

Karen's Top 10 Presentation Tips

1. START AT THE END

Before you pick up a pen or create a slide, think about the end result? What do you want the audience to take away? What do you want them to know or do? What do they care about? No matter how many years and dollars you've spent on research and development, when presenting, your entire project should boil down to one key thought. If you could sum it up in ten seconds, what would you want your audience to know? For example, workers around the country spent the past ten years collecting census data. The statistics and volumes of information are endlessly complex, but their message is short and simple: **Fill out the form.**

2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Until you talk about something that affects your audience, they won't pay attention. To do this, think about your goals and frame what you want to say from their perspective. So, think audience and keep asking yourself:

- What does this mean to them?
- Why should they care?
- If I were sitting in their seat, what would I care about?
- How does this information affect them?

To gain their buy in, you need to quickly marry that to what they care about to what you want to tell them.

3. YOU HAD ME AT HELLO

It takes 7 seconds for someone to form an impression of you. Make your opening words count so you capture attention quickly and give people a reason to listen. Instead of reading an agenda or slide, share a story, vignette or example that drives home your main point.

If you want people to remember content, it's essential to back up your main points with examples and short stories that are meaningful and relevant.

4. KEEP IT SIMPLE

The more you say, the less people remember. So, instead of trying to jam ten pounds of information into a two- pound bag, think about three key points you'd like your audience to remember. Then look for facts and information that will support those points make the information relevant to the listener. For example, if you're talking technology, how will the technology save people time and money? If you're talking about medicine, how will a therapy change or affect someone's life? Put yourself in your listener's shoes.

5. DROWNING IN DATA

People remember impressions, not drifts of data. They remember how you made them feel. When we see stories about tsunamis, we don't remember the details. But, we'll never forget the stories, the images and how we felt when we saw almost indescribable pictures of death and devastation. Make your facts and figures stronger by supporting them with real evidence such as powerful numbers, examples, anecdotes and visual images that leave a lasting impression.

6. NO ONE CAME TO SEE A SLIDE SHOW

Today's business presenters often equate preparation to preparing a slide presentation. Visuals should reinforce what you say, not serve as your script. Don't read the slide! Audiences are looking to you to make sense of information. Prepare your presentation first. Then develop visuals that support your key message. Additionally, write in bullets or phrases to help you talk more and read less so you are free to look at people and engage them.

7. GET TO THE POINT

Most of us have short attention spans. Your audiences are no different. They want you to get to the point...quickly. When they ask a question, they want the facts, not long winded answers. If they interrupt you in the middle of a slide to ask a question, they want you to answer the question and then move on instead of answering the question and repeating all of the information on the slide. Often, presenters over answer questions to buy time, fill the silence or because they think a brief response is too simplistic. Less is more still holds true. Long answers frequently dilute messages, lack examples and open the door for unwanted questions.

8. VOICE VISION WITH VOLUME

When you speak, you're on! Even if it's a small meeting, you want to project so your voice is strong and authoritative. We've worked with many people

who are soft spoken and others who start out strong, but trail off at the end of a sentence. We advise visualizing a person in the back of the room straining to hear you. Speak to that person in an effort to better project. And, whenever possible, stand up to maximize the richness of your voice.

9. STUMP THE CHUMP

It is almost inevitable that someone will interrupt your presentation to ask a question. As distressing as this can be, they are not trying to stump you. Think of the question as an opportunity to address their concerns and use it as a stepping stone to repeat and reinforce key points or deliver additional information. It's helpful to anticipate questions and prepare answers in advance.

10. NIX THE JARGON

It's not about you. It's about your audience. Don't assume that just because your audience is packed with managers and peers, you can talk technical jargon and lingo. You live and breathe your work. They don't necessarily understand the complicated details you are laying out. Remember to explain technical facts in non-technical and whenever possible, use analogies, short phrases and visual examples.

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