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# Communicate For Impact Reference Guide

BELOW ARE A FEW PAGES TO HELP  
GUIDE YOUR CASE SOLUTIONS.

APPLE'S LEARNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT TEAM WILL GO OVER IT  
AGAIN ON FRIDAY.



The University of Texas at Austin  
McCombs School of Business



# Communicate for Impact

## Practical Tips

**“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”**

**Hans Hofmann**, *German-born American painter*

Great presentations start with planning and preparation. To help you get organized let’s review some recommendations that will help you gather all the essential elements needed to net it out.

## Know your Audience

Having a solid understanding of your audience, their needs and expectations is critical to delivering a high quality presentation. Before creating your communication, start by thinking about your audience’s needs first. This allows you to focus the message and make it as relevant as possible.

Understanding your audience will not only help you prepare your content, it can also help you anticipate how they will react to the message and what questions they might have.



**Knowledge**

What is their familiarity and perspective on the issue?  
How much details or context do they need?

**Interests**

What do they care about?  
What is important to them?

**Needs**

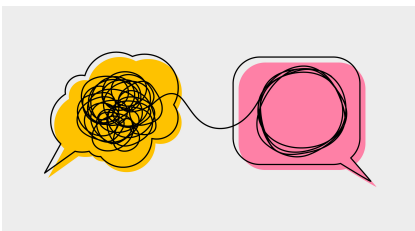
What information do they need to move to the next step?  
What data would be meaningful to them.

**Concerns**

What questions will they ask?  
What might concern them?

**Expectations**

What are they expecting from us?  
What insight should we provide?



Edit everything that is possible down to what is essential

## Net It Out

### Purpose

- What is your desired outcome?
- What is the single most important point you must communicate in your presentation?
- What action do you want to happen as a result of it?

### Key Points

What are (up to three) the key points you will cover based on your purpose and audience?

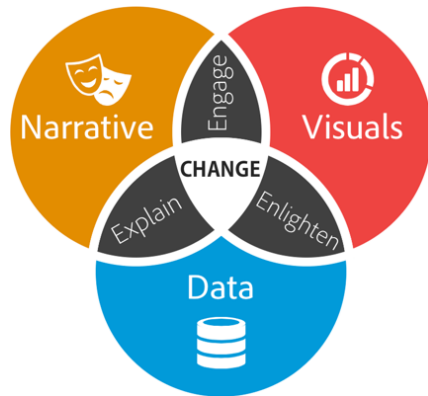
### Keep it Simple

There may be moments where time or environment prohibits you from delivering your whole presentation. Develop a 30 seconds elevator pitch version to narrow it down to what is absolutely essential.

### How will Data Support your Story?

Your data will largely determine the type of story you can tell. But every story needs a Big Idea—one key message you want to communicate, a distinct point of view.

- What are you trying to explain?
- What insights should you share?
- What data points will support your narrative?



## Craft Your Story

Storytelling is a powerful way to engage your audience and help them understand your logic and approach. When paired with the right data, storytelling helps you communicate your insights effectively, giving your data meaning.

**Relevant Data:** When you combine the right visuals and narrative with the right data, you have a data story that provides context, which augments our understanding and drives action.

**Appealing Visuals:** Data visualizations focus attention and drive the audience to insights they wouldn't see without charts or graphs. Keep it simple. Remove clutter to minimize cognitive load.

**Engaging Narrative:** A narrative coupled with the right data, sets the context and helps explain what's happening in the data and why a particular insight is important. Think about the order in which you want your audience to experience your story.

### Narrative Flow

One way to order the story is **chronologically**. Identify a problem, gather data to better understand the situation, analyze the data (look at it one way, look at it another way, tie in other things to see if they had an impact, etc.), emerge with a finding or solution, and based on this have a recommended action.

Another strategy is to **lead with the ending**. Start with the call to action: what you need your audience to know or do. Then back up into the critical pieces of the story that support it. Leading with the call to action has the additional benefit of making it immediately clear to your audience what role they are meant to play or what lens they should have on as they consider the rest of your presentation or communication, and why they should keep listening.

# Craft Your Story

## Anatomy of a Presentation

Using this format for your Presentation gives you a simple framework to address most of the aspects of good presentations, as well as addressing the needs of your audience.

