

A Presentation is NOT a Series of Slides: Tell a Story, Make a Point



By Charles Alfaro

If you've specialized in executive [communications](#), you're all too familiar with this scenario...you share a presentation with a CEO or other senior leader, and are told it is "the right message, slides and flow." Great, I nailed it! Then, before you can truly enjoy the moment, comes the words we dread..."I know what I want to say," or "This isn't my first rodeo," or my personal favorite, "I'll wing it." Uh oh!

In many cases, "I'll wing it" leads to a presentation turning into a collection of slides. With each new slide the presenter looks at the screen, and tries to remember what he/she wants to say...often times stumbling over words, saying something that was meant to come later or repeating himself. The presentation is deemed a success – because "I got in all the points" – when in reality, the overall message is lost on the audience.

When a speaker is all over the place, and the presentation is disjointed, the audience knows it...the message loses any importance and authenticity, the speaker loses credibility and the listeners tune out. On the other hand, when it all comes together, it's a powerful tool!



- **Make a point:** know your key message, and stick to it; make sure the audience leaves with a clear understanding of what you want to say, and what they need to know and/or do.
- **Be prepared:** knowing the facts is not the same as knowing what to say; it's not enough to know the content, you have to know the flow of the story.
- **Rehearse:** if you're looking at your remarks the night before, or worse, an hour before your presentation, you're not ready...you have to know the story, the slides, the order and flow; this only comes with practice, and repetition.
- **Own it:** it's your presentation; as communicators we work to shape the story, it's up to you to tell it in your individual voice and style.

Every communication is an opportunity to share your vision. Prepare for it the way you would for a board meeting, with the same focus and intensity. Your audience – employees, customers, reporters – deserves that level of preparation and attention. And telling a story that is compelling, as opposed to sharing a bunch of stuff, will result in delivering a message that's authentic and genuine, as well as remembered and actionable.

About the Author: Charles Alfaro has extensive experience developing strategic, creative and authentic communications, for external and internal audiences. He's designed programs that have successfully increased the visibility and reputation of companies, brands and executives, at such leading companies as Boehringer Ingelheim, Cadbury and Roche.