

How to Structure Your Presentation So You Don't Bore the Audience

Back in the day there was one golden rule of giving speeches and presentations, and that was "Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them." While that may have been effective in the olden days (though we doubt it was ever effective, merely standard) today's audiences require much more engagement. They want to be moved; captivated; changed. A tall order for any presenter for sure.

Good public speaking is about taking the audience on an emotional journey. Now while that may sound challenging and beyond what you think you are capable of, having the audience in the palm of your hand is simply about telling them a great story. And it doesn't matter what industry you're from or what message you're trying to get across, human beings are hardwired for storytelling.

Here are 4 storytelling techniques that will have your audience hanging on your every word:

Monomyth

You may have heard this technique referred to as "The Hero's Journey" as it's the specific structure found in many myths, religious writings and folklore from all around the world. And why is it so popular and effective?

Because this is a story about someone setting out on a difficult journey and overcoming a great obstacle and ending the journey with newfound wisdom and insight. It's a story most of us can relate to in some way or another.

And it's not just folk tales that follow this structure, modern stories like "Finding Nemo" and "Star Wars" do it, too.

This particular story structure is great to for explaining to your audience how you gained the knowledge and wisdom you are sharing with them.

The Mountain

The mountain structure can be very effective because it has the ability to sustain the drama and tension in your story. Think of this structure as similar to that of a television episode: the scene is set, and the action

happens in small series with multiple challenges taking place, the tension builds and builds and then there is a climactic conclusion.

This structure is great for telling your audience how either you personally, or your company, overcame a series of challenges.

Nested loops

Nested loops is a storytelling technique whereon three or more narratives are layered within each other. Your most important story, which would be the core message of your presentation, would be in the very center, and the other stories would be woven around it to elaborate on your central theme or point.

This is a very natural form of storytelling. It's a bit like if your wife were telling you a story about her grandmother who bestowed a lot of wisdom... the first loop is your wife's story, the second is her grandmother's story, the third encapsulates the overall important lesson you choose to bestow to the audience.

This technique works well if you are trying to tell the audience how you became inspired to start your company or if you want to use analogies to explain a central concept.

In Medias Res

If you want to grab your audience's attention and keep them on the edge of their seat, this is the technique to use. With it you start your story in the heat of the action, and then pop "back" to the beginning and explain how you got to the heat of the action.

Just be careful you don't give too much excitement away at the very beginning as you still want to build and hold some suspense over your audience. So instead, hint at something big that's coming and then suddenly jump to the beginning and build your way to the big thing you hinted at.

We should mention that this works best with shorter presentations. If you try and hold you audience's attention this way for an hour, they may become frustrated and lose interest.

This could work great if your company is launching a specific product and the inspiration for the development of that product came from a very dramatic or emotional place. For example, you and a friend found yourself in a tiny car that wouldn't start in the middle of Kruger National Park in South Africa with a herd of elephants charging toward you....

If you are giving a presentation at an upcoming trade show, try one of these techniques and see if your audience isn't more engaged!