

# How To Give Winning Technical Presentations

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Case studies are among the most fruitful types of technical presentations.

- Audiences begin with a very positive attitude and high expectations of value to be received (unless they have just attended a bad case study)
- Audience expectations of absolute professionalism in speaking are muted. Even multiple mistakes are usually ignored.
- Speakers usually are best at telling their story (except when they forget why they are doing it and become irrelevant and boring).
- Audiences remember the stories that teach them lessons, and they find they can teach others the same lesson by repeating the story, so your stories can have a real impact on your audience.

In other words. This is a great opportunity to have a successful presentation.

## Workshop Objectives

- Grow your confidence that your presentation will benefit the audience.
- Avoid the big errors that turn audiences against speakers.
- Pick the golden nuggets that will help your audience most.
- Decide how to package the nuggets

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- Most speakers who accomplish their goals share a common perspective: they see their presentations as an opportunity to make a positive difference in the personal or professional lives of the people in the audience.
- They learn techniques and rehearse to avoid grasping defeat from the jaws of victory.”
- Their most important step: defining the specific skills (or tips or problems to avoid) that they can communicate that will be of the greatest value to the largest number of people in their audience.

## What Is A Great Presentation?

- The audience learns at least one and as many as three very important skills or tips that actually help them succeed.
- The audience develops a deep respect for you and the contribution you are making.
- Notice who is the subject in both points.
- Repetition works.

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- Your actions help; but audience reactions and their post-presentation actions are the only useful measures of your success.
- Consider how effective your talk would be if everyone in the audience had opaque masks and perfect ear plugs
- Communications is an act of the listener
- Repetition works.

## Challenges You Envision

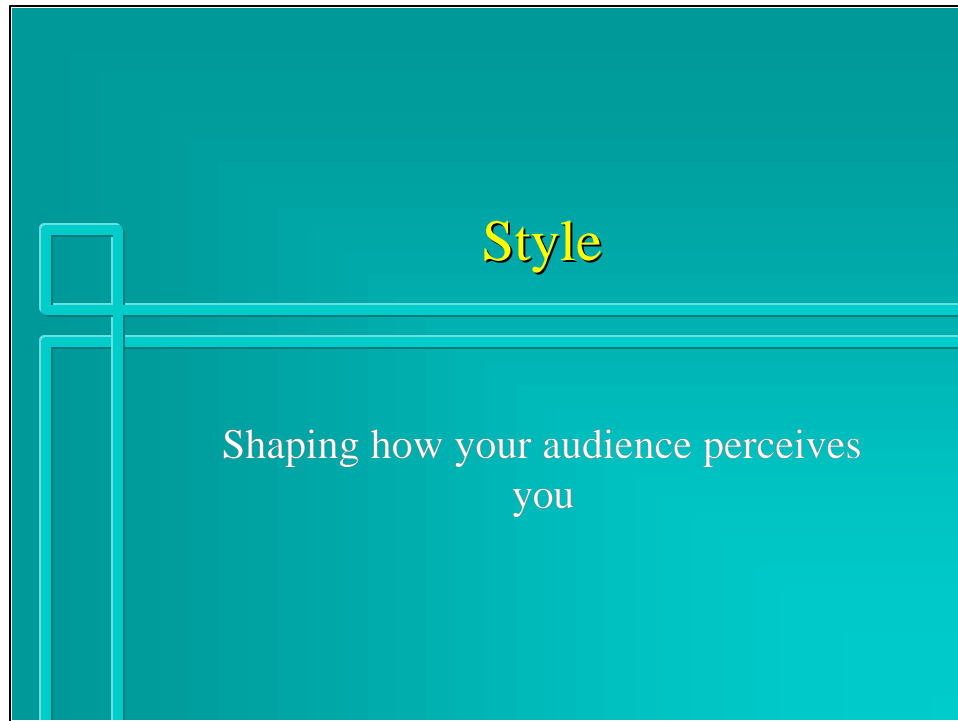
- “That’s nice, Alan, but what about.....?”
- How much detail to cover? How technical?
- What if I get nervous and forget what to say?
- What if they know more about it than I do?
- What if I cannot answer their questions?
- What to do with my hands?
- What else?

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A class on presentation techniques is just like your talk. Until the audience (you) get past your blocking concerns, you won’t be ready to listen to, and assess, the other skills that might be presented today.

So let’s go through each of your concerns now.



Your style is what you say to the audience without words -- it involves where you stand, what you do with your hands, what you wear, and more.

