



# Book The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs

## How to Be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience

Carmine Gallo  
McGraw-Hill, 2009

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### Recommendation

When Apple CEO Steve Jobs died in 2011, the world lost one of its greatest corporate pitchmen. Presentation consultant Carmine Gallo explains how Jobs captivated audiences for decades. He delves into Jobs's public speaking and explains communication methods you can apply. While Gallo lists Jobs's tools and techniques, he ignores one of Jobs's crucial lessons: Keep it simple. Here, long vignettes relating anecdotes and examples appear often amid the text, set off with thin rule lines, and sometimes disrupt the narrative flow. As Gallo says, "Problems occur when you think about too many things at the same time." Although this manual went to print in 2009, before Jobs's death, and therefore speaks about the Apple CEO in the present tense, its advice remains very relevant. *BooksInShort* recommends it to CEOs, entrepreneurs, salespeople and anyone who must sell ideas to an audience.

### Take-Aways

- Before his death in 2011, Apple CEO Steve Jobs was known as an outstanding spokesman for his company. This book, set during his lifetime, reports:
- You can teach yourself Steve Jobs's communications secrets and become an accomplished presenter.
- Learn from his example how to deliver "insanely great" pitches to corporate audiences.
- A great presentation must tell an engaging story and deliver a memorable experience.
- Superb speeches depend on planning, message refinement and extensive rehearsals.
- A presentation should communicate a single core idea.
- Metaphors and analogies can increase your persuasive power.
- Use body language, gestures and vocal tone to vary your presentations.
- Do not spout business jargon.
- Creating a startling moment will help you make your presentation unforgettable.

### Summary

#### Sitting on the Edge of Their Seats

You can learn to present like Steve Jobs, Apple's famous CEO, one of the world's greatest high-voltage business communicators. Some fervent Jobs enthusiasts even camped out all night in the cold, going to great lengths to be present at his speeches and waiting until morning to be among the first to gain admission when the doors opened.

"If you are passionate about your topic, you're 80% closer to developing the magnetism that Jobs has."

To learn how to win an audience, and to craft compelling and convincing messages, heed Jobs's example.

Any speaker can learn from his methods for presenting new ideas and consistently generating excitement over Apple products. Jobs began delivering high-profile presentations in 1984 when Apple introduced the first Macintosh computer. His public explanations were always good, and, over the years, they got even better. His products drew an army of enthusiastic customer evangelists and his audiences report that his presentations were unforgettable experiences.

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” (Albert Einstein)

By following Jobs’s communication and presentation techniques, you also can exert a powerful persuasive effect. Start by delivering your message with passion.

## Setting the Stage

Successful presentation closely resembles the structure of a three-act play for its drama, performance and entertainment. Preparing a presentation also has three acts: “create the story, deliver the experience,” and “refine and rehearse.” These components break down into 18 scenes. Enact these scenarios and you – like Steve Jobs – can deliver “insanely great” presentations:

### Act 1: Creating the Story

You must have a gripping narrative that engages your listeners:

1. **“Plan in analog”** – First, think out exactly what you want to say. Write a presentation plan on paper and create a full storyboard. Carefully sketch your ideas and script your speech as completely as possible. Presentation expert Nancy Duarte recommends spending up to 90 hours preparing a one-hour presentation, devoting the majority of your time to research and planning, not to producing slides. Identify a single main idea that you want your audience to remember and support it with three primary messages. Use analogies and metaphors. Add video, show-and-tell demonstrations, and third-party endorsements.
2. **“Answer the one question that matters most”** – Prepare your presentation with one question uppermost in your mind: “Why should my listener care about this idea?” Deliver the answer early in your presentation to engage your audience members quickly and to make them eager to hear more of what you have to say. Determine which facet of your subject will matter most to them and repeat that idea at least twice during your presentation.
3. **“Develop a messianic sense of purpose”** – Jobs’s ambitious goal for Apple fits into a one-sentence proclamation: “We’re here to put a dent in the universe.” Bud Tribble, an Apple vice president, once said that Jobs projected a “reality distortion field” – that is, his passionate belief in Apple’s products ignited his “ability to convince anyone of practically anything.” To win your audience, be equally enthusiastic.
4. **“Create Twitter-like headlines”** – Jobs introduced the iPhone in 2007 by proclaiming, “Today, Apple reinvents the phone!” That’s a headline people are sure to remember. Those who heard Jobs introduce the iPod will never forget his “1,000 songs in your pocket” tagline. Be just as succinct when you present.
5. **“Draw a road map”** – Make it easy for your audience members to follow you. Create a verbal map that shows exactly where you plan to take them. When Jobs unveiled the iPhone, he said, “Today, we are introducing three revolutionary products.” Then he launched “a wide-screen iPod with touch controls, a revolutionary mobile phone and a breakthrough Internet communications device.” Be as clear as Jobs about your presentation agenda.
6. **“Introduce the antagonist”** – To introduce the first Macintosh, Apple ran an unforgettable, now historic, commercial during the 1984 Super Bowl. The ad shows a Big Brother-type leader on a huge screen lecturing to an audience of drones. Suddenly, a young woman charges into the lecture hall, runs up to the screen and throws a sledgehammer through it, making it explode. The commercial ends with this message: “On January 24, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh, and you’ll see why 1984 won’t be like 1984.” The villain of the ad, the Orwellian lecturer, represented Big Blue – that is, IBM – Apple’s main competitor. Include villains in your presentations. Communicate how your product or service will eliminate them.
7. **“Reveal the conquering hero”** – Just as your presentations should have villains, they also should have heroes. In 2001, Jobs introduced the iPod by explaining the serious problems inherent in the portable music players then on the market: the limited number of songs individual units could play, the high cost per song, the short battery life, and so on. Jobs made the iPod the hero of his presentation, explaining that it allows users to store 1,000 songs. To learn from his example, detail the problems in your industry, outlining the current, sad state of its products or services. Then lay out your vision of how your new offering will vastly improve the landscape.

### Act 2: Delivering the Experience

To capture your audience members’ attention, you must create “visually appealing and ‘must-have’ experiences”:

1. **“Channel their inner Zen”** – A famous photo shows Jobs sitting on a rug on the floor of his giant living room. The only other items visible are a lamp, a record player and some scattered music albums. Photographer Diana Walker took the picture in 1982, when Jobs was worth upward of \$100 million. He could have filled the room with expensive furniture. But as a Zen Buddhist, he liked to keep things simple, including his home and his presentations. This is why Apple products are so simple and elegant in design and function.
2. **“Dress up your numbers”** – Numbers have little meaning unless you place them in context. In 2003, a Rolling Stone reporter asked Jobs if he was upset that Apple only had 5% of the personal computer market. Jobs’s reply was, “Our market share is greater than BMW or Mercedes in the car industry.” By supplying this context, Jobs put Apple’s market share into context. When you include figures in your presentations, supply the necessary context. Don’t bury your audience with a surplus of statistics.
3. **“Use ‘amazingly zippy’ words”** – In 2008, Apple introduced the iPhone 3G – an upgrade to its original iPhone – which the firm designed for AT&T’s superfast third-generation data network. Devices that can access this network operate at a transfer speed of 3 megabits per second (Mbps), much faster than the 144 kilobits per second (Kbps) of second-generation networks. When Jobs referred to the speed of the new iPhone at the 2008 Worldwide Developers Conference, he did not fall into a boring discussion of Mbps and Kbps. Instead, he called the iPhone 3G’s speed amazingly zippy. To introduce an upgraded iPod that year, Jobs said, “iPod Touch is the funnest iPod we’ve ever created.” Don’t bog down your presentations with jargon. Like Jobs, reach for catchy language.
4. **“Share the stage”** – Jobs willingly invited well-known businesspeople to share the stage with him, often unexpectedly. Audience members love such positive surprises. Once, Intel CEO Paul Otellini appeared at a Jobs presentation dressed up in the giant, germ-free “bunny suit” that workers wear in the firm’s ultra-sterile plants. Another time, Microsoft CEO Bill Gates became part of Jobs’s presentation via satellite linkup. When you are on stage, don’t be afraid to share the limelight, particularly if your guest speaker adds drama to your presentation.
5. **“Stage your presentation with props”** – In 2008, the new MacBook computers from Apple redefined notebook computing for the industry. Apple used a solitary aluminum block for the “unibody enclosure” of these thin, lightweight computers. When Jobs introduced these computers to the world, he had Apple representatives pass around models so audience members could feel the cool metal. “You’re the first to get your hands on one,” Jobs said afterward. When you present, involve as many of your audience members’ senses as possible to make your presentations truly memorable.

