

# **Business Presentation Revolution**

**The Bold New Way to Inspire Action,  
Online or on Stage**

**Phil Waknell**

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# Praise

“Are you wondering how to enchant your audience? How to make a stronger impact in your next presentations? Phil’s methodology is clear and priceless. Read this book and learn from probably the most enthusiastic and passionate business presentation specialist!”

– **Catherine Marchand**, Executive VP, Merchandising & Design,  
Lacoste

“I used to waste days preparing business presentations, thinking there must be a better way. Thanks to Phil and his methods, I spend less time for better results. What a liberation!”

– **Nicolas Beau**, Global Head, Watch and Fine Jewelry  
Business Development, CHANEL

“Many business-critical ideas are expressed poorly, hence they are hardly heard and change little. Phil Waknell’s book is set to repair this injustice. If you need to lead through ideas, this book is for you.”

– **Isaac Getz**, Professor, ESCP Business School, and author of  
*Freedom, Inc.* and *Leadership Without Ego*

“The business world needs leaders, and leaders need this book. Phil Waknell will absolutely change the way you present. A surefire method for presentation success.”

– **Garr Reynolds**, author, *Presentation Zen*

“Edgar Morin said that the complex is something we cannot explain. When explained, the complex becomes evident. It is this process of transforming complexity into simplicity in communication that I’ve found in this book. And the only word to correctly describe this process is truly ‘art’.”

– **Paulo Magalhães**, Founder and President,  
Common Home of Humanity

“When the Beatles sang about revolution and wanting to change the world, they might have had Phil Waknell’s excellent new book, *Business Presentation Revolution*, in mind! Waknell, the Chief Inspiration Officer of presentation company Ideas on Stage, pulls back the curtain to reveal how you can capture hearts and minds, change the world – and, yes, even start a revolution by enhancing your public speaking skills using his powerful and revolutionary methods.”

– **Todd Cherches**, CEO of BigBlueGumball, and author of *VisuaLeadership: Leveraging the Power of Visual Thinking in Leadership and in Life*

“I’ve had the privilege of working with Phil for the past five years – his know-how and methodology are both essential and inspirational. Welcome to the revolution!”

– **Christopher Bailey**, CEO, Colombus Consulting

“I wholeheartedly share the purpose of this book, to improve the way we do presentations. This book summarizes more than a decade of Phil’s experience as a presentation coach, and the tools revealed in this book will make your presentations more effective and enjoyable – not only for you, but, most importantly, for your audience. As Founder of the WikiStage Conferences, if I could make all of our speakers read this book and prepare their talks based on it, I would do it. This is a revolution worth joining.”

– **Johannes Bittel**, Founder, WikiStage.org

“In business, we should all live and die by the words of Sir Michael Moritz of Sequoia Capital: ‘If people can’t tell stories, I don’t think they succeed as leaders.’ Fortunately for us, we have tools such as this book and people such as Phil Waknell to help us make sure the stories we have inside us can reach their audience and make an impact.”

– **Jean Bourcereau**, Managing Partner, Ventech

# R<sup>e</sup>think

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Welcome to the Revolution

Some people choose to spend their time spotting trains or collecting stamps, even if others believe there could be nothing more boring.

Since 2010, I have spent my time on business presentations: writing them, illustrating them, delivering them and helping thousands of others to do so. Like trainspotting and stamp-collecting, many people might assume this is boring because that's how they feel watching most presentations.

Unlike these optional pastimes, business presentations are a necessary part of daily life in most organizations. And because they are often boring and ineffective, presentations are an expensive problem, and a revolution is long overdue.

By picking up this book, you have taken the first step toward joining the Business Presentation Revolution and learning to feel as passionate about presentations as I do. My aims are to awaken the credible, creative speaker you can become, to share a simple yet powerful method to make your presentations stand out and succeed, and to give you the confidence to lead and to inspire your audiences to follow you.



***With the tools and techniques in this book, you can transform presentations from an unwelcome task into a pleasure, for you and your audiences, and thereby improve your results, motivate your teams and boost your career.***

### Learning by doing

You will not become a brilliant presenter just by reading this book from start to finish, just as you cannot learn to drive a car without ever getting into one. We learn better by doing than by reading or hearing. Throughout this book there are activities to perform, and I suggest that you take the time to perform them.

To further enrich your learning experience, there are many additional resources available on the accompanying website: **bpr-book.com**. These articles, videos, examples, templates and checklists will add to what you can read in this book, help you in your activities, and inspire you to keep working to become the best presenter you can be. I strongly encourage you to access these online resources as you read.

