

"Be forewarned—if you pick up this book,  
your presentations will never be the same again."

—Martin Lindstrom, bestselling author of *Buyology*

# The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs



How to Be  
**Insanely Great**  
in Front of  
Any Audience

**Carmine Gallo**  
Columnist, [Businessweek.com](http://Businessweek.com)

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ISBN: 978-0-07-163675-9

MHID: 0-07-163675-7

The material in this eBook also appears in the print version of this title: ISBN: 978-0-07-163608-7, MHID: 0-07-163608-0.

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*To my father, Franco, an insanely great man  
who has lived an extraordinary life*

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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
Prologue: <i>How to Be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience</i>	ix
<b>ACT 1 CREATE THE STORY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SCENE 1</b> Plan in Analog	3
<b>SCENE 2</b> Answer the One Question That Matters Most	15
<b>SCENE 3</b> Develop a Messianic Sense of Purpose	27
<b>SCENE 4</b> Create Twitter-Like Headlines	39
<b>SCENE 5</b> Draw a Road Map	49
<b>SCENE 6</b> Introduce the Antagonist	63
<b>SCENE 7</b> Reveal the Conquering Hero	75
<b>INTERMISSION 1</b> Obey the Ten-Minute Rule	83
<b>ACT 2 DELIVER THE EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>SCENE 8</b> Channel Their Inner Zen	87
<b>SCENE 9</b> Dress Up Your Numbers	105
<b>SCENE 10</b> Use “Amazingly Zippy” Words	113
<b>SCENE 11</b> Share the Stage	127
<b>SCENE 12</b> Stage Your Presentation with Props	137
<b>SCENE 13</b> Reveal a “Holy Shit” Moment	151
<b>INTERMISSION 2</b> Schiller Learns from the Best	161
<b>ACT 3 REFINE AND REHEARSE</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>SCENE 14</b> Master Stage Presence	167
<b>SCENE 15</b> Make It <i>Look</i> Effortless	179
<b>SCENE 16</b> Wear the Appropriate Costume	195
<b>SCENE 17</b> Toss the Script	199
<b>SCENE 18</b> Have Fun	207
Encore: <i>One More Thing</i>	215
Notes	219
Index	233

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a collaborative effort. The content took shape with the help of family, colleagues, and the amazing staff at McGraw-Hill. Big thanks to my editor, John Aherne, for his enthusiasm and counsel, and to Kenya Henderson, for making it all happen! McGraw-Hill design, marketing, and public relations staff are among the best in the book publishing industry. I'm honored they share my excitement about the subject.

My wife, Vanessa, manages our business at Gallo Communications Group. She worked tirelessly to prepare the manuscript. How she found the time between juggling our business and caring for our two children is beyond the scope of "mere mortals."

Many thanks to my editor at BusinessWeek.com, Nick Leiber, who always seems to find a way to improve my columns. As always, thank you, Ed Knappman, my encouraging agent at New England Publishing Associates. Ed's knowledge and insight are second to none.

I owe thanks to my parents, Franco and Giuseppina, for their unwavering support. Thank you, Tino, Donna, Francesco, Nick, Patty, Ken, and many other close friends and family members who understood why I couldn't be around or why I had to skip golf on weekends. Back to the course!

My girls, Josephine and Lela. You are Daddy's inspiration. All your patience during Daddy's absence will be rewarded with an insanely great visit to Chuck E. Cheese.



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## PROLOGUE

# How to Be Insanely Great in Front of Any Audience

**A person can have the greatest idea in the world—  
completely different and novel—but if that person can't  
convince enough other people, it doesn't matter.**

—GREGORY BERNS

Steve Jobs is the most captivating communicator on the world stage. No one else comes close. A Jobs presentation unleashes a rush of dopamine into the brains of his audience. Some people go to great lengths to get this hit, even spending the night in freezing temperatures to ensure the best seat at one of his speeches. When they don't get that buzz, they go through withdrawals. How else do you explain the fact that some fans threatened to protest Jobs's absence from a conference he had keynoted for years? That's what happened when Apple announced that Jobs would not deliver his traditional keynote presentation at Macworld Expo in 2009. (Apple also announced that it would be the last year in which the company would participate in this annual trade show produced by Boston-based IDG World Expo.)

