forward to learn more and discuss the next steps with you.

A PROVEN PITCH DECK TEMPLATE

There is no firm rule on the number of slides to use. You could, for example, show several slides in rapid succession to describe the problem, or you may want to use just one slide. It all depends on your personal style and the message you want to convey.

No matter how many slides you end up using, keep best slide design practices in mind and only communicate one message per slide. Keep your deck clean and your pitch easy to follow.

Slides that are an effective backdrop during your presentation are typically not well suited to be understood without hearing your words. If you plan to hand out a copy of your pitch deck, take the time to create a second, more detailed version that can be understood without listening to your pitch.

Always keep the purpose of your pitch in mind. The goal is to start a dialogue, not to answer in detail every question an investor

might have. Allow investors to understand what you do and why you are passionate about it without getting lost in specifics. Simply tell your story explaining why your idea matters, why now is the right time for it, and why your team is ideally suited to execute.

THE COVER SLIDE

The first slide is your opportunity to give your audience a snapshot of what your idea and company is about. This is your value proposition. The cover slide is typically displayed only briefly to set the stage while you are getting introduced or introduce yourself.

To help investors immediately grasp your idea, you need a short one-sentence portrait of your business. This statement should make it immediately clear, even to industry outsiders, what you do and how that helps people.

An effective value proposition is short and concise and encompasses what sets you apart from others, making it memorable and easy to repeat. It could be a comparison to a well-known company with a similar business model, for example “We are the TripAdvisor for Pet Owners”. Or you could use a variation of “Helping [target customers] to [benefit] by [solution].”

The key is to keep your value proposition short yet still descriptive enough. Ideally you want your listeners to say to themselves “That sounds interesting. I want to know more...”

THE PROBLEM SLIDE

When you describe the problem, emphasize the pain it causes and why competitive solutions are unsatisfactory without getting into your product yet.

There is a tendency to spend too much time describing the problem in minute detail. This is not needed as it takes away valuable time from presenting your solution and what it will mean to the world. Investors grasp a problem quickly and are more interested to learn how you will solve it.

If you could use only one sentence to describe the problem you solve, what would you say? That sentence is often all that's needed to get an investor's attention. If the problem isn't all that obvious, a short story or anecdote will help to make it real so investors can relate even if they are not in your immediate target market.

THE MARKET SLIDE

After you have set the stage by highlighting the problem, explain what that means in terms of market size. Describe your ideal customer and how many of them there are. This will show the available potential and how you position your company in the market.

You might prefer to show this slide after you have introduced your solution. That is okay. The reason it is listed as the second slide here is that you can often combine the problem and the size of the opportunity in one attention grabbing statement. Discussing market size early will also help build anticipation and leave your audience wanting to know how you're going to leverage the opportunity.

It is tempting to make your target market seem huge by counting all the people that could benefit from your product and then state that "if we capture just 5% of this total market, ..." Investors aren't really moved by that. Instead, they want to know how big your reachable market is based on your abilities and strategy.

THE SOLUTION SLIDE

Just like you do in your customer presentations, you want to focus on what your solution means to your customers, not what it is. To make your message relatable, ask yourself “What does that mean?” for each feature to distill the benefit of your product or service.

An effective way to make your product real in the minds of your audience is to demonstrate it, either live or by showing a short video. This will keep the audience engaged and helps them envision how your users will be helped.

If you already have customers, explain how they use your product and what kind of results they are getting. This will further help to make your opportunity tangible for investors.

THE BUSINESS MODEL SLIDE

Your business model will show how your idea will make money. Describe how you will reach potential customers. What channels are you using and what is your sales process? How does your roadmap look like to get to your next milestones?

In general, investors are not all that interested in bailing out failing businesses, but rather seek new and innovative approaches. They are particularly interested in businesses that can disrupt the status quo by either saving your customers money, adding significant value, or both.

THE COMPETITION SLIDE

Investors want to know how you fit into the competitive landscape and why you have a unique advantage over existing solutions. Even if your product is a brand new concept, your

prospects are currently using something to achieve what you promise with your solution.

