



MARKETING
INSIDER GROUP

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO DELIVER KILLER PRESENTATIONS



How to Deliver Killer Presentations

Delivering effective presentations is key to success in today's competitive landscape. Whether you are the CEO of a startup, a corporate professional, or just starting your career, delivering killer presentations can make or break your career.



The last thing you ever want to see when you're presenting is a bored audience. But if you have to present a ton of data, you might find yourself staring at a crowd of yawns. How can you keep your audience on its toes when you're sharing a ton of numbers?

Even if you've spent hours upon hours on data mining, on analysis, and on your report, if you can't make those numbers come alive and matter to your audience, you will lose the important opportunity to make your point.

How can you make your audience as excited as you are about the data in your presentation and the decisions you want them to make?

The problem for most presenters is that the data can get lost if you don't communicate well. You have to

make those numbers tell a story. And your story has to matter for your audience and make an impact for them.

In the guide, we'll help you understand how to transform dry presentations into engaging moments of inspiration. You've done the hard work—your analysis, insights, and recommendations. You have the script. You have the plot. But you need to make the film come to life.

The simple answer to how to impact your audience to where they will walk out and take action is one word: Visuals.

Visuals transform your data into an engaging story that can turn you into a presentation rockstar—at least in the eyes of your audience.

But First, The Elephant In The Presentation Room

Fear! If you are like most people, you're afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Especially in front of a crowd.

And it is true that the fear of public speaking is cited as the biggest fear for most people.

It ranks right up there with:

- Acrophobia - the fear of heights, which ranks at #5
- Achluphobia – the fear of the dark, ranked #4
- Arachnophobia – the fear of spiders, ranked #3
- Necrophobia – the fear of death, ranked #2
- Nomophobia – the fear of someone taking your phone away

Yes, fear of speaking, clinically known as “Glossophobia” is cited as the most dreadful fear, topping even our fear of death.

But here's the truth, fears are simply stories we tell ourselves.

So, how do we address our fear of public speaking? We simply have to tell ourselves a new story. Effective presenters often speak about how they “fake it until they make it.” And feign confidence until they actually start to feel greater presence on stage, especially in the opening minutes.



WILL MY CREDENTIALS GIVE ME CONFIDENCE?

What can you do to give yourself the confidence when you are presenting on stage?

Unfortunately, most presenters start by talking about themselves. They even open their presentations with the line **"First, let me tell you a little about myself, my company, and what we sell."**

In the business context of presenting, many presentations include the **"About Us"** slide, a slide with customer logos, a slide with top executives, top awards, a overview of the products you sell.

All of these slides tell the audience that you only care about yourself and jot the audience. And so audiences tune out, yawn, and leave if they can.

No one wants to be pitched. So don't try to present your insights or sell your idea like a sleazy used car salesperson does. Your idea deserves a presentation worthy of your hard work.



What Would Oprah Do?

You'll never hear Oprah Winfrey brag about her awards. Yet audiences sit at rapt attention for hours when she talks.

You'll never hear Oprah shouting a sales pitch. Yet stores can't keep her products in stock, they're so popular.

People buy her products because she tells them how much they've helped solve problems. It's never about Oprah. It's all about her audience.

She makes her audience feel so close to her that people call her by only her first name. That's because she's like that big sister who wraps you in a hug and tells you, "I believe in you," and then proceeds to share how you can overcome that unsurmountable challenge.

Oprah, you see, remembers the advice master storyteller Maya Angelou gave aspiring writers and speakers: "I've learned that people will forget what you said; people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Artists and filmmakers instinctively get that. Whether it's surprise, unbridled fear, or just having some lighthearted fun, the secret to connecting with your audience—in a presentation or otherwise—is empathy.



Channel the Power of Empathy to Conquer Fear

Let your audience know you've walked in their shoes. Feel their pain. Start every presentation by identifying one thing that causes them pain and you will have the attention of everyone in the room.

What about that gang of scary bosses that always sit on the first row during every presentation? How do you face that fear? How in the world do you explain the importance of empathy to executives—or anyone else, for that matter—who don't have any?

You can use empathy to connect with anyone. And once you realize this, you can start to view the point of your presentation as simply connecting to your audience as a people, just like you.

