FULL COLOR INSIDE

Presentation SECRETS

DO WHAT YOU NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE WITH YOUR PRESENTATIONS

ALEXEI KAPTEREV

+ Insider Tips
  Expert advice to help you structure your presentation, build clear and attractive slides, and deliver with passion

+ Valuable Insights
  Eye-opening descriptions of storytelling techniques employed by the pros

+ Unbeatable Advice
  Real-world examples of scripts and slides and little-known tips on design and delivery

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Alexei Kapterev

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To my mom and dad

About the Author

Alexei Kapterev is one of the world's leading experts on presentations. Having had many years of experience with international and Russian consulting firms, he decided to focus exclusively on presentations in 2007. That same year he published a presentation titled "Death by Powerpoint," which saw more than one million views, all with no advertising or promotion. Kapterev currently has a private consulting practice in Moscow. As permanent lecturer, he teaches at the Graduate School of Business Administration (Moscow State University) and as guest lecturer at the Moscow School of Management Skolkovo. He is also working in cooperation with Mercator, Russia's premier studio producing corporate presentations, films, and business graphics. One of his presentation scripts was awarded the finalist award at the New York Festivals competition.

About the Technical Editor

Mike Stevens, as creative director for several Silicon Valley advertising agencies, has won numerous awards over the years for creative excellence in communication and has honed his own presenting skills in highly competitive situations as an agency owner. He is also a talented writer and editor, whose credits include the high-tech thriller *Fortuna* (as author) and Nancy Duarte's highly acclaimed book on presentations *Resonate* (as editor).

Stevens is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California at Berkeley with a B. A. in English and is fluent in several European languages.

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—Alexei Kapterev

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Read This First

I have been specializing in presentations for the last 5 years, but before I was approached by Wiley, I had no ambition to write a book. It never felt like the right time, never felt like I had enough to say on the subject of presentations to justify the whole book. But when I made a decision to write, a magical thing happened. All the questions that I was postponing answering for years started coming back to me. The questions that I wasn't obliged to answer before now returned all at the same time: nagging me, bothering me, demanding to be answered. It wasn't a totally pleasant experience; after all, there were good reasons why I wasn't answering those questions before. Those questions were tough:

- How do I make a script that is dramatic but not pretentious?
- How do I make slides that are simple yet project credibility?
- How do I become spontaneous and react to the audience during a live presentation despite hours of planning and painstaking rehearsals?

And, of course, there were many, many more. I spent months answering those questions, and I am proud to have answered many of them. In terms of progress in my chosen profession this book is the absolute best thing that ever happened to me. My only hope now is that *Presentation Secrets* will be as useful for you as it was for me.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

This book is intended for those of you who disagree that contemporary slide presentations are the necessary evil. For those who believe that preparing and delivering presentations is something one might actually enjoy. For people who want more from their presentations: more fun, more adventure, more challenge, and more results. For people ready to explore, ready to stop being just "presenters" and become scriptwriters, graphic designers, and improv artists—at least so some extent.

It doesn't matter whether you present in business, educational, political, or scientific contexts. Nuances do exist, of course, and I address them in the book. However, for the most part I write under assumption that your audience is simply human. Humans have common psychological and physiological traits that don't depend much on their chosen field. We all like stories, our capacities for processing raw facts are limited, and we mostly trust people who look authentic. These needs aren't easy to meet, but armed with advice from this book, if you at least attempt to meet these needs, you might well succeed.

Beginners will find the "Focus" chapters (Chapters 2, 5, and 8) to be most useful. Those chapters provide the foundation for all the work that you will be doing, whether you are working with your structure and slides or delivering your presentation live. The "Contrast" chapters (Chapters 3, 6, and 9) offer more advanced tips, and the "Unity" chapters (Chapters 4, 7, and 10) also invite into the discussion those of you who are experienced in the art of presentations.

WHAT THIS BOOK COVERS

This book covers three major topics concerned with presentations: structure, slides, and delivery.

