

REDUCE YOUR POWERPOINT EMISSIONS NOW!

STOP GLOBAL BORING

How to Create Engaging Presentations
that Motivate Audiences to Action

Kathy McAfee

Foreword by Arthur Samuel Joseph, author of *Vocal Leadership*



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*When the student is ready,
the teacher will appear.*

— BUDDHIST PROVERB

*This book is dedicated to all of my wonderful,
generous, and trusting clients. You have been the
best students and my greatest teachers.*

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FOREWORD

As I began to reflect on the foreword I would write that would inspire the reader and introduce the rigorous, integral, magnificent teacher/leader/creative force that Kathy is, my thought was to simply quote the source herself, e.g.:

- “There’s a bottom line to everything in business. Your ability to effectively present affects the bottom line.”
- “Engaging means to have an often mysterious or magical power to attract and the ability to hold attention...”
- “It’s not what you say, it’s what they think you mean.”

And, so many others. I also recognize that as you begin reading this book, you will find your own motivating quotes and call to action.

Instead of offering you a foreword of quotes, I would rather tell you a story, about how I first met Kathy. (By the way, you will learn how to be a wonderful storyteller when you read *Stop Global Boring*.) Kathy sent me an invitation to connect with her on LinkedIn. She explained that for several years she had been following my work; had purchased everything I had published/produced; had practiced my work, internalized it, and realized it was time to study directly with me. We met at my office in New York and had an extended, intense comprehensive lesson, which she recorded. There were no emotional barriers, no roadblocks. Regardless of the significant teacher/businesswoman Kathy is, she allowed herself, as I say in Vocal Awareness, “to Surrender to the Work.” As I said earlier, Kathy is an integral force and an impeccable student who truly wants to learn and assimilate whatever it is she aspires to learn. Post our first lesson, as Kathy deepened in her embodiment of Vocal Awareness and wanted to factor her learning into her own teaching, she always asked permission because, in addition to everything else, she is a truly respectful woman.

I in part share this story because what you will learn from this wonderful book is written and taught by a woman who cares deeply about *your* success. Whether you learn from this book or have the privilege of learning personally from her in a one-on-one session or in the myriad corporate seminars she teaches around the globe, you will never experience arrogance, territoriality, or any hierarchical nature to her teaching—how often do you have the opportunity to experience this safe harbor in any business environment today?

Stop Global Boring is a highly creative, comprehensive, meticulous book on everything you need to know about being the most effective communicator/leader—personally or professionally—you can be. What Kathy sometimes says may seem obvious and that is the point—everything she is teaching is accessible, but you likely do not know it or do it. You may find yourself saying, “Gee, why didn’t I think of that?”

Every chapter begins with a relevant story because Kathy is a masterful storyteller. She is, however, not weaving

fairytale, but offering pragmatic stories that will directly impact you personally and professionally.

Kathy will be your guide on a journey of self-discovery that will enhance, as I say in *Vocal Awareness*, “the message and the messenger.”

Arthur Samuel Joseph, M.A.

Founder/Chairman

Vocal Awareness Institute, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

The lights are turned down. You stand at the front of the room, ready to deliver your presentation. The PowerPoint that you and your team labored over for three weeks appears on the screen behind you. You expect to wow and engage your audience, but instead, just like the lighting, the energy level is low in the room. You talk to the screen. Your voice drops. Your audience drifts off to sleep.

What happened? The audience didn't respond the way you expected. The PowerPoint you so painstakingly created—with its cool animation, colorful charts, and fact-infused bullet points—did not change the world. In fact, it didn't even hold the attention of the people in front of you.

Congratulations, my friend. Like thousands of other well-intentioned professionals around the globe, you have

contributed to a growing epidemic infiltrating boardrooms, auditoriums, classrooms, and meetings around the world. That epidemic has a name: Global Boring.

The massive swarm of thirty million PowerPoint slide decks shown each day sucks the life out of audiences around the world, and bores million-dollar holes in company budgets by wasting valuable time. PowerPoint is the industry standard for presentations; however, it is also counterproductive and highly expensive. According to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled “Tips for PowerPoint: Go Easy on the Text; Please, Spare Us” (Sandberg, 2006):

- Bad PowerPoint presentations cost companies \$252 million a day in wasted time.
- PowerPoint routinely disrupts and trivializes content.
- PowerPoint is boring. The phrase “death by PowerPoint” is a common corporate expression.
- PowerPoint is a great crutch.