Style matters because speaker style has a (some would say, too) large impact on the willingness of an audience to go along with the ideas of that speaker.

# Style

- Three measures audiences use
- Common errors and how to correct them

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## Three Measures

- Your Authority
- Your Energy
- Your Awareness

*.... the audience perceives ...*

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## Rule 1: Communications Is ..... An Act Of The Listener

- You are talking to a group
- Imagine that each person in the group puts on an opaque blindfold and sound-blocking earphones
- How well are you communicating?

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## Rule 2: First Impressions ..... Last A Long Time

- Every member of the audience evaluates you almost continually.
- They remember
- Each new encounter allows them to adjust their perception

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## “I’m Uncomfortable”

### Errors

- ◆ Starting too soon
- ◆ Hands in pockets, at ease, crossed arms, sumo wrestler, praying, fig-leaf
- ◆ Fiddling with toys
- ◆ Jangling change
- ◆ “you know” “uh” “like”

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## “I’m Uncomfortable”

### Errors

- Starting too soon
- Pockets, at ease, crossed arms, sumo wrestler, praying, fig-leaf
- Fiddling with toys
- Jingling change

### Corrections

- Balanced stance
- Open
- Hands at your sides
- Nothing in your hands

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## Dealing with Verbal Habits

- Very difficult to stop saying “like” or “you know” ... but if it’s important to you...
- Set up a fund for the Children’s Hospital and pay a quarter to it each time anyone notices you make the error.

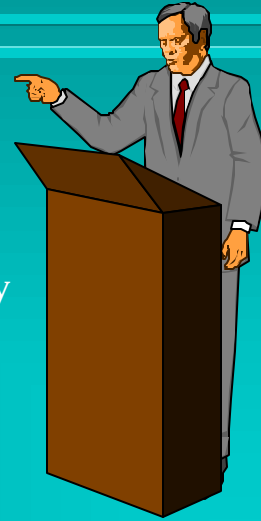
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# Projecting Stiffness

## Errors

- ◆ Hiding behind a podium
- ◆ Locking your hands
- ◆ Responding inappropriately to interruptions



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## Projecting Stiffness

### Errors

- ◆ Hiding behind a podium
- ◆ Locking your hands
- ◆ Responding inappropriately to interruptions

### Corrections

- ◆ Come out where they can see you
- ◆ Use your arms
- ◆ Move deliberately
- ◆ Acknowledge and adopt the interrupter

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## Statement Clothing

### Errors

- ◆ Overdressing: Esquire or Mademoiselle
- ◆ Under-dressing
- ◆ Grunge

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## Which type of clothes?

A



- Your department's budget has just been cut to zero
- Choose one person to argue on your behalf
  - ☞ To financial execs?
  - ☞ To research or engineering managers?

B



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## Statement Clothing

### Errors

- Overdressing: Esquire or Mademoiselle
- Under-dressing
- Grunge

### Corrections

- Dress like your audience
- At the top
- Technical audiences are especially sensitive

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## Eye Contact Errors

- Staring at a spot
- Scanning foreheads or ties
- Reading your slides
- Reading a script

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## Correcting Eye Contact Errors

### Errors

- Staring at a spot
- Scanning foreheads or ties
- Reading your slides
- Reading a script

### Correction

- Speak to one person
- Hold their eyes through a thought or clause
- Acknowledge
- Move on to another area of the audience

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### Rule 3: Truly Great Speakers Have Conversations With Their Audiences

- One on one is familiar and comfortable
- Comfort in answering questions comes from responding to needs
- Lofty goal: Make the entire presentation into a conversation in which you are helping each person in the audience meet his or her needs

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## Style Summary

- Authority: stance, movement, clothes, voice
- Energy: movement, voice
- Awareness: talking to individuals, responding to interruptions, getting out from behind the podium

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# Packaging

How To Make Your Presentation Of  
Ideas More Appealing

A teal-colored presentation slide. On the left side, there is a vertical yellow bar with a white square at the top. To the right of this bar, the title 'Teaching Step by Step' is written in yellow. Below the title, the text 'This is the dimension missing in most technical presentations' is written in white.

## Teaching Step by Step

This is the dimension missing in most  
technical presentations

## Do you have much spare time?

- Neither does your audience
- Teaching them “all about” a topic is not a helpful act
- Your job is to teach them how to solve a problem or exploit an opportunity



## Three steps -- don't skip the first

- Make sure they “buy” the problem or opportunity
- Teach them a step-by-step solution
- Optional: show them a little of the theory behind the steps

Before they are ready to learn the solution, they have to “buy” the problem. One of the most important things you will learn all day is how to get them to do that.

