

# YOUR ULTIMATE PRESENTATION

**Impress your audience,  
de-stress yourself**

---

**- MARC STOIBER**

## **PRAISE FOR THE ULTIMATE PRESENTATION METHODOLOGY**

*The utilization of Marc's Your Ultimate Presentation training platform was so efficient, that ALL our TEDx speakers could benefit from it. Whether they tuned in through his livestream training session, or watched the recording after – all the content Marc provided was invaluable. This is exceptionally rare, and a service that I couldn't find provided anywhere else in the world.*

*This added to our whole team's demeanour, and spread through all stakeholders of the event. Most importantly, this positivity and energy could be directly correlated to the quality in our speakers talks. Not one, not two, but all TWELVE of our speakers presented a captivating TEDx speech at the main event. This directly resulted in increased engagement with our livestream and post-event views exceeding our anticipated numbers by over 1400%!*

- Kyle Ingram, TEDx Organizer

---

*I needed to speak and inspire our 900 employees. Marc worked with me and several members of our Communications team to storyboard, then script, a speech that would then be adopted by me in my own words. In order to embed it cleanly in my memory, we crafted "breadcrumb" slides that would serve as visual guides for me as well as help the audience follow the story. I can tell you these visual clues were critical for me. He was great at helping us keep the story flowing. And keeping it on point and not meandering endlessly.*

- Jim Lightbody, President & CEO, BCLC

---

*I've worked with a handful of speaking coaches throughout my career, and what I found especially helpful about Marc is his holistic approach - from crafting a compelling narrative, to engaging your audience, and delivery, he's helped me refine my talk every step of the way.*

- Lauren Wang, Founder, The Flex Company

*Marc was Yoda to my Luke Skywalker as I prepared for my first TEDx talk. His Ultimate Presentation coaching course was invaluable in helping me forget everything I really needed to forget about making a speech, and then giving me the confidence and the skills to stand and deliver from the heart.*

*Marc is the rare professional who combines an encyclopedic knowledge of selling one's ideas with a razor sharp wit and sense of humour. He also, crucially, has an uncanny knack of knowing how to leverage your particular "style" to get maximum impact. Bottom line: there is no way I could have closed the TEDx conference without him.*

- Rob Abbott, Marketing / Communications Senior Manager,  
AOT Technologies

---

*I had to deliver a presentation to a group of my peers in 24 hours, I was extremely busy with work, and when I looked at my powerpoint and speech content, they were underwhelming. This was an important speech - there was new business on the line, and if this presentation went over well, it would pave the way to giving a presentation to hundreds of listeners at an upcoming conference. I didn't want to take any chances.*

*Marc gave my speech a story structure that made it more compelling and entertaining, then added my personal stories to help me build empathy and rapport with the listeners. Next, he did an overhaul of my slide show, creating slides that guided me forward. Even if I were to forget my lines, the slides were designed to get me back on track. Finally, he rehearsed with me - especially the all-important opening and conclusion.*

*24 hours later, I stood up in front of my audience. My talk went over EXTREMELY well, with over half the audience following up to discuss new business.*

- Donald Chu, CCO / Co-founder Finaeo

*Marc's toolkit is terrific! I had Marc speak at two of my CEO Forums with raving results, and he helped me write and tell a compelling story for an upcoming speaking engagement at a professional conference. I recommend Marc if you want to write a great speech, and enjoy the process along the way.*

- Natalie Michael, CEO and Executive Coach

---

*I recently attended an ACETECH 'Confessions of a CEO' presentation by a local technology leader.*

*As soon as the presentation started, it was evident that this was not going to be a typical plod through a slide deck. The presentation was bright and succinct, the analogies were funny and relevant, and the presenter told a great story. The audience was totally engaged and the Q&A session was extensive. The key message of culture trumping strategy came through and stuck. It was a terrific presentation.*

*At the end, the presenter did a shout out to Marc Stoiber, crediting Marc for helping the presenter tell his story. Great job, Marc!*

- John Brett, President / CEO, Delta-X Research

---

*The 'Your Ultimate Presentation' course is so well organized and delivered. The course flows logically, and allows time for re-thinking, re-shaping and honing your ideas. It was actually a really fun and interesting course and the end result is ....well....your ultimate presentation! I've been public speaking for over 10 years so thought that I knew quite a bit about it but I learned a LOT more from Marc. This was a gold mine for me.*

- Nikki Lineham, Co-founder, Educating Now

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....6

**Step Zero**

Your topic - You want me to speak about what? .....8

**Step One**

Your story - Start thinking like a hero .....18

**Step Two**

Your structure - Writing as a team sport .....26

**Step Three**

Rehearsing - Think Hollywood, not Broadway .....32

**Step Four**

The presentation - Don't think event - think launch .....41

# INVEST IN YOURSELF

Warren Buffett nailed it.

Asked what his most successful investment had ever been, he said:

*The best thing I ever invested in was myself.  
For me, that meant learning  
to present in front of people.*

Buffett had it right. Today, more than ever, presenting effectively is core to success for executives. Investing in presentation skills pays.

Great presentations are not a cakewalk. The concepts we need to convey are increasingly complex, audiences are increasingly diverse, and attention spans are increasingly, well, decreasing.

Why do so many executives present so poorly? I see several causes:

- **Fear**, which leads to procrastination and lack of preparation.
- **Overconfidence**, or believing people have to listen to what you say because you're the boss.
- **Lack of connection with listeners**, or forgetting that what you're delivering might not be what the audience wants, or can understand.
- **Delivery of data, not stories**, caused by a misperception about the presenter's job. Hello, death by powerpoint.

Even if an executive wants to improve, it's hard to get effective guidance.

Sure, there are plenty of public-speaking secrets books. But they seem to be long on concept and short on concrete. *Deliver jaw-dropping moments! Unleash the master within!* Gee, thanks.

