



# Book The One Minute Presenter

Warwick John Fahy  
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## Recommendation

Many people are so afraid of public speaking that they would rather run blindfolded down the middle of a busy highway than make a presentation to an audience. The formal name for speechmaking anxiety, which affects three out of every four people, is glossophobia. This fear is so abject that in polls it outranks necrophobia, the fear of dying. Are you a glossophobe? If so, take heart: Presentation expert Warwick John Fahy, a member of Toastmasters International’s Hall of Fame, has the answer to your problem. He details eight steps toward becoming a more confident public speaker, including some “fearbusters” you can use to conquer your dread of making presentations. This easy-to-follow program can help anyone present fearlessly. *BooksInShort* recommends Fahy’s valuable advice on public speaking.

## Take-Aways

- In today’s hyperactive, multitasking world, few people truly focus. Audiences routinely tune out most speakers and presentations.
- You can break through the clutter and engage your audiences by using eight techniques:
- First, overcome your fears by visualizing, practicing, training, exercising and talking to other people about things not related to your presentation.
- Second, learn about your audience members so your words will be compelling to them.
- Third, have a firm goal and a 25-word essential message in mind. Tell a story.
- Fourth, build rapport with your audience. Use eye contact. Cite local topics.
- Fifth, record and listen to your voice. Build a strong vocal presence.
- Sixth, prepare to manage interruptions with professionalism and good humor.
- Seventh, get ready for Q&A sessions so you can handle them easily.
- Eighth, rehearse. Put in an hour of preparation for every minute you speak in public.

## Summary

### No Attention

Increasingly, cable television, video games, email, the Internet, social networking, instant messaging and smart phones provide constant distraction. Amid this information overload onslaught, which includes standard print and broadcast media, people often tune out public speakers. “Digital natives,” people born after 1980, are particularly bad audience members. They’ve grown up with the Internet, which shapes how they think and process information. Their motivation is “instant gratification,” and their attention spans tend to be severely limited.

“Bring [a melon] to the top of a skyscraper building and then drop it...The resulting crush of melon on the pavement below is the average person’s attention span today: a mess. It’s fragmented. It’s in bits.”

“Poor interactions” also negatively affect attention. The majority of business communications are not interactive, so people quickly tune them out. Time pressures, language barriers and multitasking are other obstacles to audience attention. Stressed people have a hard time calming their anxiety enough to listen well. Presenters trying to secure the attention of busy, distracted, harried and unfocused audience members face a major challenge.

## Too Many Presentations

Speechmakers, meanwhile, talk too much for their listeners to tolerate. According to estimates, speakers batter audiences with millions of presentations every day, many of them mind-numbingly dull. Indeed, instead of capturing their spectators’ attention and interest, such presentations quickly put them to sleep. Is it any wonder that audience members habitually zone out when someone is at the lectern?

“People are just not able to focus like they could before.”

Fortunately, you can muster numerous proven presentation techniques to enhance your message and get your audience members to sit up and pay close attention. This is true whether your listeners share your demographics or are diverse and multicultural. These techniques work even when presenting to Internet-driven digital natives, a growing part of today’s “customer base and workforce.” Modern teenagers will present an even greater challenge as tomorrow’s customers and employees. They happily watch television while they simultaneously “take a telephone call, send a text, receive a photograph, play a game, downloaded a music track, read a magazine” and “watch commercials at x6 speed.”

“Being authentic is...about finding your own speaking voice and being able to naturally and comfortably communicate back and forward with an audience.”

Follow these eight steps to make compelling presentations to anyone at any time:

### 1. “You, the Presenter”

To be an effective presenter, you must be unassuming and sincere. Do not let stage fright wreck your presentation. Catalog your present “speaking strengths.” Build your “authenticity” as a speaker by citing your experiences, demonstrating how much you care about the subject, and being confident and candid.

