

Workplace
Wisdom
For
9 To Thrive

*Proven tactics and hacks
to get ahead in today's workplace*

Nina Sunday

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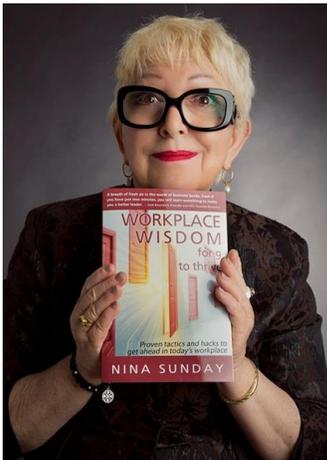
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INTRODUCTION

Predictions around disruption to the world of work declare there is a new work order. Young people today may have 17 jobs in five different careers. Portfolio careers are on the rise i.e. not one job, one employer, but multiple jobs and employers, perhaps over more than one profession.

In a tech world, it's high social skills that help you stand out and get ahead. The best managers are outstanding communicators who know how to lead a team, collaborate with a diverse range of people and able to influence peers and customers to take action. They know it's not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference. Word choice and how we use language impacts the way we persuade others. In the age of disruption, being adept at human interaction is rewarded with higher wages.

Being average at your job is over. Not being interdisciplinary can harm your career. To thrive in a rapidly changing world, managers and teams need to continuously improve all aspects of their workplace know-how: the art of communication and influence, productivity, sales and service, leading people and creating a conscious and transparent workplace culture.

To future-proof your employability in a VUCA world, (short for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), constant reinvention is the key to keeping up, evolving and staying relevant. Your job IS change. It's up to you to stay change agile and continuously grow and reboot your brain. I trust this book will help you achieve the getting of workplace wisdom.

How to use this book

For managers

Each chapter is a stand-alone piece of micro-learning. Copy a chapter to distribute to your team and invite them to read before the next team meeting. You'll find a list of trigger questions in the article *How to Brainstorm* within the *Stay Curious* section, such as:

- What can we **start** doing?

- What can we **stop** doing?
- What can we do **more of**?
- What can we do **less of**?
- What can we **improve**?

And when you've captured in writing a wish-list of next actions, then rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D according to its priority, for example:

- A. low effort, high payoff – do first
- B. low effort, low payoff – do next
- C. high effort, high payoff – just get started with the first action-step
- D. high effort, low payoff – don't bother

For individual contributors

Show this book to your manager and volunteer to copy a chapter to send around, with your manager's blessing, to team members with the invitation to read then participate in an ideas discussion at the next team meeting.

You might like to suggest your manager leads that discussion, or if they decline, offer to do so yourself. At the meeting, use the trigger questions and record each suggestion in writing as they come up. Allocate a specific time. After idea generation, go back to quickly rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D priority.

By you taking the initiative this way, (where there's a positive workplace culture), it will likely identify you as a high-potential team member destined for leadership. (However, if this suggestion is not well-received, ask yourself what can be done to make the culture more conducive to growth and learning; or was it perhaps the manner in which you suggested you take the initiative?)

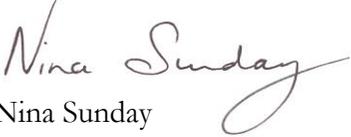
Always be reading

To grow your workplace wisdom read a non-fiction book (digital or print or listen to an audiobook) at least 10 minutes a day. Read at least one book a month, 12 books a year. See the article *Read Your Way to the Top* in the

Gather Wisdom section of this book for reasons to read every day. Leaders are readers. Be a reader.

Feel free to stay in touch by visiting the contact page at www.brainpowertraining.com.au and sharing your thoughts.

The way we did business five years ago can't be the way we do business in the next five. Constant reinvention is the key.


Nina Sunday

Present persuasively

Presentation literacy isn't an optional extra for the few.
It's a core skill for the twenty-first century.

