

How to Present Like Steve Jobs

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Comparing a Steve Jobs presentation to most presentations is impossible — he’s in a league all his own. Apple’s chief executive is arguably the most charismatic pitchman in business today. His presentations are brilliant demonstrations of visual storytelling that turn customers, employees, and the entire computer industry into evangelists. [The Apple website streams video of Jobs’s keynotes](#), which make excellent learning tools.

[In January 2007, Jobs gave perhaps his greatest presentation to introduce the new iPhone.](#) This speech demonstrates the techniques he and other inspiring leaders use to wow their audiences – techniques you can use in your next presentation.

For more tips, watch our [BNET video on Jobs' presentation secrets](#).

Things you will need:

- \$0. Although Jobs relies on a team of designers to create amazing slides, you can replicate his techniques for nothing.
- 10 hours to rehearse for a new 30-minute presentation. It may sound like a lot, but if you want Jobs-style drama, you need to know your material cold.
- **A Vision:** If your topic can’t be summed up in 10 words or less, it’s too broad.
- **A Clear Structure:** An organized speech is easier for the audience to follow.
- **Visuals:** Eye-catching graphics form the basis of the most compelling slides.
- **Dramatic Flair:** A few time-tested storytelling devices help build excitement.

A yellow sticky note with the text 'step 1' written in black.

Ignite Your Enthusiasm

Goal: Engage your listeners’ passion by tapping into your own.

Steve Jobs is passionate about designing cool, fun, and easy-to-use computers, digital music players, and now phones. And he’s not too bashful to admit it. His words and phrases reflect his enthusiasm. These quotes are from the iPhone launch and from previous presentations:

“We’re going to make some history together today...”

“Today we’re introducing revolutionary products...”

“We’ve got amazing stuff to show you this morning...”

“This is an awesome computer...”

“This is an incredible way to have fun...”

“This is the coolest thing we’ve done with video...”

“We are so excited about this. It’s incredible...”

Jobs is exciting to hear, and many public speakers consider him to be a role model for their own presentations. Rarely, however, do most speakers take the opportunity to express their excitement about a particular product, feature, or service. They might be passionate about their story, but when asked to deliver that message in front of others, they fall into presentation mode: serious, glum, stiff, and formal.

If you honestly believe that something is “amazing,” go ahead and say it. As listeners, we are giving you permission to be excited and passionate and to have fun! After all, if you’re not passionate about the topic, how is your audience going to be?

What Not to Do

Strike These from Your Speech

Some words and phrases, like the ones below, are meaningless, trite, and overused. You don’t have to eradicate each and every one of them from your speech, but try to avoid them as much as you can.

- Maybe
- I think
- Well, you know
- Kinda
- Sorta
- Uh, Um, Ah, and other filler words
- Buzzwords of any type (e.g., mission-critical, optimized, monetize, synergy, no-brainer, slam-dunk, etc.)

step 2

Navigate the Way

Goal: Present your theme as a mantra to help your listeners remember it easily.

Jobs has always been able to craft a vision so vivid and powerful, he rallies his listeners to the better future he sees and, in so doing, persuades them to go along for the ride. When Jobs was attempting to lure then-Pepsi CEO John Sculley to lead Apple, Sculley was reluctant.

Jobs asked him, “Do you want to sell sugar water all of your life or do you want to change the world?” Jobs’s vision is to change the world, and we believe him.

“This is a day I’ve been looking forward to for two and a half years,” Jobs said during the iPhone launch. “Every once in a while, a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything. One would be fortunate to work on just one of these in your career. Apple has been very fortunate to introduce a few of these in the world.” At this point in the presentation, Jobs reminds his audience about the Macintosh and the iPod, giving listeners permission to believe in the vision he is about to describe: “Today Apple is going to reinvent the phone!”

To reinvent the phone. This mantra is simple, bold, and reflects a concise core purpose that is easy for listeners to remember and to rally around. Note that it is also under ten words.

Nitty Gritty

Outline Your Presentation

Even after Jobs has articulated his vision in a clear, concise mantra, he continues to navigate the way by providing a verbal outline for his presentations. He starts by describing the structure, then opens and closes each section with clear transitions. For example, during his Macworld 2008 keynote, Jobs said, “So that’s Time Capsule, a perfect companion to Leopard, and that’s the first thing I wanted to show you this morning.”