The number of well-meaning but boring presentations has no doubt increased since 2006 thanks to the advent of programs like Prezi, Keynote for Mac, and other

technological enhancements in presentation software.

When you abdicate your communication power to PowerPoint and other presentation programs, you run the risk of draining budgets, missing the mark on important messaging, and disengaging your audience. Where's the power in that, and what point are you really making? Think of it this way. Relying on PowerPoint slides to tell your story is like relying on a LiteBrite to paint a landscape. While each tool visually supports some details, when using PowerPoint, you need to supplement the details verbally to make sure you offer a complete, accurate, and holistic picture of what you're trying to convey.

A Time for Change

What happens when the lights in the meeting room stay bright? When you return to the fundamentals of public speaking and choose an analog approach without using PowerPoint? When you stop global boring and avoid death by PowerPoint?

What happens is that something powerful and impactful

occurs. Your presentation generates new energy. You discover more creative and innovative ways to deliver your message. You engage your audience. You deliver your key message. When you forego PowerPoint and rely on your unique style of delivery, you get the results you desire.

Stop boring people. Instead, make them want to listen to what you have to say, and then motivate them to follow through on the actions and behaviors you inspire.

Making It Stick

In what ways can you creatively deliver a message and get people to remember it? How can you move your audience without relying on a one-dimensional approach like PowerPoint? There are multiple ways. Managers, business leaders, and executives, when asked to brainstorm creative ideas to engage audiences, came up with telling a story, reading a passage from a book, using a prop, creating a contest, and writing on the back of a napkin, to name just a few. The key is to start with a blank slate and think about the best ways to communicate your message. You can default to PowerPoint as a supporting tool *only* if doing so

enhances the audience's ability to understand what you have to say. PowerPoint is nothing more than an option for visual support. It's not your presentation. You are the presentation. You are the messenger with the message. It's time you take your rightful place. Step aside, PowerPoint.

How This Book Serves as Your Lifeline to More Powerful Presentations

As a lifetime student of presentation, and as an executive presentation coach and trainer for more than ten years, I've developed a better way to deliver messages to an audience with better results. My formula for presentation success is high touch, low tech—tapping into the creative power of the individual and playing to each person's unique strengths and gifts. It makes no sense for every person to look like, sound like, and act like the same model of presentation perfection. There was and will only ever be one Steve Jobs. While we admire his presentation prowess, we must work to discover our own authentic style.

And, just as with Steve Jobs, there is and will only ever

be one you. Hiding behind your PowerPoint slides only diminishes your brilliance and delays your development as an effective communicator.

The Time to Stop Global Boring is Now

This book will help you to:

- Advance your presentation skills and build your confidence so you produce greater results without depending on PowerPoint.
- Shine a spotlight on your professional competencies as you learn to project more of your passion, talent, and influence when presenting your ideas to others, and move you ahead in your career, business, and life.
- Gain the insights, resources, and motivation needed to become a high-engagement presenter by reducing your dependency on technical crutches.
- Eliminate bad habits that block your path to becoming an effective communicator and a powerful presenter.

- Challenge you to stop global boring immediately by reducing your PowerPoint emissions and start engaging your audience.

In the following chapters, you will discover new ways to channel your creativity to more effectively communicate, influence, and motivate audiences into action. The new knowledge and skills you acquire will be useful not only in the presentation arena, but in many other aspects of your work and life where effective communication is essential, including leadership.

