

Last Minute Presentation?

Speed Preparation Time with these Tips



When Kevin Jorgenson and Tommy Caldwell climbed to the top of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park in 2015, they were the first ever to scale the 3,000 foot granite wall using only their hands, feet and safety rope.

As daring as this was, I'm certain each inch of the climb was meticulously planned months or even years in advance. But as busy leaders or subject matter experts, we often don't have much time to work on an important presentation.

What if you're a busy CEO called at the last minute to do an IPO road show or a brand manager standing in to unveil a new product? What if you're a start-up pitching to a group of high powered VCs?

Under tight circumstances you're probably tempted to wing it. Not a good idea. Instead, make intelligent use what little time you have. It can be almost as easy as **1, 2, 3:**

- 1. ORGANIZE OFFLINE** - Before opening a slide deck, quickly brainstorm the most critical ideas you need to communicate. This provides a solid foundation on which to build your talk.
 - What's your purpose? What's the main message?
 - What does your audience really need to know? So what - why should they care?
 - What are the three or four main points you need to make?
 - What action do you want your listeners to take?
- 2. CREATE ORDER OUT OF CHAOS** - In many Silicon Valley companies there are rooms with whiteboard walls. I've worked with clients where we've covered every surface with "scribbles." From this a pattern, logic or structure emerged that formed the basis or narrative of the talk. Typical patterns include:

- **Benefits:** "Apple's iPhone is one of the early 21st century's defining technologies. These smartphones are:
(1) The vehicle for bringing billions more people online (2) Digital census-takers, creating a more detailed view of society than ever before (3) An economic windfall as they remake entire industries."
- **Problem - Cause - Solution:** "We're spending too much time with problems in the lab. These are caused by low capacity, power outages and lack of organization. We've corrected these by buying new systems, adding capacity and upgrading test equipment."
- **Topics:** "This is our biggest product launch in history. Today I want to cover five areas: Quality; Systems; Storage; Market Share; Support."

3. Make the Ask: Remember that listeners often remember most what they hear last. Take advantage of this by moving your audience to acceptance or action.

- "I encourage you to take advantage of today's conference, attend the training sessions and put plans in place for the future."
- "Our investments outperform our peers in 7 out of 10 markets. By getting this right we've benefited our clients and we'd like to count your group as one of them in the future."
- "The project is behind schedule, but we've taken the necessary steps to debug the software so you can tell customers we'll ship the new release no later than one month from today."

Using these techniques won't guarantee a perfect talk, but they will save you time which means you may actually prepare rather than wing it. That in itself will ensure a better presentation and a chance to make a powerful impact. You may even spark needed organizational change while enhancing your own career.

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