

BLUEPRINT: YOUR NEXT PRESENTATION

PRESENTATIONBLOGGER

“CALM YOUR NERVES BY FOCUSING ON HOW YOU CAN HELP THE AUDIENCE. EVERYTHING YOU DO IS FOR THEM.”



David McGimpsey

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing to download this report. Inside these pages you will find useful, practical advice that will help you improve your presenting and public speaking skills (even if your presentation is tomorrow morning).

I decided to write this report because time and again I see people make the same preventable mistakes when they have to deliver business presentations or need to speak publicly at a social event.

So, who am I to give you advice on delivering presentations?

I'm David McGimpsey, or Dave Mac for short.

Throughout my career in technology I needed to watch a lot of people deliver presentations; from company financial reports and company re-structuring to new technology rollouts and design walkthroughs. Almost 100% of these presentations were awful!

This led me to become a presentation skills trainer. I help people, just like you, to deliver effective and engaging presentations. Throughout these pages I will share some of my insights to help you improve your presentation skills.



YOUR NEXT PRESENTATION

ESSENTIAL STEPS

- 1. OUTLINE AND DEVELOP**
- 2. REHEARSE**
- 3. CREATE SLIDE DECK**
- 4. REHEARSE WITH SLIDES**



OUTLINE AND DEVELOP

STEP 1

OUTLINE AND DEVELOP

UNDERSTAND YOUR TOPIC

If you have been asked to deliver a presentation on a particular topic there's a strong chance it is because you are the subject matter expert. Therefore you will have a good understanding of your topic.

If you find yourself in the situation where you are not the subject matter expert (maybe your boss has asked you to do a talk in his or her absence) then you need to ensure you have a good understanding of the topic before you go any further.

Why is it so important to understand the topic? If you don't understand the topic it is very hard to deliver a fluid, engaging presentation because you will always be focused on trying to remember information. You'll always be focused on your notes or your slides.

The best presenters talk from what they know. They talk naturally, from memory and rarely, if ever, need to rely on notes or bullet points on their slides.

OUTLINE AND DEVELOP

UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE

The first stage of preparation should be to understand your audience.

Who are they?

Why are they going to be in attendance?

How can you frame your presentation in a way that benefits them directly?

What things are they unlikely to want to hear?

Only by considering these questions, and gearing your delivery around the answers, can you truly put together an engaging presentation.

OUTLINE AND DEVELOP

CREATE AN OUTLINE

Stop!... Please don't sit down and create a line-by-line description of your presentation. Writing out the steps that you'll follow the whole way through your delivery won't work. Writing everything line-by-line will prompt you to try to memorize your presentation.

Trying to memorize your presentation is a sure-fire way to kill your delivery.

When you write everything out line-by-line or try to memorize your presentation word-for-word you kill the natural flow of your delivery. If your delivery doesn't come across as natural then your presentation just becomes the standard, boring presentation that your audience has no reason to care about. Here's how to create an effective presentation outline:

1. Sit down with a blank piece of paper. Write your topic down. Your topic should be a blend of the message you want to get across, what you need the audience to do, and how it will benefit them.
2. Below your topic create three or less subheadings. The subheadings are the points that support your topic. I recommend three points (or subtopics) maximum because more than that and your audience may struggle to remember the main points of your presentation.

OUTLINE AND DEVELOP

CREATE AN OUTLINE (continued)

Your outline might look something like this:

Turning our financials around to grow the business and increase everyone's bonus

- ▶ *Current status of financials*
 - ▶ *More competition*
 - ▶ *Flat growth*
- ▶ *New marketing plans*
 - ▶ *Introduction of low-cost product*
 - ▶ *Increased marketing exposure in similar areas to our competition*
- ▶ *Forecasts for the future*
 - ▶ *Fast growth in the near term after launch of new product*



REHEARSE

STEP 2

REHEARSE

What's that you ask? "Why are we rehearsing when not a word of a speech has been written and no slides have been created?"

Firstly, we are going to rehearse without having planned a script so that you are able to "talk" about the presentation material rather than "recite" it. The problems with memorizing a script and reciting it are many. You won't be able to remember it word for word and your attempts to do so will make you look un-natural, even robotic. You are more likely to forget information as you struggle to remember minutia from your script. Your audience will be able to tell that you are remembering directly from a script and therefore less likely to be engaged, and less likely to trust you.

Secondly, we are going to rehearse without slides. To deliver a truly natural and engaging presentation where the audience actually "listens" to what you say, you need to be able to do it without slides. Imagine for a second that you arrive at the meeting room or auditorium and the projector has just blown up. You can't use slides, so you're not going to deliver anything? Think about how bad that would look.

REHEARSE

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

As you rehearse and become better at delivering the content of your presentation, your visual communication becomes extremely important.

There are several elements to visual communication. Nothing can be perfected in your first presentation but over time each element naturally gets better. The elements of visual communication I believe you should consider (in order of importance) are:

- ▶ Eye contact
- ▶ Gestures
- ▶ Body position
- ▶ Movement

REHEARSE

EYE CONTACT

Making eye contact with your audience can be difficult at first because you are feeling so self-conscious. The trick with eye contact is to remember you want to have a conversational tone. Make your eye contact as natural as possible by imagining you are having a conversation with the people in front of you.

Here's why eye contact is important:

- ▶ It builds rapport
- ▶ It allows you to monitor the audience
- ▶ It improves your credibility

Making eye contact is just a matter of glancing at members of the audience. You don't want to look at any one person for too long for the same reason that fixed eye contact during a one-on-one discussion is uncomfortable.

REHEARSE

GESTURES

The rule for gestures is “be natural”.

