


Boosting Business Performance



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Greetings!

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"How-to" tips and advice on increasing business prosperity, published every other Thursday.

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● Note from the Author:

The End of an Exciting Series


Today's newsletter completes a series of special editions on the design of slide presentations, which has spanned an entire year. This is the fourth and final look at this important topic.

This crucial skill set affects people in nearly every industry on most every continent of this planet, since so many people are looking for effective ways to stand out "magnificently from the masses."

Closer to home: This week, I had the enormous pleasure of presenting a new workshop on this topic to my local chapter of the **Society for Technical Communication**. I was greatly honored by the audience's rapt attention and enthusiasm, and the terrific response to the same formula that appears in the feature article below.

By summarizing the presentation series in this final overview, I'm aiming to provide a **memory-jogging guide** to help you excel in presentation design beyond your wildest dreams. If you follow the recommended principles, your presentations won't ever be the same again, and your success should increase commensurately!

For these reasons, I hope you enjoy today's features, including "Your 'Secret Sauce' for Presentations: Art + Science + Story = Impact!" And don't forget to **join the conversation** by leaving your comments on [my blog!](#)



Here's to your business prosperity,



Adele Sommers, author of the "[Straight Talk on Boosting Business Performance](#)" success program

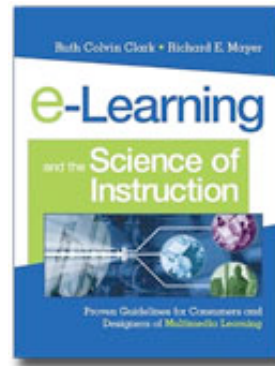
P.S. If you missed any previous issue, [visit the newsletter index!](#)

● Special Message:

Where Does the "Science" Come From?

Today's feature article introduces **cognitive science** into the equation for presentation design. But what exactly does this science have to do with what we present to our audiences?

A couple of excellent books can help answer this question. They explain different aspects of the same body of research on human comprehension and learning. We know today that the same basic principles that govern how people learn best with **visual and auditory elements** (multimedia) also apply to the design of presentations.



"[E-Learning & the Science of Instruction: Proven Guidelines for Consumers and Designers of Multimedia Learning](#)," co-

authored by Drs. Ruth Clark and Richard E. Mayer, expands on the plethora of studies on human learning that Dr. Mayer and his colleagues have been conducting over the last 15 years.

Much of Dr. Mayer's original research appeared in a prior work, "[Multimedia Learning](#)." This book initially laid out the principles behind **how well we learn** from various combinations of visual and auditory stimuli.

For example, these studies suggest that **using your slides as your "narration script"** (where you read your talking points off of your slides, while your audience is also reading them) **can hurt** your audience's comprehension. There are much better ways to design slides than using bullet points to tell your story. This revelation -- one of many -- may seem intuitive. But without the science backing it up, many people would not realize exactly how much they reduce the impact of their presentations by following their old, familiar habits!

● Feature Article:

Your "Secret Sauce" for Presentations:

Art + Science + Story = Impact!

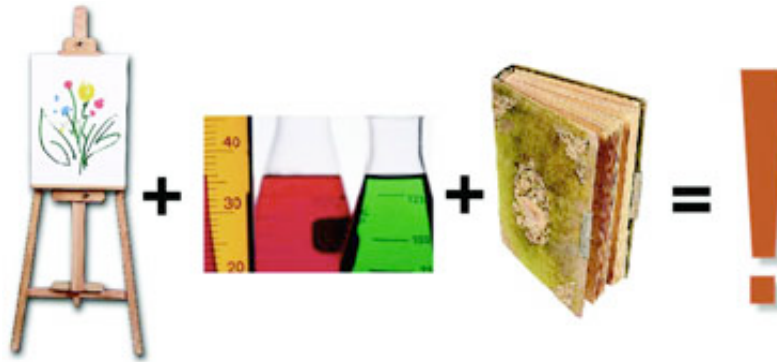
by Adele Sommers

What's the overarching formula for making the very best possible impression on your audience when you deliver a slide presentation? How do you capitalize on the scarce and precious commodity that your audience is offering you, which is the gift of their time and attention?

This article, **Part 4** in a series, culminates our overview of the **repeatable formula** we have been discussing for creating truly outstanding presentations. (For previous articles in the series, see [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), and [Part 3](#).) This formula comprises a set of powerful artistic and story-telling principles that are scientifically supported.

We can summarize the ideas behind this presentation formula in these simple terms:

Art + Science + Story = Impact!



Begin by Building a Step-by-Step Foundation for Your Presentation

Each of these four stages is explained in greater detail in the sections that follow.

1. First, start with a **needs assessment** to determine what and how much to do. Depending on whether the impression you need to make is *low-key* or *high-stakes*, you can decide which principles of the formula to apply.

2. Second, if your situation is fairly **low-key**, or you have relatively little time, plan to use the **Artistic and Multimedia Principles** at a minimum to maximize your audience's ability to understand and retain your ideas.

3. Third, if your situation is **high-stakes**, plan to apply the **Story Principles** as well to help make your presentation exceptionally memorable and actionable.

4. Fourth, plan to use three crucial **delivery** tips when you go to present your slide show in person.



1. Start with a Needs Assessment to Make Your Presentation Remarkable



Before you get started, aim to do some preliminary planning. This important first step can make the difference between a **world-class** presentation and just another forgettable slide show!

