

How to give a powerful presentation

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Communication and leadership go hand in hand, so business leaders need to know how to present well.

In this SmartBrief on Leadership video, I share how to give a powerful presentation by outlining four elements every presentation should include:

1. **Persuasion:** It's not enough to simply state your points; you must convince people to accept them
2. **Pictures:** Use stories and other sensory language to bring your message to life
3. **Pathway:** Build your case in a logical, easy-to-follow manner
4. **Practical application:** Be clear about what changes or actions you want your audience to take

This video shows you how to get people's attention, keep them engaged and have a real impact on them.

To book Denise Lee Yohn to speak to your organization, see her [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

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Transcript

As a keynote speaker, I give presentations for a living and business leaders are always asking me for advice on how to present well. So, I thought I'd take a different tack with this month's SmartBrief post and share some presentation tips. Here are four elements of a powerful presentation – and they all start with “P.”

First, powerful presentations persuade. It's not enough to simply state your points; you must convince people to accept them. That starts with understanding your audience and anticipating how they are going to react to your message. So, when you prepare for your talk, ask yourself:

1. “What do people think/feel/know now?”
2. “What should they think/feel/know after my presentation.”
3. “What stands in the way of that change?” These could be questions, objections, firmly held beliefs. Make sure you address those hurdles.

Renowned pastor Tim Keller says, “The essence of persuasion is to take something someone already believes and use that 'against' them. ...Don't just say, 'Why don't you believe this?' or 'If you don't believe this, you're wrong.'” Instead, persuade people by saying, “If you believe this, then why won't you believe that?”

Second, powerful presentations uses pictures. I'm not saying you have to use PowerPoint slides. I'm talking about using stories and other sensory language to bring your message to life. You need to ignite people's imagination and appeal to their emotions, even -- actually, especially -- when you're presenting dry or mundane content. So, use analogies and illustrations, give examples and share anecdotes.

The third element of a powerful presentation is pathway. Many speakers aren't clear about what they're getting at or where they're going in their presentation. You must build a case in a logical, easy-to-follow manner. This is particularly important in virtual presentations, where it's easy for your audience to get distracted or tune out.

I try to ensure my talks include a clear pathway by preparing a detailed outline of my content first. I build in a natural progression between my points and then, when I'm presenting, I connect the dots between them with verbal and visual cues. Given how short people's attention spans are these days, you need to bring them along with you through every step of your message.

And finally, powerful presentations include practical application. Often speakers can get caught up in making a good impression or showing off their knowledge. But you don't want your audience to simply think or know something; you want to affect how they live. So, make sure you're clear about what changes or actions you want them to take.

One of my mentors explained it this way: He said, you can't just tell people the "what," you have to tell them the "so what." So what should your audience do as a result of what you've told them?

A powerful presentation incorporates these four Ps: persuasion, pictures, pathway and practical application. They're how you get people's attention, keep them engaged and have a real impact on them.