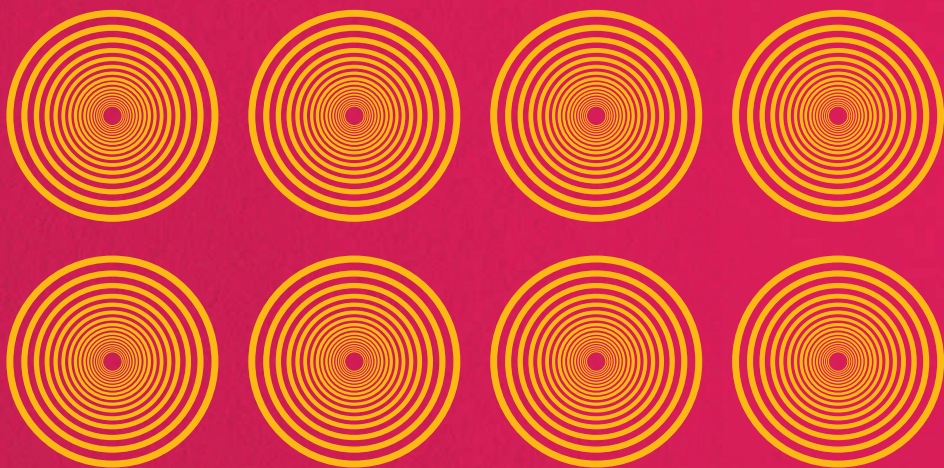


'This is the most effective book I have ever read on the art of presenting, especially for leaders. *The Leader's Guide to Presenting* is the one book they would ever need on this subject.'

Adrian Foster, UK Marketing Manager, Parker Hannifin

THE LEADER'S GUIDE TO PRESENTING

HOW TO USE SOFT SKILLS TO GET HARD RESULTS



TOM BIRD AND JEREMY CASSELL



PUBLISHING
FINANCIAL TIMES

Praise for *The Leader's Guide to Presenting*

‘An indispensable guide for global leaders in aiding the preparation of high-stakes, persuasive presentations with structure and purpose to deliver positive outcomes. This book has been an invaluable aid in delivering to my audiences engaging and compelling messages with the necessary punch!! Brilliant!!’

**Dr Graham Woolford, Head of Operations,
Unihealth, South Africa**

‘Having coached and trained leaders since 1999, including presentations coaching and training, I am hugely impressed with Jeremy and Tom’s book. *The Leader’s Guide to Presenting* provides leaders with a thorough, practical and easy to use guide to making presentations to different types of audience. I’ve learned a lot from reading it.’

**Jeremy Lazarus MA, FCCA, FCT, Director,
The Lazarus Consultancy Ltd**

‘This book crystallises the key elements that can allow any leader to be really present when they present and make a dynamic difference with any audience. You can dip into it or read it in a linear way – whichever way you chose I can guarantee you will find lots of ideas, tools and questions that will allow you to improve your ability to present dynamically and make the impact that will make a real, positive difference in your world.’

John Matson, Partner, Arthur Cox, Chair, Lex Mundi

- your expectations for the audience (whether you want them to interact, engage in group discussions, etc.?)

At the end

At the conclusion of your presentation you are looking to:

- leave the audience feeling positively predisposed to your argument (if appropriate);
- maximise the chance that they will remember your key points;
- manage their emotional state so that they leave feeling positive;
- engage them with a clear 'call to action': i.e. what you want them to do as a result of the presentation.

Here are a few things to cover to maximise your chance of achieving the points listed above:

- Summarise your key messages or themes again.
- Give a strong and confident 'call to action'.
- Ensure that you 'have the last word'. If you handle questions towards the end of your presentation, ensure that you answer these before you go into your final summary of the key points and call to action. This will better enable you to manage how the audience feels at the end of the presentation. See Part 4 for more information on this.

6. Rehearse!

This final stage of the planning and preparation process is perhaps the most important. It surprises us how many senior leaders fail to rehearse their presentations. Could you

imagine an actor going on stage for the first night of a new play without having exhaustively rehearsed his lines and his delivery? And yet often we see leaders engaging in high-stakes presentations where the audience are witnessing his or her first rehearsal!

■ Could you imagine an actor going on stage for the first night of a new play without having exhaustively rehearsed his lines and his delivery?

