

# resonate

PRESENT VISUAL  
STORIES THAT  
TRANSFORM  
AUDIENCES

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## CHAPTER 5

# Create Meaningful Content

# Everything and the Kitchen Sink

It's now time to collect and create information. Resist the temptation during this initial phase to sit down with presentation software; it's not quite time for that yet.

This chapter covers various idea-generation techniques. It's rare that the first, most obvious idea generated is the best one. Tenaciously generate ideas along a theme until you've exhausted all possibilities. Usually, the truly clever ideas appear in the third or fourth round of idea generation.

You will use divergent thinking—the mental process that allows idea creation to move in any direction you can imagine. Divergent thinking enables new, original content to emerge. This is a messy phase, so suspend neatness and allow yourself to stay unstructured—you'll be scouting for new ideas and mining existing ones. Broadening the amount of possibilities creates unexpected outcomes, so explore every solution and suspend judgment.

## Generate as Many Ideas as Possible:

- **Idea collection:** While you can avoid starting from scratch by collecting presentations from peers, that's not the only type of information out there; and regurgitating someone else's slides is not the best way to connect with your audience. Collect readily available ideas—but more importantly, purposefully mine for inspiration from all other relevant resources.

When panning for gold, prospectors scoop up a pan full of dirt and swish it around until the heavier

and more valuable gold settles to the bottom—never knowing which pan full of dirt will yield a great nugget. So scoop "dirt" from everywhere during the idea-collection phase. Look at industry studies, competitor insights, news articles, partner programs, surveys—*everything*. Go both wide and deep. Gather as much as possible about the competitor's messages so you can position yourself differently than they do. Find out everything about the subject, and roam into tangential topics for insights.

- **Idea creation:** Inventing new ideas is a different process from mining existing ones. This is where you need to think instinctively—from your gut. Be curious, take risks, be persistent, and let your intuition guide you. Draw from your creative side to generate ideas that have never existed or been associated with your big idea before. Recognize that when probing into what's possible, your ideas will exist in a bit of a fog—because you can only see the future dimly. Approach this in an open-minded state—one in which you'll explore the unknown. You're experimenting, risking, dreaming, and creating new possibilities.

Grab a sheet of paper or a stack of sticky notes and jot down everything you can imagine that supports your idea. The goal is to create a vast amount of ideas, and you'll be prompted to add even more over the next several pages! But don't worry; you'll filter, synthesize, and categorize all of them and craft a meaningful whole later on.

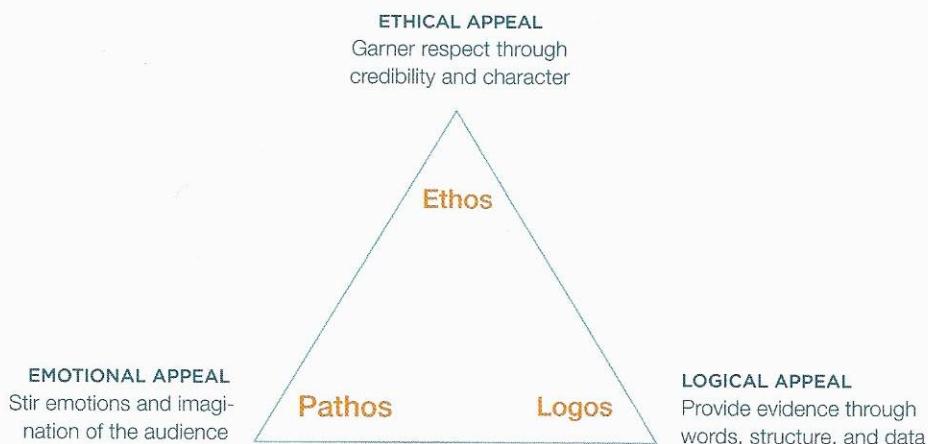
*Collect and organize as many ideas as possible. Sticky notes make capturing ideas easy, and the best part is that they can be rearranged as needed.*



# More Than Just Facts

Now that you have begun to collect and create content, this first batch you brainstormed might be primarily comprised of facts. Facts are one type of content to collect—but they're not the only type needed to create a successful presentation. You must strike a balance between analytical and emotional content. Yes, emotional. This might not be a step with which you're comfortable, but it's an important one nonetheless.

Aristotle claimed that to persuade, one must employ three types of argument: ethical appeal (*ethos*), emotional appeal (*pathos*), and logical appeal (*logos*).<sup>1</sup> Facts alone are not sufficient to persuade. They need to be complemented with just the right balance of credibility and content that tugs at the heartstrings.



Stating fact after fact in an hour-long presentation doesn't signal to the audience *why* these facts are important. Use emotions as a tool to bring emphasis to the facts so they stand out. If you don't, you're making the audience work too hard to identify the decision they are to make. Staying flat and factual might work in a scientific report but simply won't work for the oral delivery of persuasive content.

#### ETHICAL APPEAL

Connect with the audience through shared values and experiences. Create the right balance of analytical and emotional appeal; this will bolster your credibility. The audience will feel connected to and have respect for your idea.

#### LOGICAL APPEAL

Develop a structure to keep the presentation intact and help it make sense. Make a claim and supply evidence that supports the claim. It is necessary to use logical appeal in all presentations.

#### EMOTIONAL APPEAL

Stimulate your audience through appeals to their feelings of pain or pleasure. When people feel these emotions, they will throw reason out the window; people make important decisions based on emotion.

"The heart has its reasons which reason knows not of."

Blaise Pascal<sup>2</sup>

# Contrast Creates Contour

People are naturally attracted to opposites, so presentations should draw from this attraction to create interest. **Communicating an idea juxtaposed with its polar opposite creates energy. Moving back and forth between the contradictory poles encourages full engagement from the audience.**

Taking a strong and clear position opens up the opportunity for others to come up with a compelling counter-position, creating contrast. For each claim you make, the odds are high that there is a polar opposite claim that someone in the room supports. Of course, you believe that your perspective is the correct one—yet others in the room will likely differ.

The gap between *what is* and *what could be* is established through creating contrast. Most people jump right to describing what the world looks like today (or historically) versus what it could be tomorrow. That's the most obvious type of contrast. But it could also be "what the customer is like without your product" versus "what the customer could be with your product." Or "what the world looks like from an alternate point of view" versus "what the world looks like from your point of view." Basically, the gap is any type of contrast between where the audience currently is and where they could be once they know your perspective.

Addressing alternate points of view and contrasting perspectives is not only thorough; it's interesting—and there's proof.

In a 1986 article in the *American Journal of Sociology*, John Heritage and David Greatbatch analyzed 476 political speeches in Britain and studied what preceded the applause. They wanted to figure out, for example, why a speech could be received in total silence, whereas other speeches were applauded nearly twice per minute. What was it that appealed to the audience enough to evoke the physical response of clapping? After studying over nineteen thousand sentences, half of the bursts of applause could be attributed to a moment in the speech where a form of contrast was communicated. The role that contrast plays in generating a response from the audience was quite evident.<sup>6</sup>

The exercise on the next page will help you broaden your own perspective and create room for you to consider and address the audience's alternate beliefs. Confronting their perspective gives you credibility; you'll even hear opponents say things like, "Wow, that was thoroughly thought-out."

