

Life is a Series of Presentations Introduction

Live and Learn... And Share It All

Sometimes, in rare quiet moments, I sit around and wonder about the presentations that have shaped our world: King Solomon delivering his verdict in the most famous custody dispute in human history, Jesus testifying before Pontius Pilate, Henry V urging on his troops at Agincourt, the young Elizabeth begging Queen Mary to spare her life in the aftermath of a Protestant plot, Thomas Jefferson exhorting his patriotic brethren to fight for their freedom, John F. Kennedy inspiring a generation to reach the moon, and Martin Luther King, Jr. motivating a million people on the Mall in Washington to fulfill his dreams of equality. Often these presentations have pertained to matters of life and death for masses of people. In some cases they have decided the fate of the presenters themselves.

I sincerely hope you never have to make a presentation with your life hanging in the balance. More likely you think of your presentations as less threatening moments in the work week when you have to get up in front of a group. (If the audience is big enough, you may be so nervous that you want to die, but that's another matter.) Maybe you have to pitch a product to your sales reps or, if you are a rep yourself, to a roomful of customers. Perhaps you're an executive or manager who has to present the company direction to a set of employees or a chief executive who has to make quarterly presentations to her board of directors. If you're reading this you probably have some kind of preconceived notion about what it means to make a presentation. It's a formal occasion in a conference room, lots of chairs, a few sleepy colleagues or maybe even a sea of faces staring up at you. White boards. Overhead projectors. PowerPoint slides. Coffee and danishes on the side table. A printed agenda. Right?

Well, yes, sort of. Frequently presentations do contain those things. And, in similar fashion, frequently a movie contains music. But does the absence of music mean that it's not a movie? No, of course not. So the absence of an overhead projector doesn't mean it's not a presentation. Making presentations isn't about the props. It's about the context. I have learned this over the years, and I think most people know it in their hearts, even if they don't spend a lot of time thinking about what exactly constitutes a presentation.

In the most literal sense, I make presentations for a living. I speak before groups of people, sometimes thousands at a time, almost every day. And I get paid to do this, so you might think of me as a professional presenter. But what if I told you that those presentations are only a fraction of the number of presentations I make in a day? In fact, when I talk to large groups on my subject of expertise, I often begin by asking the audience how many presentations they make in a 24-hour period. Usually these are men and women from the ranks of management, so their first thought is of the laser pointers and the other toys, of the sales calls and the pitches to colleagues. One or two a day might be their initial answer. But then, with little prompting, a thought begins to dawn on them. What exactly is a presentation, anyway? Is a presentation defined by the size of the group and the coldness of the room, or is it defined by what you are trying to accomplish at that moment?

As the light of recognition begins to shine in the eyes of my audience, they reevaluate their initial answer. Maybe every time they formally communicate to a superior or customer, that's a presentation, meaning they make presentations dozens of times a day. Maybe every time they need to win a colleague over to their point of view over the phone or by e-mail is a presentation – meaning they make presentations scores of times a day. Maybe every time they try to convince anybody, anywhere of anything – in business, at home, on the phone, in person, one-on-one or in groups – that's a presentation. In which case, they might actually make hundreds of presentations a day!

Your life is full of opportunities. And these opportunities are a reflection of the choices you make daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. I'd even say your life consists of the choices you make every minute. Do I get up when the alarm clock rings or do I stay in bed late this morning? Do I go for the bacon and eggs or do I eat the bran cereal? Do I kiss my child before I put him on the bus or do I scowl at him because I haven't had my coffee yet? For that matter, do I allow my mood at this very moment to be dictated by the presence or absence of a cup of java?

Your success in life depends upon how you approach the millions of opportunities before you. The person who sleeps late every morning, for example, might be well rested, but she surely isn't going to be the early bird catching the worm. For the purposes of this discussion, however, I'm not concerned with whether sleeping late is a good choice. I'm more interested in one particular type of frequent opportunity: your chance to make an impression upon people who will affect the course of your life. What I spend my time teaching to smart people just like you is that they don't even realize the opportunities they miss every day by not stopping to think about their presentation strategy. And this is a significant loss to all aspects of their well being, from their monetary success to their personal happiness.

