



DUARTE

Ten Tips for a Powerful Presentation

A pre-presentation checklist for guaranteed audience engagement and more

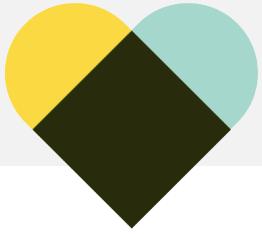
“Ideas are not really alive if they are confined to only one person’s mind.”

Nancy Duarte, Resonate

If you’re here brushing up on tips to create a powerful presentation, you’ve probably already got an important idea to communicate. Congratulations! You’re already through the truly hard part. Now, it’s time to sharpen and polish your message, prepare to deliver it deftly, and inspire audiences to adopt your idea and make your vision of the future a reality.

We live and breathe presentations here at [Duarte](#), so we put together a few general principles to help give you some direction. Remember, the goal is to give your audience an experience that will expand the way they think, leaving them feeling smarter and empowered to change.

Know your Audience



You know those people you're speaking to? They're actual people! They're individuals with unique desires, fears, and worries, not a monolithic mass. It's easy to forget that when you're addressing a group, but if you start by finding out what makes them tick you can create a personal connection and deliver a presentation that makes an impact on each one of them.



Once you know what kind of people you've got in your audience, you'll have a better idea of how you may want them to change. This is crucial: if you've chosen to deliver your message through a presentation, you should want to empower your audience to see or do something differently. If your presentation isn't supposed to move people, reconsider giving it in the first place. Would it work – and save everyone's time – as a document that you circulate to stakeholders instead? Or if you're still formulating your idea and looking for feedback, host an informal conversation instead, using your document as a prompt for dialogue.

Verify that a Presentation is the Right Medium

Hone in on your Presentation's Big Idea

A presentation's Big Idea is the one key message you want to communicate. It contains your point of view on a topic and the risks or benefits of adopting that perspective. The Big Idea should drive all decisions about what content to include and what stories to tell. Make sure every slide supports your Big Idea and carries your argument forward in a logical sequence. If you can't part with information that isn't relevant to the main message, consider adding an appendix, distributing handouts, or sending a follow-up email.



Pro Tip: *Be willing to part with information. Less really is more.*

Tell them a Story that Makes them Care



You cannot persuade with facts alone. This idea can be traced back to Aristotle, but advertisers have been putting it to use for decades. In fact, fMRI neuro-imagery shows that when evaluating brands, consumers primarily use emotions rather than information. Stories help presenters evoke emotional responses in their audience and get them to understand different points-of-view.

Address Resistance



Persuasive presentations anticipate the audience's objections and empathize with their challenges. Your presentation should make the current state unappealing and pull your audience toward the ideal state. By addressing objections head-on, placing challenges in a new context, or by describing benefits that are worth the cost, you will increase your credibility with your audience, and they'll sense that you're truly on their side.



Like stories and films, presentations should build interest and suspense. An effective way to create this dynamic is to adopt the [What Is/What Could Be](#) form that many persuasive presentations follow. Switching back and forth between “what is,” the current, undesirable situation, and “what could be,” the desired state, creates a rhythm of tension and release, struggle and solution that forms the drama of the presentation and keeps listeners interested. And like any great story, you should set up this tension as soon as possible. Don't spend too much time on a preamble or exposition about yourself or your company; the hero of this drama is the audience, not you, since you'll be calling upon the audience to do the hard work of adopting your ideas.

Use Contrast to Enhance Drama and Credibility

Get a Gut Check

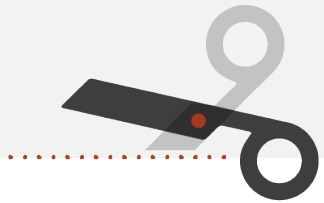
Would your mom or spouse understand what you're talking about? It's easy for anyone to get too involved in limited environments and ideas. Host a screening with people who are similar to your target audience, but who work in other industries to get good, honest feedback.



Be the Expert

Your slides are visual aids not a script. Many presenters are often tempted to put too much information on a slide. But using your slides as a crutch keeps you from having to deeply understand the subject and your audience. If you prepare thoroughly, you can [anticipate most questions](#) or objections you'll get.

Cut, Cut, Cut



It's human nature to focus on one stream of communication at a time, so your audience will either listen to what you're saying or read the slides themselves. Too many details can exhaust your listener and drown out your message. Focusing on the one Big Idea, reducing the amount of information, and communicating one idea per slide makes a presentation's message clearer.



Now that you've rallied your audience, you'll need to give them clear direction on what needs to be accomplished. Without a clear call-to-action, your presentation doesn't serve its purpose. Be aware that you'll be requesting different tasks from different kinds of people and personalities in the audience, and acknowledge that you're asking them to accomplish a great deal.

Use a Clear Call-to-Action

Your Powerful Presentation Checklist

1	Know Your Audience	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Tell them a Story that Makes Them Care	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	Get a Gut Check	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Verify that a Presentation is the Right Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Address Resistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	Be the Expert	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Hone in on your Presentation's Big Idea	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	Use Contrast to Enhance Drama and Credibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	Cut, Cut, Cut	<input type="checkbox"/>
						10	Use a Clear Call-to-Action	<input type="checkbox"/>



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***Need help? Duarte
can help you tell your
story.***

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