Chris Anderson, Curator, TED talks

FIVE COMMON PRESENTING MISTAKES

Wages are higher for job-seekers with presentation skills ability. The Foundation for Young Australians analysed 4.2 million online job postings from 2012 to 2015 in Australia from more than 6000 sources to uncover what employers are looking for. Roles requesting presentation skills paid many thousands of dollars more per year.⁽¹⁾

Most people underestimate the power of being a good presenter. Speaking well in front of your team has the ability to make you come across as poised, confident and competent.

Here are five common presenting mistakes to avoid.

1. *Pacing Back And Forth*

If your way of coping with nerves is to stalk back and forth like a caged cat, your audience will get so distracted they'll be more interested watching you wear a path in the rug than in what you have to say. Maintain a positive stance, make good eye contact and smile. Then when you do move, you'll look and feel natural.

2. *Weak Opening And Closing*

The first 90 seconds are crucial. In fact, the first seven seconds are even more crucial. We form a first impression in the blink of an eye. Author, Malcolm Gladwell, refers to thin-slicing.⁽²⁾ The audience makes judgements even before you speak. Think about how you move, how you take your position in front of the group, your eye contact, whether you are smiling and appear confident, how you deliver your first line.

Memorise your opening sentence so it's powerful, clear, and confident. You'll gain your audience's undivided attention which breeds self-confidence. Then you're on your way to a competent performance.

A strong close should include a review of your key ideas and a call to action. Then your audience will remember the important points you made and perhaps be inspired to take action.

3. Lack Of Structure

Simply put, tell your audience at the start what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them. Make sure you plan and rehearse a structure; a beginning, middle and an end.

Storyboard

One way to plan your structure into a logical flow is to storyboard it.

1. Start by listing of all your key ideas. (Writing by hand in a notepad may assist idea generation because it accesses a different part of the brain.)
2. Transfer each idea onto a post-it note or index card, in any order. Alternatively, create Word table document, 16 equal boxes per page, as many pages as needed. Type each idea into centre of each box. Print out the document, then cut each box into separate notes.
3. Use one large sheet of paper or cardboard as a flat surface to lay out all your idea notes. Re-arrange in any order that seems logical.
4. Stick or staple each note in the order you decided. You now have a storyboard!
5. Display your storyboard as your visual planner, and feel proud you've achieved this milestone!

Use the Storyboard method to plan a presentation, book, blog article, film or video, any project or special event — anything with a beginning, middle and end.

4. Weak Gestures

It builds rapport with your audience to let your hands talk as you present, using definite gestures. In fact, the most popular TED Talks are with speakers who use a ton of gestures⁽³⁾ e.g. author/speaker Simon Sinek is one great example. Keep your hands above the waist and feel

free to extend your arms away from your body. Alternate between one hand and two hand gestures. Avoid pointing though; it sub-consciously registers as aggressive. Barack Obama popularised the thumb on top of a closed fist; so that's safe to emulate.

5. Not Rehearsing Til You Know It

Being able to present is a life skill. When you present it's you, in front of your audience, whether it's two people or two thousand. You owe it to yourself to do the best you can do, having done the preparation. Don't just wing it.

All successful actors study their craft. On a good day, their natural talent takes over. On a bad day, when they're not feeling 100%, they fall back on their craft to deliver a superlative performance based on years of training.

Similarly with presenting. Rehearse, but don't memorise, (apart from your opening line to get you started.) Each time you rehearse, expect the flow of ideas to change a little. That's natural. It shows you are navigating intuitively through the content; which is exactly what you want to do during the presentation.

As a case in point, I was booked for an interview for a business podcast. Ahead of time, and to help me prepare, the host sent sample questions. As well, I listened to a few episodes so I would be acquainted with the format. Two days before the recording I rehearsed with my assistant asking the same questions.

During rehearsal I wasn't satisfied with my responses, so we crafted bullet points of my preferred answers. An hour before the interview, like an actor 'getting into character', I switched off my phone, and primed my brain for the interview to come. Because I'd 'done the work', the right words came out in the right order and logical flow. I was speaking with authenticity and without notes.

