

Four Keys to Better Presentations.

While these keys may seem simple, we have all sat through presentations that make simple, avoidable mistakes.

Uncommon Value

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When COVID-19 vaccinations became available, we rapidly started seeing improvements on many metrics, which brought on some improvements to our ability to travel and get in front of customers. Now with the delta variant gaining some steam, we may see the return of some social limitations, but I believe that we will still be able to get in front of customers and prospects, thereby increasing the frequency of formal presentations. With that in mind, I wanted to go over four keys to making more memorable and effective presentations.

Plan upfront. A masterful presentation requires a lot of planning and preparation. Just like the foundation of a house supports the entire structure and, when done correctly, will do so for many years, a good plan, and time spent preparing, will support your presentation and pay dividends afterwards. Plan your outcome – where do you want your audience to end up? And what do you need to say/present to get them there?

Less words. Avoid death by PowerPoint and adopt a philosophy of less is more when it comes to text on your slides. Try to avoid more than one line of text for any bullet point on your presentations. This may be difficult, but I find it forces you to boil your message down and make it as concise and succinct as possible. Avoid the temptation to bestow upon the audience the totality of your wealth of knowledge on the subject and only provide details, or information that support the messages you want the audience to take with them.

Don't read. Avoid reading your PowerPoint to the audience at all costs. It's distracting on so many levels. You lose the ability to connect with your audience through eye contact and other body language cues. Your audience will wonder why you didn't just send them the PowerPoint deck and let them read it themselves as opposed to coming to a meeting and watching you read it to them. It also communicates that you did not prepare for the meeting and suggests you don't place a high level of importance on it. Use visual cues on the screen to remind you of talking points that allow you to communicate with your audience, not read to them.

Practice. The importance of practice can not be stressed enough. Anything worth doing is worth doing right. Don't let all the time and effort you put into the presentation unravel on the day of because you did not put enough effort into practicing the presentation.

These four keys seem simple, and they really are. There is nothing here that is earth shattering and I know you've heard these points before. But the truth of the matter is people still do this stuff every day. We attend meetings or presentations and often see these mistakes made. Getting a chance to present material to co-workers, customers, or company leadership is a big deal. When done properly, it conveys the message that you are an expert in the field being discussed and exponentially grows your personal brand, which can lead to many more opportunities for those who choose to be a professional.