

# Three Mind-Tickling Techniques to Make Your Presentation Content More Memorable and Motivating

by Mary Sandro

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Raw information tickles the logical mind and bores the rest of the mind to sleep. The result of an overly logical presentation: bored, sleepy listeners who remember nothing and do nothing. Great presenters start with raw information, add their opinions, color it with imagery, and give it personality. The more of the mind you tickle, the more retention and motivation you reap. Additional parts of the mind you can tickle include: long term memory, imagination, and emotion.

## Long Term Memory

Adults know a lot. Unlike children who come to us with clean slates, adults harbor vast reservoirs of knowledge and experience. Great presenters do not fear this knowledge and experience. They use it to their advantage.

The fastest way to create learning is to link the unknown with the known. Since adults know so many things, opportunity for linking abounds. Simile and metaphor provide the means. A simile uses the words “like” or “as” to bridge the unknown with the known. Example: It tastes like chicken. I don’t care what food I’m discussing. You now know how it tastes. Metaphors link without the words “like” or “as”. Example: That business is a three-ring circus. You can probably think of multiple businesses that fit a three-ring circus description.

One year, the city that hosted the Super Bowl was vying to host an upcoming Summer Olympics. A reporter interviewed the mayor of that city and asked about his confidence level in hosting an Olympics after the recent success with the Super Bowl. The mayor responded by acknowledging the recent success, but then cautioned, “Hosting the Olympics is like hosting 15 Super Bowls per day.”

A COO of a healthcare organization used a wonderful bridge to lead into a brainstorming session on marketing ideas. He mused, “Suppose we were in the business of attracting squirrels. How would we attract them? We would climb up a tree and act like a nut. Now, what kind of nuts do our squirrels like?” Employees laughed and joined in enthusiastically to offer new “nuts”.

## Imagination

The mind loves pictures. We dream in pictures. We daydream in pictures. We remember faces and forget names. We forget street names and remember landmarks. Have you ever given someone directions like these? “Go about one mile. Then you’ll see a big white church and a nursery across the street. Take a left. When you come to the fire station...”

I participated in a research study in college that still fascinates me. To earn extra credit in a psychology course, I agreed to be a guinea pig for the graduate students’ research project. The graduate students sat me down and told me they were going to read 20 sentences to me. My job, visualize or imagine each sentence as vividly as possible for 30 seconds. Then we would proceed to the next sentence. Based on only that information we began.

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Being the good student, I visualized intently, practically crinkling my nose to see the images. After 20 sentences, the graduate students blindfolded me and walked me down a hallway to a water fountain. They told me to take a drink of water. They blindfolded me again and escorted me back to the original room. They took my blindfold off, handed me a blank piece of paper, and instructed me to write as many of the 20 sentences as I could remember in 60 seconds. Despite my unnerving walk down the hall, I wrote down 18 sentences exactly as they had read them to me within 60 seconds. I had no idea a test was coming.

Visual aids provide a perfect opportunity to incorporate pictures into a presentation. Yet, most presenters squander the opportunity by using bulleted lists of words and numbers as their visual aids. Challenge your bullet points. Clipart programs abound. Dress up boring graphs. For high profile presentations seek the assistance of a graphic artist or employ internal talent.

If real pictures elude you, paint word pictures on your listeners' minds. Similes and metaphors, by their nature, paint vivid pictures like the 15 Super Bowls or the squirrels and the nuts. Take conceptual or technical ideas and create pictures for them. In a former life I used to be an actuary in the insurance industry. I recruited from colleges and gave presentations about the actuarial profession. To educate students about actuarial science and motivate them to pursue the career, I defined an actuary as a mathematical fortuneteller. Reaction from students, "Hey, that sounds pretty cool." (Now do you believe word pictures are powerful?)

## Emotion

People take action for emotional reasons not logical ones. Most people logically understand the hazards of cigarette smoking, yet they continue to smoke. Most people logically know that healthy diet and exercise keep them vibrant, yet they eat chocolate cake and watch TV instead. Sales professionals claim that people buy for emotional reasons then justify with logic. Have you ever purchased something you couldn't really afford? Enough said.

In general, people are motivated emotionally by "moving towards" happiness or "moving away" from pain. When your alarm clock sounds in the morning, why do you get out of bed? If you answer, "Because I love life and I can't wait to start another spectacular day. Carpe Diem!" You would be motivated by "moving towards". If you answer, "Because if I don't get up now I'll be late for work and get fired." You would be motivated by "moving away".

Add an emotional element to your presentations by explaining to listeners the rewards of action (moving towards) and the consequences of inaction (moving away). Be sure to address both ends of the spectrum. If you only dangle rewards, the "moving away" listeners tune out. If you only threaten doom, the "moving towards" listeners sour.

A recent prospect wanted presentation skills coaching for their software experts because for the first time their Users Group conference included other companies. I advised that if they went forward with the coaching, the improved presentations would create a buzz that would drive some of the increased traffic into their sessions. Then I warned that if they didn't pursue coaching, lackluster presentations might cause an exodus of once guaranteed audience members to other companies.

## Summary

Raw information tickles the logical mind, but bores the rest. To increase motivation and retention, tickle more of the mind by appealing not only to logic, but long-term memory, imagination, and emotion. Use similes, word pictures, "moving towards", and "moving away" to join the ranks of

great presenters.

### **About the Author**

Mary Sandro helps companies and professionals achieve results through effective presentations exceptional customer service and innovative hiring techniques. She is available to speak on these topics. For more information visit <http://www.ProEdgeSkills.com> or call 800-731-0601.

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