

LEARNING MADE EASY



Storytelling in Presentations

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Create engaging stories
to captivate audiences

—
Turn slides from
drab to fab

—
Storyboard to prepare
the show and tell

Sheryl Lindsell-Roberts MA

Author of *Technical Writing*

For Dummies



Storytelling in Presentations

by Sheryl Lindsell-Roberts MA

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Storytelling in Presentations For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2024 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Media and software compilation copyright © 2024 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS WORK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES, WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS OR PROMOTIONAL STATEMENTS FOR THIS WORK. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS ENDORSE THE INFORMATION OR SERVICES THE ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A SPECIALIST WHERE APPROPRIATE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR AUTHORS SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OF PROFIT OR ANY OTHER COMMERCIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR OTHER DAMAGES.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023942992

ISBN 978-1-394-20100-6 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-394-20101-3 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-394-20102-0 (ebk)

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Martians, Stories, and Heroes	5
CHAPTER 1: Sizzle Your Presentations with Stories	7
CHAPTER 2: Storyopia: Sharing Stories from What Is to What Can Be	19
Part 2: Nuts 'n' Bolts	31
CHAPTER 3: Knowing Your Audience to Make Them Heroes	33
CHAPTER 4: Mining and Crafting Great Stories	47
CHAPTER 5: Starting Strong for a Groundswell Response	69
CHAPTER 6: Ending Memorably	89
CHAPTER 7: Storyboarding: Bringing Stories to Life Frame by Frame	97
Part 3: Adding Flourishes	115
CHAPTER 8: Slideware: Buying and Applying	117
CHAPTER 9: Slide Sense: Using Slides Effectually	137
CHAPTER 10: Handouts and Workbooks: Kick 'Em Up a Notch	153
CHAPTER 11: Your Bio: The Story of You	167
CHAPTER 12: Requesting Feedback: Evaluation Forms	181
Part 4: It's Showtime	191
CHAPTER 13: Poised to Present	193
CHAPTER 14: Collaborative Team Presentations	213
CHAPTER 15: On the Spot: Fielding Difficult Questions and Delivering Bad News	227
CHAPTER 16: Adding a Splash of Humor	239
CHAPTER 17: Vive la Différence: Diversity and Inclusion	249
CHAPTER 18: Journeying from In-Person to Virtual	259
Part 5: Specialized Presentations	271
CHAPTER 19: Structuring a Training Session or Workshop	273
CHAPTER 20: Nailing an Executive Briefing	291
CHAPTER 21: Presenting a Paper at a Conference	303
CHAPTER 22: Presenting Someone Else's Content	317

Part 6: The Part of Tens	325
CHAPTER 23: Ten Hints for Combatting Stage Fright	327
CHAPTER 24: Ten Tips for Telling a Relatable Story	331
CHAPTER 25: Ten-Plus Ways to Make Your Presentation Interactive	335
CHAPTER 26: Ten Reasons Presentations Can Fail	339
Part 7: Appendixes	343
APPENDIX A: Presentation Checklist	345
APPENDIX B: Glossary	349
Index	353

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	3
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	4
Where to Go from Here	4
PART 1: MARTIANS, STORIES, AND HEROES	5
CHAPTER 1: Sizzle Your Presentations with Stories	7
Storytelling Isn't Just a Buzzword	8
Storytelling Is Your Axe; Sharpen It	8
Setting the Stage	9
Avoid Defaulting to Slides	11
Eliminating slidezillas	11
Visual storytelling can be exceedingly powerful	12
Firing Up Your Audience's Imagination with Storyopia	14
Using the Story Arc	14
Pitting the Heroes Against the Villains	16
On to Storyboarding	18
CHAPTER 2: Storyopia: Sharing Stories from What Is to What Can Be	19
Taking Your Audience on a Journey	20
Understanding why people respond to stories	21
Remembering that stories can be visual	21
Knowing that everyone has a story (Yes, even you!)	22
Mapping Out Your Storyopia Journey with Storyboards	24
Speaking in the first person, present tense	25
Learning from the All-Time Storytelling Greats	26
Aesop	26
Abe Lincoln	27
Jerry Seinfeld	27
(Mr.) Fred Rogers	28
Winston Churchill and Volodymyr Zelenskyy	28
Steve Jobs	29
Guests on TED Talks	29

