

SOLID GOLD PRESENTATIONS
SHINE & PROSPER



A Fistful of Nuggets

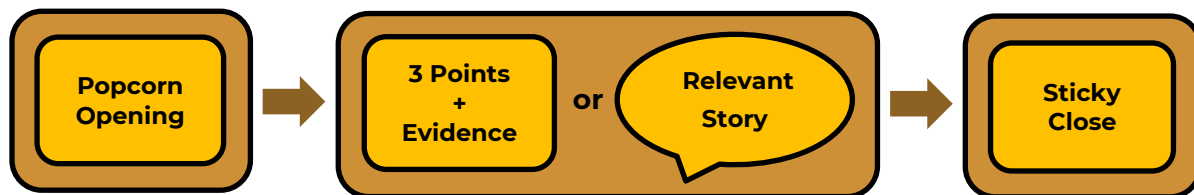
Craft a Winning Message
with a Popcorn Opening and a Sticky Close

A Fistful of Nuggets

Craft a Winning Message

with a *Popcorn* Opening and a *Sticky* Close

The nuggets in this short summary are part of a proven process to craft an impactful *Message*, *Opening* and *Close* for your next presentation...



Why grab and polish these nuggets? Because a powerful message delivered with a strong voice can open the door to golden opportunities...

To achieve great dreams, you must give them a voice!

Speak boldly to the world and Life rushes to your aid.

**ALLIES APPEAR.
OPPORTUNITIES ARISE.
FORTUNES BLOSSOM.**

Why delay?

EMPOWER YOUR VOICE & SEIZE YOUR FUTURE NOW!

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Craft Your MESSAGE and CALL TO ACTION



The whole of your presentation should align with a clear *Message* and end with a concise *Call to Action*. This keeps you and your presentation on a straight path. When your presentation moves in a clear direction toward a logical conclusion, your audience will be more likely to buy into your final *Call to Action*.

We will use the business example below to determine a core Message and a concise Call to Action. Keep in mind that the various tips and strategies apply to ALL presentations, including motivational talks, sales pitches and even wedding speeches:

Let's assume you are responsible for sales or marketing in a small or medium-sized business. Sales have plummeted during a long economic downturn and it is critical to boost revenue, primarily through online initiatives. You have carefully researched the marketing options and you will be presenting your suggested strategies to your leadership team (or even to a larger company audience).

What is your MESSAGE?

Once you know the topic of your presentation (boosting sales and revenue), you can then craft your core message around that topic. Ideally, your message should speak to a strong emotional need. The following message summarizes how market diversification can be achieved: ***"We must secure our future with a bold marketing pivot that boosts sales and revenue"***

What is your CALL TO ACTION or ACTION-BENEFIT STATEMENT?

Your *Call to Action* is the action you want your audience to take and act upon. Try to make sure your call to action is:

- **SPECIFIC** (the audience should know exactly what they need to do).
- **PERSUASIVE** (your message should be convincing and inspire action)
- **PRACTICAL** (the audience should have the abilities/time to complete the action).
- **TIMELY** (this should be a good point in time for the audience to act).

A *Call to Action* is usually followed by a *Benefit*, in which case it can be referred to as an *Action-Benefit Statement*. The audience is most likely to take action when the benefit speaks to their emotional needs. In our example, the emotional need would be 'job

security'. Therefore, in our message to boost sales and revenue with an assertive marketing shift, the Action-Benefit statement could be:

“Support this revenue-boosting marketing shift [the action you want your audience to take]... **and help secure a prosperous future for all of us** [the emotionally-charged benefit the audience will gain if they take that action].”

What is your TITLE?

Once you have narrowed your *Message* and your *Call to Action* or *Action-Benefit Statement*, you can begin crafting a catchy and emotionally charged title for your presentation, such as...

“A Bold Marketing Pivot to Secure our Future: 3 Critical Steps”

Although some presentations may not require a title, it's good to have one ready just in case. At the very least, crafting a title helps you further clarify your message.

Organize the STRUCTURE of Your Presentation

Now that you have identified your *Message* and crafted a *Call to Action* or *Action Benefit Statement*, you have a clear direction that you can use to construct your presentation. You then need a series of logical steps that move your presentation in that direction. Not knowing (or forgetting) your steps can be stressful. The following 4-step structure will help you create a logical flow that is easy to remember and follow...

