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"Talk Like TED is a smart, practical book that will teach you how to give a kick-butt presentation."
— Daniel H. Pink, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *To Sell Is Human* and *Drive*

TALK

THE 9 PUBLIC-SPEAKING SECRETS

LIKE

OF THE WORLD'S TOP MINDS

TED

CARMINE GALLO

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE PRESENTATION SECRETS OF STEVE JOBS*

Talk Like TED

**THE 9 PUBLIC SPEAKING SECRETS
OF THE WORLD'S TOP MINDS**

Carmine Gallo

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To Vanessa, with love and gratitude

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INTRODUCTION

Ideas Are the Currency of the Twenty-first Century

“I’m a learning machine and this is the place to learn.”

—TONY ROBBINS, TED 2006

IDEAS ARE THE CURRENCY OF the twenty-first century. Some people are exceptionally good at presenting their ideas. Their skill elevates their stature and influence in today’s society. There’s nothing more inspiring than a bold idea delivered by a great speaker. Ideas, effectively packaged and delivered, can change the world. So, wouldn’t it be amazing to identify the exact techniques shared by the world’s greatest communicators, watch them deliver jaw-dropping presentations, and apply their secrets to wow your audiences? Now you can, thanks to a world famous conference that posts its best presentations for free on the Internet—TED (Technology, Education, Design), a scientific analysis of hundreds of TED presentations, direct interviews with TED’s most popular speakers, and my personal insights gleaned from years of coaching inspiring leaders of the world’s most admired brands.

Talk Like TED is for anyone who wants to speak with more confidence and authority. It’s for anyone who delivers presentations, sells products and services, or leads people who need to be inspired. If you have ideas worth sharing, the techniques in this book will help you craft and deliver those ideas far more persuasively than you’ve ever imagined.

In March 2012, civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson delivered a talk to 1,000 people attending the annual TED conference in Long Beach, California. He received the longest standing ovation in TED history, and his presentation has been viewed nearly two million times online. For 18 minutes Stevenson held the audience spellbound by appealing to their heads and their hearts. The combination worked. Stevenson told me that the attendees that day donated a combined \$1 million to his nonprofit, the Equal Justice Initiative. That’s over \$55,000 for each minute he spoke.

Stevenson did not deliver a PowerPoint presentation. He offered no visuals, no slides, no props. The power of his narrative carried the day. Some popular TED speakers prefer to use PowerPoint to reinforce the impact of their narrative. In March 2011, professor David Christian launched a movement to teach “Big History” in schools after delivering a riveting 18-minute TED talk backed by visually engaging slides and

intriguing graphics. “Big history” teaches students how the world evolved and its place in the universe. Christian’s presentation, which covers 13 billion years of history in 18 minutes, has been viewed more than one million times.

Christian and Stevenson have seemingly different presentation styles and you will hear from both of them in this book. One tells stories, the other delivers mountains of data with image-rich slides, yet both are captivating, entertaining, and inspiring because they share nine secrets. They understand the science and the art of persuasion.

After analyzing more than 500 TED presentations (more than 150 hours) and speaking directly to successful TED speakers, I’ve discovered that the most popular TED presentations share nine common elements. I’ve also interviewed some of the world’s leading neuroscientists, psychologists, and communications experts to gain a better understanding of why the principles that underlie these elements work as well as they do. Best of all, once you learn the secrets these communicators share, you can adopt them and stand out in your very next pitch or presentation. These are techniques I’ve used for years to coach CEOs, entrepreneurs, and leaders who have invented products or run companies that touch your life every day. While you may never speak at an actual TED conference, if you want to succeed in business you’d better be able to deliver a TED-worthy presentation. It represents a bold, fresh, contemporary, and compelling style that will help you win over your audience.

IDEAS WORTH SPREADING

Richard Saul Wurman created the TED conference in 1984 as a onetime event. Six years later it was reinvented as a four-day conference in Monterey, California. For \$475, attendees could watch a variety of lectures on topics covering technology, education, and design (TED). Technology-magazine publisher Chris Anderson purchased the conference in 2001 and relocated it to Long Beach, California in 2009. In 2014, the TED conference begins a run in Vancouver, Canada, reflecting its growing international appeal.

Until 2005 TED was a once-a-year event: four days, 50 speakers, 18-minute presentations. In that year, Anderson added a sister conference called TEDGlobal to reach an international audience. In 2009, the organization began granting licenses to third parties who could organize their own community-level TEDx events. Within three years more than 16,000 talks had been delivered at TEDx events around the world. Today there are five TEDx events organized every day in more than 130 countries.

Despite the astonishing growth in the conference business, TED speakers were

introduced to a much larger global audience through the launch of TED.com in June 2006. The site posted six talks to test the market. Six months later the site only had about 40 presentations, yet had attracted more than three million views. The world was and still is clearly hungry for great ideas presented in an engaging way.

On November 13, 2012 TED.com presentations had reached *one billion* views, and are now being viewed at the rate of 1.5 million times per day. The videos are translated into up to 90 languages, and 17 new viewings of TED presentations start every second of every day. According to Chris Anderson, “It used to be 800 people getting together once a year; now it’s about a million people a day watching TED Talks online. When we first put up a few of the talks as an experiment, we got such impassioned responses that we decided to flip the organization on its head and think of ourselves not so much as a conference but as ‘ideas worth spreading,’ building a big website around it. The conference is still the engine, but the website is the amplifier that takes the ideas to the world.”¹