PART 2: NUTS ‘N’ BOLTS	31
CHAPTER 3: Knowing Your Audience to Make Them Heroes	33
You Must See Your Target So You Know Where to Aim.....	34
Do You Aim at the Needs of Your Audience?	34
Using the Start-Up Brief to Target Your Audience	35
Audience.....	37
Purpose.....	42
Questions	43
CHAPTER 4: Mining and Crafting Great Stories	47
Examining Ways to Mine Stories from Experiences.....	48
Becoming an active listener.....	49
Honing your skills of observation	50
Noticing when an experience sparks a reaction.....	50
Noting when you (or someone you know) beat the odds.....	51
Drawing upon what you’ve read	51
Avoiding Story Overload and Clutter	53
Morphing Stories from Data	54
Knowing the tools	55
Crafting the data story	55
Using data to inspire action.....	56
Crafting Your Own Repertoire of Stories	57
Starting with paper and pencil (or pen).....	57
Making the connections and creating a list.....	58
Introducing the Four Pillars of Storytelling	59
Setting	59
Characters	60
Conflict	60
Resolution.....	60
Including a Call to Action	61
Embellishing your stories.....	61
Looking to others for inspiration	63
Refining Your Stories.....	65
Including sensory language for added depth.....	65
Replacing insensitivity with mindfulness.....	66
Revisiting the language of genders.....	66
Coining Your Own Word (Becoming a Neologist).....	66
Learning from a modern-day expert	67
Rising to the challenge	67
CHAPTER 5: Starting Strong for a Groundswell Response	69
Grabbing the Audience’s Attention as They Enter	70
Opening your Presentation with a Story	71
Conveying a hero’s journey	71

	Putting the backstory up front	72
	Telling a future story	73
	Sharing converging strategies	74
	Crafting a case study	74
	Delivering the story pitch	75
	Using visuals to complement opening stories	76
	Other opening attention grabbers	79
	Introducing Yourself and the Program	80
	Appreciating the Power of the Pause	80
	Taboo Openings	81
	Avoiding Openings that Lack Confidence	81
	Presenting an Opening Activity	82
	Starting with a group activity	83
	Previewing the Audience on Q&A Expectations	87
CHAPTER 6:	Ending Memorably	89
	Letting Them Know You're Wrapping Up	89
	Combining a Call to Action with a Story	90
	Exploring Other Powerful Closings	92
	Ending Gracefully and On Time	92
	Curtailing if you need to	93
	Thanking everyone for coming and relishing the applause	94
	Giving Them Something to Remember You By	95
	Staying in Touch to Build Your Network	95
CHAPTER 7:	Storyboarding: Bringing Stories to Life Frame by Frame	97
	Storyboarding in Business	98
	Before You Start Storyboarding	98
	Considering Different Storyboarding Formats	99
	Using comic strip frames	99
	Using sticky notes	100
	Using "wall-paper" editing	100
	Preparing Tell and Show columns in word processing software	102
	Using greeking when visuals drive the talk	109
	Building Transitions and Breaks into Your Storyboard	109
	Stepping Back and Looking at the Big Picture	110
	Outsourcing to the Pros	111
	Knowing your needs	111
	Vetting vendors	112
	Storyboarding for Sales Presentations	112
	Making the audience the heroes of every sales presentation . . .	113

PART 3: ADDING FLOURISHES	115
CHAPTER 8: Slideware: Buying and Applying	117
Life Before Death (by PowerPoint)	118
Buying: Meeting the Cast of Presentation Players	119
Knowing your needs	119
Finding the app that fits	120
Using and Sharing Slideware During Virtual Meetings	120
Giving Your Presentation an Enticing Title	121
Not needing to reinvent the wheel	122
Knowing your audience's inner monologue	122
Appreciating the Power of an Opening Slide	124
Understanding how not to open	124
Designing an engaging opening slide	125
Knowing How and When to Use Bullets and Numbers	126
Using bulleted lists	126
Using numbered lists	126
Using parallel structure	128
Punctuating a list	128
Avoiding laundry lists	129
Formatting Text	130
Formatting do's for text	130
Formatting don'ts for text	130
Preparing graphs, charts, and tables	131
Adding transitions and animations	131
Incorporating videos	131
Adding Sizzle to Your Presentations	132
Finding popular platforms	132
Visualizing in the cloud	133
Creating Slide Accessibility for All	134
Checking out Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)	134
Preparing slides for colorblind audience members	134
Proofreading Until Your Eyes Hurt	135
CHAPTER 9: Slide Sense: Using Slides Effectually	137
Don't Lambaste Slides	138
Getting the Most from Your Slide Real Estate	139
Slides that are not effectual	139
Slides that are effectual	142
Showing Statistics to Your Advantage	146
Knowing the difference between manipulating and persuading	146
Remaining ethical	146

