



Prezi

HubSpot

# How to Give a Killer Presentation to Impress Your Boss

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**4 Foundational Steps** for Planning and Delivering Leadership Worthy Presentations

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# Introduction

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As most marketers know, an idea can seem exciting and flawless until the moment you walk into a room to present it — especially when that room is full of senior management.

When it comes to getting buy-in on ideas or budget for your marketing efforts, the details of presenting to an internal audience matter just as much as those of presenting to an external one. After all, a room full of clients can be a tough crowd, but a room full of higher-ups is both tough and responsible for the success of your company. **They've got an entirely different agenda and a very specific way of thinking about what's good for business.**

To top it off, [recent research](#) shows that office workers typically get only three minutes of consistent focus before their colleagues are interrupted with distractions — be they smartphones or otherwise. In order to grab attention and keep it, today's presenters need to focus less on the traditional delivery of bullet points and more on telling a story that an audience can connect to.

This guide will help your ideas live up to their potential by enabling you to rethink how you share them with your company's decision makers. While selling execs on an idea is never easy, there are a few simple steps you can take to stand out and swing the odds in your favor.

## STEP ONE

# Define The Why behind The What

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No matter the type of presentation you're giving, or who you're presenting to, defining why your idea matters — and not just what it is — is fundamental to its success. When it comes to sharing these foundational elements with your boss (and perhaps boss' boss), here are a few things you'll want to keep in mind.

## They care

You have a vision, and you want your audience to see it the same way you do: captivating, game-changing, progressive. So help them. Don't be afraid to include why you're passionate about what it is you're sharing. Being inspired helps inspire, and executives will clearly see that your idea isn't just a flash in the pan.

As thought leader and author [Simon Sinek](#) advocates, good companies don't hire for skills, they hire for attitude. Show your leadership team that they made the right decision by choosing you.



## They'll ask hard questions

Senior managers can have a reputation for being tough, but it's important not to take it personally. Try to remember that they often have packed agendas, which means the time you're using to present to them should be worthwhile. As a result, they need to make high-stakes decisions fast.

You should expect and prepare to answer probing questions, not because managers think your idea is bad, but because this is how they will arrive at a decision quickly—such as whether what you are presenting fits within the current business strategy and budget, and whether it has the potential for an acceptable return on investment.

STEP TWO

# Plan Accordingly

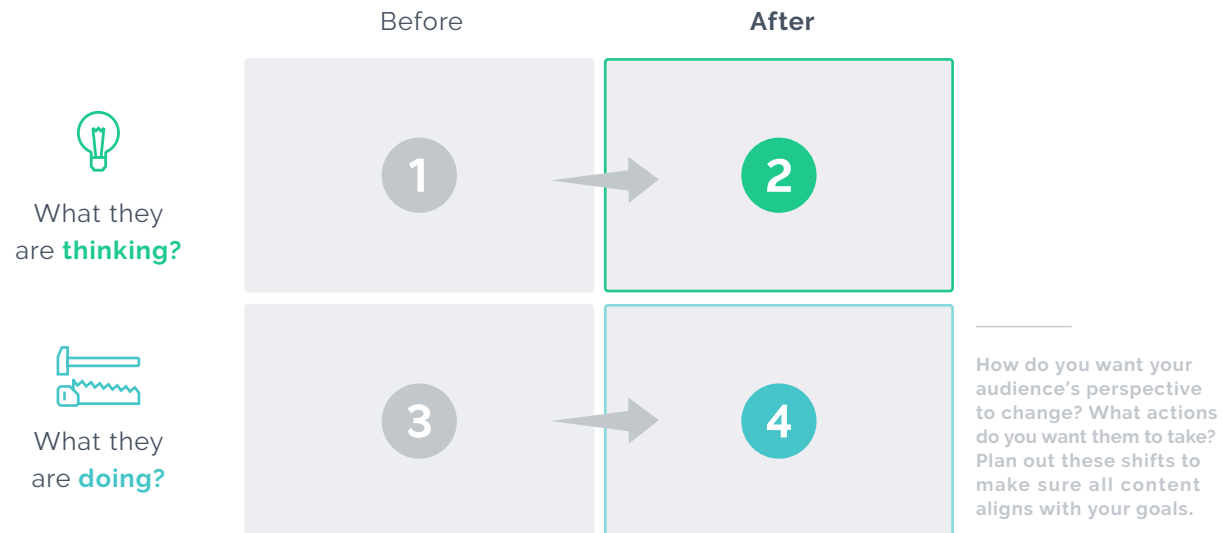
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Once you've taken the time to outline the why behind the what and prepared for the many questions that will likely be asked, you might be tempted to jump right into building your presentation. Before you do this, take the time to adequately organize and think through your ideas. Start with these goals.