Some practical tips to get the most from rehearsing your presentation are:

- If possible, rehearse in the location that you will be delivering the presentation in.
- Rehearse all the way through. We see lots of leaders who rehearse only the first part of their presentation but have never had a complete run-through.
- If possible, record on video the rehearsal and play it back to see how you come across.
- If appropriate and possible, ask someone to watch the rehearsal so that they can give effective feedback to you on how you come across, the pace and confidence of your delivery, the clarity of your messages and the degree to which you engage them.
- Notice what you need in order to deliver the messages most effectively while being able to engage with the audience. When you rehearse, be aware of how much time you spend looking at notes and consider what you need to do to ensure you connect with the audience rather than your notes. Some people have cue cards with a summary of each key point or individual words to aid their memory about what they will be covering.

SUMMARY

- Having a structured process for your preparation helps ensure you cover everything you need to.
- Consider what form your presentation should take to maximise the chance of achieving your objectives: formal, informal, facilitated, creative, etc.
- Follow the six-step preparation process:
 1. Know your audience.
 2. Identify your desired outcome.
 3. Brainstorm content and key messages.
 4. Structure the content.
 5. Focus on the start and finish.
 6. Rehearse!



Pacing the audience

The big mistake: trying to lead your audience too quickly

Have you ever attended a presentation where you felt interested in the topic but disconnected from the presenter? Perhaps you felt that they didn't fully appreciate your needs and views or were pushing their ideas a little too hard at you. It may be that you felt they were almost too enthusiastic about their message or that they lacked the necessary context to ensure that their message felt relevant to you.

What is going on in these situations? What is the presenter either doing or not doing that is contributing to a sense of disconnection between them and the audience?

What often happens is that a presenter tries to lead their audience too quickly to the points they are trying to make or the feelings they want their audience to have. In doing this, the presenter creates a sense in the audience that they do not fully understand their needs or 'get' them. Trying to lead your audience too quickly is an easy mistake to make: one that is all too common among leaders. It is also an easy thing to prevent through the application of some simple yet effective

techniques. This chapter will show you how to avoid making a mistake that can have a significant negative impact on your presentations.

What is 'leading too early'?

Have you ever been in a situation where someone was angry or frustrated with you for either something you had done or not done in either your personal or professional life? Perhaps they came to confront you with it and your reaction was to softly say 'calm down'. What was the impact of those two softly spoken words in response to someone's obvious frustration? It is likely that it did not help or defuse the situation at all. In fact it is likely to have escalated it. Why? Because there was a clear gap between how the other person was feeling and the feelings that you were demonstrating, resulting in the other person feeling that you did not 'get' the importance of the situation to them. Your intention was to lead the conversation into calmer waters, but by not demonstrating that you understood how important this issue was to the other person you showed a gap. This is an example of 'leading too early'.

As a leader you will often be presenting on topics where you want to engage your audience and leave them feeling positive or motivated about your message. It is likely that in a number of these situations you will already be feeling genuinely positive about what you have to say and it is with this feeling that you start your presentation. Even if you do not communicate your thoughts and feelings explicitly in the words that you say, they are likely to be communicated very clearly through your body language and the way you speak your words.

Enthusiasm for your message is great to have. In fact we would highly recommend it! The problem is that your

audience may not feel the same. The reality is that there is likely to be quite a gap between how you feel about your message or proposition and how your audience feels about it at the start of your presentation.

■ The reality is that there is likely to be quite a gap between how you feel about your message or proposition and how your audience feels about it at the start of your presentation.

This difference in how your audience feels at the start of your presentation compared to how you feel is where we can lose a presentation right at the very start. Because people buy ideas emotionally first and then justify them logically, this ‘emotional gap’ is critical to recognise (if it exists) and address before you seek to lead the audience towards your desired position. If you do not acknowledge how the audience might be feeling before you start into the body of your presentation they will only see how *you* feel, what *your* emotions are, and this can potentially communicate a number of things to the audience:

- a lack of understanding by you of how they really feel;
- a disconnect, or gap, between how you feel as the leader or presenter and how they feel;
- a feeling that you are not aware of the reality that they face; their concerns, pressures or challenges.

By not acknowledging first how the audience might be feeling or what they might be thinking you are leading them too quickly.

The reason that this is such a big mistake is that people need to feel acknowledged and heard before they are willing to