STEP 1: Introduction (if your host introduces you)

STEP 2: Opening (followed by a **Self-Introduction** if you are introducing yourself)

STEP 3: Body of Your Presentation

STEP 4: Close including a **Call to Action**

STEP 1: YOUR INTRODUCTION



Sometimes, you will have to introduce yourself. However, if possible, try to have someone else introduce you. When you are introduced by another person, your audience will immediately perceive you as being more credible and your talk as being more important. As a result, they will be more eager to hear what you have to say. Here is some guidance for structuring your introduction:

WHEN SOMEONE INTRODUCES YOU. If your host will be introducing you, ensure that your host has a copy of your crafted Introduction. Being introduced by your host incorrectly is a poor, embarrassing and stressful way to start your presentation - especially if you have to correct your host. To prevent this glitch, send your host a prepared introduction *before* the presentation date. Make sure the font is large enough to be read easily. Generally, your introduction should contain relevant information, listed in the following order:

1. **The Title of your presentation.**
2. **Why or how THIS Topic is important to THIS Audience at THIS Time.**
3. **Brief information about your Background and Credibility.**
4. **Your Name** (if necessary, let your host know how to pronounce your name correctly).

WHEN YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF. If you are introducing yourself, start with your carefully prepared *Opening*. Pause after your opening. THEN introduce yourself. State your name, reference your credibility, and briefly summarize why your talk is important to this audience at this time. If you start with your introduction rather than with your opening, you will dilute the impact of your opening.

For additional tips and practical worksheets on crafting self-Introductions or introductions by the host, see the '*Personal Credibility Assessment plus Intro & Outro*', available in our *Accelerator Kit*.

STEP 2: YOUR “POPCORN” OPENING

Your opening will set the tone of your presentation. It will also set your confidence level! Here are some ways NOT to start:

- **DO NOT HIGHLIGHT YOUR WEAKNESSES.** You will subvert your image and undermine your confidence with phrases like *“I feel really nervous”* or *“I’m not really prepared”* or *“I have a cold.”*
- **DO NOT APOLOGIZE OR MAKE POOR EXCUSES.** The following types of openings will undermine your authority and credibility: *“Sorry I am late”* or *“Sorry I don’t have my slides organized”* or *“Sorry about my projector not working.”*
- **DO NOT START WITH A BLAND OPENING.** Introductions like *“I am going to tell you about...”* or *“My topic is about...”* are essentially code for *“Lean back and snooze.”*
- **DO NOT START WITH A FORMAL OPENING.** Openings like *“Mr./Ms. President... my dear colleagues... honored guests...”* can be used in the right formal circumstances, however, they are not especially captivating or endearing with most audiences.

Instead, start with a **“POPCORN” Opening** that bursts your message open to immediately



capture your audience, and to make you feel and look competent. How do you ensure such a strong opening? By carefully CRAFTING, MEMORIZING and PRACTICING your dramatic opening until you have it internalized. Continuing with our example of raising sales and revenue with an assertive marketing shift, you could open your presentation with one of the nine strategies below. Note that all the examples end with a *‘bridge’* that allows the presenter to smoothly transition to the body of the presentation. We have underlined the bridge at the end of each example.

1. Open with a PROBLEM solved by a CALL TO ACTION



This is a lean and hard-hitting opening suited for audiences who value their time and want the facts quickly (e.g. professionals at a business meeting).

e.g. ***“We have a problem. Our traditional marketing strategies are no longer working because our current and potential customers are shifting more aggressively to online shopping.*”**

This threatens our long-term sustainability. But with challenge comes opportunity! The solution is to shift our marketing in the same direction so that we meet our customers and leads in the market square where they increasingly spend their time and money – online! I urge you to support this shift and secure our future. Specifically, I need your support for three practical steps...

EXCEPTION: If you know your message is *controversial*, it is better NOT to start with a clear message and a concise Call to Action. Otherwise, you immediately reveal your controversial position and risk having the audience turn a deaf ear to the rest of your presentation. In that situation, continue with the body of your presentation and leave your Call to Action *for the end*. By that time, the audience will have digested your presentation without undue bias, making them as receptive as possible to your concluding Call to Action.

2. Open by **THANKING THE AUDIENCE** (and **SPECIFY WHY** you are thanking them)



This is a good opening if you feel especially honored to be presenting to your audience or if the audience is making a special effort to attend. In either case, it is insufficient to say “Thank you, it’s a pleasure/honor to be here.” Your lack of originality may underwhelm your audience and make them question your sincerity. You must give your audience evidence as to *why* you are genuinely pleased or honored. When you offer them proof of your sincere appreciation, they will automatically find you likeable. You will then be presenting to an audience that is smiling, friendly, open-minded, and more forgiving.

e.g. *“Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I only joined the company three months ago, so I am honored to be sharing a strategy to secure everyone’s prosperity by boosting our revenue. How can we achieve this? By assertively shifting our marketing strategy in the same direction as our customers...toward online shopping. We can make this critical shift in three practical steps...”*