## Create Contrast

Review the ideas you've brainstormed so far. Each one of those ideas should have a contrasting idea inherent to it. There is an intelligent counterargument to each point you make. It's important to explore them all. You might not use them, but as part of your preparation, you should know what they are.

To the right is a list of contrasting elements to serve as a springboard. Most of your ideas possibly fall in one column or another. Look at all the elements in the list and generate new ideas you might not have considered. Create opposing ideas for each point that you can think of. Do this exercise for the items in each column and then repeat the process in the reverse order, which could trigger more ideas. When done, you should end up with a nice, hefty list of contrasting perspectives.

WHAT IS	WHAT COULD BE
Alternate point of view	• Your point of view
Past/Present	• Future
Pain	• Gain
Problem	• Solution
Roadblocks	• Clear Passage
Resistance	• Action
Impossible	• Possible
Need	• Fulfillment
Disadvantage	• Advantage (Opportunity)
Information	• Insight
Ordinary	• Special
Question	• Answer

Contrasting the commonplace with the lofty transforms audiences toward *what could be*. These thematic ideas are what creates the shapeliness of the up-and-down pattern in the presentation form. 

# Transform Ideas Into Meaning

So far, you've generated and collected ideas. Now you'll give those ideas meaning. The structure and significance of stories transforms information from static and flat to dynamic and alive. Stories reshape information into meaning.

The brain processes information and associates meaning to it. This mental process of attaching meaning helps us categorize information, make decisions, and determine something's worth. People place value on relationships and material goods depending on the meaning they bring.

Trying to persuade by stating the features and specifications of your subject matter, product, or philosophy is meaningless—until you add a human to the mix. Take something like a medical device. The design may be lovely and the alloy strong—but the attribute that creates meaning is that it *saves lives*. Could there be a story to tell about how the device is used to save a life, or even a doctor's time? Features become valuable when they impact a human. That's where the meaning lies.

Stories help an audience visualize what you do or what you believe; they make others' hearts more pliable. Sharing experiences in the form of a story creates a shared experience and visceral connection.

The rest of this chapter focuses on how to make information meaningful and, as a result, make the audience more receptive to the ideas you are communicating.

**"Stories are the currency of human relationships."**

Robert McKee<sup>8</sup>

You undoubtedly have items in your garage that you're hanging on to that are precious to you but would be meaningless to others. I have those too.

When my Gram passed away, she had nothing in her home of seeming material value. She was a smart, quick-witted lady who'd won awards for her poetry and lived a simple life in a tiny house on an orchard. When the dreaded task of dividing up her belongings came, I knew what I wanted: one of her small stained teacups. This seemingly valueless trinket would be worthless at a yard sale, yet it was precious to me. Not because of the craftsmanship or design but because of how and when it was used. I could visit Gram for hours, sipping from that cup as she told stories. The resale value of the teacup is less than a nickel, yet at the same time, to me the value of the cup is priceless.

The value of one's belongings or even their life is not based on what it physically is; the *real* value comes from the meaningfulness associated with it by another person.



# Turn Information Into Stories

Stories strengthen presentations by adding meaning. Used well, stories, analogies, and metaphors help create significance and stimulate the senses. Stories can be one sentence long or weave through an entire presentation as a theme (page 156).

Stories are easy to repeat. Transforming information into an anecdotal format charges the information emotionally and puts it into a readily digestible format.

Below is a template that uses a shortened version of The Hero's Journey.<sup>9</sup> You can add as many details and descriptive flourishes with which you're comfortable, but the basic structure remains sound. Think about what types of information help illustrate your point best and turn some of that information into a story format. To the right are examples of how the template below transformed information into story.

## Short Story Template<sup>10</sup>

### BEGINNING

When	Transition	Who/What	Where
Once upon a time	there was	a manager	in marketing
In 1993	I heard about	a person (name)	in Singapore
Two months ago	I bought	a computer	on eBay
Years ago	I saw	a car	in a garage
In ten years	there will be	an event	somewhere

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### MIDDLE

Context	Conflict	Proposed Resolution	Complication (Optional but effective)
At the time	Which put us in conflict with	So	• What risks were there?
This was happening	We knew that couldn't continue	We tried this	• Were you worried?
	The results weren't acceptable		• What if it failed?

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### END

Actual Resolution	MIP (Most Important Point)
In the end ... (doesn't have to be positive)	What's the moral or core message?

POINT YOU WANT TO MAKE		STORY ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE <sup>11</sup>	STORY ABOUT CUSTOMER INTEREST
BEGINNING	When, Who, Where	Every cross-divisional function could benefit from a steering committee.	Midsized companies would save money if they bought this software.
MIDDLE	Context	A few years ago, the sales team tackled a problem that demonstrates the cross-divisional issues I'm talking about.	Last year I met with Susan, the CEO from a company very similar to yours.
	Conflict	At the time, all sales groups were independent.	She was strategically wicked-smart, and, just like you, she was curious whether our software could help her business.
	Proposed Resolution	This means we were confusing the customers with many different rules, processes, and formats.	She knew that her organization wouldn't scale if she didn't have software that worked in a global environment.
	Complication	So we decided to create a sales-steering committee.	We installed a trial version for the employees in the Dallas office only.
END	Actual Resolution	You can imagine how hard it was to reach agreement on anything.	She was concerned that the employees would have a dip in productivity while learning a new program.
		But we agreed to meet every two weeks to discuss common ground. Over the next year, we standardized all our processes and learned a lot from each other. The customers were much happier with our service.	Instead, employee productivity increased, and Susan received numerous e-mails about how the software will help them gain market advantage.
		I think every cross-divisional function could benefit from a steering committee.	It took her less than a week to agree to an organization-wide installation.
MOST IMPORTANT POINT			Your company has the same challenges and would benefit, too.

# Move from Data to Meaning

Numbers can be captivating if you move beyond just spouting the data. According to *Now You See It* author Stephen Few, “As providers of quantitative business information, it is our responsibility to do more than sift through the data and pass it on; we must help our readers gain the insight contained therein. We must design the message in a way that leads readers on a journey of discovery, making sure that what’s important is clearly seen and understood. Numbers have an important story to tell. They rely on you to give them a clear and convincing voice.”<sup>12</sup>

Numbers rarely speak for themselves. How big is a billion? How does that figure compare to others? What causes the numbers to go up or down? You can leave it up to individual interpretation, or you can explain the bumps, anomalies, and trends by accompanying them with narrative.

**There are a few ways to explain the narrative in the numbers:**

- **Scale:** Nowadays, we casually throw around profoundly large (and minutely small) numbers. Explain the grandness of scale by contrasting it with items of familiar size.