In the first part (Part I) you will learn the basics of storytelling, how the narrative part of your presentation should be constructed. I will walk you through the process of establishing your story's goal and finding the best hero your audience can associate with. You will establish the controlling conflict by trying to answer the question, "Who is fighting whom for what?" You will also create a sequence to lead the audience from established status quo through the conflict to the resolution and new balance.

Part II has to do with slides, which serve four major goals: to remind, to impress, to explain, and to prove. By answering the question "What's the purpose of this slide?" you will learn to choose the proper slide type and the proper visual concept. I will briefly mention various ways of visualizing data and common pitfalls to avoid. The last chapter of Part II is dedicated to aesthetic design, which I believe is becoming increasingly important as the new language of communication.

In the last part of the book (Part III) you will learn about the most important things to focus on during a live presentation. I will also touch on more strategic, time-consuming but ultimately rewarding ways of improving your public speaking skills. Finally, I will share my thoughts on the subject of speaker's authenticity, perhaps the hottest topic in today's presentation discourse.

Overall, this book is organized as a 3×3 matrix, one axis being "Structure, Slides, and Delivery" and the other "Focus, Contrast, and Unity." The latter are the core principles that I follow in my own approach; you will find the detailed descriptions for them in Chapter 1.

WHAT YOU NEED TO USE THIS BOOK

You need at least some experience with preparing and delivering presentations. Even a couple of attempts to get your point across with slides will be enough. If you have never delivered any presentation in your life, you will have a hard time understanding what all the fuss is about.

Also, I don't offer much technical advice about Microsoft PowerPoint or any other application in this book. I assume that you are already familiar enough with some slide editing

software. If need to improve your skills here, I suggest you read other titles from John Wiley & Sons. (*PowerPoint 2010 For Dummies*, for example, is an excellent book.) However, this information is important only for Part II of the book, which deals with slides. Other parts of the book that deal with structure or delivery are much more technologically independent.

FEATURES AND ICONS USED IN THIS BOOK

The following features and icons are used in this book to help draw your attention to some of the most important or useful information in the book, some of the most valuable tips, insights, and advice that can help you unlock the secrets of presentation.

▶ Watch for margin notes like this one that highlight some key piece of information or that discuss some poorly documented or hard to find technique or approach.

SIDEBARS

Sidebars like this one feature additional information about topics related to the nearby text.

TIP The Tip icon indicates a helpful trick or technique.

NOTE The Note icon points out or expands on items of importance or interest.

CROSSREF The Cross-Reference icon points to chapters where additional information can be found.

WARNING The Warning icon warns you about possible negative side effects or precautions you should take before making a change.

CHAPTER 1

What Is Presentation?

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Communicating with presentations
- How this book is organized
- Storytelling, slides, and delivery
- The three principles

In late 2003, I was working for a consulting company as an analyst. The firm specialized in policy advising. Our clients were Russian ministries, senators, regulators, and formerly state-run, now privatized, companies. My job was to write reports to support decision-making processes. I had almost no contact with the clients, and frankly, I didn't suffer much because of that. I was quite happy just writing. But then came "the day." One of the firm's partners (to whom I am now very grateful) decided that it was time for me to see the big world. I had to present one of my recent reports before the firm's client.

NOTE I tried to transform my report into a presentation in a PowerPoint deck. It was a bullet-point, teleprompter-style nightmare, which is becoming rare nowadays. I remember my boss telling me to use more pictures. In 2004, "pictures" came mostly from a clip-art gallery, which came by default with Microsoft Office. Also, I had zero design skills and my taste wasn't exactly ideal. So, yes, there were a few pictures, but frankly, it would have been much better without them.

I spoke for about 30 minutes and it all went very well, or at least I thought so. Unfortunately, it turned out that the client didn't quite share my view. He didn't understand why the report was prepared, what the findings were, and why we wasted so much time and money. My bosses had to improvise another presentation on the spot, one which, happily, did the job. The client calmed down but asked that they never delegate any presentations to me again. I was so frustrated that I promised myself to master the skill in the next few months.