Do the work and the words will flow, off the cuff, in a natural way, so you can speak from the heart.

FIVE COMMON SLIDESHOW MISTAKES

Mistake #1. Relying Too Much On Your Slideshow

Have you ever attended a presentation where the speaker actually read from the slides? Did you find it boring, or even irritating? Multimedia should support your presentation; it shouldn't *be* the presentation.

Use cue cards with keywords and rehearse until you know it. Then rely on memory to convey your message. (You can have your cue cards nearby to refer to, but if possible, put them aside and out of your hands.)

I do not recommend memorising your presentation. Just be natural, be conversational, be human and . . . trust yourself!

Presenter View in PowerPoint® allows you to see the upcoming slide as a trigger for the next piece of content. If you have a printout on paper of all your slides with the number of each slide clearly marked, then if you do want to quickly switch to a future slide, you can simply type in the number, hit enter and voila, that slide displays! (Refer to the later chapter on PowerPoint® keyboard shortcuts.)

Mistake #2. Too Many Words Per Slide

The current trend is for slides to display fewer words. Use a strong photo with one key word or short phrase and let what you say be off the cuff. After all, you are the expert. Never, ever read out the words off a slide.

If you do have to display words on a slide, aim for a maximum of six keywords per slide. This keeps the font to readable size for those who forgot their glasses. The slides are there to *support* your message, not merely repeat or *be* the message.

The audience has better memory of your information if they are not distracted by having to switch off listening to you to read a wordy slide.

Mistake #3. All Text, No Visuals

Use slides to reinforce your message with visuals conveying emotion. For example, if you were presenting on pollution, a photo of an oil-covered bird or a city clouded by smog conveys the message emotionally, while you might still discuss EPA data and statistics.

Tip: Use good quality stock photos rather than clipart. For a small outlay a stock photo looks more professional, less ‘cheesy’. And get in the habit of taking your own photos you can use on slides.

Mistake #4. Using Too Many Transitions, Spins, Wipes, Dissolves

Use transition devices and sound effects sparingly. Less is more.

Mistake #5. Dimming the Lights So Your Face Is In The Dark

The purpose of a presentation is to communicate with your audience. People are engaged by eye contact and facial expression. Aim to connect with the people in front of you. Let them see the sparkle in your eye. Facial expression and body language is 55% of communication, tone of voice and words combined are only 45% of the total message.

HOW TO GRIP AN AUDIENCE FROM YOUR FIRST LINE

If I open a presentation with a thought-provoking question or startling fact, such as . . .

‘Do you know what’s really scary about India? The population is 1.3 billion people, yet 35% are under 15 years of age.’⁽⁴⁾

This question and answer construct is dramatic and has impact. What if I’d opened my talk instead with . . .

‘Today I’m going to talk about the population growth in India.’

If you were in the audience, your response would probably be . . . (yawn), ho hum.

There are many ways to open a presentation, and my personal favourite is to ask a provocative question relevant to the topic. Four simple adjectives evoke a visceral, emotional response. Those four words are:

- weird
- scary
- hard
- stupid.

I acknowledge Judy Carter, author of *The Comedy Bible*, who taught me the ‘four attitudes’.⁽⁵⁾

Put one of those words in a question, pause, then answer the question with an amazing fact, and you’ve got an opening that’s dramatic and has impact!

For example:

‘Do you know what’s really stupid about distributing our product catalogue to letterboxes in December every year?’

(Pause)

‘In the first two weeks of December, our catalogue is competing with 16 million other catalogues distributed at that time!’

Here’s the construction again:

- question
- pause
- statement

For example:

‘Do you know what’s really scary about Customer Service?’

(Pause)

‘The more you raise the bar, the more customers expect!’

This formula may not work with all of your material all of the time, but it probably works with some of your material some of the time. And when it does work, it creates impact.

