



Using “PAFs” and Punches to add Pizzazz to Your Presentations

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Picture this. A product manager presenting the plan of action for the current cycle walks up to the podium and says, “Can you hear me? Is the microphone working? I’m a little nervous. I haven’t spoken to large groups before. Well, uh... my name is John... and.. uh, I’d like to tell you about the marketing plan for this cycle.

If you were listening to this presenter, would you be anxiously waiting to hear what he had to say?

When you stand up before an audience, whether it is for two people or two hundred, you have to capture their attention right away. You need a grabber – something that tells the audience the benefits of listening to you. Remember that everyone is tuned to the same radio station, “WII-FM,” What’s In It For Me?

Introductions

A powerful introduction consists of four steps. It begins with an attention-grabbing opening. The next step is to state the objectives of your presentation, and then go over the agenda. Finally, introduce yourself. Here are examples of how to use these four steps.

Step 1: Use a “PAF” to Capture Attention

The first words that come out of your mouth should peak the audience’s interest or curiosity. To do this, use a “PAF.” PAF stands for “Put A Force,” and it’s what gets your presentation off to a dynamic start.

The most powerful openers focus on your audience’s needs and interests. Here are a few examples of PAFs:

Describe an incident or anecdote:

Tell a story in vivid detail. Make sure it is related to your topic. For example, if you are presenting to a group of physicians at a Lunch and Learn, you can use a story like this to show how your drug can make a difference to a patient.

A young boy named Shawn was walking with his grandfather on the beach. As they walked along the shoreline, they saw many starfish that had been washed up onto the sand. Shawn stopped each time, picked up a starfish, and threw it into the ocean. After doing this several times, the grandfather became impatient and said, "Shawn, stop throwing those starfish into the ocean. There are so many, there's no way you can make a difference." They continued to walk. Shawn stopped, picked up one more starfish and threw it into the ocean. He then turned to his grandfather and said, "Grandpa, I just made a difference for that one."

You would link this to what you plan to cover by saying, "As physicians, your treatment choices impact your patients. I appreciate the opportunity to tell you how our product X can make a positive difference for your patients."

Start with a strong quote:

A strong quote related to your topic can arouse interest. When we teach presentation skills, we use this quote by Winston Churchill to drive home the importance of preparation. "If you want me to give a long speech, I'll give it right now. If you want a short speech give me two weeks to prepare."

Present an unusual statistic:

Used sparingly, statistics can arouse audience interest and strengthen your presentation. Instead of simply quoting numbers, put the statistics in a context that your audience can visualize. For example, "If you took all the patients with problem X, you could fill Yankee Stadium ___ times."

Until you paint a picture, the statistics are just numbers for your audience. Give our statistics a visual context, and they'll actually see your message.

Use a visual or a prop:

A visual or prop raises curiosity, and works well because it engages more of the senses. The audience instantly sees an image that makes your words come alive.

For example, at a presentation on osteoporosis, a sales representative held up a chopstick and broke it in half to illustrate how easily bones can snap in patients with this disease.

Use an analogy:

Start with a premise and build on it. For example, one physician began his presentation by asking the audience to imagine they were on a roller coaster, and to experience the feeling of rising up and suddenly dropping down. He drew an analogy between the roller coaster and the challenge of regulating a patient's blood sugar.

Get the audience laughing (appropriately):

Use a humorous story to get the audience laughing. This is not about telling jokes. If you begin with a joke and no one laughs, you'll feel awkward and so will the audience. Even worse, you risk the chance of offending someone.

A story about something that happened to you can forge a powerful connection because it highlights the human foibles we all experience, and makes you seem real. Humor and human pathos are the most powerful ways to engage the audience. If you have to poke fun at anyone, make sure it's yourself.

Step 2: State your Objectives

After your dynamic PAF, state your objectives. Tell them why this topic is relevant to them and what they will learn, or do better or differently (WII-FM). For example, "By the end of this presentation you will learn at least two new techniques that you can implement immediately to increase the effectiveness of your presentations."

Step 3: Outline your Agenda

Now introduce the content you plan to cover by linking to your objectives. For example, "For you to be able to achieve this objective, I will cover..."

Step 4: Introduce Yourself

If you are introduced by someone this step is unnecessary. Otherwise, introduce yourself and your company and add something about your background that lends credibility to you as a speaker.

Conclusion

A dynamic conclusion is just as important as a captivating opening. Don't make the mistake that many presenters make of petering off with a feeble ending such as, "Well, that's all I have to say on this subject."

Leave your audience with a "Punch," something that makes your talk memorable. As in your introduction, there are four steps to the conclusion.

Step 1: Signal

Your conclusion should be short, sweet and focused. Begin by signaling your close. It can be as simple as saying, "In conclusion..." or "Let me summarize by saying...."

Hint: don't signal until you are actually ready to close. Audiences become irritated when the speaker signals a close and then proceeds to bring up new points.

Step 2: Summarize and Reinforce

Once you've given your signal, reiterate the key points of your presentation, which are linked to your objectives. For example, "I mentioned that by the end of this presentation you will have at least two new techniques for dynamic openings and closings to your presentations. We talked about four steps for opening your presentation, six ways to grab attention at the beginning, and a four-step process to conclude your presentation with a punch.

Step 3: Call to Action

Give them a call to action by stating what you want them to do differently. For example: "Can I count on you to try one of these new techniques?" Pause. Then finish with a "Punch."

Step 4: Give the punch

The punch adds pizzazz to your ending. Think about how often you end up humming the final song of a movie. We remember most clearly the last thing we hear.

Your punch can be a story, a famous quote, or a prop that ties in with your presentation. It's a good idea to use a different technique from the one you used at the beginning. So, if you started with an anecdote, you can end with a visual. If you began with a statistic, you can end with a humorous story.

Your opening and closing are the most memorable parts of your presentation. Put extra time and effort into preparing and practicing them in advance. You'll feel more confident, and you'll leave your audience humming the tune you put into their heads! Wouldn't that be nice?

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