This is how it all started. Two years later, the client (albeit a different one) asked for me to present whenever possible. Four years later, I'd read Jim Collins's book *Good to Great* and decided to do for a living what I found I could do best—give presentations. Next year, I published a presentation called "Death by PowerPoint," which to my utter surprise went viral, having been viewed by more that one million people as of now. It was the greatest reassurance that the path that I've chosen is the right one. I'm currently teaching presentations at one of Russia's best business schools, doing corporate workshops, practicing as a consultant, and occasionally working with Mercator, Russia's leading producer of corporate films, business presentations, and infographics.

WHAT ARE PRESENTATIONS?

We live in a world in which nobody knows how to do anything. What I mean is that capitalism is based on the idea of division of labor and the labor is divided as never before. With division of labor as great as ever, we have to connect via words, symbols, and electronic code. We have to connect via phone conversations, written reports, e-mails and instant messaging, blogs, micro-blogs, and via just plain water cooler conversations—and presentations, yes, via presentations. We have to speak publicly more now than ever.

Presentations are an extremely complex and expensive form of human communication. The interaction is relatively short but the combined time of all the people involved costs a lot. The only explanation as to why people continue to give presentations despite their complexity and cost is that they are also sometimes tremendously impactful. Also, sometimes, there's a lot at stake. People give presentations before commencing expensive projects and after finishing

them. It makes sense to conduct extensive preparations in these cases, and there's almost no limit on how deep and wide you can go. You can rehearse, you can rearrange your slides, and you can research for new arguments in support of your point. So, whenever I am asked to "help with a presentation," my first question is inevitably, "What is the presentation in this case?" Answers differ vastly.

People frequently think that presentations are about delivery, about acting skills, and about how you say what you have to say. In the end, these aspects are what we see and hear, but are only the tip of the iceberg. People also think that presentations are mostly about slides. This is what I am asked to do a lot: make slides. The word "slides" has become synonymous with the word "presentations" in some organizations. People spend lots of time designing the right slides, making them so they can work with or without the actual presenter.

Moreover, with more presentations being e-mailed rather than presented, this part is quickly becoming less important.

Apart from slides, there's another part that has to do with structure and argumentation, which is whole different domain. It has to do with what you say rather than how you say it. This part requires storytelling, script- and speechwriting skills, and a deep knowledge of the content. Can any single person possibly become an expert in all these fields? Can you become a present-day Renaissance person: a scriptwriter, a graphics designer, and a master of verbal and nonverbal delivery?

The short answer is "yes," but let me make a confession first. My education is in finance. As you are probably aware, finance is one of the most tedious professions on Earth. It's really not far from accounting. I spent three years working as a financial controller for Citibank. At some point, I even considered a career in one of the "Big Four" auditing firms. Before my involvement with presentations, I never seriously thought of myself as a "creative type." I was never good at oral communications; my only serious strength was writing. I wasn't even a good storyteller, as my reports didn't require any storytelling skills (or so I thought at the time). As I mentioned, I never studied graphics design in any systematic manner. I wasn't a good actor. So, yes, it is possible to become good at something as complex as presentations. It is possible even without any existing skills and without dedicating your whole life to it. After all, I didn't quit my job to learn how to give presentations. The first thing you need is motivation. I studied because of my initial failure; you might study because of your initial success. The second thing you need is a plan. The purpose of this book is to give you the plan.

Three more points about this book:

1. Figure 1-1 is a slide from my presentations training workshop. It's what I show people when I want to explain what presentations are. Coincidently, this is also how this book is organized. It is split into three major parts. Part I is about story structure, Part II is about slides, and Part III is about delivery. Also, I have three broad principles that I use in my work. In each part there are three chapters and each chapter will follow one broad topic, thus producing a nice three-by-three matrix. In this chapter, I give you a brief introduction to the three parts and three principles.

