

Presentation and communication skills

Lecture 3 - Memorable talk

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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.

Stick to your time

- Thinking is hard work. People will only give you a couple of minutes to make a powerful argument and attract their attention.
- Ideal length of time for a presentation is 15-20 minutes. It is because of “cognitive backlog” - too much information, prevents the successful transmission of ideas.
- If you must create one that’s longer, build in soft breaks (stories, videos, demonstrations) every 10 minutes.
- 15-20 minutes is long enough to be serious and short enough to hold people’s attention. It turns out that this length also works incredibly well online. It’s the length of a coffee break. So, you watch a great talk, and forward the link to two or three people. It can go viral, very easily.
- By forcing speakers who are used to going on for 45 minutes or more to bring it down to 15 or 20, you get them to really think about what they want to say. What is the key point they want to communicate? It has a clarifying effect. It brings discipline.

Draining the brain

- Cognitive processing—thinking, speaking, and listening—are physically demanding activities. The accumulation of information results in “cognitive backlog,” which, like piling on weights, makes the mental load heavier and heavier.
- As more and more stuff you need to remember piles on, it creates greater and greater pressure and pretty soon you’re going to drop it all.
- If you’re really concentrating, critical listening is a physically exhausting experience. Listening as an audience member is more draining than we give it credit for. Listening is an exhausting activity because the learner is continually adding material to be remembered—retrieved—later.
- The longer the task or the more information that is delivered, the greater the cognitive load. Listening to a five-minute presentation produces a relatively small amount of cognitive backlog; an 18-minute presentation produces a little more, while a 60-minute presentation produces so much backlog that you risk seriously upsetting your audience unless you create a very engaging presentation with “soft breaks”—stories, videos, demonstrations, or other speakers.

Energy and willpower

- We have a finite amount of willpower each day, which becomes depleted as our brains consume more energy. Completely unrelated activities (resisting chocolate, working on math puzzles, listening to a presentation) drew on the same source of energy.
- This helps to explain why we're so tired, especially later in the day, after we've been making decisions all morning or trying to suppress distractions (like the tempting piece of pie for lunch).
- A long, confusing, meandering presentation forces your listener's brain to work hard and to consume energy. Your brain cells need twice as much energy as other cells in your body. Mental activity rapidly depletes glucose. Talk for too long and your audience will find ways to distract themselves from your content.
- A simple explanation of a complex topic gives the audience confidence in the speaker's mastery of the subject. Albert Einstein once said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough."
- Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex. It takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction. "Leonardo da Vinci once said, "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." Be sophisticated. Keep your presentations and pitches short and simple."