Then, there are speaker coaches. I've worked with some amazing ones. I've also had clients tell me they worked with coaches who had a method, but no magic. Presentation is equal parts methodology, creativity and psychology - learning the steps to crafting a presentation does not a presentation coach make.

Conclusion? It's damn hard to find solutions that make it easy to have fun preparing and delivering great presentations, that help you incorporate ideas that sparkle, that make the whole venture less lonely and anxiety-ridden.

That's what this book aims to do.

One last thing. If you're wondering who made me the grand poobah of presentation, the answer is *nobody*.

That said, I've worked in marketing and communications for 30 years. For 15 of those years, I was a creative director who got paid too much because I could convince clients they were buying a million dollar commercial that would work. It was present effectively, or die.

My superpower (or so clients tell me) is making complicated things simple. I wrote this book to package skills I've learned over 30 years - skills I teach every client who needs a more effective presentation. They work. And they're simple.

**STEP ZERO:  
THE TOPIC,  
OR YOU WANT  
ME TO SPEAK  
ABOUT *WHAT?***



I made this step zero, because it's the step most people don't even know exists. Here's the scenario. You get asked to speak at a conference about your success as an entrepreneur. Or your boss instructs your team to talk about last year's numbers.

You say *Yup*, and start scripting.

Stop. Simply nodding and agreeing to speak on a topic virtually guarantees a lifeless presentation. You need more to work with. A topic that fits *you*, that fits *your audience*, that offers scope to explore and plenty of inspiration for *good stories*.

You can do this with nearly every topic. The trick is looking at it from different angles until you see something remarkable.

Let's use a movie analogy. Imagine you're a producer who's been asked to create a movie on this topic:

### **Adventure in Space**

Impossibly vague, right? So how could you take this bland topic and turn it into a blockbuster? Look at it from different angles.

- *A young man's quest for spirituality, morality and integrity, set against a galactic battle between good and evil* - Star Wars.
- *A tense showdown between man and machine in space, resulting in a mind-bending trek through the universe* - 2001 A Space Odyssey.
- *An uplifting biopic about astronauts who inspire the world with their heroism against all odds in the early space race* - Apollo 13.

All are adventures in space. All led to incredible films. None of them feel anything like the others. That's the power of tweaking topics.

Now, back to your topic.

How can you take a banal topic and give it some real juice?

Let's say the topic you're given is:

### **Our Profitable Last Quarter**

For a start, *know right now* that you can't simply talk about your profitable last quarter.

So pull out a sharpie and post-it notes. It's time to start coming up with alternate topics.

Yes, alternates. *Many alternates*. To come up with a great topic, you don't start with one topic. I'll borrow an anecdote from my days creating ads: *Your first idea might be the right one - but you won't know until you've come up with 50 more.*

So how to generate those 50 (or more than 3, at least)?

### **WHY ME**

Let's make it easy. *Ask the person who selected you to speak.*

Start by questioning them on the *Why Me* angle:

- Why should I of *all people* be speaking on this topic? There are lots of people who have done what I've done.

- Do you think I have *deep experience* I can tap? Elaborate.
- Do you think I've just *gone through something remarkable*? What was that?
- Do I have a *unique perspective*? Tell me all about it.



*Credit: Amazon.com*

Chances are, you'll catch them by surprise. In my experience, organizers don't spend time thinking through your topic - usually they have an extremely generic idea, which they lob at you like a hot potato, hoping you'll make it awesome. Don't let them get away with that sort of laziness, or they'll be sleeping soundly in the days leading to the presentation, while you stare at your screen with a twitching eye.

In your conversation, I'll guarantee you can uncover topic nuggets that can kickstart a great talk.

After the *Why Me* line of questioning, you might end up with topics like:

- The secret boardroom story I heard that led to last quarter's performance.
- How my team engineered last quarter's performance - using three simple steps.
- Warren Buffett told me we were going to have a quarter like this.

But wait. Don't let the organizer out of the room yet.

## **WHY NOW**

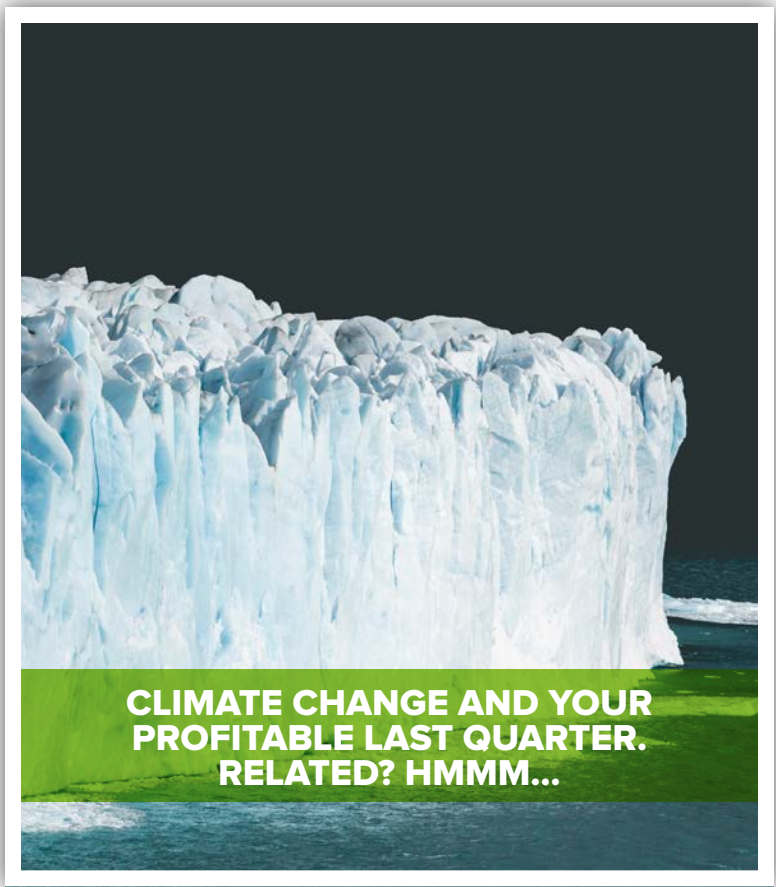
Next, pepper them with *Why Now* questions:

- Why *at this particular point in time* should I be talking about this?
- Is there a *global event* that touches on this topic?
- Are *trends converging*?