FIGURE 1-1: How this book is organized.

2. This book comes with illustrations, and I designed almost all of them by myself with no external help. I briefly considered hiring a professional graphics designer but realized that it would not be fair. If I say that everybody can learn to design slides by applying some principles and practicing, I should at least be able to do it myself. So I did. I am not a professional designer but at least they are authentic (which I believe is exceptionally important).
3. This book mostly relies on my five years of deliberate practice in the art of presentations. This is not a scientific book. I love science, and I care a great deal about empirical evidence. Unfortunately, however, some of the topics I discuss here are grossly under-researched. Sometimes, I have no other choice but to jump to conclusions, which just seem logical to me and are based on nothing but experience.

So, that's it for the introduction. Shall we get started?

STORY

Everyone who studies public speaking sooner or later gets to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. It is hardly a joyful read, so I'll just give you one concept from it. Aristotle says that there are three modes of persuasion: *logos*, *pathos,* and *ethos*. Logos is an appeal to the rational, pathos is an appeal to the emotional, and ethos is an appeal to the personality, which are the qualities of the speaker. That was in the 4th century B.C. Unfortunately, in the centuries that followed, scholars of rhetoric perfected logos and ethos and rejected pathos. You can see their attempts to appeal to pathos in the *New Oxford American Dictionary,* which gives the second definition for the word "rhetoric" as

"language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience, but often regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content." Well, pathetic.

I think I know precisely what led to this. It seems that scholars of rhetoric deal with pathos because they think they have to, not because they truly want to. Public speakers always put themselves in opposition to poets. In their eyes they were decision makers and the seekers of truth, while poets were lowly entertainers. But canons of public speaking always included entertainment. Hence, the classical Roman *docere, movere, delectare* (educate, motivate, entertain), but only because the public demanded entertainment. Speakers would love to just inform and motivate, but, unfortunately, this isn't an option. So, they struggle with it, poor chaps. Even today I meet speakers (mostly scientists) who believe that an appeal to reason is inherently ethical and persuasive, whereas an appeal to emotions is deceptive and unworthy of a real educator. They are doing it only because they can't avoid it.

By contrast, poets—and I use this word in its broad Greek sense meaning also artists, dramatists, and writers—always loved entertaining. This was their job. Aristotle himself admits, "It was naturally the poets who first set the movement going." It seems that in the past couple of centuries, our civilization has made truly dramatic progress in storytelling. We started to tell more and better stories. Better yet, we learned how stories should be constructed.

I won't be covering logos much in this book. This isn't because I hate logos (I love it); it's because this field is pretty much covered already. For those of you interested in pure logos, I recommend an excellent book called *The Minto Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing, Thinking, & Problem Solving* by Barbara Minto. Problems with logos are well known. Such presentations look very reasonable and even persuasive but aren't very motivating. People nod their heads and then mind their own business. Nelson Mandela said, "Don't address their brains. Address their hearts." However beautiful this phrase is, I don't fully agree with it. I don't think we should avoid addressing the brains. As scientists, businesspeople, and activists, we have to deal with facts and logic. Storytellers love to contrast stories with statistics by saying that stories are a much more persuasive and effective means of communication, but really, there's no clear evidence for that. They are more entertaining—that's obvious—but that does not necessarily make them more effective from a practical standpoint. But secondly and most importantly, there isn't much difference between storytelling and fact telling anyway. Storytelling is and always was the essence of business presentations. Storytelling is nothing but putting facts in a sequence and making connections.

Funny as it may sound, storytelling should not be confused with telling stories. Telling an anecdote is just an attempt to illustrate your concept, to provide an example or counterexample, to make your audience more engaged. This might be a useful tool but that's not what Part I of this book is about. I don't just suggest you use stories within your presentation, I suggest you adopt the story structure for the whole presentation.