*WaterPartner.org's 2008 animation:* “This year, 1 white girl will be kidnapped in Aruba, 4 will die in shark attacks, 79 will die of Avian flu, 965 will die in airplane crashes, 14,600 will lose their lives in armed conflict, 5,000,000 will die from water-related disease. That’s a tsunami twice a month or five Hurricane Katrinas each day, or a World Trade Center disaster every four hours. Where are the headlines? Where is our outrage? Where is our humanity?” [www](#)

- **Compare:** Some numbers sound deceptively small or large until they’re put into context by comparing them to numbers of similar value in a different context.

*Intel's CEO Paul Otellini's 2010 CES Presentation:* “Today we have the industry’s first-shipping 32-nanometer process technology. A 32-nanometer microprocessor is 5,000 times faster; its transistors are 100,000 times cheaper than the 4004 processor that we began with. With all respect to our friends in the auto industry, if their products had produced the same kind of innovation, cars today would go 470,000 miles per hour. They’d get 100,000 miles per gallon and they’d cost three cents. We believe that these advances in technology are bringing us into a new era of computing.”

- **Context:** Numbers in charts go up and down or get bigger and smaller. Explaining the environmental and strategic factors that influence the changes gives the numbers meaning.

*Duarte Founder Mark Duarte's Vision Presentation:* When rolling out the 2010 vision, Mark showed a graphic depicting four bold strategic moves the organization had taken every five years since its founding twenty years ago. He explained how each strategic span of five years formed the corporate values. Then, he overlaid historic revenue trends over the same five-year increments showing how Duarte weathered each economic storm, emphasizing the role each strategic surge created in growth and opportunity. There was little resistance in understanding why the next five-year plan was worth supporting.

Telling the narrative implied in the numbers helps others see the meaning of the numbers.

# Murder Your Darlings

Now that you've amassed all the analytical and emotional content possible, it's time to narrow it down. Many of the ideas are unique and were possibly fascinating to uncover. But you can't say it all—and no one wants to hear it all. **The ideas need to be filtered down to the points that succinctly support your big idea.**

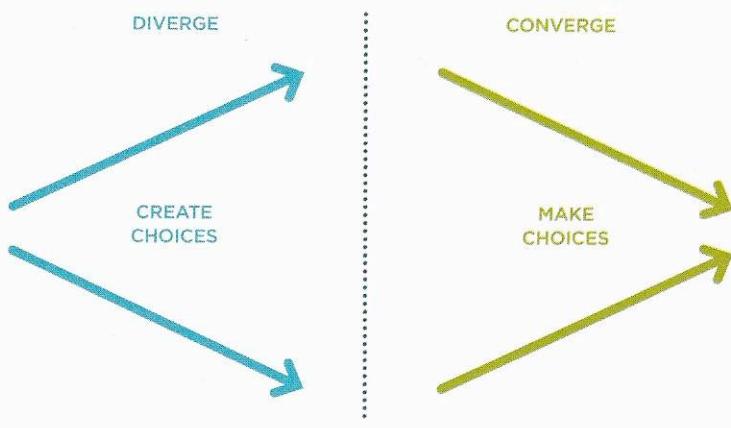
The pages in this chapter have walked you through divergent thinking by generating ideas. You collected factual and emotional content and considered contrasting perspectives.

Now it's time for some convergent thinking. Divergent and convergent were identified by J. P. Guilford in 1967

as two different types of thinking that occur in response to a problem. Divergent thinking generates ideas, while convergent thinking sorts and analyzes these ideas toward the best outcome.

So hopefully, all the ideas you just generated give you some great creative choices to sift through.

In his book *Change by Design*, Tim Brown says, "Convergent thinking is a practical way of deciding among existing alternatives. Think of a funnel, where the flared opening represents a broad set of initial possibilities and the small spout represents the narrowly convergent solution."<sup>13</sup>



"In the divergent phase, new options emerge. In the convergent phase, it is just the reverse: Now it's time to eliminate options and make choices. It can be painful to let a once-promising idea fall away."

Tim Brown<sup>14</sup>

Although you may feel that all the ideas you generated are insightfully riveting and took a ton of time to generate, they need to be sorted and organized—and some ideas need to be killed off. Killed? Yes; and the best filtering device you have is your big idea itself. Review it again, and eliminate all the fodder you captured that doesn't distinctly support that one big idea.

It's a violent creative process to construct ideas, destroy them, group them, regroup them, select them, reject them, rethink them, and modify them. Use both divergent and convergent thinking processes repeatedly until you have the most salient content to support your big idea.

When you feel that you have firmly established your position and filtered your ideas, review page 105 and validate that you retained enough interesting contrast. You don't want contrast to hit the cutting-room floor during the vetting process.

**Filtering is very important. If you don't filter your presentation, the audience will respond negatively—because you're making them work too hard to discern the most important pieces.** While they are listening, they are determining in their minds what was interesting

versus what was superfluous. And given the current social media environment, they have a forum to—very publicly—let others know their impression of your presentation. Their feedback can be brutally honest too. So if you don't edit it, the audience will be frustrated, and they might have the creative chops to distribute their thoughts to thousands of their social network followers. **Make edits on behalf of the audience; they don't want everything.** It's your job to be severe in your cuts. Let go of ideas even if you love them, for the sake of making the presentation better.

Audiences are screaming "make it clear," not "cram more in." You won't often hear an audience member say, "That presentation would have been so much better if it were longer." Striking a balance between withholding and communicating information is what separates the great presenters from the rest. The quality depends just as much on what you choose to remove as what you choose to include.

**"Whenever you feel an impulse to perpetrate a piece of exceptionally fine writing, obey it—whole-heartedly—and delete it before sending your manuscript to press. MURDER YOUR DARLINGS."**

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch<sup>15</sup>

# From Ideas to Messages

Now that you've edited down the content, you're going to cluster it by topic and then turn the topics into discrete messages. Grab a fresh piece of paper or a stack of sticky notes and write out the three or so major topics that support the big idea and spread them out, giving them breathing room. The important points should be top-of-mind after all the research you've done, but if you're struggling to limit them to five, it might take a bit of mental negotiation to murder another darling or two.

Each topic should overlap as little as possible. Make sure that nothing relevant to your big idea has been overlooked. There's a thinking process commonly used at McKinsey called **MECE** (**Mutually Exclusive and Collectively Exhaustive**):

- **Mutually Exclusive:** Each idea should be mutually exclusive and not overlap with the others; otherwise you will confuse the audience. ("Hey, haven't we talked about the acquisition already?")
- **Collectively Exhaustive:** Don't leave anything out. If you plan to talk about your competitors, you should not mysteriously leave one out. The audience expects you to be complete.

Once you've nailed down the key topics, list three to five supporting ideas around each. To the right is an example from a presentation announcing an acquisition that would be delivered at an employee meeting.