How To Make It Work

1. Avoid making a single statement that both asks and answers the question. For example, avoid this:

‘Did you know it’s scary our website attracts three million visitors every year but only 3% make a transaction?’

That construction is weak and does not have impact. Remember . . . it’s question — pause — statement. Here’s the same idea again, this time using the construction, question — pause — statement:

‘Do you know what’s really scary about our website?’

(Pause)

‘It attracts 3 million visitors a year, yet only 3% of them make a transaction!’

2. Avoid drawing attention to the question with a lead-in statement like ‘*I’d like to ask you a question . . .*’ Go straight in, ask the question, be dramatic. You might like to open this way even before you introduce yourself or overview what your talk will be about.
3. Avoid the temptation to use a quality other than *weird, scary, hard* or *stupid*.

‘Do you know what’s really amazing about . . .’ does not create the same effect as, ‘Do you know what’s really stupid about . . .’

Weird, scary, hard, stupid are four words with attitude! And once you’ve asked your question, paused, and answered it, then relax, drop the dramatics and perhaps go on with . . .

‘Hi, my name is <name>, and today we’re going to discover . . .’

In closing, do you know what's really weird about asking a question using *weird*, *scary*, *hard* or *stupid* to open a presentation? The more you take a risk with a provocative question, the more impact you have with your audience!

HOW TO DITCH YOUR NOTES AND SPEAK WITH CONFIDENCE

When preparing to present, write it out, make cue cards, rehearse, but once in front of your audience, trust yourself to remember.

Let me tell you a story about how I learned to avoid coming across as stiff or wooden when presenting. I was asked to deliver five minutes on my usual subject, not to a workshop of 16 people, but to an after-dinner audience of 80 people. This was out of my comfort zone.

Rather than rehearsing my five minutes over and over til I was confident, instead I relied on creating good notes on cue cards. I took my beloved notes with me onstage; and my notes became my master. Instead of focusing on audience reaction, engaging them with eye contact, I became a slave to 'getting it right'.

The outcome? I appeared nervous, uncomfortable, lacking in confidence, in a word — wooden. Upon reflection, I vowed forevermore to rehearse til I knew it, then trust myself to speak off the cuff.

It's All About Self-Trust

In an extreme sport like skydiving, there's a motto — *check your equipment, then trust your equipment*. When presenting, prepare, write it out, make cue cards, rehearse. But once in front of your audience, trust yourself, (trust your sub-conscious). Put your notes aside.

So What If You Forget A Detail?

Firstly, your audience doesn't know what you forgot to say. Secondly, if what you omitted was essential to understanding, and if you allow time for Q&A, a question allows you to respond confidently and appear the expert.

Don't Memorise

Have you discovered when rehearsing that each time you deliver there's a different logical flow? If so, that's good. It means you are navigating intuitively through your content. Let go and allow it to unfold.

Be Extemporaneous

This word comes from the Latin, *ex tempore*, meaning 'out of the moment'. To speak extemporaneously is to speak off the cuff, in a smooth, dynamic way, without the aid of notes.

How To Be Extemporaneous

You wouldn't use your slideshow as your notes, would you? Research shows when a speaker reads aloud the same text displayed on a slide it not only annoys and frustrates an audience, it also interferes with recall. That one behaviour not only contributes to your coming across as 'wooden', it also reduces your credibility.

Make your slides a visual feast. Find an emotive photo image, add a single keyword and move away from slides full of text.

Don't Use Notes

If you let go of notes, your words will follow an organic flow and you will be more personally engaging. You will also appear more confident, poised and professional.

But don't memorise. With learning it all off by heart, there's a danger again of sounding hollow.

It can make you stiff or wooden. Rehearse at least one complete run-through within 24 hours of the event, then let go and trust yourself to navigate intuitively through your content.

The purpose of being 'in the flow' is to sound natural and appear authentic. It gives you freedom to focus on your audience, make eye contact and connect with the room.

