

# Best Practices for Communicating and Presenting Online

*The best of Business Management Daily's advice*

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**The world we all thought was coming—in which remote employees make up such a sizeable part of the workforce, and teams connect with each other virtually as much as they do in person—arrived sooner than any of us thought.**

**In this special report, we've collected the best of Business Management Daily's advice on how to communicate and present on a screen, from emailing to giving a speech. New times demand a new approach to making yourself understood. See you online!**





## **4 tips to help you put your best face forward on video conference calls**

Whether your entire workforce remains a virtual operation, or you're simply communicating with clients and industry colleagues on video more often than usual to maintain some human connection, you may have found yourself relying on a method of communication that has been largely unfamiliar to you.

Use these tips to make sure you're putting your best face forward on every video call.

### **1. Watch nonverbals and adjust accordingly**

If you were presenting in person and noticed your audience was scrolling on phones, squirming or simply staring off into space, you'd likely adjust your pace, tone or the length of your presentation.

The same notion applies to video. While it can be tough to carefully watch several face-filled squares at once, take note of what the people you are talking to are doing while you speak every few minutes.

When you take this pause to "read the room," you'll have a better sense of whether you need to encourage engagement by inviting more crowd participation or adapt your own pace to address signs of confusion or statements you've made that need clarifying.

When a co-worker is nodding in agreement with what you're presenting, for example, welcome the opportunity for others to share a point of view. If you notice participants are gazing down at paper or using a separate screen to take notes, slow the pace of your presentation and pause to give others a chance to catch up.

When you are willing to notice the nonverbal video feedback that's constantly being offered and act upon it, you can increase the amount of engagement and interaction on every video call.

### **2. Think back to grade school**

At the start of every video call, establish terms of engagement with participants. If the call involves at least three participants, agree to raise hands when a person wants to speak.

If the call involves several participants, instruct anyone with questions or feedback to use the group's "chat" feature to minimize interruptions. When you establish how people can indicate that they want to speak, you'll spend less time listening to people apologize for accidentally speaking on mute or talking over one another, and more time accomplishing whatever the call is intended to do.

Likewise, encourage participants to use hand gestures like a "thumbs up" or similar to engage when speaking isn't necessary, but feedback is helpful.

You'll be more likely to keep people interested in the conversation and off their email and other devices during the call.

### **3. Choose your on-camera look carefully**

Avoid wearing busy patterns and stripes, which can both be distracting; and steer away from hats or other accessories you wouldn't wear on a typical day in the office.

Before you turn your camera on, confirm your background is free of clutter and distracting objects, and ensure the area is sufficiently lit. When possible, face a sunlit window or sit at an angle to an overhead or side source of light.

Place the camera on your computer or device at eye level and look into it when you are speaking. Whenever you know you'll be on camera, alert other members of your household that you're in "session" and not to enter the room or otherwise interrupt.

### **4. Turn the camera and microphone on and off as needed**

Because the microphone on your device can pick up background noise you may not even realize is around you, get in the habit of putting your microphone on mute anytime you aren't speaking.

If you need to move away from your camera temporarily or receive an urgent email or text you can't ignore during the call, turn your camera off so that others aren't distracted by your movements.

While working lunches are certainly par for the course in a typical workday, it's best to try to avoid eating and drinking on camera to the extent possible.



## **Become more aware of your email style**

Try taking just one day to review a big batch of your most recent emails and ask yourself, *Is there a chance someone could take these words the wrong way?* Try to assume the

recipients are feeling especially defensive about the issue, and that you don't know them as well as you think. Entertaining these hypothetical questions for just one day will make you more conscious of your tone when writing electronically.



## **Even a 15-second presentation demands these basics**

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Never take any moment in the spotlight for granted, even if it's just to stand up and say your name, where you work and a favorite hobby in order to introduce yourself at a public gathering. This is a moment that shapes the way people perceive you; don't let it get away from you! Always consider these essentials:

**1. Speak up.** Nothing frustrates people faster than low-talkers and mumblers. This is so easy to fix: Just pretend that you're speaking not to the audience but someone sitting against the back wall of the room.