Unless you're a hermit living on a mountaintop, your life largely consists of your interactions with the people around you. In the office, unless you're everyone's boss, you can't choose all your colleagues (in fact, it's more likely you haven't chosen any of them). You can't usually pick your boss. And rarely can you choose your customers. Yet all these people hold tremendous sway over your daily progress through the work day and, as important, the ultimate success of your career. So you might not have chosen to work with them, but – consciously or not – you would like to have a degree of power over how much you can sway them.

In our personal lives, we often have more influence over those people with whom we surround ourselves, but even then we cannot assume control of their moods or thoughts. If a person in the family unit does not wish to cooperate in the family's daily activities, that's going to affect all our happiness. If the members of our family cannot convince one another to behave in compatible ways, then we're all going to be miserable.

Think about some of the opportunities you have every day to win people over to the thoughts and actions that will help you improve your own life. Your son doesn't want to put his clothes on for school, and if he persists much longer then you'll be late for work. You've got too much to accomplish at the office, so you desperately need to convince your boss to allow you to hire an assistant. At lunchtime you want to talk a clerk into letting you return a brand-new VCR to the store, even though you lost the receipt. On the way, you're pulled over by a police officer for failing to make a full stop before turning right on red, and you'd really like to be sent on your way without a ticket.

Imagine how much your time on earth would improve if you could prevail at most of these crucial moments. Not a single one of them may change the entire course of your life, but winning that other person over to your point of view with regularity almost certainly will help take you where you want to go. *The way in which we present our thoughts and ideas to people –*

from our colleagues at work to our spouse and even to the person waiting on us at the grocery store – could have a profound effect on the shape of our own lives. So one sure way to accomplish the things we want to accomplish is to improve our success rate in these kinds of circumstances. If we can do that, then we can advance the quality of our existence. Because, as I like to say, *life is a series of presentations. Mastery of the art of making presentations takes us closer to the outcomes we desire.* It also provides a powerful confidence boost that will guarantee you more success in all aspects of your life.

Never thought of it that way? Take heart. It's not your fault!

Whenever I have the opportunity, I ask educators in the Dallas area, where I live, what kind of instruction they offer their students in the art of presenting. I've asked this of university professors and I've asked it of high school principals. As parents, we all want our children to have confidence in their abilities and possess high self-esteem, so I asked the head of my two girls' elementary school this question, as well. The best answer he could think of was Speech Class, which is for children with pronunciation issues!

Of course a kid with a speech impediment should get special attention, but what about helping the rest of us be all that we can be? The fact is that our formal education systems usually lack any instruction in the more practical skills of life. But I'm not talking about reinstituting defunct home economics classes. Rather, I am confronted every single day with intelligent, well-educated and often exceptional people – my clients or people who work for them – who have never been offered one iota of information about what should be the fourth pillar after reading, writing and arithmetic. I call it *presentation skills*. But we might as easily call it *people skills*. As my friend and colleague Jim Rohn – a motivational speaker, author and business philosopher – has said: "It's not the matter you cover so much as it is the manner in which you cover it."

In the course of my life, I've had the privilege of getting to know many interesting folks, not a few of them people of great accomplishment. I've met and trained famous entrepreneurs and politicians and the executives, presidents and CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Some of these people had enough God-given talent to sell sand to a desert nomad. Most of them – however they came to it – had the ability to connect well with the people around them and frequently to win colleagues and customers over to their point of view. But the interesting thing is that these men and women weren't necessarily all that much better at this than their closest rivals. In most cases, in fact, they were just marginally better than their colleagues at some of the skills that define great communicators. Did that small difference really matter? You bet it did. In this book you'll learn about what my organization calls the Presentation Impact Curve, which suggests that incremental improvements in your presentation skills will pay disproportionate dividends with regard to your influence upon others. By being just a little bit better than their peers, the successful individuals I know achieved enormous results. And if I had to write a profile of each of those people who were successful, I could probably explain to you exactly how their presentations differ from those of the millions of equally smart and well-intentioned workers who never could seem to achieve their own highest ambitions.