The topics you initially generate are usually a single word or a sentence fragment. In the same way that a big idea shouldn't be a topic, these little ideas need to be transformed into messages as well. Again, a message should be a full sentence that's emotionally charged. Topics are neutral; messages are charged.

Now that you've created clusters of ideas around the topics, you're going to transform the topic into a key message for each cluster.

Each message should feature as much contrast as necessary to effectively communicate the point.

In the acquisition brainstorm on the left-hand page, the first acquisition failed. They shouldn't jump right into discussing the new acquisition (*what could be*) without acknowledging the first failed acquisition (*what is*). The message of the new acquisition must include an acknowledgment of what was learned from the previous failings, or the audience will feel like this new acquisition will fail also.

Changing topics into messages ensures that the content supports one big idea and that each message has an emotional charge to it. In the next chapter, you'll be arranging and structuring these messages.

Here are examples of changing the topics on the previous page to messages:

TOPIC	MESSAGE
Market	We have an aggressive competitor grabbing market share.
Acquisition	This acquisition will be successful because we applied insights from the last one.
Operations	Operations will pay the biggest price, so let's all support them well.
Culture	Our culture is valuable and will be strengthened through this historic change.

**CHAPTER 6**

# **Structure Reveals Insights**

# Establish Structure

Now that you've created meaningful messages, how do you arrange them for maximum impact? You structure them in a deliberate and logical way. A solid structure is the foundation of a coherent presentation, and shows the relationship between the parts and whole. It's similar to the couplings on a train or the string of a pearl necklace; it keeps everything connected in an orderly fashion, as if the content were destined to fit together neatly within a given framework. Without structure, ideas are easily forgotten.

**"It's unwise to merely dump a pile of unstructured information into the laps of your audience. They will have the same reaction as if you take a watch apart, fling the pieces at them and say 'Here's all you need to make a watch.' You might get high marks for research and energy, but that is a low-class consolation prize. By doing this you confess that you don't know what to do with all the stuff you've dug up. Audiences expect structure."**

Henry M. Boettiger<sup>1</sup>

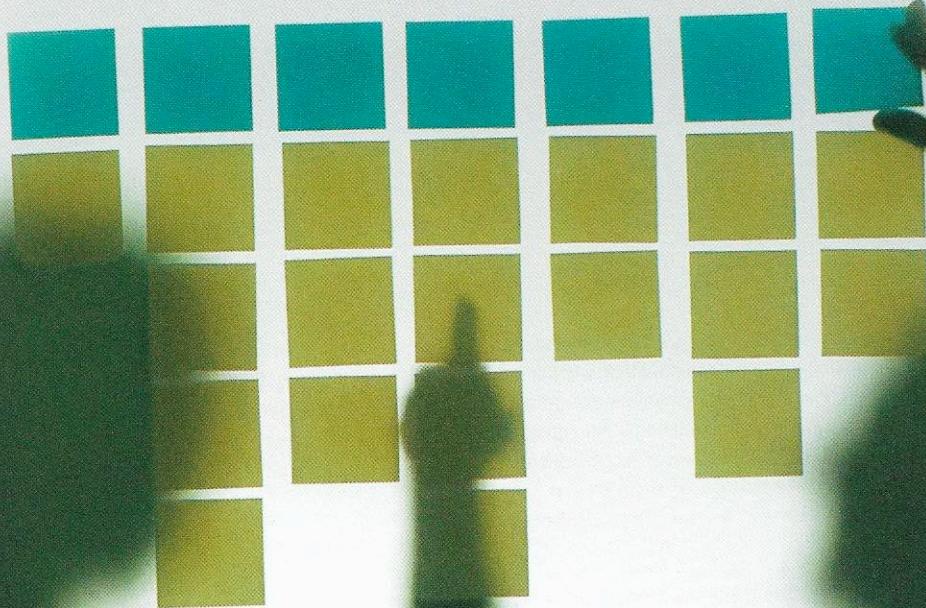
Most presentation applications are linear and encourage users to create slides in a sequential order. One slide follows the other, which naturally compels the user to focus on the individual details instead of the overarching structure. To help your audience "see" the structure, move out of the linear format of the presentation application and create an environment where you can look at the content spatially.

There are several ways to do this. You can use sticky notes, tape slides on a wall, or lay them on the floor. Any method that pulls your content out of a linear presentation application will work. Moving out of a slide-creation environment helps identify holes and keeps you focused on the bigger picture. This will help move your presentation from being about a bunch of small parts to being about a single big idea.

Clustering your content helps you visually assess how much weight you've given to various portions and how many supporting points you need to get your message across. Use this technique to confirm that you're emphasizing the correct content and allocating appropriate time for each message.

Keep in mind that the structure should accommodate the audience's comprehension needs and should be assembled in a way that's palatable to them. It's natural for subject matter experts to prepare material linking ideas that are closely connected in their own minds, but remember that the audience might not see these relationships as readily. Connect your messages in a way that your audience can follow. The structure should feel natural and make common sense to them!

This section will walk you through various structural devices for organizing your presentation. Most presentations that fail do so because of structural deficiencies. When the structure works, the presentation works. If one is sound, the other will be sound. A good structure helps you work out the kinks and eliminate the extemporaneous.



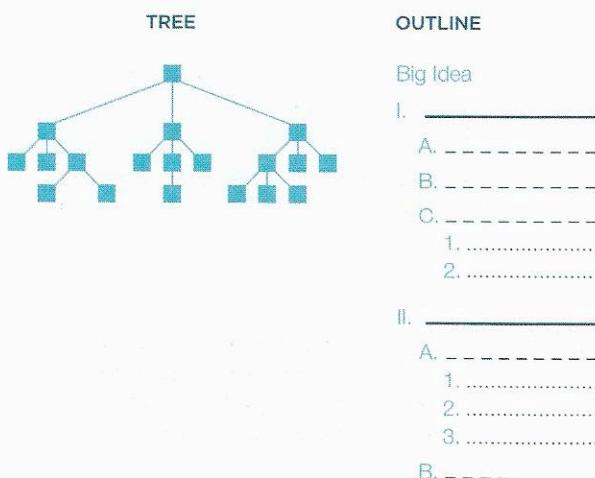
# Make Sense

The odds are high that you've been the victim of a meandering presentation. Unorganized presentations follow an invisible, neurotic pathway that only makes sense to the presenter. When an audience is unable to recognize structure, it's usually because the presenter either didn't have time to organize the information or didn't care enough to package the content in a way the audience could easily process.

Presentations that follow rabbit trails lead nowhere and leave the audience lost in a confused maze of dead ends.

Without structure, your ideas won't be solid. Structure strengthens your thinking. But many presentations today migrate away from the purity and clarity of structure. Don't fall for this temptation.

The most widely used structure for presentations is topical. A logic tree and outline are common forms to help visualize structure:



Notice how all the supporting information hangs off the larger topics. Points are held together under one unifying big idea from which the topics cascade down.