Highlight how your solution is superior. What specific advantages or “secret sauce” do you have that others don’t?

THE FINANCIALS SLIDE

If your company already generates revenue, share them together with your sales and cash flow forecast for at least the next three years.

Keep this on a high level without getting lost in details or sharing an elaborate spreadsheet. In your initial pitch, investors don’t want to deep dive yet. All you need to share at this point is your expected number of customers, sales, expenses, and profit — and how you arrived at those numbers.

Make sure that your assumptions are realistic and based on solid research. Investors usually detect inflated numbers easily. If you lose credibility when presenting your financials, it is difficult to regain it.

THE TEAM SLIDE

Investors are seeking extraordinary talent as much as they seek game-changing solutions to existing problems. So you want to position yourself and your team in the best light. Showcase all of your key team members, their previous successes, and the role they play in your organization. What makes each of you uniquely qualified to build a successful company in your chosen market?

If your team is not yet complete, identify the key positions that still need to be filled and explain why these positions are crucial to your future success.

Talking about what makes you uniquely qualified is an excellent opportunity to show your passion with an origin story that will appeal to the emotions of your listeners. What drove you to start your journey in the first place?

THE ASK SLIDE

While the main goal of your pitch is not to immediately raise money, investors still need to know what you're looking for and how you are going to use the funds.

Investors need to be convinced of your ability to map out and achieve major milestones on time and on budget. The more specific you can be when describing your planned use of funds, the more confidence you will instill.

THE SUMMARY SLIDE

This slide is an ideal place to repeat your value proposition and display your contact information while you thank your audience and possibly engage in a Q&A session. Consider adding a QR code with your website or an electronic business card to make it easy for your audience to get in touch with you.

Armed with these slides, you will be able to easily scale your pitch depending on the amount of time you have available. Always keep in mind to keep your problem statement short to leave more time for your solution.

The order of your slides doesn't really matter, as long as it builds on your strength. If your strength is your team, lead with that. If your strength is your product, emphasize that. And if your strength is your business model, stress that.

PRACTICING YOUR PITCH

Investor pitches are amongst the most important presentations you will ever give. You therefore want to practice often so your message rolls off your tongue with ease. While this is a major time commitment, it will ultimately be worth it because, as the saying goes, “If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail.”

It helps to have a written script of your pitch to start with. Rather than writing your script, use your computer’s dictation function and just talk as you would when you explain your idea to a friend. You will end up with a more naturally sounding script, because our grammar and choice of words typically changes, even if just slightly, when we are in writing mode.

Creating a successful pitch is an iterative process and you will probably make many changes during practice before you arrive at your final version.

When you practice, you are bound to trip up from time to time. There is a tendency to start the entire pitch over every time that happens. This will only lead to you over practicing the earlier parts of your pitch while the later parts may still be a bit bumpy. A better approach is to just go back a few sentences and take it from there. This will help you internalizing those parts and transitions that actually caused you problems.

When you are sufficiently prepared, practice in front of others. These practice audiences may offer valuable feedback about what is clear and what they don’t understand, especially if they are somewhat removed from your business. Take all of this feedback to heart and modify your pitch until it is easily understood by anybody.

Always record yourself when you practice. It is amazing what we hear and see when we watch ourselves as an audience would. Watch some of these recordings with the sound switched off to focus only on the visual impression you are giving. Are your gestures and facial expressions telling a story even without the words?

Use the audio recording of your best practice session and listen to it often. This will help you internalize your words in the same way you internalized the words to certain songs without ever seeing the lyrics.

Many pitches are followed by a Q&A. Also practice answering anticipated questions so that you can keep your momentum in the minutes following your pitch.

NETWORKING WITH INVESTORS

When you present at an investor conference or any other event, you also have a chance to network. The purpose of networking is similar to that of your pitch. It is not to make a sale. The goal is to make new connections and explore possibilities for new relationships.

Avoid turning these events into a numbers game. Setting an objective of having just a few meaningful discussions will result in more interesting conversations than if you try to collect as many business cards as possible. Not only will you end up making more significant connections, you will come across as more approachable than those who work the floor relentlessly and constantly look out for their next “victim”.