In corporate America, awareness of the value of presentation skills to business success is just breaking to the surface. In the not-too-distant past, most of my clients were the top executives at major companies – people who often had to speak to large groups of employees and shareholders, or who found themselves often in front of the media. Or they were teams of sales professionals trying to get an edge with their customers. Today, by contrast, my clients increasingly appreciate the importance of presentation skills at every level of their organization. Wal-Mart, for example, has 98,000 managers apart from the top executives in the home office.

If those managers can't motivate or communicate well to their teams, the efficiency and responsiveness of the entire organization – 1.4 million employees – suffers.

As more and more top executives come to recognize the crucial role of efficient personal communication throughout their companies, I believe they will begin to institutionalize the ongoing learning and refinement of the important skills we'll talk about in this book. The greatest manager of his generation, Jack Welch of General Electric, used to say he considered himself a teacher, a job that is largely about presentation, when you consider it. In similar fashion, Steve Jobs of Apple Computers and Bill Gates of Microsoft may be old rivals, but they have many traits in common. Both men, I believe, are at the leading edge of a movement toward increasing involvement by chief executives in the presentation skills that they hope will permeate their corporations. Jobs and Gates have changed their official titles in the past couple of years. If they keep to the paths they've chosen, I believe they may soon come to refer to themselves as the Chief Presentation Officer (CPO) of their respective companies. *Acknowledgement of the importance of the CPO role may represent the next phase of the so-called Learning Organization.*

But no individuals should wait for their bosses, seeking a corporate edge, to give them an advantage in their own day-to-day lives. The historical references that I opened with are just a few among thousands of stories I might find where great presentations skills have already made the difference between success and also-ran status. Where did Elizabeth I and Henry V and JFK and Martin Luther King, Jr. acquire their presentation abilities? Some of the greatest leaders in history certainly may have possessed extraordinary talents, but I strongly believe that *delivering good presentations is more skill than talent*. What makes me so sure? I now earn my living making presentations, yet I was once just about the worst presenter you could ever want to hear!

Bounce When You Hit Bottom

If you have attended one of my seminars for corporate executives, you might find my background a little surprising. The people I've helped often have advanced degrees and work at the top echelons of American business. They've attended the best colleges and training courses, benefited from the advice of the greatest consultants in the world, and now they run things at such companies as Ford, Wal-Mart and New York Life. As for me, I've read and studied thousands of works. The foundations of my program rest firmly on a core of book knowledge, as well as life experience. My story, I think, is relevant to the enterprise at hand.

About forty years ago, I was born into a middle-class family in Oklahoma City. We lived in a nondescript house not unlike millions of modest houses you find in the hard-working neighborhoods of any American town. My father's father was a small-time entrepreneur with his own candy route. My mother's father, Cliff Smalley, started his own car detailing business in 1943 (a bad hand kept him out of World War II), and my father later went to work for him. Including my younger brother, Randy, we were a happy family. I went to public school until the fifth grade, then to non-denominational Christian schools, then to Catholic high school. I learned then to make God the priority in my life, and that is still true today.

But what distinguished me, I guess, was having two grandparents and parents who lived by their entrepreneurial instincts. All I knew my whole life was to be an entrepreneur, to serve people and, ultimately, to be blessed to earn a whole lot of money. My family never quite achieved the last part. But the family business, the Auto Beauty Shop, did perform well enough to keep us all very well fed. Dealers would send us cars to be spotlessly cleaned, and my father, my grandfather and even my grandmother would work right alongside a group of

hardworking men and women six days a week, doing the same car-cleaning chores as their employees without regard to economic status or race, at a time when people had strong feelings about both.

After watching this activity while growing up, all I ever wanted to do was work. I started mowing yards when I was ten or twelve and pretty soon I was holding down three jobs. At one job, I was making \$20 per hour when kids my age were normally making \$2 doing other things. I worked for Target stores, assembling bicycles at night for \$5 per bike. They'd lock me in the store a couple of nights a week and I'd just crank these things out, putting together four bikes an hour and sleeping little. I also worked as a photographer for an insurance company, taking pictures of houses to document them for coverage. And, of course, I helped out at the Auto Beauty Shop. Somehow I made it to school regularly, but my main focus was raking in the bucks – and finding ways to spend them. By the time I was sixteen I owned a '66 Mustang, a '48 Chevy pickup and a '77 Monte Carlo.

