



# FEARLESS PRESENTATIONS<sup>®</sup>

## MINI COURSE

How to End Your Presentation with a Bang



## INTRODUCTION

“To your audience it’s like a great fairy-tale with a sad ending.”

### TERMS

**Presentation-** a speech or talk in which a new product, idea, or piece of work is shown and explained to an audience.

### Introduction

Have you ever heard a great speaker end an amazing talk with a lousy “Thank you,” or worse, “That’s all folks, any questions?” Such endings are anti-climactic. You went through all that effort to deliver a good presentation and that’s how you end it? That is a real shame when it happens.

To your audience, it’s like a great fairy-tale with a sad ending. A dud, a runner who had cramps a couple of steps before the finish line. So near, yet so far. Below are a few tips that will help you end your presentation with a bang, so that you will finish your race like you ran it.

## **Eliminate these Things from Your Presentation Conclusion**

### **Question & Answer Periods.**

Avoid these Presentation Show Stoppers One of the things that drives me up the wall is ending a fantastic presentation with a Q&A session that is, quite often, lackluster. I remember my Jr. High School football coach talking about passing the ball. He's say, "Only three things can happen when you pass the ball, and two of them are bad."

I kind of feel the same way about Question & Answer periods. If your audience asks you great questions, you can end your presentation on a high note. However, if your audience asks you odd or uninteresting questions, you can end on a low note. Worse, you may not get any questions, and the ending will just seem odd. When I present, I encourage people to ask questions DURING my presentation. That way, I can use one of the above ideas to end my presentation with a bang.

### **Thanking the Audience for Their Time.**

When you stand up to speak, you should have the attitude that your audience is there to hear you because you have important information that they need. When you thank your audience for their time, you are conceding that their time is more important than your time.

### **An Abrupt Ending with No Conclusion.**

When I was in college, I had an internship with Atlantic Richfield. At the end of the internship, I had to give a presentation in Dallas to a room of executives. I bombed the speech. The thing that really put an exclamation point on my failure was that once I ran out of content, I just abruptly stopped and sat down. There was dead silence in the room.

The woman who had introduced me just minutes prior, slowly stood up and said, "Well, I guess this is a good time for a break." Everything that happened after my abrupt ending just made the whole thing more awkward. So, spend time preparing your conclusion. Practice it a few times, and you will end on a high note.

## Designing Your PowerPoint Slideshow First

If you've read many of my blog posts or listened to any of my podcasts, you'll know that I mention this one a lot. This is the absolute BIGGEST mistake that almost everyone who presents (even me on occasion) will commit. We start our preparation by creating the slideshow (or other visual aids). This part of the preparation typically takes longer to complete.

As a result, we will start doing this part way too early in the process. You will save yourself a lot of time and a lot of stress if you figure out what you want to say first. Then, after you have a pretty good presentation, design visual aids to help you explain the content.

A few years ago, I was called in to help a team of engineers practice a group presentation to one of their big clients. The vice president of the engineering firm along with the head of the marketing department made a PowerPoint deck for the entire group. So, they created the slide-deck by receiving input from the other four presenters ahead of time. However, the other four presenters were not intricately involved in the process. So, I arrived in the meeting room, and the presenters were confused and irritated already.

Each of them were trying to say interesting things based on the visual aids that had been pre-created for them. So, they were adapting what they wanted to say to what was on the screen. To be blunt, it was really, really boring. The four speakers who had little control over the slideshow were extremely nervous.

Luckily, I had seen this type of challenge before. So, I had each of the presenters disregard the slideshow temporarily and re-design their actual speaking part. We spent an hour or so re-creating the speech. Then, I had each of them practice their part of the presentation a couple of times. All total, this took about half a day. They all began to feel more comfortable with their speech. Finally, we redesigned the visual aids to help each of the presenters better explain his or her content. Interestingly, a couple of the presenters didn't use a slideshow at all. They chose to use props and posters instead. (These visuals were better for their part of the talk.)