Incorporating Images	147
Using photos	147
Using clipart	149
Living in a Visual World	150
Using visuals to tell an entire story	150
Complementing visuals with a story	150
Turning data and tables to into a story	152
CHAPTER 10: Handouts and Workbooks: Kick	
'Em Up a Notch	153
Preparing Handouts	154
Presenting handouts of your slides	155
Leaving room for notetaking	155
Knowing what to include	155
Deciding when to distribute handouts	157
Crafting Workbooks	158
Giving step-by-step instructions	159
Including Before-and-After examples	160
Incorporating stories	162
Adding practice exercises	163
Remembering your bio and contact information	163
Writing the Copy	163
Printing and Binding	164
Printing options	164
Binding options	164
CHAPTER 11: Your Bio: The Story of You	167
Showing You Have a Personality, Not Just a Pulse	168
Establishing bragging rights	169
Breaking from the pack	170
Choosing your voice	170
Creating Your Infomercial	170
Crafting a pithy elevator pitch	171
Creating a two-paragraph profile	173
Crafting a one-page bio	175
Developing Your Online Persona	177
Including keywords for SEO	178
Knowing your character-count limits	178
Responding to comments	179
Knowing What's Out There About You	179
Checking for accuracy	179
Dealing with social media defamation	180

CHAPTER 12: Requesting Feedback: Evaluation Forms	181
Making On-the-Spot Visual Assessments of Your Audience	182
Audience Evaluation Forms	183
Asking closed-ended questions	183
Going for more detail with open-ended questions	184
Putting it together	186
Mirror, Mirror on the Wall	188
Doing a self-assessment	188
PART 4: IT'S SHOWTIME	191
CHAPTER 13: Poised to Present	193
Making a Great First Impression	194
Dressing for the occasion	194
Wearing a name badge	195
Wearing a mic	195
Practicing the Art of Practicing	196
Practicing in front of people and getting feedback	197
Using notecards	198
Making your audience the heroes	198
Knowing when to use positive or negative	199
Practicing strategic use of repetition	200
Avoiding unnecessary redundancies	200
Asking rhetorical questions	201
Practicing pauses and punctuating with your voice	202
Considering speech patterns and word choices	203
Getting in the Zone	203
Looking Them in the Eyes and "Listening"	203
Being Sensitive to Diversity and Inclusivity	205
Updating your terminology	205
Avoiding online barriers	205
Dealing with Technology Snafus	206
During face-to-face presentations	207
During virtual presentations	207
An Ounce of Prevention	209
Embracing the Benefits of Public Speaking	210
CHAPTER 14: Collaborative Team Presentations	213
Meeting the Team	214
Knowing what makes a cohesive team	215
Understanding the role of the project manager	215
Dealing with shirkers	216
Completing the Start-Up Brief Together	216
Storyboarding as a Team	217

	Delivering Formal or Informal Presentations	218
	Using Technology to Aid Collaboration	220
	Giving and Getting Peer Feedback	220
	Scenario: Setting the Stage for a Purchase	221
	Filling out the Start-Up Brief and preparing handouts	222
	Storyboarding for this scenario	223
	Making sure the Naugle team focuses on the visitors as the heroes	224
CHAPTER 15:	On the Spot: Fielding Difficult Questions and Delivering Bad News	227
	Dealing with Grinches	228
	Responding to a combative person	228
	Defusing tension	229
	Fielding Questions	229
	Deciding when to take questions	230
	Handling difficult questions	232
	Not having the answer	233
	Delivering and Owning Bad News	233
	Owning the news	233
	Making a bad news sandwich	234
	Using a direct approach	234
	Looking ahead when delivering bad news	236
CHAPTER 16:	Adding a Splash of Humor	239
	Invigorating a “Bored” Room	240
	Giving a Little Giggle	240
	Sliding in Lightheartedly	241
	Fashioning a Funny File	243
	Popping Out a Prop	243
	Ferretting Out Punchlines or Quotes	244
	When in Hesitation, Skip the Citation	245
	What to Do if Your Audience Left Their Funny Bones at Home	246
	Trying 30 Days of Chuckling	247
CHAPTER 17:	Vive la Différence: Diversity and Inclusion	249
	Presenting Skillfully to a Diverse Audience	250
	Speaking with clarity	251
	Paying attention to your body language	252
	Being content sensitive	252
	Pronouncing names correctly	252
	Presenting in a Foreign Country	253
	Knowing Conversions	254

