

Stop Ending Your Speeches With 'Any Questions' and End with This Instead

If you're planning to wrap up your presentation with a half-hearted call for "any questions?" followed by a "thank you" and a quick exit, then you haven't planned your whole presentation.

Too many people end their presentations with a call for questions, which is a mistake. Why? Because it leaves the audience in charge of your ending, when, in fact, you want to be the one who decides the last words the audience hears.

If you're not planning to take questions throughout your presentation, here are the final four steps you need to end your presentation memorably (in a good way):

1. Recap your main points

After you've covered your content, sum it up for the audience so that they remember what you've just told them. No matter how compelling you were, you still need to assume that people's attention spans are short. A quick review of your main points will help your listeners lock in what they've learned.

2. Invite questions (and mean it!)

While you may wish you could avoid this section at all costs, you need to give people an opportunity to clarify anything they didn't understand, seek additional information, and even challenge your proposal. You might even find that an audience member's question brings up a novel idea or thoughtful approach you hadn't considered, leading you to draw an updated conclusion.

3. Share your conclusion

Don't get complex or fancy. It can be a simple restatement of your objective, with a few observations thrown in that you collected during the Q&A. Or, if the Q&A didn't yield any new insights, you can skip the observations. The point is to remind your audience of the key message you want to reinforce.

4. Close memorably and meaningfully

Perhaps no section of a presentation is as important as the closing, since that's the last thing your audience will hear. And because it's so critical, your closing must be prepared and practiced.

You never get a second chance to make a last--and lasting--impression. Make sure that your presentations end positively, memorably, and with you in the driver's seat.