

The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs

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10 Ways to Sell Your Ideas the Steve Jobs Way!

In *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs: How to be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience*, communications coach and BusinessWeek.com columnist Carmine Gallo reveals the techniques that have turned the Apple CEO into one of the world's most extraordinary corporate storytellers. For more than three decades, Jobs has transformed product launches into an art form. Whether you're a CEO, manager, entrepreneur, small business owner, or sales or marketing professional, Steve Jobs has something to teach you. Above all, a Steve Jobs presentation is intended to do three things: inform, educate and entertain. Here are ten steps to accomplishing them.



Plan in Analog

Steve Jobs made his mark in the digital world of bits and bytes, but he plans presentations in the old world of pen and paper. A Steve Jobs presentation has all the elements of a great movie—heroes and villains, stunning visuals and a supporting cast. And, like a movie director, Steve Jobs “storyboards” the plot. Before you go digital and open PowerPoint, spend time brainstorming, sketching or whiteboarding in the early stages. Remember, you’re delivering a story, the narrative. Slides complement the story. Neuroscientists have found the brain gets bored easily. Steve Jobs doesn’t give his audience time to get distracted. His presentations include demonstrations, video clips, and other speakers. All of the elements are planned and collected well before the slides are created.



@Carol: I heart this.

@Tom: I'm stealing this idea!

@Sammy: When's
lunch?



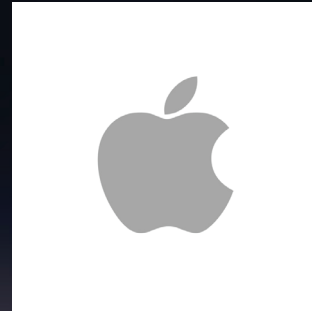
@Laura: This presentation is
awesome!

@Bob: ROTFL

@Bob: Did u eat my sandwich?

Create a Twitter-Friendly Description

Steve Jobs creates a single sentence description for every product. These headlines help the audience categorize the new product and are always concise enough to fit in a 140-character Twitter post. For example, when Jobs introduced the MacBook Air in January, 2008, he said that is it simply, "The world's thinnest notebook." That one sentence speaks volumes. Jobs will fill in the details during his presentation and on the Apple Web site, but he finds one sentence to position every product. Your listeners need to see the big picture before the details. If you can't describe your product or ideas in 140 characters or less, go back to the drawing board.



Introduce the Antagonist

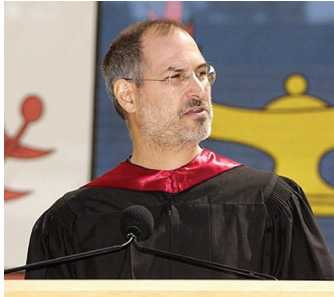
In every classic story, the hero fights the villain. The same holds true for a Steve Jobs presentation. In 1984, the villain was IBM, known as “Big Blue” at the time. Before Jobs introduced the famous 1984 television ad to a group of Apple salespeople, he created a dramatic story around it. “IBM wants it all,” he said. Apple would be the only company to stand in its way. It was very dramatic and the crowd went crazy. Branding expert Martin Lindstrom says that great brands and religions have something in common: the idea of vanquishing a shared enemy. Create a villain that allows the audience to rally around the hero—you and your product.

A “villain” doesn’t necessarily have to be a direct competitor. It can be a problem in need of a solution. When Steve Jobs introduced the iPhone in January, 2007, his presentation at Macworld focused on the problems mobile phone users were experiencing with the current technology. The iPhone, he said, would resolve those issues. Setting up the problem opens the door for the hero to save the day.

Why should I care?

Focus on Benefits

Your listeners are asking themselves one question: Why should I care? Steve Jobs sells the benefit behind every new product or feature—and he's very clear about it. Why buy an iPhone 3G? Because "it's twice as fast at half the price." What's so great about Time Capsule? "All your irreplaceable photos, videos and documents are automatically protected and easy to retrieve if they're ever lost." Even the Apple Web site focuses on benefits with top ten lists like, "10 Reasons Why You'll Love a Mac." Nobody cares about your product. They only care about how your product or service will improve their lives. Make the connection for your customers. Don't leave them guessing.



“Three stories from my life.”



Stick to the Rule of Three

Nearly every Steve Jobs presentation is divided into three parts. When Jobs returned from a health-related absence on September 9, 2009, he told the audience he would be talking about three products: iPhones, iTunes and iPods. Along the way he provides verbal guideposts such as “iPhones. The first thing I wanted to talk about today. Now, let’s move on to the second, iTunes.” The number “three” is a powerful concept in writing. Playwrights know that three is more dramatic than two; comedians know that three is funnier than four, and Steve Jobs knows that three is more memorable than six or eight. You might have twenty points to make about your product, but your audience is only capable of holding three or four points in short term memory. Give them too many points and they’ll forget everything.

If three is such an important number, why does this e-book have ten points? Because it’s a written reference tool that is not intended to be delivered verbally. If this information were delivered verbally, we would only stick to three key takeaways. Remember, Steve Jobs will send his audience to the Apple Web site for more information, but he only delivers three points in a conversation.

