

# Simply Talking

PRESENTATION & STORYTELLING MODEL



## Is your presentation crystal clear?

by Presentation and Storytelling Coach Sylvie Verleye

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When you read this syllabus you have likely followed a workshop, training or coaching in presenting. This document covers what we have been talking about and summarizes all the tips to guide you with your next presentation.

I thank you for participating and wish you all the best for your next presentation!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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In the past 15 years I have focussed on 'business presentations' I have seen few evolutions. Slides were overloaded 15 years ago and they still are, and I can even understand why. Years ago speakers shouted that we need more visuals slides which has now resulted in 'decorated slides' which are bullet slides decorated with small images.

New trends were launched like Pecha Kucha (20 slides, 20 images, 20 seconds to tell your story on each slide). This style was especially adopted at conferences. But what about are business presentations that we do during a meeting or for a customer? How do you present to a CEO? How do you present to your team? How do you pitch to an investor?

I have translated new trends into ideas you can experiment with. I got these ideas by interviewing CEOs and VPS, by presenting myself, by receiving feedback from participants, by reading books from colleagues who inspire me. I designed my own presentation model that you can use for every kind of communication whether it is a communication to one single person or a very big audience. But it means a new way of presentation so it is challenging. I have 6 tips for you.

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Elisabeth Gilbert tijdens TED TALK

## TALK WITHOUT SLIDES

When I interview VPs and CEOs it strikes me again again how they stress the need for SHORT stories and the fact they don't really need slides during these stories. When I asked one of them what he means with short his answer was 'just 5 minutes'. I think we assume that an audience expects a 20 minute presentation with slides but do they really? From what I heard during the interviews, they don't but what is the alternative then?

Step 1 is to make a clear difference between detailed slides and the story behind the slides. Presenting does not mean commenting slides, it means first and foremost telling a story!

## 2



## 'SHORT FOR THE BOARD'

I hear many complaints about 'high level presentations'. What I hear from the high level audience is what I described above: too long, not to the point. What I hear from speakers who present for this audience is: they interrupt a lot, they ask to make it short while they originally allowed a 20 minute presentation, they are more interested in their smartphones than in the message. When you recognize this, try a different presentation style. Start with a short 5 minute monologue and continue with a dialogue with your audience to give them more information.

You can say literally to your audience in the introduction that you will start with a 5 minute summary and that you will fill in the details with their questions. I can assure you that you will have the attention of your audience!

This works beautifully with this high level audience but actually I think you can use it for all of your communication in a meeting setting, even with customers!

## 3



## ALWAYS START WITH A PITCH

No matter how much time you have for your presentation, always create a basic story of no longer than 4 to 5 minutes (the time to make a soft boiled egg). But that story needs a thread and a structure based on an agenda with bullet points is not it (this only works as structure for the whole meeting).

Think for a moment what you would like the audience to remember from your presentation? If someone was not present to listen to your presentation, what would you like your audience to tell? Not just words I presume but sentences! So your thread has to consist of sentences. Often these are your conclusions. Never overestimate what the audience can remember, though don't underestimate them either. I bet they can talk for 1 minute about your presentation. So what do they need to say?

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In 1 minute they can explain the basic problem or situation and they could say what the different options are to solve it. Your thread are your options. In 1 minute they can say what the problem is, what the ideal solution would be and the reasons why this is the best solution. Your thread is now the different reasons. In 1 minute they could refer to a situation nobody was aware of and they could give tips how to do it differently in the future. The thread is now the different tips.

Limit your thread ideally to 3 because not only you need to memorise the thread, the audience should remember this as well. 3 is a magical number. Though if you have 4 elements that's ok. Key is that you think about the core story. Why are you there? So that the audience could make a decision? To convince them? To inform, inspire, give a wake up call or reinsure them?

If you want to extend the 1 minute core of your story to 5 minutes, you have to work with drawers. If you have 3 reasons as a thread you can look at these reasons as 3 closets or 3 branches of a tree. Each closet has drawers and that is your explanation. Just as each branch has sub branches. The more drawers you open, the more explanation or details you give; This means the number of drawers will be limited for a 5 minute presentation. If you have to present 20 minutes, you simply have more drawers.

## 4

Use storytelling to spice your story



## STORYTELLING TO KEEP THE ATTENTION

One of the most difficult things when you present is how to attract and especially keep the attention. Just think for a moment how most speakers start a presentation now... They all use a cliché sentence that sounds like 'today I would like to talk about'. I advise you to start with storytelling. This means that you create the context of your story by using a story that you remember (this is storytelling, telling stories from your memory). It is an easy start for you as you don't really have to memorise the start you just have to remember what the first sentence is to start your story and it is a great way to get your audience involved from the very first minute.

