



## Life Is a Series of Presentations

8 Ways to Punch Up Your People Skills  
At Work, at Home, Anytime, Anywhere

by Tony Jeary with Kim Dower and J.E. Fishman  
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304 pages

### Focus

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### Take-Aways

- Life is a matter of making presentations one after another. Every time you talk to or deal with someone you're making a presentation.
- Make presentations well and you'll succeed, make them poorly and you'll fail.
- Persuasion can be based on reciprocity, consistency, commitment, social proof, affection, authority or scarcity. Most people want to be persuaded.
- There's no such thing as a "slight misunderstanding."
- Persuasive presentation requires mastery of both preparation and delivery.
- Know your audience and talk in terms they understand, even to an audience of one.
- Presentations can influence, inspire or inform. Understand exactly why you are making a presentation and what you want it to achieve.
- Full "sensory acuity" means using all five of your senses to get information.
- Inhibitions that hurt presentations can include being too eager to please, feeling like an imposter and being too intent on perfection.
- Great presenters prepare well, stay flexible, study the audience, ask 'why,' avoid fear, assume leadership, stay calm and work hard.

### Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>

## Relevance

### What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) A great deal about how to make a good impression; 2) How to present your ideas persuasively; and 3) How to win allies and influence prospects.

### Recommendation

The book jacket bills author Tony Jeary as “coach to America’s top CEOs.” It doesn’t identify them, but the author clearly has a certain bold presentational style, and stressing his identity as a expert coach could be both a strategic and an educational tactic. The book’s content is evergreen, a mixture of hortatory slogans and amusing anecdotes, all designed to make you a better presenter — whether your audience is one listener or an auditorium full of people. The author’s advice is, for the most part, solid, detailed, practical and conservative. Don’t be too put off by a few dated examples (Bill Clinton and Gary Condit) and if you’re pressed for time just read the handy lists of “very important points” that close each chapter. *getAbstract.com* assures you that you can’t waste time reading this book. It’s that useful.

## Abstract

### The Nature of Presentation

Every human interaction is a presentation. Each time you talk to someone, you’re presenting yourself, pushing your image, trying to make that person see you in a certain way, trying to persuade that person to see things the way you want them seen. Clearly, mastering the art of presentation is indispensable, especially for people in positions of leadership who must persuade and direct people. As you conquer presentation skills, you will learn how to instill in people the desire to go where you direct them. There is truth in the old saw, “It’s not what you say but the way you say it.” The way you present something can have enormous consequences. Just regard presentation as an ability you can learn.

During his famous debate with the first President George Bush, then candidate Bill Clinton connected with his audience. Bush kept looking at his watch. Who won? Bush lost and poor presentation was one reason. Throughout his presidency, Clinton presented so well that even in troubled times, he enjoyed tremendous personal appeal.

Presentations have several purposes:

- To influence — You might be trying to influence the CEO to promote you, or your subordinates to pitch in with extra effort on a new project, or your children to tidy up their rooms. Persuasive presentation is the key to exercising influence.
- To inspire — Think of a great preacher or a football coach at halftime.
- To inform — Some informational presentations are boring, but some have moved people to devote themselves to a cause or belief.

Great presenters, no matter what their purpose, have a few things in common:

- They are careful about appearance.
- They prepare assiduously.
- They understand that inspiration might be nice, but skill and hard work carry the day.

“Every time you touch a life you are making a presentation.”

“The single most powerful thing you can do to convince your audience of something is to provide a compelling reason why they should do what you suggest (or believe what you say).”

“I’ve worked the eight essentials into a mnemonic: I P-R-E-S-E-N-T.”

“I is for Involve your audience.”

“P is for Prepare your audience.”

“R is for Research your presentation arsenal.”

“E is for Explain ‘why’ before planning ‘how.’”

“S is for State management: achieve the proper mental states.”

“E is for Eliminate ‘unknowns’ by turning them into ‘knowns.’”

“N is for kNow your audience.”

“T is for tailor your presentation throughout to keep your audience focused.”