**2. Make eye contact.** Like insufficient volume, a lack of eye contact when speaking in public exudes weakness and a lack of confidence. It also undermines your credibility: Why should anyone believe what you're saying if you can't even look up when you're saying it?

**3. Cut the disclaimers.** No one needs to hear that you're nervous, or that you didn't have time to prepare or that everyone else's presentation is "so much better than mine." Jump into what you have to say with no delay. That exhibits strength.

**4. Smile.** No matter what you do in your 15, 30 or 60 seconds, a smile will keep it all from going truly wrong. Smiling will settle your nerves quickly. Let people know you're a happy person who doesn't mind being here, even if you're not the most polished speaker in the world.

Note the common theme here: seeming strong, not weak. It takes only three seconds to establish one trait over the other. Use those seconds well!



## Tech tip: PowerPoint: Give animation a try

Presenting online (without a webcam on you) can be daunting if you've only ever presented in person or in print. You won't have the power of your facial expressions or gestures to emphasize your message. What can take their place is carefully used animation. Use entrance animation to keep the focus on the topic you are discussing. Don't be afraid to experiment with animation and transitions. You don't want kitsch, but you do want to keep your audience engaged. Practice and make sure you're giving the audience something to look at or some movement every 15 to 30 seconds.

**Q. I have a complex Excel chart to put in a presentation. Can I animate it to better explain how it's put together?**

**A.** Yes, you can do this, provided you are using a chart that was either pasted from Excel (as a chart, not a picture) or that was created from the Chart button on the Insert tab in the Illustrations group. Select the whole chart and choose your animation. Then look for the effect options that apply to your chart. Normally, you would remove the first animation, which brings up the chart background. You don't have the option to convert it to shapes here, but you can adjust the animation to apply to series, categories and elements.

**Q. I've inherited a presentation with a lot of animation. I want to get rid of some or most of it. How do I that?**

**A.** It's frustrating to inherit a lot of complicated animation in a presentation that doesn't actually make things clear. To stop things from bouncing and flying all over the screen on a slide with animation, click the Animation Pane and then the Animation Pane button. Select some or all of the animation steps, and then press the Delete key. That's really it.

Even if you want to keep some of the animation, it's better to delete the existing animation and start over. Some of what appears to be animation may indeed be transitions. Use the Ctrl+A shortcut to select all slides in the Navigation Pane on the left side of the screen. Then, choose None in the Transition to This Slide Gallery. If you don't see the little star next to each thumbnail, perhaps it's because there's still some animation on this slide.



## Lights ... camera ... awkwardness

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**Q: Our staff has been given a project to record dozens of short first-person presentations on video. We've found that a few folks are depressingly wooden, formal, and uneasy on camera. Is there a simple way to snap them out of their stage awkwardness?**

**A:** Try throwing the script away and having people focus on delivering the main points in the way they feel most comfortable, and have someone in the room with them whom they feel very comfortable with. But what may really save you here is simply some extra time with the editing software. In the cutting lies the chance to shave off seconds wherever you can to make the proceedings go by much quicker and use B-roll to cover up some of the more painful moments. It's tough to change people; it's easier to change the illusion.



## Before you forward that email ...

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Especially during a time of uncertainty, we all want to be helpful by forwarding valuable information via email to family, friends and co-workers. But this is the time to be extra conservative with email forwards containing supposedly useful info if you have the slightest doubt about their source. You don't want to be the person who sends something on only to realize it was fraudulent or just poorly researched.



## 5 ways to elicit applause and direct a successful virtual event

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As we move forward in the future, virtual presentations will continue to play a starring role in the events world. This is a new challenge for some businesses, packed with teachable moments for everyone involved behind the scenes.

Speakers typically excel in front of a live crowd seated before them and thrive off the positive eye contact and other energy in the room. Delivering an engaging experience for attendees in virtual seats, however, requires additional considerations.

The following tips will help to streamline the on-set mechanics, earn the audience's confidence and appreciation, and support others preparing to take the virtual stage:

**1. Educate your audience—well before show time.** Ensure that everyone registered for the event understands how to access it before the big day arrives. If you wait until the last minute to send them instructions, that breeds confusion and frustration. Keep spirits high and give everyone ample notice. Better yet: Apart from simply emailing instructions, post them on your website too.