### Leadership communication

Are you a leader? How can you tell?

It's simple: someone with no followers isn't a leader. You can't proclaim yourself a leader – those who choose to follow you, or not, define whether you are a leader.



***Leadership is the art of being followed.***

This means making others want to follow you. Whereas managers can make people follow instructions, leaders get people to follow them – not because they have to, but because they want to.

You don't have to be a manager to be a leader. If you are selling products, services, ideas or yourself, you need to make your audience want to follow you and your ideas. A successful presenter, therefore, needs to be perceived as a leader worth following, and we all know we are unlikely to follow a speaker who is poorly prepared, who speaks unconvincingly, whose presentation is boring or whose slides hurt your eyes.

This book is for anyone who aspires to lead, who understands that strong communication skills are vital, and who realizes that the conventional wisdom has led most presentations to be boring and ineffective. It is for those who wish to stand out, to inspire and to make people want to follow them.

If that sounds like you, read on. The business world needs more people like you.

## **The presentation problem**

Imagine you are watching your favorite movie. You are captivated by the combination of a brilliant story, fine acting and breathtaking images. At the end, you feel happy or fulfilled, and you remember a lot about the film even though it only told you a story.

Now imagine yourself in a meeting room, or a university, or a virtual meeting, listening to a presentation. How do you feel? Most likely, the only thing you remember afterwards is how bored you were and how much of your precious time you wasted.

Businesses, schools and organizations all around the world waste millions year after year because of bad presentations. If you add the time and money spent creating bad slides, delivering ineffective presentations, and attending meetings, conferences and lectures that waste your time, you will quickly realize that all around you, presentations are a problem.

Think of it in pure business terms. If meeting participants remember nothing and waste their time, and if conference participants sit there bored and praying for the coffee break or evening cocktail, the return on that investment is minimal.

If your sales pitch fails to make customers want to buy from you, your revenues will suffer. If your leadership presentation fails to inspire your employees, they won't be motivated to deliver on your strategy. And if your results presentation fails to convince analysts that your leadership,

strategy and results are a good deal for shareholders, your stock price and company value could plummet. In all of these situations, you would not be succeeding as a leader, and that could affect your own career.



***The impact of a good or bad presentation has never been greater, yet most presentations are a waste of everybody's time. We don't just have a problem – we have a huge problem.***

## After the revolution

Most business presentations have been poor for too long. I've helped business leaders around the world with their most important presentations for many years, and they have seen what a difference a powerful presentation can make. It is a real competitive advantage.

To give you a clear idea of how different a post-revolution presentation is, the Before and After the Revolution table outlines how applying the five key revolutions in this book will deliver results that are diametrically opposed to typical, boring business presentations.

The Business Presentation Revolution does require a little effort on your part, but it will be worth it. I can be so confident about this because on all continents, across many industries and functions, from healthcare to luxury, from sales to R&D, so many business presenters have already joined the revolution and seen the difference it makes to their success – and they refuse to turn back.



***Once you've read this book, you will no longer wish to suffer through another boring pre-revolution presentation, or to inflict one on your audiences.***

*Before and After the Revolution*

Before the Revolution	After the Revolution
Focused on information	Focused on transformation
All about the speaker and what they want	All about the audience and what they need
Long enough, based on what the speaker wants to say	Short enough, based on what the audience needs to hear
Aims to include everything the speaker wants to cover	Aims to keep the audience's attention throughout
As standardized as possible	As personalized as possible
A monologue	As interactive as possible
Create slides, then (perhaps) think about what to say	Choose what to say, then (perhaps) illustrate it with slides
Tell them a lot, but they remember a little	Tell them a little, and they remember a lot
Full of facts and figures	Only essential data, backed up with examples and anecdotes
Lots of text on the screen	Visual slides with a few words
What you project is what you share (via email or printout)	You project straightforward slides and share a clear document
Your audience sits through your presentation, trying hard to listen	Your audience listens attentively without even trying
Your audience can't wait for the presentation to be over	Your audience can't wait for your next presentation

## The science of presenting

I'm not a motor mechanic. I don't play with my car's engine because I don't understand how it works in detail. I leave that to professionally trained experts. The human brain is far more complex than an engine, and we know far less about how it works. Trying to present without learning a little about how the brain works is like throwing a spanner into a car and hoping it will fix the brakes.

Don't worry, I'm not going to get all neurological here. I'm just going to give you a few highlights about what presenters need to know. I believe this is required knowledge for giving presentations because when you present, you're trying to change what's in your audience's brains in some way. The following points are my own conclusions based on reading many books and papers, as well as my own experience. If you need to see the science behind these simple statements, I recommend the excellent *Brain Rules* by John Medina and anything by Richard Mayer.