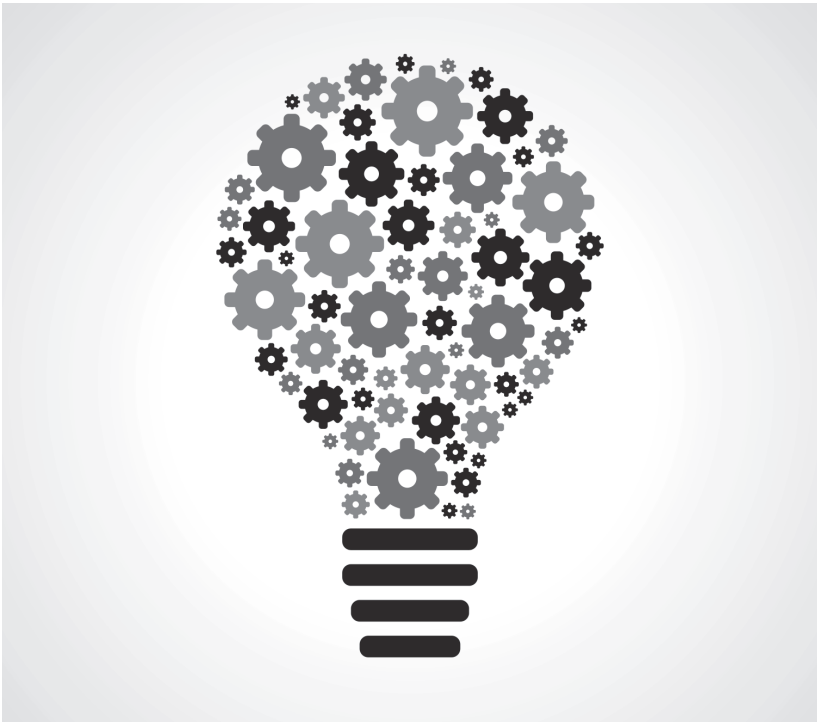
Facing the Global Boring Crisis

There is too much noise and competition in the marketplace, as well as in the workplace. Effective communications, combined with creativity, can positively change your presentation, and your outcome. If you choose to go PowerPoint-free—or at least commit to reduce strategically your dependency on this overused tool—you will see benefits. The lights will come back on, and impact, action, and outcome will result.

Turn the page to get started on your path to becoming the best presenter you can be.

SECTION 1

PLAN



CHAPTER 1

Your Next Presentation: What's It Worth to You?

Jim faced a moment of truth in his career coupled with a total confidence melt down. He convinced himself that he was about to lose his job. Worse than being fired, his biggest concern was letting down his team. What created such angst for a seasoned sales executive with years of stellar performance? The threat came in the form of an invitation to give a short presentation at his company's global summit.

Jim did not fear speaking or presenting; in fact, he quite enjoyed it. He had his own unique style that appealed to his U.S. audiences. An avid car collector and sportsman, Jim frequently incorporated images and stories from his

personal hobbies to enliven his presentation. His style worked well—until now.

I got the phone call on a Thursday morning. The request was for an emergency presentation coaching session for a key executive of a global company. The executive, Jim, was flying out to Paris, France, the following Wednesday and he was a wreck. When could I get there?

We scheduled a four-hour coaching session for Monday afternoon. When I walked into the meeting room, I saw seven people sitting around the conference table. Three women were intensely working on laptop computers, building PowerPoint slides. The woman who hired me, plus a public relations specialist, also sat in the room. Finally, there were two men—one was my client Jim and the other man appeared to be sabotaging Jim. From his undermining comments, sidebar remarks, and suspicious body language, I concluded that he wanted to go to the Paris summit in place of Jim. His tactics acted like poison, slowly weakening Jim and further dissolving his self-confidence. Job number one was to find a polite way to remove the saboteur so I could work with Jim and rebuild his confidence.

Once I removed the poisonous colleague, I asked the women working the laptops how many slides they had created. In unison, they reported 156. I winced. I then asked how much time Jim had to give the presentation. Without flinching, they replied, “Twenty minutes.”

Problem #1: Too much content for the time allotted.

I turned to Jim. “What is the objective of your presentation?” I asked. Instead of answering the question, he exclaimed, unfiltered, “I hope I don’t get fired. I hope I don’t come home with action items that my team cannot possibly fulfill.”

Problem #2: A negative objective.

I next asked Jim, “What is your message?” In other words, what was the most important thing he needed to communicate to his audience?

Jim turned to his PowerPoint handlers. “What’s my key message?” he asked them. The women quickly flipped open their laptops and scrolled through the slides, searching.

Given how much scrolling took place, I guess they found the key message around slide fifty-eight, buried deep in a monstrous deck of data, fancy charts, graphs, bullet points, and unnecessary animation.

Problem #3: Key message confusion.

We finally hit bottom when Jim gave voice to his inner critic. He uttered in frustration the self-condemning statement, “I’m a fake. I’m a phony. I have no business giving this presentation.”

Problem #4: Loss of confidence.