In 1979, before I even graduated from high school, my grandfather agreed to sell me the 49% of his business that he had not already sold to my father. I had my grub stake, and I was going to work like a dog to make it pay off. I woke up before dawn every morning to go pick up the expensive cars from the dealers. Before sunup I would be driving brand-new Ferraris down deserted streets, minimizing the chance of any mishaps. Then I would work alongside my employees, just as my father and grandparents had, and I'd return the cars the next morning.

I got to know the dealers real well, and one day the manager of the Cadillac dealership, a fellow named Keith Wadley, called me aside. "Son, you're working too hard with your hands," he told me. "You're too smart for that. You need to be using your mind, not your hands."

That simple observation hit me like a strike of lightning from heaven. My dad had been a server. All his life, he had served people with his hands. I was going to do it differently. I would serve people with my mind. So I worked just as hard as ever cleaning cars and managing the Auto Beauty Shop, but I soon began making time for investing in and building businesses, too. In all honesty, I was manic about it. Within three years I owned a residential leasing company, a building company, a grocery store, two lakes for potential development, an office building and small parts of two banks. At the peak of my fortune in the mid 1980s I had two homes, a chauffeur, six cars and many of the other possessions of a wealthy man. But in 1986, oil suddenly dropped from \$40 to \$10 per barrel and Congress changed the laws of depreciation to make real estate speculation far less attractive. My highly leveraged empire collapsed like a cornstalk after a hard frost.

Within a year I was destitute. I had gone from having several million dollars to a negative-\$500,000 net worth in a matter of months. The foreclosures and lawsuits were coming so fast and furious that I had to marry my wife with a sort of reverse pre-nuptial agreement – one that would protect her against my creditors. At the worst point I lay in bed for three days, contemplating suicide. Those days were so painful that I never revisit the details, even now. I didn't know what to do, but I had to move on. My wife, Tammy, and I packed up our one remaining car and headed for Dallas to try and start a new life. I thought about taking a spin past the now shuttered Auto Beauty Shop, but the idea was too discouraging. I just hit the gas pedal and resolved not to look back.

Pretty soon I had scraped up a few bucks to start another business. I was mowing lawns for my first time as an adult, working alongside a small crew that I had assembled. But this time they weren't lawns in my own modest childhood neighborhood – they were the lawns of rich people. I figured that maybe I could meet someone in these upscale areas who might help me find a new opportunity and again steer my business life in the direction of success. Day after day I went home to the bathroom of our tiny apartment and washed the grime off my

calloused hands with the words of Keith Wadley echoing through my head: “You need to be using your mind, not your hands.”

But how? I had so few dollars left to employ – all I had were those two hands and what I retained between my ears. There must be a way to leverage what I knew, I thought, both my good and bad experiences. While I worked I wondered how many of the people in all those great houses had made it big by doing the same. And whenever I saw a client, I’d tell him or her the story of how a multimillionaire from Oklahoma City came to be mowing lawns in the suburbs of Dallas.

Then, one day, sure enough, I went to pick up the monthly check at a client’s house. I had become casually friendly with this fellow over the months, and I told him my story, as I had done to a hundred others. This time, he invited me in for a cup of coffee, we chatted for a few minutes, and he gave me a tip that would change my life. He said that – never mind my spectacular flameout – my experience at having achieved quick success could make me a hot commodity on the rapidly growing seminar circuit. He invited me to attend a seminar on computers with him, which shortly led to an introduction to the event’s promoter.

I had a lot of respect for the seminar world. I had rounded out my hard-knocks education with dozens of visits to seminars, the best of which I found far more efficient communicators of information than an ordinary classroom. After hearing my story, the promoter, whose name was Gary Cochran, told me I had far more life experience than most of the seminar speakers he had represented. He agreed to give me a shot, and before I knew it he had scheduled me in dozens of cities.

