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Seth Godin, author of *Linchpin*

The naked presenter

Delivering Powerful Presentations With or Without Slides

Garr Reynolds

Praise for *The Naked Presenter*

“Many books about presentation delivery cover simple topics like eye contact and gestures. Garr’s book goes much deeper, highlighting Zen concepts that address meaningful ways to connect credibly with an audience. It’s a must-read for anyone who has to give presentations.”

—**Nancy Duarte**, CEO of Duarte Design and
author of *slide:ology* and *resonate*

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“I do between 80 and 100 speaking events per year. That’s a full-time job in and of itself, but it’s a sure-fire business development tool for our agency. The only reason this model works so well for us is because I take everything Garr Reynolds says to heart. I don’t read his books, I devour them from the inside out. From the structure of the presentation to how to make the slides brilliant, nobody beats Garr. *The Naked Presenter* is a book whose time has come. Shedding everything to focus on the audience and the content is the true secret to great presentations. Now, Garr is sharing that secret (and how to do it) with the world. Thank you, Garr!”

—**Mitch Joel**, president of Twist Image and
author of *Six Pixels of Separation*

“You’ve probably watched a TED Talk, or seen someone who just owns the stage like Tom Peters and has the audience gasping for more, but did you know that you too can deliver presentations that get great reviews? You can by being a Naked Presenter. I’ve used these techniques to be a better presenter and they work. Use them and your audience will rave about your presentations. Heck, they might even stop Twittering during your presentations. Imagine that.”

—**Robert Scoble**, video blogger, technical evangelist,
and coauthor of *Naked Conversations*

The more you rehearse, the more the fear of the unknown is removed. The more the fear is removed, the more confident you will become. As you become more confident, you will feel more relaxed and your confidence will shine through. The thing about confidence is that it's impossible to fake. With practice, you will indeed become a confident speaker. However, it is possible to rehearse too much. You want it to sound natural and fresh, not mechanical or memorized. If you over-rehearse or try to memorize a script, you will diminish your ability to connect and engage the audience in a natural way.

The Day of the Presentation

On the day of your talk, there are three things you can do before you speak that can help you present naked and engage: (1) Arrive early so you can set up the room the way you like and have time to deal with any glitches that may pop up (whether you use multimedia or not), (2) encourage people to sit in the front, and (3) mingle with the audience before you begin your presentation.

Arrive early, prepare the room

It's always important to arrive early, especially if you will be using technology. Set up your computer right away, make sure the audio and projector are working, and confirm that your remote is working well in the room. When using a projector, many people like to turn the lights low (even in smaller venues). But unless you're presenting in a large, ballroom-style room, leave as many lights on as possible. The speaker cannot be in the dark, no matter how good that makes the slides look.

If you are allowed to adjust the room physically, then give yourself plenty of time to do this. Arrange the room to create the most intimate setting possible, given the restraints of the speaking location. Get people close and remove any physical barriers. If there is

a lectern in the middle of the stage, ask that it be removed or put to the side. Sometimes the lectern is fixed, so it's not possible to move it, or it's a major hassle for speakers who come after you and still prefer to stand behind the lectern. That's OK—even if the lectern stays in the center of the stage, there is no reason for you to stand behind it.

Encourage people to sit near the front

Years ago I presented to a group of 200 people. That's a good turnout, but the problem was the hall seated 450. As people arrived, they naturally spread themselves out all over the hall. The presentation went OK, but the overall vibe and sense of connection was definitely lacking compared to earlier talks with similar material. The intimacy was missing.

The next time I faced a similar situation, I asked the audience members to move closer to the front before I began. This instantly created a more lively atmosphere as people began to unconsciously feed off one another's reactions to the presenter (me) on stage. More questions, more discussion, stronger laughter, and more overall engagement ensued, with me and with each other. That kind of engagement is not possible when audience members sit very far away from each other. Remember: We want the audience close to us, but we want the audience members to be close to each other as well. Whenever possible, block off a section in the back or ask people to come to the front. The excitement, laughter at the funny bits, and the overall connection and participation goes way up when you take a relatively small number of people in a large room and bring them closer to you.

Mingle with the crowd before you start

A mistake novice presenters make is keeping their distance from the audience while people are waiting for the presentation to begin. This is a wasted opportunity. One reason to arrive early is so that you can take care of all of the technical matters and room arrangements before people start showing up. This gives you the peace of mind you need to begin meeting people as they start arriving. You can't meet everyone, obviously. But even if you meet a handful of people and have a couple of conversations with the audience members, you have demonstrated that you are relaxed, happy to be there, and focused on the audience and their needs.

As you meet people and hear their stories, this may give you further insights into their pain and their specific challenges—ideas that you can elaborate on further in your talk. You'll also discover that you may be able to work your conversations into your talk later. For example, let's say you spoke to a well-known businessman named Nathan Bryan before your talk began. During your presentation, then, you may preface one of your key points with "As I was telling Nathan Bryan in the audience a few moments ago, the main problem with the strong yen is..."

Another benefit of going into the audience before you start speaking is that you will begin to feel more comfortable and confident as the audience shifts from an abstraction in your mind to a more concrete and unique group of people that you came to converse with. There is nothing to be scared of or worried about. Since your presentation already began (in a sense) 30 minutes earlier while mingling with the crowd, you'll feel much more relaxed and prepared than if you just wait in the wings until your name is called. It will feel more like the continuation of a conversation you already started with the audience than a sudden and scary beginning.

In Sum

- A boundary of time as well as space is important for exploration and creativity to flourish. Quiet your busy mind so that you can focus on what is important and what is not when preparing your presentation.
- Identify your purpose and understand who your audience is. If we focus on our audiences as we should, then in the preparation stage we will identify where our audience is *before* our talk and set a goal for where we would like them to be *after* our time with them.
- When planning your presentation, think of it as a good story that has conflict, contrasts, problems, and solutions. Emotional elements often leave lasting impressions on the audience. Remember to (1) identify the problem, (2) identify causes of the problem, and (3) show how and why you solved the problem.
- On the day of the presentation: (1) Arrive early so you can set up the room the way you like and have time to deal with any technical glitches, (2) encourage people to sit in the front, and (3) mingle with the audience before you begin your presentation.



**The most precious gift we can
offer others is our presence.**

— Thich Nhat Hanh

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