Storytelling Across Multiple Generations	254
Being non-judgmental	255
Understanding generational dynamics	255
Blending the generations creates a rich exchange of ideas	256
Accessibility for All.	256
Making accommodations	257
Delivering your presentation.	258
CHAPTER 18: Journeying from In-Person to Virtual	259
Storytelling to the Rescue.	260
Getting to Know You	261
Sending electronic invites and follow-ups	261
Sending pre-work	262
Being Ready for Your Close-Up	262
Creating seated energy.	264
Being ready with an understudy.	265
Choosing a background	265
Creating a Culture of Inclusivity	266
Conducting an Interactive (Synchronous) Presentation	267
Knowing the maximum number of participants.	267
Finding ways to be interactive	267
Being Savvy On Screen	268
Following Up with Your Audience	270
PART 5: SPECIALIZED PRESENTATIONS	271
CHAPTER 19: Structuring a Training Session or Workshop	273
Understanding Your Audience and Making Them Heroes	274
Performing a Training Needs Assessment (TNA)	275
Determining areas where hard and soft skill training may be needed	276
Getting a ROI	278
Arranging and Organizing Your Session	279
Personalizing the session.	280
Incorporating engaging activities	281
Mining Session-Related Stories	283
Understanding why people attend	283
Tapping into past victories and flubs	283
Crafting a Storyopia Journey	284
Including characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions	284
Sharing a cautionary story	285
Accommodating Different Learning Styles	285
Evaluating the Success of Your Session	286

Training, AI, and the Big Bang	287
Understanding how AI is reshaping training.	288
Adding value or replacing people?	288
Using AI for its good	289
Being aware of AI's drawbacks	289
CHAPTER 20: Nailing an Executive Briefing	291
KISS-ing the Message (Keeping it Short and Sweet)	292
Executive Beef-ings	292
Welcoming the Chance to Shine	293
Learning your audience's persona	293
Finding an ally beforehand	295
BLUF-fing your opening	295
Adding supporting data	295
Applying the 10/30 rule and being ready to pivot	297
Fortifying a robust conclusion	298
Rehearse. Rehearse. Rehearse.	298
Executive Sales Briefings	298
Finding their pain, needs, and desired outcome	299
Questioning that can lead to sealing the deal.	300
CHAPTER 21: Presenting a Paper at a Conference	303
Presenting at a Conference	304
Stories, Science, and Conferences	305
Storytelling is the soul of science communication	305
Knowing where to find stories.	306
Developing an Abstract	306
Getting Ready for the Conference	307
Structuring your message	307
Preparing and delivering your presentation	308
Making your presentation interactive	308
Checking out the room.	309
Anticipating questions	310
Preventing parchedness.	310
Avoiding Boos and Taboos.	311
Taking Center Stage as a Keynote Speaker	311
Becoming a keynote speaker.	311
Being the opening keynote speaker	312
Making the lasting impression.	312
Networking at a Conference	313
Evaluating the Results.	315