**2. Prerecord the presentation to keep speakers on time.** This will also enable you to calmly resolve any technical problems such as:

- **Internet signal**—turn off other programs to optimize connection
- **Sound**—headsets are recommended for ensuring quality audio input and output
- **Camera angles**—eye level works best to engage participants and truly connect with audience members
- **Presentation files**—use standard fonts (e.g., Arial, Verdana, Georgia, Times New Roman or others) to reduce the risk of substitution by different versions or installations of the software on other users' computers.

**3. Reinforce viewer confidence.** Almost like marathon runners excitedly counting down the mile markers as the crowd cheers them on, add a special touch that keeps attendees interested and invigorated. For example, including a progress bar in your videos can be an encouraging way to show them how far they've come along, provide a rewarding sense of accomplishment and firmly hold their attention during the time that remains.

**4. Build in breaks.** If presentations are tightly stacked back to back, your audience will suffer from video (and bladder!) fatigue. Give them a little time in between so they can use the rest room, check messages, grab a snack or attend to other quick details. This will sustain their motivation, comfort and ability to focus. I've also seen a conference host creatively incorporate healthy stretching breaks led by a fitness professional in between each session.

**5. Create a sense of spontaneity.** While attendees watch the prerecorded presentation, give them a channel to communicate with each other. A public chat box is a great way to help them feel connected and to welcome their feedback.

Additionally, roll out the red carpet with a live Q&A following the presentation. Appoint a moderator who's ready to pitch speakers a few seed questions in order to keep a swift pace and in case the crowd is a little shy. This interaction raises everyone's energy level and opens the virtual door to a productive conversation with speakers in real time.



## Tech tip: **Make your PowerPoint slides help your memory**

Preparing a long presentation and concerned about your ability to remember everything you want to say? Here's where your bullet points can work overtime. Use them as memory cues by massaging the text to tip you off to the *next* topic and its details. Audiences tend to think slide text is strictly for their benefit, so they'll likely never realize it's really your helpful crutch.



## **9 bad email phrases**

It's easy to fall back on weak standby words in business correspondence. Such as:

- 1. Please don't hesitate to contact me.** States the obvious. Sounds phony.
- 2. I hope you're well.** It's empty filler, and the reader knows that.
- 3. Sorry to bother you.** Immediately undermines your credibility.
- 4. No problem.** It sends a message that sometimes these requests are a problem.
- 5. Let's touch base.** Overused, sporty reference.
- 6. Per my last email.** Passive-aggressive.
- 7. I'm reaching out...** You mean it friendly, but it's just kind of creepy.
- 8. Happy Monday!** Not everyone suffers the same lighthearted despair over the day of the week.
- 9. I think...** A safety net that reveals your lack of confidence.



## The guaranteed great speech template

It's 48 hours before you have to give a speech that makes a difference. You've sat through a hundred of these before—and you remember maybe two of them. Here's a sample sequence to keep yours on course so it doesn't wind up with those lost 98.

### **BEGIN WITH: The non-intro intro**

No one really needs to be thanked for being here today, appreciated for having you or reminded that the weather is nice. Just as a movie is more intriguing if it opens right on the action instead of the credits, get to the point as swiftly as you possibly can.

### **ADD: A story and a mystery**

Jump into a brief, tight narrative right away, one whose setting and events don't quite seem to match with your subject matter. Get the audience to wonder, "What's this anecdote really about?"

### **ADD: The reveal**

Conclude your compelling story by relating its true meaning to the theme of your talk. The audience should think, "Ahhhhh, I see now."

### **ADD: A fact that opens their eyes**

Now throw out a number, a statistic, a quick truth about your topic that will truly surprise them.

### **ADD: Your own surprised reaction**

Become a part of the audience for just a moment by making your own jaw drop at the factoid you just put out there—and describe how you felt when you first became aware of it. This is a good chance to introduce a little humor as you describe the feeling of being suddenly whacked over the head by an eye-opening realization.

### **ADD: A second story**

You've got one narrative under your belt; now give them another one. No mystery about how it relates this time—now that you're all on the same page, stay on it.