I called a time-out and found a creative way to shore up this leader’s confidence. I asked each person in the room to share one thing they appreciated and admired about Jim. With each person’s gift of positive feedback, Jim’s posture improved. He sat taller. He began to grin. When I asked what he loved and admired most about himself, Jim’s playful answer revealed that he was back in the driver’s seat and ready to work on his presentation.

Getting to the Point

We dove into his presentation objectives and set realistic goals with positive outcomes. We moved aside the 156 PowerPoint slides for the moment and focused on his key message—the single most important thing he needed to share with this audience. Jim’s smile returned and so did his sense of humor. He got out of his own way and became reengaged in the presentation process.

A Positive Outcome

One week later, the phone rang. The woman who hired me for the emergency coaching session excitedly told me that Jim called from Paris and said he “wanted to marry the Marketing Motivator.” While the compliment was flattering, I was thrilled Jim accomplished his mission. He not only survived his presentation, he thrived on stage.

Several factors demonstrated Jim’s success. First, his audience was so engaged with his presentation, they granted him an extra forty minutes to speak. Second, he received a job grade increase, which meant a jump in salary. Third, he

received an invitation to join a special advisory group to the CEO—a sort of inner circle of division leaders who provide valuable feedback from the field.

Jim was elated. His presentation skills helped him shine a spotlight on his business acumen and leadership skills. Back at the top of his game, he believed in himself and enjoyed working again.

Good Things Can Happen to You, Too

Let's determine the value of your next presentation. What is it really worth to you? What difference will it make in your job whether or not you are an effective presenter?

A powerful presentation can positively enhance your personal leadership brand and increase your professional credibility. Your ability to effectively communicate and deliver actionable information can accelerate your career and establish you as a subject matter expert. Many wonderful things can happen when you are a powerful presenter and you demonstrate confidence in your communicating style.

Why Are You Here?

During my workshops I ask my clients why they have committed their time, energy, and money to improving their presentations skills. Even if their boss nominated them to attend my presentation skills workshop (perhaps an action listed on their Individual Development Plan), there is a core unpinning as to why they attend. Rather than me lecturing them on the benefits of strong presentation skills, I like them to discover and share their own motivations. After conducting hundreds of these workshops, I have discovered there are three main motivations that influence people to leave their comfort zones and improve their performance in an area that quite frankly scares the pants off of most people—public speaking.

My clients tell me there are three main reasons why they are invested in improving their communication and presentations skills. They include:

1. Career success
2. Business success
3. Personal success

Each reason pushes a particular button and influences a person to change behaviors and take specific actions. Which ones motivate you?

Career Success

Four key motivators that tie to your career place an impetus on presenting well. I call them The Four R's: Requirement, Rewards, Recognition, and Riches:

- 1. Requirement.** Communication skills are a basic job requirement for every profession. These days it's simply not enough to be a subject matter expert. You're expected to effectively communicate with colleagues, clients, bosses, and others in ways that create organizational success. You may not realize it, but you are selling your ideas every day, whether presenting them to a large audience, a small group, or an individual.
- 2. Rewards.** When you present, you not only share information, but you also demonstrate your capabilities and potential. Presentations are a showcase for your leadership, competency, and

readiness to take on greater responsibilities. Seize these opportunities as a method for advancement. As in Jim's case, a promotion may be your reward.

- 3. Recognition.** Presentations let you bring your ideas to more people and influence the way those people think or behave. In return, you may receive recognition in the form of applause, or even at a more personal, profound, and deeper level, through connections made due to your thought leadership and presentation effectiveness.
- 4. Riches.** Effective presentations can result in acquiring new clients, securing lucrative job opportunities, selling more of your products and services, and even landing paid speaking engagements. Becoming an effective presenter can enrich your life—personally, professionally, and financially.

Aaron's Story

Aaron was a high-energy, Six Sigma black belt with a passion for uncovering inefficiencies and making process improvements that resulted in quantifiable gains. He thought fast, spoke rapidly, and worked quickly. His organization loved him.

Sometimes, however, he dove so deep and so fast that senior leaders had a difficult time keeping up. They became so overwhelmed with his data-rich PowerPoint slides that they tuned him out for their own survival.