CHAPTER 22: Presenting Someone Else’s Content	317
Making This Your Time to Shine	318
A Nip Here, a Tuck There	318
Making the Presentation Your Own with a Story	319
Don’t Catch ‘Em by Surprise	319
Dealing with the Elephant in the Room	320
Don’t Try to Wing It!	321
Amending the slides	321
Including the audience	322
Taking a tip from artisans	322
Adapting a Presentation from the Corporate Office	323
Preparing as You Would for a Substitute Teacher	324
PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	325
CHAPTER 23: Ten Hints for Combatting Stage Fright	327
Think of Elvis	328
Greet People As They Enter the Room	328
Remember You’re the Star	328
Build a Memory Palace	328
Practice — Practice — Practice	329
Make a List of Specific Worries	329
Visualize Your Success	329
Say Bye-Bye to Butterflies	330
Use Notecards	330
Join a Group	330
CHAPTER 24: Ten Tips for Telling a Relatable Story	331
Keep a “Resource” File	332
Don’t Open with a Slide Unless	332
Start with a Compelling Story or Hook	332
Take Your Audience on an Adventure	333
Embellish the Story	333
Personalize the Story	333
Start with One of the Five Questions	334
Make Sure Your Story Is On Point	334
Circle Back to the Original Story	334
End with a Call to Action	334
CHAPTER 25: Ten-Plus Ways to Make Your Presentation Interactive	335
Ask Questions	335
Move Around the Room	336
Get the Audience Moving	336

Gamify the Presentation	336
Do a Host-Guest Interview.	337
Give Your Audience the Steering Wheel.	337
Get a Debate Going.	337
Group for Scenario-Solving	337
Create a Human Barometer.	338
Initiate Lightning Talks	338
Speed Network	338
Incorporate Technology	338
CHAPTER 26: Ten Reasons Presentations Can Fail	339
Opening	339
Audience.	340
Verbal language.	340
Body language	340
Technology	341
Slides	341
Storytelling	341
Questioning	342
Closing.	342
Feedback.	342
PART 7: APPENDIXES	343
APPENDIX A: Presentation Checklist	345
APPENDIX B: Glossary	349
INDEX	353

Introduction

Stories are how we learn best. We absorb numbers and facts and details, but we keep them all glued into our heads with stories.

— CHRIS BROGAN, AUTHOR, MARKETING CONSULTANT, JOURNALIST, SPEAKER

Join the sensibility of today’s industry giants who are renouncing slidezilla-type, data-laden PowerPoint monsters (and their clones). Instead, they’re energizing audiences with storyopia. Storyopia, like utopia, represents the ideal. It’s the ideal story that takes audiences on a journey from what *is* to what *could be*. Storyopia will make your audience feel like heroes and will lead to amazing results for them and for you. Your audience will see your presentation as personal, and you’ll become a valuable resource.

This book will help you develop your own tales of adventure that will take your audiences on journeys to greatness through your insights, leadership, and storytelling, coaxing their brains into thinking they’re experiencing the incidents themselves. And they’re right there with you — engaged. Whether your presentation is in person, virtual, or hybrid and whether it’s streaming or zooming into the metaverse, it all starts with storyopia. Then a storyboard maps it all out with what to tell and what to show.

About This Book

This book is the culmination of my many years of exploring the art of storytelling. I cherry-picked from an enormous body of the greatest raconteurs of all time — from Aesop to Lincoln to Jobs and others. Their quotes and stories are filtered throughout this book. Thus, the pages are somewhat like a big-picture briefing of storytelling in presentations — from preparation to presentation to a standing ovation. Here’s a quick overview of what you’ll find and where:

Part 1: Martians, Stories, and Heroes

Your presentations are stories. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end — that’s a story. This part introduces you to the art of storytelling. It shows how your audiences can be heroes just like the heroes you read about in the news, fiction, and real-life situations.

Part 2: Nuts 'n' Bolts

This critical part takes you through the process of understanding your audience, starting strong, ending with a bang, and bringing your presentation to life with storytelling and storyboarding. It will help you pinpoint what you want your audience to do, think, learn, or feel.

Part 3: Adding Flourishes

This part shows you how slides can enhance your presentation with visuals when they speak more loudly than words. It also discusses how to kick handbooks and workbooks up a notch, how to write and present a stellar bio, and how to prepare and use evaluation forms.

Part 4: It's Showtime

When you get to this part, you're ready to take your show on the road. Find out how to be poised when presenting bad news and fielding difficult questions. Understand how to talk with a diverse audience. Journey with ease from the in-person world to the virtual world.

Part 5: Specialized Presentations

This part embodies specialized presentations from structuring a session, acing executive briefings, delivering a paper at a conference, and presenting someone else's content to make it your own.

Part 6: The Part of Tens

This part is a *Dummies* classic. You'll find tips for combatting stage fright, becoming more relatable, being interactive, and learning reasons presentations fail (with solutions so yours won't).