You might also have specific people in mind you'd like to meet. You might be able to approach them directly, but it is often more advantageous to look for a mutual connection and ask them to introduce you. This takes away some of the pressure and often creates instant rapport.

Whenever you network, you need to be prepared to explain in a few words what you do and how this helps others. The best personal introductions are those that evoke a bit of curiosity. When you get a response like "That sounds interesting. Tell me more." or "Cool. How do you do that?" you are on the best path to an engaging discussion.

Lastly, always follow up with your new connections after the event even if you don't have any immediate action items. When we attend conferences and meetups, we usually meet so many people, it's easy to forget some shortly after the event. Sending your new connection a quick thank you note for spending time with you will put you back on the radar.

CHAPTER 6

KEEP MOMENTUM IN Q&A SESSIONS

“No question is so difficult to answer
as that to which the answer is obvious.”

George Bernard Shaw

Question & Answer sessions following a presentation offer an additional opportunity to keep putting your best foot forward.

If you are using slides during your presentation, make sure the last slide, the one displayed throughout the Q&A, shows your logo, company name, contact info, and perhaps your slogan, presentation title, or an image of the product. This makes it easy for those people who want to take a picture of your relevant information to get back to you later or share it with their network. You might even want to add a QR code with your contact information to make it easy for people to get in touch with you.

Here are few tips that will make your Q&A session a valuable experience for your audience:

ANSWER TO THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE

If possible, move a step or two into the direction of the person asking the question and make eye contact. Keep looking at that person during the question, as gazing around the audience would signal impatience on your part.

Once you have processed the question, begin making eye contact with your entire audience again. Include them in your answer as much as you did during your presentation.

PAUSE BEFORE ANSWERING A QUESTION

Even if you have heard a question many times before, pause briefly before responding. This shows confidence and respect for the person asking the question. It also demonstrates that you are willing to give a thoughtful answer instead of jumping on the answer with a canned response.

Avoid starting your answer with “That’s a good question.” That tends to be perceived as insecurity because people usually say this when they are unsure of an answer. It also comes across as dishonest. Do you really mean it? Is it really that good of a question? It also may signal disrespect for the other people asking questions. They’ll think “What? Was my question not a good question too?” If you need time to think, better say: “Thank you for this question. <pause> ...”

You can also repeat the question. Repeating questions is recommended anytime you are unsure if other people in the audience have heard the question clearly and when there is a recording

where the questioner's microphone is not tied into the overall recording equipment.

WORDS TO AVOID

Some words are more powerful than others. While some words may have a similar meaning, the images and emotions they evoke in the listener can differ quite a bit.

Here are three words that are best to avoid in Q&A sessions. When you leave these words out or find an appropriate alternative your answers will have more weight.

I THINK...

Starting an answer with "I think..." isn't all that bad, but there are stronger alternatives. How about "I believe..." or "I'm convinced..."? Depending on the question, you might not even need any of these and simply state your opinion as if it were a fact.

I GUESS...

Hardly any word gives more of an impression of uncertainty than "guess". Your audience can do that on their own. If you don't know an answer or are unsure, telling that to your audience will be more valuable than a random guess.

HONESTLY...

Starting an answer with "Honestly..." or "To tell you the truth..." gives the impression that you might not be all that truthful otherwise. There is really no need to advertise your words as truthful if you are communicating authentically and honestly.

QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

Your emotional state during a Q&A session is as important as it is during the actual presentation. Yet even experienced presenters feel an increased level of anxiety when it comes to Q&A sessions. They know that some questions have the potential to throw us off balance.

The best preparation would be to expect all possible questions. But that doesn't seem realistic. What you can do instead is to prepare for the emotional states some questions might induce.

Focus on the following five categories of questions that will affect your state of mind:

QUESTIONS YOU HEAR ALL THE TIME

These questions have the potential to put you on autopilot and not always in a good way. You've heard them so often, they may seem boring to you. But the person asking such a question will hear your answer for the first time. Make sure you deliver it in that spirit.

