

# Triple your Presentation Success

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## Acknowledgements

No book is ever written by just the author. In fact, the idea for this book came about after I made a keynote presentation in Noosa, Australia, in 2013.

I was approached by a senior leader attending the conference who said ‘I present often, and as a professional I always want to know what I can do better. But I also want it to be fast and easy! Can you help?’

We laughed and talked, and I gave him a few tips. During the plane ride home I wrote the words Sexy, Stats, Story on the back of a clean vomit bag (yes, work with what you have). My goal was to make this short, practical and doable: a formula you could remember in your head.

This book was co-created by that leader’s honesty. This book would also not have happened without my talented editor Lieu Thi Pham, thanks for the tough love!

I am also grateful to have incredible mentors who continually inspire and challenge me: Matt Church, Peter Cook and Christina Guidotti. Every day my clients give me the privilege of doing, in Matt Church’s words, ‘work I love with people I like’. The love and support of my family, my husband Vish and my daughter Tara, the warmth of my extended family and the laughter and joy of my friends all make my life rich.

Thanks most of all to you the reader, for picking up this book and for taking on the opportunity to triple your presentation success.

**Yamini**

“Every presentation is an opportunity to make an impact: to showcase you and your messages at your best.”

# Introduction

The stakes of not getting your presentation right have never been higher. You could win or lose that next promotion, that opportunity to do business or to be seen as an inspiring leader, all based on your presentation.

So what stops us inspiring our audiences every time we present? In mentoring CEOs and leaders for over a decade, I have constantly heard the following three barriers come up:

- **Having to deliver dry, boring content**
- **Battling nerves**
- **Little or no time to prepare**

Every time we pick up a presentation book, or attend a course, we worry if we'll embrace the ideas and systems. Often, despite our best intentions, what gets in the way is that conventional presentation training tries to turn us into a version of the author/trainer.

**Triple your presentation** success, on the other hand, gives you the tools and permission to be the best version of yourself.

Every presentation presents a fork in the road: you can choose to simply inform your audience, or you can choose to influence and inspire them. If you choose the latter, then this book is for you.

# What's your job as a presenter?

So, what's your job as a presenter? The obvious answer is to present. However, to truly figure it out you have to know why your audience is there. Your audience always wants three things from you as the presenter:

- **To learn**
- **To have fun while they learn**
- **To be inspired**

This applies no matter the context: presenting at an internal team meeting, pitching for a multibillion-dollar tender or giving a keynote speech at a conference. Knowing what every audience wants makes the presenter's job crystal clear.

“Your job as a presenter is to inform and inspire. Craft great content and create connection.”

## Content and connection

No matter what your content is, it has to inspire and connect with your audience. In the presentation game we have bought into the idea that content is king for too long. Our new mantra for the 21st century should be: connection eats content for breakfast.

The trick is to use your content to create connections to you and your messages. Not content for content's sake, but content that you can inspire your audience with.

You can do this in three steps:

1. Craft **sexy** messages
2. Back it up with **stats**
3. Slam dunk with **story**

A presentation needs basic architecture to hold it together. When the architecture is inspiring, so too is the presentation.

## Sexy, stats, story is the new presentation architecture for the 21st century.

This is your new mantra: **sexy, stats, story**. It doesn't matter whether you have 15 minutes and the back of an envelope or months to prepare, this structure is easy to remember and will help you shine.

You can follow it in an infinite loop. For example, if you have three messages, you would follow the 'sexy, stats, story' mantra three times.

Of course, once you have a handle on this structure you can alter it and start with provocative stats, or open with a killer story. But first we need to know the rules in order to break them.

# Sexy

# 1. Sexy: Craft a sexy message

Start by looking at your presentation and listing all its key messages. Don't drown in the detail just yet, and make sure you avoid any laborious explanations. For example, one of your messages might be 'collaboration is important'.

The next step is to re-package these messages so they are sexy and grab your audience's attention. So, here are the top tips for creating a sexy message and they all involve leaving your clothes on!

A sexy message is a memorable, repeatable sound bite.

# 1. Sexy: Craft a sexy message Cont.

## Tip 1: 'Smart down' your message

A sexy message is not about dumbing down your message. Instead, it is about 'smarting down' your message in a way that people will connect with and remember. Find the right words but make sure they are memorable and grab people's attention.

Tim, one of our workshop participants, had the message 'results from last year'. Indeed, his results were spectacular, but this was quite a standard message. Tim made it sexy by re-packaging it as 'why I love you!' He opened his presentation with: 'I want to start by telling you why I love you.' KABOOM! He instantly had everyone's attention. Compare that with the more conventional 'I am here to share last year's results'.

## Tip 2: Spin it

What about if you have a boring message that has already been said? You need to put a different spin on it to turn it into a sexy message.

Try looking at newspaper headlines and popular culture for inspiration. For example, a research paper on counterfeit designer clothes became The Devil wears (fake) Prada, playing on the title of the movie and book The Devil wears Prada. Feel free to be tongue-in-cheek and provocative, and think about how your message can be re-packaged using something that is current and popular.