Part 7: Appendixes

Here's a checklist that will guide you from your presentation to preparing for a standing O, as well as a glossary of terms.

As you read through this book, you'll notice that each chapter abounds with best practices, including the following:

- » Storyopia Archives are real-life accounts that I or others have experienced — all ending with the lesson learned.
- » Visuals in each chapter enhance the narrative as well as stand alone when they speak louder than words.
- » Each chapter opens with a quote that ties into the theme of that chapter. In addition to stories, quotes are one of several suggestions for openings to make presentations engaging from the get-go.

- » Strong headlines and subheads give key information at a glance. They grab attention and provide a quick overview of the section.

Foolish Assumptions

I try not to make assumptions because everyone knows what happens when you *ass-u-me*. So, rather than making any foolish assumptions, I looked through my crystal ball and discovered that you probably fit into one of these categories. You're . . .

- » On the verge of closing a major contract and need a compelling presentation to seal the deal.
- » New in the job market and are making your first nail-biting presentation.
- » Presenting a revised budget to executive-level managers that will have a negative impact on the bottom line.
- » Looking for a consensus for a new idea.
- » Teaching hardware, software, or a new concept.
- » Applying for a large grant and your presentation will be the deciding factor.
- » Delivering a paper at a large conference, and this is your moment to shine.
- » Giving a presentation that was prepared by someone, and you want to make it your own.
- » Shaking like an unbalanced clothes dryer when you have to make a presentation.

Whatever your reason, you'll want to wow your audience to ensure they heed your call to action and leave your presentation doing, thinking, feeling, or learning a pre-determined *something*.

Icons Used in This Book

Scattered throughout this book you'll find icons in the margins to highlight valuable information that call for your attention. Here are the icons you'll see and a brief description of each:



START-UP
BRIEF

Grab your sleuth's magnifying glass to scrutinize the Start-Up Brief and gather all the clues you can about your audience.



REMEMBER

The nagging little voice in your head that won't let you forget anything, even if you try to ignore it like a pesky flying insect.



SHERYL
SAYS

If I had a chance to speak with you personally, these are the things I'd say.



TIP

Find nifty tips that may be timesavers, frustration savers, lifesavers, or just about any other savers.



WARNING

Avoid these pitfalls to save yourself headaches, heartburn, and humiliation.

Beyond the Book

Beyond this book is a Cheat Sheet I've prepared that will get you rewarded (not busted). Here's what you'll find when you go to www.dummies.com and type **Storytelling in Presentations For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the search box.

- » Guidelines to rock your next presentation
- » Avoiding the seven deadly slide sins
- » Starting on the right foot with the Start-Up Brief

This Cheat Sheet is available as a handy reference at all times. Keep a copy on your wall, computer, tablet, and smartphone. And share it with your team.

Where to Go from Here

I realize you won't read it like a suspenseful mystery novel from cover to cover — but I strongly urge you to read Part II, Chapters 3–7 sequentially. These chapters offer the nuts 'n' bolts for casting your audiences as heroes through storytelling . . . bringing life to your presentations. For the remainder of the book, jump around to whatever topic interests you or applies to the presentation challenge you face. You may find something in one chapter that resembles something you read in another. (It's not a memory lapse or sloppy editing.) It's just that I don't know where you'll drop in, and there are certain things you shouldn't miss.

From here, you're on your way to becoming a presentation pro and giving top-notch talks that make you and your audience heroes.

1 Martians, Stories, and Heroes

IN THIS PART . . .

Create audience heroes with stories that sizzle, jettison slidezillas, use the story arc, and fire up your audience's imagination.

Take audiences on storyopia journeys from what is to what can be, get pointers from the all-time storytelling greats, and realize that everyone has a story (yes, even you!).

- » Sharpening your axe
- » Avoiding PowerPoint autopilot
- » Beginnings, middles, and endings
- » Storyopia to create audience heroes

Chapter **1**

Sizzle Your Presentations with Stories

If history were told in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.

—RUDYARD KIPLING (ENGLISH WRITER, POET, AND STORYTELLER)

Good storytelling can make your presentations sizzle in ways that slides can't.