Design your presentation first. Then, figure out what visuals will help you explain the content better.

## LESSON 3 / **The Danger of Not Announcing an Imminent Close**

### **The Danger of Not Announcing an Imminent Close**

Our brains are wired to look for structure in things. That's why people get frustrated with cliffhangers in movies. Only in movies, there's a sequel.

In speeches and presentations, the end is the end.

Give a few hints a couple of slides or paragraphs before the ending. Make it clear that you're about to wrap things up by saying, "So let me review what we've discussed", "As I wrap up this presentation" or "In conclusion" or "As I conclude this speech, allow me to..."

Signaling the close politely prepares your audience for the ending. Plus, those who are starting to lose interest will start paying more attention. Ironically, announcing the ending also makes it more memorable.

But how do you make an ending memorable? If saying "Thank you" or "Any questions" is not advisable, what can you do?

"Tell 'em what you  
'gonna tell 'em, and  
then tell 'em what you  
told 'em."

- Zig Ziglar

### **Secrets to a Powerful Presentation Ending**

- Briefly Summarize Your Key Points.

If you are using the Three Point Talk, Four Point Talk, or Five Point Talk format that we advise, an easy conclusion is to just summarize your topic and key points. Zig Ziglar, the famous motivational speaker used to say, "Tell 'em what your 'gonna tell 'em, tell 'em, and then tell 'em what you told 'em."

So, his suggestion was to give an introduction outlining your topic and key points as an introduction. Then, cover your presentation one point at a time clarifying and giving evidence for each point. Finally, just recap your topic and key points one more time as a conclusion.

This technique works really well, because it allows you to repeat your key points a few times. This repetition helps your audience remember the content better. Here is an example:

#### **We Can Increase the Number of Young Viewers by Focusing More on Our Social Media Platforms**

1. Teens get most news from social media.
2. Increase coverage w/ teens increases interest in station.
3. Making social media selective will make us stand out against competition.

[Introduction] "My topic today is about how we can increase the number of young viewers by focusing more on social media. The things that we are going to cover are, how teens get most of their news from social media, that if we increase our coverage with teens there will also be a corresponding increase in interest in our TV station, and how making our social media selective will allow us to stand out from the competition."

After the introduction, the speaker would then cover the "meat" of the presentation by going through each point with specific examples and evidence about how each of those points are true. At the conclusion, the speaker could just recap by saying, "So in conclusion, since teens get most of their news via social media, if we increase our coverage with teens, we will also increase interest in our station, and if we make our social media selective we will stand out from the crowd, I believe that we can increase the number of young viewers by focusing more on social media."

### **Very easy, and very informative for your audience.**

- End with an Example, Story, or Anecdote.

My favorite way to both start and end a presentation is with a compelling story or anecdote. I delivered a breakout session speech a few weeks ago about how to design better technical presentations. I started my presentation by describing my first day in Macroeconomics class in college. (It was really, really boring.) Of course, I described it in a very funny, over-exaggerated way. I finished the presentation by describing how one of my class members had implemented the content of the session when he was delivering a very data-intense presentation for the Center for Disease Control. In this example, the speaker got rave reviews from his audience. Those contrasting stories work really well together.

Sometimes a good anecdote or funny story can be a good way to end on a positive as well. A good place to get funny anecdotes is from Reader's Digest. (RD has a great book published that has just funny work-related stories. You can purchase it here: *Laughter the Best Medicine @ Work: America's Funniest Jokes, Quotes, and Cartoons*) I was training an instructor years ago, and I had her pick a random funny anecdote from Reader's Digest. I told her that I'd find some way to insert the funny story into our class. Here is the story that she picked...

*A woman went to her boss saying that she was going to go home early because she wasn't feeling well. The boss, having just gotten over a cold of his own said that he hoped it wasn't something that he had given her. A fellow worker piped up saying, 'I hope not. She has morning sickness.'*

(Obviously, this instructor-in-training also had a sense of humor, as well.) I thought about it a while, and I just ended the session with, "So, in summary, one of the most important parts of the presentation design process is knowing your audience. It reminds me a story..." I then just added the anecdote word-for-word, and I got a big laugh.