### **ADD: An audience callout**

Show you're engaged with them by working in a member of the audience at the end of your second tale. "I can see, sir, that you think that's insane," you might say, or "Just a quick show of hands of how many people have experienced the same thing."

### **ADD: Why you're there**

Time to make your central point, the one you want to leave them with. What is this speech really about? It should put a small spin on what they thought it would be—build an unexpectedly nice roof upon your solid foundation.

### **ADD: A plea**

Tell your audience what you want them to do when they leave their seats. Issue a call to action and a personal request. Don't just give them information; give them a cause.

### **CONCLUDE WITH: A swift exit**

Once you've hit all the points you need to, don't leave any time for an anti-climax. Don't reproduce your introduction or start in with the thanks. Go out on a high note and walk away.



## **Ensure people respond to emails**

No doubt it's frustrating when people won't return your emails. However, if you become rude or demanding, you only increase the chances that they'll delay responding longer—or that they don't respond at all. Instead, follow these tips to garner a response without damaging the work relationship:

**Make it easy for them to respond.** People may skip over a long, complex email. Keep it concise and to the point, and tell them exactly what you need them to do next and by when. Don't fill the message with fluff. While you should be polite, skip the pleasantries.

**Use your subject line wisely.** Including "Your response is needed by 10/15" or some other directive can help people prioritize the message. Avoid flagging every message as "URGENT" or "IMPORTANT," and use those distinctions only for messages that truly are.

**Ask them to confirm.** Don't make it easy for people to say, "I never got that message." Include in your email, "Please respond to confirm you received this by 4:00 p.m. today." If they don't confirm receipt, stop by their office or call them. The more you do that, the less likely they will be to ignore future messages.

**Time a follow-up.** Depending on the scope of the task, you may need to follow up a day or two before the deadline. Forward the original message, and say "I haven't received a confirmation from you, and I just want to ensure that you are all set to deliver this by 10/15."

**Don't start copying other people.** You may be tempted to copy the person's boss or some other authority figure to force him or her to act. That almost always backfires. You may make an enemy of your co-worker and come across as a tattletale to your boss.

**Call or meet the person face to face.** If after two emails you've heard nothing, pick up the phone and call them or visit their workspace to remind them of the deadline.

At this point, you may need to state some consequences if they fail to act. For example, "If I don't have your feedback by 1:00 p.m. today, I will have to submit the plan to Joe without it." Most will act fast so that they don't look bad in front of the team or management.



## Tech tip: **Online presentations and morph transitions in PowerPoint**

**Q. I have to start giving a lot of online presentations. Should I be preparing these differently than in-person ones?**

**A.** When you realize how much is communicated by our facial expressions and gestures, it is important to think about this medium differently. For example:

- Use animation to emphasize informational points.
- Use diagrams, like SmartArt, to convey ideas of direction or structure (think arrows, boxes and flow).
- Consider toggling between your video image and your screen or slide share to break up the action. It's easy for your audience to check out when no one else is watching you.

You can have all sorts of notes in front of you and stickers on your monitor when you present. No one will see them. Don't use the stickers for data. Use them for reminders.

All of these tips will help your voice, tone and pace. Record your voice smiling with your eyebrows up, and then not. You'll surely notice a difference. For example: Eyebrows up, Smile, Pause 1, 2, 3.

**Q. How does the morph transition actually work?**

**A.** Here's the step-by-step:

**1. Create the slide** with the object you want to animate with a morph transition. Make sure it is positioned exactly where you want to start.

**2. Duplicate the slide.** You can select the slide in the navigation pane on the left and use the Ctrl+D shortcut. On the copy, move or change the color or 3-D aspect of the object. Be

sure it is where you want the transition to end. Do not delete and recreate the object on this second slide. Begin with a duplicated slide.

**3. On the Transitions tab** in the Transitions to this Slide group, select the Morph transition from the gallery.

The animation should preview for you automatically. If it doesn't, go to the previous slide and use the Shift+F5 shortcut to start the presentation from this slide. Or you can use the From Current Slide button in the Start Slide Show group on the Slide Show tab. Navigate to the next slide. If your morph animation didn't work, it's probably best to start again from the duplicated slide. Keep the one that didn't work in case you need specific colors or positioning. Remove the morph transition. Use it for reference, until you don't need it anymore.