Whether you realize it or not, you're already a storyteller. When you meet a friend, have dinner with family, or spend time with a colleague, you share small amusements and calamities of your day or week. It's in our nature to tell stories and share our life's events. And you probably use hyperboles (exaggerations) to make your stories more engaging — peppering them with statements such as, “I nearly died of embarrassment” or “My feet were killing me.” While this casual sharing is different from being in front of an audience, you do know how to tell stories. You have lots of them. After all, you started telling stories when you made babbling sounds as a baby.

Storytelling Isn't Just a Buzzword

Storytelling has existed for eons, and it's more than a business buzzword. It's the way get your point across memorably. Think of your presentation as a story. *It has a beginning. It has a middle. It has an end.* That's a story! Aristotle is credited with having introduced this basic storytelling structure with his three-act plays.

- » The opening is the setup, laying out the plot.
- » The middle, which is typically the longest, introduces complications, twists, and turns.
- » The third act brings the production to a close.



Throughout your lifetime, you'll likely give many types of formal and informal presentations: sales, educational, training, lectures, problem-solving, or simply a talk to a group for pleasure. Even giving toasts at weddings or delivering eulogies at funerals are types of presentations. They can all benefit from storytelling.

Storytelling Is Your Axe; Sharpen It

Abraham Lincoln is perhaps one of the best-known orators and storytellers of all time. He said, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first few sharpening the axe." Relating that to presentations, when you spend the time to prepare compelling stories, your presentation will be relevant and memorable, and you'll be able to chop through the clutter.

When you spend time planning properly, you'll become a confident and influential presenter, and you'll get the results and recognition you deserve — perhaps even get standing Os.



Whether presentations are live, virtual, or hybrid, they're one of most effective business communication tools of our time. Strong presentation skills are a hallmark of strong leaders and people who aspire to become leaders. When you want to be seen as a subject matter expert (SME) or knowledge source, a presentation can showcase your skills and potential. Each time you pitch an idea, discuss solutions with a client, or interact with colleagues, you're presenting your skills. This can lead to

- » Higher visibility
- » Improved confidence

- » Better communication skills
- » Career growth
- » Extended networks

Setting the Stage

At the outset of my signature workshop, “Storytelling and Storyboarding: Building Blocks to Influential Presentations,” I divide the group into teams of two or three people and present the following scenario. (Although this may seem a little hokey, there’s a method to my madness, so please bear with me and give it a try.)

It’s the year 2050 and a group of Martians is scheduled to visit your facility. You plan to be at the space pad to greet them, but an important meeting has called you away. You know the Martians will be hungry after their long and arduous journey, and you’ll be out of the office when they arrive. So, you hire a driver to bring them to your location. You need to prepare a presentation teaching them to make something easy — a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. They do speak English.

Grab a pen or pencil and a sheet of paper and briefly show how you’d approach this.

Welcome back . . . Did you start with a slide presentation? If so, you’re in the majority. Most participants spend 5–10 minutes outlining what would become a slide presentation. They begin by instructing the Martians to put down two slices of bread. Open the jar of peanut butter. Smear some on one of the bread slices, etc. On occasion, I’d overhear someone say, “I don’t think slides will work. Perhaps a video would work better.” While that’s insightful, few have thought through the details they take for granted when giving instructions. Here are just a few of the things you may take for granted:

- » Although the Martians speak English, would they necessarily know what peanut butter and jelly are? (We only understand the words we’ve been exposed to.)
- » Would they understand how to remove the lids from the jars? (Hmm. . . hit them with a sledgehammer?) If you said twist the lid, would that be clockwise or counterclockwise?
- » How should they spread the peanut butter? (With their fingers?) If you told them to smear the peanut butter with a knife, would they know how to use the knife safely without spewing blood?

Then . . . once you've identified the level of detail you need to share, the next step is to identify the best means of communicating it. A live, interactive presentation would work best. If that's not possible, a video could be a viable substitute.



REMEMBER

When you're faced with a presentation you need to prepare, sharpen your axe. Consider your audience and the best way to present. Think of relevant stories they'll relate to. Chapter 3 offers a full discussion of knowing your audience and how to focus on their needs.

STORYOPIA ARCHIVES: PAIRING PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY

The history of how peanut butter met jelly is a little uncertain, but one thing is for sure – they're a match made in heaven and are meant to be together. In the early 1900s peanut butter was a delicacy, bought and eaten only by the wealthy. At the time, peanut butter was frequently paired with pimento cheese, celery, cucumbers, and crackers.