You may teach the theory, if you first get the problem buy-in and if you do a wonderful job of teaching them the step-by-step solution.

# Packaging

- Introductions
- Openings
- The Most Common Error
- Signposts
- Stories
- Humor
- Presenting Proposals

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# Introductions

- Short
- Top relevant credential
- Related respect

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## Your Opening

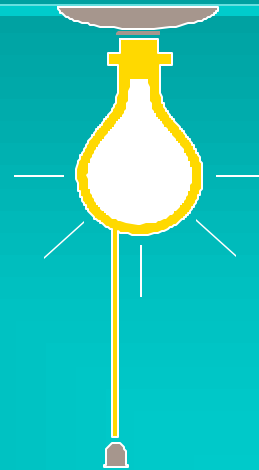
- Dangerous but a good opportunity
- “I know who you are”
- “I won’t waste your time”
- Best: relate a conversation or experience that proves you understand the problem(s) they face.

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## Rule 4: The Light Switch

- Seven to ten seconds of attention
- “So What?”
- Mentally gone
- “Coffee Break” or “Fire”



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## Most Common Technologist's Error

- Starting into the core of your presentation before you have proven that the audience has 'bought' the problem you are there to solve.



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## Signposts

- Lists
- Transitions
- “Most important point”
- “In conclusion” or “finally”

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# THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL OF PRESENTATIONS

The most important tool used by great  
presenters.



## Stories

- No speaker's tool is more powerful - especially for technologists
- Use them to demonstrate why the problem matters
- Use them to prove the solution works
- Use them to counter objections
- Use them to change decision criteria

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# Humor

- Relevant
- Believable
- Acceptable in all groups
- If embarrassing, self-directed

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## Presenting Proposals

Important presentations usually ask audiences to accept and support an idea, a project, or the progress a team is making

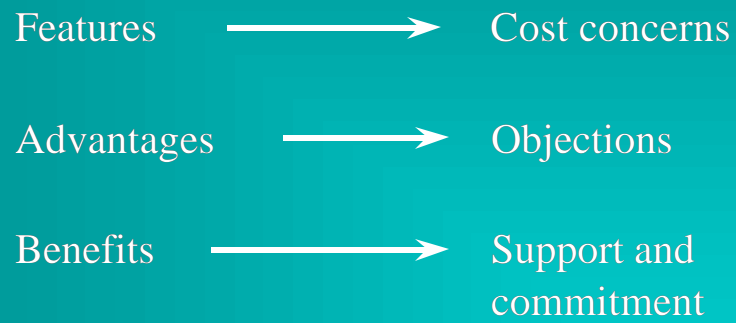
## Presenting Proposals

- The bicycle vs. the car
- Features (car goes 60 miles per hour, has four wheels, is enclosed)
- Advantages (car is faster than bicycle)
- Benefits (get home faster and spend more time with family)
- Question: How is a benefit different from an advantage?

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## Presenting Proposals



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## Packaging Summary

- Stories
- Introductions - someone else, short
- Openings - dangerous, I won't waste time
- The most common error
- Presenting proposals

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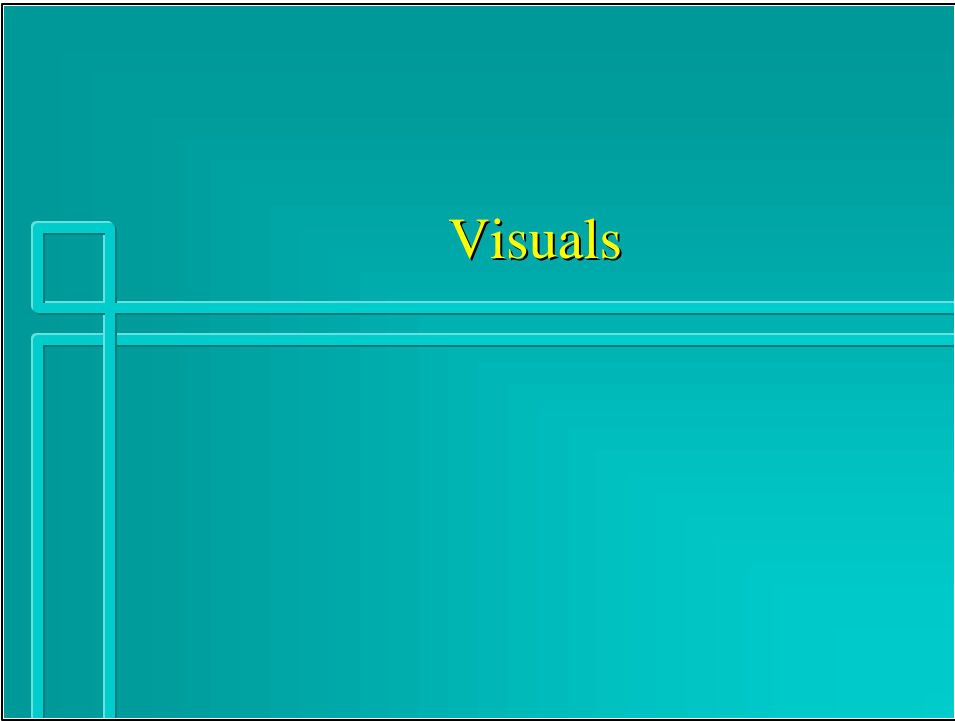
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## Practice Session

