



Presentations with **Punch**

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Presentations with Punch

by Christine M. Hollinden, MBA, CPSM

All of your companies make presentations – to introduce your firm, present your qualifications, or to win business. Your companies spend a lot of time and resources developing collateral, presentations, statements of qualifications and proposals. But, we've all seen the presentations that fall flat. You may have even been in the room yourself when you've known by the look on your audience faces that you haven't reached them. They didn't get it.

So, how can great companies and great people make presentations that fall short? Sometimes it's timing – not enough hours in the day to get everything done so something (the presentation) gets shorted. Sometimes it's just going through the motions – we know we've lost even before we open our mouths so why bother? Other times it's attitude and perception – a presentation won't persuade anybody, I don't have enough time or resources to put together a great presentation, so why bother.

There are three basic sections to a Presentation: Message, Story & Delivery. Sounds simple, right? Today, we are going to talk about how you can put some punch into your presentations in all three areas through organization, approach and storytelling.

Definite Purpose

To create a presentation with punch, begin with Definite Purpose. I can read your thoughts "but, Christine, I KNOW the purpose. . . to win business." I'm talking about the bigger purpose.

Write a purpose statement for each presentation, something like this: The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate our unique abilities in {_____} area. To educate our audience on our processes and approach. To build the relationship between our firm and theirs.



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Take a few moments to write down a few of your own ideas for your next presentation. Take the purpose to the next level. This process sounds simple, but it has an amazing affect. When you start with the Definite Purpose, it helps your team visualize success, stay focused on the desired outcome, and actually increases the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Knowing

The next step is knowing yourself, your audience and your opponents. A boxer would never enter the ring without first knowing his strengths and his vulnerabilities. We spend so much time thinking about ourselves, thinking about what WE are going to say, how WE are going to get our point across, that we spend little, if any time thinking our opponents. Yet, if you were stepping into a boxing ring, you would spend ample time thinking about your opponent. Or, you'd quickly find yourself looking at the mat and waiting for the bell to ring.



The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses—behind the lines, in the gym, and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights.

Muhammad Ali

Conditioning

How will you prepare to go the distance? Just like an athlete, conditioning happens through hard work and practice. Practice in front of co-workers. Practice in front of outside parties – people who aren't afraid to tell you the truth. People who will offer guidance and ideas. Practice in front of people who are as similar to your target audience as possible.

Spar. Develop your reflexes. Ask challenging questions. Play out various scenarios. What if they tune out? What if the key decisionmaker leaves the room? What's our plan? What do we say? How do we respond? It's important NOT to focus on the negative, but just to be aware.

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Choreography

Plan the presentation from beginning to end – from the moment you arrive, through set up, actual presentation, transitions, and endings.

Think creatively.

Remember, a solid presentation is more than just fancy footwork. It's about achieving your purpose. Every movement, sends a message. Do they all tie back to your Definite Purpose?

When a boxer enters the ring. He enters it with a plan. The sparring begins with a dance. Sizing up the opponent. Looking for the opportunity. Then, seizing the opportunity. The winner isn't typically the one who starts thrashing about. It's the boxer who is deliberate. Taking advantage of good opportunities and lessening the impact of the blows.

Delivery

Tell a story. The audience will either read the slides or listen to you. They will not do both. So, ask yourself . . . is it more important that they listen or read? Presentations should support your communication, not "BE" your communication.

Pace yourself – leave something for the end. Think about that parting comment. That last thought. What can you say that leaves a powerful impression.

- Most presentations at least business development presentations have a time limit. Work within the limitations or parameters given.

- Plan your time wisely, but focus on the Purpose and the Message NOT the Time. In other words, if you are given an hour to present, that doesn't mean you MUST use the entire hour. Instead, start the opposite direction. Draft the Purpose. Draft your Key Messages. Diagram how to convey your key messages. THEN AND ONLY THEN, narrow it down to your key points to maximize any time limitations.
- More importantly, if you can deliver your message in half the time, do it! Particularly if you are promoting your firm as efficient and effective. That's how you tie it to Purpose and Message.
- Think about your audience. What type of people are they? What are their characteristics? What are their tendencies? Then decide the best format for the information.



Approximately 65% of the population are visual learners. So, graphics that tell a story have a greater chance of making contact than words. Study infographics for ideas and inspiration.

Think beyond the norm. The expected. Remember, it's about being remembered. It's about delivering *the punch*.

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