

# PERCEPTIONS & REALITIES

## Boring . . . Triggers . . . Snoring (zzzz)

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I once attended a presentation by an executive who began by saying, “I want to get through the initial slides so we can get to the interesting stuff.”

How would you react to this remark if you were in his audience? Think about it.

Maybe you would tune out rather than bothering to listen to material the speaker considers boring. Perhaps you’d conclude that the speaker didn’t think enough of you to want to make the initial slides interesting. As a professional speaker, my own reaction was to wonder whether the later slides would be any better than the initial slides.

As it turned out, they weren’t. Slide after slide was crammed with tedious, eye-straining, color-clashing detail. Even with my spectacle-assisted 20/20 vision, I couldn’t see his slides clearly. As a result, I couldn’t grasp the points he was making.

This presentation was right after lunch, mind you, and it was one of those carbo-laden lunches from the cookbook, *How to Eke By on 9800 Calories a Day*. To make matters worse, we were in a room darkened just enough to feel like naptime. And the speaker droned on and on about each slide. Instead of informing, persuading, educating or entertaining his listeners, this executive was making us regret our decision to attend.

When you deliver presentations — whether to customers, prospective customers, senior management, team-mates, or anyone else — think about the impact of your words. It’s so easy to toss off a comment or make a flip remark and in doing so, convey a message that’s other than what you intended. Such as that listeners will have to sit tight and endure



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the first several slides that have been included in the presentation even though they're boring.

As important as your words are in influencing listeners' reactions, your energy in delivering the presentation is also important. If you want your audience to feel enthusiastic about what you're presenting, you need to exhibit enthusiasm in presenting it.

This applies especially to your opening remarks, because that's when listeners draw conclusions about the quality of your entire talk. Get off to a yawn-inducing, send-'em-to-dreamland start, and you may have difficulty reversing that negative impression, even if an orator-quality delivery follows.

If you believe part of your talk is dull, tedious, tiresome, obtuse, monotonous, or fatiguing (my thesaurus offers these words as alternatives for "boring"), whatever you do, don't announce that fact to your audience! Who knows, maybe what you consider mind-numbing, they'll find fascinating.

Even better, do your audience a favor and eliminate material you feel compelled to apologize about. And trash all visuals that lead you to say, "I know you can't see this, but...". If your audience won't be able to see it, enlarge the information and spread it across several slides. Or provide it in a handout and limit the slide to an abbreviated reference to it. Or just omit it altogether!

Delivering your presentation with energy, enthusiasm, ebullience, exuberance and exhilaration (my thesaurus is big on presentation Es) will make all the difference between whether your audience enjoys it or spends the time catching up on their Zs. 😊

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