- Present your three nuggets in the form of stories about how you discovered them or how you learned they were important

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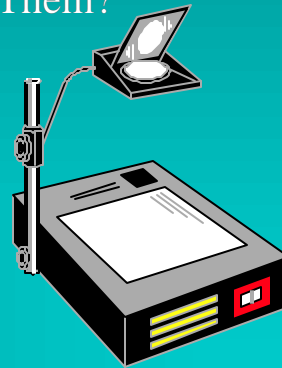
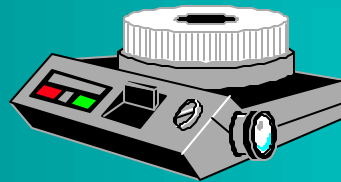
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## Using Visuals

- When Should You Use Them?
- How Do They Work?

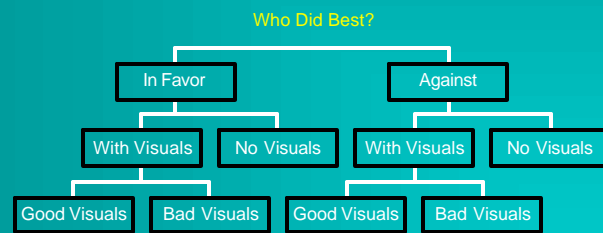


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## When Should You Use Them?

- The Wharton Study, expanded at the Univ. of Minnesota

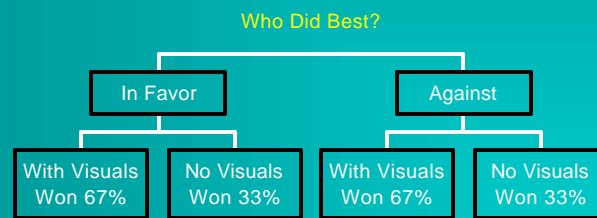


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# What You Expect

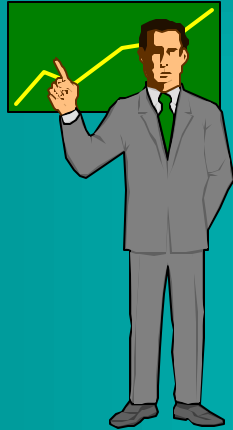
## ■ Visuals made difference



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## Why Visuals Work



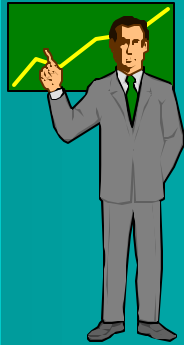
*Visuals work in two steps*

- 1. First they alter the audience's perception of the speaker*
- 2. Then, that new perception alters the decision*

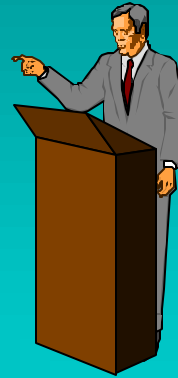
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## Guess Who Was ....



