

# Five Steps to Improve Your Leadership Talks

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An Introduction to The **Powerful Presentation Process**

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Your Essential Leadership  
Communications Tool Kit

Benjamin Ball  
associates   
pitch | present | persuade

Having the skills to deliver Powerful Presentations isn't a nice to have – it's a must have. Leaders have a simple choice: be an effective communicator, or get left behind.

“Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the commonplace simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity.”

Charles Mingus

This guide will help you get started by making you question how you present now.

Some readers may think it's too difficult to change, and therefore carry on with their current ways.

Others will be inspired, feeling that these steps are what they have been missing all along.

We've written this guide for the business leader who wants to deliver more than the average presentation. Perhaps you have seen others achieve great results with their presentations and talks – but don't know where to start. Great communication is increasingly important, and the principles we share here are enduring ones. We are not saying it will be easy. But by reading this you are making the first steps to delivering Powerful Presentations.

## What is a Powerful Presentation?

A Powerful Presentation pulls your audience closer to your objective. You change the hearts and minds of the audience. You do this through three things: the messages you use, the structure of your talk and your delivery style.

Most people have never learnt how to present well. That's why their presentations are ineffective. That's also why so many business leaders hate delivering them, and why audiences rarely enjoy sitting through them.

A **Powerful** Presentation is:

- ✓ Interesting
- ✓ Lively
- ✓ Inspirational
- ✓ Memorable
- ✓ Repeatable
- ✓ Persuasive

A **Bad** Presentation is:

- ✗ Dull
- ✗ Forgettable
- ✗ Predictable
- ✗ Irrelevant
- ✗ Patronising
- ✗ Unengaging

According to Forbes magazine:

20%

of business leaders say they'd do anything to avoid giving a presentation

70%

say presentation skills are critical for career success

“Communication is the most important skill any leader can possess.”

Richard Branson

# Is it Worth Becoming a Powerful Presenter?

# 74%

of adults suffer from speech anxiety.

National Institute of Mental Health

Learning how to create and deliver a Powerful Presentation is an investment with an ROI, not a marketing or L&D expense.

With Powerful Presentations it is easier to engage, inspire and drive positive change.

#### Powerful Presentations:

- ✓ Are built for your audience
- ✓ Include your listeners
- ✓ Feel interactive
- ✓ Encourage people to get involved
- ✓ Answer questions and solve problems

#### Poor Presentations:

- ✗ Waste time
- ✗ Annoy people
- ✗ Frustrate listeners
- ✗ Put up barriers
- ✗ Feel random

Business leaders need to communicate clearly – and in a way that grabs attention. Audiences want engaging content that is useful to them.

# A Fundamental Change in How to Approach Presentations

## A warning before you begin.

Each step in the following process is important. While you may be familiar with some or all of the steps, it is important to remember that you need to adopt all of them to transform your presentations into Powerful Presentations. Each step builds on the previous one, to create an effective result. That is how you will achieve and maintain success.

“It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.”

Mark Twain

## A Note on PowerPoint

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**“My best advice is to not start in PowerPoint. Presentation tools force you to think through information linearly.”**

Nancy Duarte,  
presentation  
design guru

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People often confuse creating PowerPoint slides with “preparing a presentation”. They feel they are making progress by spending hours in front of a screen, designing slide after slide. But that approach is like making a movie by pressing ‘record’ on a video camera, before you have a story or a script.

**A Powerful Presentation is an illustrated talk, not a series of narrated slides.**

As you become a Powerful Presenter, you’ll find that you leave creating your slides until late in the process – if you use slides at all, that is.

# Five Steps to Improve Your Leadership Talks

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**1. Lay a Firm Foundation**

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**2. Build Using a Strong Structure**

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**3. Decorate with Delicious Language**

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**4. Edit and Practice. Repeat.**

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**5. Decide if Visual Aids are Necessary**

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**BONUS STEP: Speak to the Heart **and** to the Head**

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# 1 Lay a Firm Foundation

AIM stands for

**A**udience

**I**ntent

**M**essage

A great leadership presentation starts with great planning.

One of the most common questions from our clients is:

**“How should I start my presentation?”**

When we hear this question we usually discover that the presentation is not planned well. All great talks are built on solid footings. They have clear messages, they know what they want to achieve and they are constructed to achieve just that. The AIM planning process that we advocate will help you develop Powerful Presentations.

**“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”**

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Plan your presentation with AIM

# A

Plan around your  
**AUDIENCE**

Start with these key questions:

- What does this audience want to hear?
- What will grab their attention?
- What language and which references will work best for them?
- How can I make it memorable for them?

# I

Be clear on your  
**INTENT**

These questions will define your purpose precisely:

- Why am I giving this talk?
- What do I want my audience to do after the talk?
- How will I know it has been a success?

# M

Identify one big  
**MESSAGE**

And these questions will help you prepare your message:

- What do I want someone to say after the talk?
- How will people describe my talk?
- How could I sum up my talk in one line?