The chief marketing officer of a public company recently shared with me a process modification she made while developing messages for her CEO. Traditionally, she and her team would "pitch" ideas to the CEO by firing up a slide show. About three slides in, he would inevitably throw a wrench in by letting them know that this or that piece of content should be included. If he'd held onto his shorts, he would have seen that his favorite pet content was there, but he wouldn't have seen it for another fifteen minutes of slides. She laughed and said that the last time she worked with him, her team had a monumental idea. Ditch the slides and give him a substantial outline. He quickly absorbed the structure, saw his pet content immediately, and spent the bulk of the hour building on the ideas they proposed. Long live outlines!

**There are benefits to looking at a presentation's structure holistically.**

- It creates a snapshot of the structure so you're looking at the whole and not the parts, which keeps you focused on the construct instead of the details.
- It ensures that you have one clear big idea bolstered by supporting topics.
- It filters out tangential subtopics that may fall within the topic but that don't purely support the single big idea.
- It helps the review team get a quick read on the structure and messages, saving them time so they can give more thoughtful feedback.

## Organizational Structures

There are several interesting ways to organize supporting content. Though the most common is topical, a presentation's structure can incorporate other less customary organizational patterns. These patterns can be used as the overarching structure to replace a topical one, or to arrange content within a subtopic.

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These four structures have a natural storylike form that creates interest in presentations:

- **Chronological:** Arrange information related to events according to their time progression (forward or backward). This is best used if a topic is generally understood in terms of when events transpired.
- **Sequential:** Arrange information according to a process or step-by-step sequence. This is usually used in a report or to describe a project rollout.
- **Spatial:** Arrange information according to how things relate together in a physical space.
- **Climactic:** Arrange information in order of importance, usually moving from the least to most important point.

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These four structures have contrast inherently built into them and work for persuasive presentations:

- **Problem-solution:** Arrange information by stating the problem and then the solution. Establishing that there's a problem helps convince people of the need for change.
- **Compare-contrast:** Arrange information according to how two or more things are different from or similar to one another. Insights surface when information is put into this context.
- **Cause-effect:** Arrange information to show the different causes and effects of various situations. This is effective when promoting action to solve a problem.
- **Advantage-disadvantage:** Arrange information into "good" or "bad" categories. This helps the audience weigh both sides of an issue.

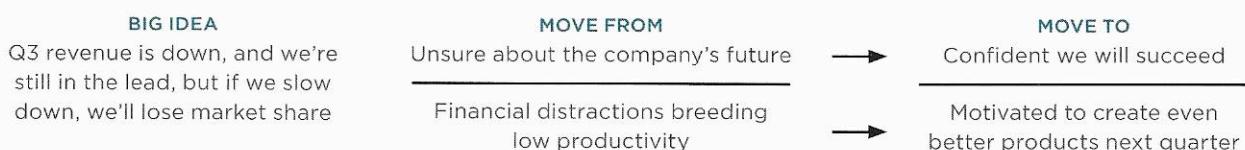
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Choose the organizational structure that makes the most sense for your message. Whichever structure you use, guide the audience through it with clear verbal or visual cues that clarify where you are and where you are taking them.

# Order Messages for Impact

**Structure can be used to drive a desired outcome.** Where and how you associate one piece of information with another creates meaning and determines how others will receive it. Skillfully arranged information creates emotional appeal and leads to the desired emotional impact at the end of the presentation.

Below is an example of a third-quarter update presentation. Most organizations regularly deliver these reports to communicate the progress being made toward corporate goals. Notice that the “move to” states that the employees should feel confident and motivated to help.



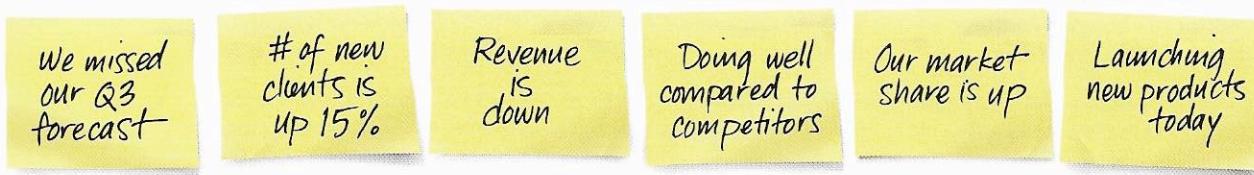
## Demotivating Structure

This structure does not motivate the audience to feel confident that they will succeed.

<b>Revenue is down</b>	<b># of new clients is up 15%</b>	<b>Our market share is up</b>	<b>Launching new products today</b>	<b>Doing well compared to competitors</b>	<b>We missed our Q3 forecast</b>
<b>Script</b> Welcome, everybody, to the Q3 update. I just want to let you know that the Q3 revenue was down. The rumors are true.	The numbers are down. But hey, we're up 15 percent in number of new clients. That's good. Good job, everyone.	Our market share is also up, so that's not bad.	And you guys were able to turn out some new products this quarter, and I'm really proud of you for that.	We're not doing too bad compared to our competitors.	All this happened in a quarter in which the analysts predicted we'd be down, so it was expected. Thanks for coming today, and have a great day.

## Motivating Structure

Now look at the same material presented in a different order with a pinch of added emotional appeal. Simple structural shifts and celebratory marvel changed the presentation's tone and outcome. Each point builds on the previous one, and it culminates in a motivating crescendo.



### Script

Welcome, everybody, to the Q3 update. When the forecasters looked at this quarter, they said our industry—our company in particular—was the little engine that couldn't. They said we wouldn't be able to make the climb.

In spite of that, we have shaken up the market in a down economy! Our new-client wins are up 15 percent over last year. In fact, four of the new clients are large multinational organizations that have been on our target list for over three years!

Yes, revenue is down, but let's give that context: The economy is down; our industry tracks with the economy, and so it's down; our company is a leader in our industry and tracks with it, so of course our revenue would be down.

But how did we do compared to our competitors? SuperCo is down 12 percent. DuperCo is down 8 percent. How far down are we? <pause> We are down only 2 percent.

So how has that impacted our market share? We have made significant gains—not only domestically but also abroad. Even though the marketplace has endured a season of chaos and uncertainty, you have made this season one of my proudest moments.

Just look at the products we'll be rolling out in Q4. Wow, aren't they beautiful? It takes innovation and tenacity to create stunning products with this magnitude of market disruption, and you did it! If you can be this creative in an uncertain environment, I can't wait to see what you'll do when the market turns around. We're not only the engine that could; we're an engine that can't be stopped!

The way information is structured makes a difference in the outcome.

# Create Emotional Contrast

Audiences enjoy it when presentations convey emotional contrast and appeal; however, most presentations lack this because it requires an additional step and can be an elusive element to include.