The first six TED talks posted online are considered classics among fans who affectionately call themselves “TEDsters.” The speakers included Al Gore, Sir Ken Robinson, and Tony Robbins. Some of these speakers used traditional presentation slides; others did not. But they all delivered talks that were emotional, novel, and memorable. Today TED has become such an influential platform, famous actors and musicians make a beeline to a TED stage when they have ideas to share. A few days after accepting the Oscar for best picture, *Argo* director Ben Affleck appeared at TED in Long Beach to talk about his work in the Congo. Earlier in the week U2 singer Bono delivered a presentation on the success of antipoverty campaigns around the world. When celebrities want to be taken seriously, they hit the TED stage. Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg wrote her bestseller *Lean In* after her TED presentation on the subject of women in the workplace went viral on TED.com. TED presentations change the way people see the world and are springboards to launch movements in the areas of art, design, business, education, health, science, technology, and global issues. Documentary filmmaker Daphne Zuniga attended the 2006 conference. She describes it as “a gathering where the world’s top entrepreneurs, designers, scientists and artists present astonishing new ideas in what can only be described as a Cirque Du Soleil for the mind.”² There’s no event like it, Zuniga says. “It’s four days of learning, passion, and inspiration ... stimulating intellectually, but I never thought the ideas I heard would move my heart as well.” Oprah Winfrey once put it even more succinctly: “TED is where brilliant people go to hear other brilliant people share their ideas.”

THE PRESENTATION SECRETS OF STEVE JOBS

I'm in a unique position to analyze TED presentations. I wrote a book titled *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs*, which went on to become an international bestseller. Famous CEOs are known to have adopted the principles revealed in the book, and hundreds of thousands of professionals around the world are using the method to transform their presentations. I was flattered by the attention, but I wanted to reassure readers that the techniques I explored in *Presentation Secrets* were not exclusive to Steve Jobs. The Apple cofounder and technology visionary just happened to be very good at putting them all together. The techniques were very "TED-like."

In the book I make the point that Steve Jobs's famous commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005 was a magnificent illustration of his ability to captivate an audience. Ironically, the commencement speech is one of the most popular videos on TED.com. While it's not officially a TED talk, it contains the same elements as the best TED presentations and has been viewed more than 15 million times.

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.³ Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking," Jobs told the graduates. "Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become." Jobs's words spoke directly to the type of people who are moved by TED presentations. They're seekers. They're eager to learn. Discontent with the status quo, they are looking for inspiring and innovative ideas that move the world forward. With Steve Jobs, you learned the techniques from one master; in *Talk Like TED* you get them all.

DALE CARNEGIE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Talk Like TED digs far deeper into the science of communication than almost any book on the market today. It introduces you to men and women—scientists, authors, educators, environmentalists, and famous leaders—who prepare and deliver the talk of their lives. Every one of the more than 1,500 presentations available for free on the TED Web site can teach you something about public speaking.

When I first started thinking about writing a book on the public speaking secrets of TED talks, I thought of it as *Dale Carnegie for the Twenty-first Century*. Carnegie wrote the first mass market public-speaking and self-help book in 1915, *The Art of Public Speaking*. Carnegie's intuition was impeccable. He recommended that speakers keep their talks short. He said stories were powerful ways of connecting emotionally with your audience. He suggested the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphors and analogies. Three-quarters of a century before PowerPoint was invented Carnegie was talking about using visual aids. He understood the importance of

enthusiasm, practice, and strong delivery to move people. Everything Carnegie recommended in 1915 remains the foundation of effective communication to this day.

While Carnegie had the right idea, he didn't have the tools available today. Scientists using fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) can scan people's brains to see exactly what areas are being activated when a subject performs a specific task, such as speaking or listening to someone else. This technology and other tools of modern science have led to an avalanche of studies in the area of communication. The secrets revealed in this book are supported by the latest science from the best minds on the planet, and they work. Is passion contagious? You'll find out. Can telling stories actually "sync" your mind with that of the person listening to you? You'll discover the answer. Why does an 18-minute presentation trump a 60-minute one? Why did video of Bill Gates releasing mosquitoes into an audience go viral? You'll learn the answer to those questions, too.

Carnegie also lacked the most powerful tool that we can use to learn the art of public speaking: the Internet, which wouldn't be commercialized until 40 years after Carnegie's death. Today, thanks to the availability of broadband, people can watch videos on TED.com and see the world's best minds deliver the presentations of their lives. Once you learn these nine secrets, read the interviews with popular TED speakers, and understand the science behind it all, you can turn to TED.com to see the presenters in action using the skills you've just read about.

WE'RE ALL IN SALES NOW

The most popular TED speakers give presentations that stand out in a sea of ideas. As Daniel Pink notes in *To Sell Is Human*, "Like it or not, we're all in sales now."⁴ If you've been invited to give a TED talk, this book is your bible. If you haven't been invited to give a TED talk and have no intention of doing so, this book is still among the most valuable books you'll ever read because it will teach you how to sell yourself and your ideas more persuasively than you've ever imagined. It will teach you how to incorporate the elements that all inspiring presentations share, and it will show you how to reimagine the way you see yourself as a leader and a communicator. Remember, if you can't inspire anyone else with your ideas, it won't matter how great those ideas are. Ideas are only as good as the actions that follow the communication of those ideas.

* * *

TALK LIKE TED IS DIVIDED into three parts, each revealing three components of an inspiring presentation. The most engaging presentations are:

- **EMOTIONAL**—They touch my heart.
- **NOVEL**—They teach me something new.
- **MEMORABLE**—They present content in ways I'll never forget.

EMOTIONAL

Great communicators reach your head and touch your heart. Most people who deliver a presentation forget the “heart” part. In chapter 1 you’ll learn how to unleash the master within by identifying what it is that you are truly passionate about. You will read about research—never published in the popular press—that explains why passion is the key to mastering a skill like public speaking. Chapter 2 teaches you how to master the art of storytelling and why stories help your listeners get emotionally attached to your topic. You’ll learn about new research that shows how stories actually “sync” your mind to those of your audience, allowing you to create far deeper and more-meaningful connections than you’ve ever experienced. In chapter 3 you will learn how TED presenters exhibit body language and verbal delivery that is genuine and natural, almost as if they are having a conversation instead of addressing a large audience. You’ll also meet speakers who spent 200 hours rehearsing a presentation and learn how they practiced. You will learn techniques to make your presence and delivery more comfortable and impactful.