1. There is no such thing as “divided attention”: there is “undivided attention,” or distraction. If you don't have your audience's undivided attention, they won't properly understand or remember what you're saying.
2. Attention spans are short, even for interesting material, and almost zero for anything boring.
3. When it comes to presentations, two synonyms for “boring” are “typical” and “predictable”.
4. Human beings cannot listen to one thing while reading another.<sup>1</sup>
5. We forget most of what we hear, very quickly.<sup>2</sup>
6. The more we say, the less people remember.<sup>3</sup>

Business presenters need to know what science knows about how audiences pay attention and how they learn. Most presenters don't work hard

enough to gain or retain attention; they expect people to read and listen simultaneously, they don't use memorable images, their presentations are too long and they usually say too much for fear of leaving something out.



***A presentation is hard work. If the presenter doesn't put in the hard work, it will be hard work for the audience.***

All of this can be doubly relevant for online presentations. Where a live audience might be able to pay attention to their boss for twenty minutes, that attention span may only be ten minutes in an online meeting, where the speaker doesn't know whether the participants are paying attention – and where the participants know the speaker doesn't know.

The tips in this book take into account how our brains work, focusing on making the audience fully attentive, and giving them the best chance of remembering you and your messages.

## **Empty your cup**

Astute businesspeople will realize that a problem for some is an opportunity for others. If most presentations are mediocre at best, then a little effort can allow any presenter to shine.

Buying this book is an important first step. You've started to invest in yourself and your ability to lead others. You've probably seen and given many presentations before, so you likely have some preconceived ideas of what presentations should be as well as what doesn't work.

Before learning how to join the revolution and enjoy the competitive advantage of this new and better way of presenting, you first need to let go of the old approach. Make a conscious effort to throw away everything you thought you knew about presentations. Trash the old ideas of "one slide for three minutes," "seven bullets per slide" and "tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them". If your cup is already full, you won't be able to pour anything new into it.



## Five key revolutions

There are many things people need to change about the way we present, but I have distilled them into five major revolutions. If you make all these changes, you are set up for success. If you miss one, you risk failure.

**1**

**It's not your presentation – it's theirs.**

Each presentation should be personalized to its audience.  
Make them the most important ingredient.

**2**

**Aim not to inform, but to transform.**

People forget most of what they hear almost immediately.  
Focus on what you need them to believe, feel and do.

**3**

**Prepare your storyline before your slides.**

You're not there to comment on your slides.  
Your slides exist to illustrate and reinforce what you say.

**4**

**Don't confuse slides with documents.**

Slides make poor documents, documents make poor slides,  
and a mix of both is doubly poor.

**5**

**Aim not for perfect but for personal.**

People prefer authenticity to perfection.  
Be yourself: when you share, we care.

Each revolution underpins one of the five stages outlined in this book; together, they will serve as your guiding light as you follow the path to successful presentations.

Now it's time to discover the method that has already helped many aspiring leaders and saved many audiences from presentation pain, and which will revolutionize the way you present: the Presentation SCORE Method, or pSCORE for short.

## pSCORE: The Presentation SCORE Method

Over several years, and many thousands of presentations for clients of all types, we've refined the presentation generation process we follow at Ideas on Stage into what we call the Presentation SCORE Method (or pSCORE) – a tried and tested way to create and deliver effective and memorable presentations. It's the method we use with our clients in many industries and functions, the method we teach them, and a method that has proved its worth time and time again.

We call it the Presentation SCORE Method because there are five key success criteria for a great presentation, and they make up the acronym SCORE: Simple, Clear, Original, Related and Enjoyable.



### **SIMPLE**

The more you say, the less they remember, so keep it short, simple and to the point.



### **CLEAR**

Your objectives and key messages should be obvious to everybody – including you.



### **ORIGINAL**

Make your presentation stand out, and people will remember it for longer.



### **RELATED**

It's their presentation, not yours, so make it relevant and useful for your audience.



### **ENJOYABLE**

If the audience enjoys your talk, they will pay more attention, and remember more.

If what you say, what you show and how you speak all meet these success criteria, your presentation will likely SCORE with your audience.

pSCORE is a method that will give you the best possible chance of achieving those goals.

Let's look at what success looks like for a business presentation, using the five pSCORE success criteria.

## ***Simple***

In recent years, TED talks have demonstrated that short presentations work better than long lectures, but this insight isn't new.

Take, for example, the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln – one of the most famous and well-respected speeches by any politician in history. How long was it? Just over two minutes.

