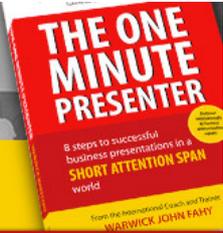


Speak like an Executive



Warwick John Fahy

AUTHOR · EXECUTIVE SPEECH COACH · FACILITATOR OF LEARNING

"I help ambitious senior finance executives switch from technical expert to effective executive"

What's your big idea?



Photo credit: Krzysztof (Kriss) Szkurlatowski www.12frames.eu

How to convey new, technical or different ideas

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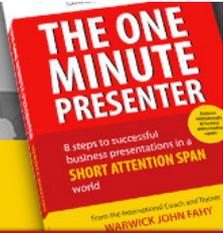
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The Big Idea

I'm very passionate about the spoken word. I love public speaking and spend a lot of time watching videos and live public talks to see how people engage and convey their ideas. I work with corporate professionals. I work with international business school MBA and e-MBAs. I work with start up entrepreneurs. Recently I spent some time working with 10 start ups to help them shape their message in terms of how they describe their business and pitch investors. Here are a few thoughts around how to convey big ideas that matter. Especially ideas that are driving change to happen.

1. What problem do you solve? And why should the audience care?

Clearly articulating a problem is half the solution. So take time to paint a clear picture on what exactly is the problem you are addressing. Bring the audience to this pain-point as vividly as you can. Personal anecdotes, examples or analogies can all do this. Then explain why this is a problem worth solving. Sometimes you can find a solution to a problem that's not worth solving. My dad once created a pair of concrete hands so that you didn't need to hold your book while reading. I'm not sure just how heavy the books were back then but let's just say the molds remained in the garden shed.

Write down a list of reasons for why the audience needs to solve this problem. Start to sketch the typical target audience. Describe the typical person who wishes this problem to be solved. Prioritize them according to certain criteria such as how urgent the problem is to them, how much they are impacted by the problem, how much they would be willing to pay for it.

2. What's the value? And who benefits?

Sometimes we get very excited by our ideas. We spend a long time talking them through and visualizing them with our partners and team. But what happens when we face a new audience. An audience that hasn't been exposed to our ideas. How can we grip them with the same passion. One area that's often lost in the excitement of a new idea is the value.

What is it exactly?

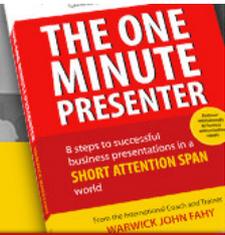
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How does the value get released?

What do we need to do to release this value?

And who benefits from it?

3. What's your purpose?

Often time you have many ideas or models in your head. During your talk, focus on one strong idea. Don't dilute your ideas but adding in too many different ideas. Lead with your strongest idea. What's your most desired end result. Capture this in a sentence. So I often start by saying:

My purpose is to equip technical professionals with the skills they need to shine while speaking in public.

I want to turn shy technical people into confident public speakers.

4. What behavioral changes do you need to make?

Making change happen can be challenging when faced with ingrained habits or behaviors. Think back a few decades to how hard workers fought to prevent new publishing technology being introduced into British newspaper publishing. Even today in companies without unions, making a rapid shift in working conditions is difficult for large companies to achieve. Consumers often have preferred ways to purchase. I found from my own experience when I first arrived in China and was asked to help a friend's daughter prepare for an overseas university application. While I wanted to help her get up to steam in terms of being ready to cope in an international environment, the approach favored by her father was to find an agent to just get the application done. Agents are often preferred in many sectors as there's a closer bond and familiarity. That said, things can change. While Chinese first traveled overseas, now the amount of independent travelers has exceeded the numbers going on tours. What changes do you need to make? How much of a challenge will they be?

5. What assumptions are you making?

Often when you're expressing a new idea, there are many possible paths that could be

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chosen. Perhaps you're not sure which one to take. Perhaps you are confident that you know the right path. Regardless, make sure you spell out your assumptions. What are you assuming will happen so that your ideas will come into fruition. One of my assumptions is that the increase in technology and rapid expansion in information we've been seeing over the last decade will make spoken communication more important not less important. What assumptions are you making?

There will be a market for my new product or service

People will be willing to pay for it

This change is urgent enough that people will want to do something immediately

We can actually deliver what we promise

6. What metaphor can you use?

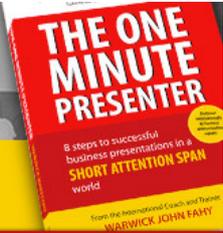
How can you shortcut the time it takes for someone to understand what it is you are describing. In Hollywood this is known as the high concept. For example, in 1979 the science fiction movie Aliens was introduced as "Jaws on a spaceship". Steven Spielberg once said, "if a person can tell me the idea in 25 words or less, it's going to make a pretty good movie."

So how can you use a high concept to describe your business. Using popular companies can be one way. Perhaps your new business is "the ebay for industrial products" or "Facebook for the medical profession". In a few words, people can get the gist of what it is you do.

Conclusion

While you're getting ready for your next important pitch or presentation, use the above points as a checklist to ensure that your content is packaged to engage and connect with the most pressing interests of the audience.

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I work with technical professionals who want to engage and influence non-technical people through public speaking and presenting.

About the Author

“Warwick helps C-level executives, working in multinational companies based in Greater China, who need to become more confident and effective in their spoken communications. Warwick helps the executive project a clear message allowing them to express their opinions powerfully and gain respect from senior managers even when under pressure.”

Warwick is the author of “The One Minute Presenter: 8 steps to successful business presentations in a short attention span world”.

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