Eye Contact

It has been suggested that to avoid nerves, stare over the heads of your audience to look at the back wall. That's misinformation! Good eye contact is engaging and inclusive.

As you express one idea or sentence, maintain eye contact with a member of your audience. Then shift eye contact to a new person and continue with the next new idea or sentence.

Eventually each member of the audience will be the point of your focus at least once. You can also use the 'Z' — sweep your eyes at a moderate pace, in 3 sweeps — Back row, left corner to right corner, to front row, left corner, to front row right corner.

Then do it again, sweeping your eyes in a slightly different Z motion, eyes landing on a different person each time.

Cue Cards vs Notes

If notes are a safety net, what style of notes are acceptable to an audience without affecting your perception as an authority on your topic? Full page notes allow you to write full sentences. That's ok during preparation. But once you have your written-out text, move to system cards or palm cards. Rewrite your notes as keywords to trigger memory.

Content vs Process

Have you ever encountered a speaker who, when told they have five minutes remaining, simply speeds up and firehoses the content? When a speaker speeds up, do listeners think faster? More likely they mentally switch off, waiting for it all to end!

Remember, content is not more important than process. When running out of time, simply draw easily to a natural conclusion, still leaving time for Q&A.

Master Self-Talk

How you mentally speak to yourself before you go on has an effect. Observe what you say to yourself, and replace a negative thought, such as 'What if I forget things?' with a positive affirmation such as, 'I know enough to be successful.'

Action

- Instead of full page notes, transfer keywords to cue cards.
- Practice, rehearse, know it so well you can drop cue cards altogether.
- Don't memorise by rote. Navigate intuitively through the content.
- Master self-talk. Tell yourself, 'I know enough to be successful', and 'people will like me'.

WHY YOU SHOULD STEER YOUR PRESENTATION WITH MORE QUESTIONS

Do you ask lots of questions when you present? Don't tell; remember to ask instead.

Why Ask Questions?

When you ask a question, your audience seeks out the answer in their own minds. The lights literally go on in their brains (brain scans illustrate this). Automatically, your audience is more engaged and actively listening.

'Why is it so?' became a household phrase in Australia and North America from the sixties to the eighties due to Physicist, Professor Julius Sumner Miller's appearances on TV demonstrating intriguing mysteries of physics.

He would ask questions such as:

- How tall a mirror do you need to see all of you?
- What would happen if there were no friction in the world?
- How do waves break?

The Professor's goal was 'to stir interest, awaken enthusiasm, arouse curiosity, kindle a feeling, fire up the imagination.'⁽⁶⁾

Here are suggestions about how to ask an intriguing question:

1. Instead of going straight in with, ‘*John P. Kotter says about Change Management . . .*’ preface your statement with a leading question such as, ‘*What do the experts say?*’
2. Rather than, ‘The Australian Bureau of Statistics report on . . .’ you can pose, ‘Where can we find evidence for this?’
3. Instead of assuming, ‘I’m sure you read the article this week about . . .’ ask, ‘Did you see the article this week about . . .?’
4. Rather than the assumption, ‘*You all know Amazon dot com*’, query, ‘*Who is familiar with Amazon dot com?*’ In any group, it’s possible one person is not familiar with something the other 99% are.
5. Instead of telling, ‘Here’s what you can do’, ask, ‘How can you make a difference?’

How To Start A Question

Consider Rudyard Kipling’s poem⁽⁷⁾:

I keep six honest serving-men
 (They taught me all I knew);
 Their names are What and Why and When
 And How and Where and Who.

These six questions — who, what, where, when, why and how — are known as the ‘journalist’s credo’. In journalism the six Ws (the sixth word ends in ‘w’) are regarded as essential to information-gathering. Use these six words to spice up your presentation with more questions.

Open With A Question

You can capture your audience’s attention by opening with a dramatic question:

- Do you know what’s really scary about . . . ?
- Have you ever wondered why . . . ?