Based on this line of questioning, you may be able to expand your topic into one of *global scope*, or one that touches on a *current event* that's on everyone's mind.

So, for example:

- How Indonesian coffee markets led to our profitable last quarter.
- Rising consumer expectations, falling prices, and other unlikely trends that led to last quarter.
- Why the last quarter is showing us where the world is going next year.



## WHY HERE

Finally, ask the organizer *Why Here* questions:

- Why would *this particular group* of people like to hear me talk about this?
- Do they have a *particular worldview* that craves information on this subject?
- Do their *jobs* demand they seek out this information?
- Are they in a certain *psychological state* - perhaps depressed about previous quarters' numbers?

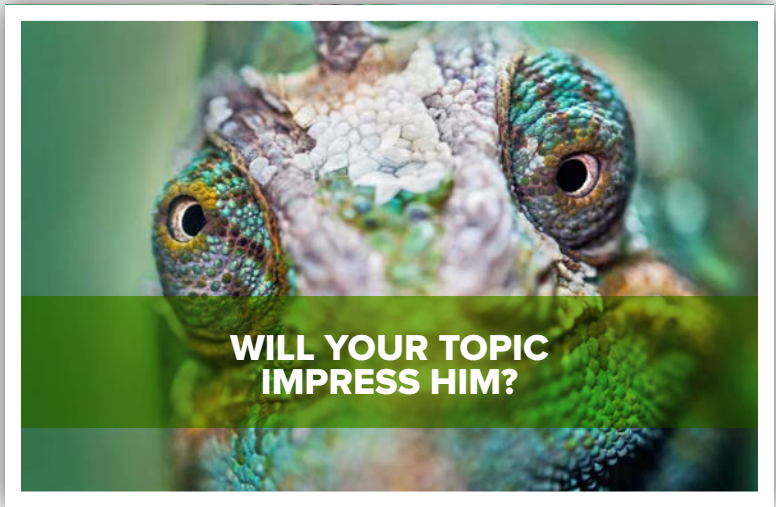
Based on this line of exploration, you may be able to dig into the heads of your audience more effectively, and deliver a topic that touches the people in the room personally.

This could lead to topics like:

- The last quarter - what's in it for you?
- The last quarter is just a sign of great things to come - follow me!
- What can you do to give us more quarters like this?

## THE LIZARD BRAIN

Alright. It's time to let the organizer go, and grab a lizard.



The lizard brain (aka the limbic cortex) is our most primitive brain, responsible for our fight / flight / mate instincts.

Today, the limbic lizard is the gatekeeper for the rest of our brain. If an audience member's lizard doesn't like your presentation, it shuts their brain down. You're *out*, and chances are, you aren't *coming back in*.

The lizard brain is intrigued by ideas that are *novel and valuable*, without being *threatening* or overly *complex*.

It shuts down when it's *confused*, *scared*, or *bored*.

Soooo, what topics will give you the ability to deliver a presentation that keeps the lizard engaged?

How about...

- Three lessons from last quarter that you can use to drive your personal wealth.
- The hidden dangers, and hidden rewards, in last quarter's results.
- Last quarter was great. Now, you can help make things even better.

### **THINK WIDE OR DEEP**

I see you're inspired, and papering the walls with post-it note topics. Before you decide to incorporate them all into your talk, stop. You can't have it all.

You can talk about the history of the world, or what happened to one person one day. But when you try to talk about what happened to everyone in the world one day, you fail.

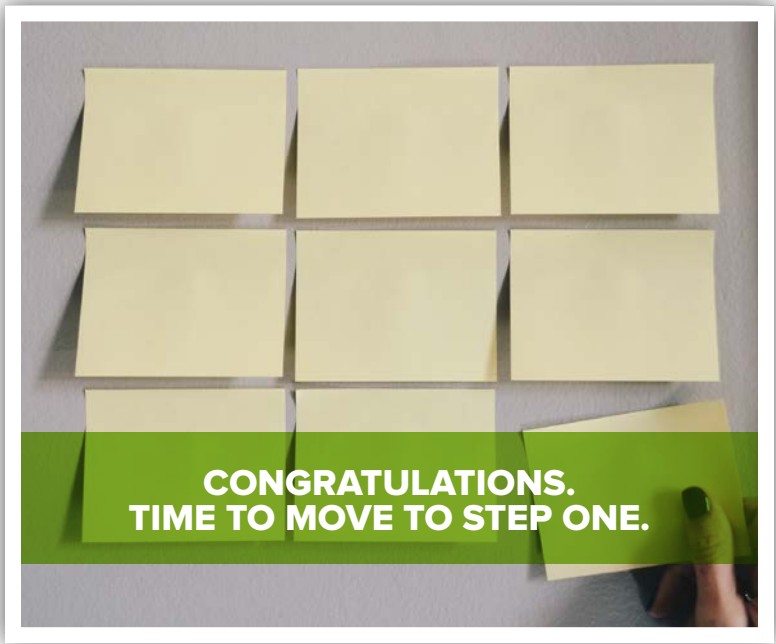
When it comes to topics, remember to go *wide or deep*, but *never both*.

Going wide or deep could inspire great topics like:

- We've had 50 consecutive great quarters. Here's why.
- The one day last quarter I knew we were going to do great.
- The 30 year journey our company took to get to last quarter.



Why Me? Why Now? Why Here? The Lizard. Wide or Deep. Once you've run your topic through these filters, I'm virtually certain you'll have a wall full of ideas.



It's time to start scripting.

# **STEP ONE: START THINKING LIKE A HERO**

Now that you have a blockbuster topic to explore, you need to craft a story around it.

