

## Skills 360 – Presentations: Connecting with your Audience (1)

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you think much about who your audience is when you're planning a presentation?
2. Do you find it difficult to plan just the right amount of material or content to fit the allotted time for a presentation?
3. Think of a presenter that you find very engaging. What does the person do that helps engage you or grab your attention?

### Vocabulary

**At the end of the day:** after considering everything; "Sure, I like the blue design as well, but at the end of the day what's important is what the *customer* thinks, not me."

**To pack up:** to organize your belongings or equipment when you are finished an activity; "The trade show is finished, but we still need to pack up our entire display and get it back to the office by 7:00."

**To head home:** to go home; "I know you haven't been feeling well this week Brian, so why don't you head home early today?"

**Easy-going:** an "easy-going" personality is calm, flexible, and not easily bothered; "Why don't you just use Dylan's workstation for the morning? He's really easy-going, so I'm sure he won't mind."

**Extrovert:** a naturally sociable person, or one who is outgoing and enjoys being with others; "We are currently looking for motivated extroverts to fill three positions in event marketing."

**To take the stage:** to go to the front of a room or auditorium to begin performing or giving a presentation; "You could feel the excitement in the room as soon as Tony Robbins took the stage and began speaking."

**To lay eyes on something:** to see something; "As soon as I laid eyes on the slick new Mazda XTC I knew I wanted to buy one."

**Up to snuff:** good enough, or meeting a standard; "Maria, we were very impressed with your early work, but in the past couple of months your reports just haven't been up to snuff."

**Just plain something:** we can use "just plain" before an adjective to emphasize a negative quality; "I'm sorry, but I think waiting to launch the website until *after* Christmas is just plain stupid."

**Chances are:** probably; "You're looking for Tanis? Oh, chances are she's in the board room. She's had meetings all day."

**Blunder:** mistake; "Looks like Office Paper forgot our order again. One more blunder like this and I think we should find a new supplier."

**To keep something in mind:** to consider or think of something, especially as you do something else; "When you're negotiating with these contractors, just keep in mind that last time they quoted us way too much."

**Flock:** a group of birds, or – informally- a group of people; "That new café is really doing well; every morning there's a flock of customers at the door waiting for it to open."

**Eager:** excited and energetic; "Well, I must say that we're all very eager to start work together with our new partners on this European project."

**To get a handle on something:** to get something under control or to understand something; "I'm sorry Ross, but I won't be able to look at your proposal until I've gotten a handle on this little HR crisis."

**To put yourself in someone's shoes:** to imagine you are someone else in order to understand their situation; "I think if you put yourself in the customer's shoes, you'll see how frustrating it can be to navigate your tech support system."

**To satisfy expectations:** to do or perform as expected, or at a level that people hope for; "To satisfy your client's expectations, you need to ask a lot of questions at the start and have good communication throughout the project."

**Self-evident:** obvious or not needing to be stated; "Yes, we want to increase profits. That's self-evident. But the question is *how* can we do that?"

**Tight:** well-organized and concise; "Our current website content is much too wordy, so we need a good writer who can give us really tight copy."

**Compelling:** interesting, exciting, or convincing; "We need our new promo videos to make a strong impact, to give some really compelling reasons to buy our products."

**To nix:** to remove or decide not to include; "Just looking over your slides here, if I were you I'd just nix the whole section on investment strategies. I don't think the audience will care about that."

**To make the final cut:** to be used or selected after other possibilities have been eliminated; "We've had two dozen applicants for the summer positions, but only six will make the final cut."

**To kill something:** to ruin or destroy; "The most recent product recall has really killed our reputation for quality."

**To drone on:** to talk at length and in a boring way; "After hearing the CFO drone on for an hour, I was sure happy that the CTO gave just a three-minute report."

**Implications:** the results or resulting meaning of something that happens; "Poor training practices can have enormous implications for the productivity of new workers."

**To fit into the big/bigger picture:** to serve a broad purpose or to be useful within a context or situation; "Well, I certainly think we could afford to buy out NewFold Inc., but how would that fit into the bigger picture in terms of growth strategy?"

**Innate:** inborn, or natural; "A lot of leadership skills can be learned. Still, it helps if you have an innate charisma or powerful personality."

**To wrap something up:** to put something in a package, a design, or a context; "The data is useful, but we need to wrap it up in a form that people can understand and access."

**Narrative:** story or story-telling; "Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to start by just giving you a few highlights in the life narrative of our keynote speaker today..."

**To take someone's word:** to believe what someone says without looking for clear proof or evidence; "I've worked with Harriet before, and take my word for it, she's really smart and really loyal."

**Sticky:** likely to be remembered; "I never imagined that our latest radio ad would be so sticky. Everywhere I go I hear people singing our little song!"

**Guru:** a famous person in a field who is considered very wise or intelligent; "You should come with me to see Jack Canfield speak next month. He's a really inspiring business guru."

**To build rapport:** to build a positive relationship in a particular situation; "You should take your new customers out for dinner and just try to build a good rapport with them on a personal level."

**To break the ice:** to become comfortable socially, especially at the start of a situation or event; "A bit of conversation about the weather or sports or holiday plans before a meeting can really help break the ice."

**Ally:** a friend or someone who will defend you; "Let me call Roger at the City about this license issue. He's been a good ally in municipal government for a long time."

**To glean information:** to get information, often indirectly through observation; "Before you meet with a new customer, it's a great idea to search for news about the company to see if you can glean useful information about their situation."

**Golden:** valuable or excellent; "These pictures of our big product launch are golden; let's make sure we put these on the website right away."

**To tie something in with something:** to connect ideas or information within a presentation or writing; "I really liked how the speaker tied the importance of workplace culture in with recruiting strategies."

## Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host, Tim Simmons, and today I want to talk about how to connect with your audience during a presentation.

You've probably heard all sorts of advice about delivering a good presentation. But **at the end of the day**, every single presentation strategy is designed for one thing: connecting with the audience. In fact, if you don't connect with your audience, you might as well **pack up** your PowerPoint and **head home**. You need to build a *bridge* to send your message across. No bridge, no message. And don't think you need to be an **easy-going extrovert** to connect with an audience. This is something that you can learn to do well.

Today I want to focus on what you do *before* you actually **take the stage**. Yes, before you even **lay eyes on** your audience, you can start thinking about how to connect. You'll need to do some thinking about your audience, and plan accordingly. Don't put your information at the center of the presentation, put your *audience* at the center.

Think for a second about a presentation that you felt wasn't **up to snuff**. What was wrong with it? Maybe the presenter told you things you already knew, or told you things you never really wanted to know in the first place. Or maybe he was **just plain** boring. Whatever the case, **chances are** that presenter didn't put *you*, the audience member, at the center of his presentation. He put himself, or the information.

So, to avoid this **blunder**, find out who your audience will be. What's their background? Are they similar to you? Do they work in the same job, company, or industry? What's their level of knowledge? These are all questions you should **keep in mind** as you plan. Because what you say, and how you say it, is vastly different depending on the audience. Would you give the same presentation, for example, about your company's history to a **flock** of **eager** college grads and to a small group of senior executives from a foreign company? Hopefully not.

Once you've **got a handle** on who you'll be talking to, you can consider what they want, or need, to know. **Put yourself in their shoes** and ask "what would I expect out of this presentation?" Then design your presentation to **satisfy** those expectations. You might think this seems **self-evident**, but it's not. In copywriting, there's something called the Red Pen Rule. This rule says that once you've got what you think is **tight** and **compelling** text, take out your red pen and **nix** 30% of the words. Most presenters would be wise to follow this advice with the information they include. There's usually 30% of a presentation that shouldn't **make the final cut**. It's that 30% of irrelevant stuff that can **kill** your connection with the audience.

Now, here's another important consideration about content: don't just give them the "what." Give them the "why" and the "so what." Presenters who focus on the "what" **drone on** about strategy X or sales figures for Y or new research on Z. But *why* do X, Y, and Z matter? And *so what* if they're true? In other words, what are the **implications** of all this information? I'm talking here about giving context to what you're saying. It has to **fit into the big picture**, or purpose.

Another way to connect with your audience is by working with people's **innate** need for *stories*. We like information to be **wrapped up** in a **narrative**. Stories make information *meaningful*. You don't have to just **take my word** on this. Chip and Dan Heath wrote a book called *Made to Stick* about why some ideas survive and others die. And yes, they'll tell you that using "stories" is one of the best ways of making an idea **sticky**. In fact, ask any 21<sup>st</sup>-century business **guru** and they'll tell you about the importance of story-telling.

All right, so you understand who you'll be talking to, and you have a plan for a tight, compelling presentation that includes the "why" and the "so what" and tells a story. Now it's time to connect. And that starts when you arrive early for your presentation and start **building rapport** with people coming into the room as you set up.

Ask them questions to learn something about them. What do they do? What matters to them? What are they working on? What are their thoughts on the topic of the presentation? If you **break the ice** like this, even with just a few individuals, you'll start out with **allies** in the room, and you'll be less nervous. And the information you **glean** in this way is **golden**. You can find ways to **tie it in with** your presentation and really make your talk speak to people.

And that's what we'll look at next time: all the things you can do *during* your presentation that will help you make an even better connection.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the **[BusinessEnglishPod.com](http://BusinessEnglishPod.com)** website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

## Review

- Which of the following should you put at the center of your presentation when you are planning?
  - The information you're presenting
  - Yourself and your goals
  - Your listeners and their expectations
  - The facilities and equipment
- The "Red Pen Rule" of copywriting can teach us that we should try to...
  - avoid certain colors when planning and designing presentations.
  - remove 30% of our content in the final stages of planning.
  - use only short and simple words in a presentation.
  - imagine how other people feel during our presentations.
- Which of the following would be good questions to ask yourself about your audience when planning your presentation? [choose all that apply]
  - What do they know about the topic?
  - Where did they attend university?
  - What is their background?
  - What do they expect from the presentation?
- Which of the following statements are important to include in your presentation to make it more compelling? [choose 2]
  - The "why"
  - The "when"
  - The "so what"
  - The "who"
  - The "where"
- According to business writers and leaders, what is something that really helps make messages or ideas "stick"?
  - Visuals
  - Data
  - Books
  - Stories
- Why is it a good idea to arrive early and speak with audience members before you start your presentation? [choose 2]
  - You can remove sections that are not relevant.
  - You will feel more comfortable presenting.
  - They will be more likely to understand the information.
  - They will convince others that your presentation is good.
  - You can get information to use in your presentation.
  - You can finish the presentation early.

## Review Answers

1. Which of the following should you put at the center of your presentation when you are planning?  
**C Your listeners and their expectations**
2. The "Red Pen Rule" of copywriting can teach us that we should try to  
**B remove 30% of our content in the final stages of planning.**
3. Which of the following would be good questions to ask yourself about your audience when planning your presentation? [choose all that apply]  
**A What do they know about the topic?**  
**C What is their background?**  
**D What do they expect from the presentation?**
4. Which of the following statements are important to include in your presentation to make it more compelling? [choose 2]  
**A the "why"**  
**C the "so what"**
5. According to business writers and leaders, what is something that really helps make messages or ideas "stick"?  
**D stories**
6. Why is it a good idea to arrive early and speak with audience members before you start your presentation? [choose 2]  
**B You will feel more comfortable presenting.**  
**E You can get information to use in your presentation.**