

AN e-BURST OF INSPIRATION FROM THE BEST BOOKS

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GRABBING YOUR AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY

If You Don't, Your Presentation
May Be Doomed

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Grabbing Your Audience's Attention Immediately

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Picture your audience at the start of your presentation. Imagine a group of potential customers who've come to hear you give a presentation about your company's newest product drifting into a meeting room one by one, sipping their coffee, checking their BlackBerrys or iPhones. Or a banker in a wood-paneled office, sitting behind a tall stack of documents, who must decide whether or not to lend your start-up money for expansion. Or, as with my IPO clients, a roomful of institutional investors in an elegant hotel banquet room, wondering how the NASDAQ is doing at that very moment in time.

Where are their minds? Chances are, not on you, not at the start of your presentation. Chances are they are thinking about an urgent message on their handhelds, the prior loan applicant, the mercurial NASDAQ, their next appointment, the report that's overdue, or the fight they just had with their significant other.

If you were to launch into your presentation at full speed, describing your product, service, or technology, you would vault ahead of your audience, and they would be forced to catch up. Don't make them think!

You can capture your audience immediately with an Opening Gambit, a short statement to seize their attention (and, simultaneously,

to help you launch into your presentation in a comfortable, conversational manner).

There are seven classic Opening Gambits:

1. **Question.** A question directed at the members of the audience.
2. **Factoid.** A striking statistic or little-known fact.
3. **Retrospective/Prospective.** A look backward or forward.
4. **Anecdote.** A short human-interest story.
5. **Quotation.** An endorsement about your business from a respected source.
6. **Aphorism.** A familiar saying.
7. **Analogy.** A comparison between two seemingly unrelated items that helps illuminate a complex, arcane, or obscure topic.

1. The Question

One excellent way to open a presentation is with a question directed at the audience. A well-chosen, relevant question evokes an immediate response, involves the audience, breaks down barriers, and gets the audience thinking about how your message applies to them. The rhetorical question can be an excellent icebreaker, as long as it's both provocative and relevant to your audience.

2. The Factoid

An Opening Gambit Factoid is a simple, striking statistic or factual statement: a market growth figure or a detail about an economic, demographic, or social trend with which your audience may not be familiar. This factoid must be closely related to the main themes of your presentation, and to your Point B. The more unusual, striking, and surprising your factoid, the better.