Now, you have to know a little bit about the seminar business to appreciate the impending disaster. In those days, no one paid admission for seminars. Everyone involved made their living off the sales of books and other paraphernalia in the back of the room. Gary would spend thousands of dollars getting people to attend. It was the speaker’s job to inspire them to buy stuff. If the audience didn’t visit the table at the back of the room, then nobody involved in producing the seminar would eat.

I wish I remembered my first presentation like it was yesterday. But the reality is that I’ve blocked most of it out – it has receded into the fog of humiliation. I’m not even sure of the exact topic: something along the lines of how to achieve one’s financial goals. What I do recall is how confident I felt before the event. Unlike so much of the seminar talent in those days, I knew I was the real thing – or had been. I wouldn’t be speaking theoretically about how to grow wealthy; I had done it on a grander scale than many people ever dared dream of. (Even the bad luck that followed would have lessons people could take away.) I had invested dozens of hours in slick overhead transparencies that would drive home the points of my presentation. I had bought a brand new suit and tie on my wife’s credit card. My shoes were polished and I was ready to rock and roll.

The promoter had efficiently booked me into a dozen cities, and the first gig was an appearance in the ballroom of some mid-level hotel in downtown Seattle. I strutted into the cavernous room with my notes and slides tucked under my arm in a manila folder. Looking up for the first time, I suddenly discovered that Gary had done his job too well. There must have been close to a thousand people in the room. To me, it felt like a million. I haltingly introduced myself and, throwing the first slide up, began to speak. I had spent ten years building an empire, only to go broke, I explained in all sincerity. Now, as I urged them to do, I had decided not to build a business but to build *myself*. This was not hocus pocus, I thought. I could really bring value to the people in this audience. But if so, why were they tittering in the background? I looked out at them in desperation. To my nerve-blinded eyes they were a monolith, an expanse of incommunicative faces. Somehow, as I droned on, I began to discern that a few

hands had gone up, as if trying to throw me a lifeline. They didn't wish to be called upon, though; they were pointing at the screen behind me. I had placed my transparency on the projector upside down!

I'd like to say that that was the low point of my new career as a presenter, but such a statement wouldn't even come close to being accurate. In fact, that moment wasn't even the low point of that day! I continued to fumble along, adrift at the head of the room, completely detached from my audience and through my awkwardness and ineptitude putting the lie to my very real life experiences and the lessons they ought to have taught. But what else could I do? I was passively carried along by the inertia of the moment, which had taken me away from any tangible connection to my audience or the material I was presenting. People weren't just laughing at my slides anymore; they were doing something much worse. They were laughing at *me* – and they were beginning to walk out of the ballroom.

That two-hour train wreck of a seminar was the first of many presentations I made that year that ended in utter failure and humiliation. I don't think I sold a single book or tape in Seattle. And if Gary earned back his expenses on me that first year it had to be a miracle. But, though I was humbled, I also remained determined. I wasn't going to mow lawns for the rest of my life and I had to find a way to pay for that new suit! I trudged through forty cities that year, and after each appearance Gary and I went back to the hotel room to do the post mortem. I also began studying everything I could get my hands on that might improve my presentation skills. I read hundreds of books about public speaking and related topics, watched scores of videos and attended dozens of seminars to observe and quantify how the masters made excellent presentations. And eventually I began to improve. Then I built upon that improvement. Today, with all due modesty, I am one of the most accomplished presentation coaches in the country. But that result didn't drop from outer space. It came from study and plain old hard work.

There will always be a little bit of art behind regular presentation success, and we can't control the amount of talent God gives us. But I firmly believe that being a successful presenter involves more craft than talent. In my studies I have identified skills and techniques that run like indelible themes through the lives of successful presenters. No one comes into the world with skills and techniques. They have to be taught and they can usually be learned by anyone with the will to learn them.

I know that it's true, because I learned them myself. In addition, my co-author Kim Dower, who makes her living as a media coach, has taught similar skills to hundreds of high achievers. Her clients are often experts in their field, but they need help in front of a camera or an audience. Often in a matter of a few days or even hours, they leave her office with their pitches much more polished than when they entered it.