Involving the audience emotionally helps them form a relationship with you and your message. According to Peter Guber, “Business leaders must recognize that how the audience physically responds to the storyteller is an integral part of the story and its telling. Communal emotional response—hoots of laughter, shrieks of fear, gasps of dismay, cries of anger—is a binding force that the storyteller must learn how to orchestrate through appeals to the senses and the emotions.”<sup>17</sup>

Moving between analytical and emotional content is another form of contrast. Remember, contrast is very important for keeping the audience interested. Switching between the two creates contrast.

## Presentation Content Types

Below are two columns listing typical presentation content. Hard drives around the world are packed with slides from the left-hand section, but only a tiny percentage have slides from the right-hand section.

ANALYTICAL CONTENT		EMOTIONAL CONTENT	
Diagram	Specimen, exhibit	Biographical or fictitious stories	Shocking or scary statements
Feature	System	Benefits	Evocative images
Data	Process	Analogies, metaphors, anecdotes, parables	Invitations to marvel or wonder
Evidence	Facts	Props or dramatization	Humor
Example	Supporting documentation	Suspenseful reveals	Surprises
Case study			Offers, deals

Look at any of the analytical topics from the list on the left. They typically have no emotional charge to them—neither pain nor pleasure. Yet all could be presented in a way that transforms traditionally analytical material into emotional material. For example, a simple diagram of a small circle within a larger circle could convey that an acquisition occurred. The diagram is neutral until you tell the story of the struggle it took to acquire the company, or the heroics displayed by both parties to expedite the acquisition. Data is purely analytical until you explain *why* the ups and downs exist.

## Contrast Analytical and Emotional Content

Let's review the Q3 update presentation from the previous pages once again. A typical quarterly update presentation is full of data and reportlike material that isn't likely to connect employees to the message.

Here's how the analytical information was modified in the earlier example:



Inventory your slides and identify any content that can be transformed from analytical to emotional. Change it wherever appropriate.

In the movies, alternating emotion is called beats. Beats are the smallest structural element in a movie; there can be several in one scene. Scenes are analyzed to

make sure there is a shift of emotion in each scene. Screenwriters carefully ensure that the emotions are moving between pain and pleasure so that the audience remains engaged.<sup>8</sup>

Moving back and forth between analytical and emotional content engages presentation audiences in the same way.

## Contrast the Delivery

The chronic bombardment of media and entertainment has transformed us into an impatient culture. The entertainment industry continues to churn out new, innovative ways to engross our minds and hearts and provide us with various avenues of escape.

Audiences have become accustomed to quick action, rapid scene changes, and soundtracks that make the heart race. These advances in entertainment have set high expectations for visual and visceral stimulation and have undermined our ability to sit attentively for an hour while a speaker drones on. Most squirm within ten minutes and wish they had a remote control to flip to something more interesting.

Changing up delivery methods from traditional slide read-along to less conventional means keeps the audience interested and creates an element of surprise. Use alternate media, multiple presenters, and interaction to keep your talk alive, but be aware that these mode

changes need to be carefully planned. Several can and should occur within an hour.

The key to getting and holding attention is having something new happen continually. This creates a sense that something is always “going on.” Changing delivery modes can include physical movement on the stage. People feel compelled to watch visual events carefully because of our natural fight or flight instinct. Changes in media, alternating presenters, or even something as simple as a dramatic gesture creates variety for the audience and holds their interest.

**Overuse of slides diminishes the power of human connection.** Because genuine human connection is rare, you should capitalize on moments when you’re presenting in person. An audience will deem a presentation a success if they feel they interacted with you. Lowering your dependency on slides helps facilitate this sense of connectedness.

**Varying the delivery method between traditional and less traditional methods creates contrast:** Below is a list of delivery methods that contrast. You can see how delivering using nontraditional methods will make the presentation more interesting.

TRADITIONAL	NONTRADITIONAL
<b>Stage</b>	
Be the main event	• Share the main event
Hide behind podium	• Be free to roam
Use stage as-is	• Use stage as a setting
<b>Style</b>	
Serious business tone	• Humor and enthusiasm
Confined expressiveness	• Large expressiveness
Monotone	• Vocal and pace variety
<b>Visuals</b>	
Read slides	• Minimize slides
Static images	• Moving images
Talk about your product	• Show them your product
<b>Interaction</b>	
Minimize disruptions	• Plan disruptions
Resist live feedback	• Embrace real-time feedback
Request silence	• Encourage exchanges
<b>Content</b>	
Familiarity with features	• Wonderment and awe at features
Flawless knowledge	• Self-deprecating humanness
Long-winded rambles	• Memorable, headline-sized sound bites
<b>Involvement</b>	
One-way delivery	• Polling, shout-outs, game playing, writing, drawing, sharing, singing, and question-asking

Use as many variations as possible to keep it interesting. Mix it up to create contrast!

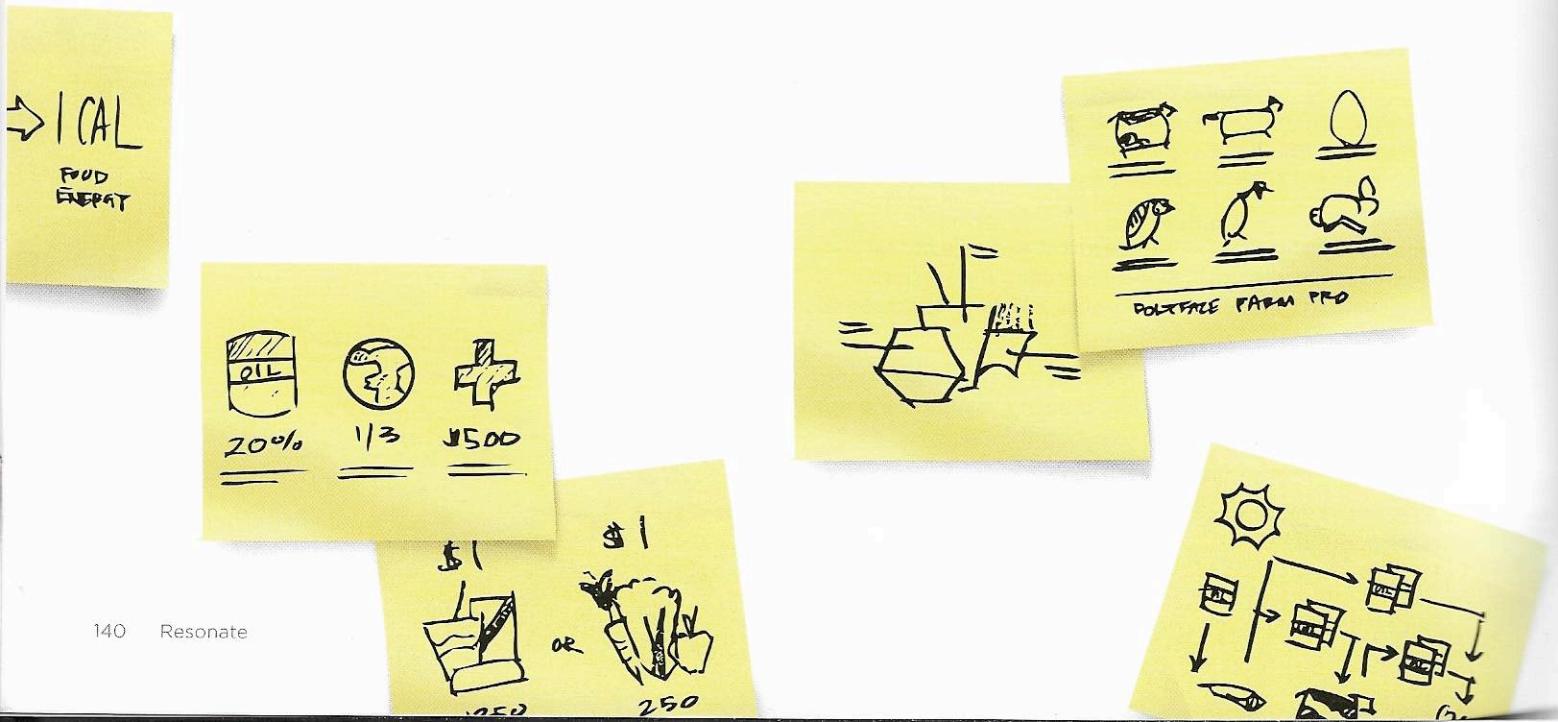
# Putting Your Story on the Silver Screen