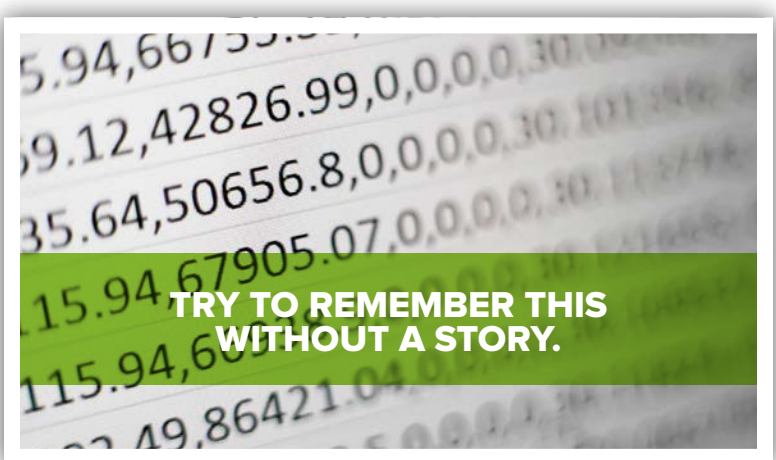
Great stories don't need to be long stories. In fact, Hemingway managed one in six words.

*For sale.*  
*Baby shoes.*  
*Never worn.*

Unfortunately, you need to present for about 20 minutes. Sorry, Hemingway.

Therefore, the next step in crafting your presentation is to give your topic a story arc.

We humans are wired to remember stories. From the time we dropped from trees, we conveyed valuable information through stories. It was the only way we could guarantee our audience would absorb everything we said.



In the process, we became very good at structuring stories that would stick.

There are millions of original stories. But very few original story structures. I'd be willing to wager most writers - especially those who want to captivate with a rollicking adventure - have one template they fall back on again and again. The *Hero's Journey*.



The Hero's Journey is broken into four parts:

- **Call to adventure** - The hero leaves their happy status quo to begin an adventure.
- **Challenge and temptations** - The hero enters an unfamiliar world and finds themselves in all sorts of nasty situations.

- **Transformation** - The hero gets better at this whole adventure thing, and becomes a better person in the process.
- **Return** - The hero returns to the familiar world, changed because of their adventure.

As you may have surmised, there are more academic descriptions of the Hero's Journey. I'd highly recommend checking out [this one](#).

But for the purpose of this book, I'm going to skip past the theoretical and keep it real, yo. Here are the steps of the Hero's Journey, illustrated through one of my favorite movies - Star Wars.

### CALL TO ADVENTURE

- **The status quo:** Luke Skywalker is bored, bored, bored at home on the farm with his aunt and uncle.
- **The catalyst:** Luke finds a message from the kidnapped Princess Leia. It sparks his curiosity.
- **Denial, and encounter with the mentor:** Luke meets Ben, a.k.a. Obi-Wan, but refuses his offer to train as a Jedi knight. He also discovers the magic of the Force, and his father's light sabre.
- **Acceptance and action:** Stormtroopers kill Luke's family, and he begins his training as a Jedi knight.

### CHALLENGE AND TEMPTATIONS

- **Trials and tribulations, friends and foes:** Luke travels with Obi-Wan, C-3PO, and R2-D2 to the cantina and meets soon-to-be helpers Han Solo and Chewbacca. They start tangling with nasty stormtroopers.
- **The edge of the abyss:** Luke and his helpers board the Death Star to save the princess.

- **The plunge:** Luke encounters a series of ordeals, including the monster in the sewage, the collapsing trash room, attacking stormtroopers, and so on.
- **The payoff:** Luke saves the princess.

## TRANSFORMATION

- **The way through:** Luke and company evade Darth Vader and go home to prepare for the attack on the Death Star.
- **The true test:** Luke uses the Force to destroy the Death Star.

## RETURN

- **The new normal:** Luke comes home to a hero's welcome.
- **Bestowing the gift:** Luke is now a Jedi, strong with the Force - a spiritual gift that will heal the galaxy.

## BACK DOWN TO EARTH

Star Wars is all well and good. But what if your presentation isn't a wild and woolly adventure?

I have news - the Hero's Journey is used every day in business.

Look at the *Our Story* tab on corporate websites. The captivating ones follow a familiar path:

- Our heroes - the soon-to-be founders of the company - start out in a status quo world that in some way doesn't satisfy an itch they need to scratch.
- They inspire a band of followers, and set out on a journey to right this wrong.
- This takes them into an unfamiliar world. Innovations don't work, hostile competitors try to derail them, investors let them down.
- Through a series of trials and tribulations, they land on the right innovation, win the hearts of consumers, and start a successful business.
- They return to a new status quo - one where the world can happily scratch that itch.

This *origin story* is also used to great effect in investment pitches by entrepreneurs. The story enables them to encapsulate:

- The *inspiration* behind their innovation.
- Proof that the innovation has withstood the test of fire, and has *won the hearts* of consumers.
- *Validation* that the new and improved world (with this product in it) is worth supporting.

So back to the story we're using as an example in this book - Our Profitable Last Quarter. Does the Hero's Journey work? If it does, you know we have the swiss army knife of all story tools.

Let's give it a try.

### CALL TO ADVENTURE

- **The status quo:** Our company was chugging along, doing fine.
- **The catalyst:** We discovered that by taking a certain measured risk, we could be much more successful.
- **Denial, and encounter with the mentor:** Actually, we met an advisor who had done this with his company in the past, and it had really worked out well. He seemed a bit rough around the edges, so we decided to kick that risk down the road to a later date.
- **Acceptance and action:** We learned our competitors were about to move forward with another innovation that would end up eating our lunch. We had to take the measured risk.

