

## 5 Content Tips That Drive Action

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Convincing people to act on your ideas is an art. If you are one of the people who approach preparing content by opening PowerPoint, this newsletter is for you. What follows are five content tips that will help you to create high impact presentations. On the surface, they may seem too simplistic. The reality is that most people overlook these pointers and end up with content that is confusing or uninspiring.

### Tip 1.

#### **Take the time to know your audience.**

Don't make the mistake of assuming they are just like you. People have different learning styles and clear preferences for the way information is presented to them. Begin by creating a list of all the people who will be attending your presentation. If possible, understand the personalities that you will be addressing. Know how they think. For example, are they more oriented to the big picture, processes, details or relationships? Learn ahead what they care about, what they might find objectionable or why they might resist your topic.

### Tip 2.

#### **Grab attention with a focused opening.**

You have two minutes to gain and hold the attention of your audience. If you waste time or begin without clarity of what you want listeners to think or do differently, you will lose your audience. They will begin to respond to email, even though supposedly listening to you. A study by the Institute of Psychiatry in London found that participants who were interrupted with emails performed worse on IQ tests than those who were under the influence of marijuana. Just imagine how receptive your audience will be if they are responding to email. Listeners only care about themselves and what you can do for them. Your opening statement should cover three things: what you know to be a problem or issue, what you want them to do or think after your presentation and why it will be a benefit for them to act on your recommendation. Hiding your "ask" to the end is a mistake. People lis-

ten better if you tell them up front these three key things. Your opening statement should be compelling and delivered in less than two minutes. Short sentences with strong verbs and adjectives will grab attention quickly.

### Tip 3.

#### **Present a simple, well supported argument.**

An audience has a limited processing capacity. Less is more! Researchers tell us that the most people can remember at a sitting are five key points. However, three really maximizes retention. While there may be a lot to say, consider your audience and what is critical for them at this particular moment. Discussing information they don't care about is a waste of your time and theirs. Remember people are besieged by information. Additionally, today's audiences are much more skeptical because they are used to people "spinning" a good tale. Be sure to support your data with metrics or analyses and explain where your information comes from. If your information solves a problem, your listeners will pay attention. If not, they won't! In fact, Henry Boettinger in his book, *Moving Mountains*, says the only reason for the existence of a presentation is that it be an answer to a problem. Lastly, make sure one point logically leads to the next. Strategically, organize your content.

### Tip 4.

#### **Go for the heart.**

When people hold strong opposing attitudes, they "dig their heels in" and hold on to their old way of thinking. To overcome resistance, move them emotionally. Advertisers tell us that logic plays only a small role in changing attitudes. People are swayed by stories, examples and brief anecdotes because they can picture, and even feel, what you have said. Nobody remembers a bullet point list, but they will remember your story. The likelihood of listeners being persuaded improves dramatically when there is a high emotional component.

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**Tip 5.**

**Conclude on a strong note.** It is easy to overlook the importance of a strong conclusion, especially if running out of time. Many presenters end on a limp note, by saying, “Thanks for your time” or by quickly showing the remaining slides in their deck. Your conclusion is the last thing people will remember. It is important for you to reinforce your point of view, the action you want people to take going forward and the benefits they will derive.

Successful presenters are artists, masters of design. They do not skip steps. They carefully address each of the areas covered in this article. Save this newsletter to your desktop as a checklist.

***Question:** Have you had presentations that were not successful? What have been the issues? We’re interested in your reaction to this article. [Click here](#) – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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