



How to wow with my public speaking skills

Tips on how to make your presentation engaging and memorable.

80% of most presentations content is forgotten within minutes of the closing sentence. The most memorable presentations are those that are:

- so bad you don't know whether to laugh or cry,
- or are so good that they've made you feel like laughing or crying!

In this "I Need To Know" we will give you some simple tips that will make your next presentation engaging and memorable for all the right reasons.

So let's start with a little insight into how we remember.

Get someone to shout out 15 random words which you have to remember. Once they've finished calling out, you can take a pen and write down here as many of those words as you can.



Studies have identified that we always remember most of the first things we hear, then the second things we remember are those that come last. It's the stuff in middle that we remember least. This well researched observation is known as Recency & Primacy, and if portrayed as a graph our retention pattern tends to look like this:



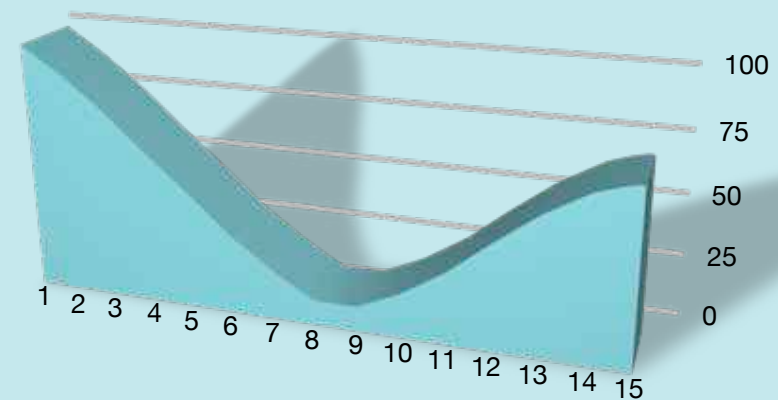
How did you do? Did you remember more of the first and last words, and less of the middle?

Now apply this to presenting; Let's say you have a beginning, middle and end structure, have a think about what this means...

...Yep, the beginning and end are the critical bits if you want to get a message to stick.

Now think about where you spend most of your preparation time. For most people, it's the middle content stuff! Hmm.

Of course the middle is important, so great presenters work hard at improving the audience's ability to engage with its content and retain what's being covered. Then they add a brilliant beginning, and a fantastic ending to really get the message across. Here are our seven steps to help your next presentation to be outstanding.



Beginning

1 Use Yes Sets. This is a really simple but effective way to get everyone onside from the beginning of your presentation. What you do is start with a sentence that nobody in the room is able to say "no" to. Imagine giving a presentation on using the new SAP software installation at your organisation, you could start by saying "Welcome everyone, some of you may have a lot of experience using SAP and others may have none at all." - Everyone has to answer yes. Nobody is sitting their thinking, this presentation isn't for me. Compare that with saying; "Welcome everyone, as you have never used SAP before we are going to..." Those who may have experienced it elsewhere will immediately be thinking "no", I have used it, so this presentation is going to be a waste of time for me." In a sentence you have lost their total engagement, and created a negative mindset from the beginning.

Yes sets help you set the presentation up for success, and leave everyone thinking this is for them. Practice writing out some Yes Sets, keep it generic and vague, ask can anyone possibly say no to this statement.

Practice some Yes Sets here:

2 Give the audience a role. Our next tip is to give the audience a job to do during your presentation. This helps to keep them engaged, makes them think about the content, and increases the mental interest in staying tuned in.

It sounds like this; "Today I'm going to cover the five company values, I would like you to consider each of them as I go through my presentation, and decide how they practically apply to you in your work situation."

You could make this role even stronger by adding; "and I would like you to give me your thoughts and opinions about this at the end of the presentation."

3 Use a residual message. If recency and primacy is true, our greatest opportunity to get the message across to the audience is in the opening words.

A great way of doing this (because it makes it easy for the audience to get it), is to use a residual message. That's a message that you want to have reside in their minds when you and they leave.

It should be aligned with your presentations objective, and act as a super executive summary of the central message of the presentation. Once you've got one, you should use it as often as you can. Definitely at the beginning, several times if possible during the middle, and again as you reach the end. Here's an example; "Failure to collect our debts means poor cash-flow, which means major risk to our survival."

Practice creating a strong residual message:



Middle

4 Add flair. We've discovered that the middle content part of your presentation is the least memorable, so we need to find ways of increasing audience attention. There is an endless list of things that you could do to achieve this, So have a think, and capture as many ideas as you can in the space provided below:

You can be much bolder when presenting, in the same way that actors are said to “ham it up” on stage. Good presentation comes close to good acting so you can do and say things using much more passion, enthusiasm, body language, tone, volume etc. You will have to go a long way before you will over do it, especially if you are naturally quieter in nature.

5 Think elephant, not mouse. Ever noticed how nervous a mouse looks, it's all those short sharp movements, twitching and squeaking. Now think about the elephant, do they look nervous? Not usually! It's because they are slow, calm, unflustered in their motion and stance.

When you present, become an elephant, not a mouse. Slow down your body movements, your walk to the rostrum, your gestures, slow down your voice too, and fill the space around you with your elephant volume.

This will have a profound effect on the confidence that others will believe you have. It will slow down your heart rate and help you to deal with any anxiety.

6 Field questions all the way through. People used to tell trainee presenters to ask for questions at the end. Unless it's a big auditorium you are presenting to, we say field the questions all the way through. It is a great way of keeping the audience engaged, motivated and bought in to your subject.

Don't worry about that question you don't know the answer to, there are two things you can do. 1. Say "I'll find out about that for you", and 2. Say "Has anyone else got any opinions on this..." The second option also wins you some time to think as others contribute with their thoughts.

End

7 Leave a hook. In closing you again have a great opportunity to reinforce your residual message so that no one leaves uncertain about your key point. Repetition is helpful for our retention, so keep highlighting it. Then see if you can develop a hook for the audience to latch on to. It could be a question, it may be a statement, a call to action is always good. Whatever form it comes in, you are looking for something that grabs the attention, that stimulates a reaction, that is a cause for further thought and consideration. It may sound like this: "Thanks for your attention this afternoon, your support will transform our ability to get this agreed." or " Thanks for your attention this afternoon, If you want this to work, then I need you to respond quickly and agree to get back to me by Tuesday."

This will finish your presentation in a way that highlights the importance and value of what you have brought to them.



Draft some potential hooks for your next presentation:



Practice will make perfect, but have these tips in mind and you will be off to a great start. Make sure you get some personal feedback after the presentation, really listen to it, write it down and think about how you could do better. Even if you think it's not going well half way through, think elephant, change what needs changing, and carry on.