QUESTIONS ALREADY ANSWERED IN YOUR PRESENTATION

There is a tendency to answer these questions by saying: "As I have explained in my presentation,...". This only expresses your mild annoyance, but doesn't do anything for the audience. Keep in mind that at any point in your presentation, some people may have drifted off. When composing your answer, pretend you didn't cover it in your presentation. Use the moment as an opportunity to reiterate one of your talking points.

QUESTIONS THAT NEED LONG ANSWERS

These questions can create a sense of urgency in you if you don't have enough time for a satisfactory answer. Prepare to answer these questions as briefly as possible. Then invite the questioner to a further dialog after your presentation.

QUESTIONS FOR WHICH YOU DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER

Some questions are simply out of your area of expertise. Answer these questions honestly. It's okay to not have an answer for every single question. Commit to finding out the answer and to follow up with the person asking it.

QUESTIONS YOU HOPE YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER IN PUBLIC

These questions are the trickiest. They can induce tremendous anxiety. Such questions may never come up but it is still valuable to think of the possibility. Then consider ways how you can shift the discussion back to what you are prepared to share and focus on that.

Practicing these answers prepares you for a wide range of possible emotional reactions. You prepare yourself for states ranging from boredom all the way to anxiety.

WHAT IF NOBODY HAS QUESTIONS?

On rare occasions, you might open the Q&A and nobody has a question. Don't sweat it and definitely don't let that be the end of your presentation.

Rather, get things started on your own and lead the audience with the first question. Look around the room while saying “As you consider your questions, let me help you out. One of the most common question people tend to ask me is...”. This will most likely trigger a few further question from the audience and your Q&A session will be in full swing.

Sometimes, there are no more questions with still plenty of time left. Instead of cutting the session short, use the time to reiterate your main talking points and your call to action.

When you practice your pitch, also spend time practicing the Q&A to train yourself to answer any anticipated questions with ease and confidence.

CHAPTER 7

NEXT STEPS

“I am still learning.”

Michelangelo

Now that you have a foundation for your persuasive presentations, it's time to look at ways you can hone your skills and improve them continuously.

KEEP PRACTICING

Reaching unconscious competence with any skill doesn't just happen overnight. To make a skill second nature requires practice. Presentation skills are no exception.

What might be unique about presentation skills is that they can be practiced almost anywhere and anytime because you always carry all required equipment with you. You can hone your skills even in face-to-face discussions by following the principles outlined in this book. Or you can join a Toastmasters club near you to practice and develop your public speaking skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Record each of your practice sessions and rehearsals. It is amazing how much you notice when you watch yourself as an observer.

Of course, the more important a presentation is, the more you should practice it. Pull aside your friends, colleagues, and family members and ask them to be your audience. Embrace any feedback you receive, even (or especially) from people unfamiliar with your topic.

Practice each part of your presentation separately. If you stumble during your practice session, and you always start from the beginning, you end up having practiced the first parts of your presentation way more than the rest. Because you want to end your presentation with impact, practice the closing as much as you practice the opening.

If you find some words or sentences difficult, practice these parts with a wine cork in your mouth. Put the cork between your front teeth and say a passage a few times before removing the cork. Try your best to say the words as clearly as possible while having the cork in your mouth. Then say the same passage again without the cork. Notice the difference? It's an old trick stage actors use and it works because you become aware of the muscles in your mouth — and really use them.

KEEP READING

You now have a solid foundation to create, practice, and deliver your next presentation. Don't stop here though.

Whether you want to learn more about the techniques of great presenters, gain more insight into persuasion principles, create

stunning slides like never before, or harness your speaking anxiety once and for all, the following books will help you.

THE PRESENTATION SECRETS OF STEVE JOBS BY CARMINE GALLO

The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs is as close as you'll ever get to having the master presenter himself speak directly in your ear. Communications expert Carmine Gallo has studied and analyzed the very best of Jobs's performances, offering point-by-point examples, tried-and-true techniques, and proven presentation secrets that work every time. With this revolutionary approach, you'll be surprised at how easy it is to sell your ideas, share your enthusiasm, and wow your audience the Steve Jobs way.