## 4 videoconferencing blunders to avoid

We've all quickly learned both the efficiencies and quirks of videoconferencing. But how are we personally perceived inside that medium? Keep these tips in mind so you come off better when accepting that next video invite:

**1. Work that mute button like an athlete.** Position your cursor right over the mute button and keep it there throughout the call. Something as simple as a cough or a child's cry in the background can switch the camera view briefly to your own feed, which is distracting. Toggle the mic on only when you have a complete thought to share; it's easier in a video conversation than in person to get suddenly cut off because you hesitated.

**2. Present a passport-style angle.** Sometimes people show a rather odd visual perspective when they get on camera; they seem to be either looming above the group, looking downward because their camera is too low or wildly off-center. Make sure you're nice and square before making your feed live.

**3. Align your screen name with who you really are.** A recent Google Hangout we attended was populated by many people with very unusual nicknames; most of them didn't realize that the screen name they'd used to sign up with Google long ago had populated over to videoconferencing, making it difficult to remember who was who.

**4. Be aware when it's "go" time.** Pre-meeting banter is great, but keep a close eye on the time and the attendees filing in—you don't want to be relaying an anecdote or chatting about politics when the moderator is waiting to begin. Remember that on a

video call, you're essentially speaking to the whole room and not just the person you're directing your speech to.



## Tech tip: Add subtitles to your PowerPoint presentation

As businesses become more global, the challenge of delivering presentations that are well understood by nonnative speakers seems monumental. Even within one's local community, people speak a different language than you do. But if you need to reach them, the Subtitles feature can easily be added to your PowerPoint presentation. On the SlideShow tab, in the Captions & Subtitles group, click the Subtitle Setting button. You can choose your spoken language and the subtitle language here. Then you will see the translated captions below your slides, as you speak.



## What your email sign-off is really saying

Do you put much thought into your email sign-off?

Chances are you don't. Generally you pick one and stick with it. It becomes your persona for better or worse.

The reader of your email, especially one whom you are corresponding with for the first time, gleans something about you from your sign-off.

Here are five popular email sign-offs and what the recipient could conclude:

**"Best."** This is the most common. It's the go-to closing to telegraph a professional, conservative friendliness. But what does "best" mean? Best of luck? Best wishes? I hope you have the best day, week, career? Anyone one of those, but you're not sure which one. But it doesn't matter. The real message: "This is strictly business, and let's keep it that way, buster."

**"Cheers."** If you're over 40, Norm and Cliff (heck, Carla too) quickly come to mind. If not, that's OK; there's a glass-clinking, feet-on-the-desk, we-can-keep-it-lite feeling to this closing. You're a pal or you want to be one, and it carries an informal tone, British style. The trouble is, you can draft a serious message, but it still ends with two beer steins clanking.

**“Regards.”** This one falls into the same category as “best” except it rings a little stiffer. It says little more than “I respect you.” If your message has a more weighty tone, it works better than “best” would. Paired with “kindest,” it takes on a chummier vibe, but it still wouldn’t mask its CEO-like stiltedness.

**“Thanks.”** You appreciate everything. Even if it’s just the fact the recipient read your message. Those who “thank” are courteous and willing to please, accommodate or work together. Add a “for all your help” to give it more of an endearing aura. The strange thing about “thanks” is sometimes you thank someone who hasn’t done anything at all for you yet.

**“Sincerely.”** A throwback to the written letter, “sincerely” is a safe closing, although the sincerity of it can come under question. It carries a sober-minded stuffiness and is tinged with old-fashioned honesty, although it’s short on creativity.



## **Slides do not a leader make**

OK, we both know you’re going to lean heavily on PowerPoint for that next presentation. But before you give in to the allure of slides, just play a little game in your mind by asking yourself: *How could I pull this show off if I had no visuals? How would I make this topic intriguing?*

Imagine yourself commanding the room with only your voice, because that’s always where a talk’s true power should come from.