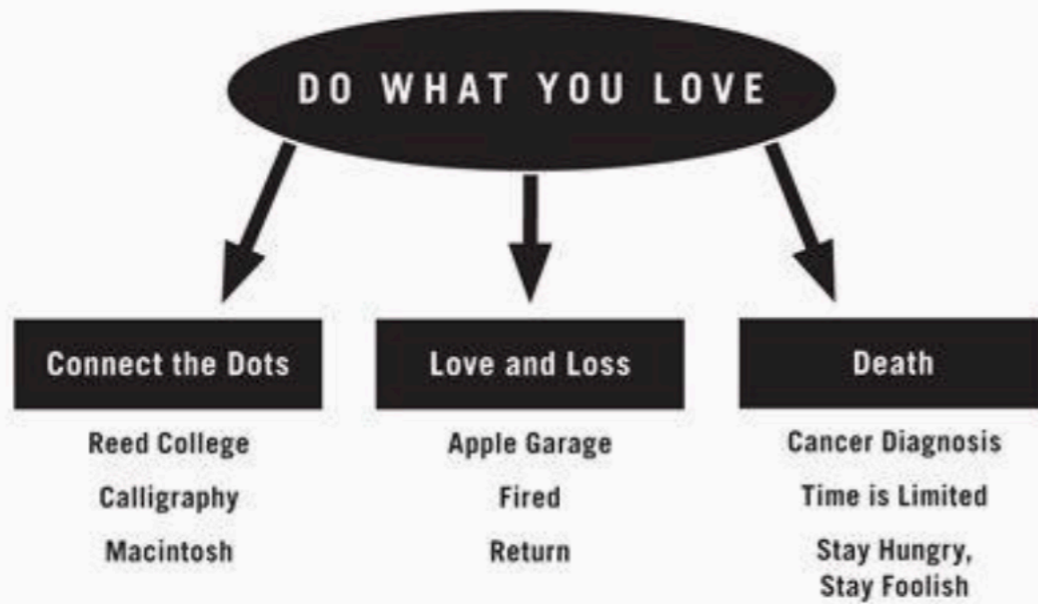
The rule of three

- The human mind can consume only about three “chunks” of information in short-term, or working, memory. If you add more items, retention falls off considerably. It’s one of the most powerful concepts in writing and communication.
- Think about where you have seen things or words in three...
- In the spirit of the rule of three, many effective presenters use three stories as the outline for their presentations.

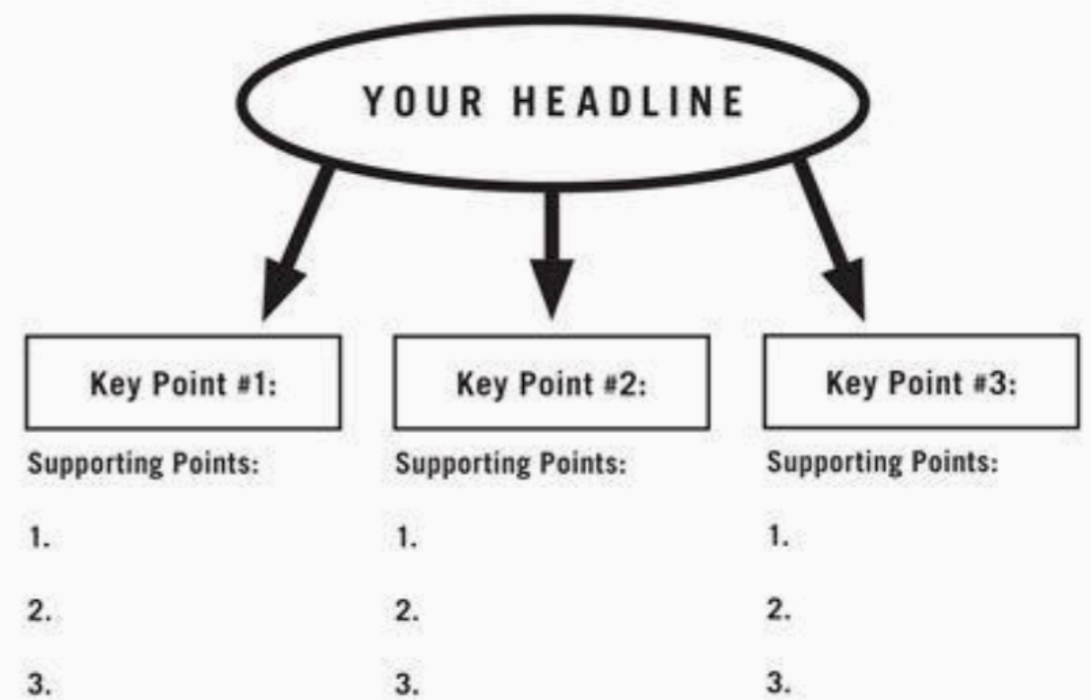
Message map

- Step One: Create a Twitter-Friendly Headline
 - What is the single most important thing I want my listener to know about my [product, service, brand, idea]?
- Step Two: Support the Headline with Three Key Messages
 - Include the three supporting messages that support the overall theme
- Step Three: Reinforce the Three Messages with Stories, Statistics, and Examples
 - Write a few words that will prompt you to deliver the story.
- Creating a message map for your presentation content is an efficient and effective way to ensure your presentation isn't too long or unorganized.

