

What People Often Forget When Making a Presentation!

By Judith Filek—President
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Savvy presenters know you have to get two things right, your opening and your close. If you do those well, you will be a success because people remember the first words out of your mouth and the last. However, while presenters know the importance of a strong opening and close, often they fizzle at the end. Some run out of time and simply say *"I am out of time. Thanks for coming and contact me with your questions."* Others fail to let their listeners know they are about to end. When they say their final words, people have no response. Listeners leave uninspired or disinterested. Put as much time into writing and practicing your close as you do other parts of your presentation.

Ways to Close Effectively:

Summarize the main ideas you have discussed. Restate your point or position in a slightly different way. *"In summary, we have discussed the opportunities and the risks. Our team feels we can and should proceed with help from our engineering team in Bangalore."* If you have talked for more than 20 minutes, it is important to summarize what has been discussed since people may have forgotten or drifted. By re-stating your position or point of view on a topic, you influence those that don't have the breadth of knowledge that you do.

Call your listeners to action. Never let your listeners walk away unsure what they should do after the meeting. Directly state what you want them to think or do. It may seem obvious to you, but unless you ask for what you want, you risk being disappointed. *"What we need from you is immediate approval for our team of four, two from Raleigh and two from India, to proceed with the design phase. We believe if we work full time, the project can be completed in three weeks, allowing for a little cushion."* A strong call to action commands attention.

Challenge them to do something different.

"If you want to get better, you have to put in the work. Tomorrow, when you go back on the job, I challenge you to change one thing about the way you communicate with others. Keep working on that skill until it is part of your DNA."

End with an inspirational or dramatic statement, a quotation. A lot of people collect inspiring quotes or they go on-line to see what statesmen, business people, actors and other well known people have to say around a topic. A pithy statement or quote, not only grabs attention, but it leaves listeners on a high note. It allows you to go out with a bang.

Go back to your opening. If you have told a great story at the beginning, go full circle and link back to it. It brings your story to a close. *"My hope for you is the same as my college professor once had. You have to think big to be big!"*

Your close is the last thing your listeners will remember. It's one last opportunity for you to impress your listeners. Wow your listeners by restating your position, asking for what you want and inspiring others to take action. Don't flame out by leaving your final words to chance. Carefully plan your close. Practice it. End on a bang!

Question: Think about your presentations. How much time do you spend preparing for your close? What specifically do you do? 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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Continued on page 2