Sell Dreams, Not Products

Charismatic speakers like Steve Jobs are driven by a nearly messianic zeal to create new experiences. Steve Jobs doesn't sell computers. He sells the promise of a better world. When Jobs introduced the iPod in 2001, he said, "In our own small way we're going to make the world a better place." Where most people see the iPod as a music player, Jobs sees it as a tool to enrich people's lives. Of course, it's important to have great products. But passion, enthusiasm and a sense of purpose beyond the actual product will set you and your company apart.

Jobs is also passionate about his customers and he's not afraid to wear that passion on his sleeve. During a presentation in 1997 he concluded by saying, "Some people say you have to be a little crazy to buy a Mac. Well, in that craziness we see genius and that's who we make tools for." Cultivate a sense of mission. Passion, emotion and enthusiasm are grossly underestimated ingredients in professional business communications and yet they are powerful ways to motivate others. Steve Jobs once said that his goal was not to die the richest man in the cemetery. It was to go to bed at night thinking that he and his team had done something wonderful. Do something wonderful. Make your brand stand for something meaningful.

Create Visual Slides

Apple products are easy to use because they eliminate "clutter." This design philosophy applies to every Steve Jobs presentation. There are no bullet points in his presentations. Instead Jobs relies on photographs and images. Where the average PowerPoint slide has forty words, it's difficult to find seven words on ten of Jobs's slides. The technique is called "Picture Superiority:" information is more effectively recalled when text and images are combined. For example, when Steve Jobs unveiled the MacBook Air, Apple's ultra-thin notebook computer, he showed a slide of the computer fitting inside a manila inter-office envelope. That image was worth a thousand words. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication," Jobs once said. Be sophisticated. Keep it simple.

Make Numbers Meaningful

In every Apple presentation, big numbers are put into context. On September 9, 2009, Apple VP Phil Schiller said that 220 million iPods had been sold to date. He placed that number into context by saying it represented 73% of the market. He broke it down even further—and took a jab at the competition—by saying Microsoft was “pulling up the rear” with its 1% market share. Schiller learned his technique from Jobs who always puts large numbers into a context that’s relevant to his audience.

The bigger the number, the more important it is to find analogies or comparisons that make the data relevant to your audience. For example, when the United States government bailed out the U.S. economy to the tune of \$700 billion, it was too huge a number for most people to comprehend. Journalists tried to put it into context. The one example that seemed to capture the attention of the press—\$700 billion is like spending one million dollars a day since the day Christ was born. Now that’s a big number!

Use Zippy Words

Steve Jobs speaks in plain English. In fact, he has fun with words. He described the speed of the new iPhone 3G as “amazingly zippy.” Where most business presenters use words that are obtuse, vague or confusing, Jobs’s language is remarkably simple. He rarely, if ever, will use the jargon that clouds most presentations—terms like “best of breed” or “synergy.” His language is simple, clear and direct. Legendary GE CEO Jack Welch once said, “Insecure managers create complexity.” Exude confidence and security; speak simply.

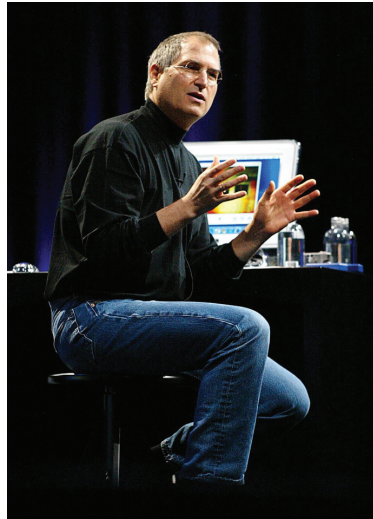
Reveal “Holy Smokes” Moment

Every Steve Jobs presentation has one moment that neuroscientists call an “Emotionally Charged Event.” The emotionally charged event is the equivalent of a mental sticky note that tells the brain, “Remember this!” For example, at Macworld 2007, Jobs could have opened the presentation by telling the audience that Apple was unveiling a new mobile phone that also played music, games, and video. Instead he built up the drama. “Today, we are introducing three revolutionary products. The first one is a widescreen iPod with touch controls. The second is a revolutionary mobile phone. And the third is a breakthrough Internet communications device...an iPod, a phone, an Internet communicator... an iPod, a phone, are you getting it? These are not three devices. This is one device!” The audience erupted in cheers because it was so unexpected and very entertaining.



One More Thing: Practice, a Lot

Steve Jobs spends hours rehearsing every facet of his presentation. Every slide is written like a piece of poetry, every presentation staged like a theatrical experience. Yes, Steve Jobs makes a presentation look effortless but that polish comes after hours and hours of grueling practice. Steve Jobs has improved his style over time. If you watch video clips of Steve Jobs's presentations going back twenty years (available on YouTube) you will see that he improves significantly with every decade. The Steve Jobs of 1984 had a lot of charisma but the Steve Jobs of 1997 was a far more polished speaker. The Steve Jobs who introduced the iPhone in 2007 was even better. Nobody is born knowing how to deliver a great PowerPoint presentation. Expert speakers hone that skill with practice.



About Carmine Gallo

Carmine Gallo is the communication skills coach for the world's most admired brands. He is a sought-after keynote speaker, seminar leader, media training specialist, crisis communication specialist, presentation expert and communications coach. His clients appear in the news every day and many would not think of launching a new product without his insight. Gallo is a former CNN business journalist and a current columnist for BusinessWeek.com. He is the author of several books including his latest, *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs: How to be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience* and *Fire Them Up! 7 Simple Secrets of Inspiring Leaders*.

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