Channel the Power of Story to Hook Their Hearts

The only way to channel empathy and to deliver killer presentations is through a simple approach to storytelling. Because stories have value. Stories have existed from the dawn of time to convey important pieces of information that were vital to our cave man and women ancestor's survival.

Stories work because they convey emotion and empathy more effectively than data and stats and facts.

In fact, stories are such a powerful driver of emotional value that you can measure their impact objectively.

Stories Whose Impact You Can Measure in Dollars

As Steve Jobs put it, "The ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones who do."

Steve Jobs knew that stories had real value and that's why Steve bought Pixar from George Lucas in 1985 for \$10 million. Steve sold Pixar to Disney in 2006 for \$7 billion. Not a bad return on investment for a technology inventor.

And Pixar movies all followed a simple formula. They started out with a problem a fictional character needed to solve. In the case of "Frozen," it was a couple of sisters struggling to get along and breaking through the ice after being "frozen" in the face of adolescent fear.

Pixar learned how to tell stories that everyone can relate to. They understand that everyone has problems they're trying to solve.

What if...you had the answer to those problems?

They won't listen if you face the whiteboard and drone on about all that data you worked so hard to mine. Not even if you're the world's foremost expert.

Tell a story instead. Draw a picture. Show, don't tell.

The Pixar Storytelling Formula

You can learn to tell a story like Pixar does. Put their box-office smashing formula to work for your company, your customers, and your career.

Let's say your company's customers have a tough problem to solve. You've just come up with the perfect idea to help them overcome that problem. Only it involves a lot of statistics that will start the C-suite suits to yawning the moment you turn to the whiteboard.

Don't turn to the whiteboard. Turn to the story behind the numbers. They don't need all the details. They just need to know that they solve your customers' problem. Use the tried-and-true Pixar formula to get them on board with your solution. Here it goes:

Once upon a time...

Tell the problem's backstory—just enough to get your audience hooked. Invoke their own empathy.

Every day...

Tell how the problem affected people in their everyday lives. How it affects your audience. Create an itch that needs to be scratched.

One day...

Tell about the catalyst that started the tumble into the abyss. That situation that brought the problem to the forefront. It's gone from an itch to a running sore—and it's getting worse.

Because of that...

Tell how the downward spiral affects the main players. What do the stakeholders have to lose?

Because of that...

Tell how the problem metastasized...and how others joined them in their quest to solve the problem.

Until finally...

The situation comes to a crossroads. It becomes a crisis. How will the main players handle it?

Of course, in a Disney Pixar animated film, they handle it perfectly. After a few tussles with the bad guys, of course.

But in your story, you'll show them the way. They'll use your solution, of course. But not until you follow the formula to the end. Let's look at how it happens on the big screen.

An Example from Pixar's *Finding Nemo*

Here's how that formula played out in the biggest smash hit Disney had during that 26-year period of unbridled growth—*Finding Nemo*.

(Once upon a time...) A widowed fish by the name of Marlin lives in the sea.

(Every day...) Marlin warns Nemo of danger. He worried about his only son.

(One day...) Nemo swam into the open water. Because that's what teenagers do, right?

(Because of that...) A diver captured Nemo. Uh-oh!

(Because of that...) The always-nervous Marlin went on an amazing adventure, traveling the entire ocean, escaping sharks and jellyfish. He met a new friend named Dory and a cool old turtle family.

(Until finally...) Marlin and Nemo are finally reunited and live happily every after.

The situation comes to a head; the hero swoops in to rescue, and all's well that ends well (as long as Nemo follows Marlin's advice).

As you can see, the classic Pixar storyline sounds nothing like most presentations at meetings and conferences.

After all, Marlin didn't start by telling Nemo about all his awards. He didn't show off a list of his finny clients to Dory when he made her acquaintance. And he didn't tell the diver how even King Shark sought his advice to create his watery empire.

He just showed Nemo the way out.

We can learn a lot from a children's movie. Take your audience on an adventure, and you'll never lose them.

Hook Your Audience by the Heartstrings, Not by Your Credentials



This simple storytelling formula has many origins and predecessors. Joseph Campbell called it "The Hero's Journey." The first Star Wars movie followed this classic approach.

- An unlikely hero starts out with a call to adventure. (Luke Skywalker.)
- A strange and supernatural mentor appears to guide him. Obiwan Kenobi (and Han Solo).
- The hero faces a dark and evil challenge. (Darth Vader and the dark side of the force.)
- The hero overcomes the challenge and returns home triumphant.