Lots of stories start with a timing 'yesterday, 2 weeks ago, just the other day...' Don't think these all need to be exciting stories. You could refer to something someone said during the previous meeting. It can be anything as long as it helps to make your point.



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Storytelling is interesting to start but it also helps to keep the attention. The longer you talk, the harder it is to keep the attention. If you talk for 20 minutes you need variation. I already advised to work with a 'drawer system' to create your story. You could fill all these drawers with facts & figures, which could work for a 5 minute talk. But if you do that for 20 minutes you gently put them to sleep. You need drawers that have a variation of facts & figures, and examples because this is the best storytelling there is. To make the comparison with the egg story: a soft boiled egg is good for maximum 5 minutes, for 20 minutes you better serve them an omelet with lots of herbs, spices and different colors.

## Don't present like a robot...

Lots of presentations look alike. Just have a look at your company presentation. I bet it covers topics like: history, mission & vision, structure, locations, to end with products or services. We start with that same old sentence to introduce our topics 'today I would like to talk to you...', we use an agenda, we mix text with small pictures to 'decorate' the slide and we do this because we think it is the right thing to do. Though it is not, otherwise I wouldn't hear so many complaints about presentations... I want to offer you alternatives that really work.

Our current presentation style is most often commenting slides you or someone else made. If we wouldn't have the slides we would be lost. Though what is the story? To find your company story you have to think about what makes you unique. What makes you different or stand out from your competition? This is your thread and that heart of your story. You build the whole story around this thread with the different drawers because you need to be able to tell this story short as well!

Now you might think...I don't do that kind of presentation. I give monthly financial updates so this does not work for me. Yes it does! When we give monthly or quarterly updates slides always use the same format and you only adjust the figures. What we now do most often is again comment these slides. I think these slides are the discussion document, something you can send before your presentation. Don't think that everyone will look at it though before your presentation. My point is that you need to think what your main story is this month. DO you need to make them aware of a figure that is not good and what the options are? Do you need to point out the major changes in comparison with previous month? Don't just cover everything that is on the slide. Point out what is important because that is your story.

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Use a visual mindmap to memorise the story.

You can visualise the story as a tree. The tree trunk is your introduction STORY. Whether you talk for 5 minutes or 20 minutes, you need to start with creating this context so your audience can follow. For 5 minutes you keep that story short, for 20 minutes you can add more details.

The trunk ends in key branches, ideally 3. This is your thread. These are not topics though key sentences. If you would only have 1 minute to talk you can only give the introduction and these key sentences. This is something you absolutely have to know by heart.

Every branch has sub branches (these are like different drawers in a closet). The more sub branches, the longer your presentation.

You can also memorise it like this:



1 minute



5 minutes



20 minutes

TIP! Look at TED.com. On this site you see different presentation, some with PPT some without. Look and listen to these presentations because you can really learn a lot from it!

## 5



### EYE CONNECTION vs EYE CONTACT

Connecting means consciously looking at people with the aim to feel a 'connection'. You can look for 1 second but this does not mean you connect. You can look at people as though you would serve them a glass of wine. Don't give them drops! Turn towards people in your audience and serve them small glasses of wine. You cannot serve them all at once, you serve individuals!!

When you present you will probably be nervous. Subconsciously you want to protect yourself because you feel judged. Don't hide because you won't look confident. Come close to your audience and choose a strong 'neutral position'. You can learn from television. A fantastic TED movie to watch on bodylanguage is Amy Cuddy.

Don't think that experienced speakers are not nervous. They are, they just know how to deal with these nerves and use their bodylanguage to hide it!

## 6



Bron: Andy Van Laer, Butterslides

## USE NOTES AS HANDOUT

There are 3 reasons why speakers put too much on a slide:

- Because they are afraid to forget something
- To impress the audience and show how much effort they put into the slides
- Because the slides are used as a report after the presentation as well

THE solution for this problem is 'the notes' and this is exactly what you are reading right now. On top of the page you see the slide that you have shown during the presentation and under the slide you write your explanation on that slide. The easiest way to do that is like this:

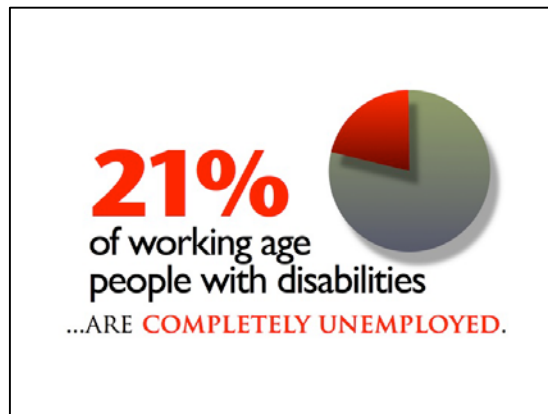
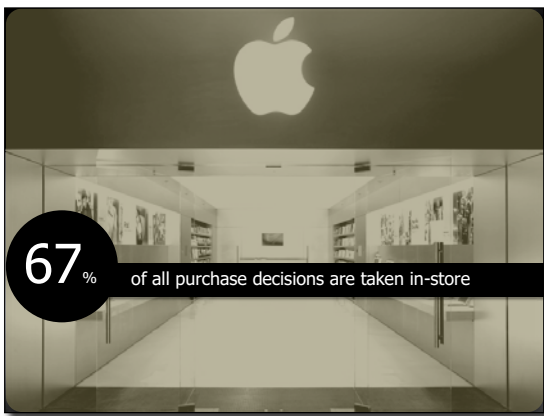
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- When the slides are ready you go to 'file' – 'publish' (2007) or 'save and send' (2010) or 'export' (depending on the program you use) – 'create notes in word' – choose between notes below the slides or notes next to the slides – OK

You save the word document as a PDF and this is the document you give or send AFTER the presentation.

## What are visual slides?



The basic rule for a visual slide is actually simple: 1 slide, 1 picture, 1 message. You tell the story. When you use slides during the story you have to memorize the order of the slides.

That's why I like the 10 20 30 rule of Guy Kawasaki: maximum 10 slides, maximum 20 minutes, minimum font 30. In my opinion the minimum font is 20 when you have a small audience but no lower than that. The bigger the audience, the bigger the font.

Always remember this: PowerPoint is a visual aid! The most important thing is your contact with the audience. Actually it is easier to present without slides because there are only two parties to consider: you and the audience. Otherwise you have 3 parties, you, the audience and the screen, which is more difficult.

Keep the heart of your audience beating!! Don't be the cause of 'death by PowerPoint'. And please check the youtube movie 'How not to use PowerPoint' by stand up comedian Don McMillan to know what the exact problem with PowerPoint is.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKCflihkezU>

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Make a clear difference between a 'slideument' and a visual slide.

## SLIDEUMENT (Document in PPT)

- Use a template
- Small font
- Lots of details
- Read/discussion document
- No animation
- Used in meeting setting

## VISUAL SLIDE

- No template!
- Minimum font 20
- Only messages
- Presentation document
- Simple animation if needed
- Used in conference setting

You can find pictures on [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com) or surf to google but only use big pictures AND make sure you are authorized to use the picture. On google it is not always clear...

When you need great pictures for free, surf to the following link: <https://designschool.canva.com/blog/free-stock-photos/>

Be careful though how you use your slides. Very often we are not conscious of the fact that we use PowerPoint because we think it is expected, we use it because we actually don't like people to look at us, we use it because it is a cheat sheet during the presentation so that we won't forget anything.

A presentation is all about your story and the speaker only can tell that story, not the slides. And of course slides can help you, though this means extra work. You have to make a detailed slide deck though you can't use this during your story as it is too detailed. And you need to prepare a story as this is the core message. So if you use no slides you don't have to prepare anything else and you can rehearse your story in your car, while jogging, wherever...

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This is what you can do: project your detailed slides and press B.

## **B** in PowerPoint means BLACK

You tell your story and you can even add in your introduction that you will start with a short 5 minute summary of your messages and that you will use no slides. You will never have had that much attention. After your 5 minutes you ask them on which points they would like more details and then you can press B again to go to your detailed slides. If you want to jump to slide 13, just type the number 13 and press enter.

During your 5 minute story you can use slides but these have to be built like a 'neat flipchart'. Whatever you would write, sketch, draw on the flipchart...that is what you prepare on slide. Nothing extra. If you would draw a schedule, build that schedule in PPT with simple animation so that it follows your story.

## Checklist for your next presentation

1. Think about your audience: who are they, how many, what are their expectations, level?
2. Write down the goal of your presentation. You can use the sentence 'the goal of this presentation is to...'. Make your goal interesting for your audience so they understand the need to listen to this presentation.
3. Often there is a problem situation that you can explain in the introduction of your presentation. Sometimes the audience is aware of that problem though often they are not. You can begin with a clear example to describe that problem as your audience will recognize this. It is one of the best ways to capture the attention of the audience. You can link your example with the objective of your presentation by using the sentence 'why do I tell you this...because (and then you describe your goal).
4. Your presentation is a story! It is not just commenting slides. Every story has a clear thread. Aim for a thread of 3 messages that you can link one to the other. These could be 3 advantages, 3 reasons, 3 tips, 3 solutions... To find the thread it is a good idea to think of what you want your audience to remember. They cannot remember everything but what are the key messages? Your key messages are sentences, they are never questions and rarely words. Create sentences!
5. The thread of 3 key messages are actually like 3 closets. Every closet has different drawers. Your drawers are your explanation how you got to that message. The more drawers, the more details, the longer your presentation.
6. The end of your presentation can be a summary of your key messages or a link to your goal again. If you aim for a discussion after your presentation, ask a clear question to your audience.