NOVEL

According to the neuroscientists I’ve interviewed, novelty is the single most effective way to capture a person’s attention. YouTube trends manager Kevin Allocca told a TED audience that in a world where two days of videos get uploaded every minute, “Only that which is truly unique and unexpected can stand out.” The brain cannot ignore novelty, and after you adopt the techniques in this section, your listeners will not be able to ignore you. In chapter 4 we explore how the greatest TED presenters engage their audiences with new information or a unique approach to an area of study. Chapter 5 is about delivering jaw-dropping moments, highlighting those speakers who carefully, consciously design and deliver “wow” moments their audiences are still talking about years later. Chapter 6 addresses the sensitive but important element of genuine humor—when to use it, how to use it, and how to be funny without telling a joke. Humor is unique to each presenter and it must be incorporated into your personal style of presenting.

MEMORABLE

You may have novel ideas, but if your audience cannot recall what you said, those

ideas don't matter. In chapter 7 I explore why the 18-minute TED presentation is the ideal length of time to get your point across. And yes, there's science to back it up. Chapter 8 covers the importance of creating vivid, multisensory experiences so your audience can recall the content more successfully. In chapter 9 I emphasize the importance of staying in your own lane, the ultimate key to being a genuine, authentic speaker whom people feel they can trust.

Each chapter features a specific technique shared by the most popular TED speakers along with examples, insights, and interviews with the people who delivered the presentations. I've also included "TEDnotes" throughout each chapter: specific tips that will help you apply the secrets to your very next pitch or presentation. In these notes you will find the name of the speaker and the title of his or her presentation so you can search for it easily on TED.com. In each chapter we'll also explore the science behind the featured secret—why it works and how you can apply the technique to take your presentations to a higher level. In the last 10 years we've learned more about the human mind than we've ever known. These findings have profound implications for your very next presentation.

LEARN FROM THE MASTERS

In *Mastery* author Robert Greene argues that we all have the ability to push the limits of human potential. Power, intelligence, and creativity are forces that we can unleash with the right mind-set and skills. People who are masters in their field (e.g., art, music, sports, public speaking) have a different way of seeing the world. Greene believes the word *genius* should be demystified because we have "access to information and knowledge that past masters could only dream about."⁵

TED.com is a gold mine for those who want to attain mastery in the area of communications, persuasion, and public speaking. *Talk Like TED* will give you the tools and show you how to use them to help you find your voice and maybe even your fortune.

Better-than-average communicators are generally more successful than other people, but great communicators start movements. They are remembered and revered by their last names alone: Jefferson, Lincoln, Churchill, Kennedy, King, Reagan. Failure to communicate effectively in business is a fast road to failure. It means startups won't get funded, products won't get sold, projects won't get backing, and careers won't soar. The ability to deliver a TED-worthy presentation could mean the difference between enjoying acclaim and toiling in hopeless obscurity. You're still alive. That means your life has purpose. You were meant for greatness. Don't sabotage your potential because you can't communicate your ideas.

At TED 2006, motivational guru Tony Robbins said, “Effective leaders have the ability to move themselves and others to action because they understand the invisible forces that shape us.”⁶ Passionate, powerful, and inspiring communication is one of those forces that moves and shapes us. A new approach to solving long-standing problems, inspiring stories, intriguing ways of delivering information, and standing ovations are known as “TED moments.” Create those moments. Captivate your audience. Inspire them. Change the world. Here’s how ...

PART I

Emotional

The key part of the TED format is that we have humans connecting to humans in a direct and almost vulnerable way. You're on stage naked, so to speak. The talks that work best are the ones where people can really sense that humanity. The emotions, dreams, imagination.

—CHRIS ANDERSON, CURATOR, TED

1. Unleash the Master Within

Passion is the thing that will help you create the highest expression of your talent.

—LARRY SMITH, TEDx, NOVEMBER 2011

AIMEE MULLINS HAS 12 PAIRS of legs. Like most people she was born with two, but unlike most people Mullins had to have both legs amputated below the knee due to a medical condition. Mullins has lived with no lower legs since her first birthday.

Mullins grew up in a middle-class family in the middle-class town of Allentown, Pennsylvania, yet her achievements are far from ordinary. Mullins's doctors suggested that an early amputation would give her the best chance to have a reasonable amount of mobility. As a child Mullins had no input into that decision, but as she grew up she refused to see herself as or to accept the label most people gave her—"disabled." Instead, she decided that prosthetic limbs would give her superpowers that others could only dream of.

Mullins redefines what it means to be disabled. As she told comedian and talk-show host Stephen Colbert, many actresses have more prosthetic material in their breasts than she does in her whole body, "and we don't call half of Hollywood disabled."

Mullins tapped her superpower—her prosthetic limbs—to run track for an NCAA Division One program at Georgetown University. She broke three world records in track and field at the 1996 Paralympics, became a fashion model and an actress, and landed a spot on *People* magazine's annual list of the 50 Most Beautiful People.

In 2009 the 5'8" Mullins stood on the TED stage at 6'1" the height she chose for the occasion. Mullins picks different legs to suit the event. She uses more-functional limbs for walking the streets of Manhattan and more-fashionable ones for fancy parties.

"TED literally was the launch pad to the next decade of my life's exploration,"¹ said Mullins. Mullins believes her TED appearance began a conversation that profoundly changed the way society looks at people with disabilities. Innovators, designers, and artists outside the traditional prosthetic medical community were inspired to see how creative and lifelike they could make legs. "It is no longer a conversation about

overcoming deficiency. It's a conversation about potential. A prosthetic limb doesn't represent the need to replace loss anymore ... So people that society once considered to be disabled can now become the architects of their own identities and indeed continue to change those identities by designing their bodies from a place of empowerment ... it is our humanity, and all the potential within it, that makes us beautiful."