## **Delete behind-the-scenes chatter from email forwards**

When we forward emails, we tend not to notice if we’re actually including an entire chain of them, beginning with someone’s original message. Including this history can cause two problems: First, your reader may get bogged down by chatter and information he or she has no need for. Secondly, those email messages, when written, were intended only for the original recipients, and since we write in different “voices” for different people, someone reading a message they weren’t originally included on may be surprised and even put off by the tone or phrasings they see, especially if they’re mentioned somewhere in there. That was private communication and is usually better kept as such.



## Take the stage with the skill of Steve Jobs

*"Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories."* This was how Steve Jobs began his 2005 commencement speech at Stanford University. In doing so, he was actually executing multiple layers of subtle communication strategy. Morey Stettner, corporate trainer and editor of *Executive Leadership*, assures us that we are quite ready to do the same.

The basic principles of engaging listeners haven't changed too much since the time of Aristotle, who described the three key elements of persuasive speaking long before the invention of PowerPoint and the wireless mic. Steve Jobs may not have intentionally adopted Aristotle's list, but its wisdom sure found its way into his presentations.

### The 'Big Three'

- **Logos – meaning logic.** A speech must come from a voice that seeks not to boast or pander, but to illuminate with facts and an open mind. Steve Jobs made few assertions in public without evidence to back them up.
- **Ethos – meaning credibility.** Why should your audience buy into what you're saying? Because you can show them you know what you're talking about, that's why. You might think Jobs' position as an industry leader did most of the work here, but think of how many top dogs you've heard who are clearly relaying the words of advisors or coaches—and doing it unconvincingly.
- **Pathos – meaning passion.** It's very easy for a crowd to detect that you're not invested much in your words. One of your goals is to prove that you care about your topic as much as anyone. Vast knowledge and immense stature, Morey Stettner explains, mean little if your lack of passion results in a boring monotone or rushed delivery.

Here are some of the rules he offered for aspiring orators:

**1. Refine and simplify.** Decide what your main message is and stick to it. An audience that has to sift through endless details and subject changes may come away not really knowing what your overall point was.

**2. Devise multiple ways to convey that point.** Stettner tells the story of conference attendees years ago who were given a T-shirt designed by Jobs. It read, simply, "Pirates, Not the Navy"—a terse phrase to get people into the mindset of free thinkers, outsiders, outlaws. Your speech itself may not always take hold, so give the audience other paths to your message.

**3. Be true with “I” and “we.”** There’s a time to speak for your team and your company, and a time to be frank with your personal vision. Don’t be afraid to reveal a goal that’s driving you, and you alone, from within. People connect deeply with such ambition, while those who claim that everyone around them feels the exact same way can come off as fake.

**4. Embrace the monosyllable.** Apple’s CEO was of course a tech expert, but he tried to avoid dropping jargon on his audience. Simple words reach and resonate with everyone, not just the in-crowd. A fondness for buzzwords and corporate lingo can make speakers “sound like they sat in a room with a management consultant for five hours,” Stettner says.

**5. Think in threes.** The human mind loves a good trio, as in, “There are three reasons we need to launch this product right now” or “I want to talk about the three building blocks of our plan.” Three points are just enough to establish credibility and heft; any more than that may give doubters too much room for rebuttal or even boredom. (If you blank out during a talk, Stettner points out another benefit of a three-point approach: Those points act as handy mental bookmarks allowing you to find your way quickly back to your message.)

So let’s say you’ve done everything right and totally captivated the crowd. You’ve nailed it all ... *and then your clicker stops working.*

Stettner tells the tale of what Jobs did when it happened to him in front of a huge industry crowd as backstage helpers scrambled for a solution. He had a story ready for the moment, one so amusing and interesting that when the tech glitch was fixed two minutes later, the audience felt almost as if they’d gotten something *extra* that day. That particular save could be put down to pure preparation—and the natural calm that comes when you truly want to be behind that podium.



## **The dubious wisdom of email signatures**

A pre-made email signature would seem to add a nice personal touch to the end of your emails, but often they create the opposite effect, ending your communications with an impersonal “form letter” feel. Internal emails especially could do without the odd formality of contact and job title info that people see again and again. Before you add it, think to yourself: Am I trying to keep some sort of professional distance between myself and the recipient, or do I want to establish a true back-and-forth? If the latter, drop the signature.