By letting your listeners in on the structure, you help them understand where they are in your story.

step 3

Sell the Benefit

Goal: Explain the real-world problem, then offer your solution.

Once Jobs reveals his one-liner — his core vision — he immediately launches into a discussion of why the world needs a new phone. A solution is inspiring only when it cures a real-world pain. Jobs sells the benefit of the phone by first describing the current state of the industry. The problem, he says, “is [smartphones] are not that smart, and they are not that easy to use. We want to make a leapfrog product that is way smarter than any mobile device has ever been and super easy to use. That is what iPhone is.”

Jobs continues to describe the problem on most smartphones: keyboards, which take up more than one-third of the phone whether the person is using them or not. The Apple solution is to create a “revolutionary interface” that will get rid of the buttons and create one giant screen. This brings up the problem — how do you get around the screen with no scroll wheel or stylus?

Again, Jobs sets up a problem and offers a solution: “We’re going to use the best pointing device in the world,” he says. “A device we’re all born with. Our fingers.” Jobs then describes Apple’s new “multi-touch” technology that accurately responds to the touch of a finger to bring up applications on the phone.

Most speakers describe the solution before the problem. Jobs flips it around to make it easier for the listener to follow.

Hot Tip

Encourage Others to Reach Their Potential

Jobs asked a team to work around the clock for two years to create the iPhone. Participating in the creation of a revolutionary product certainly must have kept them energized. But Jobs capped off their effort by asking them to stand, publicly praising them at the end of his presentation.

How do you think his employees would have felt if Jobs had taken all the credit? It would have been demoralizing. Instead, they were praised in front of their families and thousands of media, analysts, peers, and partners who were assembled for the launch.

step 4

Paint a Picture

Goal: Use a captivating storyline to structure your presentation.

Jobs tells the iPhone story by using several techniques:

1. Stick to the rule of three. We remember lists in groups of three. Jobs unveiled the iPhone and built drama at the same time by saying, “Today we are introducing *three* revolutionary products. The first is a wide-screen iPod with touch controls, the second is a revolutionary mobile phone, and the third is a breakthrough Internet communications device.” For added emphasis, he repeated the three products three times, then delivered the knockout: “These are not three separate devices. This is one device! Today Apple is going to reinvent the phone!”

2. Tell personal stories. During one section of the presentation, Jobs’s clicker suddenly stopped working. He mentioned it with a smile, knowing that someone backstage would take care of it, then told a story about how he and Apple cofounder Steve Wozniak had built a TV jammer and used it to block TV signals at Wozniak’s college dorm. He used the opportunity to make an emotional connection with his audience. Once the problem was solved, Jobs continued as if it had all been planned. Effortless but powerful.

3. Keep it visual. In a Steve Jobs presentation, you will not find bullet points, mind-numbing data, or lists of numbers on slides. When Jobs mentioned each of the three products — an

iPod, a phone, an Internet communicator — a slide with an image of the product appeared. When he discussed the “ultimate pointing device” — your fingers — all the audience saw on the screen was an image of a finger touching the iPhone.

Too much text on the screen distracts from the speaker’s words. Strike the right balance between visual and verbal by creating slides that are big on images and low on text.

4. Rehearse. Jobs rehearses presentations for hours. Nothing is taken for granted. He knows the flow of his story, how he is going to build up to a big moment, what he is going to demonstrate, and how he will open and close the presentation. He appears effortless — but only after hours of rehearsal. Motivation takes preparation.

Big Idea

Reinforce an Optimistic Outlook

Nobody launches revolutionary products without an optimistic outlook. Since his earliest days of tinkering with computers, Jobs has had an unshakable belief that his products would change the world. In each of his presentations, Jobs speaks the language of hope and opportunity.

Near the end of his iPhone launch, Jobs said, “There’s an old Wayne Gretzky quote that I love. ‘I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been.’ We’ve always tried to do that at Apple since the very beginning and we always will.” Always end your presentations on a hopeful note.

Adapted from Fire Them Up: 7 Simple Secrets to Inspire Your Colleagues, Customers and Clients by Carmine Gallo.