## Most presentations contain tons of information but little inspiration.

## Tip 3: Short is sexy

Your message must be short: 15 to 30 seconds maximum. We used to say that storytelling helps increase sales by more effectively engaging with your customers. Now, with our short and sexy version, we say: **facts tell, story sells.**

# 1. Sexy: Craft a sexy message Cont.

## **Tip 4: Write it as a bumper sticker**

Try to distil your message to its essence, much like you'd see on a bumper sticker. Let's face it, you'd never see 'optimising synergies' on a bumper sticker!

This technique forces you to keep it short. But you don't have to come up with an original slogan. If it works with your message you can use one that is already out there. For example, if one of your messages is 'collaboration is important', you could re-package it to say 'behind every great person... is a group of people... collaborating'

## **Tip 5: Be inspired by advertising and movie tag lines**

You are probably not a professional copywriter, but there's no reason why you can't piggyback on some of the world's best work. Start collecting advertising and movie tag lines. Think of this as your 'sexy message bank' and when you are

crafting your message, you can draw from this collection.

A great example of this comes from a leader who was presenting an internal business update on a project that, despite stalling in the past, was set to receive more resources. Named 'the hero project', he started off with the (unsexy) message that it was 'strategically aligned with the organisational imperatives and that resource allocation has been prioritised for this quarter'. However, as he was a huge Rambo fan, he took his favourite line from the movie - 'heroes don't die, they just reload' - and re-packaged his message as: 'heroes don't die, they just reload with resources'

Once you've introduced your sexy message, you can move onto explaining it in more detail. However, aim to catch your audience's attention first, and you'll have them hanging on your every word.

# Stats

## 2. Stats: Back it up baby!

Once you have your sexy message you need to back it up with hard data, numbers and research. This appeals to people's left-brain and the logic-oriented sceptics in your audience. It also makes you credible as a presenter.

For example, if your sexy message is 'facts tell, stories sell', the stats could be:

**Did you know that more than 80% of buying decisions are made on emotions?**

**And stories are a great way of connecting to this emotion in the sales process.**

Here are the tips you need to seamlessly incorporate stats into your presentation, ensuring your sexy message is informative as well as fun.

*Approach numbers  
with caution - numbers  
can be numbing.*

## 2. Stats: Back it up baby! Cont.

### Tip 1: Don't drown people in numbers

We seldom walk away from a presentation thinking there weren't enough charts, data and numbers. Often it's quite the reverse. Some presenters live in number land, or, once their presentation enters it, are loath to leave it. However, that's the point when the energy leaves the room.

What if you have no choice and your presentation requires lots of graphs, charts and numbers? One approach is to distribute them as a handout and focus on a few key points in your slides.

**A handout is a hand up for your audience: it helps them understand your numbers.**

What matters most is the insight you bring to the numbers. In Sir Ken Robinson's TED Talk **How schools kill creativity**, he makes a case for how education should nurture, not kill, creativity. This is how he uses data, and then helps the audience with both his insight and humour.



**“In the next 30 years, according to UNESCO, more people worldwide will be graduating through education than since the beginning of history. (The Data)**

**More people, and it's the combination of all the things we've talked about — technology and its transformation effect on work, and demography and the huge explosion in population. Suddenly, degrees aren't worth anything.**

**Isn't that true? When I was a student, if you had a degree, you had a job. If you didn't have a job it's because you didn't want one. (The Insight)**

**And I didn't want one, frankly?” (The Humour)**

## 2. Stats: Back it up baby! Cont.

### Tip 2: Pitch don't preach the key numbers

Your next task is to make your key numbers relevant and interesting to your audience. The best way to do this is by adding an interesting fact, or sharing a customer observation, after the number. A presenter at a large conference once started by saying:

**“One in three people will suffer from public speaking anxiety in their lifetime. Turn to the person on your right, and then to the person on your left, among the three of you, who will it be?”**

Everybody laughed, but the stats sunk in.

Another way of presenting stats is to quote an authority or expert in the area. You could say, for example, ‘I was reading Seth Godin’s blog and he shares that one of the top 100 things searched for on Yahoo! is Yahoo!’

At a conference a global CEO presented his numbers as a weather map of the regions. It was the highlight of the conference. All this proves that no matter how boring the numbers are there are many imaginative ways to present them.

### Tip 3: Be strategic with the stats you present

Hans Rosling’s TED Talk *The best stats you will ever see* is an example of how you can do numbers well, even with a serious topic.



Rosling presents complex, longitudinal, global stats on child mortality, but does it with drama, urgency and adopts the persona of a sports broadcaster. It’s magic, and it works without minimising the seriousness of the issue.

As the presenter, you have to make strategic choices about the data you are going to show. Your job is to prioritise this for your audience. And always ensure that your data is credible, and that you credit your sources.

# Story

“Just by following the first two steps you will transform your presentation. However, to totally rock, you have to anchor it with a story.”

## 3. Story: Inspire your audience

Story, in this case, means something that makes it real for your audience: an actual story or an example or an anecdote.

This last step makes it all come alive and helps your audience understand what it means in the real world. Most importantly, it inspires them.