Nobody ever complained that a business presentation was too short – the opposite is usually true, and the effectiveness of a presentation is usually inversely proportional to its length.

Talk isn't cheap. In business, time is money, and talk is expensive. Too many people spend too much of their time creating and sitting through long, ineffective presentations. That's not a wise investment, so keep your presentation as short as it can be to achieve your objectives. That's the first aspect of simplicity.

The second is to ensure that you don't say too much. The more you say, the less your audience will remember – and don't forget how good people are at forgetting what they hear during a presentation. If you're too ambitious and aim to convey information that's too complex, or too much of it, they may remember nothing because you emphasized nothing.



***Say little, but say it well and make it stick. Keep it simple in terms of time, objectives and messages, and you're well on the way to presentation success.***

## ***Clear***

Keeping your objectives and messages simple and your presentation as short as it can be is a good start. In fact, just by having an objective you're already ahead of most presenters. However, there are still plenty of ways for these simple objectives and messages to get lost somewhere between the speaker and the audience.

- ▶ If the audience can't hear you, they won't understand your message.
- ▶ If you speak too quickly, they won't have time to think about what you're saying and what it means to them, and they'll forget each sentence as soon as the next begins.
- ▶ If you use complicated terms or concepts, or mispronounce words, they won't understand your message – or, worse, they might misunderstand it.
- ▶ If the text in your slides is too tiny for your audience to read, they will try, and fail, and think poorly of you – and while they are trying to decipher your unclear slides, they are not listening to you.

You should also have a clear structure so the audience is never lost in your presentation, wondering where you are and where you might be going. And, as part of that structure, make your key messages stand out to your audience. Don't expect them to guess what's most important – they may guess wrong, or they may not bother to guess at all.



***If the audience can hear and understand what you're telling and showing them, easily determine your key messages, and know where they are at all times in your presentation's structure, then you've achieved the goal of clarity. It sounds obvious, yet most presentations fail on at least one of these aspects.***

## ***Original***

In the business world, many managers sit through multiple presentations every day. Most of those presentations are alike, meaning that none of them stands out and sticks in their memory.

Imagine you are making a proposal to a potential client. That client might have six vendors lined up to deliver their presentations, one after the other. If five of the presentations look and sound similar, but one of them stands out in some way, which are they likely to remember the next day?

For the audience, an original presentation makes a refreshing change from all the usual, boring ones. For you, the presenter, that same originality gives you a better chance of being remembered, and it gives your key messages a better chance of being considered and actioned.



***Your presentation should stand out – otherwise, it will fade away.***

## ***Related***

When you spend time choosing and wrapping a gift for someone, it's not your gift – it's theirs. When you spend time writing a letter to someone, it's not your letter – it's theirs. Likewise, when you spend time preparing a presentation for an audience, it's not your presentation – it's theirs.

Your audience is the first magical ingredient in a successful presentation. This means that it should be tailored to them and their needs, it should meet their expectations wherever possible, and you should deliver it in a way that suits them and creates a connection between them and you. It should also be related to other items on the agenda, if appropriate, as well as the context in which you are presenting.



***Know your audience, and prepare a presentation specifically for them. When you care about their experience and offer them a personalized gift, they will receive it gratefully and care about it – and you.***

## ***Enjoyable***

This might sound more relevant to a TED conference than to a serious business presentation, but “serious” does not have to be the opposite of “enjoyable.” In fact, business can learn from theater, film, and modern conferences like TED and WikiStage: people pay more attention when they are enjoying themselves.

Think back to when I compared watching a movie to sitting through a presentation. The more enjoyable the movie seems to you, the more attention you pay to it, the less distracted you get and the more you remember.

The same is true for a presentation, or a speech, or a lecture, or a training course. The more the participants enjoy it, the more they will pay attention, and the more they will remember.

If you want your audience to take action, you first need their attention. And if you want their attention, make your presentation enjoyable to attend. Enjoyment leads to attention; attention leads to action.

That does not mean that you need to crack jokes or show them video clips from *Saturday Night Live*. Humor may have its place in some presentations, but not in all. An enjoyable presentation is one where the audience pays attention effortlessly.

When it comes to presenting, the opposite of “enjoyable” is “boring” and therefore “unsuccessful.” In Section 3, we’ll see how to make a presentation enjoyable without making it any less serious or business focused.

You might think that making your presentation Simple, Clear, Original and Related is enough, and making it Enjoyable is just the icing on the cake. I disagree: enjoyment is the key to the cake tin.