You're finally at the last step of the presentation creation process. Now that all your messages are clear and structured, it's time to storyboard the slides.

**Before opening presentation software, keep in mind the following:**

**One idea per slide:** Each slide should have only one message. There's no reason to crowd several ideas onto one slide. Slides are free; make as many slides as you need. Give each idea its own moment on the stage. The audience visually re-engages each time you advance to the next slide, so having several well-paced slides will re-lure them visually each time you click.

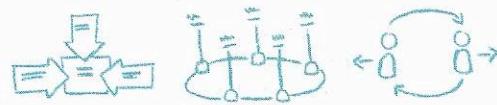
**Keep it simple:** Sketch out small visual representations of your ideas on paper or sticky notes. Constraining your ideas to a small sketch space guides you to simple, clear words and pictures (as proof of concept) before creating them in presentation software. Even if you don't have an image, nice big type on the screen is better than dense prose.



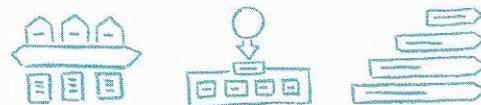
**Turn words into pictures:** Turning words into pictures is easy if you understand the relationship between the words on the slide. Look at one of your bullet slides. Each piece of content has some sort of relationship with the other content because when you were assembling the slide, it “felt” like they belonged together. Circle all the verbs or nouns on the slide and think through how they are all related to each other. Odds are, the relationships they form fall into one of the categories below.

## Various Types of Visual Relationships<sup>9</sup>

**FLOW**  
Shows process



**STRUCTURE**  
Shows classification



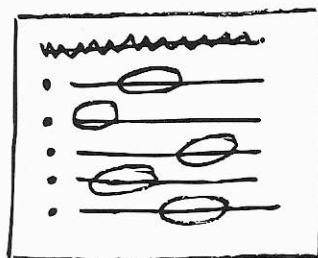
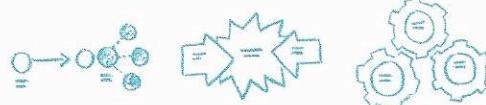
**CLUSTER**  
Shows groupings



**RADIATE**  
Shows links and nodes



**INFLUENCE**  
Shows cause and effect



Circle either the verbs or nouns in the bullet points and determine their relationship to each other.

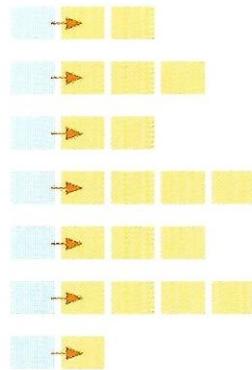
Note: If you want insights into how to create slides, pick up these two books: *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds and *Slide:ology* by yours truly.

# Process Recap

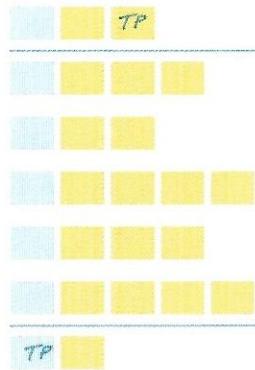
If you've been using sticky notes to collect and organize your ideas over the last two chapters, this is what the process should look like.



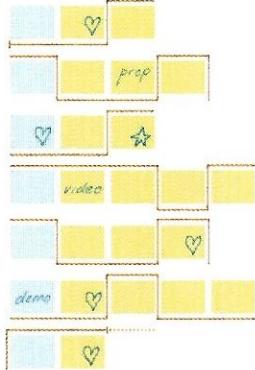
### ADD SUPPORTING POINTS



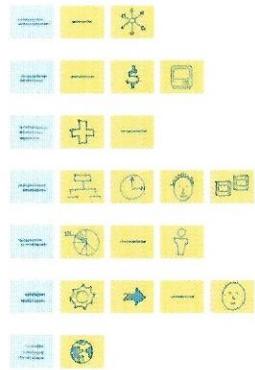
### STRENGTHEN THE TURNING POINTS (TP)



### VERIFY CONTRAST



### VISUALIZE MESSAGE



Each message needs supporting evidence in the form of slides.

page 128 to 129

Get your acts together!  
Ensure you have a clear beginning, middle, and end with strong turning points.

page 38 to 39  
page 42 to 45

Validate the content contour, emotional contrast, and delivery contrast.

page 46 to 47  
page 136 to 137

Once the message and the structure are final, turn the words into pictures.

page 140 to 141

# Create a S.T.A.R. Moment

Create a moment where you dramatically drive the big idea home by intentionally placing *Something They'll Always Remember*—a S.T.A.R. moment—in each presentation. This moment should be so profound or so dramatic that it becomes what the audience chats about at the watercooler or appears as the headline of a news article. Planting a S.T.A.R. moment in a presentation keeps the conversation going even after it's over and helps the message go viral.

Since you might be presenting to an audience that sees lots of presentations—like a venture capitalist or a customer who is reviewing several vendors—you want to stand out two weeks after you presented, when they're making their final decision. You want them to remember YOU instead of all the other presenters they encountered.

The S.T.A.R. moment should be a significant, sincere, and enlightening moment during the presentation that helps *magnify* your big idea—not distract from it.

