

THE AUTHORITY GUIDE TO PRESENTING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING



How to deliver engaging
and effective business presentations

STEVE BUSTIN



There are only two types of speakers in the world. 1. The nervous and 2. Liars.

Mark Twain



Introduction

Presentations are now a fact of life. For many people a slightly unpleasant fact of life, a bit like a trip to the dentist or a day of enforced jollity with some distant relatives. Something to be endured, but you'll be left with a vague sense of satisfaction and achievement at having survived it. So the fact that you've picked up this book suggests that (a) you know you're going to have to make a presentation at some point and (b) you'd like some help to make it as successful – and even pleasant – an experience as possible.

You'll often hear people cite research which states that most of us are more scared of public speaking or presenting than we are of death. Really? Twenty minutes speaking to an audience is a less appealing prospect than an ever-after of absolute nothingness? Yikes. You must have seen some terrible presentations in your time.

I'm one of those strange people who enjoy presenting and speaking in public. I always have. I compèred my first event when I was 11 (a Burns supper at my primary school in Scotland, despite the fact I'm English) and won my first award for speaking

in public when I was 13. I haven't shut up since. Now I do it (and teach others to do it) for a living. I enjoy knowing that I can take an audience on a journey as I share my expertise, experience and stories, which is what this book is all about.

The feedback I normally get when I speak or present (and we'll look shortly at whether those two terms are interchangeable) is that audience members like my confidence, my engagement with them and the fact they get tools, tips and other 'takeaways' they really can take away and use immediately. Those are the key things I want to share with you in this Authority Guide. By the end of this book you will have the tools and tips you need to give confident, engaging and effective presentations that leave your audience not only awake, but positively enthusiastic, meeting both your – and their – objectives.

Why do we give presentations and speeches?

We give presentations not as a form of punishment for the presenter or audience, but because they work. Human to human interaction is at the heart of how we learn, share, communicate and promulgate information, skills and knowledge – and also often how we entertain and engage.

Yes, you can read books (starting with this one, obviously), watch videos, take part in webinars or conference calls, engage on social media or listen to a podcast, but there's a reason why we still have meetings, attend conferences, pitch for work, invite people to present to us or seek out speakers that 'speak' to us on all sorts of levels. As humans we respond in a very basic and deep way to listening to the human voice, especially if that voice is talking our language and giving us information that is pertinent and useful to us.

Presenting and public speaking are now *essential* business skills. If you're a business leader you need to be able to address your staff, inspire and motivate them to take your organisation forward. You may also be asked to represent your organisation or even industry sector by speaking at conferences and events.

If you're a business owner you need to be able to pitch and promote your business to potential clients and customers and to speak at networking events. Public speaking is also an essential part of a modern business development strategy.

If you're an employee and looking to develop your career, presentations are a great way to raise your profile and highlight your skills to your peers and bosses. Many job interviews (especially at senior levels) now include giving a presentation as part of the selection process.

You may even be looking to turn speaking into your career, flying around the world to speak for huge fees at conferences and events, sharing your vision for the world and with the world. It's a fun way to earn a living – if not quite as glamorous or as well paid as you may hope.

Saying 'I don't want or need to present' is no longer an option. If you're running a business or you're part of an organisation, it's a skill set you need to develop, hone and practise. That's where this book comes in.

What's changed about presentations?

Presentations have changed because we have changed and business has changed. Our attention span is shorter. The demands on our time are greater, but our appetite for new information, ideas and inspiration has also grown.

Presentations now tend to be shorter, more interactive and more engaging than they used to be. The days of someone talking to a deck of slides covered in bullet points are, thankfully (hopefully?), almost over.

A few words on terminology

There are lots of different words commonly used to describe the topic at hand – presentation, speech, public speaking and pitching, for example.

There are distinctions to be drawn between some of these terms, but for the purposes of this book we'll assume that they are all pretty interchangeable, as when you present or pitch you are giving a speech – and when you are public speaking you are presenting. Therefore I will primarily use the word 'presentation' as a catch-all term, as this is what most of us give in a business context, whether that's presenting in an internal meeting or presenting at a major international conference.