By following this format, you should be able to filter out and consider only those elements that are going to be absolutely critical to your presentation


Topic	Behavior	Impact
<b>Introductions</b>	Introduce topic Introduce yourself	Understanding why they are there, and what will be covered
<b>Boundaries</b>	Share agenda Share assumptions/context When to ask questions Out of scope topics or discussions	Keeps things on track Understanding of how to participate Self-regulate out of scope discussions
<b>Story</b>	Define the topic Explain obstacles Propose solution Support with data / examples	Understanding of topic Confidence in analysis Builds credibility Confidence in conclusion
<b>Alignment</b>	Recap presentation Ask for / Answer questions Acknowledge concerns	Opportunity for audience to reconnect Concerns or misunderstandings addressed
<b>Next Steps</b> (if applicable)	List action items Assign responsibilities Schedule dates Follow up meetings	Understanding of what, when and who - takes action


## Tips

### Know Your Stuff

- Answer the question with intentional statements. Keep it **short**.
- **Where** did you get your data?
- **Know** your content. Keep your “presenter’s notes” in your head and backup slides ready if needed. Organize comms in a way that makes it easy for the audience to follow.
- **Anticipate** questions and include those details proactively.

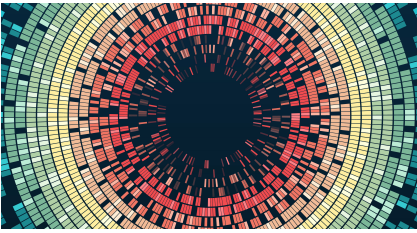
### Format

- Organize information in a **logical** flow.
- Write in the active voice, be **direct** and **concise**.
- Use bullets and bold fonts to group topics (No more than 5 bullets per slide).
- Do not use a font size smaller than 26, otherwise split content to another slide.
- Use charts and tables to make sense of data.
  - Make sure your chart is legible, if someone can’t read it from 10 feet away, figure out a different view.
- **Highlight** key data points to focus attention
  - **Utilize box outlines** or circled numbers  to draw your audience to different points on the slide/chart/table

 Know what slides to cut if time is short

### Presentation

- Tell a **story**, use visuals to assist with this.
- **Project** your voice and **articulate** clearly.
- Make it **conversational**, no canned dialogue. **Don’t read the slides!**
- Rather than memorizing a “speech”, outline points you want to make during the presentation.
- **Read** your audience. If they look confused, provide more context/detail. If they are following, move on to the next point.



# Data Visualization

## Use Cases

- When you want to quickly identify a pattern in a set of data, such as similarities and differences.
- When you quickly wish to spot trends or exceptions in a set of data.

## Best Practices

A good data visualization should have a simple message, be clear and honest, show context and invite action.

Improve your visuals, by only showing what is important to the audience, by sorting and highlighting appropriately and adding annotations and reference lines.

## Recommended Visualizations

- Heat maps | best for overall status or alerts (don't mix).
- Bar charts | best for comparing discrete categories.
- Stacked Bar charts | good for comparing proportions / attainment.
- Dot plots | useful where differences are small / do not need to start at zero.
- Line charts | best for time series / connections.

## Visualizations to Avoid

- 3D Charts | difficult to visualize correctly.
- Pie or Donut Charts | difficult to visualize correctly.
- Combo charts | difficult to visualize correctly.

# Data Visualization

## Layout and styling

- Are grid lines necessary? If no, remove. If yes, make sure they are not too heavy (use gray).
- (Bar charts): Do my bars start from 0? If not, redo to show the full range of values.
- Are there too many lines or elements? If yes, consider breaking up into multiple charts or small multiples.
- Multiple charts: are the axis limits consistent?
- Is anything 3D? If yes and the data is not 3D, remove any 3D styling
- Are my elements aligned? Remove distractions by aligning elements

## Annotations and Labels

- Is a label or legend redundant? If yes, remove.
- Am I labeling too many things? Remove what's unnecessary, limit distractions.
- Are my axes labeled? Are units specified? Numbers without units are dangerous.
- Do I have a legend? If yes, can I remove it and label data directly instead?
- How many font sizes and weights am I using? (rule of thumb: no more than 3 distinct ones)
- Is there a reference value (spec or limit)? Is this shown directly on the chart for easy comparison?
- Is my font choice or font weight distracting? Make sure text isn't diverting attention.

## Colors

- Does each color have a purpose? If not, strip away the color.
- What do I notice first about the visualization? Can I adjust color to focus attention?
- Do I need to color each mark individually, or can I limit color use to what's important?
- Am I using too many colors? Use no more than 8 for qualitative data, ideally 3-5.
- Can I distinguish among colors shown? If not, add text annotations.
- Does my color scale make sense for the data I'm showing? Qualitative scales versus quantitative; sequential versus diverging (e.g. above/below target).
- Can my colors be confused by a color blind audience? If yes, change to a new one.
- Am I using red for something positive? Reserve red for negative connotations, and take into account other cultural conventions.