Mullins's determination made her a world-class athlete; her passion won the hearts of the TED audience.

Secret #1: Unleash the Master Within

Dig deep to identify your unique and meaningful connection to your presentation topic. Passion leads to mastery and your presentation is nothing without it, but keep in mind that what fires you up might not be the obvious. Aimee Mullins isn't passionate about prosthetics; she's passionate about unleashing human potential.

Why it works: Science shows that passion is contagious, literally. You cannot inspire others unless you are inspired yourself. You stand a much greater chance of persuading and inspiring your listeners if you express an enthusiastic, passionate, and meaningful connection to your topic.

* * *

IN OCTOBER 2012, CAMERON RUSSELL told a TEDx audience, "Looks aren't everything."² Cliché? Yes, if it had been delivered by anyone else. Russell, however, is a successful fashion model. Within thirty seconds of taking the stage Russell changed her outfit. She covered her revealing, tight-fitting black dress with a wraparound skirt, replaced her eight-inch heels with plain shoes, and pulled a turtleneck sweater over her head.

"So why did I do that?" she asked the audience. "Image is powerful, but also image is superficial. I just totally transformed what you thought of me in six seconds."

Russell explained that she's an underwear model who has walked runways for Victoria's Secret and has appeared on the covers of fashion magazines. While Russell acknowledges that modeling has been good to her—it paid for college—she's also keenly aware that she "won the genetic lottery."

Russell showed the audience a series of before-and-after photos. The "before" photos revealed what she looked like earlier in the day of a photo shoot and the "after" photos displayed the final ad. Of course the two photographs didn't look at all alike. In one photo, Russell—16 years old at the time—was seductively posed with a young

man whose hand was placed in the back pocket of her jeans (Russell had never even had a boyfriend at the time of the shoot). “I hope what you’re seeing is that these pictures are not pictures of me. They are constructions, and they are constructions by a group of professionals, by hairstylists and makeup artists and photographers and stylists and all of their assistants and preproduction and postproduction. They build this. That’s not me.”

Russell is a master of her craft—modeling. But modeling is not what she’s passionate about. She’s passionate about raising self-esteem in young girls, and that’s why she connects with her audience. Passion is contagious. “The real way that I became a model is I won a genetic lottery, and I am the recipient of a legacy, and maybe you’re wondering what is a legacy. Well, for the past few centuries we have defined beauty not just as health and youth and symmetry that we’re biologically programmed to admire, but also as tall, slender figures, and femininity and white skin. And this is a legacy that was built for me, and it’s a legacy that I’ve been cashing in on.”

Russell’s looks made her a model; her passion made her a successful speaker.

Russell and Mullins were given a platform because they are masters in their fields, but they connect with their audiences because they are passionate about their topics. What fuels a speaker’s passion does not always involve their day-to-day work. Russell didn’t talk about posing for photographs, and Mullins didn’t talk about competing in track and field. Yet each gave the talk of her life.

The most popular TED speakers share something in common with the most engaging communicators in any field—a passion, an obsession they must share with others. The most popular TED speakers don’t have a “job.” They have a passion, an obsession, a vocation, but not a job. These people are called to share their ideas.

People cannot inspire others unless and until they are inspired themselves. “In our culture we tend to equate thinking and intellectual powers with success and achievement. In many ways, however, it is an emotional quality that separates those who master a field from the many who simply work at a job,”³ writes Robert Greene in *Mastery*. “Our levels of desire, patience, persistence and confidence end up playing a much larger role in success than sheer reasoning powers. Feeling motivated and energized, we can overcome almost anything. Feeling bored and restless, our minds shut off and we become increasingly passive.” Motivated and energized speakers are always more interesting and engaging than bored and passive ones.

I’m often asked to work with CEOs on major product launches or initiatives, helping them to tell their brand stories more effectively and persuasively. I travel around the

world to visit brands such as Intel, Coca-Cola, Chevron, Pfizer, and many other companies in nearly every product category. In any language, on any continent, in every country, those speakers who genuinely express their passion and enthusiasm for the topic are the ones who stand apart as inspiring leaders. They're the ones with whom customers want to conduct business.

For years I started with the same question during my coaching sessions with a client—what are you passionate about? In the early stage of building a story, I don't care about the product as much as I care about why the speaker is fired up about the product or service. Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks, once told me he wasn't passionate about coffee as much as he was passionate about “building a third place between work and home, a place where employees would be treated with respect and offer exceptional customer service.” Coffee is the product, but Starbucks is in the business of customer service. Tony Hsieh, the founder of online retailer Zappos, isn't passionate about shoes. He told me he's passionate about “delivering happiness.” The questions he asks himself are: How do I make my employees happy? How do I make my customers happy? The questions you ask will lead to a very different set of results. Asking yourself, “What's my product?” isn't nearly as effective as asking yourself, “What business am I really in? What am I truly passionate about?”

Tony Hsieh is so passionate about customer service and employee engagement, he is a sought-after speaker at events and conferences around the world (he has to turn down far more requests than he accepts). Since many speakers are bone-dry because they have no passionate attachment to the topic, watching an enthusiastic speaker is as refreshing as drinking ice-cold water in the desert.

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING?

Recently I've started to change the first question I ask of my executive clients who want to become better communicators. In his last major public presentation, Steve Jobs said, “It's the intersection of technology and liberal arts that makes our hearts sing.” So today I've replaced “What are you passionate about” with “What makes your heart sing?” The answer to the second question is even more profound and exciting than the former.

For example, I worked with a client in the agribusiness community of California. He headed an association of strawberry growers, an important crop for the state. Here's how he answered my questions:

Question 1: What do you do? “I'm the CEO of the California Strawberry Commission.”

