

# Presentation and communication skills

## Lecture 2 - Novelty

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Office hours (Room 5C.30)

Monday 15:15 – 16:00

Wednesday 12:30 – 13:15

### Literature:

- Gallo, C. (2014). Talk like TED: the 9 public-speaking secrets of the world's top minds. St. Martin's Press.
- Anderson, C. (2016). TED talks: The official TED guide to public speaking. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

# Novelty

- Novelty recognition is a hard-wired survival tool all humans share. Our brains are trained to look for something brilliant and new, something that stands out, something that looks delicious.
- When you walk into a classroom you have two jobs: one is to teach and the other is to recruit everyone in that classroom to join the pursuit of truth.

# Teach Me Something New

- Reveal information that's completely new to your audience, packaged differently, or offers a fresh and novel way to solve an old problem.
- Why it works: The human brain loves novelty. An unfamiliar, unusual, or unexpected element in a presentation intrigues the audience, jolts them out of their preconceived notions, and quickly gives them a new way of looking at the world.
- Babies are born with a deep desire to understand the world around them and an incessant curiosity that compels them to aggressively explore it. This need for exploration is so powerfully stitched into their experience that some scientists describe it as a drive, just as hunger and thirst and sex are drives. Moreover, we don't outgrow our "thirst for knowledge" as we grow into adulthood.
- Your audience craves knowledge, even if they have only a mild interest in the topic. As long as you relate your topic to the audience by teaching them something new they can use in their daily lives, you'll hook them, too.

# Learning and dopamine

- Learning something new activates the same reward areas of the brain as do drugs and gambling. For many students and many adults, learning about new things is an adventure and very rewarding, and dopamine levels increase in the brain to help us retain that new information.
- The best teachers are always thinking of new ways of delivering information. Increase novelty in a classroom and you increase the dopamine levels of your students. Dopamine can be addictive—our goal as teachers is to get our students addicted to learning.
- Some speakers take a defeatist attitude. They don't think they have anything new to teach people. Sure they do. We all do. We all have unique stories to tell. You might not have the same experiences as the speakers in this chapter, but you have stories just as interesting and valuable in your journey of discovery. Pay attention to the stories of your life. If they teach you something new and valuable, there's a good chance other people will want to hear about it.

# Delivering statistics

- Most scientists deliver statistics with mind-numbingly dull presentations. But the best ideas will fail to inspire an audience if they're not packaged effectively.
- Sometimes the data you present might not be earthshaking or entirely unfamiliar to the audience, but that doesn't mean you can't deliver it in a fresh way. For example, you can use very personal stories to bring the data alive and connect the stories back to the theme of his presentation.
- All in all, you should either reveal something entirely new that the audience does not know or present familiar information repackaged in an unfamiliar way. Maybe your audience has heard some of the information before, but they don't know what you know and they might have seen a version of the data or information that just didn't click. You'll grab their attention if you can teach them just one thing they didn't know before.

# Bombard the brain with new experiences

- Only through seeing your own world through a fresh lens will you be able to give your audience a new way of looking at their world.
- Building novel concepts into your presentation does require some creativity and a new way of looking at the world. One technique to jump-start your creativity is to embrace new experiences. The brain takes shortcuts. Its mission, after all, is to conserve energy.
- Neuroscientists have found that only through bombarding the brain with new experiences do we force our minds to look at the world through a new lens. That means you need to get out of the office once in while. Experience new events, people, and places. Most important, incorporate those new experiences into your presentations.

# Twitter-friendly headline

- If you can't explain your big idea in 140 characters or less, keep working on your message. The discipline brings clarity to your presentation and helps your audience recall the one big idea you're trying to teach them.
- The first step to giving a TED-worthy presentation is to ask yourself, What is the one thing I want my audience to know? Make sure it easily fits within a Twitter post, what I call a "Twitter-friendly headline."
- Remember to make your headline specific and clear. From a well-crafted headline, the audience should be able to identify what the product, service, or cause is as well as what makes it different or unique. Your audience needs to see the big picture before learning the details. If you can't explain your product or idea in 140 characters, keep working at it until you can.
- The Twitter headline works for two reasons: (1) it's a great discipline, forcing you to identify and clarify the one key message you want your audience to remember and (2) it makes it easier for your audience to process the content.

# Deliver Jaw-Dropping Moments

- The jaw-dropping moment in a presentation is when the presenter delivers a shocking, impressive, or surprising moment that is so moving and memorable, it grabs the listener's attention and is remembered long after the presentation is over.
- Why it works: Jaw-dropping moments create what neuroscientists call an emotionally charged event, a heightened state of emotion that makes it more likely your audience will remember your message and act on it.
- Bill Gates: "Malaria is, of course, transmitted by mosquitoes. I brought some here, just so you could experience this. We'll let those roam around the auditorium a little bit. There's no reason only poor people should have the experience."