### CHALLENGE AND TEMPTATIONS

- **Trials and tribulations, friends and foes:** Turns out there was a great appetite to take on the risk from some of you. Some others, meh. Others were not very happy about it at all. It takes all kinds.
- **The edge of the abyss:** We put all the measures in place to take the risk. Did we dare to take it?
- **The plunge:** We took it. What a hairy ride those first few weeks were!
- **The payoff:** But our customers could sense something was going on, and started cheering for us.



## TRANSFORMATION

- **The way through:** So, emboldened by our early success, we pushed the risky measures through wholeheartedly.
- **The true test:** Snap! The money started to roll in.

## RETURN

- **Return to the new normal:** Now we've had a great, profitable quarter. And it looks like more on the way.
- **Bestowing the gift:** We did it once. We know how to do it again. Let's go for it!

Yup, it works.

So how about *your* presentation? Can you make it fit the steps of the Hero's Journey? Start thinking through how your presentation would track on this story arc. It's just about time to start scripting.

# **STEP TWO: PRESENTATION WRITING AS TEAM SPORT**

*It's a well-known fact the Bible was written centuries  
after the actual events.*

*In that time, the stories were passed along verbally  
from one person to the next.*

*Being human, the listeners probably forgot the nuances,  
and amplified the good bits when they retold the stories.*

*Not to be disrespectful, but it's conceivable that the story of Jesus  
healing the leper by laying his hands on him started out  
as Jesus helping a man with the sniffles by telling him  
to get some rest and plenty of liquids. Just sayin'.*

You have the arc of your story in your head. That's solid progress. But now, the magic happens as we bring in your writing team.

Team?

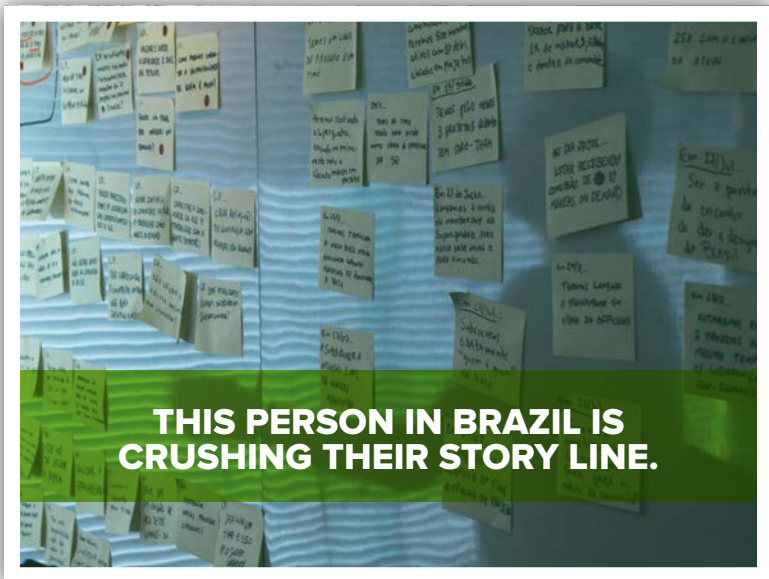
In my experience, there's no better way to amplify good ideas and squash weak ones than by engaging collaborators to edit your work. Even better, working with a team accelerates your progress, and takes the weight of solo creation off your shoulders.

There's only one problem. Creation can be a bit personal. People get possessive about their ideas. Things get weird. To make it all happen without devolving into weeping, gnashing of teeth and general bad juju, you need a structure and ground rules.

First, you need to set up the team for success with a bit of solo work. Write the steps of your Hero's Journey on post-its:

- One thought per post-it.
- No more than five words per post-it.

As you write, hang the post-its in one long line along the wall, left to right. You're literally creating a story line.



## TIME TO COLLABORATE

Now, it's time to bring in a collaborator who will challenge your thinking without destroying your spirit. Maybe your business partner. Maybe that new millennial down the hall who always seems to be having more fun than you are.

Like *Fight Club*, the rules of engagement are simple:

- *You take your collaborator through the story line*, literally touching each post-it as you read it aloud.
- Your collaborator is tasked with *making the story better*.
- They can tell you if a *certain post-it doesn't work*, and tear it down.
- But they are *not allowed to simply tear down* post-it's. They need to suggest a better idea to take its place. They write their idea on a post-it and hang it in the empty space.

As you may imagine, not all collaborators are good collaborators. You may find yours too judge-y, too lacklustre, too fawning. It happens. If you feel frustrated, politely thank your partner and quickly find another. After all, you have a presentation coming up - you can't waste time fighting or enduring passive aggressiveness.

Once you feel you and your partner have gotten the story structure in shape, it's time to see if there are any opportunities to spice it up.

Here, I always lean on Chip and Dan Heath's S.U.C.C.E.S. formula:

- **Simple** - Are there elements in the storyboard that seem to make everything fuzzy and complicated? Any confusing sub-stories? Unfinished thoughts? Prune them.
- **Unexpected** - You have a fairly linear story line. Are there any elements of surprise you can add?
- **Concrete** - Does your story give the audience something real to do or think about? People need concrete ideas, parables they can understand. Skip the quantum mechanics.
- **Credible** - Are you an authority on the subject you're speaking on? Do you have some real numbers to back your claims?
- **Emotional** - A talk on your successful last quarter can get a tad dry. Include a story about how you made that money do good - putting a homeless family into a home, or providing lunches for kids in a poor neighbourhood.
- **Story** - Sure, your entire presentation is a story. But are there sub-stories in there - little anecdotes or asides - that make it more memorable?

Once you and your partner have spiced up the story line a bit, it's time for you to do a bit more solo work.

Reflect and incorporate the post-its you believe truly work. Read the modified story line out loud a few times, to ensure the words actually sound as good as they look.