Question 2: What are you passionate about? “I’m passionate about promoting California strawberries.”

Question 3: What is it about the industry that makes your heart sing? “The American dream. My parents were immigrants and worked in the fields. Eventually they were able to buy an acre of land and it grew from there. With strawberries, you don’t need a lot of land and you don’t need to own it; you can lease it. It’s a stepping stone to the American dream.”

I’m sure you’ll agree that the answer to the third question is much more interesting than the first two. What makes your heart sing? Identify it and share it with others.

TEDnote

WHAT MAKES YOUR HEART SING? Ask yourself, “What makes my heart sing?” Your passion is not a passing interest or even a hobby. A passion is something that is intensely meaningful and core to your identity. Once you identify what your passion is, can you say it influences your daily activities? Can you incorporate it into what you do professionally? Your true passion should be the subject of your communications and will serve to truly inspire your audience.

THE HAPPIEST MAN IN THE WORLD

Matthieu Ricard is the happiest man in the world, and he’s not happy about it. In 2004 Matthieu Ricard temporarily left the Shechen monastery in Kathmandu to teach a TED audience in Monterey, California the habits of happiness.

According to Ricard, happiness is a “deep sense of serenity and fulfillment.” Ricard should know. He’s not just pleased with his life. He’s really, really happy. Scientifically, he’s off-the-charts happy. Ricard volunteered for a study at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Research scientists placed 256 tiny electrodes on Ricard’s scalp to measure his brain waves. The study was conducted on hundreds of people who practice meditation. They were rated on a happiness scale. Ricard didn’t just score above average; the researchers couldn’t find anything like it in the neuroscience literature. The brain scans showed “excessive activity in his brain’s left prefrontal cortex compared to its right counterpart, giving him an abnormally large capacity for happiness and a reduced propensity towards negativity.”⁴

Ricard isn’t all that happy about being labeled the happiest man in the world. “In truth, anyone can find happiness if he or she looks for it in the right place,”⁵ he said. “Authentic happiness can only come from the long-term cultivation of wisdom, altruism, and compassion, and from the complete eradication of mental toxins, such as hatred, grasping, and ignorance.”

Ricard’s presentation, “The Habits of Happiness,” attracted more than two million

views on [TED.com](https://www.ted.com). I believe Ricard's presentation was well received because Ricard radiates the joy of someone who is deeply committed to his topic. Indeed, Ricard told me, "These ideas are dear to me not only because they brought me a lot of fulfillment, but because I am convinced that they can bring some good to society. I am particularly passionate to show that altruism and compassion are not luxuries, but essential needs to answer the challenges of our modern world. So, whenever I am asked to join a conference, I am glad to do so and be able to share my ideas."⁶

Successful speakers can't wait to share their ideas. They have charisma and charisma is directly associated with how much passion the speaker has for his or her content. Charismatic speakers radiate joy and passion; the joy of sharing their experience and passion for how their ideas, products, or services will benefit their audiences. "I believe that the best way to communicate with anyone is to first check the quality of your motivation: 'Is my motivation selfish or altruistic? Is my benevolence aimed at just a few or at the great number? For their short-term or their long-term good?' Once we have a clear motivation, then communication flows easily," says Ricard.

Amazingly, if your motivation is to share your passion with your audience, it's likely that you'll feel less nervous about speaking in public or delivering that all-important presentation in front of your boss. I asked Ricard how he remains calm and relaxed in front of large audiences. Ricard believes that anyone can talk him- or herself into feeling joy, bliss, and happiness when they choose to do so. It all comes down to your motivation. If your only goal is to make a sale or to elevate your stature, you might fail to connect with your audience (and you'll place a lot of pressure on yourself). If, however, your goal is more altruistic—giving your audience information to help them live better lives—you'll make a deeper connection and feel more comfortable in your role. "I am very happy to share ideas, but as an individual I have nothing to lose or to gain," said Ricard. "I don't care about my image, I have no business deal to cut, and I am not trying to impress anyone. I am just full of joy to be able to say a few words about the fact that we vastly underestimate the power of transforming the mind."

WHY YOU WILL FAIL TO HAVE A GREAT CAREER

If you're not happy and passionate about the work you do, you might fail to have a great career, and if you're not having a great time at a great career, it will be harder for you to generate enthusiasm through your presentations. That's why career, happiness, and the ability to inspire people are connected.

The topic of career success consumes University of Waterloo economics professor Larry Smith. Smith is frustrated with today's college students. He's upset because most college students will pursue specific careers for the wrong reasons—money, status,

etc. According to Smith, those students will fail to have great careers. The only way to have a great career, says Smith, is to do what you love. Smith channeled his frustration into an inspiring, passionate, and humorous TEDx lecture, “Why You Will Fail to Have a Great Career.”

I spoke to Smith about the popularity of his TED presentation, which at the time of our discussion had been seen more than two million times. The reaction surprised him. Smith agreed to do the talk at the request of his students. Since his classes are usually three hours long, he took it as a personal challenge to distill his ideas into 18 minutes. It was hugely popular because the audience sees a speaker with unbridled passion and a sense of urgency that makes his lecture riveting. Smith’s presentation was essentially 30 years of pent-up frustration reaching a boiling point. “Wasted talent is a waste I cannot stand,”⁷ Smith told me. “My students want to create technology. I want them to create really ‘kick-ass’ technology. I want them to be passionate about what they’re doing.”

Smith’s premise is simple. There are plenty of bad jobs, he says. Those “high-stress, blood-sucking, soul-destroying” jobs. Then there are great jobs, but very little in between. Smith says most people will fail to land a great job or enjoy a great career because they are afraid to follow their passion. “No matter how many people tell you that if you want a great career, pursue your passion, pursue your dreams ... you will decide not to do it.” Excuses, he says, are holding people back. His advice? “Find and use your passion and you’ll have a great career. Don’t do it and you won’t.”