***If your presentation isn't enjoyable, it doesn't matter what you say because your audience won't be paying deep attention, and you'll be wasting your breath.***

## Five stages to presentation success

We will come back to the five pSCORE success criteria throughout the book, and you will see why we need to focus on them so strongly. For now, let's take a first look at pSCORE and start thinking about how we build a presentation that will SCORE with our audiences.

*Business Presentation Revolution* is organized around the five stages of pSCORE, each of which corresponds to one of the five key revolutions:

**Section 1: Foundation** covers the first steps of preparing a presentation, remembering that it's not yours – it's theirs. We'll therefore start by focusing on the audience, their needs and the context in which you'll be giving this presentation, and then setting transformational objectives. The foundation on which you should build the presentation is the key stage that most presenters skip in their haste to start typing their slides.

**Section 2: Ideation** builds on your foundation by generating ideas for what to say, show and do during your presentation to achieve your objectives, aiming not to inform but to transform your audience.

**Section 3: Creation** takes your ideas and shapes them into a compelling and effective storyline for your presentation, with storytelling techniques to gain and keep your audience's attention and to make your key messages memorable. By the end of this stage, you'll know what to say and in what order – and then you'll be able to consider whether your audience might benefit from some slides. Always create your story before your slides.

**Section 4: Illustration** takes your storyline and illustrates it powerfully, avoiding a confusing blend of slides and documents, and instead using effective slides and other visual aids where appropriate to make your messages more interesting and memorable. By the end of this stage, you'll have a finished presentation, knowing what to say and what to show.

**Section 5: Connection** helps you to prepare and rehearse ahead of your presentation, and to deliver it professionally and convincingly yet naturally. Your performance in front of your audience is just as important as

what you say and what you show, and your connection with your audience is more important still.

Each section includes several chapters, and at the end of many of the chapters you'll find activities. Since humans learn more by doing than by reading, I recommend you take the time to go through these activities.

I suggest reading through the book from start to finish, and then going through it again as you prepare your next presentation, making sure you complete each chapter before moving on to the next one. While it's up to you how you read and use the book (it's not my book – it's yours), I have two humble requests:

1. Please don't skip the Foundation stage (Section 1). If you forget to prepare, prepare to be forgotten.
2. Please use the many supporting materials at **bpr-book.com**. In particular, before starting the first stage, I recommend you fill in the free Impactful Presenter Scorecard. It only takes a couple of minutes, and it will give you an idea of your current presentation skills.

Now it's time to get started. Think of a presentation you need to prepare soon, empty your mind of everything you might already have thought to say, and let's go through pSCORE, beginning with stage 1: Foundation.



# THE AUTHOR

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Phil Waknell is Chief Inspiration Officer at Ideas on Stage, the leading presentation specialists, working with many of the world's top companies, speakers and start-ups, as well as helping hundreds of presenters at all types of conferences, from TED to corporate events.

Phil co-founded Ideas on Stage in 2010 with business consultant and ace designer Pierre Morsa. It quickly became a world-renowned presentation design, coaching and training company, based on a mix of business storytelling, high-impact slide design and powerful speaking coaching, with a dash of real business experience, a large dose of creativity and a dedication to delighting clients.

Before Ideas on Stage, Phil spent several years as an IT manager with Procter & Gamble and six years with Hewlett-Packard in international account and sales leadership roles. He has lived and worked in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Bulgaria and Japan. He holds an Executive MBA from HEC Paris and a languages degree from the University of Leeds. Despite living outside his native UK since the last century and becoming French enough to understand the rules of belote, he still loves cricket, curry, and beer without bubbles.

While based in Europe, Phil teaches, trains and speaks all over the world about the art of presenting, in English and French. In addition to giving

Ideas on Stage courses and keynotes, and helping business leaders and start-ups with their most important presentations and pitches, he teaches business communication at HEC Paris Executive Education and EMLyon Executive Education.

Contact Ideas on Stage if you'd like help revolutionizing presentations where you work. From their offices in the US and across Europe, Phil and his colleagues work with clients all over the world in several languages. You can find them at:

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## **Some training courses are based on books. This book is based on a training course.**

Phil and his colleagues at Ideas on Stage have given our flagship *Business Presentation Revolution* course to companies, start-ups, associations, business schools and social entrepreneurs for many years.

We coach and train in English, French, Spanish and Italian, online or in person.

If you'd like to boost your organization with a proven hands-on training course that brings pSCORE to life, inspire your people with a powerful keynote talk or webinar, or wow people with your own presentations, we'd love to hear from you.

Contact us via our our web site mentioning the hashtag *#businesspresentationrevolutionary* for a 5% discount on our courses and keynotes.

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