3. Open with a **DRAMATIC STORY** or **TESTIMONIAL**



This is best done through a personal story since personal events can be recalled with passion and conviction. If you are telling a story about someone else, then make sure the story is still captivating and relevant to your message. The same holds true for testimonials – make them relevant and engaging.

e.g. ***“When our founders started this organization, they worked out of a garage. Although they had an innovative product, they had to explore new markets and target key customers. Some of you may recall that... [tell a brief story highlighting a past innovative marketing strategy that yielded dramatic results]. We now face a similar challenge. Our current and potential customers are migrating en mass to online shopping. Our marketing strategy must follow this migration if we are to boost revenue and secure our future. We can achieve this in 3 practical steps...”***

4. Open with an **INTRIGUING STATEMENT, SLIDE, STATISTIC** or **QUESTION**



Your goal is to craft an opening that immediately catches the audience’s attention. You can achieve this by opening with a highly interesting statement, slide, statistic, or question. However, if you are a presenter that gets stressed at the start of your talks, then we specifically recommend opening with an *Intriguing Question*, as discussed directly below...

Opening with an intriguing question. Not only is it simple to open with a question, it also naturally reduces stress. Why? Because by asking a question, you immediately transfer the pressure from you to your audience. Now *they* are under pressure to think and respond. The more involved your question, the more time the audience will need to think, and the more time you will have to regain your composure. In other words, opening with a question helps you “*get your feet wet*” before wading deeper into your presentation.

Here is the suggested process:

1. **HOLD UP YOUR HAND AS YOU ASK THE QUESTION.** You can raise your hand for both onstage and on-camera presentations. A raised hand will motivate your audience to think and respond to your question. You are also getting your audience engaged right from the get-go.
2. **SMILE AND MAKE EYE CONTACT.** When onstage, make eye contact with different parts of the room. When on-camera, look at the lens.
3. **KEEP YOUR HAND RAISED!** Do not be intimidated if there is a long silence. Smile and keep your hand in the air. People need time to think, so give them the necessary silence they need.
4. **USE THE SILENCE TO LOOK AND FEEL CONFIDENT.** A long pause can give you the advantage of looking and feeling in control. It can also give you precious seconds to breathe deeply and strengthen your composure.
5. **MOTIVATE CAPTIVATED INDIVIDUALS TO RESPOND.** If you are delivering an onstage presentation, look for individuals who seem to be captivated by your question. Smile and make eye contact with one of them for at least 5 seconds. This may induce the person to state the response they have been formulating. If not, make eye contact with another “captivated thinker” who is likely to respond.

If you are on a video-conference and your audience is open and friendly, consider calling an alert participant by name and telling them that they look like they have a response in mind. However, use this approach with discretion – you do not want to intimidate your audience.

e.g. ***“Life is all about change. And change can cause stress. Yet there is one group of people who absolutely LOVE change. Can anyone guess who that is? [raise your hand and pause for a few seconds]. Babies with wet diapers! [pause for a few seconds to let the chuckles die down]. Unlike babies, most of us aren’t very fond of change...we get used to things being a certain way. But we need change to help us grow. Our current situation is more serious...we need to change to SURVIVE! Our current and potential customers are racing toward online shopping. We need to shift our marketing strategy in the same direction so that we can boost revenue and secure our future. This can be achieved in three practical steps...”***

Asking a question when you suspect the audience will be shy

There may be situations when you want to open with a question, but you suspect the audience will be too shy to raise their hands and offer a response. This is often the case at the start of a presentation when the audience members are not yet familiar with each other and have not been warmed up. If you anticipate such an inhibited audience, consider asking a question in the negative so that no one raises their hands. For example, instead of asking “*Who here believes we need to renovate our website and double-down on e-commerce?*”, raise your hand and ask: “*Who here does not want to raise revenue by leveraging our website and maximizing our e-commerce potential?*”

Keep your hand raised as you pause for a few seconds. Look at different people in the room or at the camera lens. No one should be raising their hands. Then say: “*I didn’t think so! That is why we are taking 30 minutes to review three practical ecommerce strategies that will leverage current market trends and help secure our future!*”

5. Open with an ANALOGY that captures the audience’s interest



Many presenters use analogies to simplify complex information. Analogies are also a great way to *open* your presentation. Try to pick analogies that your audience will understand and relate to. In the example below, the analogy is between negotiating a sharp turn on a road and shifting a marketing strategy in a different direction.