## Know your objective

It might seem obvious, but factoring in what you want your audience to do after they've seen your presentation is crucial. Start by considering what your audience is thinking before your presentation, and what you want them to think after your presentation. Then ask yourself what they're doing before your presentation, and what you want them to do after.

Sharing the vision behind your idea sets a positive and exciting tone, but unless you determine what you want your audience to do with that vision, it won't have anywhere to go. Write the answers to these four questions down and keep them nearby when planning the content for your presentation. You should try to ensure that all content in the presentation helps change your audience's perception from what it currently is to what you want it to be.



## Socialize your idea

The next thing to work out is finding an advocate. Who's the internal champion you can speak to before the presentation, to get their insight and—most importantly—their support?

Finding the right senior supporter is key if your goal is to encourage management to take some kind of action. They can help you understand how your idea fits in with other company activities and goals and what it might take to get in approved—and then when the day for the big presentation comes around, they can help you by influencing their peers.

It's also helpful to have individual, informal meetings with the people you're presenting to before you actually give your presentation.



This can be as brief as a five-minute chat next to the coffee machine where you outline the idea, rewards, and potential risks in a way that piques interest.

Like the synopsis of a book, a basic elevator pitch can be enough to prompt your target to believe you have an interesting idea. A pitch complete with the potential outcomes, however, turns your idea into something actionable, and will prompt leadership to want to explore it further.

## Create an ROI proposal

If you're asking for budget to do something, or presenting next year's campaign plan, create a separate ROI document that you can either leave behind or send before your pitch. Going through the process of outlining the ROI of your project will help you formulate your argument, so it's a good idea to do this before you actually create your presentation.

Senior management will appreciate that you've taken the time to put the ROI of your idea into writing—if you want them to take it seriously, then you need to show that you take it seriously, too.





The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on the right side are several large, dashed white gear shapes. These gears are arranged in a way that they appear to be interlocking, with some partially visible at the edges of the frame. The dashed lines of the gears create a rhythmic, geometric pattern against the teal background.

### STEP THREE

# Be Brief

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So you've determined the why behind the what, you've taken time to outline your key objectives, and you've got some early supporters on board. Now it's time to build your presentation. Here are the most important things to keep in mind when crafting content to be presented in front of senior management.

## Begin with an attention-getter

Brevity is essential when presenting to senior managers, so rather than building up to an aha! moment, try leading with one—such as why this idea in particular is important. Getting to the important stuff right away helps ensure there's plenty of time for questions, which is key for executive buy-in.

Here's a good way to structure your presentation with brevity in mind:

- 1 Lead with The Why behind The What
- 2 Cover a maximum of **3 main points** of your story
- 3 Give supporting facts and data (such as what other leaders in the industry are saying about this idea)
- 4 Open up for audience Q&A
- 5 Delve into the relevant details

A quick presentation is at its best when it's built around a few summary slides/frames. The key is to keep these uncluttered and concise in order to allow them to serve as jumping off points for your audience to ask questions.



If you need some inspiration, [Prezi Business](#) features a variety of non-linear templates designed specifically for creating presentations that are visually succinct, but pack a ton of optional information.