Steve Jobs's 2005 Stanford Commencement Speech



Message Map Template



Paint a Mental Picture with Multisensory Experiences

- It is better to present an explanation in words and pictures than solely in words.
- Deliver presentations with components that touch more than one of the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.
- The brain does not pay attention to boring things. It's nearly impossible to be bored if you're exposed to mesmerizing images, captivating videos, intriguing props, beautiful words, and more than one voice bringing the story to life.
- It's far more effective to explain concepts using multiple methods of sensory inputs—such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic.
- When the brain is allowed to build two mental representations of an explanation—a verbal model and a visual model—the mental connections are not just a little stronger. They are much, much stronger.

Visuals

- In presentation slides, use pictures instead of text whenever possible. Your audience is far more likely to recall information when it's delivered in a combination of pictures and text rather than text alone.
- The average PowerPoint slide has 40 words. It's nearly impossible to find one slide in a TED presentation that contains anywhere near 40 words, and these presentations are considered among the best in the world.
- The brain cannot multitask as well as you may think it can. Multitasking, when it comes to paying attention, is a myth.
- The brain does multitask at some level—you can walk and talk at the same time. But when it comes to the brain's ability to pay attention to a lecture, conversation, or presentation, it is simply incapable of paying equal attention to multiple items.
- Concepts presented as pictures instead of words are more likely to be recalled. Put simply, visuals matter—a lot. If you hear information, you are likely to remember about 10 percent of that information three days later. Add a picture, however, and your recall rate will soar to 65 percent. To put that into context, a picture will help you remember six times more information than listening to the words alone.

One theme per slide

- Use visuals to enhance words, not duplicate.
- When most presenters deliver data, they bombard the audience with an avalanche of numbers and charts, all in one view.
- The better way you want to deliver data: use one statistic (or theme) per slide, followed by photographs or images to give the brain a break from the monotony of the graphs, tables, and charts.
- Add a multimedia element in the form of visuals to bring your data alive. The visuals reinforce each point and help us “feel” the emotion behind the numbers.
- People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. Don’t think just about what you want people to know; think about how you want them to feel.

Visualizing your content - recommendations

- Add images or include background pictures to pie charts, tables, and graphs.
- Use no more than 40 words in the first 10 slides. This will force you to think creatively about telling a memorable and engaging story instead of filling the slide with needless and distracting text.
- Kill bullet points on most of your slides. Text and bullet points are the least memorable way of transferring information to your audience. You might not be able to achieve this goal with every slide, but it's a good exercise.
- Once you force yourself to eliminate wordy slides, you'll realize how much more fun you can have with your presentation. The best part—your audience will love it!

Be authentic, open, and transparent

- Most people can spot a phony. If you try to be something or someone you're not, you'll fail to gain the trust of your audience.
- You'll never make a lasting impression on people unless you leave your own mark. You should identify what lane they should be in, and to stay in their lane.
- Successful people identify their life's core purpose and relentlessly follow that purpose to become the best representation of themselves that they can become.
- When you deliver a presentation, your goal should not be to "deliver a presentation." It should be to inspire your audience, to move them, and to encourage them to dream bigger.
- You cannot move people if they don't think you're real. You'll never convince your audience of anything if they don't trust, admire, and genuinely like you.
- One way to be more authentic is to present the content to a friend or spouse before presenting it to the intended audience. You are more likely to let some of your "real" self come out when delivering the information to someone they have a relationship with than to a group of listeners they don't necessarily have a close connection with.

Cool stuff to watch

- David Christian - The history of our world in 18 minutes: https://www.ted.com/talks/david_christian_the_history_of_our_world_in_18_minutes
- Neil Pasricha - The 3 A's of awesome: https://www.ted.com/talks/neil_pasricha_the_3_a_s_of_awesome
- Kevin Allocca - Why videos go viral: https://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_allocca_why_videos_go_viral

Questions?

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