INFLUENCE BY ROBERT CIALDINI

Influence, the classic book on persuasion, explains the psychology of why people say "yes" — and how to apply these understandings. Dr. Robert Cialdini's thirty-five years of rigorous, evidence-based research along with a three-year program on what moves people to change behavior has resulted in this highly acclaimed book. You'll learn the six universal principles, how to use them to become a skilled persuader, and also how to defend yourself against them.

HARNESS YOUR SPEAKING ANXIETY BY NATHAN GOLD

Harness Your Speaking Anxiety contains 28 practical tools to help you discover how your nervous energy can be harnessed and used as a potent force when speaking in any situation whether on stage delivering a TED talk, presenting the keynote at a conference, pitching to management or investors for resources, or even answering questions during a job interview. The strategies out-

lined in this book will help you to connect emotionally with your audience like never before.

RESONATE BY NANCY DUARTE

In *Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences*, Duarte shows just how important stories are for compelling presentations. She has studied great presenters and their presentations and suddenly it clicked: those presentations all followed some form of pattern. A pattern that is not just found in great presentations, but also literary work and blockbuster movies. Drawing from this research, Duarte outlines these patterns and gives useful tips on how to add that special something to your presentations.

SLIDE:OLOGY BY NANCY DUARTE

Slide:ology will challenge your traditional approach to creating slides by teaching you how to be a visual thinker. This book is full of practical approaches to visual story development that can be applied by anyone. The book combines conceptual thinking and inspirational design, with insightful case studies from the world's leading brands.

PRESENTATION ZEN BY GARR REYNOLDS

Presentation Zen challenges the conventional wisdom of making “slide presentations” in today's world and encourages you to think differently and more creatively about the preparation, design, and delivery of your presentations. Garr shares lessons and perspectives that draw upon practical advice from the fields of communication and business. Combining solid principles of design with the tenets of Zen simplicity, this book will help you along the path to simpler, more effective presentations.

ENCHANTMENT BY GUY KAWASAKI

Enchantment is all about influencing others. Kind of a modern day version of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Because presenting is influencing at its best, there are some great tips in the book to make your presentations more compelling, more effective, more enchanting.

KEEP WATCHING

The internet is full of great videos to help you improve your presentation skills. One site in particular is a treasure trove for public speaking enthusiasts: TED.com.

The following are five relevant videos every presenter should watch at least once.

HOW TO SPEAK SO THAT PEOPLE WANT TO LISTEN

Have you ever felt like you're talking, but nobody is listening? Here's *Julian Treasure* to help. In this useful talk, the sound expert demonstrates the how-to's of powerful speaking — from some handy vocal exercises to tips on how to speak with empathy. A talk that might help the world sound more beautiful.

HOW GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE ACTION

Simon Sinek has a simple but powerful model for inspirational leadership — starting with a golden circle and the question: “Why?” His examples include Apple, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Wright brothers.

YOUR BODY LANGUAGE MAY SHAPE WHO YOU ARE

Body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see ourselves. Social psychologist *Amy Cuddy* argues that “power posing” — standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don’t feel confident — can boost feelings of confidence, and might have an impact on our chances for success.

TED’S SECRET TO GREAT PUBLIC SPEAKING

There’s no single formula for a great talk, but there is a secret ingredient that all the best ones have in common. TED curator *Chris Anderson* shares this secret — along with four ways to make it work for you. Do you have what it takes to share an idea worth spreading?

THE SECRET STRUCTURE OF GREAT TALKS

From Martin Luther King Jr’s “I have a dream” speech to Steve Jobs’ iPhone launch, many great talks have a common structure that helps their message resonate with listeners. In this talk, presentation expert *Nancy Duarte* shares practical lessons on how to make a powerful call-to-action.

LET ME COACH YOU

After reading this book you have all the knowledge needed to create presentations that convince. All that’s needed now is for you to continue practicing everything you have learned and making adjustments in your approach. Over time, these skills will become second nature to you.

If you would like to accelerate this process — or simply get help to further refine your skills — please get in touch with me. I will

coach you to capture the attention of your audience, sequence your message to flow naturally, and use story to evoke powerful emotions that get your listeners to take action.