Apple vice president Phil Schiller filled in for the legendary presenter. The expectations were nearly impossible to meet, but Schiller performed admirably *precisely* because he used many of Jobs's techniques. Nevertheless, Jobs was missed. "The sun is setting on the first generation of rebellious whiz kids who invented the PC, commercialized the Internet, and grew their companies into powerhouses," wrote reporter Jon Fortt.<sup>1</sup>

A Steve Jobs keynote presentation is an extraordinary experience, and he doesn't give many of them. Although fans, investors, and customers hope to see more of him at Apple events, given his leave of absence in 2009 for medical reasons and Apple's withdrawal from Macworld Expo, there might be fewer opportunities to see a master at a craft he has honed for more than three decades. (It was later confirmed that Jobs had undergone a successful liver transplant and would return to work.) This book captures the best of Jobs's presentations and reveals, for the first time, the exact techniques he uses to inspire his audience. Best of all, you can learn his skills and adopt his techniques to blow away your audience, giving people a high they will crave again and again.

Watch a Macworld keynote—"Stevenotes," as they are known among the Mac faithful—and you will begin to reconsider everything about your current presentations: what you say, how you say it, and what your audience sees when you say it. I wrote a column about Steve Jobs and his presentation skills for BusinessWeek.com. It quickly became hugely popular around the world (Daniel Lyons, aka "Fake Steve Jobs," even featured it). It appealed to Mac and PC owners alike who wanted to improve the way they sell themselves and their ideas. A select few readers had seen Jobs in person, while others had watched video of Jobs online, but the vast majority of readers had never seen him give a keynote. What they learned was eye-opening and forced many of them to go back to the proverbial drawing board.

For educational purposes, use YouTube as a complement to the techniques revealed in the pages to follow. At this writing, there are more than 35,000 clips of Steve Jobs on YouTube, a far larger number than for most other high-profile CEOs, including Virgin's Richard Branson (1,000), Microsoft's Steve Ballmer

(940), and the former head of General Electric, Jack Welch (175). In this case, YouTube offers a rare opportunity to read about a particular individual, learn about specific techniques that make him successful, and see those techniques in action.

What you'll learn is that Jobs is a magnetic pitchman who sells his ideas with a flair that turns prospects into customers and customers into evangelists. He has charisma, defined by the German sociologist Max Weber as "a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary people and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."<sup>2</sup> Jobs has become superhuman among his most loyal fans. But Weber got one thing wrong. Weber believed that charisma was not "accessible to the ordinary person." Once you learn *exactly* how Jobs crafts and delivers one of his famous presentations, you will realize that these exceptional powers are available to you as well. If you adopt just *some* of his techniques, yours will stand out from the legions of mediocre presentations delivered on any given day. Your competitors and colleagues will look like amateurs in comparison.

"Presentations have become the de facto business communication tool," writes presentation design guru Nancy Duarte in *Slide:ology*. "Companies are started, products are launched, climate systems are saved—possibly based on the quality of presentations. Likewise, ideas, endeavors, and even careers can be cut short due to ineffective communication. Out of the millions of presentations delivered each day, only a small percentage are delivered well."<sup>3</sup>

Duarte transformed Al Gore's 35 mm slides into the award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. As with Al Gore, who sits on Apple's board, Steve Jobs uses presentations as a transformative experience. Both men are revolutionizing business communications and have something to teach us, but where Gore has *one* famous presentation repeated a thousand times, Jobs has been giving awe-inspiring presentations since the launch of the Macintosh in 1984. In fact, the Macintosh launch, which you will read about in the pages to follow, is still one of the most dramatic presentations in the history of corporate

America. I find it amazing that Jobs has actually improved his presentation style in the twenty-five years since the launch. The 1984 presentation was tough to beat—one of the greatest presentations of our time. Still, Jobs’s keynotes at the Macworld Expo in 2007 and 2008 were his best ever. Everything that he had learned about connecting with audiences came together to create truly magnificent moments.