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7. When you plan to use PowerPoint, this is the time to do it because now your story is clear. !

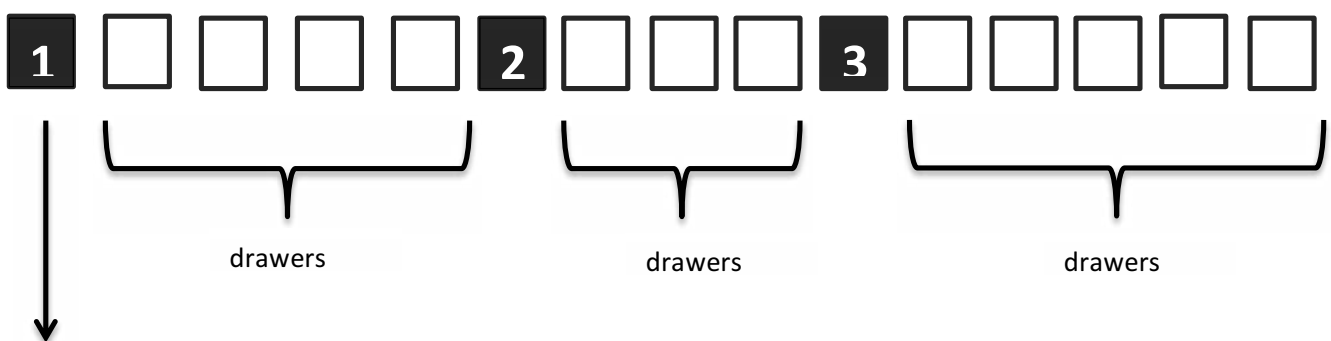
TIP1! Remember that you are the conductor of your presentation, you are in control and you can only stay in control when you know the order of your slides.

TIP2! Remember, when you click to a slide the focus of your audience is on that slide. This means that your audience is on the slide too. If you have too much on the slide, you're in trouble. Guide your audience. Sometimes animation to build the slide can help, though keep it simple! Only appear and fade as animations and forget the rest...

Keep your slides as visual as possible!

-If you have 3 key messages, you have 3 key slides as well. Every key message is a different slide. They have to look alike!

- be creative with company colors
- minimum font is 20
- basic rule: 1 slide, (1 image), 1 message



Your first slide is ideally your first key message. Build the 'drawer slides' the way you would use a flipchart. You can hide slides by pressing 'B'..

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TIP3! When your slides are ready, look at them from the perspective of the audience. Do the test: click through your slides as if you are in the audience. Think carefully what your linking sentences are to go from one slide to another.

8. Practise your presentation ALOUD in different parts. Only the introduction. Only the first part. Memorize your first sentence to have an easy start.
9. Know your thread by heart.
10. Know your last sentence by heart.
11. Know the order of the slides by heart.
12. Know where you will present. Do you want a specific setting, microphone?
13. Do you have/need notes to send after the presentation?

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The ideas above are meant to keep the heart of your audience alive. Beware of the pitfall to just comment your slides, especially when you talk to management. Keep it short, and if you really have to talk longer, spice up your story with storytelling!

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## RECOMMENDED LITERATURE

Presentation Zen, Garr Reynolds

The Naked Presenter, Garr Reynolds

Made to Stick, Dan & Chip Heath

Real Leaders don't do PowerPoint, Chris Witt

The Pyramid Principle, Babara Minto

Slideology, Nancy Duarte

Presenting to Win, the art to tell your story, Jerry Weismann

Stilte, ik Spreek, Sylvie Verleye ( order on [www.simplytalking.be](http://www.simplytalking.be))

## WEBSITES

[www.TED.com](http://www.TED.com) to see inspiring speakers

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) Stand up comedian Don McMillan 'How not to use PowerPoint'

[www.garreynolds.com](http://www.garreynolds.com) to get online presentation ideas

[www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com) as an alternative for PowerPoint

Pictures from [butterslides.com](http://butterslides.com), [foodiesfeed.com](http://foodiesfeed.com), [foter.com](http://foter.com) en [photopin.com](http://photopin.com)