

Weekly Magnetic Persuasion Newsletter

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THE PERFECT PRESENTATION

Educate, Inspire & Entertain

PRESENT WITH POWER

Before we jump into the meat of this topic, remember as you prepare your persuasive message that you want to focus on one defined issue. You are not there to persuade on ten different points. Stay focused and stay away from sensitive issues that aren't on your original agenda. In other words, don't inadvertently offend your audience on one issue when your focus is on another. The structure of your persuasive message should follow the pattern discussed below.

1. Create Interest

You have to generate an interest about your chosen topic. Your audience needs a reason to listen: Why should they care? What's in it for them? How can you help them? A message that starts with a really good reason to listen will grab the attention of the audience, enabling you to continue with the message. Without this attention, there is no hope of getting your message across.

2. State the Problem

You must clearly define the problem you are trying to solve. The best pattern for a persuasive speech is to find a problem and relate how it affects the audience. In this way, you show them a problem they have and why it is of concern to them. Why is this a problem to your audience? How does this problem affect them?

3. Offer Evidence

This is the support you give to your argument. Evidence validates your claims and offers proof that your argument is right. It allows your audience to rely on other sources besides you. Evidence can include examples, statistics,

stories, testimonies, analogies, and any other supporting material used to enhance the integrity and congruency of your message.

4. Present a Solution

You have gained your audience's interest and provided evidence in support of your message, now you must solve their problem. You present the argument you want them to believe and satisfy the need you have identified or created. You have created dissonance and now you are providing the solution. How can your product meet their needs and wants and help them achieve their goals?

5. Call to Action

A persuasive message is not true persuasion if your audience does not know exactly what they need to do. Be specific and precise. In order to complete the solution to their problem, they must take action. This is the climax, the peak of your logic and emotion. The prescribed actions must be feasible. Make your call to action as easy as possible.

Using this type of structure facilitates people's acceptance of your message and clarifies what you want them to do. We all have a logical side to our mind, which results in our need for order and arrangement. If we don't sense some sort of structure, we tend to become confused and create our own organizational flow--thus creating our own solution. If you can't be clear, concise, and orderly, your prospect will find someone else who is.

There is not such thing as a boring topic,
only a boring presenter
—Kurt Mortensen

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CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

That first thirty seconds with your audience are critical. How do you start? Great persuaders craft and design their message. There is no room to wing it. Your opening is where your audience formulates and settles into their impressions of you. Think of your opening or introduction as comprising no more than 10 percent of your full presentation. Budgeting your speech in this manner forces you to organize your time so that you know exactly what you're going to say and how you're going to say it. Scrap the old fillers such as "Today's topic is..." or "I'm going to speak on..." or worse, "I was assigned to talk about..." When preparing your opener, think of ways in which you can grab your audience's attention and perk up their ears. Several of the most effective attention-grabbing approaches include:

- Using humor
- Telling a personal story
- Posing a thought provoking question
- Sharing a quote
- Presenting a startling fact or statistic

As you move from the opening of your presentation to the main body, it is helpful to remember the acronym TESS. TESS = testimony, examples, statistics, and stories. Top persuaders tend to incorporate each of these elements into their presentations. Our research shows that when speaking to an audience, each point of TESS will resonate with different audience members. On average, TESS resonates as follows:

Testimony	12%
Example	23%

Statistic	18%
Story	47%

Let's first talk about testimony. A testimony is a person's statement or declaration of what they believe and assert to be true. In your presentation, it can be your own testimony, or it can come from a third party. Testimony is a source of social validation—people assume that if others believe in it, then they should too. Great persuaders know how to use testimony when their credibility is low. Make sure your testimonials are believable and unbiased and that they are qualified for your audience.

Examples are explanations or models that demonstrate or illustrate your points. Instead of just spouting off facts, examples make your points come alive. Examples reinforce your ideas and make them vivid and real in the mind of your audience. Examples can be studies, research, or anecdotes. Metaphors are another great way to more vividly express certain points. As a subset of examples, they are effective because they use pictorial language to connect objects and ideas. On average, we use almost six metaphors per minute during spoken language.

Next up is statistics. In a consumer climate that is increasingly skeptical, I recommend using statistics sparingly. Everyone knows that you can "cook the books" and find statistics to prove almost anything; your audience wants credible statistics. Statistics resonate with the logical mind, and when convincing, they are very persuasive. In particular, the analytical minds in your audience will love you and want to know the source. Most statistics need to be explained and often work best with visual aids.

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STORIES

Stories are the most powerful of the four elements of TESS. Stories draw your audience in while helping them understand and appreciate your message. I'm sure you can think of a time when you were in an audience, not paying much attention to the speaker. You were probably off in your own world, when all of a sudden, you perked up and started to listen because the speaker started telling a story. When we hear a story, we automatically tune in and want to know what happens next.

Great persuaders have mastered storytelling. When you understand what essential storytelling components are and how to use them, you will be able to touch people's hearts. Since you won't always have an opportunity to build rapport and trust with every individual in your audience on a one-on-one basis, stories can answer their questions about who you are and what you represent. Do you want them to view you as funny, honest, or down to earth? Identify the main points you want to get across and select your stories accordingly. When an individual's emotions are engaged, he will be more inclined to accept you and your message. The more common ground you can establish with your audience, the more attentive and receptive they will be.

People value their own conclusions more highly than yours, so if you can make your story their story, you will be that much more persuasive. As human beings, we are drawn to anything that gives us answers. Use stories to help your audience members answer some of their own questions. If you are successful in doing this, your message will grow and develop in their minds and hearts. If they remember nothing else about your presentation, at the very least, your story and its underlying message will get played over and

over again in your listeners' minds.

Now, what about your conclusion? Your goal as a persuader is to make your conclusion memorable. Whereas your opening comprised about 10 percent of your presentation, prepare your conclusion to take up only 5 percent. Since you have been persuading the entire time, you should need only 5 percent to wrap things up. Your conclusion should basically be a clear and concise repackaging of your main points.

As you move through your conclusion, get right down to your "call to action." Make it short, to the point, and energetic. Think of your conclusion and call to action as the final punch, the thing you want your audience to remember most. Because you've spent so much time setting it up, you want the conclusion to be really powerful.