This formula has—in one form or another—been part of humankind's most profound stories. The kind of story that endures for thousands of years—like the ancient Greek mythology. The kind of stories that we still quote today: Shakespeare, Tolstoy, in every culture and every language.

You can give your big idea the same kind of treatment. Your audience needs to hear it in a way they'll relate to. Otherwise, they'll miss something that could transform their lives or their company.

You need to put your idea into that hero's journey.

The hero's journey is about the process of transformation. And this is the same kind of transformation you want in your audience during a presentation. There are going to be challenges that arise. Maybe even big challenges. Challenges that test your audience's faith in your advice.

But you are the mentor. You help your audience to have a revelation.

The Structure of Presenting Your Big Idea

Every great presentation starts by defining a problem the audience has or didn't know they had. A problem that gets in the way of them achieving an important goal.

They are the hero of your story. And your ideas are the ones that can help them achieve their goals.

Give your idea a context—a structure—not just an empty recitation of facts and data, and your audience will sit up and take notice.

The Structure of a Killer Presentation:

1. Start by challenging the conventional thinking.
2. Visualize the implications. This is where data visualization really helps.
3. Infer a solution but don't go too deep. Leave them wanting more...
4. Show visual examples of who has used the solution and won. Tell real stories.
5. Define clearly how they can solve the challenge with your solution

In the popular TV drama *Mad Men*, the lead character, Don Draper—a copywriter in a high-powered Madison Avenue advertising firm—had a meeting with the executives with Kodak.

Tasked with pitching his company's ad campaign for the photo giant's latest product, a slide show projector that moved each slide through the screen on a circular platform, Draper instead told a story.

He showed scenes from his family life. His wedding. The birth of his first child. Family picnics. Holiday photos. As he showed each photo, he told a story, each sentence just as he turned to a new photo. He explained

“This device isn't a spaceship. It's a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It's not called the Wheel. It's called a Carousel. It lets us travel the way a child travels. Around and around, and back home again... to a place where we know we are loved.”

In the end, Draper had the executives wrapped around his finger. The story sold. That's fiction, of course. But that scene packed so much power because stories sell. No pitches. No gimmicks. Just story.

Like the fictional Draper, you can win over people through stories they love.

This guide uses the same structure we proposed above:

1. We challenge the conventional “About us” presentation
2. We showed the implications of boring your audience through data without visual stories
3. We slowly defined how stories can solve the presentation dilemma
4. We used Pixar and Star Wars and Mad Men to demonstrate the solution.
5. Now we need to define how anyone can solve the challenge of crafting a killer presentation:

12 Ways to Tell Stories That Break Through Your Fear and Their Boredom

Here are some more storytelling tips to help you break through your fear and kick boring rhetoric to the curb.

1

First of all, stop making it all about you. Make your audience the hero of your story and your presentation. Do this one thing and you will be a better presenter than the majority of presenters out there,

2

Make your story move—with visuals. We all know “pictures paint a thousand words.” Instead of getting caught up on memorizing, or even worse, reading the words on your slides, use pictures that represent the main point you want to make.

3

Write—and speak--about what you know. In the *Mad Men* Kodak presentation, Don Draper didn't talk about the mechanics of the projector. He didn't tell how fast it could switch photos in microseconds. What he did know about the projector was that it could tell a story. In that arena, Draper was a genius. He spoke about what he knew—storytelling and his family—and that brought the house down.

4

Speak with passion. If you don't show how much you believe in your idea, how in the world do you expect others to catch on fire about it? No matter how much research you've done, no matter how perfect your turn of phrase—without passion, your presentation will never connect with its audience.

5

Present with unbridled enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is about funneling your passion and focusing it on your audience. It's that contagious emotion that takes you from a true believer into an evangelist. It's a straight-from-the-heart speech that shows others what your big idea can do--for *them*.

6

Use visuals to simplify complex data or ideas. Unless you're presenting to an audience of mathematicians, too many data and numbers overwhelm most people. Statistics by themselves, don't persuade. What those statistics mean to them, does.

Visuals allow your audience to grasp the big picture. They unite all the divisions within a company, too. Whether your audience is in Sales, HR, or Finance, each one can understand the overall picture *with a picture*.