- More professional
- Better prepared
- More persuasive
- More credible
- More interesting



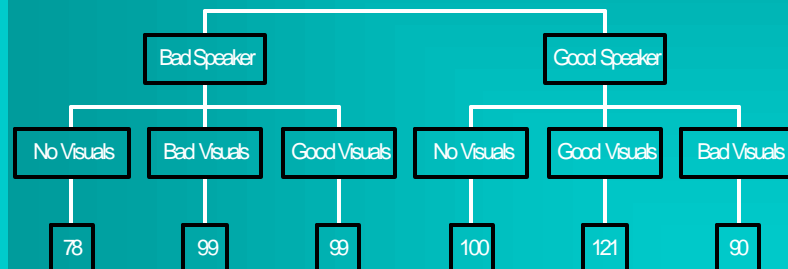
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## What You Didn't Expect

### ■ The Impact Of Poor-Quality Slides

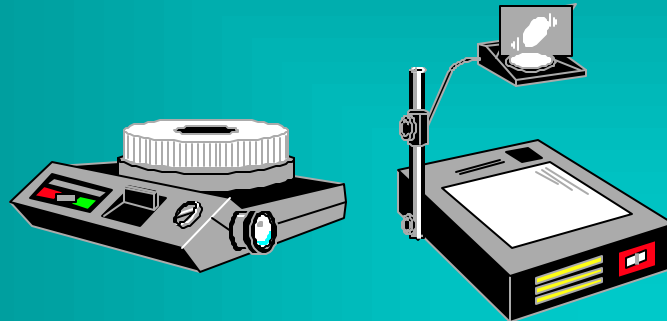
Who Got Them To Spend More Money?



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## Using Visuals Well



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## Word Slides That Work

### This one?

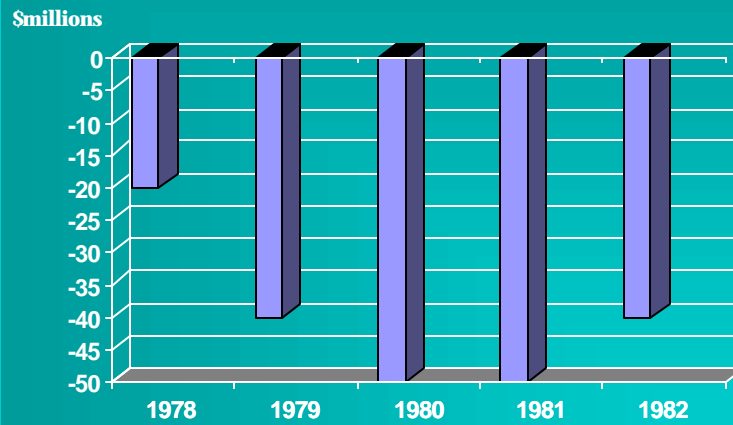
- < 7 lines
- < 7 words/line
- high contrast
- large

### Or this one?

- try to keep the number of lines small and the number of words on a line under seven because the audience will try to read the whole slide
- use a high contrast (black on white or yellow on black or blue on white) to keep them readable
- make the letters large enough to read



## The right chart?



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## Summary on Visuals

- Use them in every presentation
- Make them easy to read
- Make sure the chart makes the point

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## Administering the Session and Handling Questions

## How to administer your session

- When to start
- Handling visuals
- Breaks
- Changing speakers
- Handling interruptions and problems
- Evoking questions

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## Handling Questions

- Your moment to shine
- Questions belong to the audience
- Maintain authority
- Show you care

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## Really tough questions

- They cannot hurt you, but you can hurt yourself
- Stop, take a step back
- Look elsewhere
- Restate
- Answer the restated question
- Ask for the next question

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## The Monopolizer

- Answer the current question
- Ask if it's OK to take questions from others

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## The Exception

- If it is the president of the company.

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## A 'speech' acting like a question

- The audience wants you to take control
- Interrupt!
- Say "I don't think I understand the question"
- Keep interrupting
- Don't attack!

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## Irrelevant question

- Answer VERY briefly
- Ask them to come up after the talk

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## The really easy question

- Take your time
- Give them choices
- Give them the right answer

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## The one you don't know

- Do not say "I'll get back to you"
- Take out a sheet of paper, ask for the person's name and number, and write down the question.
- Ask whether anyone else also wants an answer to that one and pass the paper around.
- Before you leave ask loudly, "Who has the sheet with the question on it?"
- Find the answer and send it out!

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## Question handling: summary

- The audience wants you to succeed
- Don't cede power to a monopolizer or a series of "attack questioners"
- Opportunity to show you care
- Opportunity to re-present nuggets

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## Practice Session

- Respond to some tough questions

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## The Critics Worksheet

Presentation rating forms to use in  
evaluating other presenters

## Does this session work?

- Educates but doesn't train
- Use the presentation rating forms: seven times.
- *Please! Do not give the completed forms to the people you rate.*

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