



INTRODUCTION

I've always been encouraged that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and I'm so glad that your journey to presentation excellence begins with this book.

I also want you to know that it is an interesting journey, and an entertaining journey, and that while there will certainly be comfortable places to stop and rest along the way, you will always benefit from picking up again and challenging yourself to go further.

Beyond this, it's a journey essential to your professional success. Companies are stepping up their efforts to do more with less. This means that the ability to organise and discuss information in an engaging way — a way that stimulates thought and motivates people to act — will increase your value to any organisation, as well as your sense of personal effectiveness. If you can be the one who shows a willingness to present, and to improve your presentation skills, you'll be writing yourself a ticket to a bright and interesting future. It will be a pleasure to be your guide along the way.

My own presentation career began when I worked as a tour guide at the U.S. Capitol Building when attending college. I didn't have to develop the content myself, but I did have to deliver it in a way that made my tour groups want to follow me around that big building. I also had to make sure that my groups could hear me over the handful of other guides working each room.

It wasn't until I decided to try my hand at stand-up comedy that I had to confront the questions of content, structure, pacing... and terror. Developing a stand-up monologue was perfect for forcing me to consider how best to engage an audience at the outset, how to link the various subjects in each monologue, and how to wrap things up in a memorable way. And while I'll never forget the horror of the moments when I felt so nervous that my mind went completely blank and I could hear waves crashing in my ear drums, I am grateful that they motivated me to develop strategies for calming myself and maintaining access to my brain under pressure.

Once I began working as a corporate communication trainer, I took on the challenge of developing slides to support my content. I discovered that just like structure and delivery, audiovisuals require a lot of attention, with the added aspect that they need to be updated regularly. I also learned that they can hurt us as much as they can help.

Everything I've learned along the way, from teenage tour guide to international speaker, will find a place in this book. As you start your own journey to present for success, I hope you will find the tools I describe and the advice I offer to be useful and fun.

Let's get started!

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