Together, we distill a message that aims at the hearts of your audience and resonates on an emotional level. We explore which of your stories and anecdotes best support your message and weave them into your pitch for maximum emotional appeal. We structure your speech that you get immediate attention and keep your audience engaged. And we will work on every aspect of your delivery to ensure that your non-verbals communicate your enthusiasm as much as your words.

Schedule a discovery call today to start taking your presentation to a new level.

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To all my fellow coaches at *Pitch in the Zone*, a weekly online event to help presenters improve their presentations, thank you for letting me host this unique event. Thank you, Scottie Spurzem, Michael Marchuk, Massimo Peroncelli, and Rick Pollack, for dedicating 30 minutes each week to help founders and entrepreneurs improve every aspect of their pitches.

And thanks to all the participants of *Pitch in the Zone*, many of you keep coming back to help others improve, including Samantha Worrell, Jess Owens, Liderman Duin, Debby Kruzic, Scott Peak, Kevin Minier, Chris Dundon, Håvard Lillebo, and Hai Banh. I have learned more from you in these sessions than you imagine.

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And thank YOU for reading this book.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME

I coach professionals like you to reach deep into the hearts of any audience with ease.

After 20 years working as a technology evangelist, presenting ideas and innovative products at conferences, trade shows, and in customer meetings, I began teaching others how to become more confident and more effective communicators in 2008.

Since then, I have been coaching hundreds of presenters to captivate their audiences and will be delighted to help you too.

HOW I GOT STARTED

My professional journey began in 1982 when I was selected for NCR's exclusive business apprenticeship program in Switzerland.

NCR was one of the largest and most influential computer companies at that time, offering tremendous opportunities for personal and professional growth.

After my apprenticeship, which lasted three years, I built my technical foundation working as a COBOL programmer for two years before spending a year at our company's headquarters in Dayton, Ohio as part of a professional development program.

After I returned to Switzerland, I joined NCR's marketing team in charge of office automation. This was in 1988, when most

companies considered an electronic typewriter state of the art technology.

MY TECHNOLOGY EVANGELIST YEARS

Introducing office automation to the Swiss market was the beginning of a 20 year long journey as technology evangelist.

I loved what I was doing and apparently so did my boss because in 1990, he approached me with an opportunity that changed my life.

The opportunity was to introduce an upcoming new type of computer. A computer that was, as my boss put it “kind of like a notebook computer, but without a keyboard.” It turned out to be one of the first tablet computers invented, the NCR Notepad.

This was 20 years before Apple introduced the iPad and it offered me tremendous opportunity to hone my persuasive communication skills. I was a frequent presenter at trade shows, conferences, and also introduced the product to companies throughout the country.

The challenge: for the first few months, I didn’t even have a device to show. All I had was a model made out of wood, a few slides, and my words. And that’s when I really learned that words, delivered as compelling stories, are what truly convince people. All the facts, figures, and test-drives are ultimately just there to confirm decisions we make emotionally.

MY WORK AS TRAINER AND COACH

While working as a technology evangelist, I was obsessed to become the best I could be.

In addition to all the training I received in my job, I always sought further opportunities to grow, personally and professionally.

In the mid-1990s, I was one of the first clients of Zig Ziglar's coaching program and spent the second half of the decade learning directly from Richard Bandler, a co-developer of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and one of the world's foremost experts in persuasive communication. I got certified as Trainer of NLP in 1998.

This built a solid foundation to become a communication trainer and coach in 2008. Since then, I have trained and coached hundreds of professionals.

My typical clients are individuals with a desire to improve communication skills as well as companies who foster a culture of excellence. I have facilitated workshops at leading companies, including Ricoh, Sony, IBM, and Microsoft, and I also frequently work with conference organizers and startup accelerators to prepare founders for demo days and pitch competitions.

I would be delighted to help you put your best foot forward in your customer and investor presentations. Visit my website and schedule a discovery call to get started.

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Did this book help you in some way?
If so, I'd love to hear about it. Honest reviews
help readers find the right book for their needs.

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