Now the bad news. Your presentations are being compared with those of Steve Jobs. He has transformed the typical, dull, technical, plodding slide show into a theatrical event complete with heroes, villains, a supporting cast, and stunning backdrops. People who witness a Steve Jobs presentation for the first time describe it as an extraordinary experience. In a *Los Angeles Times* article about Jobs’s medical leave, Michael Hiltzik wrote: “No American CEO is more intimately identified with his company’s success . . . Jobs is Apple’s visionary and carnival barker. If you want a taste of the latter persona, watch the video of the original iPod launch event in October 2001. Jobs’s dramatic command is astonishing. Viewing the event recently on YouTube, I was on the edge of my seat, even though I knew how the story came out.”<sup>4</sup> Jobs is the Tiger Woods of business, raising the bar for the rest of us.

Now the good news. You can identify and adopt each of Jobs’s techniques to keep your audience members at the edge of their seats. Tapping into his qualities will help you create your own magnificent presentations and give you the tools to sell your ideas far more persuasively than you have ever imagined.

Consider *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs* your road map to presentation success. It’s as close as you will ever get to having Jobs speak directly in your ear as you present the value behind your service, product, company, or cause. Whether you are a CEO launching a new product, an entrepreneur pitching investors, a sales professional closing a deal, or an educator trying to inspire a class, Jobs has something to teach you. Most business professionals give presentations to deliver information. Not Jobs. A Steve Jobs presentation is intended to create an experience—“a reality distortion field”—that leaves his audience awed, inspired, and wildly excited.

## Moving On Up

*As soon as you move one step up from the bottom, your effectiveness depends on your ability to reach others through the spoken and written word.<sup>5</sup>*

—PETER DRUCKER

Some of the most common terms used to describe Steve Jobs are “seductive,” “magnetic,” “captivating,” and “charismatic.” Other terms, typically related to his interpersonal traits, are less flattering. Jobs is a complicated man who creates extraordinary products, cultivates intense loyalty, and also scares the shit out of people. He is a passionate perfectionist and a visionary, two qualities that create a combustible combination when the way things are do not match the way Jobs believes they should be. This book is not intended to tackle everything about Steve Jobs. It is neither a biography of the man nor a history of Apple. This book is not about Jobs the boss, but about Jobs the communicator. And although the book will help you create far more effective presentations, it leaves the art of presentation design to more qualified authors whose life work is dedicated to the field of graphic design. (For more references, tips, and video clips of the presentations cited throughout the book, visit [carminegallo.com](http://carminegallo.com).) What the book does offer is the most thorough breakdown of exactly how Jobs crafts and delivers the story behind the Apple brand. You will learn how Jobs does all of the following:

- » Crafts messages
- » Presents ideas
- » Generates excitement for a product or feature
- » Delivers a memorable experience
- » Creates customer evangelists

The techniques will help you create your own “insanely great” presentations. The lessons are remarkably simple to learn, but applying them is up to you. Speaking the way Steve speaks

requires work, but the benefit to your career, company, and personal success will be well worth your commitment.

## Why Not Me?

When I appeared on CNBC's "The Big Idea with Donny Deutsch," I was struck by the host's infectious energy. Deutsch offered his viewers this piece of advice: "When you see someone who has turned his passion into a profit, ask yourself, 'Why not me?'"<sup>6</sup> I urge you to do the same. When you read about Jobs in the pages to follow, ask yourself, "Why not me? Why can't I energize my listeners like Jobs?" The answer is, "You can." As you'll learn, Jobs is not a natural. He works at it. Although he always had a theatrical flair, his style has evolved and improved over the years. Jobs is relentlessly focused on improvement, laboring over every slide, every demo, and every detail of a presentation. Each presentation tells a story, and every slide reveals a scene. Jobs is a showman and, as with all great actors, he rehearses until he gets it right. "Be a yardstick of quality," Jobs once said. "Some people aren't used to an environment where excellence is expected."<sup>7</sup> There are no shortcuts to excellence. Presenting like Jobs will require planning and practice, but if you are committed to reaching the top, there is no better teacher than Apple's master showman. (See Figure 1.)