- End Your Presentation with the End of an Earlier Story.

A similar, but way more inspirational way to use stories in your presentation is to give the beginning of a story early in the presentation and end the story in your conclusion. For instance, I sometimes start my public speaking classes telling the story I referenced above where I bombed that presentation when I was an intern. I will often go into great detail about how my hands were sweaty, and how I rushed through the whole 15 minute presentation in about three and half minutes. I was mortified.

I will sometimes finish my presentation telling how, just a year later, after a little outside training, I accepted an award in front of over 400 people. This time, I was calm, and I used my humor to win over the audience. By continuing the story and providing a positive result, it makes for a pretty nice presentation ending.

- End with an Open-Ended Question.

Questions simulate our brain's neocortex or 'new' brain, the part of our brain that overrides instincts and old behaviors. When you pose a question, or hear a question from someone else, your brain automatically thinks about it. Sometimes, your brain will instinctively answer the question whether you like it or not.

That's why people are drawn to thought-provoking questions. So a great way to end your speech is with a well-designed, thought provoking question. Avoid easy questions where the answer is an obvious "yes." Ask open-ended questions, potentially sensitive questions and questions with no straight right or wrong answers. Get their wheels turning.

For instance, if you have a persuasive title that focuses on a result that your audience is interested in receiving, you can actually just ask the audience your presentation title in a question format. Using the title in the sample outline above, an ending question might sound like, "In what ways could we focus more on our social media platforms as a way to cater to the young viewer?" The question has not real right or wrong answer. Any answer will help the speaker validate her premise. She could get 10, 15, 20 answers from her audience, and every single one will help her make her overall point.

If my title is "The Three-Point-Talk Will Help You Save Time When You Design Presentations," I could end the speech with a question like, "Based on what we've talked about today, how can you see the Three-Point-Talk helping you save time?"

Again, and answers that the audience provide will help me prove my point. The more the better.

- Give the Audience a Call-to-Action.

Most speeches and presentations tell their audience that they can do something to affect the world that they live in. Be it to save the environment, get a good job, improve company leadership or save more money. Whatever the case, such advice is useless if it's not applied.

What's the use if your audience forgets it, right? To prevent that and to inspire your audience, challenge them to do one specific thing from your speech.

If your speech is about finding a dream job and one of the points is to reach out to people in your network, dare your audience to connect with 3 people after the talk. It has to be specific and actionable, not just, "get a dream job".

If your presentation is about why your company should invest in advertising, make your call-to-action very specific. "So, my suggestion is that we increase our advertising budget by 10% and use that budget for additional re-targeting ads."

The thing to keep in mind here is that the more calls to action that you have, the less likely they will do anything. So, make your call-to-action just a single item. Make the item easy to implement.

- Echo Close

You can end with an inspirational quote, and then echo a single part of that quote as your presentation capstone. For instance, you might say something like...

*Plutarch once said, "The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled." So, when you present, kindle the fire of knowledge. Kindle the fire of enthusiasm. Kindle the fire of humor. Kindle the fire of empathy. And you you will kindle the fire of learning from your audience.*

- Another example might be.

*George Orwell once said, "If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out." So, cut the fluff. Cut the repetitive bullets. Cut the platitudes. And you will cut the confusion from your audience. It is an easy technique if you prepare the ending and practice it a few times.*

- "One More Thing"

Steve Jobs was famous for concluding his keynotes with "One more thing..." then following it up with a surprising fact, feature or innovation.

Why is this effective? Because it leaves people talking.

Next time you're about to give a speech try leaving out the most surprising part 'til the end. Then channel your inner Steve Jobs.

So replace these poor ways of ending your presentation with one of the ways above to end your presentation with a bang!