There are five types of S.T.A.R. moments:

- **Memorable Dramatization:** Small dramatizations convey insights. They can be as simple as a prop or demo, or something more dramatic, like a reenactment or skit.
- **Repeatable Sound Bites:** Small, repeatable sound bites help feed the press with headlines, populate and

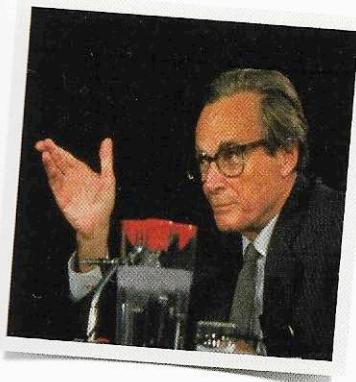
energize social media channels with insights, and give employees a rally cry.

- **Evocative Visuals:** A picture really is worth a thousand words—and a thousand emotions. A compelling image can become an unforgettable emotional link to your information.
- **Emotive Storytelling:** Stories package information in a way that people remember. Attaching a great story to the big idea makes it easily repeatable beyond the presentation.
- **Shocking Statistics:** If statistics are shocking, don't gloss over them; draw attention to them.

The S.T.A.R. moment shouldn't be kitschy or cliché. Make sure it's worthwhile and appropriate, or it could end up coming off like a really bad summer camp skit. Know your audience and determine what will resonate best with them. Don't create something that's overly emotionally charged for an audience of biochemists.

S.T.A.R. moments create a hook in the audience's minds and hearts. They tend to be visual in nature and give the audience insights that supplement solely auditory information.

## Famous S.T.A.R. Moments



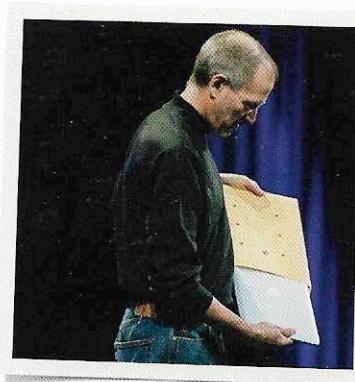
### RICHARD FEYNMAN

Richard Feynman helped investigate the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster. He quickly identified the failure of a crucial O-ring as the probable cause of the explosion. To illustrate his point, he bent and clamped a piece of the rubber O-ring and secretly placed it in a cup of ice water. At a perfectly timed moment, he loosened the clamp and as the rubber slowly uncurled he said, "...[F]or more than a few seconds, there is no resilience in this particular material when it is at a temperature of 32 degrees."<sup>1</sup> The press went nuts because it should have expanded in a millisecond. [www](#)



### BILL GATES

Through his philanthropy, Bill Gates hopes to solve some of the world's biggest problems, including malaria. In his 2009 TED talk, Gates established the gravity of this disease by stating that millions have died, and 200 million people are suffering from it at any given time. He then stated that more money is spent developing baldness drugs on behalf of wealthy men than on fighting malaria for the poor. At that moment, he released a jar of mosquitoes into the room saying, "There's no reason only poor people should have the experience."<sup>2</sup> [www](#)



### STEVE JOBS

Steve Jobs is a master at unveiling Apple products in intriguing ways. "This is the MacBook Air," he said in January 2008, "so thin it even fits inside one of those envelopes you see floating around the office." With that, Jobs walked to the side of the stage, picked up one such envelope, and pulled out a MacBook Air. The audience went wild as the sound of hundreds of cameras clicking and flashing filled the auditorium. "You can get a feel for how thin it is. It has a full-size keyboard and full-size display. Isn't it amazing? It's the world's thinnest notebook," said Jobs.<sup>3</sup>

# Case Study: Rauch Foundation Shocking Statistics

In 2002, a small group of Long Island's civic, academic, labor, and business leaders gathered to discuss challenges facing the region and its potential for new directions. As a result of those meetings, The Rauch Foundation funded the Long Island Index to gather and publish data on the Long Island region. Their operating principle was "Good information presented in a neutral manner can move policy." The goal was to be a catalyst for action by engaging the community in thinking about its future from a regional perspective.

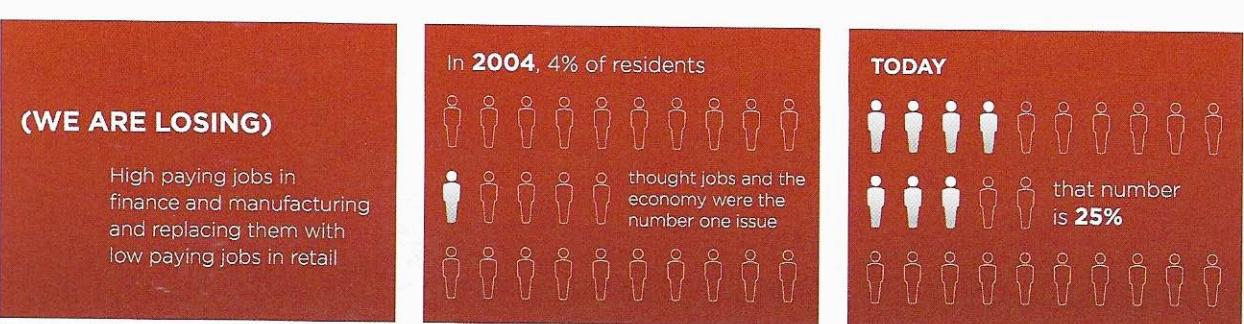
Even though the Long Island Index had served up valuable data about the past and present, the hope to drive action to make the future better hadn't seen much traction.

The local Long Island newspaper, *Newsday*, reported, "Last year, Index founder Nancy Rauch Douzinas challenged people to adopt a let's-do-something-about-this attitude. But the attitude, like action, hasn't materialized. So the Index is adopting an attitude of its own. It still will present data neutrally, and it won't take sides, but it will be much more active in trying to make sure that its ideas and its sense of urgency don't end when the lights come on after the annual presentation."<sup>5</sup>

So at the 2010 press launch of the Index, The Rauch Foundation pulled out key statistics and incorporated that information into a presentation. Dramatizing the key statistics with images helped convey the inventiveness and sense of urgency that would be required to manage growth with better environmental outcomes. Titled *The Clock is Ticking*, this four-and-a-half minute presentation showed one image after another to drive home the idea that Long Island is in steady decline and must do something—right now! [www.longislandindex.org](http://www.longislandindex.org)

**"For seven years, the Long Island Index produced many reports filled with facts and figures that told people how poorly our region was faring. When we shifted to telling the story visually, the reaction was electric. The information was the same, but the new format communicated the issues with an emotional urgency. The visual story moved citizens and elected officials to address the problems with an understanding that there was no more time to lose."**

Nancy Douzinas  
President, Rauch Foundation





**21%** of Households...



**TODAY** 48 families will begin  
the foreclosure  
process on their home

### (WE ARE LOSING)

Our next generation  
of workers



**22%** of those aged  
25-34 left Long Island  
between 2000  
and 2008



**69%** of 18-34 year  
olds are somewhat  
or very likely to  
move within the  
next five years

Every **MINUTE**

**\$7,610**

Every **MINUTE**

**\$7,610**

is drained from  
our economy

**THE CLOCK IS TICKING  
ON LONG ISLAND**