NOTE There's an ongoing dispute about the relative persuasiveness of stories versus causal evidence and statistics, with no clear winner. Some empirical studies have concluded that stories indeed elicit significantly fewer objections than statistical evidence, supposedly by going around the conscious mind (Slater, 1990; Slater & Rouner, 1996, 1997). Some studies have concluded that anecdotal evidence is more persuasive than statistics, and other studies have concluded otherwise. Meta-analysis by Allen and Preiss in 1997 found a small but statistically significant advantage of statistics over storytelling. But again, these people are using statistics to prove that statistics are more persuasive. I think it is safe to say that the jury is still out on this one.

▶ Stories aren't just facts; stories are facts with souls.

Yes, storytelling is a popular, even hip, subject. We are a storytelling species, and as far as I'm aware, there's nobody else in this game on this planet. Stories as a form of communication existed well before writing and they were optimized for oral transmission of facts. Stories engage emotions to make facts more memorable. Your long-term memory and your emotions come from the same part of the brain: the limbic system of our paleomammalian brain. Stimulating emotions improves recall of facts; this is a well-established scientific fact.

Stories don't have to be in opposition to logic, either. You can't have a story without logic. The plot has to develop according to certain rules; you can't just introduce random stuff whenever you please. Stories are the logic of life. Stories are meant to explain events; they form the chain of cause and effect. Of course, this explanation might be just an illusion, but you cannot have an explanation without a sequence, right? Any sequence of events is a proto-story. You just need to structure it properly and add some spice. So, I don't think you need to contrast storytelling with statistics or causal explanations. You need to contrast structured fact-telling with unstructured fact-telling.

▶ Stories unite multiple disjointed facts and concepts into one solid experience.

In any case, most presentations consist of facts or logical arguments put into a sequence. The problem is that this sequence often makes no sense. It is dull. It is difficult to follow. It gives no answer to the question "So what?" We are forced to follow the train of thought without understanding where it is leading us and why. Presenters tend to put a lot of dots on the board without really connecting them. It's no surprise that with structure like this, they have trouble following their own train of thought. They forget what to say next. How can you forget what to say next in a story? Stories are convenient to tell, pleasant to listen to, and easy to remember.

It is true that a purely factual story is usually not as entertaining as a made-up one. The good news is that a factual story is much easier to create. You don't need to make up facts. The facts are already there. All you need to do is select the right facts and put them in a sequence. If this seems like cherry-picking to you, you are right. You have to engage in cherry-picking. Your time is always limited, and you have to speak about some topics and leave some others out. But storytelling isn't about leaving inconvenient facts out of the story. Rather, it's about

integrating them. Inconvenient facts have a surprising effect, and surprise is one of the cornerstone elements of a well-crafted narrative. So, no, storytelling isn't about picking "the right" facts; it's about making what seem like the "wrong" facts work together. It's about making meaning out of chaos. And this is what Part I of this book is about.

SLIDES

In 1979, Hewlett-Packard introduced the first program for editing presentation slides. It was called BRUNO. It didn't become a big hit (or, in fact, any hit at all) and was soon discontinued. However, the idea of a visual slide editor endured. The demand was great, but software limitations at the time were severe. Only eight years later, when a small startup called Forethought, Inc., produced a piece of software called PowerPoint 1.0, did presentation software become a major hit. Microsoft bought the company, and PowerPoint soon became part of its Office suite. Ten years later, PowerPoint was everywhere. It became ubiquitous in boardrooms, conference rooms, classrooms, ballrooms, and even churches. As with any early mass-production attempt, the quality was quite poor, and the environment suffered. In 2001, Angela Garber, a journalist writing for *Small Business Computing,* coined the phrase "Death by PowerPoint." The world had enough. "Why can't you turn off the projector and just speak like a person?" people would ask, and every other book on delivery skills was trying to address this problem.