## TIME FOR PEER REVIEW

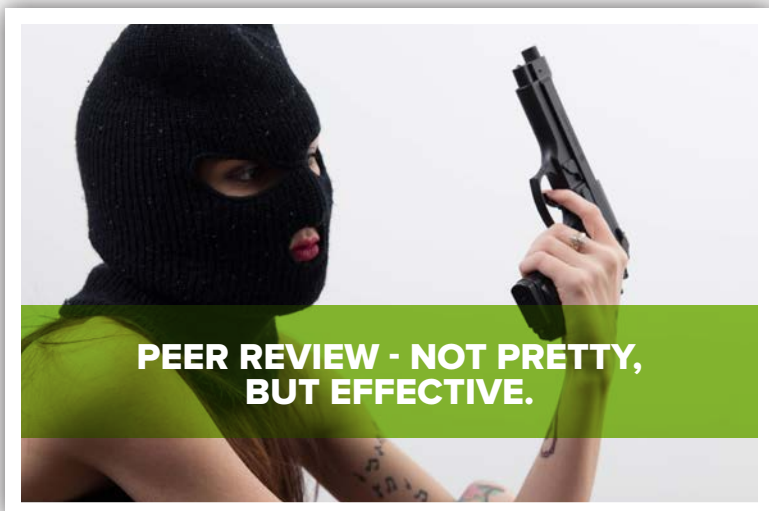
Once you're feeling confident with the story line, it's time for *peer review*.

I was introduced to peer review when I worked at a wonderful ad agency named Palmer Jarvis.

This agency was a west coast David to all the big east coast goliaths. We couldn't afford superstar creative talent, so we had to find other ways to generate brilliant concepts.

What we did was hang our concepts - still in sharpie and paper form - on our office wall. One by one, we invited our colleagues in to critique them. Which idea was the most brilliant *creatively*? Was it on *strategy*? Was it easy to *get*?

It was painful to watch your ideas get weeded like that - but we knew the survivor would be a knockout.



When it comes to your presentation, the concept is the same.

Talk a few people who align with your audience through your storyboard to get their gut check. If your presentation is Our Profitable Last Quarter, invite the accountants and account managers in.

If something doesn't sit right with them - even if they don't know how to fix it - make sure you note it. There may be a weakness that can be addressed.

In my experience, if one person isn't happy with an element, you can ignore the feedback. If two people are hung up on that element, take a closer look. And if three don't like it, make the change immediately.

## **STEP THREE: REHEARSE LIKE HOLLYWOOD, NOT BROADWAY**



Your story line has endured trial by peer review and lived to tell the tale. You're feeling strong about your content. Now it's time to think delivery. To borrow from music, a story line is nothing but sheet music. Delivery is how you make it *sing*!

## **SKIP THE MANUSCRIPT**

When I work with clients, we usually don't write a manuscript. The script is the post-it notes hanging on the wall.

It's not because we're lazy. It's because a manuscript is too much like a Broadway play. You start at the top - *Act 1, Curtain Rises* - and don't stop until the final word - *Act 3, Curtain Falls*. There's little room for interpretation along the way, and the whole thing feels like it needs to be memorized in its entirety to guarantee successful delivery.

You're an executive with a hundred things on your plate. Do you relish the idea of memorizing an entire script? No.

Post-it notes, in contrast, are single thoughts. You see a note, you riff on it, you move on to the next note. You can almost picture a director yelling *Action!* as you launch into the idea, then yelling *Cut!* once you've delivered it.

That's how I want you to think of rehearsal.

Look at the post-it notes for the first part of your story - remember, the Call to Adventure - and rehearse them like they're your entire script. Note by note, build the story, develop your delivery, set the mood. Get it to the point where you could talk about it at the water cooler. *Own it*. Then move on to the next part of your show, Challenge and Temptations.

By doing it this way, you build your presentation much like a director and editor would craft a film - bit by bit, scene by scene. Breaking the whole into bite-sized chunks is a gift - there's only so much you can forget in any given scene before you move on to the next scene.

And, as you're about to discover, you have visual cues to ensure you don't forget a thing.

## **THE BREADCRUMB SLIDESHOW**

Some speakers argue for lots of slides. Others argue for a few, or no slides.

I say they're giving an answer to the wrong question.

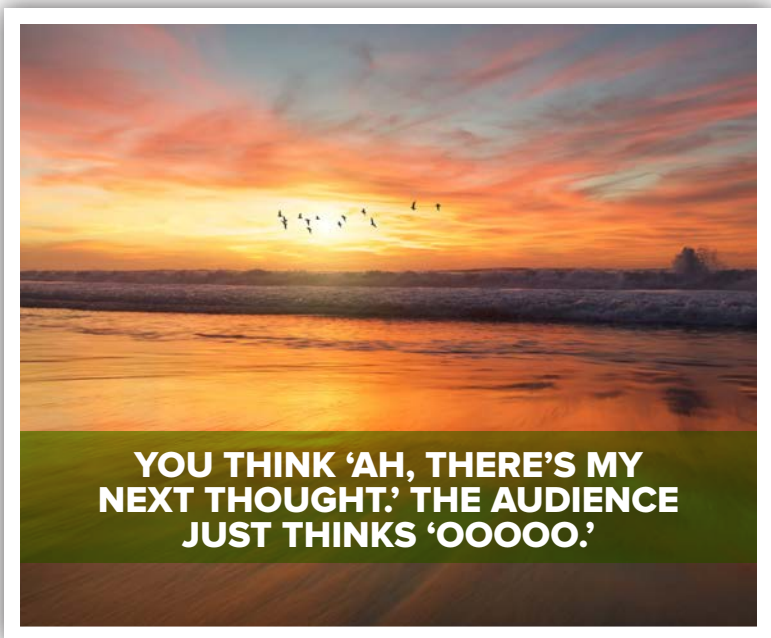
There is no right or wrong number of slides. However, there is a way to use slides to ensure you get a brilliant presentation, with less stress.

It's called the breadcrumb method.

When I work with clients, I have them speak their post-it's out loud. I sense their transition moments - when they jump from one idea to the next.

We note each transition, and create a slide that subtly telegraphs the upcoming idea.

By doing this, the presenter can riff on a thought until they're done - then simply look at the screen and see the 'breadcrumb' that triggers their memory of the next thought they need to speak about.