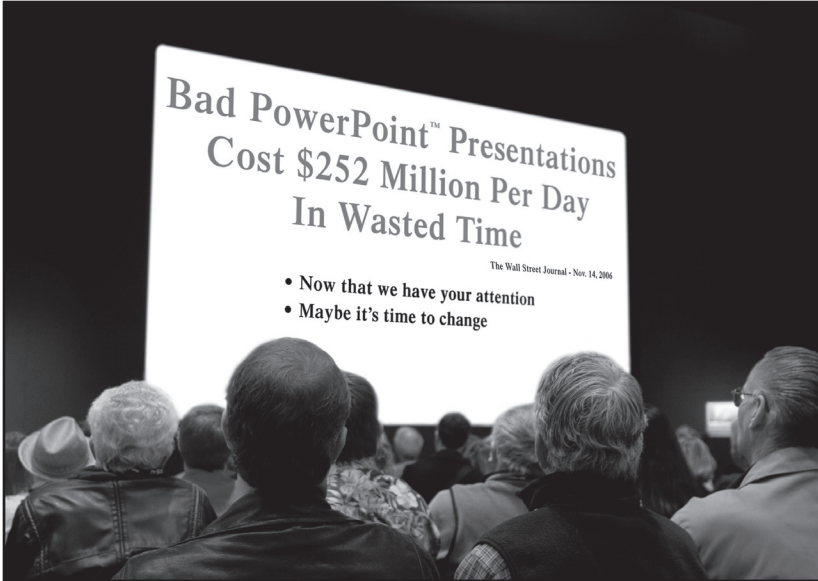
I challenged Aaron to take a different approach for his next presentation. I encouraged him to demonstrate his points using props and metaphors rather than with data on slides. Like a true competitive athlete, Aaron took this challenge to heart and instructed his team to present without PowerPoint.

To demonstrate how much paper and reports their project had eliminated in the last fiscal quarter, during

Aaron's presentation the team wheeled in a Radio Flyer wagon loaded with paper printouts that represented paper and time savings. When the executives in the audience realized that they didn't have to discuss the mountain of paperwork stacked high in the Radio Flyer, they were relieved. Two days after the presentation, Aaron sent this email to me:

"FYI. Killed it (which is a good thing). CFO loved it. CEO gave us more responsibility. My boss said she was very proud."

The point is this. Even senior leaders get bored with PowerPoint data dumps. They are looking to you to distill the information and make their decision-making easier. Aaron did just that with his new and improved presentation style, and, in return, received more responsibility as a reward.



Business Success

There's a bottom line to everything in business. Your ability to effectively present affects the bottom line:

1. **Wasted Time. Wasted Money.** Think back on the massive swarm of thirty million PowerPoint presentations mentioned earlier. The ones spewing high levels of toxic boring emissions into boardrooms, auditoriums, and conference rooms, and costing around \$252 million a day in wasted time. Encourage your team to stop global boring and go PowerPoint-free—or at least reduce the

number of unnecessary slides they present. It could be one of the best cost-saving business strategies you employ this year.

2. Lost Opportunities. When you bore your audience, you say goodbye to the opportunity to:

- clearly articulate your ideas in a way the audience understands,
- move your audience to action with a sense of urgency,
- generate potential sales, referrals, and connections,
- listen and learn from your audience by engaging in a meaningful conversation, and
- position you and your company as leaders in your field.

When you give a boring presentation, you lose. Your company loses. Your audience loses. Global boring is a no-win for everyone.

3. Competitive Advantage. Most companies will say they strive for excellence in everything they do.

They want to be the best in their industry, and they work diligently to ensure they have a competitive advantage in the markets they serve. Then why do so many of these same companies tolerate mediocre presentations? Why do they allow their salespeople and leaders to drone on and on with capability presentations that quite frankly bore their prospective clients to death and miss the mark by a wide mile? I sometimes tell my clients that no one ever dies from a bad PowerPoint presentation, but we sure suffer greatly through them. Many corporate leaders will say that presentation skills are important, but their actions suggest they are not urgent. Effective presentation skills are both urgent and important. Any company who wants to have a competitive advantage in their market will pay attention to the quality of their people's presentation skills and performances—each and every one of them. Mediocrity is not a winning go-to-market strategy.

Kate's Story

Kate Emery was a CEO with a mission. She wanted to add social purpose to the bottom line. Kate passionately believed that businesses could generate both a profit and a purpose, and in doing so, create greater public good. As she evolved her thinking for her company, she quickly realized the idea had greater potential if adopted by other organizations. She took the next step and founded reSET, a nonprofit organization in Connecticut that promoted social enterprise trust as a new option for business entity formation. To realize her vision, Kate's idea would require state legislative approval. She knew she must rally support for a bill to pass, and that meant she needed to speak out powerfully and present a compelling case to the public.