# What to do first?

- What's the first thing you should do when creating a PowerPoint presentation? If you're like many people you'll say, "Open PowerPoint." Wrong answer. You should plan the story first.
- PowerPoint gets a bad rap, but it's not a bad tool. It can—and is—often used to create stunning presentations. But if you don't have the story in the first place, your gorgeous slides won't matter. Every memorable story, film, or presentation has one scene or one event that everyone remembers because it's so impactful.
- Think about your content and identify the most important points you need to make. Then find a novel and memorable way to communicate those messages. Sometimes you need to surprise your audience in order to get them to care.
- When you experience an emotionally charged event (shock, surprise, fear, sadness, joy, wonder), it impacts how vividly you remember that particular event. You're more likely to remember events that arouse your emotions than events that elicit a neutral response.

# How to create an emotionally charged moment?

- Every performer has at least one jaw-dropping moment—an emotionally charged event that your audience members will be talking about the next day. Every presentation needs one. Get one and use it. Your presentation content will make a better impact if it can be stamped onto the minds of your listeners
- For example you can...
  - Use props and demos
  - Use unexpected and shocking statistics
  - Use pictures, images, and videos
  - Use memorable (catchy, repeatable) headlines
  - Use personal stories

# Humor

- Don't take yourself (or your topic) too seriously. The brain loves humor. Give your audience something to smile about.
- Why it works: Humor lowers defenses, making your audience more receptive to your message. It also makes you seem more likable, and people are more willing to do business with or support someone they like.
- Humor plays a key role in the playbooks of the world's most inspiring public speakers. It will work for you, too, but you must learn to incorporate humor creatively and naturally. Repeating tired or, worse, crass or dirty jokes won't get you far. In fact it might turn off your audience.
- The most popular TED speakers do not tell jokes! Unless you're a professional comedian, jokes are not authentic. A humorous observation, however, is perfectly appropriate and very effective.

# Power of humor

- When we meet other people for the first time, we tend to quickly form impressions and make judgments about their personality characteristics such as their friendliness, trustworthiness, motives, and so on. Indeed, the ability to form relatively accurate impressions of others rapidly and efficiently may have been important for survival in our evolutionary history.
- One source of information that contributes to our initial impressions of others is the way they express humor. Humor is a form of interpersonal communication, and a good sense of humor is therefore an important social skill that we typically admire in others.
- Studies show that when we meet people who have a good sense of humor, we are more likely to attribute other desirable traits to their personalities. Studies have shown that humorous people are seen as friendly, extroverted, considerate, pleasant, interesting, imaginative, intelligent, perceptive, and emotionally stable.
- When popular online dating sites in the United States ask their members what quality they find the most desirable trait in a mate, more than 80 percent answer “a sense of humor.” When it comes to finding a mate, survey after survey shows that humor is more important than educational level, career success, or physical attraction.
- Unless you’re pitching yourself into a round of speed-dating, you’re probably not looking for a mate when you give a presentation, but you are seeking the attention and respect of your audience. Your audience is turned on by humor. Arouse them. Their devotion will help you be far more successful.

# How to be funny?

- If it's all in telling, how do you say something funny in a presentation? The first step sounds counterintuitive, but it's critical: don't try to be funny. Avoid telling jokes. The moment you start telling the joke, you're dead.
- What can you use instead?
  - Anecdotes, Observations, and Personal Stories
  - Analogies and Metaphors
  - Quotes
  - Video
  - Photos

# Some details...

- Remember what worked. Think back to anecdotes, stories, observations, or insights that have made you or your colleagues smile in the past. If they worked there and are appropriate to your presentation, weave them into your narrative and practice telling it.
- Do your homework on quotes. Search for third-party quotes that lighten up the mood of your presentation or cut through the complexity of your topic. Don't feel that you need to stick with famous quotes. Go off the beaten path. In many cases, quotes from people you know can be quite funny and engaging.
- Lighten up your presentations with videos and photos. Most PowerPoint presentations are dreadful because they have so little—if any—emotional impact. Incorporate a humorous photograph or video clip to lighten the mood.
- You don't have to go for a laugh all the time, but you should try to elicit at least a smile.

# Cool stuff to watch

- Hans Rosling - The best stats you've ever seen: [https://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_the\\_best\\_stats\\_you\\_ve\\_ever\\_seen](https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_the_best_stats_you_ve_ever_seen)
- Sir Ken Robinson - Do schools kill creativity? [https://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_do\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity](https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_do_schools_kill_creativity)
- Steve Jobs - How to live before you die: [https://www.ted.com/talks/steve\\_jobs\\_how\\_to\\_live\\_before\\_you\\_die](https://www.ted.com/talks/steve_jobs_how_to_live_before_you_die)

# Questions?

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