Smith was one of the most inspiring TED presenters I’ve met though I have to admit that I may be a little biased. I’ve been preaching the same gospel since the day I changed my plan to go to law school and pursued a career in journalism instead. At first I didn’t earn nearly as much as I would have in the legal profession, and I certainly had some doubts about my chosen career path. Following your passion takes courage, especially if you don’t see the results as quickly as you’d like. My life is vastly different today than it was in those early years, and I enjoy sharing my ideas with audiences around the world. Best of all, I don’t feel as though I “work.” Writing these words, watching these presentations, studying the science behind them, interviewing famous speakers, and sharing their thoughts with you is a joyful experience for me. Above all, I’ve learned that those who are joyful about their work often make the best public speakers.

“You’ve got to follow your passion. You’ve got to figure out what it is you love—who you really are. And have the courage to do that. I believe that the only courage anybody ever needs is the courage to follow your own dreams.”

In his TEDx lecture Smith cited Steve Jobs's famous commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005 when Jobs encouraged the students to pursue the path they really love. "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle."

Smith agrees with Jobs, but believes the advice often falls on deaf ears. "It doesn't matter how many times you download Steven J.'s Stanford commencement address, you still look at it and decide not to do it," Smith told the TED audience. "You're afraid to pursue your passion. You're afraid to look ridiculous. You're afraid to try. You're afraid you may fail."

After spending a quarter century in journalism, writing, speaking, and communications, I can tell you without hesitation that the most inspiring presentations are delivered by people such as Larry Smith, Aimee Mullins, and most of the other speakers you'll meet in the chapters that follow. They share a deep well of experience and a passionate commitment to sharing their ideas to help others succeed.

TEDnote

ACCEPT HAPPINESS AS A CHOICE. What is one challenge you have been faced with recently? After identifying your challenge, list three reasons why this challenge is an opportunity. You see, happiness is a choice, an attitude that is contagious, and your state of mind will positively affect the way your listeners perceive you. Matthieu Ricard told me, "Our natural state of mind, when it is not misconstrued under the power of negative thoughts, is perfection. It is essential to inspire hope and confidence, since it is what we lack most and need most in our times."

THE NEW SCIENCE OF PASSION AND PERSUASION

Passion and public speaking are intimately connected. French philosopher Denis Diderot once said, "Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things." Successful leaders throughout history have speculated that passions—great passions—can elevate the soul. Today science proves them right. Neuroscientists have discovered—and have been able to quantify—why passionate people like TED speakers and great leaders inspire, energize, and influence other people.

Before we can create and deliver more-passionate presentations, we need to understand what passion is and why it works. For ten years Pace University

management professor Melissa Cardon has made passion her passion. In her breakthrough study “The Nature and Experience of Entrepreneurial Passion,” Cardon, along with four research colleagues from prestigious universities, found that passion plays a critical role in an entrepreneur’s success. For one thing, passion mobilizes a person’s energy and enhances his commitment to a goal. But passion does so much more. According to Cardon, “Entrepreneurial passion catalyzes full-blown emotional experiences, complete with engagement of brain and body responses.”⁸

Cardon began her research by developing a definition for *entrepreneurial passion*. The common definition of *passion* simply didn’t lend itself to academic studies and measurement. Passion is typically defined as “strong amorous feelings” or “sexual desire”; not exactly the kind of passion Cardon was interested in pursuing as an academic study. Yet “passion” is thrown around constantly as a critical component of success and, I would argue, is a critical element of all inspiring presentations.

What exactly does it mean to have a passion for something and, more important, how can people harness their passion to improve their odds of success in life, business, and public speaking? Cardon’s challenge was to identify what passion means, what it does, and how to measure it. Academically, if you can’t measure something you cannot quantify what it actually does. In order to establish passion as a robust area of study, Cardon had to develop a definition most scholars could agree on. Today, Cardon’s definition of entrepreneurial passion (EP) is generally accepted in the academic literature: “A positive, intense feeling that you experience for something that is profoundly meaningful for you as an individual.”

Cardon says that passion is something that is core to a person’s self-identity. It defines a person. They simply can’t separate their pursuit from who they are. *It’s core to their being*. “Passion is aroused not because some entrepreneurs are inherently disposed to such feelings but, rather, because they are engaged in something that relates to a meaningful and salient self-identity for them.”

Cardon’s analysis helps explain why the most popular TED speakers connect with their audiences: they speak about topics that are salient to their self-identity. Take urban environmental consultant Majora Carter, for example. Carter’s oldest brother served in Vietnam but was gunned down near their home in the South Bronx. Poverty, hopelessness, and racial divides made Carter who she is—a passionate advocate for urban renewal. Her experience defined her, and it defines her work. According to TED.com, “Carter’s confidence, energy and intensely emotional delivery make her talks a force of nature.” For Majora Carter, raising the hopes of those who have lost hope is core to who she is.

Entrepreneurship is core to Sir Richard Branson's identity. In 2007 Branson told a TED audience, "Companies are all about finding the right people, inspiring those people, and drawing out the best in people. I just love learning and I'm incredibly inquisitive and I love taking on the status quo and trying to turn it upside down."⁹ Building companies like Virgin Atlantic that challenge the status quo is core to who he is. I spent a day with Richard Branson on April 22, 2013. I had been invited to accompany him on the inaugural flight of Virgin America's new route from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. On the ground and in the air, Branson was all smiles as he enthusiastically talked about customer service and how it makes the difference in the success of his brand.

Branson and Carter are engaged in activities that are intensely associated with their role identities in a profoundly meaningful way. And it's that passion that plays a critical role in their career successes and their success as communicators, according to Cardon.