## The harshest online presentation scorecard ever

Steel yourself—we want you to put your upcoming talk through this aggressive 9-point test. Our goal is to poke, nitpick and annoy until you have all your bases covered and can come off like an awesome leader, not a text reader. Let the tough love begin!

### Be honest—exactly how excruciatingly boring is your presentation title?

- **-3 points:** OK, it's pretty bad, but creativity isn't my bag.
- **-1 point:** It's fine, it works. I'm not trying to win any awards.
- **+1 point:** I'll try a little play on words, ask a question or maybe create a bit of mystery.
- **+3 points:** They're never heard this title before *anywhere*—and this will definitely raise some eyebrows.

### How long will people have to endure your speech until you tell them an actual story they can relate to?

- **-3 points:** Story? Um... I don't have any of those.
- **-1 point:** It's going to be a while, but I do have a good one.
- **+1 point:** I tell a story within a few minutes.
- **+3 points:** I lead off with one, of course.

### How sleepy is the audience going to get staring at slide after slide of text?

- **-3 points:** Yeah, they all pretty much consist of lines of text. Sigh.
- **-1 point:** Most of them are really text-heavy.
- **+1 point:** Some of them are quite text-y, but it seems necessary.
- **+3 points:** Just a few are text-only—I want this thing to be as visual as possible.

### When your tech fails you at the worst possible moment, are you going to totally freeze so that's all anyone will remember?

- **-3 points:** I'll just wing it if the worst happens, I guess.
- **-1 point:** I know I'm a good improviser and can push through any rough patches.
- **+1 point:** There's nothing in my presentation that can be ruined by malfunctioning tech.
- **+3 points:** Heck, I don't even need slides or a mic. I could do this whole thing well using just my natural voice and body.

### Are you bringing along a nice big box to fit all your "um"s, "ah"s, "like"s, "you know"s and "well"s?

- **-3 points:** I'm not sure what my possibly irritating vocal mannerisms are, so I'm hoping I'll catch myself.
- **-1 point:** I know of one or two things I do that can grate on an audience, and I'll try to remember to make them less irritating.

- **+1 point:** I've done a run-through of the presentation and listened back to it, and I hear some bad vocal patterns I'll work on.
- **+3 points:** I've listened to past recordings of myself, including a run-through of this one, and I know exactly what to fix and how to do it.

**Are you going to let people just walk out of the presentation afterwards with nothing to do? How nice of you to make their lives so easy!**

- **-3 points:** Well, it's just an informational talk, I'm not trying to change the future.
- **-1 point:** I have some recommendations for the audience to follow, but nothing too direct.
- **+1 point:** I do have a call to action or two toward the end.
- **+3 points:** Every major point I make in the presentation is followed by a directive the audience is urged to try.

**What Netflix shows will you be binge-ing on instead of rehearsing for this very important presentation?**

- **-3 points:** I'll go over it once or twice in my mind and let 'er rip.
- **-1 point:** I plan to do a couple of informal run-throughs at my desk or at home.
- **+1 point:** I'll perform it cold several times.
- **+3 points:** I'm rehearsing constantly—I want to reach the point where notes are just a luxury, and I'm totally comfortable with the location.

**How painful are your jokes these days? Is this going to be like listening to Dad try to be funny at Thanksgiving?**

- **-3 points:** Humor's not really my thing.
- **-1 point:** I'll lead off with a little quip, I suppose.
- **+1 point:** I have a couple lines that might get a smile, even a laugh.
- **+3 points:** I'm making sure there are key moments of humor, and that the lines are original.

**One more thing: Would it be safe to say that Sony Pictures will probably NOT be contacting you to adapt your presentation into a major motion picture because it's so memorable?**

- **-3 points:** I'm not out to change the world here, it's just a presentation.
- **-1 point:** I'm not an expert presenter, but there's some useful information here.
- **+1 point:** I'm definitely putting a different spin on this topic than people are used to.
- **+3 points:** I want people walking out of the room thinking, "THAT is a professional I would like to get to know, and that was SO much more interesting than I was expecting."

***If your final tally is less than 9 points, remember that being granted a captive audience is a great way to make or break yourself as a thought leader. Get serious about it!***