Slide to slide, breadcrumb to breadcrumb. The presentation flows efficiently from start to conclusion.

I'm not suggesting the breadcrumb slide should say 'Hey dummy, you're talking about this next'. Most of our slides are purely visual. But they provide the presenter with a meme that triggers their brain to the next thought. The audience, meanwhile, simply sees a presenter engaging them with a story, and a beautiful slide that reinforces the idea being talked about.

Breadcrumb slides work - especially for busy executives. I've done 30 minute presentations without skipping a beat, with virtually no rehearsal. Nobody in the audience noticed.

## YOUR ALTER EGO

Put a tea towel cape on a five year old, and suddenly they believe they can jump off the fence and fly.

Convince a nervous presenter that she's Joan of Arc, and suddenly she believes crushing this presentation is her God-ordained destiny.

That's the power of alter egos.

When I work with clients, I like to introduce the concept of alter egos as soon as we start rehearsing. I ask them to name a public figure or two they admire, and who absolutely crushes it when they speak. A few that come up with again and again:

- Oprah
- Morgan Freeman
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- John F. Kennedy
- Ellen DeGeneres
- PeeWee Herman (kidding)

Alter egos are awesome for two reasons.

First, they give you someone to emulate. If you want to get folksy, perhaps think like Ronald Reagan delivering a 'Somewhere in America' anecdote. You might pause more, chuckle a bit, project warmth and empathy like only the Gipper could.

Second, they give you a suit of armour. Suddenly it isn't you giving the talk on your profitable last quarter. It's, say, Edna Mode, the hilarious Anna Wintour-ish character in *The Incredibles* (hey, nobody said your alter ego needs to be *real*!) Subconsciously, you feel safer, and don't think about flubbing lines. Edna Mode ain't bothered if she flubs a line, right? She's Edna Freakin' Mode!

I used to present like a nervous squirrel. I'd race through my script. I'd forget bits, and make sudden detours. Worst part, I didn't realize it. It's just my natural nervous-squirrel character.

Watching me present, my wife suggested I try presenting a bit like Stuart McLean, Canada's version of Garrison Keillor.

McLean has a folksy, funny, warm presentation style that audiences love. His show, *The Vinyl Cafe*, was a Canadian institution. People loved him from coast to coast.

So I studied McLean's style. And I tried it the next time I got up on stage.

It felt wonderful. Almost immediately, my cadence slowed. I smiled and ambled around the stage with the comfort of someone who has done it a million times. My jokes felt funnier, the connection with the audience felt more genuine.

Sure enough, after the presentation, an audience member came up, told me she loved the talk, and said I reminded her a bit of Stuart McLean. A good thing, in her eyes.

Now, I'm not saying I tried to *impersonate* Mr. McLean. There's no way I could've pulled that off - and I didn't want to.

What I did do was try to put myself in his shoes. *How would Stuart present this talk on marketing?*

Clearly, it worked.

Now, I have nothing against the real you. But I haven't met an executive who hasn't had to stand taller to deliver tough news, or speak more empathetically to bring hope and comfort.

You may find that adopting the persona of someone you admire extremely helpful and instructive. You're following your alter ego's lead, instead of standing up on stage alone.

If you need to challenge your team try harder, imagine yourself as JFK telling America that we need to send a man to the moon *not because it's easy, but because it's hard*.

If you need to bring comfort and hope, imagine yourself as Barack Obama delivering his farewell speech.

Shall we give it a try with our Profitable Last Quarter speech?

First, think about the impact your speech needs to have:

- It should spark joy in our accomplishment.
- It should provide a sense of relief, knowing we were right in charting this course.
- It should give us the confidence to scale even greater walls in the future.

Now, does any personality seem a natural fit to deliver that emotion?

- George C. Scott playing Patton?
- Steve Jobs addressing his staff in one of his cool thing talks?
- Michelle Obama speaking to kids about reaching their potential?

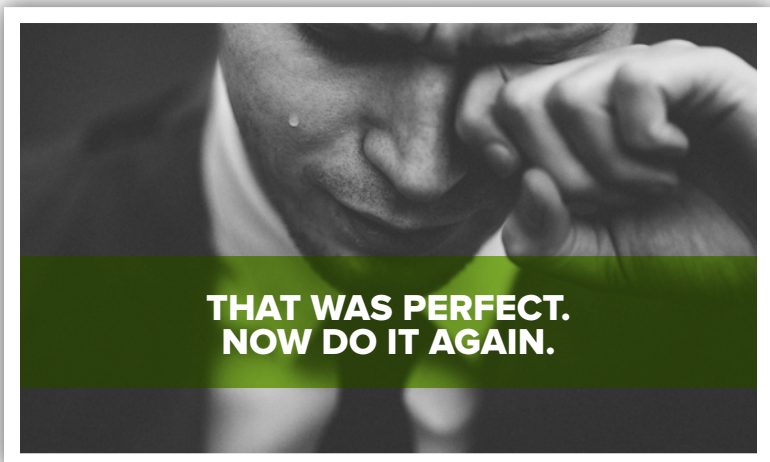
If the right personality doesn't pop up, you might ask a few of your collaborators - the people who helped you write the presentation or peer reviewed it - which famous personality they could imagine bringing this speech to life.

## **REHEARSE UNTIL YOU HATE IT**

Finally, it's time to actually rehearse.

I've found there's only one rule in rehearsing. Do it.

In fact, do it until you hate it. Because it's only when the thought of one more run-through feels like fingernails on a chalkboard that the presentation is internalized. Ironically, the more internalized it is, the more spontaneous it sounds.



Rehearsal also saves you in the million moments of mini-crisis that can pop up unexpectedly. If a heckler shouts something from the audience and you're thrown off your pace, the words appear from your subconscious. If you lose your audio, or the slideshow breaks down, the words come in auto-pilot.

## **BUT REHEARSE EFFECTIVELY**

I've found there's a way of rehearsing that accelerates retention.