Let me make a confession: Despite all the bad rep, I love slides. I think they are fantastic. I have loved them all my life, even when I didn't know they existed. In school my favorite class was biology, where we had a gigantic tree of species painted all over the wall. I loved visual aids, and I loved filmstrips. Tinkering with slides is what I do to procrastinate. I don't agree with the notion "you are the star, not the slides." I like showing the slides to the audience. I love that look on people's faces when they see a great slide. It took me a while to figure out how to make them properly and I am proud to share with you some of my insights.

To me, there are two reasons you should leave your projector on:

- For one thing, we might simply forget what to say next, which might be because we didn't bother to make our structure memorable enough to begin with, but never mind that for now. PowerPoint might have created many problems, but it solved at least one: The fear of forgetting what to say is gone. In Ancient Greece or Rome, speakers didn't use notes (mostly because there was no paper) and *memoria*, the art of memorizing, was one of the five core skills that speakers needed. Thanks to PowerPoint, we no longer need to memorize anything, and we can speak without notes. I don't know about you but I hate memorizing things. I think this change has fundamentally revolutionized public speaking.

The downside, of course, is that slides became notes. We started using the slide projector as a teleprompter (and when I say "we," I am proudly including myself). Figure 1-2 shows one of the first presentations I ever prepared (in 2004). This was a 20 minute–long talk, with nine slides and just two diagrams. Then, I discovered *Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery* by Garr Reynolds and *Beyond Bullet Points: Using Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 to Create Presentations That Inform, Motivate, and Inspire* by Cliff Atkinson. They explained to me what the slides are for; slides are visual aids, not prompters. This changed everything for me. Figure 1-3 is an excerpt from my presentation circa 2006. As you see, there's much less text and many more pictures. The design is still horrible, though.

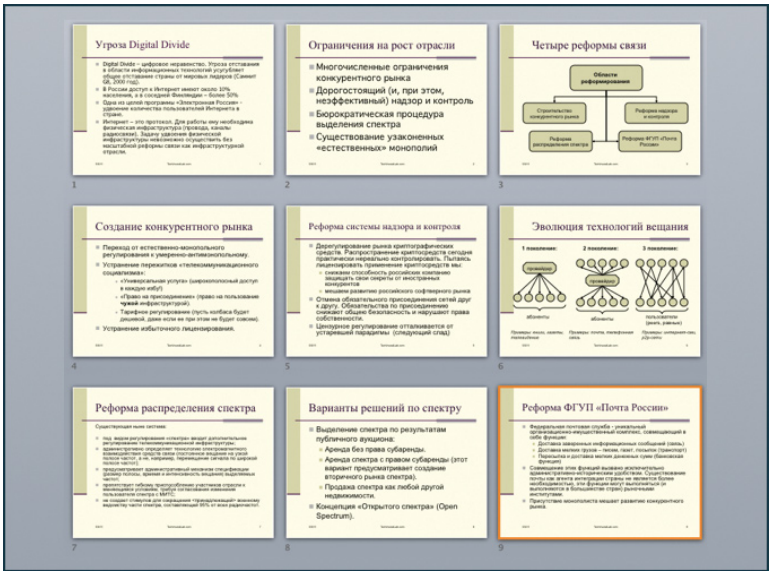

FIGURE 1-2: My slides from 2004.

- The second reason to leave our projectors on is a widely known phenomenon called the *pictorial superiority effect*. Simply put, it means that under most circumstances, people are much better at reading and remembering pictures than words.

NOTE In one widely cited study by Weiss and McGrath (1992), people were able to recall in 72 hours just 10 percent of what they heard but 20 percent of what they saw—twice as much. What's even more stunning, they were able to recall 65 percent of the information when it was presented in both visual and auditory form. So, by turning off your projector, you are doing your audience a great disservice. Don't do it; just make sure your slides are worth viewing.

FIGURE 1-3: My slides from 2006—getting better.