# 2

## Build Using a Strong Structure

**“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”**

Colin Powell

A great talk structure is like a drainage system. It's essential, but you shouldn't notice it's there. When you become aware of it, it's usually because there's something wrong.

Too many talks either have no structure or it's too obvious. They either have no drain or it is like standing next to an open sewer.

A well-organised talk makes it easier for the listener and easier for the speaker. You lead the listener from point to point and they feel happy to follow. Getting it right is both an art and a science.

You can structure your presentation in many ways, including with narrative and stories.

### How does a Powerful Presentation start?

Some powerful ways to start your presentation include:

- Asking a thought-provoking question
- Telling a relevant story
- Revealing a shocking statistic

Whichever you choose, it needs to:

- Grab interest
- Show the audience why they should listen
- Introduce the topic
- Create intrigue

### Build your talk using a logical flow

During your talk, a logical format will make your talk easier to create and listen to. Fortunately humans have had thousands of years to perfect structures for talks.

For example, you could use:

- Future position, present position, how we get there
- The hero's journey
- Past, present, future
- A series of questions

### End your talk with a lasting impression

After your start, the end is the most important part of the talk. Everything you say should build to your final words. What must your finale achieve?

- Summarise key points (crucial in longer talks)
- Conclude with a satisfying finish
- Leave the audience with a powerful lasting memory

Some ways you could do this include:

- Looping back to a point you made, or a story you began, at the start
- Challenging your audience to take action
- Repeating your key message

# 3

## Decorate with Delicious Language

**“Don’t tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.”**

Chekhov

It is easy to be grey and dull. Most presentations are. But when you speak of the crackle of an open fire, the smell of wet dog, or the dazzling gold of Tutankhamen, you engage people with all their senses. You can grab their minds, play with their emotions and tease their view of the world.

Unfortunately we are rarely shown how to use the tools of powerful language. But the skills of rhetoric are available to anyone who wants them. Using a few of the techniques on the following page can transform your talks from dull grey to sparking silver.

There are dozens of rhetorical tools you can use. These are three of the most practical ways to liven your talk:

### 1. Discover the magic of metaphors

Analogies and metaphors help audiences understand complicated concepts by using familiar ideas in new ways. For example, when Steve Jobs was trying to explain what his technology could do for the world, he said that computers are the “equivalent of a bicycle for our minds”.

**“The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius.”**

Aristotle

### 2. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat

Repetition looks bad when written but is essential when spoken. Brief recaps at the end of each section act like checkpoints on the journey, ensuring understanding with succinct summaries of each point.

**“If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time — a tremendous whack.”**

Winston Churchill

### 3. Use the power of three

Our brains love sets of three. It’s no coincidence that in our childhood stories bears, pigs and trolls featured in threes. Or that advertisers ask you to Just Do It and to Work, Rest and Play while Tony Blair definitely said Education, Education, Education.

**“Liberté. Egalite. Fraternite.”**  
Maximillian Robespierre

**“I came, I saw, I conquered.”**  
Julius Caesar

**“By the people, of the people, for the people.”**  
Abraham Lincoln

## 4

## Edit and Practice. Repeat.

*“I ponder my text until I’m tired of it. And then I start again. And when I’ve done seven or eight versions, at some point I can’t go further. So I tell myself it’s fine.”*

Georges Brassens

The difference between a Powerful Presenter and a poor presenter is generally practice and editing. It is about testing your material and making it better, rather than slavishly remembering the first draft. Practice means cutting, changing, fixing, adjusting and improving.

Great speakers spend hours working on their content. First, they get the ideas right, then the words, then the rhythm. This process makes the content easier to deliver – and more impactful.

**The longer you spend preparing,  
the better your talk will be.**

*“Champions keep playing until they get it right.”*

Billie Jean King

## 5

## Decide if Visual Aids are Necessary

Presidents don’t do PowerPoint

So, you’ve created a great talk, refined it and practiced it.

Now – and only now – is the time to consider whether visual aids will help support your message. Many people are much better communicators with few or no visual aids. Your rule of thumb should be: only use a visual aid if it enhances the audience’s experience.

Are you creating a handout or a visual aid? They are not the same thing. Visual aids should convey your point with a two-second glance. Handouts should be as easy to read as a newspaper.

**Techniques for creating great slides:**

- Tell your messages through headlines and sub-headings
- Use a consistent style throughout
- Avoid dull templates

**Ideas for powerful visual aids include:**

- Full page images
- Physical objects
- Video
- Repeated and consistent ideas

*“Design is not just what it looks and feels like. Design is how it works.”*

Steve Jobs

## BONUS STEP

# Speak to the Heart and to the Head

**“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”**

Nelson Mandela

Aristotle described the three modes of persuasion as logos, ethos and pathos. This means you need to seem logical, be credible and appeal to emotions in order to persuade.

In business we tend to forget how important emotional appeals really are. Your audience may find you credible and agree with your logic. But without emotional engagement they won't act on your message.