- They study the audience to understand how its members want to be addressed.
- They really, really seem to care.

### Persuasion

Research into the psychology of compliance suggests that animals have hardwired patterns that cause them to respond the same way to the same stimuli repeatedly. People may be like that, too. Researcher Robert Cialdini identified six categories of persuasive techniques:

1. Persuasion based on reciprocity — Think of the charities that send you a cheap gift in the mail, such as a calendar or address stickers. Some even send a penny. They know that many people will feel that once they receive a gift, they “owe” a donation.
2. Persuasion based on consistency and commitment — People like steady, reliable behavior and dislike the opposite.
3. Persuasion based on social proof — When in doubt, people tend to follow the crowd. Good marketers know this and will sometimes offer an extraordinarily good deal to a company or two just to be able to cite them as satisfied users of a program or product.
4. Persuasion based on affection — People like people who are attractive, seem to like them and seem to resemble them. They are more apt to respond to people they like.
5. Persuasion based on authority — Audiences tend to respond to people in authority. Great con men understand this, and arrogate the attributes and insignia of authority, including clothes, trappings and titles. Persuasion by authority is also the reason why sports stars and other celebrities get multimillion-dollar endorsement contracts.
6. Persuasion based on scarcity — People fear a loss more than they want a gain. That’s why sales are always “for a limited time only.”

### The Realm of the Senses

Use all of your senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch — to understand the world around you and to communicate with others. Use full “sensory acuity” to put your five senses on heightened alert as the channels through which information about the world comes to you, and through which you communicate.

Communication is not merely a matter of choosing the right vocabulary. Words may elicit a variety of responses from people depending on their experiences. The idea of a swimming pool elicits one response from someone who won trophies for swimming the butterfly and another from someone with a pathological fear of water. Prejudices and preferences affect how people listen. This diversity is a force you need to confront.

Avoid generalizations, especially about political or social controversies. Avoid historical references that may be emotionally explosive for members of certain groups. Be sensitive to how your audience is reacting. Listen and watch. Are they leaning forward, sitting on the edges of their seats, or are they shuffling papers, whispering and turning around to talk with the people behind them? Presentation is not a one-way communication; sense what the audience is demanding of you and deliver it.

### Competence and Security

Presentation, like any other skill-based activity, calls upon four levels of competence:

1. We don’t even know that we don’t know — Think of an infant who doesn’t even know what shoelaces are for, much less how to tie them.
2. We know what we don’t know — Think of a toddler who knows shoes need to be tied but doesn’t know how.

“Most audiences spend the first three minutes of the presentation sizing up the presenter.”

“You must be mentally present to make a successful presentation.”

“Our focus must always be on the audience, not ever only on our agenda.”

“What distinguishes winners is the will to prepare to win.”

3. We know that we know — Think of a five-year-old paying careful, conscious attention to every loop and tug as he ties his shoes.
4. We don't even think of what we know — Did you tie your shoes this morning?

As you set out to master the art of presentation, your goal is the last level, “unconscious competence.” Even with this goal in mind, those who are inhibited about speaking suffer when they must make presentations. Even when they know what they have to say and how to say it, they remain self-conscious. Some common inhibitions are:

- A great desire to please — People who are too eager to please their audience may speak very fast, deprecate themselves and generally make the audience uncomfortable, the same way a too-attentive waiter makes a diner uncomfortable. Leverage this inhibition into a strength by resolving in advance that your goal is to make sure the audience enjoys the presentation.
- Feeling like an imposter — Successful people with this well-studied syndrome feel that they really don't deserve their success. They are sure people will see through them. To deal with this inhibition, write your resume as if you are applying for the job of giving this presentation. Record your strengths, consider them carefully and go for it.
- Shooting for perfection — Perfectionists fuss over every detail and never really believe they've done enough. They end up delivering a disorganized mess because every time they start on one train of thought, they shift to another. They try to include far too much information. In an effort to do everything, they accomplish nothing. Convert this weakness into an advantage by blocking out plenty of time to prepare. If you are a perfectionist, that could be a lot of time, but take however much you need. Review and revise until you've done well even by your demanding standards. Then deliver.