First, literally read out the post-it note storyboard hanging on the wall. Point at each note, read it out, move on. While doing this, invite someone to listen in. Often, written words look great on the wall, but come out confused or stilted when they're spoken. Your listener will point out those little hiccups.

After a few point-and-read rehearsals, pull back from the wall - literally. Step a few feet back from the notes on the wall so you have to squint to read them, and try a few rehearsals like that. Follow that by turning your back on the notes and rehearsing. Rinse and repeat.

When you get to the point where you can recite the entire speech, it's time to embed it in your subconscious.

- Mumble it to yourself as you walk the dog.
- Say it out loud as you drive to work.
- If you only have a few moments - say, you're riding the elevator solo - speak the introduction or the conclusion to your speech.

If possible, the day of the presentation, get up on the stage and recite the speech to the empty hall. Again, if you only have a few minutes, recite the opening. In my experience, if you nail the first five minutes, the rest follows easily.



**STEP FOUR:  
THIS ISN'T AN  
EVENT - IT'S A  
LAUNCH**

Here's a bit of an a-ha. Don't think of your presentation as *an event*. Think of it as *the launch* of a campaign.

All too often, we speak, the audience claps, and, well, that's it. What a *terrible waste* of a great talk. And all your hard work!

If you were a publicist launching a movie, would you simply do a screening, thank everyone and go home? No! You want the world to see the movie - and that means taking the first screening and leveraging it to drive other fans to Netflix.

Here are a few thoughts on leveraging your presentation to be more than a moment in time.

Remember those post-it notes? I hope you didn't tear them off the wall in a fit of tidiness. Before you deliver your speech, transcribe them onto paper. Or, if you're feeling lazy, speak your speech into a recorder and have a transcription service do it.

When you have that manuscript, add in all the details, facts and stats wouldn't work in a presentation, but would work well as backup materials. Go ahead, put in the spreadsheets, the footnotes, the complex drawings. Now write it all out again as a mini-book. Nice, flowing prose. Full sentences. Something your audience would like to read.

This manuscript is what you refer to in your presentation when, after the second standing ovation, someone asks if you have some information for the audience to take home.

Why yes, you say with a wry, puckish smile, in fact I do. Here's the web link to the manuscript.

## **GIVE ‘EM SOMETHING TO DO**

A great speech motivates people to do something.

Giving your listeners a way to channel the energy your presentation inspired into positive actions is a wonderful way to know your talk actually mattered.

It’s a bit of a two-part exercise.

You need to know *what you want everyone to do*. In the case of the Our Profitable Last Quarter presentation, that action might be *try harder so we can get even better numbers next quarter*.

Next, you need to map out actual steps your audience can take.

You might point them to a landing page to receive further instruction. Create [GreatQuarterlyProfitsForever.com](http://GreatQuarterlyProfitsForever.com), drop in a quick video of yourself thanking your audience for listening to you speak, offer them the manuscript in downloadable form, and present a few *steps to greatness* in a way that provokes them into action. Offering free lunch to the first 15 people who take all the steps, for example.

## ONE FINAL NOTE

One final thing before I unleash you on the audiences of the world. I call it the Netflix synopsis.

If you're scrolling through the catalog of movies on Netflix, you'll notice two things that come with every film listing:

- A bright, colourful poster - usually with the movie name and characters on it.
- A two line synopsis of the movie, designed to lure you in.

Study the synopses. You'll notice most of them give an abridged version of the Hero's Journey, but with a cliffhanger enticing you to view.

In the case of the Our Profitable Last Quarter presentation, that might read *At our company, modest profits were always good enough. Until the team discovered the secret formula for taking it to the next level. How did they do it?*

The Netflix synopsis is your publicist way of luring people to attend your presentation. It can come in the form of an email from the boss, inviting the company to come to your lunch 'n learn. Or it can be in the program of the conference you've been invited to keynote.

Of course, it's also your way of summing up the presentation to the paparazzi. Or your kids.

And finally, it's your pitch to producers when they come knocking, hoping to turn your presentation into the next Star Wars.

May the force be with you.

## CONCLUSION

I love coaching executives who need to deliver great presentations.

There's something about seeing someone turn a mundane business subject into a gripping tale of good and evil that really flips my switch.

It does the same for the executives I coach. In nearly every case, they can't believe they pulled it off.

While I'd like to take full credit for these transformative experiences (and probably will, after a few cocktails) the reality is that the success flows from trial-and-error experiences that led to a methodology. The methodology contained in these pages.

Delivering a great presentation isn't a solo venture. It isn't something that some can do and others can't. And it can't be left to chance.

If this book has accomplished one thing, it's to dispel these myths.

Crafting a great presentation is a team sport. And it can be broken down into manageable steps.

That said, the process is constantly evolving.

For example, the entire *alter ego* piece was inspired by Todd Herman's book The Alter Ego Effect - which was introduced to me by Natalie Michael of MacKay CEO Forums, one of my clients.

I had used my Stuart McLean alter ego years before Herman's great book. But I never realized that it was a thing. I just did it.

I hope this book works the same way for you. It's far from a comprehensive 'how-to' on speechwriting and delivery. But it does give you building blocks.

Finally, I'm a big fan of gorgeous photography. Great photos make for spectacular presentations. Most of the photos in this book were downloaded from [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

If you discover more tools I should know about - and incorporate - I'd be happy to hear them. Drop me a line at [marc@marcstoiber.com](mailto:marc@marcstoiber.com).

## **MARC STOIBER**

Marc Stoiber has been building effective brands for 30 years.

He started as a writer and creative director at big agencies around the world. Today, he works in Victoria, BC as a brand consultant, presentation coach and entrepreneur.

In his spare time, he's a family man who also plays guitar, surfs, and skateboards in pools (yes, they're empty).

You can reach out to Marc at [marc@marcstoiber.com](mailto:marc@marcstoiber.com), or connect with him on social media.