There are three simple steps to finding the right story:

- 1. Start by looking at its purpose, in this case, your sexy message.**
- 2. Look through your experiences, both personal and professional, to see what fits this purpose.**
- 3. Consider your audience and what will work for them.**

Once you've decided on the best story, make sure it shines by following these tips.

## 3. Story: Inspire your audience Cont.

### Tip 1: Write it down

Most people fluff around, ramble and take too long if they try to tell a story off the cuff. By simply writing it down you will gain clarity and craft it well. Make sure you write like you speak so that your story flows well and comes across as conversational.

Of course, when it comes time to deliver your story, make sure you never read it off the page. Writing it down is purely for clarity.

### Tip 2: Keep it short

In business, your stories should take between 30 seconds and 2 minutes maximum. Anything longer and you risk losing your audience.

### Tip 3: Practice, practice and more practice

The more you practice, the better your stories will be. Although it can be awkward, nothing beats practicing aloud, whether it's in the shower or when you're walking the dog. It also helps to record your stories into your phone to listen back to them.

Finally, here's an example of a personal story shared by Bill Arconasti of Atlassian that demonstrates the power of the right story:

A few years ago a friend and I went backpacking in the pristine wilderness of Denali National Park in Alaska. We bought every piece of equipment known to man to fight off grizzly bears, like pepper spray, bells etc. Before we set off, the rangers made us watch a video in which we were instructed to simply wave our arms in the air in the unlikely event we encountered a bear. My friend and I laughed so hard at the actors in the video and made fun of the idea that something so ridiculous would scare away a bear.

The very next day we set off and had barely turned the corner when there right in front of us was a giant grizzly bear. My knees started knocking and my friend shouted 'hand me the pepper spray!'

And for some reason I replied 'no just wave your arms in the air, and we both did. To our shock the bear ambled off. When we returned we told the ranger about our encounter and he replied 'I am so glad you did not use the pepper spray as that just makes the bears mad. Either that or you accidentally spray yourself!'

### 3. Story: Inspire your audience Cont.

I am sharing this with you because it reminds me of our daily choices with technology. Of course we can choose the 'bells whistles' version for our customers but sometimes, just like waving your arms can scare off a grown grizzly, all that is needed is the simple version.

This story ticks all the right boxes: it immediately pulls you in, it's engaging, it's funny, it's purposeful and it marries story and message beautifully.

It also demonstrates how, even in business storytelling, it's often the personal stories that are the most powerful.

Of course, this is just the beginning. (Warning: the following is a blatant plug) I co-authored an entire book on the power of storytelling, titled ***Hooked: how leaders connect, engage and inspire using storytelling*** and, of course, it's the best book on the planet to show you how to do just that!

# Pulling it Together

# Pulling it together

## So how do you pull it all together?

Here is an example from one of my presentations **Influence power for the 21st century**. We have used the **sexy, stats, story** formula on one key message.

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### Sexy message

Leadership is not about influence.  
Leadership is about intentional influence.

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### Stats

Research tells us that 80% of a leader's job is communication.

But, imagine if, as a leader, every time you communicated you produced both action and results?

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### Story

I remember my first brush with influence. When I was 10, my teacher asked us to write a sentence that made sense, but the sentence could only be made up of ten words, and each word could only have two letters. We tried and we tried and came up with nothing.

My teacher then wrote on the board 'If it is to be, it is up to me'. That day my teacher influenced a classroom full of children to think and behave differently, not just in that moment but also for the rest of their lives.

It was my first lesson in influence and leadership and I was hooked!

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## Pulling it together Cont.

### The winning trifecta

So there you have it. The winning trifecta that will help you triple your presentation success is **sexy, stats, story**.

Before I finish, I'll leave you with this tale from Thailand, where, in the 1950s, a group of Buddhist monks were moving a five-ton clay Buddha statue that had sat in a deserted temple for hundreds of years. In the midst of moving, the straps broke and the statue fell to the ground.

The monks' horror soon turned to surprise, however, when they noticed something glistening beneath the cracked clay. They began chipping away at the statue, revealing a solid golden Buddha inside.

The story goes that hundreds of years earlier an invading army was sure to steal the golden statue.

So, the monks at the time devised a plan to cover the statue in clay. Although the plan worked, sadly all the monks perished and the secret was never passed on.

That was until it was discovered centuries later through this happy accident.

For too long, just like the golden Buddha, we have been operating with our greatness hidden. But no more. This successful formula of **sexy, stats, story** will help you unlock the hidden gold in your presentation.

## About the author



Yamini Naidu is a global thought-leader specialising in business storytelling and influence. She works with leaders and entrepreneurs, and was recently featured in the highly-respected Boss magazine, who credited her with doubling her clients' revenue.

An economist by training (please don't hold that against her) she has helped clients achieve significant business results, such as increasing employee

engagement, leading organisational change, winning multimillion-dollar tenders and increasing sales..all through the power of organisational storytelling.

She believes that whatever you are trying to achieve in business, storytelling can help you get there. In fact, she guarantees it!

### Connect with Yamini



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