6. **Share a startling moment** – To demonstrate the amazing narrowness of the MacBook Air, Jobs pulled the computer out of a manila envelope while on stage. “It’s the world’s thinnest notebook,” he told the audience. This simple stunt fully proved this claim. For your presentations, plan unexpected and startling moments to wow your audience.

### Act 3: Refining and Rehearsing

Even the greatest presentation will fall flat if you don’t practice it to perfection:

7. **“Master stage presence”** – To learn how to make full, effective use of body language to captivate your audience, take a look at a Jobs presentation. Following his example, maintain strong eye contact with audience members at all times. Do not hide behind a lectern. Always keep your posture open. Constantly gesture and change the tone, inflection and volume of your voice, as well as the pacing of your words, in order to be engaging. Videotape your practice presentations so you can see how your body language and vocal delivery will come across to your audience.
8. **“Make it look effortless”** – Although good presentations should look effortless, each one is the result of weeks of preparation. That is the way to create the audience perception that you are fully in command of yourself and your materials. Like Jobs, take time before a public demonstration to solicit feedback from your colleagues and use their input to change your presentations for the better. During the 1940s, another famous orator, Sir Winston Churchill, practiced his speeches before addressing the British Parliament, using the same dogged strategies that shaped Jobs’s public speaking some 60 years later. The more you practice, the better your presentations will become.
9. **“Wear the appropriate costume”** – Consider how you will look on stage. Watching Jobs’s presentations, you’ll see that his animated expressions and habitual outfit add as much personality to his performance as his inventive use of language: a black St. Croix mock turtleneck sweater, a blue pair of Levi’s 501 jeans and New Balance running shoes. Always dress appropriately for your audience. When Jobs presented his post-Apple computer firm, NeXT Inc., to the Bank of America, he ditched the turtleneck and jeans and wore a pricey Brioni suit.
10. **“Toss the script”** – Don’t read from scripts. It distances you from your audience. You can, however, add annotations to PowerPoint’s notes section for reference. Practice your speech over and over so that eventually only one or two main words from your script will immediately bring back full sentences as you speak.
11. **“Have fun”** – Don’t just educate your audience members; entertain them. Jobs introduced Apple’s OS X operating system by removing OS 9 from a casket on stage. “We are here to mourn the passing of OS 9,” Jobs told his audience. If a problem occurs during a presentation, acknowledge the snafu, stay upbeat, smile and continue. Never let your audience know that you are rattled. Enjoy yourself on stage.

### Stanford University Commencement Address

In June 2005, Jobs delivered Stanford University’s commencement address. It is now a fixture on YouTube. In this speech, Jobs worked with many of the presentation techniques that shaped his image. He broke his presentation down into three elements. First, he began with a narrative using the “rule of three,” saying, “Today, I want to tell you three stories from my life”:

#### The First Story

When he told the graduates how he quit Reed College after only six months, he said, “The first story is about connecting the dots.”

#### The Second Story

“My second story is about love and loss,” and he talked about how he learned to love computers and how bereft he felt when Apple fired him.

#### The Third Story

“My third story is about death.” Here Jobs told the graduates how he learned that he had pancreatic cancer. Having gained everyone’s undivided attention, he then said: “Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life.”

### About the Author

**Carmine Gallo** is a communications consultant, coach and a BusinessWeek columnist. He is a public speaker and a seminar leader.

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