

Introducing A Presentation

Learning how to start a presentation is just as important as knowing how to finish it. It is the beginning of the conversation that can make or break it in capturing your audience's attention. There are many ways to start a presentation that will engage the hearts and minds of the people you want to convey your message to. Here are some power tips and tricks that anyone from marketers and sales people to the common man can use to nail the beginning of their next presentation.

Getting your audience's attention from the beginning is the most important thing one can do in starting a presentation. Yes, you want to introduce yourself and complete the formalities as quickly as possible, but without grabbing their attention, you've already lost them. Remembering the importance of capturing the attention of who you're speaking to will set you up for the many other strategies.

Welcome Them with A Thank You

Another important formality is welcoming your audience with a thank you. It shows both sincerity and appreciation and additionally establishes the sense of community with your audience. A great example of this is welcoming them coupled with a thank you for the opportunity to speak or share.

Memorize Your First Opening Line

In general it is not a good idea to memorize your entire speech. It is however a good idea to memorize the beginning 4 - 10 sentences. This is critical because it allows you to feel confident and ride the wave of confidence as you continue your presentation.

State The Purpose Of Your Presentation

Generally your audience will know your purpose or why you're there but if you want to be sure make it clear to them. Thinking about the purpose gives you a direction to point throughout your presentation and they'll constantly revert back to it.

Tell A Joke

Tell a joke to elicit laughter from the audience. Even for marketing and sales representatives, this can be a way to lighten the room and become more connected with the audience. Don't overdo this as it can steer people away from your purpose, but proper usage of this technique can be effective in starting any presentation.

Quote Someone

Quoting someone is a great way to start any presentation. Just be sure to make it relevant to the purpose of your speech and presentation. If you are using slides, add a picture of the person you are quoting to add more texture and breadth to your presentation.

Open Up With Being Vulnerable

We know that great speakers can be tough as nails, but those who open up about their lives or their story build a deeper relationship with their audience. When you start your presentation showcasing your ability to be vulnerable, you are giving yourself more chances to maintain the attention and interest of your audience.

Tell Your Audience A Story

This is as basic as it gets, but story telling is the best way to connect with an audience. You can start a story at the beginning of your presentation and then connect it to the purpose of why you're there. Many great presenters use this technique and it remains one of the most critical pieces to becoming an effective presenter.

Ask Questions

To start a presentation you can begin with direct questions to the audience. It's a great way to wake up their senses, get them engaged and get you more connected with them.

Shock The Audience

There can be a plethora of ways to shock the audience. You can show a funny video that showcases or furthers your purpose, state something that is contradictory to most people, make fun of something....the sky is the limit. Remember to be smart about how you choose to shock your audience as it could backfire if what you do is offensive to the majority.

Statistics & Data

Showcasing data and statistics to prove a point remains a critical strategy not just at the beginning but also throughout. Use research and data only to further your points. Statistics can be boring but if there is some compelling information that can help further the conversation, statistics and data can be a powerful tool, whether used at the very beginning or end of any presentation.

Use These Words: "Imagine, Think of, Close Your Eyes"

Another powerful mechanism used by many speakers is getting the audience to imagine or think of something. This technique can be useful in starting off a presentation.

Use the Power Of "What If"

The power of "what if" gives people the sense of how things can be if they follow your lead or your message. Again, that is why understanding your purpose and stating it gives people something to point to.

Show of Hands - Poll The Room

Just as if we're asking the audience a question, we also want to get them engaged with a "show of hands" question. This is another technique many presenters use to create context and commonality.

Use an Absorbing Visual

Compelling visuals are the ABC of presentation design – use them strategically to make a bold statement at the beginning and throughout your presentation. Your first presentation slide can be text-free. Communicate your idea with a visual instead – a photo, a chart, an infographic or another graphics asset.

Leverage The Curiosity Gap

Curiosity gap sparks our desire to dig deeper into the matter. We are explicitly told that we don't know something important and now we crave to change that. Curiosity is an incredibly strong driving force for action. Here's how you can use the curiosity gap during your presentation:

- Start telling a story, pause at the middle and delay the conclusion of it.
- Withhold the key information (e.g. the best solution to the problem you have described) for a bit – but not for too long as this can reduce the initial curiosity.
- Introduce an idea or concept and link it with an unexpected outcome or subject – this is the best tip for opening a presentation.