Also, I'll be using the word 'audience' quite a bit too, as any presentation has to have an audience (talking to yourself in a meeting room isn't to be recommended), whether that's an audience of three or four or an audience of 2,500 in a conference hall. The number of people in the audience will affect the way you present (don't stand up and bellow at four people, please), but shouldn't make any difference to the time, care and attention you put into preparing and delivering your presentation. All audiences deserve to hear and see the best possible presentation.

How (and when) to use this book

This book can be used in two ways. First, read it from beginning to end in the traditional way as it follows the chronological

order of the steps needed to give a great presentation and be a great presenter. Start at the beginning and by the end you'll understand why many of the steps need to be followed in a particular order.

Second, it's also designed to be a reference book, to be dipped in to when you need a refresher or some ideas on a certain element of presenting. Even experienced presenters and speakers sometimes want to try something new or refresh their approach. Certain chapters are likely to be useful resources when you need inspiration to avoid getting stuck in a presentation rut.

“

A good orator is pointed and impassioned.

Marcus T. Cicero

”

The anatomy of a good presentation

What constitutes a good or bad presentation?

Before we start looking at your presentation, let's think about other people's presentations, the way they make those presentations and what we can learn from them.

What constitutes a good presentation? Everyone will have their own specific likes and dislikes, but common responses to this question include:

- Interesting content
- Useful content
- Entertaining or engaging
- Relevant to me
- Easy voice to listen to
- Confident presenter
- Good stage presence
- Great slides
- No slides
- Short/succinct – no padding

Ask people what constitutes a bad presentation and the list can go on for days, but the responses that tend to top the list include:

- Dull
- Not relevant
- Too long
- Death by PowerPoint
- Nervous presenter
- No structure, hard to follow
- No obvious takeaways
- Starts with an apology – and goes downhill from there

What's interesting is that the first list is predominantly about the audience and what they wanted to get out of it: 'I found it useful', 'I found it relevant', 'I liked the slides'. The 'bad' list, however, errs more towards the presenter and their material or style: dull, nervous, no takeaways and so on.

Clearly you want your presentation to fit into the first list not the second and you need to take steps to address the factors that appear in both lists. We'll talk more in the next chapter about understanding what your audience wants to get out of your presentation. Your job as presenter is to set out to deliver a 'good' presentation as much by addressing the potential negatives as by ensuring you meet the positive criteria. Both lists are within your control.

What constitutes a good or bad presenter?

Who do you rate as a good presenter? Think about your own organisation or events you've attended. Whose presentations and speeches stick in your mind as being particularly good?

Why were they memorable? What about presenters from the wider world – politicians, business leaders and the like? Who do you rate and what makes them good presenters?

Exercise

Make a list of three or four people you rate as good presenters (ideally a mix of those within and outside your organisation). Then think of three things about each of those people that makes them a good presenter. What traits do they share?

When I am coaching people on their presentations and ask them to undertake this exercise, they will often come up with the name of their boss, then big names such as Barack Obama, Richard Branson, Steve Jobs or Margaret Thatcher.

Obviously everyone's list of criteria for what makes these people great speakers will be different, but the common responses include:

- Engaging
- Entertaining/uses humour
- Makes it feel like they're talking directly to you
- Doesn't use slides
- Has gravitas
- Varied vocal tone
- Speaks slowly and clearly
- Passionate about their topic
- Has something of value to say

Although you probably didn't assign every one of these traits to all the speakers you listed (and often political views can colour our views of whether a politician is a great speaker or not), these

are the factors that most people agree make someone a good speaker.

Exercise

Now run the opposite exercise, looking at presenters you remember as being particularly poor. What traits did they all have?