“Time is against you when you’re presenting. The old adage says you have seconds to make a strong first impression, and that still rings true.”

Use these “fearbusters” to overcome your trepidation about speaking:

- **“Work your body”** – How you feel physically directly affects your speech. Treat your body well before you present. That week, get a massage or spend time at a spa. That day, go for a walk, which aids circulation, soothes the nerves and forces air into the lungs. Stay away from “tea, coffee or caffeine-based soft drinks” before you speak. To calm yourself, do a few stretches, and have a drink of water before your talk.
- **“Help a friend”** – When you assist someone else, you’ll pay less attention to yourself and so you’ll feel less nervous.
- **“Get mentally prepared”** – Visualizing success works for great athletes. It can work for you. Think about past triumphs and how they made you feel. Imagine winning over your audience members. Picture them applauding you. Think of a positive mantra over and over; for example, “I’m the best presenter in the world.”
- **“Deep rhythmical breathing”** – The more oxygen you can draw in, the better you will feel. Add positive words if you like, such as this Vietnamese quotation, “Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.”
- **“Find a support group”** – Toastmasters International is a good one.
- **“Hire a learning coach”** – To build presenting skills, work with a professional trainer.

### 2. “Treasure Your Audience”

The more you know about your listeners, the better you will be able to connect. Derive a demographic and psychographic portrait of the people you are addressing. Determine what they consider important, what they already understand about your topic and what questions they’d ask. Figure out the most topical angle to pursue.

“Making a good connection with your face is easy. Just smile.”

Although this demographic and psychographic information will be useful, facts and figures do not provide a whole picture of your typical spectators. To envision your audience, develop a “golden avatar” that represents its members. Ask, “Who do they like?” and “What are their needs?” Once you have developed an avatar of your audience, give it a name. Make it as personal as possible.

“The clearer you are about where you want to take the audience, the better your chance of taking them there.”

When presenting, adopt a “SWIIFY” mind-set, telling your listeners, “So what’s in it for you?” Show how your talk will help them “solve a problem, meet a need, reach a goal” or “answer a question.” Explain why this is important to them. Focus on your listeners, not on yourself.

### 3. “Produce Your Message”

Make sure your presentation has an exact goal, such as compelling your audience to think or feel a certain way, or to do something specific. Like someone pitching a movie idea in Hollywood, develop a “high concept” that sums up your presentation. As Steven Spielberg puts it, “If a person can tell me the idea in 25 words or less, it’s going to make a pretty good movie.” An example of a high concept for the movie *Alien* would be “*Jaws* on a spaceship.”

“Don’t make your audiences think! Do the thinking for them.”

People love stories, so always tell a believable story throughout your presentation. Give it “an opening, a body and a close,” with a simple, clear message. Make sure

your audience can grasp your ideas without difficulty. Develop some key words in your presentation – concepts that deliver your message directly. Structure your presentation to highlight those critical points. “Like a good TV reporter, turn them into soundbites and slogans, which become the taglines of your message.”

## **4. “Create Your Connection”**

You must establish rapport with your listeners to communicate effectively. However, this requires their attention. Therefore, set some ground rules during your presentation, for example, no emailing, instant messaging or telephoning. Use eye contact to build a bond. Keep your audience engaged by periodically changing the pace of your presentation. Introduce some form of interactivity every 15 or 20 minutes. Get the members of your audience on your side by referring to something relatable that is topical or local. Show your enthusiasm and energy at all times. Use appropriate body language.

## **5. “Deliver with Style”**

Make sure your voice is as strong and vibrant as possible. The best way to monitor your vocal performance is to record and play back your presentations. Always speak with a microphone. When you make a transition to another point, amplify your speaking volume. Use the appropriate speaking pace and speed for your content. Occasionally pause during your presentation to help your audience refocus. Periodically adjust the pitch of your voice to keep listeners engaged. Emphasize certain words.