"I passionately believe that it's not just what you say that counts, it's also how you say it—that the success of your argument critically depends on your manner of presenting it."

Alain de Botton, *writer and philosopher*

## Focus on Executive Presence

Executive presence best practices can be categorized into these 7Cs: Composure, Connection, Charisma, Confidence, Credibility, Clarity, and Conciseness. Let's review best practices in each category.

### Composure

Composure brings a calm energy to your presentation. But we can all get nervous, no matter how often you present! Here are some best practices to calm your nerves, depending on what symptoms you experience.

- **Get the nervous shakes?** Before going into the room, open your Mindfulness app and do a guided breathing exercise. Breathing has proven to calm your nerves! If you're still nervous, hold the podium or your hands to keep them steady.
- **Heart racing?** Do jumping jacks beforehand to put yourself in the same physical shape as when you're nervous.
- **Dry mouth?** Bring water with you so you can take a sip and pause when needed.
- **Get sweaty?** Wear a shirt that has breathable fabric so you don't worry about sweat stains (which will make you even more sweaty!).
- **Indigestion?** Avoid carbonated beverages before you present to avoid burping.
- **Nauseous?** Eat and hydrate beforehand so you don't add to the nausea.

### Connection

While preparing to present, gain a sense of how others perceive you so you can work around any blind spots. To do this, seek out trusted feedback. Present to trusted peers and ask them for specific feedback on how you can be even better.

*Changing your delivery to meet the audience's needs helps you empathize and connect with them.*

- Seem bored? Raise your voice to get their attention.
- Seem distracted? Pull them in with a question.
- Get too many questions? Address them if you can. If you're short on time, say you'll pause at the end as you're confident you'll get to their questions with what you have prepared.
- Proceed even when something unexpected happens.

## Charisma

Despite what you may have been told in the past, charisma, like any other skill, can be developed with practice. Having charisma goes beyond what you say. It's about your ability to resonate and connect with others on an emotional level, leaving a lasting impact on them that lasts after you finish presenting.

To build your charisma, focus on developing emotional intelligence, honing your persuasive communication skills, and showing others your real, authentic self.

While presenting, be dynamic, by emphasizing certain points, pausing, slowing down, and/or changing volume. Using contrast in pauses, volume, and pace will keep the audience interested and engaged.

## Confidence

Confidence instills trust in your audience and in yourself. Practicing will help you feel more prepared.

First, video yourself giving your presentation. Then listen to it 3 more times:

1. Watch without the sound to analyze your facial/body expressions.
2. Listen without the visual to analyze how you sound.
3. Then watch and listen altogether.

You'll pick out different areas of focus each time you watch!

To continue building trust with your audience, show them the real you. Here are some best practices on how to do so:

- Bring in personal qualities to enhance the presentation.



- Have the same demeanor and personality whether your audience is one person or 100.
- Is relatable to the audience as an approachable, friendly person.
- Lastly, smile. This will show your desire and readiness to talk, even if you don't feel like it on the inside. Plus, it helps relax your body by releasing endorphins!

## Credibility

Prepare by looking introspectively. Ask yourself the following questions to remind yourself that you are the right person to give this presentation:

- How do you see this topic differently?
- What experience do you have that no one else has?
- What area of expertise do you bring to this?
- What personality traits will come through while you're presenting?
- Who has endorsed you to give this presentation?
- When was a time that you presented well in the past? what did you do then that you can do again?

Then, while presenting, bring up some of your answers to make it clear why you are the best person to deliver this presentation.

## Clarity

It's hard for someone to be confident in what you're presenting if they aren't clear on what, exactly, you are speaking about. You are there to deliver a message and the audience is there to receive it. Anything that interferes is unnecessary "noise." Noise can come from many sources: Your words could be vague. Your slides could be too distracting. Your message could be delivered in an illogical order. The solution is know your audience to provide the right context, craft a compelling story using a narrative flow, and add in effective visuals.

- Here are some other best practices:

- Deliver your point of the message without wandering or being vague.
- Use analogies, metaphors, and stories to show your understanding of the topic.

Take up space while presenting. Walk around, use your hands to emphasize your points, and point to your Keynote when appropriate. Using your body to connect what you're saying to how you're moving will make your message more clear.

## Conciseness

While presenting, articulate what you want to say with authority and conciseness. No one knows what you planned to say except you, so if you go "off script", that's ok! The more you practice, the more netted out you'll be able to be.

If you find yourself using filler words (ex: er, ah, ya know, kind of...) a tip for fixing these is to start to pause every time you catch yourself saying one. Pausing is OK. It helps the audience think, too, and gives you time to look around and observe.