Our capacity for processing concrete images is much greater than our capacity for processing abstract knowledge. Danish science writer Tor Norretranders, in his book *The User Illusion: Cutting Consciousness Down to Size,* quotes neurophysiological research measuring the bandwidth of various human senses. The results are summarized in Figure 1-4. Notice that the second diagram is in kilobits per second, which is 1,024 times faster than bits per second" shown in the first diagram. Not only is our processing mostly unconscious, but the unconscious bandwidth for vision is 100 times more powerful than for hearing.

There's an old English saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words" and a corresponding Russian saying, "It's better to see once than to hear a hundred times." Visual aids take advantage of all this bandwidth, but, of course, only if you use pictures rather than text. If you use text projected on a screen, because processing of text is mostly conscious, you are still engaging the conscious mind; the advantage here is much less dramatic.

So leave the projector on. It helps. Still, despite the progress with slides made over the past 10 years, there are many more unanswered questions. Most of them have to do with illustration and design. Slides aren't like anything we've ever encountered before. They are not reports; they are much more condensed, focused, and concise. They are not spreadsheets; they aren't made for analysis. The reader should be able to grasp the meaning of the slide in several seconds. They are not like printed materials; they are not made for careful reading. They should grab your attention and quickly influence you. They should inform, explain, or persuade.

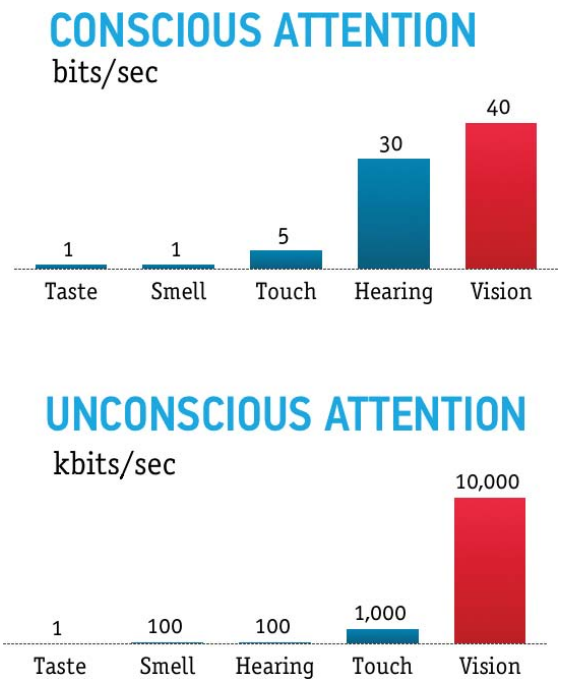

FIGURE 1-4: Conscious and unconscious bandwidth.

In order to design slides, you have to use information architecture. You have to understand how to visualize and illustrate and know how to make it all look aesthetically pleasing. This requires a lot of investment of time and effort on your part. Is it worth it? The answer largely depends on the nature of your job, that is, how much do you need to communicate and how important it is. Overall I think yes, it is well worth it. Let me give you three reasons to invest your time in design—or rather, three rebuttals to the excuses I always hear for not investing.

1. **"It's all very subjective."** I hear this a lot. No, it isn't. Of course, it isn't a precise science, but it's not wild stabs in the dark, either. There are certain rules and principles one can follow, and there are well-established tools one can use that almost guarantee better results. Companies that invest in design do dramatically better than companies that don't. Why would it be different for individuals?

   In 2004, the British Design Council, one of the world's oldest design associations with 60 years of history, released the Design Index Report. The report analyzed the impact of investments in design on the company's stock performance. The authors separated what they call "design-led" companies like Easyjet or Reuters, known for their massive investments in design, from the rest of the market. It was no surprise that those companies produced much better performance for their investors and, I'm quoting from the report,

"not just for a few weeks or months but consistently over a solid decade." The difference between the Design Index and the British Index FTSE 100, which includes the country's 100 largest companies, was a full 200 percent. In the last 10 years, the price of Microsoft's stock went down by 27 percent while the stock of Apple rose by 2,880 percent. Okay, Apple did start quite low and not all of it can be attributed to design, but almost 3,000 percent difference? Isn't design *the* secret to success?