e.g. ***“Imagine we are all on a bus travelling down a straight highway. In the near distance is a muddy field. If we keep going straight, we will end up in the field. At best, we could get stuck. At worst, we could roll the bus and get hurt. Our only option is to turn sharply before the field. We are in a similar situation with our marketing strategy. Our current and potential clients are turning sharply toward online shopping. If we don’t turn with them, our revenue will plummet, leaving us stuck and debilitated, just like driving into a muddy field. To avoid this danger, we need to follow our customers. Yes, it’s a sharp turn ahead, but the following three strategies will help us negotiate that turn and keep us on the path to prosperity...”***

6. Open by describing a DIM FUTURE followed by a BRIGHT FUTURE



Hold a mirror to your audience's fears by describing a dim future. Then paint a bright, yet realistic future. This is the future that would be achieved if your message was accepted. When you describe these two contrasting futures, use wording that triggers your audience's emotions. For example:

“We are travelling on a hard path through a challenging economic landscape. Every day we lose more revenue as our customers migrate to online shopping. In the end, we may lose our business. And none of us can afford that! We all have families to support and bills to pay. But I have good news! There is an alternate path...one that leads to increased revenue and greater security. To get on this path, we must shift our marketing strategy in the same direction as our customers – toward online shopping. We can do this in three practical steps...”

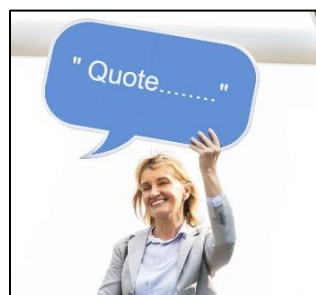
7. Open by PROMISING RESULTS



This strategy is an effective opening. However, do not make vague promises that you cannot deliver. Your promised results must be specific, measurable, and realistic. For example:

“In 6 months, we could once again be operating in a stable and lucrative market. Within 18 months, we could begin seeing the same profits [you can mention a specific number] we had four years ago. How can these results be achieved when we are currently losing our traditional customers and revenue? By following our customers! This means shifting our marketing strategy toward online shopping. We can make this shift in three practical steps...”

8. Open with a QUOTATION



Opening with a quotation can be perceived as a cliché and lazy. To minimize this risk, avoid overused quotes. Instead, use fresh, industry-specific quotes that are highly relevant to your topic. Always doublecheck that you have accredited the quote to the right person! Also, your quote will have more impact if you state the quote first and *then* make the attribution. Keep in mind that short quotes have the most “punch”. You can shorten longer quotes by using your own words that retain the same meaning. Pause for a second when you are done, and then say: *“I am paraphrasing... [state the name of the person]”*.

9. Open with HUMOR



Humor is dicey; everyone has a different sense of humor, and people can be easily offended. Also, anxiety can undermine the timing and tone of the delivery, causing humor to fall flat. However, that doesn't mean you shouldn't make a well-planned attempt. There are rewards for successfully tickling your audience's funny bone: you will immediately feel more comfortable, confident and in control. And your audience will feel more relaxed, forgiving and open-minded. In fact, many of today's audiences *expect* to be entertained! To ensure that your humor is inoffensive AND funny AND well delivered, consider the following tips:

DON'T OVERDO IT. Unless you are a professional comedian, only *sprinkle* your talk with humor. Also, don't try too hard to be funny.

BUILD ANTICIPATION. Speak slowly as you build up to the humorous part. Pause for a second. Then make your humorous point.

FAVOR STORIES OVER JOKES. Avoid telling jokes, unless you are good at it. Focus more on personal situations that can be told as a funny story. If you do decide to tell a joke, memorize it well. If you tell a story, know it well.

DO NOT MAKE FUN OF OTHERS. Humor works best when you are respectful of others, humble, and self-deprecating.

TEST IT. Practice your humorous remarks in front of friends or colleagues whose tastes mirror those of your audience.

IF YOUR AUDIENCE LAUGHS: Join them with a chuckle. Let their laughter fade before continuing with your presentation.

IF YOUR AUDIENCE DOESN'T LAUGH: Don't stress and don't *look* like you are stressed. Immediately move on to your next point.

Consider Using a Captivating Prop!