"People who are genuinely passionate about their topic make better speakers. They inspire their audiences in ways that nonpassionate, low-energy people fail to do," Cardon told me. "When you are passionate about something you can't help yourself from thinking about it, acting on it, and talking about it with other people." Cardon says that investors, customers, and other stakeholders are "smart consumers": they know when a person is displaying genuine passion and when he or she is faking it. It's very difficult—nearly impossible—to electrify an audience without feeling an intense, meaningful connection to the content of your presentation.

PASSION—WHY IT WORKS

The next step for Cardon was to identify why passion matters. She found that passion leads to important behaviors and outcomes. Cardon, along with dozens of other scientists in the field, has discovered that passionate business leaders are more creative, set higher goals, exhibit greater persistence, and record better company performance. Cardon and her colleagues also found a direct correlation between a presenter's "perceived passion" and the likelihood that investors will fund his or her ideas.

Professors Melissa Cardon, Cheryl Mitteness (Northeastern University), and Richard Sudek (Chapman University) performed a remarkable experiment and published their results in the September 2012 issue of the *Journal of Business Venturing*. The researchers set out to understand the role that passion plays in investor decision-making.

The business pitch is one of the most critical presentations in business. Without funding, most ventures would never get off the ground. Companies like Google and Apple would never have changed our lives if it hadn't been for charismatic, passionate leaders who grabbed the attention of investors. Is passion the only criteria on which Apple and Google investors based their funding decision? Of course not. Did the perceived passion of the founders (Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, Sergey Brin, and Larry Page) play a role in the investors' ultimate funding decision? It certainly did.

The setting for Cardon's study was one of the largest angel investor organizations in America, Tech Coast Angels, based in Orange County, California.¹⁰ Since 1997, the group of individual investors has invested more than \$100 million in nearly 170 companies. The sample involved investors who did not invest as a group—they made their decisions independently.

From August 2006 through July 2010, 64 angel investors screened 241 companies. The screening involved a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation and a 15-minute question-and-answer session (later you'll learn why 15 to 20 minutes is the ideal length of time to make a business pitch).

Forty-one (17 percent) of the companies were eventually funded. The startups fell into 16 categories including software, consumer products, medical devices, and business services. Using a five-point scale, angel investors were asked to assess the passion and enthusiasm of the presenter by evaluating two items: "The CEO is passionate about the company" and "The CEO is very enthusiastic." The researchers controlled for other factors such as market opportunity, relative risk, and revenue potential, thereby isolating passion as one factor in the funding decision. Isolating passion allowed the researchers to quantify the role it played and they discovered that passion did indeed play a very important role in the ultimate success of a business pitch.

Investors based their judgment of the entrepreneur's potential on 13 criteria and were asked to rank each one in order of importance to their final decision. The strength of the opportunity and the strength of the entrepreneur were the most prized criteria, ranking numbers one and two. "Perceived passion" came in third, well above such criteria as the entrepreneur's education, style, startup experience, or age.

The researchers concluded, "Our findings provide evidence that perceived passion does make a difference when angels evaluate the funding potential of new ventures ... perceived passion involves enthusiasm and excitement, and is distinct from how prepared or committed an entrepreneur may be to their venture ... perceived passion does appear to matter to equity investors."

Cardon's research is essential for helping us understand why some TED presentations become Internet sensations and, more important, how to unleash our own public speaking potential.

"Carmine, you know the old adage we tell college students that they never listen to—do what you love? Well, it's true," says Cardon. "If you're starting a company in an area that you think will make you rich, but you don't enjoy that product, industry, or anything about it—that's a mistake." Cardon believes it's also a mistake to believe that you can influence and inspire others by speaking about a topic that you don't love—that is not core to your identity.

A FRONT-ROW SEAT TO HER OWN STROKE

Few TED speakers have as deep an emotional connection to their topic as neuroanatomist Jill Bolte Taylor (Dr. Jill), a national spokesperson for the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center, which partly explains why her presentation is one of the most popular TED talks of all time.

One morning Dr. Jill awoke to a pounding pain behind her left eye, the kind of sharp jolt you might feel with an ice-cream headache. If only it had been as innocuous as a bite of ice cream. The headache got worse. Dr. Jill lost her balance and soon realized her right arm was completely paralyzed. A blood vessel had ruptured in her head. She was having a stroke—the vessels in the left side of her brain were literally exploding.

Dr. Jill considered the stroke a stroke of luck. You see, Dr. Jill is a neuroanatomist, specializing in the postmortem investigation of the human brain as it relates to severe mental illness. "I realized, 'Oh my gosh! I'm having a stroke! I'm having a stroke!' The next thing my brain says to me is, 'Wow! This is so cool! How many brain scientists have the opportunity to study their own brain from the inside out?'"¹¹ she told a TED audience in March 2008.

Dr. Jill's stroke transformed her physically and spiritually. The stroke was severe, leaving her unable to speak or move. It took years of rehabilitation before she was able to recover partially. She didn't give the TED presentation until eight years after her stroke.

Dr. Jill's spiritual awakening was profound. She connected to the world—and to others—in a way that she had never experienced in her "left-brain" world, where she saw herself as separate from the wider universe. Without the chatter of her left brain and her inability to feel where her body began and ended, her "spirit soared free." She felt part of an expansive universe. In short, she had reached Nirvana. "I remember thinking, there's no way I would ever be able to squeeze the enormousness of myself

back into this tiny little body.”

