

The Art of the Killer Presentation



We've all been there. Whether at a conference or at work, we all had to face the dreaded boring speaker at some point. You know the ones. They go on and on without taking cues from the audience. Or the content is just not relevant and poorly organized.

It doesn't have to be that way! With the right training and preparation, you can captivate any audience and leave them wanting more! Great presenters know how to get their audience's attention and leave them with a lasting impression.

There's an old adage that says people won't remember most of what you said 20 minutes after the presentation. Yet they will always remember how it made them *feel*. Whether you're working with a small team or large organization, presentation skills are vital to communicating your ideas.

In the financial industry, effective presentations are especially critical as they often turn complex financial concepts into a digestible format that can be understood by a wide variety of audiences.

So how do you deliver a memorable presentation capable of bringing down the house?

Here are 8 tips for delivering a killer presentation:

Start with a Strong Opening

The first few seconds are critical to capturing your audience's attention. The opening of your speech sets the tone for the entire presentation and tells the audience whether or not they should listen. Don't take forever to get to the point. Be sure the opening ties into the rest of your content. Use a quote from a well-known person. Ask a rhetorical question to get your audience thinking. Speak clearly, smile and make eye contact.

Know Your Audience

Don't be audience ignorant. Does your content match the interest or maturity level of your audience? Don't get caught up in the weeds. Remember that in a presentation we are battling for the audience's attention. Today, the average attention span is about 47 seconds so if you throw in complex financial jargon, you've got your work cut out for you.

Tell a Story

Telling a story engages the audience and makes your presentation more memorable. It improves your credibility and increases your relatability. When an audience relates to you, they're more likely to feel connected and give you their full attention. Stories also invoke emotions which is critical to establishing buy-in.

Strategic business storytelling provides a natural structure for organizing information. This makes it easier for your audience to remember and retain key points. Remember that data on its own is fairly dry but always tells a story. Find the story behind it and you'll captivate your audience's hearts and minds.

Go Easy on the PowerPoint

Faced with advanced financial metrics, it's important to make your slides pop. Use compelling visuals to convey information rather than text. 90% of the information transmitted to our brains is done through our eyes, so we're hardwired to absorb information visually.

Try the 10-20-30 rule. Guy Kawasaki, one of the original marketing specialists for Apple, said that the best slide presentations are less than 10 slides, last at most 20 minutes and use a font size of 30.

Be brief and clear. Your slides should focus on the 20% of data that has the most impact on business outcomes. Focusing on the most impactful data will grab your audience's attention and allow them to better absorb the material.

Practice Makes Perfect

The more time you take to practice, the more confidence you will have in presenting the material. Review the presentation and try to minimize your reliance on slides or notes. Tape yourself or rehearse with a colleague who can give you feedback.

Strive to be authentic and don't slip into "presentation mode." People want to know you're human and not just a talking head for a company. Communicate naturally and allow your real personality to shine through.

Use Your Voice Effectively

Watch your tone and place emphasis on key words. Get animated. Change your voice to express excitement or disappointment. This will help the audience follow the narrative as well as your cues.

Don't speak too quickly and slow down to emphasize important points. Take strategic pauses allowing you to breathe giving the audience a chance to catch up.

Aim for a conversational style with clear pronunciation. Project your voice so as not to appear flat and lifeless. Remember – being on stage is like acting. Presenting is a form of performance art!

Watch Your Timing

It's crucial to fit your presentation within the allotted time. If you go overtime you risk losing your audience. Staying on time shows you respect the audience's time too and won't make them uncomfortable if they have to run off to another meeting.

Pacing is important. You don't want to be halfway through your presentation with only minutes to go. Racing to beat the clock makes the audience feel anxious and people will start to tune out.

Manage Your Nerves

For many, public speaking induces anxiety but it's possible to get those butterflies under control. The best presenters use nerves to their advantage and know how to translate anxiety into a dynamic stage performance. Confidence builds through practice. Be organized, and know your content. Show up early to set up the room. Visualize a

successful presentation. Dress appropriately, and remember the audience is on your side. No one wants you to fail. We're all in this human experience together.

There's no "one size fits all" solution to delivering a great presentation. Connecting with your audience is key, and there are ways to deliver a memorable performance.

In closing, remember the words of acclaimed author and speaker John Maxwell - "People don't remember what *we* think is important. They remember what *they* think is important."