Kim and I met at the American Bookseller's Convention in Chicago a few years ago. She was conducting a raffle that offered a free coaching session, and she ended up pulling my card out of the fish bowl. As we got to talking, we realized that we shared many views on the value of presentations, especially an understanding that Presentation Mastery is perhaps the least commonly known factor in people's professional and personal success.

One day, Kim and I were talking about all the ways presentation excellence can improve a person's day-to-day life and the fact that all people are continually presenting to one another throughout the day. We compared stories that we've heard from our individual clients about how the techniques we teach them for their specific presentations help them in their personal lives. We were amazed to find that, although Kim and I work with very different types of clients, the overwhelming similarity is that everything they learn from us rolls over into other aspects of their lives and makes them feel more confident in everything they do. Then Kim looked at me

and said, “the truth is, Tony, *life* is a series of presentations.” When she said that I knew I had to solicit her help in writing my first big book. And we soon set out down that long and arduous road.

After a while, Joel E. Fishman was introduced to us by our agent. Joel is not only a writer and former editor. He is also a retail business owner. He found our proposed title, *Life Is a Series of Presentations*, to be one of the most intuitive ideas he’d heard in a long career in the book business.

So our writing team consists of a lifelong entrepreneur and presentation expert, a media trainer and a business owner and writer. Collectively we have a great deal of life experience and the expert knowledge needed to help you benefit most from this book. Each in our own way, we all live by the author Harvey McKay’s brilliantly simple advice: “Do what you love, love what you do, and deliver more than you promise.”

You don’t have to read a thousand books or watch nearly as many videos to learn to be a great presenter. I have read them all and I have studied the techniques that universally distinguish good presenters from bad. I have been honing the presenter’s craft for more than fifteen years – not only my own approach to presenting but the skills of many thousands of others whom I’ve trained and coached. These people knew that having sharper presentation skills would enhance their credibility and respect, and get more audience buy-in for the points they needed to get across. Few of these people intended to earn a living by making presentations per se. All of them who applied my practices, however, have improved their desired outcomes, learning to be more comfortable, confident and effective when the occasion arises to make a presentation. And, as I mentioned earlier, these opportunities arise many times each and every day.

Throughout this book, I use the word “audience” a great deal. You may be in the habit of thinking of an audience as a large group of people attending a formal presentation or performance. In common usage, you would be right, but one of our main points is to help you understand that when anyone tries to inspire, inform or influence anyone else of anything, that’s a presentation. This means that an audience may be as small as one person. So when I use the word “**audience**” throughout this book, it may refer to a group of any size or it may refer to a single individual.

I strongly believe that anyone who seeks success in life’s endeavors – at work or in other contexts – will benefit tremendously from the Eight Essential Presentation Practices that you’ll find here. If you end up agreeing, I urge you to pass this book along to your friends, so they can benefit too. And if you work for or own any kind of collaborative enterprise – large or small – I encourage you to expose your associates to this book, as well. I know it will make your company function better, because I have seen this with my own eyes in countless situations. It’s not overstating the case to assert that *Presentation Mastery is the single biggest key to professional success and personal power*, and this is true no matter your background or education level.

Life Is a Series of Presentations is the culmination of the past decade and a half of my work studying and helping others put into practice the techniques for making great presentations. With the help of my co-authors, I will teach you that, while the differences between a good and bad presentation may seem intangible, many of them can in fact be quantified. For example, all people – whether presenting to a conference or to their spouse – must approach their task in a state of preparedness, must make others want to listen to them, and must then be responsive to their audience. These goals sound so simple. Why don’t more folks achieve them? Well, it turns out that most people don’t know the Eight Essential Practices of Successful Presenters that you’ll learn in the second half of the book. To understand why

these practices will be effective, however, you need to appreciate the three core concepts that I'll introduce in the first section: studies of the psychology of persuasion and influence; the principles of Neurolinguistic Programming, which enables people to practice what is called Sensory Acuity; and the organizational foundation that helps you define what I call your Presentation Universe. While some of this terminology may sound complicated, these theories can be summarized relatively simply:

- **Psychology of Persuasion and Influence:** You will have greater influence over people if you understand the prejudices that are hard-wired into all human beings. Once you do, you can easily establish yourself as an authority in their minds, which means you will begin with their full attention.
- **Neurolinguistic Programming and Sensory Acuity:** The vast majority of us have five senses, but we need to learn to use them consciously so as to “read” our audience and make adjustments on the fly. It's all about gaining *attention for retention*. That is, they won't recall what we said if we can't get them to stay focused throughout the presentation.
- **The Presentation Universe:** I have learned over the years that most people give amazingly little attention to the role presentations play in their daily lives. Once they begin to think about it, however, they come to appreciate how many opportunities they're missing. By defining all the presentation opportunities in your world – your Presentation Universe – you begin to set a strategy for how you will conquer the challenges ahead. Then you will have a basis to evaluate the way in which you approach each of your presentations. Before you go into a meeting or discussion – at work or in more casual settings – do you ever ask yourself exactly why you are saying what you are about to say? No? Don't feel bad; remarkably few people do. But if you don't know exactly what the purpose of your message is, then how can you expect your audience to pick up that message fully and clearly? We function in a three-dimensional world, yet most presenters pursue their task in a manner that burdens them with tunnel vision. In order to take our presentation skills to the next level, we need to learn to think of our presentation as a multi-dimensional exercise. That's why I created a trademarked 3-D Outline, which you will learn about in Chapter 6. In over ten years training hundreds of thousands of people, the 3-D Outline has received more positive response in evaluations than any other single concept that I regularly discuss. Understanding and employing this process alone will improve any presenter's success rate exponentially. Combined with the personal perspective of a defined Presentation Universe, it gives unique insights into how to achieve your presentation goals.

Despite the value of the above theories, you need not fully grasp them in order to build your presentation skills. Each of the Eight Essentials in the second part of the book contains practical instruction on how to polish one's craft, regardless of whether the theories are of interest to you intellectually. And you can begin employing these steps in any order you choose. Taken together, however, *the Eight Essentials of Successful Presenters will dramatically improve your ability to effectively communicate your ideas to individuals or to groups of any size in both your business and personal life.*

I have taught these practices to professionals and homemakers, to older folks and to kids. My daughters have used them and had a happier time selling their fund-raising candy than any other children I know. My minister has been using them while he builds the fastest

growing congregation in the Dallas metroplex. And, of course, I use them every day, not just when I conduct seminars or training sessions, but when I need to upgrade a hotel room or get a good seat at a restaurant.

To one degree or another, in fact, I have tested the Eight Essentials you'll soon learn about before literally tens of thousands of people. I use them in my own presentations to such an extent that they have all become second nature. Of course, I have also taught them to chief executive officers, to salesmen and to mid-level executives. My niece even used some of them to get elected student council president! I know they work.

Maybe the lives of these people don't depend on presentation skills. But their livelihoods and personal happiness very well may. And yours too. Because, as I hope you've begun to appreciate, life really is a series of presentations. *The better those presentations are, the better your life will be.*

INTRODUCTION

Very Important Points

- ✓ *Your success in life depends upon how you approach the millions of opportunities before you.*
- ✓ *Unless you're a hermit living on a mountaintop, your life largely consists of your interactions with the people around you.*
- ✓ *The way in which we present our thoughts and ideas to people – from our colleagues at work to our spouse and even to the person waiting on us at the grocery store – could have a profound effect on the shape of our own lives.*
- ✓ *Life is a series of presentations.*
- ✓ *Mastery of the art of making presentations takes us closer to the outcomes we desire.*
- ✓ *Acknowledgement of the importance of the Chief Presentation Officer role may represent the next phase of the so-called Learning Organization.*
- ✓ *Delivering good presentations is more skill than talent.*
- ✓ *Presentation Mastery is the single biggest key to professional success and personal power.*
- ✓ *The Eight Essentials of Successful Presenters will dramatically improve your ability to effectively communicate your ideas to individuals or to groups of any size in both your business and personal lives.*
- ✓ *The better your presentations are, the better your life will be.*