A quiet leader, Kate knew she had to improve her presentations in order to better inform, motivate, and influence her audiences to action. By tapping into her creativity, using her historical knowledge, and working

on stronger openings and closings, Kate improved her presentations to better engage and initiate dialogue with her audiences. After giving many presentations, Kate successfully convinced state legislators to approve her bill. Business change was underway, and Kate became a sought-after speaker.

Financial Costs of a Bad Presentation

Let's try to estimate the cost of Jim's presentation as described in the opening story in Chapter 1.

• The number of hours that Jim and his team spent on PowerPoint slides		250
• Total number of PowerPoint slides produced for Jim's twenty-minute presentation		156
• Average hourly compensation for each member of the team	\$	33.58 *
• Total investment by Jim's company for preparing the presentation	\$	8,395
• Cost per slide	\$	53.81
• Estimated compensation for sixty peers to listen to his presentation	\$	671.58 *
• Total investment in Jim's presentation		\$ 8,448.81 **

If Jim had approached senior management and asked for \$8,500 to fund his presentation, would they have said yes? If so, what would the company have expected in return for their investment? Is there something else Jim could have done with this investment of time and money to create even greater value for the company? What is the opportunity cost of this presentation? Is it even feasible for Jim to think he could effectively present 156 slides in twenty minutes? It all adds up to a costly and ineffective recipe for global boring.

* U.S. Department of Labor states in their news release for 3/10/2016, “Employer costs for employee compensation for civilian workers averaged \$33.58 per hour (\$23.06 wages/salaries and \$10.52 benefits).” They say the split is 68.7% for wages and 31.3% for benefits.

**Travel expenses are excluded from this estimated cost example

Personal Success

There is no stronger motivational driver than your own desire to set the bar high, persuade you to continuously improve, and encourage you to do your best. Effective presentation skills can help you achieve your personal mission. Here are the benefits you can expect:

1. **Personal Influence.** When you effectively communicate and connect with other people, you

influence their thinking, positively change their behavior, and bring value to their lives. However, this ability to influence isn't only for people in traditional positions of authority and power, such as the boss, parents, or politicians. Influence happens when people like you and me become thought leaders in our fields and gain mastery of the softer and vital skills of communication, and relationship-building.

2. Personal Satisfaction. When you are skilled and confident in presenting, speaking, and communicating, you start to enjoy sharing information and ideas, and you:

- no longer fear or avoid speaking,
- embrace the experience and actively seek out opportunities to give presentations,
- become a proactive presenter whose audiences feel your passion and have confidence in what you share,
- free yourself of the negative side effects created by a fear of presentations—*anxiety, nervousness,*

sweaty palms, fast-beating heart, shortness of breath, extreme self-doubt, and

- trade in the bad, uncomfortable stuff for the good feelings, enjoyment, excitement, learning, engagement, openness, connection, thrill, fun, and laughter that are part of the experience.

In short, you become less boring and excel as an effective communicator.

Nigel's Story

Nigel was a young professional working for a global consumer goods company. Although senior leaders took note of his analytical skills and natural way with people, Nigel struggled when speaking in front of a group. His presentation anxiety was so high he felt nauseous. The problem was so severe it became a roadblock to Nigel's advancement within the company.

During our time together in a two-day presentation training workshop, Nigel both surprised and confused

the mock audience and me by using a bottle of beer as a prop and taking a swig from it while presenting. It turns out Nigel's presentation anxiety was so strong he felt the need to use alcohol to relax. Clearly, this was not a sustainable nor healthy solution to the problem.

Instead, I introduced Nigel to guided visualization and breathing exercises to relax and calm him. Using these techniques helped him overcome his anxiety. As a result, he became a stronger, more relaxed presenter who now enjoys public speaking and seeks out opportunities to present whenever possible. Best of all, his career prospered, and he's enjoyed a couple of professional opportunities overseas with his company, which boosted his value and visibility. His peers speak highly of his presentation prowess.

Now that you have identified your motivations for improving your own presentation skills, let's move on to discuss what a high-engagement presentation actually looks like. Get ready to engage your senses.