Too often texts on presentation skills tell the would-be presenter to match their gestures to what they are saying. This results in presenters practicing what gestures to do during their presentation. Can you imagine how un-natural this looks?

With gestures, don't fake it. Refer to the conversational rule discussed earlier. Imagine you're talking to a friend in the shopping mall or in some other social setting. As you talk to them and describe things you gesture with your arms to help explain and emphasize what you're saying. Your gestures should be like this during your presentation.

Of course, if you say the number “three” it's okay to hold up three fingers, or to count on your hand. However, it's not okay to force yourself to hold up three fingers. If you are forcing yourself your audience will be able to tell. If your audience feels you are forcing yourself then it makes you look nervous and potentially your audience loses confidence in you.

REHEARSE

BODY POSITION

Let's start with posture. All through school your parents and teachers probably repeatedly told you how important good posture is. And it is important. Good posture is important to project confidence. Imagine a presenter with a body position that was a little bent over and hunched at the shoulders... no confidence there.

When we think about posture, it's also important not to have a rigid body position. No matter how good your posture is, if your body seems fixed or rigid it will make you look nervous. It is good to have a confident posture but to also treat your body like jelly, ie. relaxed.

This brings us to being relaxed. The more fixed or straight up and down your body is the less confident you'll look. Loosen up as much as possible before you take the stage.

Finally, try to be as open as possible. Having an open body position, avoiding crossing your arms in front of you or behind you, projects confidence. This single act alone when you first take the stage relaxes your audience because they instantly feel you are comfortable talking to them and have confidence.

REHEARSE

MOVEMENT

Movement relates to how you move around the stage or the front of the room.

During your presentation standing in one position is okay, but it can make you look nervous. It can make you look nervous because prior to your presentation you've probably built up some nervous energy. Now that you're in front of everyone you release it through movement. If you're standing in one position it comes out as hand rubbing, rocking back and forward on your heels, or stepping from side to side.

Adding movement into your presentation style does two things: It makes you look like a professional presenter (for example, Steve Jobs doesn't stand in one position when he is presenting), it also allows you to work off nervous energy without the audience realizing.



CREATE SLIDE DECK

STEP 3

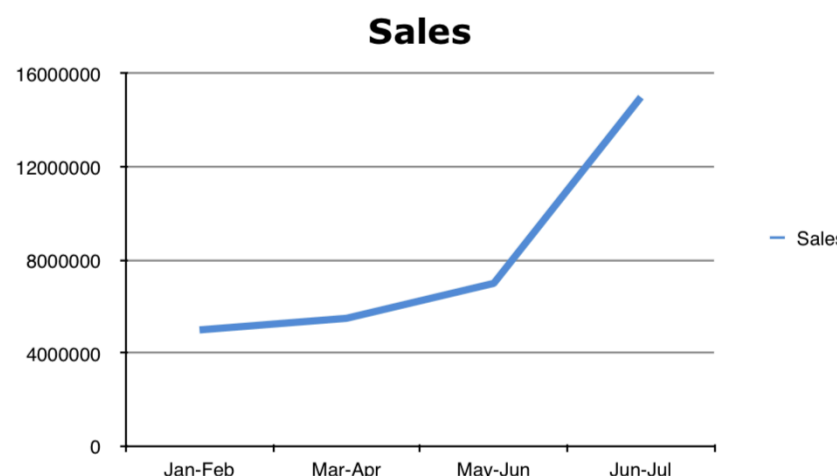
CREATE SLIDE DECK

IMPACT

One of the reasons that slide shows are eternally boring is that presenters put all the information on a topic onto the slide at the same time.

Let's take the example of a general manager who is giving a company- wide presentation to show that despite slow sales at the beginning of the year, the new marketing campaign has increased sales 200%.

In the above example, it is likely that the general manager is going to have a slide with a graph that shows sales in January/February versus sales in July/August. There is nothing wrong with having a graph in the general manager's slide deck, but I want you to consider how much impact the following statement would have if read while the below graph is shown on-screen:



CREATE SLIDE DECK

IMPACT (continued)

With the slide displayed, the general manager says: *"At the end of February our sales were at the worst level for the last three years. We had to do something. We launched a recovery project, called Project X, where the sales and marketing teams worked closely together. I'm now happy to report that sales volumes increased in July/August to a whopping \$15,000,000!"*

The problem with the slide is that it has no impact. The audience already knows exactly what the presenter is going to say before he says it. The audience knows (because they are looking at the graph on-screen) that sales were \$15,000,000 for July/August. By the time the presenter says, *"a whopping \$15,000,000!"* the audience are already thinking, *"Yeah, I know."*

So how do we improve the impact of our slides?

The answer is to design our slides in a way that the fantastic, shocking, or surprising results are not shown to the audience until we actually say what the results are.

For example, we could format the graph so that we only show the results up to June. When the presenter says *"a whopping \$15,000,000!"* he clicks and the slide changes to reveal the rest of the graph with July/August results. You can do this through the use of two slides or through animations.

Because the slides are there to support you, always look for the areas where they can add impact.



REHEARSE WITH SLIDES

STEP 4

REHEARSE WITH SLIDES

KEYBOARD OR CLICKER?

When you are delivering your presentation should you use a remote clicker or just press the keyboard to advance your slides? Ultimately this comes down to personal preference and comfort.

Personally, I always use a remote clicker and I am very comfortable with it. I like the clicker because I can move anywhere in the room. If you don't have a clicker you are bound to stay close to your computer (which may not be an issue if you're always presenting in a small meeting room).

A clicker adds impact to your delivery because it is not obvious when you are changing slides. Consider what we talked about previously about impact. When you click and say "*a whopping \$15,000,000*" it is far more impactful than stepping forward, pressing the keyboard, and saying the same thing.