

Stop Beginning Your Speeches with 'Good Morning and Thank You' and Start with This Instead

Every presentation is an opportunity to make an impression. You can either use your pitch to build credibility, engagement and buy-in, or blow the chance to share your story in a way that sells.

No matter how compelling your message is, if you don't capture your audience's attention in the first minute, you'll miss the momentum you need to get them on board -- and stay there. That first minute is when you are supposed to establish your command of the room and the topic, build rapport, and signal that you're calm, so the audience can just relax -- you've got this. But this rarely happens.

A presentation opening is your promise to your listeners. These starters promise that this meeting is going to be boring at best, and a mess at most. A great introduction promises the audience that this presentation will be engaging, innovative, educational - and maybe even inspiring.

To do that, you need to stop being polite and start being passionate, from the moment you open your mouth.

While it's tempting to put weeks into building a captivating deck, spend days making sure the numbers all add up, and wake up at night worrying whether you've incorporated all the latest changes from the team, you are better off spending a few of those minutes making sure that your start is as strong, solid and sizzling as the rest of your presentation.

Here are 20 speech openings to get you started:

1. Even though I've seen [insert movie title] dozens of times, I will always watch it when it comes on TV. And here's why...
2. My [grandmother/previous boss/coach] was famous for saying...
3. When I showed up for my first day of work here, I mistakenly thought that...
4. 5/10/20 years ago, I never could have imagined that...
5. If you were to ask my [mother/partner/teenager, etc.] what drives me crazy, they would tell you that...
6. The year was...
7. I will never forget the first time that...
8. What would you do if you'd been in my shoes? Here's what happened...
9. I have a confession to make....
10. BOOM! That's the sound of [the competition imploding/our sales opportunities quadrupling/our large job copiers breaking, etc.]...

11. I was raised to believe that...
12. It came as a shock. A total shock...
13. Among my friends, I am famous for/infamous for...
14. As [Eleanor Roosevelt/Gandhi/Shakespeare, etc.] once said, ...
15. I don't like to admit it, but...
16. Something you'd never guess about me is...
17. Experts say that...but I've found...
18. I was *this close* to ...
19. Let me set the scene...
20. 100 years ago, [sliced bread/the first roller coaster/the hubcap] was invented. What's significant about that?