## Performance in Three Acts

*The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs* is structured like one of Jobs's favorite presentation metaphors: a three-act play. In fact, a Steve Jobs presentation is very much like a dramatic play—a finely crafted and well-rehearsed performance that informs, entertains, and inspires. When Jobs introduced the video iPod on October 12, 2005, he chose the California Theatre in San Jose as his stage. It was an appropriate setting as Steve divided the product introductions into three acts, "like every classic story." In act 1, he introduced the new iMac G5 with built-in video camera. Act 2 kicked off the release of the fifth-generation iPod, which played video content for the first time. In act 3, he talked about

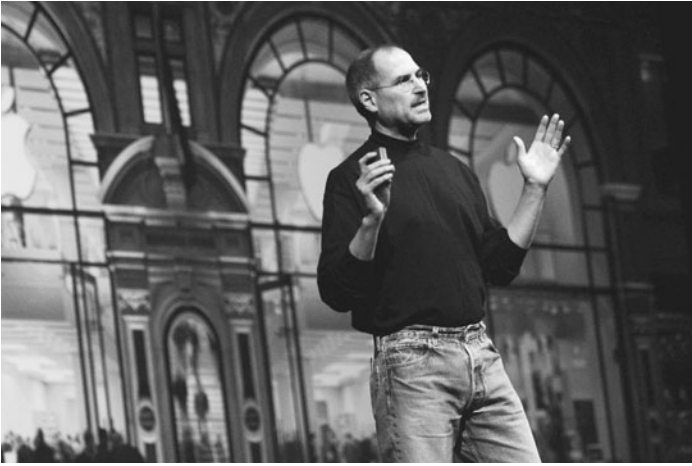


Figure 1 Apple's master showman turns presentations into theatrical experiences.

Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

iTunes 6, with the news that ABC would make television shows available for iTunes and the new video iPod. Jobs even introduced jazz legend Wynton Marsalis as an encore.

In keeping with Jobs's metaphor of a presentation as a classic story, *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs* is divided into three acts:

- » **Act 1: Create the Story.** The seven chapters—or scenes—in this section will give you practical tools to craft an exciting story behind your brand. A strong story will give you the confidence and ability to win over your audience.
- » **Act 2: Deliver the Experience.** In these six scenes, you will learn practical tips to turn your presentations into visually appealing and “must-have” experiences.
- » **Act 3: Refine and Rehearse.** The remaining five scenes will tackle topics such as body language, verbal delivery, and making “scripted” presentations sound natural and conversational. Even your choice of wardrobe will be addressed. You will learn why mock turtlenecks, jeans, and running shoes are suitable for Jobs but could mean the end of your career.



Short intermissions divide the acts. These intermissions contain nuggets of great information culled from the latest findings in cognitive research and presentation design. These findings will help you take your presentations to an entirely new level.

## What Are You Really Selling?

Jobs is “the master at taking something that might be considered boring—a hunk of electronic hardware—and enveloping it in a story that made it compellingly dramatic,” writes Alan Deutschman in *The Second Coming of Steve Jobs*.<sup>8</sup> Only a handful of leaders whom I have had the pleasure of meeting have this skill, the ability to turn seemingly boring items into exciting brand stories. Cisco CEO John Chambers is one of them. Chambers does not sell routers and switches that make up the backbone of the Internet. What Chambers *does* sell is human connections that change the way we live, work, play, and learn.