7

In your visuals, use one idea per slide. Fewer words, more images mean less confusion, more clarity. The images will stick in your audience's minds more when you keep things simple.

8

Smile. Smiles mean confidence. Smiles mean that you're passionate about what you're talking about. Even more importantly, smiles mean that you're reaching out to your audience. Also, when you smile, it can even improve your vocal tone. Your facial muscles relax, opening up your jaw and throat to produce a fuller sound.

Rehearse like a boss. No matter how well you know the subject about which you're speaking, no matter how many memory-jogging visuals you have, your mind may go blank from time to time. The more you rehearse, the more your words imprint on your memory banks. They become second nature.

Furthermore, it's not all about remembering the correct words to say. It's about your facial expressions, the tone of your voice—how you punctuate your sentences with breaks, with the rising and falling of the pitch. If you follow these tips, you'll be more than ready come time for your presentation:

9

Rehearse in front of a mirror: You may deny it to your dying day, but you probably have some weird facial expressions that—if not eradicated—can do damage to your message. When you rehearse in front of a mirror or take a video of your rehearsal, you can discover those facial habits, nip them in the bud, and eliminate them from your repertoire.

Record yourself: You may think you're a silver-tongued orator, but what you hear in your head may not be the sound you're projecting. Just like with your facial expressions, you can correct vocal habits that make your voice sound less timid, harsh, or even angry. As you improve your tone, you'll feel more confident.

Create memory joggers: In addition to your visuals, you may want to carry a few cards with you. An outline that keeps you organized, yet won't tempt you to look down instead of at your audience, can be a boon, especially when you're an inexperienced speaker. Others use mnemonic devices to organize their thoughts. Find what works for you to keep you on track.

10

Remember what makes a great story—conflict. As you prepare your presentation, make sure that you include the one element that makes or breaks good drama—conflict. How can you report on our company's financial numbers and give it conflict?

Who's your competition? How about contrasting your numbers with that of your competitor? Be sure to point out the reasons for the differences—and how your company can overcome their shortcomings.

Other topics that may seem dry on the outset come alive when you find the drama inside them. Look for that point of conflict. Create your story around that—and you'll have a presentation that people will talk about for months afterward.

11

Make your big idea the weapon your story's hero uses to conquer the villain. In every story, the hero needs a weapon to overcome the bad guy. Whether it's a Jedi mind trick or sword drawn from a stone, there's always something that the hero uses to win the fight against evil.

In your presentation, let your idea be the weapon, your customers' problems the villain. Show how your idea will turn your customers' problems into a pile of rubble, and you'll have your audience's rapt attention.

12

Send the hero of your story (your audience) on a journey.

To really get your audience on board with your idea, put them right in the middle of the drama—as the hero. Who doesn't like to think of themselves as a hero, anyway? When you structure your story so that it's the audience—not you—who brandishes your idea at the customers' problems, their eyes will light up at the possibility.

When they can imagine *themselves* solving their customers' problems, they'll not only become engaged in the story, but they'll also take ownership of your idea. When you have them at this point, you've done your job as a presenter. You will have captured their hearts—and their minds.



Help Your Audience Fall in Love

Let's review the formula for the storyline that you'll use to rev up the interest in any presentation you tackle.

Tell your story along these lines, and you'll never be stuck for an idea.

Include these elements in this order:

- Once upon a time...
- Every day...
- One day...
- Because of that...
- Because of that...
- Until finally...

Commit this outline to memory, and soon you'll be able to come up with even impromptu presentations that knock the socks off your audience. Presentations that connect with everyone from the guy in the cube next to you, to the C-suite.

They'll fall in love with your idea—and you'll never have to pitch again. Even better, you'll never fear speaking in public for the rest of your life. No fear. For you, that won't be just a slogan—but a way of life.



About Michael

Michael Brenner has been recognized as a Forbes top CMO influencer, and a Top Business Keynote Speaker by the Huffington Post. He is CEO of Marketing Insider Group, and co-author of 2 books including The Content Formula, and Digital Marketing Growth Hacks.

He has worked in leadership positions in sales and marketing for global brands like SAP and Nielsen, as well as for thriving startups. Today, Michael shares his passion on leadership and marketing strategies that deliver customer value and business impact.

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