Dr. Jill’s stroke changed her life, as did her TED presentation. “My Stroke of Insight,” a presentation based on her book of the same title published in 2008, has been viewed more than 10 million times. As a direct result of the presentation, Dr. Jill was chosen as one of *TIME* magazine’s 100 Most Influential People for 2008. In January 2013, Dr. Jill explained the transformative impact of the presentation for a blog on the Huffington Post. “Within weeks of delivering that talk in 2008, my life changed and the repercussions still resonate loudly in my world. My book, *My Stroke of Insight*, has been translated into 30 languages. *TIME* and *Oprah’s Soul Series* came calling. I’ve traveled to Europe, Asia, South America, Canada; I’ve crisscrossed the states. And in February 2012, I took a trip to Antarctica with Vice President Al Gore, 20 scientists, and 125 global leaders who care deeply about climate.”¹²

Dr. Jill had a great career, as Larry Smith would say, because she discovered and pursued her life’s calling, well before the traumatic event that would make her an inspiring speaker. Dr. Jill became a brain scientist because her brother had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. “As a sister and later, as a scientist, I wanted to understand, why is it that I can take my dreams, I can connect them to my reality, and I can make my dreams come true? What is it about my brother’s brain and his schizophrenia that he cannot connect his dreams to a common and shared reality, so they instead become delusion?”

I spoke to Dr. Jill about her presentation style—how she builds the story, practices it, and delivers it. Dr. Jill’s advice to educators and communicators: tell a story and express your passion. “When I was at Harvard, I was the one winning the awards,” Dr. Jill told me. “I wasn’t winning the awards because my science was better than anyone else’s. I was winning the awards because I could tell a story that was interesting and fascinating and it was mine, down to the detail.”

Dr. Jill’s deep connection with her topic cannot be separated from her riveting ability to communicate with passion and, ultimately, change the way her listeners see the world. If you find your topic fascinating and interesting and wonderful, it’s more than likely your audience will, too.

YOUR BRAIN NEVER STOPS GROWING

Thanks to the study of neuroplasticity, scientists are finding that the brain actually grows and changes throughout your life. The intense repetition of a task creates new, stronger neural pathways. As a person becomes an expert in a particular area—music, sports, public speaking—the areas of the brain associated with those skills actually

grow.

“We all get better at what we do if we do it repeatedly,”¹³ according to Dr. Pascale Michelon, adjunct professor at Washington University in St. Louis. Michelon told me about research that has been conducted on everyone from taxi drivers to musicians. Compared to bus drivers, London taxi drivers had a larger hippocampus in the posterior region of the brain. The hippocampus has a specialized role in developing the skill used to navigate routes, whereby the bus drivers’ hippocampi was understimulated because they drove the same route day after day. Scientists also found that the gray matter involved in playing music (motor regions, anterior superior parietal and inferior temporal areas) was highest in professional musicians who practiced one hour a day, intermediate in amateur musicians, and lowest in nonmusicians. Learning a new skill and repeating the skills over and over builds new pathways in the brain.

Michelon believes these studies also apply to people who speak repeatedly on topics they’re passionate about. “The brain areas involved in language—the areas that help you talk and explain ideas more clearly—these brain areas become more activated and more efficient the more they are used. The more you speak in public, the more the actual structure of the brain changes. If you speak a lot in public, language areas of the brain become more developed.”

Compelling communicators, like those TED presenters who attract the most views online, are masters in a certain topic because of the inevitable amount of devotion, time, and effort invested in their pursuit, which is primarily fueled by fervent passion.

SECRETS OF INFECTIOUS PERSONALITIES

Psychologist Howard Friedman studies the most elusive of qualities: charisma, a concept closely tied with passion. In *The Longevity Project*, Friedman reveals the astonishing results of a groundbreaking study on the subject.

First, Friedman devised a questionnaire meant to categorize low-charisma individuals and high-charisma people. The survey includes questions such as, “When I hear great music my body automatically starts moving to the beat,”¹⁴ or, “At parties, I’m the center of attention,” and, “I am passionate about the job I do.” The respondents had a range of options from “not very true” to “very true.” The average score was 71 points (top scorers registered about 117 points). The study separated the magnetic personalities from the wallflowers. Friedman calls it the Affective Communications Test (ACT), intended to measure how well people can send their feelings to others. Friedman, however, took it one step further.

Friedman chose dozens of people who scored very high on the test and others who scored very low. He then gave them a questionnaire and asked them how they felt at the moment. High scorers and low scorers were then placed in a room together. They sat in the room for two minutes and couldn't speak to one another. After the time was up they were asked to fill out another questionnaire to gauge their mood. Without saying a word, the highly charismatic individuals were able to affect the mood of the low charismatics. If the highly charismatic person was happy, the low charismatic would report being happier, too. It did not, however, work the other way around. Charismatic people smiled more and had more energy in their nonverbal body language. They exuded joy and passion.

Friedman's study showed that passion does indeed rub off on others. People who did not communicate emotionally (little eye contact, sitting stiffly, no hand gestures) were not nearly as capable of influencing and persuading others as high charismatics.

PASSION IS CONTAGIOUS, LITERALLY

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Nothing great has ever been achieved without enthusiasm." Professors Joyce Bono at the University of Minnesota and Remus Ilies at Michigan State University have proved Emerson right. The business-school professors conducted four separate studies with hundreds of participants to measure charisma, positive emotions, and "mood contagion."

The researchers found that "individuals who are rated high on charisma tend to express more positive emotions in their written and spoken communications."¹⁵ Positive emotions include passion, enthusiasm, excitement, and optimism. Bono and Ilies also discovered that positive emotions are contagious, lifting the moods of the participants in the audience. Participants who listened and watched positive leaders in person and on video experienced a more positive mood than those who watched leaders rated low for positive emotions. Further, positive leaders were perceived as more effective and therefore more likely to persuade their followers to do what they want their followers to do.

"Results of our study clearly indicate that leaders' emotional expressions play an important role in the formation of followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness, attraction to leaders, and follower mood. Our results also suggest that charismatic leadership is linked to organizational success because charismatic leaders enable their followers to experience positive emotions. More importantly, our results indicate that the behavior of leaders can make a difference in the happiness and well-being of the followers by influencing their emotional lives."