The most inspiring communicators share this quality—the ability to create something meaningful out of esoteric or everyday products. Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz does not sell coffee. He sells a “third place” between work and home. Financial guru Suze Orman does not sell trusts and mutual funds. She sells the dream of financial freedom. In the same way, Jobs does not sell computers. He sells tools to unleash human potential. Throughout this book, ask yourself, “What am I really selling?” Remember, your widget doesn’t inspire. Show me how your widget improves my life, and you’ve won me over. Do it in a way that entertains me, and you’ll have created a true evangelist.

Along the way, you’ll also discover that Steve Jobs is motivated by a messianic zeal to change the world, to put a “dent in the universe.” In order for these techniques to work, you must cultivate a profound sense of mission. If you are passionate about your topic, you’re 80 percent closer to developing the magnetism that Jobs has. From the age of twenty-one when Jobs cofounded Apple with his friend Steve Wozniak, Jobs fell in love with the vision of how personal computing would change society, education, and enter-

tainment. His passion was contagious, infecting everyone in his presence. That passion comes across in every presentation.

We all have passions that drive us. The purpose of this book is to help you capture that passion and turn it into a story so mesmerizing that people will want to help you achieve your vision. You see, it's quite possible that your ideas or products vastly improve the lives of your customers—from computers, to automobiles, to financial services, to products that create a cleaner environment—but the greatest product in the world will be useless without a strong brand evangelist to promote it. If you cannot get people to care, your product will never stand a chance of success. Your audience will not care, they will not understand, nor will they be interested. People do not pay attention to boring things. Do not let your ideas die because you failed to present them in a way that sparked the imagination of your listeners. Use Jobs's techniques to reach the hearts and the minds of everyone you hope to influence.

As Jobs often says to kick off a presentation, “Now let's get started.”

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# ACT I

## Create the Story

Creating the story, the plot, is the first step to selling your ideas with power, persuasion, and charisma. Succeeding at this step separates mediocre communicators from extraordinary ones. Most people fail to think through their story. Effective communicators plan effectively, develop compelling messages and headlines, make it easy for their listeners to follow the narrative, and introduce a common enemy to build the drama. The seven chapters—or scenes—in Act 1 will help set the foundation for presentation success. Each scene will be followed by a short summary of specific and tangible lessons you can easily apply today. Let's review the scenes here:

- » **SCENE 1: "Plan in Analog."** In this chapter, you will learn how truly great presenters such as Steve Jobs visualize, plan, and create ideas well before they open the presentation software.
- » **SCENE 2: "Answer the One Question That Matters Most."** Your listeners are asking themselves one question and one question only: "Why should I care?" Disregard this question, and your audience will dismiss you.
- » **SCENE 3: "Develop a Messianic Sense of Purpose."** Steve Jobs was worth more than \$100 million by the time he was

twenty-five, and it didn't matter to him. Understanding this one fact will help you unlock the secret behind Jobs's extraordinary charisma.

- » **SCENE 4: "Create Twitter-Like Headlines."** The social networking site has changed the way we communicate. Developing headlines that fit into 140-character sentences will help you sell your ideas more persuasively.
- » **SCENE 5: "Draw a Road Map."** Steve Jobs makes his argument easy to follow by adopting one of the most powerful principles of persuasion: the rule of three.
- » **SCENE 6: "Introduce the Antagonist."** Every great Steve Jobs presentation introduces a common villain that the audience can turn against. Once he introduces an enemy, the stage is set for the next scene.
- » **SCENE 7: "Reveal the Conquering Hero."** Every great Steve Jobs presentation introduces a hero the audience can rally around. The hero offers a better way of doing something, breaks from the status quo, and inspires people to embrace innovation.

# Plan in Analog

**Marketing is really theater.  
It's like staging a performance.**

—JOHN SCULLEY

Steve Jobs has built a reputation in the digital world of bits and bytes, but he creates stories in the very old-world tradition of pen and paper. His presentations are theatrical events intended to generate maximum publicity, buzz, and awe. They contain all of the elements of great plays or movies: conflict, resolution, villains, and heroes. And, in line with all great movie directors, Jobs storyboards the plot before picking up a “camera” (i.e., opening the presentation software). It’s marketing theater unlike any other.