Many of the above openings can be dramatized with a prop, such as an item, poster, or any other 3-dimensional object that is related to the message in your talk. Here are some tips:

- **MAKE IT VISIBLE.** Prior to getting on stage or on camera, position the prop so it is clearly visible to everyone. This will spark the audience's curiosity *before* you begin.
- **USE YOUR PROP TO OPEN.** When you start your presentation, you can refer to the prop in your opening. Alternatively, you can make the prop itself the main part of your opening!
- **TIE IT TO YOUR MESSAGE.** In all cases, the prop should be tied to your message.
- **LOOP BACK TO IT WHEN CLOSING.** Use the prop to make a memorable impression at the *Close* of your presentation by linking the prop to your final message.
- **MAKE IT A PRIZE.** To create even more engagement, consider making the prop a prize! We know one speaker who displays a large stuffed animal and ties it to her topic during her opening. She then says that the animal will be given away at the end of the presentation to someone who displays the most enthusiasm during the presentation, or who asks the best question during the Q&A. Her audiences love this immediate engagement, and it leads them to participate with more enthusiasm.

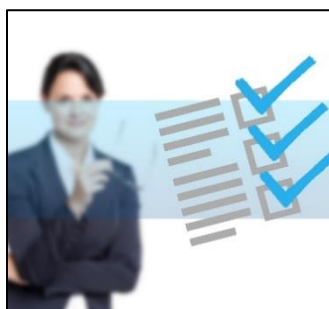
STEP 3: YOUR MAIN BODY

There are two general ways to structure the body of your presentation: you can tell a relevant and captivating story (for inspirational or motivational presentations) or you can discuss 3 core points, each supported by evidence (for most other presentations).

YOUR 3 CORE POINTS + SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Start by making a list of points that form the backbone of your message. In our example of shifting a marketing strategy to increase sales and revenue, we might come up with the following list of points:

1. Cut non-critical marketing costs and expenses.
2. Expand and optimize online services and sales.
3. Provide up-front value online (e.g., tools, guides, workbooks and giveaways)
4. Host virtual events that will inform and interest our customers.
5. Develop online partnerships with related services or industries.
6. Develop and refine online networking and sales skills – including pitches and presentations.
7. Sharpen tracking, measurement and adjustment of sales and marketing strategies.



Then chose three points that best support your Message and your Call to Action (keep in mind that you can still summarize the remaining points on a slide or handout). Your three points should explain *why* your message should be accepted and perhaps *how* your proposed action can be implemented. Support each point with evidence such as stories, testimonials, facts, statistics, expert opinions or demonstrations.

YOUR RELEVANT AND CAPTIVATING STORY



When your intent is to motivate or inspire your audience, consider telling a relevant and captivating story. If possible use a personal story that can be easily recalled and relived. Try to open your story with a dramatic sentence that captivates the audience. Tell your story with appropriate emotion and gestures. Conclude your story with an Action-Benefit Statement that concisely delivers your message.

STEP 4: YOUR “STICKY” CLOSE (Including your Call to Action)

You started with a “Popcorn” Opening that captivated your audience. Now it’s time to add



some caramel to the popcorn so that your message will “stick” to the hearts and minds of your audience. A strong, clear and well-practiced close can also salvage a lackluster presentation, thereby maintaining your credibility and confidence. Ideally, your close should loop back to your opening. If you started your presentation with a Call to Action, end with your Call to Action. Alternatively, if you started with a unique opening, loop back to that opening, and THEN end with your Call to Action (for a detailed example, see ‘*End with a Confident and Sticky Close* in Section 17 of our Guide).

Will You Be Conducting a Q&A?



If you be conducting a question and answer session after your presentation, then your presentation has not ended – stay alert! You don’t want to snatch *defeat* from the jaws of victory by lapsing in your Q&A! The Q&A allows you to reinforce your message and to further project your confidence and credibility. If you feel your presentation was stressful and underwhelming,

then the Q&A also serves as an opportunity to regain control, thereby snatching *victory* from the jaws of defeat! Our *Accelerator Kit* contains ‘*A Process for Answering Questions During the Q&A*’, which offers a worksheet and tips to help you leverage your Q&A for maximum impact.

Your FINAL CLOSE after the Q&A

Never end your presentation with the Q&A! Use these last few seconds to brand your message into the hearts and minds of your audience. Loop back to your main message and restate your Call to Action. Be **CONCISE**, **STRONG** and **CONVINCING**! Our *Guide* and *Accelerator Kit* provide examples.

The tips in this document provide only a framework for crafting and delivering your message. We invite you to purchase our **Guide** and **Accelerator Kit** for a full gold-mine of nuggets that will help you prepare and deliver a shining presentation with 24-karat confidence!

The quickest way to achieve top performance is with a presentation coach. Our 4-step **Video-Review Coaching** is a quick, efficient and budget-friendly option:



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Visit our website for a full goldmine of tips and strategies:

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PLEASE NOTE

The downloadable documents on our website contain *so many* nuggets that we had to format the materials in textbook style to limit the length. Those materials do not contain the same varied mix of images as in this summary. We may be publishing more condensed, interactive versions in the future to send to our past customers.

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