



## 7 Ways to Start Your Presentation: Introductions that Work

by Alan Ovson

So, you find yourself on stage in front of your audience. Now what? You need to know what to do to grab your audience's attention immediately! Don't waste their precious time by explaining who you are or telling them why you're there. Jump right in to your content. Give them something memorable right away.

Think of how the opening sequence of an action movie entices your interest and makes you want to see and hear more. Like that opening action sequence, your presentation needs to give your audience something valuable at the very beginning so they are interested and motivated to hear more.

Here are seven ways to get your audience on your side immediately:

1. **Ask a Question That Most of the Audience Might Be Thinking About But Not Saying:** This technique will get your audience immediately engaged with you. They will pay attention and feel that they are part of the presentation, not just passive listeners.
2. **Tell a Story That Connects to Your Main Point:** When done correctly, story-telling captures the audience's attention and imagination. Your story can get the audience to like and trust you – and give them a sense of how passionate you are about your topic.
3. **Give a Quote That Associates with Your Topic:** The theme of your quote can match the theme of your presentation, immediately connect you with someone famous and trusted, and give the audience something to ponder as you get started.
4. **Make a Startling Statement:** Want to grab your audience's attention immediately? Say something startling, surprising, or out of the ordinary. This lets your audience know that they're in for a very interesting time.
5. **Refer to the Audience:** Letting the audience know that you understand why they are important goes a long way toward endearing you to the room full of people you're trying to persuade.



6. **Refer to the Occasion:** Talking about why the audience is there builds the tone of the presentation. If it's a celebration, it should be noted. Referring and acknowledging the occasion (and why it matters) lets everyone in the room know that you care about the event you're part of.
  
7. **Tell a Joke:** This method for starting your presentation is not for the faint of heart. After all, you could receive stone-cold silence after your punch line. However, as we're fond of saying at Ovson Communications, "Humor is serious business." And it is. Joke-telling done correctly (for instance, using self-deprecating humor) is a great way to share a laugh with your listeners and get them to let their guard down so they're more accepting of your message.

The trick with all seven of these strategies is to give your audience something memorable immediately when you take the stage. They don't want to wait around for you to warm up to your topic. They're looking for value from the very beginning of your talk. Another trick with these strategies is that they can be combined. If, for instance, you can tell a memorable story that also happens to refer to your audience and to the occasion, your audience will be on your side and ready to hear your message.

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