

*“...a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention”*  
Herbert Simon

# HIGH STAKES PRESENTATIONS

**Vol. 7, No. 7** — Resources for High Stakes Presenters and those who hire them

## Oh balance, where art thou?

*As presenters, we are out of balance. We’ve got lots of content and not much pizzazz, or we ooze pizzazz and lack content, or we’ve got pizzazz and content but we fail to connect with our audience.*

Balance is important to high stakes presenters. And for presenters, balance is a combination of subject matter expertise, knowledge of the audience, and effective delivery skills.

### Which comes first?

Content is king, and yet the world is littered with the corpses of experts who couldn’t sell their ideas.

Al Gore is a good example of a smart man who lost the election in part because he had difficulty connecting with his audience.

And Cicero said about delivery that “unless it stands guard over the material, the material will evaporate, no matter how precious it was in itself.”

### An actor’s life for me!

As a young man, I was an actor, and while studying acting in New York, discovered that with vocal and physical training I could improve my presence and appeal on the stage.

This made me happy...

### So what?

When I began coaching people in business in 1989, I soon realized that while my clients did need help with their vocal and physical issues, (or stage presence), they first needed *something to say*, and they needed to *say it well*.

As an actor, I spoke the brilliant words of William Shakespeare and other playwrights. But, *who writes the lines for business people?*

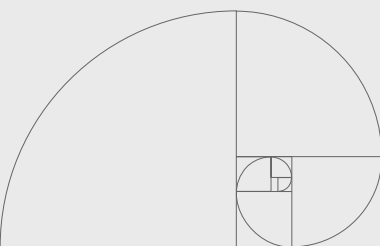
We all write for ourselves! We use the specialized language of our particular industry and function to write our presentations. And while we may be subject matter experts, we typically lack training in public speaking, or experience as speech writers, or story tellers.

### What speakers need...

Speakers need to know more than what to say. They need to know how to make their material appealing to the audience.

For instance, unlike best-selling novels, textbooks fail to excite. They have the facts, but lack drama. Same with most

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business presentations. To win standing ovations and achieve positive results, we must structure our material so that it develops and entertains like a good story.

But having something to say and saying it well are not enough. Your audience has to find you trustworthy and likeable. *Who you are speaks louder than what you say.*

### Rediscovering history

Discovering this brought me to a stunning realization: *I was learning through trial and error what the world had known since about 400 B.C.!*

In his writings on persuasive speaking, Aristotle observed that a good speaker needs *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, and that each one is necessary—but not sufficient—for success.

So what are ethos, pathos, and logos?

### Logos—what you say

Logos is information and expertise, without which you cannot speak the language of your discipline, whether you're a marketer, engineer, or portfolio manager. Aristotle called it the intellectual appeal—the reasoned argument you make to convince your audience.

Most of us are logos-oriented individuals, committed to the power of facts, proof and reasoning. If we can prove something is true, we often assume others will feel compelled to accept it. Good “logos” arguments are sometimes necessary for persuasion, but usually not sufficient..

### Pathos—how you say it

Pathos is the emotional appeal—the way you link your ideas to the motives, feelings, attitudes and knowledge of the audience. Pathos includes how you sequence your talk to capture and keep their attention.

Emotional appeals are rarely successful by themselves, because we must have reasons to justify our feelings.

### Ethos—who says it

Ethos is the ethical appeal of the speaker—his or her trustworthiness and likeability. If the audience doesn't trust you or like you, it doesn't matter how smart you are or how much you know.

We don't open emails from people we don't know, and we don't accept messages from speakers we don't trust.

Bill Clinton had a lot more influence before Monica-gate. And Rudolph Giuliani seemed to grow in stature as he responded to the crisis of 9/11. His genuine caring and authenticity has earned him a shot at the White House.

### A call for balance

High stakes presenting is not just about content, knowing your audience, or brilliant delivery. Rather, it is the right balance of all three.

Oh balance, where art thou? It's within us, if we take the time to create it.