Top tip

Get into the habit of critiquing the speakers you see in action, whether you're in a meeting listening to a colleague, at a conference watching a keynote speaker or seeing someone on TV. When you warm to a speaker, note what it is that's attracting and engaging you. Is it the way they speak? The visual aids they're using? Or the fact that they're talking your language and making it completely targeted and relevant to you?

Perhaps more importantly, when you find yourself switching off during a presentation, ask yourself why. Was it the speaker or their content? Is the content irrelevant or are you lost because it's badly structured? Is the speaker droning on in a soporific way?

When you've noted the good or bad traits (and many speakers will display a mix of both), think about how you can either follow their example – or avoid their mistakes. How can you emulate the good speakers and learn what not to do from the poor ones?

But – and it's a big but – don't set out to copy the good speakers. It's important that you find your own presenting style and hone that.

Find your style

When I'm coaching speakers and presenters, people often ask me to train them to speak just like me. I have to explain that I can't do that. What I can do is train them to speak like them – to find their own personal presentation style and make that the best it can be.

Exercise

Write down a list of what you think your strengths and weaknesses are as a presenter. List three of each, although it's worth remembering that most people find it far easier to come up with weaknesses than strengths, as we're our own harshest critics. Have a look at that list and have a think about how you can build on the strengths and address the weaknesses. If you're struggling to identify your strengths and/or weaknesses, ask two or three people who have seen you present what they think.

Even experienced speakers have weaknesses. It doesn't necessarily make them bad speakers, but it means they have traits that need addressing.

For instance, I think my strengths as a presenter are:

- People tell me I'm warm and engaging when I present – someone once said I 'sparkle' when I step on stage
- My content is very practical – my adage is that if an audience member doesn't go away with at least one thing they can take back to their desk and do differently tomorrow, I've failed
- I rarely use slides unless I think they'll really enhance a presentation for my audience. Audience members at events with lots of speakers have commented that my presentation stood out more because I didn't use slides

I think my weaknesses are:

- I know I can talk too fast, especially when I'm really excited about something or if I'm nervous
- I sometimes try to cram too much content into a presentation, which means audiences can be a bit overwhelmed or my key messages get lost
- I can occasionally get stuck in a slightly stilted delivery if I'm speaking words I've used over and over again in the past

Top tip

By knowing my strengths I build on them and use them to their maximum advantage when I'm presenting. By identifying my weaknesses I address them and reduce the risk of repeating them.

Knowing my strengths and addressing my weaknesses has helped me to hone my personal presentation style. My aim is to come across as warm; friendly and approachable; professional; with gravitas; and as an expert in my topics. Feedback from audiences and other speakers leads me to believe I'm getting it about right.

Exercise

Having identified your strengths and weaknesses as a presenter, how do you want to come across when presenting? What would you like your personal presenting style to be? Whose style do you respect and might want to emulate (but not copy)? What might need to change in your current presentation style to help you move towards that goal?

A few words about 'passion'

I have a love/hate relationship with the term 'passion'.

Top tip

If you have to tell me you're passionate (for instance in your biography or when someone introduces you before you give a presentation), you're not. Passion should be intrinsic to who you are, what you do and the way you do it, and it should 'sing out' when you're presenting. If you have to point out how passionate you are, you clearly aren't passionate enough for me to notice.

Having said that, passion is incredibly important in a presentation and as a presenter. When critiquing both business and famous speakers, it's a word that comes up time and time again as not just a positive criterion, but also a requirement of a good speaker.

If you don't have passion for your topic or your content, why on earth should your audience? If your passion for your topic is evident (even if you know your topic is a little 'dry'), then your audience is far more likely to remain engaged. Your passion can show through in your expertise, your eagerness to communicate that expertise and the energy with which you throw yourself into your presentation. The next time you see someone speak, ask yourself: Does this person have passion for their topic and if so, how can I tell?

Exercise

If you're not sure if you're presenting with passion, try speaking for 60 seconds on a topic you really are passionate about – your favourite sport or team, your family, your hobby, anything you can really get passionate about. How

does that feel? What were you doing with your body and voice that communicated passion? Can you take that feeling and those actions and apply them to a business presentation?

