

## PRESENTATIONS

# BE LESS BORING: PRESENTING FINANCIAL CONTENT ON STAGE

Avoid being the speaker who makes the audience's eyes glaze over and inspires the compilation of mental shopping lists. Communications expert **Jane Anderson** reveals how

**HAVE YOU** watched someone speak at a conference and struggled to watch past the first 10 seconds? Maybe they just have slide after slide of graphs and tiny numbers that you can't even see. (Most often, they will say, "I'm not sure if you can see this on the slide, but ...")

Dale Carnegie, author of 19 books, once said, "For every presentation you give, there

are three. The one you prepared, the one you gave and the one you wish you gave."

A 2013 Gallup poll found that 70% of people listening to presentations are disengaged. That's right - 70% of your audience may actually be sitting there thinking, 'I need to organise the kids, pick up milk, finish that report', etc.

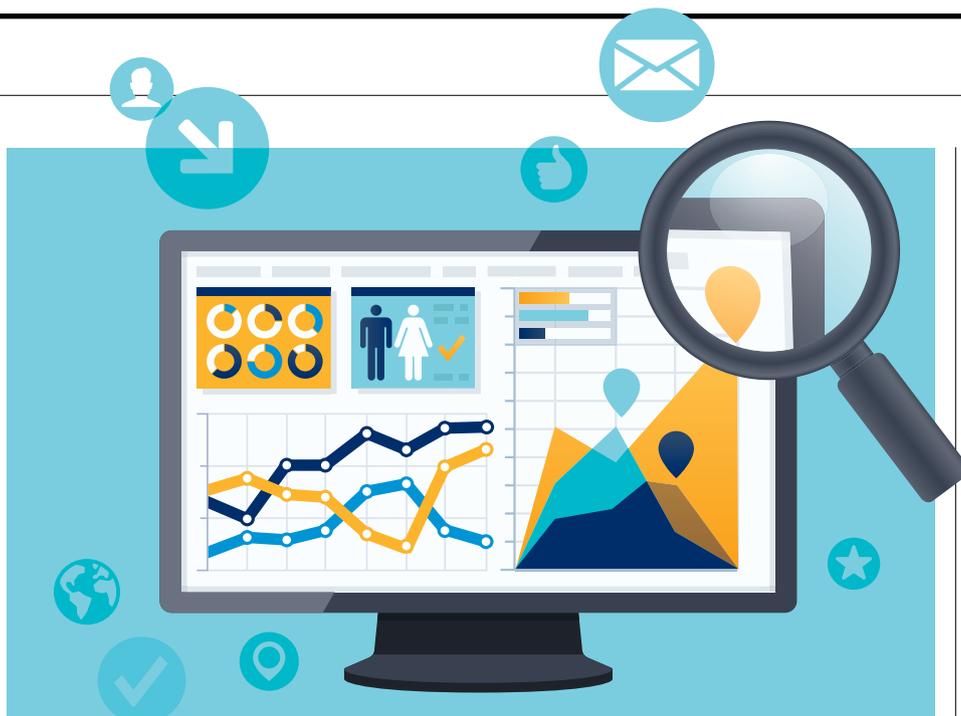
Joe McCormack, a communications

expert, recently wrote that the average person can absorb 750 words per minute, but we can only speak 150 words per minute. Therefore, it may be fair to say that your audience could be completely distracted and bored, and it's up to you as the speaker to **WAKE THEM UP!**

So, what are you going to do? You've spent all last night pulling your slide deck together

AND THE  
AMA  
GOES TO...





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You might be thinking, 'How can I make data funny?'. Consider things like your personal brand or your background. Perhaps you have a funny story to tell about your time working three jobs to have enough money to get through university. Think about some of your funny experiences with money. Remember, your audience has been sitting all day, so the last thing they want to do is sit through another boring presentation.

### **Tell stories**

Use stories to connect with your audience. Keep them punchy and interesting, and don't let them drag on for too long. Stories connect with your audience's emotions and feelings and anchor your message. Tim O'Brien once said that "storytelling is the most essential

because you haven't had time. The problem is that you can't just email the presentation to your audience to read. You actually need to breathe life into the content for someone to hear it.

The truth is that if you don't get your audience's attention within 30 seconds, you have lost the opportunity to connect, influence and inspire.

So, what can you do to grab attention and present data, numbers, graphs and other financial content on a stage?

### **Add humour**

You don't have to be a professional comedian, but it is important to lighten up and have a laugh. Humour fast-tracks connection with your audience.

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Each person sitting in front of you is in their own world. The reality is, they haven't yet made the connection between what you have to say and their world

human activity. The harder the situation, the more essential it is.” Stories are like adding colour to a blank canvas. They bring warmth and light to create interest and insights to your message.

Without a story, your content will feel like cardboard to the audience. It will leave them feeling dry and empty, wishing there was more to make it interesting and memorable. Start making a log or journal of stories that you can share when you present data.



## Start with why

Each person sitting in front of you is in their own world. The reality is, they haven't yet made the connection between what you have to say and their world. One of the temptations in presenting is to feel like you have to use up your allocated time with as much information as possible. The problem with this is that you haven't made the connection to why your audience should care.

You may well know that what you have to say is important and relevant, but they don't. It's up to you to be the conduit between their world and their problems to your world and your solutions.

Simon Sinek, renowned TED speaker and the author of *Start With Why*, says that “people don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it”. If you can capture that for the audience, then you will truly connect.



## Smile

If you are feeling stressed speaking in front of a group, it's easy to lose your own personality. Remember, wherever you are in the world, a smile is universal language, and it helps you connect on a personal level. Show your teeth if you have them! In Ron Gutman's TED Talk on the power of smiling, he describes research that found that smiling creates the same brain stimulation as 20,000 bars of chocolate! The average child smiles more than 400 times per day, so it is no surprise that it often feels joyful to be around smiling children.

Unfortunately, research shows that adults smile only 20 times per day on average, so make an effort to put a smile on your face, and you will seem more human and approachable. This will make your message

more memorable, as you'll feel more likeable to the audience. Smiling also will force you to become more relaxed and to connect more intentionally with your audience. Even if you don't feel confident, this is a good way to trick your mind into feeling more so. As Amy Cuddy, an expert in building confidence, says, you need to “fake it till you make it”.



## Less is more

Reduce the amount of content on your slides. Try not to rely on them too much for your notes, as you may end up speaking to your screen and not your audience. Use images to prompt your message and content for each point. Nancy Duarte, the world-leading expert on presentations, says people remember an image long after your content. Choose an image that represents your point, and then support your point with data if you have to. Try even just using one slide at a time for each piece of information, graph or table of data.

You may need to step some of your information out a piece at a time or highlight specific areas on a graph with pointers or circles. Your audience has a hard enough time absorbing what you're saying and trying to read at the same time, so ensure what they see on screen matches what you're saying. You may even find turning the screen off works effectively to gain your audience's attention, depending on the point you're trying to make.

By putting some time and thought into your presentation, you can make a massive difference to the experience of your audience when they're trying to absorb financial content. The less data you have, the more effectively you will connect and the more you bring yourself to the stage. This will mean your messages stick, and the audience will be far more inclined to take the action you want them to take. **MPA**

Jane Anderson is a communications expert and professional keynote speaker on personal branding and LinkedIn. Jane is the author of *IMPACT: How to Build Your Personal Brand for the Connection Economy* and *CONNECT: How to Leverage Your LinkedIn Profile for Lead Generation, Business Growth and Networking*.