After all, you could eventually expend considerable effort to conceptualize, design, script, illustrate, rehearse, and deliver your slide presentation. So, why not consider which aspects of your situation are most important to you?

Ask yourself at least **5 key questions** about your purpose, audience, their actions, the setting, and future uses of your material, as follows:

- 1) What's the purpose, what's at stake, and how critical is the outcome?
- 2) What is your anticipated audience's frame of reference?
- 3) What actions do you want your audience to take as a result?
- 4) Where are you planning to deliver the presentation -- in person or online?
- 5) In the future, could your presentation expand into something more?

In response to these questions, you can decide how to scale your **time and energy investment** to suit the needs of your presentation scenario, including how casual or critical it is. (See [Part 3](#) of the series for more details.)

2. Use the Artistic & Multimedia Principles in Any Situation

If you have relatively little time, **or** the stakes are fairly low, **and** you have no plans to expand or redeploy your presentation in the future, you can still make a pleasing impression and produce it fairly quickly using the **Artistic & Multimedia principles**. These principles pertain to the use of text, graphics, details, and special effects (see more information in [Part 2](#)):

- **Tip #1: Text** – Display only one basic idea per slide. Place your talking points (your narration script) in your handouts and speaker notes.
- **Tip #2: Graphics** – Let relevant and symbolic photos; drawings; screen captures; and simple maps, charts, graphs, and diagrams do most of the visual "heavy lifting."
- **Tip #3: Details** – Put the intricate image details in the *handouts* instead of on the *slides* to avoid overloading your audience's visual processing abilities. Avoid "branding" your slides with your logo, which can be distracting.
- **Tip #4: Special effects** – Use *relevant* sounds, videos, animations, transitions, and physical props -- in moderation -- to highlight or demonstrate key points.



3. Use the Story Principles for the Most Powerful Impression Overall

If you have more time, **and** the stakes are fairly high, **or** you think you might later develop the presentation into other products or uses, strongly consider applying **all** of the recommendations. These include the **Story Principles**, which pertain to your presentation's focus, structure, and scope (explained in more detail in [Part 2](#)):

- **Tip #5: Focus** – Begin by framing your *audience's* role, perspective, and needs. Then introduce the challenge the *audience* faces and your solution, and explain the actions that the *audience* members can take.
- **Tip #6: Structure** – Create a logical sequence and flow based on a scalable hierarchy of detail, starting with an audience orientation.
- **Tip #7: Scope** – "Chunk" all of your material into just 3–4 main topics. Include reviews along the way to summarize your information. Practice extensively beforehand while timing yourself, so you can then "scope" your talk using the scalable 5-, 15- and 45-minute detail hierarchy from your outline.



4. Keep These Final Points in Mind to Create Impact During Delivery...

After you've worked so diligently to create an outstanding, well-illustrated story that focuses on your audience's needs, use these three tips to make sure your delivery is just as compelling:

- **Tip #8:** Remember to face your audience. If you break eye contact with your attendees to read from projected slides, it interrupts the flow and further splits the audience's attention.

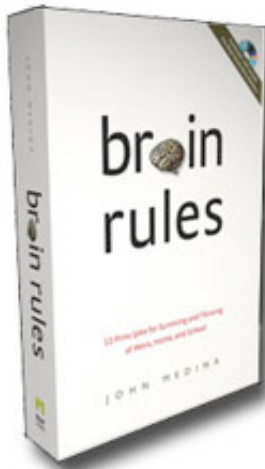
- **Tip #9:** Remember to converse with your audience. Not engaging the audience enough during your presentation invites their attention to wander elsewhere.
- **Tip #10:** Remember to respect your audience's time. Running way overtime trying to cover too much information in the time available dilutes your impact and can even cause resentment.

In conclusion, an engaging slide presentation helps broadcast a clear, powerful message; you might have only one chance to communicate your ideas effectively. But if you start with a needs assessment to determine what to do, you can use the **Art + Science + Story = Impact** formula to make every presentation a smashing success!

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● The Author Recommends:

"Brain Rules" -- More Insights into How We Process Information



You can find another fascinating look at the brain and various aspects of cognitive processing in "[Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School](#)," by Dr. John Medina.

Medina is a developmental molecular biologist, research consultant, Professor of Bioengineering at the University of Washington School of Medicine, and director of the Brain Center for Applied Learning Research at Seattle Pacific University. Yet despite the formality of his credentials, his communication style is unique and highly refreshing.

To see a series of fascinating **video presentations** on the 12 "brain rules," go to Medina's Web site at [brainrules.net](#). Medina's presentations are straightforward and extremely engaging, demonstrating a very enjoyable way to learn.

Tip: The video on **Rule #7** (why sleep is so important) is hysterically funny as well as informative. Look for it on the home page on the right-hand side, and **enjoy!**

● About the Author:

Adele Sommers, Ph.D. is the author of "Straight Talk on Boosting Business Performance" -- an award-winning Special Report and Workbook program.

If you liked today's issue, you'll love this down-to-earth overview of how 12 potent business-boosting strategies can reenergize the morale and productivity of your enterprise, tame unruly projects, and attract loyal, satisfied customers. It's accompanied by a step-by-step workbook designed to help you easily create your own success action plan. Browse the table of contents and reader reviews on [the description page](#).

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