2. **"Yeah, but I'm not a designer. Let the designer do this job."** This is known as "the division of labor argument." Although I do agree that specialization is key in any field, the problem is that design is not just "any field." Over the past 20 years, design has emerged as an interdisciplinary language. We now communicate in design. In the 10th century you had to be able to talk and to follow established civility protocols to function successfully as a member of society. People who were able to write had an advantage. By the 20th century you had to be able to write; that was the standard requirement. At this point, in developed nations, there are very few jobs you can get if you cannot write, and those you can get aren't particularly safe or well paid. Everybody knows how to write, so it is no longer a competitive advantage. My point is that design is the new writing, much like writing was the new talking once.

   The problem with leaving design to the designers is that they mostly don't care about your content. All they can do is make it pretty, but not more meaningful. And being meaningful is what communication is all about. Of course, there are good designers who actually study the subject before designing anything, but they are really expensive. For most of your presentations, you won't be having access to those kinds of designers. The argument for why you are the best designer for your slides is summarized in Figure 1-5.

If you want your ideas to have that competitive advantage, if you really want to sell your ideas to your audience, you have to learn something about design and apply it to improving your slides.

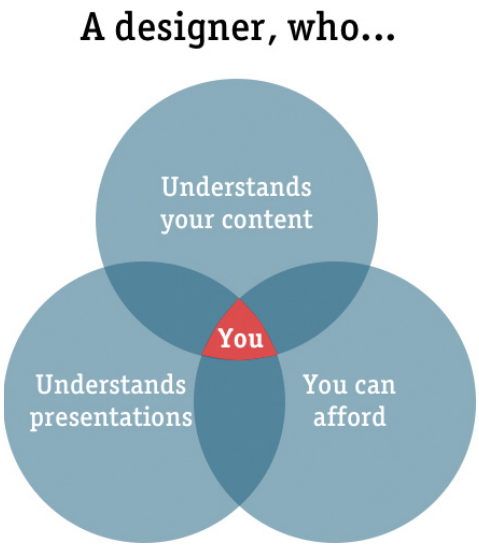

FIGURE 1-5: An ideal presentation designer is you.

It certainly makes sense to hire a professional designer or even a specialized presentation design firm if you need a sales deck that every salesperson will be using or if you are about to go for an IPO. But for most of your routine, everyday presentations, you will be the one doing it. Also, what if you have to change something in your presentation prepared by the pros? You're stuck if you don't know how. In *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary following Al Gore's presentation about climate change, we can see Gore himself tinkering with his slides. Even Al Gore does it.

3. **"Who cares, these are just slides."** Every salesman knows that polished shoes help selling. You may not work in a business where people wear formal shoes, but I think you still get what I mean. So, salespeople polish their shoes. As far as I'm concerned, slides are much more important than shoes. Why don't they get the same polish? "But I'm not a salesperson." Yes, you are! We are all in the business of selling. We sell ideas to our bosses, to our colleagues, to our employees, to our students, and to our peers. Of the slides shown in Figure 1-6, which one do you think has a better chance of selling anything?

FIGURE 1-6: Which one sells better?

The left slide is from a random presentation I pulled off the U.S. Department of Education's website. Sad, isn't it? The right slide was "designed" by me in about two minutes. I didn't change the content and even tried to preserve the original colors. I replaced the font with a somewhat more readable one and removed the busy background. Suddenly, it looks much more respectable and more dignified, and is definitely easier to read.

If the presenter doesn't care, people sense that. Some people care about the content but don't care about the look, and I think this is wrong. Beatrice Warde, an American typographer, wrote once, "People who love ideas must have a love of words, and that means, given a chance, they will take a vivid interest in the clothes which words wear."

What she meant by "clothes which words wear" was typography, but I think this quote applies to a much broader field of design, too. If you love your content, you have to care about