Jobs is closely involved in every detail of a presentation: writing descriptive taglines, creating slides, practicing demos, and making sure the lighting is just right. Jobs takes nothing for granted. He does what most top presentation designers recommend: he starts on paper. “There’s just something about paper and pen and sketching out rough ideas in the ‘analog world’ in the early stages that seems to lead to more clarity and better, more creative results when we finally get down to representing our ideas digitally,” writes Garr Reynolds in *Presentation Zen*.<sup>1</sup>

Design experts, including those who create presentations for Apple, recommend that presenters spend the majority of their time thinking, sketching, and scripting. Nancy Duarte is the genius behind Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*. Duarte suggests that a presenter spend up to ninety hours to create an hour-long presentation that contains thirty slides. However, only one-

third of that time should be dedicated to *building* the slides, says Duarte.<sup>2</sup> The first twenty-seven hours are dedicated to researching the topic, collecting input from experts, organizing ideas, collaborating with colleagues, and sketching the structure of the story.

## Bullets Kill

Think about what happens when you open PowerPoint. A blank-format slide appears that contains space for words—a title and subtitle. This presents a problem. There are very few words in a Steve Jobs presentation. Now think about the first thing you see in the drop-down menu under Format: Bullets & Numbering. This leads to the second problem. There are no bullet points in a Steve Jobs presentation. The software itself forces you to create a template that represents the exact opposite of what you need to speak like Steve! In fact, as you will learn in later scenes, texts and bullets are the *least* effective way to deliver information intended to be recalled and acted upon. Save your bullet points for grocery lists.

Visually engaging presentations will inspire your audience. And yes, they require a bit of work, especially in the planning phase. As a communications coach, I work with CEOs and other top executives on their media, presentation, and public speaking skills. One of my clients, a start-up entrepreneur, had spent sixty straight days in Bentonville, Arkansas, to score an appointment with Wal-Mart. His technology intrigued company executives, who agreed to a beta test, a trial run. Wal-Mart asked him to present the information to a group of advertisers and top executives. I met with my client over a period of days at the offices of the Silicon Valley venture capital firm that invested in his company. For the first day, we did nothing but sketch the story. No computer and no PowerPoint—just pen and paper (whiteboard, in this case). Eventually we turned the sketches into slide ideas. We needed only five slides for a fifteen-minute presentation. Creating the slides did not take as much time as developing the story. Once we wrote the narrative,

designing the slides was easy. Remember, it's the story, *not the slides*, that will capture the imagination of your audience.

### The Napkin Test

A picture is the most powerful method for conveying an idea. Instead of booting up your computer, take out a napkin. Some of the most successful business ideas have been sketched on the back of a napkin. One could argue that the napkin has been more important to the world of business ideas than PowerPoint. I used to think that "napkin stories" were just that—stories, from the imagination of journalists. That is until I met Richard Tait, the founder of Cranium. I prepared him for an interview on CNBC. He told me that during a cross-country flight from New York to Seattle, he took out a small cocktail napkin and sketched the idea of a board game in which everyone had a chance to excel in at least one category, a game that would give everyone a chance to shine. Cranium became a worldwide sensation and was later purchased by Hasbro. The original concept was simple enough to write on a tiny airline napkin.

One of the most famous corporate napkin stories involves Southwest Airlines. A lawyer at the time, Herb Kelleher met with one of his clients, Rollin King, at the St. Anthony's Club, in San Antonio. King owned a small charter airline. He wanted to start a low-cost commuter airline that avoided the major hubs and instead served Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. King sketched three circles, wrote the names of the cities inside, and connected the three—a strikingly simple vision. Kelleher understood immediately. Kelleher signed on as legal counsel (he later became CEO), and the two men founded Southwest Airlines in 1967. King and Kelleher would go on to reinvent airline travel in the United States and build a corporate culture that would earn Southwest's place among the most admired companies in the world. Never underestimate the power of a vision so simple that it can fit on a napkin!



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