Segue Questions

Questions are useful segues — (pronounced ‘seg-way’) — devices to move a speaker smoothly to the next section or theme of a presentation.

For example, ‘*Now that I’ve . . .* [explained how Customer Relationship Management works] . . . *the question remains*, [what frequency is just right for staying in touch with clients]?’

Rhetorical Questions

A rhetorical question is asked for effect; an answer is not expected.

When Mark Antony in Shakespeare’s play, *Julius Caesar*, asked, ‘*Was this ambition?*’, he meant it as a rhetorical question. Bob Dylan’s song ‘*Blowin’ in the Wind*’ is full of rhetorical questions, ‘*How many roads must a man walk down before you call him a man?*’

In a presentation, add rhetorical questions.

Thought-Provoking Questions

You can conclude your talk with a startling question to get people thinking and talking. For example:

‘Suppose you were given the opportunity to send three small items and a short message in a deep-space probe that might be found by aliens . . . What would you send? What would your message be?’

A question like that will send your listeners on a mental journey seeking the answer.

Action

1. For any statements in your presentation, ask yourself, ‘How can I restate this as a question?’
2. Identify segue transition points in your presentation and lead into the next section with a question.
3. Is there a question that would make a dramatic conclusion?

HOW TO HANDLE Q&A

When presenting to an audience, have you ever arrived at the end of your talk and, almost as an after-thought, asked feebly, ‘Any questions?’ (Perhaps you half-hoped they wouldn’t ask any?)

Welcome Questions, They're Engaging

The biggest mistake presenters make is not allowing enough time for questions and answers (Q&A). Often your audience will ask what they are most interested to know.

Have you ever attended a live musical performance where the encore was actually the best part of the evening? Musicians usually plan what they will play in an encore. Still with five or ten minutes to go is a good time to open up to questions. If it tapers off, you can revert to bonus content, like a planned encore.

But if questions are lively and flowing, that's great. That's exactly what your audience wants or needs to hear. It's what they'll be talking about in the break.

Have A Seed Question Prepared

One way to get the ball rolling is to remark, '*One question I'm often asked is . . .*' (One speaker tells me they write a starter question on an index card and briefs someone ahead of time, that if there is silence, to be ready to ask.)

Give Them Forewarning

Let them know shortly ahead of time by saying, 'In a few minutes, I'll open the floor to any questions you might have.'

When you arrive at a logical conclusion, use a palms-up gesture and mirror the words you used before, 'And now I'll open up the floor to any questions you might have.' Then pause, and make good eye contact. Look like you expect a question.

During Question-time, Here's A Few Tips:

1. Repeat The Question

It gives you time to think, to ensure you fully understand the question. And because you are facing them, everyone can catch what was said.

2. *Take Your Time*

Avoid responding too quickly to questions, even those you readily know the answer. That way you avoid bringing attention to one question difficult to answer compared to others you can answer quickly and easily.

3. *Good Phrase To Use*

‘That’s a good question’, gives you time to think, while complimenting the person doing the asking. Remember to use this *one time only*.

4. *Get To The Point*

It’s better to ask, ‘Shall I say more on this?’ than go into too much detail.

5. *How To Check Understanding*

Asking ‘Do you understand?’ puts the burden of comprehension on the listener. Instead, using ‘Does that make sense?’ suggests ‘Have I explained it well?’.

DO YOU HAVE A CALL TO ACTION AT END OF YOUR PRESENTATION?

Whenever you present, even if your purpose is to inform rather than persuade or sell, you’ll most likely want to connect with your audience.

One way to connect, and perhaps gauge how well your presentation was received, is to have a ‘Call To Action’ (CTA).

A simple CTA is to offer something free — for example, a free report or white paper — to anyone who gives you their business card at the end.

What if they don’t have their business card with them?

Perhaps add a sticky note to every handout and ask them to write their name and email address to give to you.

You can even be a little creative.