## The Eight Essentials

Developing excellent presentation skills requires having these eight essentials in place:

1. Know to whom you are speaking — Know the audience and understand what will evoke a positive response and what will turn people off. Watch the audience carefully, paying particular attention to the personality or personalities driving the audience. Learn as much as possible about the audience prior to the presentation.
2. Always ask “Why?” — Know the purpose of the presentation or the meeting. Know what you need and why. Ask why your audience is there and answer your own question. The word “because” is a powerful persuader. Use it early and often in your presentation. You may need to convince several individuals, including powerful decision-makers — but you can only convince them individually. That means your presentation, even to a group, must answer each person's “Why?” with a “Because.”
3. Fear not — Being a bit anxious and uncertain before a presentation is natural, but you simply have to get beyond that. Careful preparation and forethought can help put your fears to rest. Use a chart, or power map, to identify every person in the meeting and to gauge each person's political power in the group. Assess the leaders' degree of commitment or antagonism to your proposal. Determine whether you can take any action to build support or reduce antagonism. Leave nothing to chance.
4. Do your homework — Build an arsenal of anecdotes, quotations and data points. Have them all in writing and put some on slides. Organize them carefully. Your homework should also include preparation of the props and implements of presentation — the tools and hardware you may need. Your homework should even include the shirt on your back and the jacket over the shirt.

“When we understand what makes people receptive to an influence, we are in a position to be a motivating force in their lives — even if it’s only for a moment.”

“The more precise a person is in communication, the more successful he or she becomes.”

5. Lead the audience gently — Don’t jump from point to point and force the audience to keep up or drop out. They’ll drop out. Build connections between your points to ease the transition. Take the audience along on a gentle and interesting ride. Remember that the audience will have an internal dynamic of its own, and that there will be competition for attention from members of the audience itself. Various political dynamics may be at work and your presentation could wind up in play. Control the audience by engaging it.
6. Calm down so you can calm them down — Stress is destructive. If you are stressed, you won’t be at your best. Interestingly, you can affect how you feel by how you comport yourself. Walk confidently even if you aren’t sure of yourself, because carrying yourself with poise and pride will make you feel more self-assured. Use music, food and attire, whatever helps you feel calm and strong. Use the same tools to help set a mood during your presentation. Certain music, for example, can make your message more memorable and can make the audience more inclined to assent.
7. Give them room — Pause frequently in your presentation to give the audience time and space to absorb what you are saying. Involve them. Invite them to respond to questions, to cheer and laugh. Break the flow of your words and images so your presentation does not become monotonous and overbearing. Plant a shill — someone in the audience who will endorse what you are saying. Play games. Take a break. Tell the audience to assemble in small groups. Give them a handout. Anything that breaks the steady flow of words will give them the room they need to take a breath and agree with you.
8. Be flexible — You may have carefully prepared a presentation that for some reason just won’t work. Maybe the audience is smaller or larger than anticipated. Maybe the air conditioning has failed or a construction crew is making noise. Be ready to be flexible.

### How Persuasive Are Your Presentations?

To make sure that your presentations do their job, develop habits based on the eight essentials. Use your presentation skills consciously with large and small audiences, including preparing your listeners, setting a future focus, covering the ‘whys’ of the situation, placing your message in context and putting persuasive techniques to work. Sincerely appraise where you are now in comparison to where you want to be. For real-world feedback, ask your audience to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Their evaluations can help you build your skills and your message. With some audiences, simply talk to people or have them respond to you online. Your presentation universe includes the spheres where you want to have an impact, from family to work to volunteer organizations. In each setting, assess your total presentation and stay focused on continual improvement.

## About The Authors

Tony Jeary has teaches CEOs and other executives how to be more effective communicators. His company, Tony Jeary High Performance Resources, has worked with more than 500 organizations in 35 countries. Kim Dower worked in book publishing for more than 20 years and has advised more than 1,000 authors and celebrities. J.E. Fishman has 15 years experience in book publishing.