3 Steps to Ensure Your Presentation Enraptures Your Audience



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As a business owner or entrepreneur, you are your business's best and most impactful marketing tool. Your ability to draw in others to engage them in your message — whether it's about your business or otherwise — can make the difference between active or disinterested listeners.

Regardless of whether you are pitching to investors, presenting to a prospective client, or giving the annual state of the business report, how well you start your presentation will garner interest or incite boredom.

Think about a presentation you have seen or one you've delivered that achieved the former, then think of your answer to this question: Why was it so effective?

You likely think of words such as: engaging, dynamic, interesting, energetic, relevant, humorous, thought-provoking, well-designed, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic.

But the real reason the presentation sizzled and had everyone in the palm of the presenter's hand was one little word that's not listed above: "why."

The number one reason adults will listen to you is they know *why* they should listen to you. If you are presenting in a virtual environment, it's doubly important that you immediately give the "why." In our current moment, the advent of remote meetings and with them the increased accessibility of distractions such as email, social media, and the internet in general, it's hard to truly grab an audiences' undivided attention. This means you have to capture their imagination and quick. Attend to the number one reason they will sit up, pay attention, lean in, and want more. In other words, attend to the "why" of your presentation.

To do this, script the opening words of your presentation by using points in time – past, present, and future –to get the entire audience on the edges of their seats.

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Start with a focus on the past

Before your audience entered your presentation, where were they relative to your topic? From what situation were they coming that led them to your presentation? What were they thinking? What do they need? What do they want from your message you are about to deliver?

Transition to the present

How will you address their situation with the presentation you are about to deliver? How will you speak to what they are thinking? How will you give them what they need or want? What information will you provide? What will you do right now?

Look to the future

Clarify how everyone's future will look as a result of engaging in your presentation

Where will they be after your presentation? What will they be able to do after your presentation? What is the overall solution they will have after listening to you? Future-pace them. Get them to see the finished project and get excited about the finished product.

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Here's an example of how that looks based on the opening script from a presentation I once facilitated entitled "Presentations That End the Fizzle and Bring the Sizzle:"

"How do you quickly grab your audience's attention no matter your presentation topic? How do you engage audiences without a lot of bells and whistles How can you consistently be seen as an expert when you speak even if you are new to your industry or if the ink is still wet on your college degree?

In this session, you will know …

How to give your audience a reason to listen.

The four things you must do at the start of every presentation.

The questions you should never ask and what to ask instead.

The three-part process to demonstrate your expertise and to forever change how you approach your presentations.

By the time we're done, you will know how to deliver presentations that end the fizzle and bring the sizzle.

My name is Bridgett McGowen, and I help professionals be the most engaging, dynamic, incredible communicators ever."

You immediately received the agenda, the presentation objective, and a reason to listen. I told you all of that before I even told you my name.

While this is a bit of a meta-example (i.e. a presentation about giving presentations), it's important to remember that cutting right to the heart of the matter of whatever topic you're presenting about is the surest way to enrapture an audience.

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In this example, the past is addressed by confirming I understand the audience came to the presentation wanting to know how to quickly grab listeners' attention no matter the presentation topic, how to engage audiences without a lot of bells and whistles, and how to consistently be seen as an expert when you speak.

The present is addressed by providing the agenda: "In this session, you will know …"

Then the future is addressed with one line: "By the time we're done, you will know how to deliver presentations that end the fizzle and bring the sizzle."

Use this approach of addressing the past, present, and future in your opening words, and you will consistently have your audience in the palm of your hands. All that's left to do is to deliver.

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