

6 Tips for Presenting for Impact

Richard John, COO, Realise, encourages eventprofs to make the beginning of their presentations impactful and bespoke

1. Be unconventional

Think about how the 'James Bond' films have moved the opening credits until after a dramatic scene that has captured our attention and left us breathless. Once your audience is hooked you can slow things down – briefly – to set the scene.

2. Those first few seconds matter

This is your time to set the tone. Embrace a moment of silence. Think about how a newsreader will pass over to a journalist 'in the field;' the roving reporter will always pause for a few seconds to ensure they have the viewers' attention. Stillness, then a nod and a smile are all you need to get started.

3. Ditch the clichés

Don't start with the 'thank yous', 'the 'nice to be here's', and the 'let me tell you about mes' that so many people start with; you don't want your audience bored in seconds, and they probably already know this; and if they don't, they can track you down afterwards.

Start with something that makes you sound human and your presentation less rehearsed; "before I start, I want to share with you something that happened to me/I read on the way here." This makes your audience feel a bit more special and your speech more bespoke.

4. Signposting is vital for any journey

You don't have to have a formal agenda, but giving the audience an idea of where you're taking them will be appreciated. Remember that we are often quite selfish creatures, driven by the 'what's in it for me' factor. Telling attendees "by the end of my time I will have shared with you the four key lessons which will help you..." mentally prepares them to listen for those points, and be willing to come with you on the journey.

5. Read the signs

We've all read articles about body language and you should be looking to see what your audiences' is saying. Whilst some of the guidance can be taken with a pinch of salt (no, crossed arms don't necessarily indicate defensiveness; maybe the chairs don't have arms), do be aware of how your audience is responding. Gauge facial expressions and overall movement.

Ask for feedback on how you behave – non-verbally – in front of the audience; the nerves we feel can make our skin moister or itchier than usual.

6. Speak only if you're ready

Make sure your first sound isn't an 'uhm' or 'err'. Only speak if you're ready. All those non-word sounds can irritate your audience and reduce your impact.

I know you'll put a huge amount of effort into your presentation. Always remember, the star of the show is you. Those first few seconds are your chance to shine.



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