In addition, we mirror the emotions of others. That's why we feel uncomfortable when a speaker looks uncomfortable, and feel relaxed if they seem that way too. If you speak about your ideas in a monotone, your audience will feel bored. Sounding passionate about your topic will help listeners to become and remain engaged.

## FAQs

### 1. Can I overcome public speaking nerves?

Yes. Surprisingly easily. You can rid yourself of self-conscious and awkward feelings with some simple techniques. It does not take long and can completely transform how much you enjoy speaking in front of audiences.

### 2. I have a boring subject, can it be made interesting?

Any subject can be made fascinating. We have helped CFOs discover their inner actor and IT directors bring their technical world to life. Using the ideas above and a proven process, we pride ourselves on breathing life into the “dullest” subjects.

### 3. How long does it take to get better?

We can make a remarkable impact in just half a day of intensive coaching. However, the best communicators are like top athletes – they constantly practice, refine and improve their skills. We are your coach, challenging and supporting you to become the best you can be. The top CEOs we work with invite us back at least once a year to help build on their skills and polish their content and delivery for important events or talks.

### 4. What if I have English as a second language?

That's no problem. English is a wonderfully flexible language and you can be a strong communicator even with a limited vocabulary. In fact, research shows those who use simpler words and sentence structures tend to be perceived as more authoritative communicators.

### 5. Are speeches, presentations and pitches the same?

Yes, in the way that badminton, tennis and squash are the same. There are many similarities, and you can use similar skills for each. But there are fundamental differences that you need to learn in order to win at any of them.

### 6. Can I stop saying “Um” and “Err?”

Definitely. You can train your brain to eliminate these verbal ticks. We have a simple trick that, for most people, takes about 10 minutes. Afterwards you sound much more authoritative and speak with greater gravitas. Give us a call and we'll teach you how to get rid of your 'um's and 'err's forever.

**“I honestly thought it was the most valuable 3 hours I've spent with anyone in a long time.”**

Mick May, CEO, Blue Sky

# About Benjamin Ball Associates

Benjamin Ball Associates has won:

**BEST FOR  
FINANCIAL  
PRESENTATION  
TRAINING 2016  
– UK**

2016 Wealth & Money  
Management Awards

**BEST FOR  
INVESTOR  
PRESENTATION  
COACHING – UK**

2016 Alternative  
Investment Awards

## We believe that anyone can become a Powerful Presenter.

We have transformed anxious, un-engaging and uninspiring leaders into effective speakers within just a few days of training.

With ongoing training, we help our clients develop into world-class orators.

We cover the end-to-end process of presenting and public speaking including: preparing, structuring, and crafting a narrative; using language, stories and visual aids effectively; connecting with an audience and delivering with impact.

Each of our trainers has over 10 years' experience working with CEOs and senior executives at blue-chip clients in the UK and internationally.

Our clients include Microsoft, HSBC, The Prince's Trust and many small organisations, too. They recommend us highly – 80% of our new business comes from referrals.

Visit [benjaminball.com](http://benjaminball.com) for more information, contact Louise on +44 (0)20 7018 0922 or email [louise@benjaminball.com](mailto:louise@benjaminball.com).

**“BBA transformed an ordinary set of slides into a great presentation with a clear message. Highly recommended.”**

Nick Rogers, CEO, IPSO Ventures

# The BBA Powerful Presentation Process

## Your Leadership Communications Checklist

Before your next presentation, use this checklist to work out if you are ready. Aim to score 12/12.

### Lay a Firm Foundation

Can you picture your audience?

Why exactly are you preparing this?

What's your main message?

### Use a Strong Structure

Does it start with a bang?

Have you used a logical flow?

Do you leave a lasting impression?

### Decorate and Refine for Impact

Do you use short words and sentences?

Is your language clear and engaging?

Do you have enough repetition?

Do you speak to the head and heart?

Have you practiced enough?

Are your visual aids effective?

### YOUR TOTAL SCORE

/ 12

Call today and transform how you pitch,  
present and persuade: +44 (0)20 7018 0922

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# DO YOU WANT TO BECOME A POWERFUL PRESENTER?

We can help you become a Powerful Presenter. We'll help you craft your message, refine your content and rehearse your delivery. You'll feel calm and confident when preparing and delivering presentations.

For 1:1 coaching or in-house training for your entire team, we typically come to your offices for your convenience.

We use cameras during our training as this speeds up the process and helps you make lasting improvements.

Call us today to discuss your upcoming speech or presentation and how we can help. Speak to Louise on **+44 (0)20 7018 0922** or email **[louise@benjaminball.com](mailto:louise@benjaminball.com)**



“Transformed both the quality of my content and the effectiveness of my delivery. I highly recommend BBA.”

Martin Legault, VP and General Manager, National Bank of Canada

## CALL US TODAY

Speak to us about your communication challenges. We'll show you the best training options available for your exact needs.

### Benjamin Ball Associates

1 King Street, London EC2V 8AU

+44 (0)20 7018 0922 | [louise@benjaminball.com](mailto:louise@benjaminball.com)

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