Top tip

If you're not passionate about your topic, don't expect your audience to be.

Are you required to present, pitch or speak to an audience?

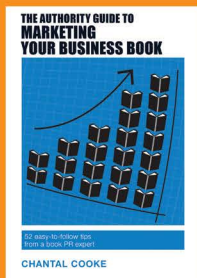
Whether it's your first presentation or you're an experienced speaker, this Authority Guide will give you the tools, tips and confidence to deliver engaging, creative and effective presentations. Steve Bustin, an award-winning business speaker (named UK Speaker of the Year 2015 by the Professional Speaking Association), an executive-level speech coach and corporate presentation skills trainer, will teach you simple but effective techniques to keep your audience engaged.



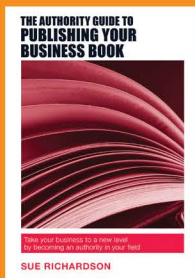
“Steve’s advice is easy to follow, simple to apply, and invaluable in terms of great communication. This book will benefit anyone who ever has to speak in public, which these days is just about everyone.”

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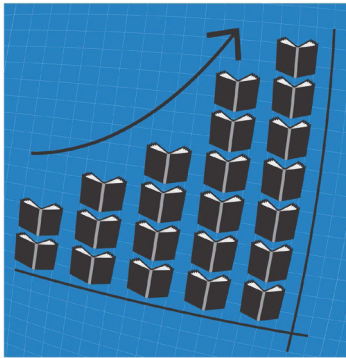


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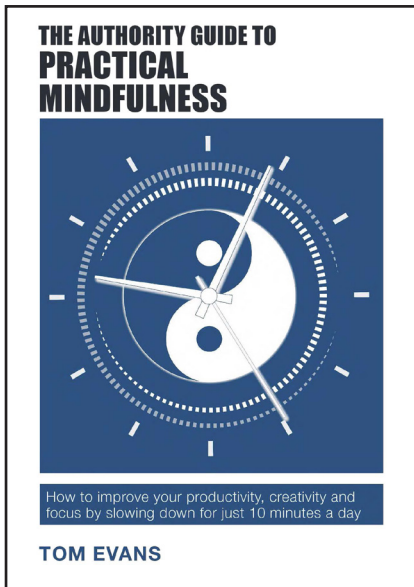
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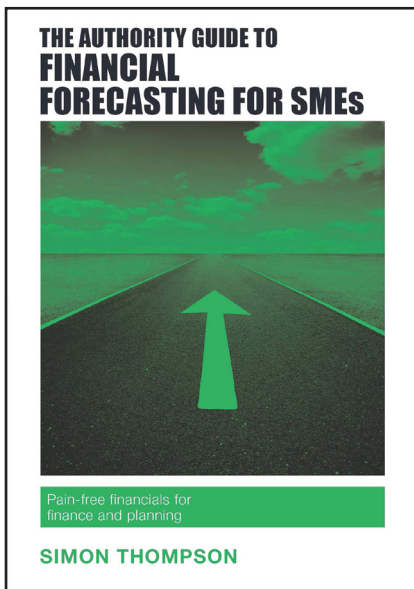
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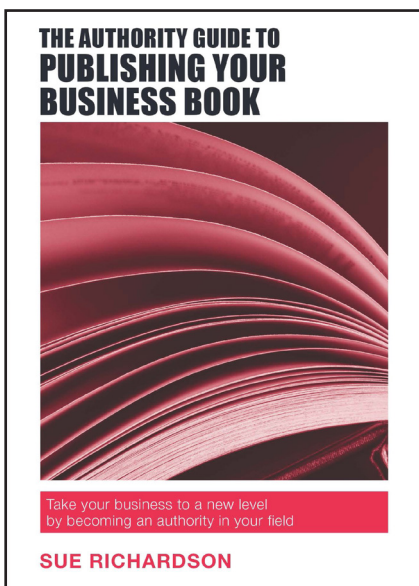


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