

MAKING A GREAT PRESENTATION: 3 COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

Truly memorable disasters don't just happen. They require a special blend of misunderstanding and misguided effort. Here are three ways to guarantee a disaster in your next presentation, and what to do instead.

Mistake #1: Believe in Magic

Show up hoping that a coherent, eloquent, useful presentation will magically appear once you start speaking. Avoid any type of preparation. Just wing it.

What Happens

Everyone is amazed by the presentation because they expected more. They are also bored and disappointed. They may even become upset because an unprepared presentation insults the audience by wasting their time. Unprepared presentations sound like, well, unprepared presentations.

What To Do Instead

Prepare. Identify the goal for your talk. Design a presentation that achieves that goal. Talk with key members of the audience about their expectations. Rehearse.

Mistake #2: Memorize your speech

Spend untold hours committing every precious word to memory so that you can recite it even if awakened in the middle of the night.

What Happens

You sound like a machine. And if you stumble on a word, you can become stuck--speechless. I've seen this happen, and it's painful.

What To Do Instead

Learn your presentation. Yes, write a script. Memorize the first and last sentences and then practice giving the presentation without looking at the script. Practice many times. Eventually, you will learn how to convey the key ideas in a natural, normal way.

Mistake #3: Talk About Yourself

Focus entirely on yourself. Tell about your background, your credentials, and your history. Tell your story. Just talk about yourself. Make the presentation all about you, yourself, and your life.

What Happens

They listen politely. If you manage to be entertaining enough, they may actually pay attention. Otherwise, the audience reacts by thinking, "So what?"

Instead

Talk about the audience. That is, talk about what they need and how they can achieve it.