**Remember, your content should support you, not the other way around.**

## Keep it simple, but leave no stone (no matter how problematic) unturned

When it comes to presenting complex data, do your best to boil it down to its most simple form, such as focusing only on the key numbers and metrics that tell your story.

At the same time, you want to make it clear that you have done exhaustive research and preparation before presenting your idea. This includes acknowledging potential bottlenecks or problems, and your plan for solving them.

At the end of your presentation, the executives in the room should feel like you have left no stone unturned—but hide those extra details until they ask for them explicitly. Data visualization comes in especially handy here. Be sure to utilize your presentation tool's built-in charts and graphs, or try downloading a pre-designed chart from [HubSpot](#) for some extra flair.

## Make it clear that you understand the context

Leadership will find you much more credible if you show them that you know how your idea fits into other things going on in the business. Is there a huge project or spend going on simultaneously to your idea's timeline? If so, it might be better to ask for support for your idea after that project is finished.



Alternately, if you feel this isn't the right time to get "all-in" buy-in for your idea, but you still want to move forward, you can ask for a smaller budget to test if it's truly scalable and has positive ROI.



Examples of some of HubSpot's pre-designed charts

#### STEP FOUR

# Present!

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You've outlined your fundamentals, set up a meeting with key stakeholders, and crafted the perfect presentation—the only thing left to do is deliver it. Aside from the advice you've probably heard a million times (don't say "um" or "uh" and be sure to speak slowly and clearly) here are a few pointers to make your moment go as smoothly as possible.



## Make it conversational

If you briefly present your main idea as outlined in step 3, you'll move on quickly to the Q&A portion of the presentation. At this point, you'll want to be ready to provide all the important details that were left out of the summary. If you're using [Prezi Business](#), you can arrange these details around your main ideas, so that you can zoom into them when the questions come up.



With this format—a big-picture overview, followed by a conversation that dictates which details you choose to reveal in which order—you'll be much more likely to address leadership's biggest concerns in a timely manner.

## Keep a close eye on body language

Instant feedback is a powerful thing, especially because it can give presenters a chance to try a different approach if their message isn't resonating. One of the clearest forms of feedback that you can receive from your audience comes from their body language. If you see an executive squirming in her seat, staring off into the distance or at the wall, or checking his phone in his lap, stop your spiel immediately.

Instead of getting nervous and plowing through the rest of your content, stop and ask questions. Try something like, "I have a few minutes before questions, is there anything else you'd like for me to cover?" By turning to your audience for guidance, you give them a chance to redirect the conversation into a direction that is more interesting to them, thereby earning back their attention.

## Don't leave without buy-in

The last thing you want is for your presentation to end in a stalemate. That said, in order to get a decision made, you may have to push your audience a bit. Be prepared to ask for a certain action. Don't be afraid to say, "Can I proceed?" or "Is the budget approved?" Make sure that you outline the next steps that you would like to take, or that you would like for your audience to take, and get a clear verbal answer on whether you can move forward. Whatever you do, don't leave the room until you've either gotten an answer, or have a follow-up meeting set.



If you feel like you need some practice, don't hesitate to find and join your [local toastmasters](#) club.

"Don't be afraid to say,  
**'Can I proceed?' or 'Is the  
budget approved?'**"

# Conclusion

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Ultimately, the more prep work you do, and the more people you can get warmed up to your idea before you share it, the better off you'll be. When it comes time to present, lead with the why behind the what, and keep the rest of your content short and sweet. Leave lots of time for questions and discussion, as this is what will ultimately help move your audience to make a decision they're comfortable with.

At the end of the day, remember: you've got good ideas. And senior executives not only love good ideas, they depend on them. Don't let anxiety over this type of audience get the best of you—try [Prezi Business](#) to discover how a shift in the way you share what you know can make all the difference.

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Ready to bring your ideas to life? Try out [HubSpot Projects](#) and start collaborating with your team today.