Today's beloved pairing of peanut butter and jelly (PB&J) were first mentioned in the *Boston Cooking School Magazine of Culinary Science and Domestic Economics* written by Julia Davis Chandler in 1901. But the impetus that took the PB&J sandwich over the top came after World War II and the Great Depression. Here's the backstory:

PB&J were on the U.S. military ration menus in World War II. Peanut butter is high-protein, rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Peanut butter also contains healthy fat, but the sweetness comes from the jelly's sugar. These sandwiches were easy to pack for long marches and were yummy to eat due to the bread that holds this dynamic duo together. Thus, after the war, soldiers craved PB&J sandwiches, and they became an American standard.

This sandwich is so ubiquitous that in the U.S. the average schoolchild eats about 15,000 PB&J sandwiches before the end of high school. (The growing number of kids with peanut allergies, however, is now threatening the popularity of this lunchbox staple.)

Lesson learned: Getting back to Kipling's quote, your story (or stories) can become part of your presentation's history — making it unforgettable.

Avoid Defaulting to Slides



SHERYL
SAYS

Throughout this book I use the term *slides* to represent any presentation software.

Old habits die hard. When people hear the word “presentation,” most of them automatically plummet into the slide abyss. When you ask these same slide-abyss people to describe the last presentations they attended, they use words like *boring*, *humdrum*, *uninteresting*, *waste of time*, *too many slides*, *too much text*, *no interaction*, and other negative phrases.

Poll everywhere, real-time audience response software, estimates that . . .

- » 30 million PowerPoint presentations are shown each day.
- » 500 million people view PowerPoint presentations every day.
- » The average presentation lasts 4 hours.
- » The average slide has 40 words.

If you think slides don’t get in the way of good conversation, try showing a few at your next dinner party and see how well it goes over.

Eliminating slidezillas

Slidezillas are the presentation equivalents of Godzilla. Just as Godzilla is the towering, reptilian monster that plagued Japan, slidezillas are the data-laden technology monsters that plague audiences.

It’s the twenty-first century. Don’t continue inflicting boring, linear, static, text-laden slides on your audiences. Every presentation should be a conversation — a sharing of information — with active participants (the audience) and a facilitator (you).

As mentioned in the introduction, industry giants such as Amazon, Google, Apple, Starbucks, Airbnb, Netflix, Zappos, Facebook, LinkedIn, GlaxoSmithKline, and others have banned slidezilla-type slides from their meetings. Their presenters must use a narrative (or conversational) format, which means talking *WITH* the audience, not *AT* them. Too many presenters use slides as teleprompters. They have their backs to the audience much of the time as they read from their slides. They may as well have sent the slides to the audience and stayed home.

Whether your presentation is for training, fact finding, problem solving, brainstorming, selling, building consensus, or takes the form of instructor-led, online, mobile, gamification, or microlearning — tell stories. Sharing stories allows you to establish a good flow of communication so your main message reaches the audience in a way that engages and drives the call to action.



WARNING

Here are a few reasons why slide presentations are *not* effective:

- » Slides are a crutch for the presenter, not a learning tool for the audience.
- » They steal the limelight from the stars and heroes of the presentation — the audience.
- » Displaying words and graphics on a screen while speaking decreases engagement, comprehension, and retention.
- » There's always the risk of a technical glitch.
- » The audience may be reluctant to ask questions or provide their own valuable insights because they know the presentation must end in the allotted time.

Visual storytelling can be exceedingly powerful

Visual stories are *not* slidezillas. They're stories communicated through visual content in the form of photographs, illustrations, slides, clip art, memes, jpgs, gifs, videos, charts, tables, graphs, infographics, word clouds, live demos, or more. The main goal of visual storytelling is to convey complex thoughts and emotions to hook the audience and drive storylines, emotions, and the call to action (CTA).

Why is visual storytelling so powerful? As humans, we're visual creatures. Ninety percent of the information transmitted to our brains is visual, so it's no surprise that visual storytelling catches our attention in a way words can't.



TIP

Add visual storytelling to your repertoire of stories. You can find out more about visual storytelling in Chapters 8 and 9.