We were consulting with a retail chain prior to their annual conference with franchisees. The goal of the Marketing Manager's presentation was to persuade franchisees to choose one of three point-of-sale opportunities to improve their store and benefit their customers. We devised a fun way to encourage people to make a commitment.

The presenter ended her talk with, 'Ladies and gentleman. Under your chair you will find three cards, green, purple and orange. The green card corresponds to Opportunity 1, purple card corresponds to Opportunity 2, orange card corresponds to Opportunity 3. Select the colour card which corresponds to the opportunity you'd like to participate. Please take it to my assistant, who will exchange it for a sample bag you can take away, filled with all the instructions you need to get started tomorrow.'

Measuring Success

You can use a Call To Action to measure success. If 20 out of 100 attendees give you their business card, that's a 20% response rate.

If you give the same talk at different locations, you can compare your results over time.

POWERPOINT® HACKS TO ADD SPARKLE TO YOUR SLIDESHOW

Ever seen a presenter position an object in front of a table projector to conceal a slide image beaming to the screen?

Would you like to know some easy PowerPoint® keyboard shortcuts that add sparkle to PowerPoint® and make you look more professional?

While presenting with PowerPoint®, have you ever wanted to digress for a moment from the topic displayed on the current slide and blank the screen? This is especially useful if you are asked a question that's off topic or simply to have a rest from light cast from the projector.

1. B and W Keys

- **B Key**
Did you know when in Slide Show view there's a keyboard shortcut that immediately makes the screen blank? One key. Like magic. Gone to black! You can do this in one movement; the B key (B is for blank). And to resume, hit the B button again; your slide reappears. It's that simple.
- **W Key**
Similarly, press the 'W' key to blank the screen white; press 'W' again and the slide reappears.

Knowing this keyboard shortcut allows you to be flexible when presenting. Your audience will find it refreshing to see you in control of your presentation; not PowerPoint® dominating you.

If you present and don't already know this shortcut . . . well, it will change your life! At least once during your presentation, shift your audience's attention from the visuals to the presenter by turning off your PowerPoint® slide to a blank screen.

Then when you are ready to go on, simply press the 'B' key again and your slide reappears.

And there it is —

B key to blacken the screen

W key to whiten the screen

2. Powerpoint® Help — Keyboard Shortcuts List

So what other keyboard shortcuts will make your life easier when you present? To see a list, when in Slide Show view, right click; a dialog box appears. Select Help and a list of keyboard shortcuts appear. Experiment with that list of functions.

3. 'Go To That Slide' Shortcut

Did you know you can go straight to any slide if you know its number? Type in its number followed by Enter. If you type Control key + S in Word,

it saves; (in Mac it's Command key + S). But when you are in PowerPoint® Slide Show, to see a list of slides, select Control + S to display a dialog box with all slides by number.

Avoid using ESC (escape Key) as it takes you out of PowerPoint®.

4. Hide Slide Shortcut

Have you ever wanted to modify a presentation, perhaps shorten it? Don't remove slides, hide them instead. Go into Slide Sorter View, right click on any slide you want to hide, a dialog box appears with 'Hide Slide' as an option.

Watch the slide number. As soon as you hide it, the number below the slide has a strikethrough line through it. Un-hide the slide with right click, select 'Hide Slide' again; it reverses the action.

5. Use A Wireless Remote

Avoid progressing slides by physically tapping the forward arrow on the keyboard with your finger. Instead, purchase a wireless presentation remote. This tool makes you look professional. You can stand anywhere in the room and progress to the next slide.

I presented a summary of these (and more) shortcuts at a national conference of professional trainers. At times I heard audible gasps from members of the audience (yes, professional trainers). A little know-how goes a long way to transforming how others perceive you as a speaker.

HOW TO BE PERCEIVED AS A POLISHED SPEAKER

Professionalism means understanding the unwritten ground rules of being part of an event when you are presenting. Here are some of the basics.