“Depending on your skills and attitude, questions can either unnerve and sidetrack or clarify and strengthen your presentation.”

Gestures also are good for emphasis, but avoid nervous motions that detract from your presentation, such as “playing with your glasses” or “adjusting your clothes.” Maintain proper posture. Use PowerPoint for clarification, but keep your slides to the minimum. Focus on your audience, not your images.

## **6. “Manage All Interruptions”**

Interruptions undermine your presentations. The more you prepare for interruptions, the better your presentation will go. Basic rules about interruptions include: No matter what happens, maintain a sense of humor at all times. Control your ego.

“Your credibility is still on the line during the Q&A, and your ability to manage people will either enhance or erode your credibility in the eyes of the audience.”

To deliver the most effective presentations, arrive early to check everything, including microphones, projectors and so on. The best in-room temperature for an audience is around 25°C (77°F). Make sure all light switches work. Go over your presentation plan in advance with the lighting professional. Learn his or her name so you will sound professional if you ask for help, such as: “Bill, can we go to video light setting?” Be sensitive to any odors in the room. Ask for a room change if necessary. If a technical glitch occurs during your presentation, be courteous and respectful to the on-site support staff. And, on the other hand, never start your presentation over again at the request of a boss who arrives late; offer to update the boss later.

## **7. “Master the Q&A”**

Many presenters fear question-and-answer sessions because they’re not prepared. While you cannot control the questions your audience members ask, you can anticipate most of them. Before your presentation, sketch out and practice viable responses to the most likely queries. Limit people to one question each, and use the “4As method” for each response: “Attend to the question in full. Acknowledge the questioner. Ask to clarify and check. Answer the question.” Pause briefly after each question to think carefully about your best response.

“Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.” (Vince Lombardi, American football coach)

If you don’t know an answer, don’t fake it. Admit you don’t know. You may need to respond to an overly complex question after the Q&A session. Handle that issue this way: “Let’s set up a time to talk about that. Can we meet afterward? Great. Thanks.”

After each response, show consideration for the questioner by saying something along the lines of “Does that make sense to you?” At the end of the Q&A session, briefly summarize your presentation’s main message.

## **8. “Finish on Time”**

Starting and finishing on time is a sign of respect for your audience. Never go on longer than planned. Carefully organize your presentation, and accurately time your rehearsals. Always rehearse your presentation to make it as perfect as you can. Do not make the common mistake of minutely planning your content, but spending little time practicing the delivery.

“Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something.” (Plato)

Devote 50% of your time to content development and 50% to rehearsing your presentation at least 10 to 15 times. Practice is the key to any effective presentation. Spend approximately one hour in preparation per every minute of your presentation. Thus, a 20-minute presentation requires a full 20 hours of planning, preparation and practice.

“Practice as if you are the worst. Perform as if you are the best.” (Anonymous)

Once you have perfectly memorized your material, begin to add gestures and points of emphasis to enliven your presentation. Follow these steps to help you build and rehearse your material:

- Develop your presentation's content first by getting it down on paper. Start with a basic outline of your primary ideas and main points.
- Expand your ideas by saying them out loud over and over. Figure out what works well and sounds best.
- Record how you sound. Do not sit down while you are recording. Stand as if you are speaking in front of an actual audience. It is also beneficial if you practice in front of a mirror.
- Note how long it takes for you to say each section of your presentation. Strict time notations will help you edit your material. Include "time marks" next to each important section so you can monitor your delivery more effectively.
- Videotape your last series of rehearsals so you can see how you come across during the presentation. Use the video to plan your emphasis points and your body language during your presentation.
- Ask trusted individuals – work colleagues, friends and family members – to watch you perform a test run of your presentation.

## About the Author

**Warwick John Fahy**, a business presentation coach in Asia, is the general manager of Teamwork China. In 2007, Toastmasters International inducted Fahy into its Hall of Fame. Fahy is president of the Professional Speakers Association of China, which he founded.

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