1. Print Your Intro On Paper And Hand to the MC

Nothing's worse than an MC reading out your profile verbatim off a website they found themselves. It's usually too long and often a little formal and not conversational in tone. Craft an interesting bio that engages the audience. Email your intro ahead of time, and as well, bring it printed out on paper to hand to the MC. This one action oozes professionalism.

2. Arrive Early

Plan to be there early for sound check and setup. Find out ahead of time the scheduled break time prior to your session and plan to arrive then. Otherwise, up to 60 minutes early is good.

If there is a speaker before you, sit in and listen. A secret of professional speakers is to reference a point made by a previous speaker and connect it to their own topic.

3. Be Prepared

You may be expecting to use your own laptop only to find they ask for your slideshow on a USB flash drive. Always have your slideshow available on a drive. Even better, email it ahead of time so they can pre-load it onto the event laptop.

Bring a printout of your slideshow so that if technology fails it can be quickly photocopied as a take-away handout.

4. Be Nice To The AV Technician

The one person in the room who can make or break you is the one in charge of your slides, sound and lighting. There's no room for diva or divo behaviour (i.e. being temperamental or insisting on this or that).

5. Be Time-aware

Always finish on time; never go over time. If the previous speaker goes over time, ask the organiser if they want you to keep to the planned duration, or to condense your presentation so the schedule can get back to plan. It makes the whole event run smoothly if you can be flexible to shorten your talk to make up time . . . if they want you to. (Remember to ask and don't assume.)

Do you find it frustrating if a speaker announces, ‘*We’ve run out of time for questions?*’

It’s good practice to open up to Q&A some minutes before the appointed end-time, to answer any burning questions. You may find it’s the most engaging part of your talk. If running behind, be prepared to overview or summarise the rest, to end on time. And never ever speak faster to fit all your content in!

6. Don’t Read Off The Screen

It used to be that a speaker could bumble along to a polite crowd, relying on a PowerPoint® slideshow featuring:

- bullet point
- bullet point
- bullet point

to convey their message. Not any more.

Today’s audience is savvy and demand a higher level of engagement than ever before. Don’t let the slideshow BE the presentation.

Why not prepare slides with a relevant photograph and keyword instead of the old text-based sea of words?

Here’s an example. Talking about growth in city building construction? Show before and after photos of a city skyline; first image — without construction cranes; second image — same buildings, with construction cranes added.

7. Repeat The Question

Some people are hard of hearing, others just didn’t catch it. Good practice is to repeat a question before answering. Not only is your audience grateful, but you have time to think before replying.

Action

Follow these seven tips and you’ll demonstrate professional courtesy and respect whenever you are asked to present.

WHAT'S YOUR SELF-TALK BEFORE YOU SPEAK TO AN AUDIENCE?

Does your internal conversation sabotage your confidence just before you present? Let me tell you a story.

I was a contestant on a national TV quiz show. New contestants entered the set through sliding doors. Female contestants were accompanied by a male in formal attire. As he and I stood waiting for the sliding doors to open, he looked down at me and asked, 'Are you nervous?'

Perhaps he could have asked, 'How are you feeling?' or even, 'Do you feel confident?', (emphasising confidence rather than nerves). But no, he chose to ask, 'Are you nervous?', (focusing on nerves).

My answer was the positive affirmation I'd been saying to myself over and over like a mantra. I looked up at him and with a big smile declared, 'I feel supremely calm and confident.' (It may sound a little strange out loud, but quietly repeated to myself, it had been comforting and reassuring.)

What do you say to yourself before you present? Find a phrase that resonates with you. My phrase is 'I feel supremely calm and confident'. What's yours?

Action

1. Observe your self-talk, i.e. what you say to yourself leading up to and day of a presentation.
2. Substitute negative, self-limiting statements with positive uplifting ones.

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The quotes, anecdotes and ideas described in this book were accumulated from a variety of sources over a number of years. While we've made every attempt to fully attribute the origin of each of these items, the author may have been unable to list some sources in the detail preferred.

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