



# The Persuasion Principle

**Discover the truth about why some presentations succeed, and others suck... and learn how to communicate your message with impact.**

Too many presentations are boring, mismanaged or downright irrelevant; and the opportunity is lost. This report reveals the six major problems with presentations, explains why presentations should be viewed as conversations, and presents the proven PEAC™ Presentation Model and five-step preparation process.

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Stuart Ayling is available to conduct in-house training workshops at your premises, company retreat or conference throughout Australasia and the Middle East. All workshops are tailored to suit your industry, staff, and specific business challenges.

For more go to: [www.marketingnous.com.au/sales-presentation-training.htm](http://www.marketingnous.com.au/sales-presentation-training.htm)

## Presentations & Business Development

There are many situations that call for a presentation. This report views presentations from a business development perspective and is written for professionals, technical specialists, and other sellers who need to communicate their message and achieve commitment from their audience (usually clients).

Presentations are an inherent component of the business development process. If you are selling, you will also be presenting – there's no avoiding it.

However it's important to recognise that a presentation isn't always a formal affair with PowerPoint slides, microphone, and a speaker standing in front of the audience. Sometimes the presentation occurs in what is considered to be a normal conversational setting, during a small group meeting or one-to-one discussion. To be successful, those who present must know the **Persuasion Principle** - how to prepare and deliver a presentation to achieve their goal.

## Presentations Anywhere, Anytime

In a business development environment a presentation may take one of many forms, and may occur at various points within the sales process, such as:

- Presenting solutions to clients in a group setting (after a sales discussion, or tender submission); or pre-tender presentation to get on the shortlist.
- Presenting one-to-one with clients, using printed material or product.
- Tabletop presentations to small groups.
- Interspersed with other sales-related conversation (presenting discrete factors and benefits as you proceed through the conversation).
- Discussing/presenting solutions over the phone (a sales discussion)
- Presenting via video or web-conference.
- Presenting an information session for education purposes to a large audience at an industry event.
- Small group presentations to colleagues, either for education or as part of a reporting process.

Unfortunately in many organisations the process of presenting is rarely given serious consideration. It is left to the whim of the individual presenter. Yet it is one of the most important elements of the business development process – that is, the ability to develop and communicate a persuasive message.

## Delivering the Value

Many presenters (or sellers) overlook the fact that...

For the presenter to achieve the change they desire from the presentation the audience must:

- **Understand the message**
- **Know what to do next, and**
- **Be willing to take that step.**

In essence, the presenter must communicate the 'value' for the audience and show them how they can achieve it and why they should care.

Sounds simple doesn't it. But delivering the message of 'value' isn't always easy. The message can be lost or misunderstood as a result of presentations that are:

- **'Data dumps'**, where the presenter provides too much detail without adequate explanation.
- **Delivered poorly**, with lack of structure and meaningful message, often exacerbated by distracting personal mannerisms of the presenter.
- **Confusing**, providing content that does not make sense, as seen by the audience.
- **Infused with extraneous ideas or concepts** that appear irrelevant for the audience.
- **Overtime**, which often results in either/or –
  - The presenter missing key points
  - Confusion, with too much information being squeezed in
  - Impatience and/or frustration, distracting the audience from the main message
- **Used as a personal platform** by the presenter to focus on themselves and their favourite issues, rather than the audience.

## Presentations as Conversations

A presentation, whether it be to a single client, a small group of colleagues, or to a large audience of strangers, is really an exercise in communication.

Importantly, in all situations the purpose of the presentation is to achieve some change, some action, or some specific outcome, including:

- **A change in thinking**, such as to be more favourably considered by the audience, or for the audience to consider a concept/product/service.
- **A decision to buy**, or to approve the idea presented.
- **A commitment to take action**, such as to run a trial, or to arrange a further meeting to progress the sales discussion.

### **A Two-Way Process**

It is often a good idea to consider the presentation as a conversation rather than a one-way information delivery process. If we look at the presentation as a two-way communication process...

- We look for ways to involve the audience.
- We expect some feedback or response.
- We try and provide 'meaning' rather than just information.
- We loosen up our style and present more naturally.
- We consider the purpose of the conversation and aim to achieve a specific outcome.

In fact many technical staff and professionals (including managers) have trouble giving effective presentations. Often they deliver too much information, lack confidence, wander from the main message, and run the risk of losing the support of their audience. Prior planning can prove advantageous.

### **For Effective Presentations Consider:**

- What is the purpose and desired outcome of the presentation?
- What is the essential message to get across?
- How should the presentation be structured for optimal impact?
- Is interaction required? Is it a presentation or a workshop?
- How will the presenter make a strong opening that captures attention?
- When will questions be taken? How will distractions be avoided?
- What are the presenter's personal quirks? How will they be controlled?

### **Presentation Tools**

When looking to improve outcomes from presentations there are a number of tools that can be developed for presenters, including:

- Templates (for PowerPoint slides, handouts, invitations and follow up messages).
- Brochures, fact sheets, case studies.
- Client stories/anecdotes.
- Samples and props.

- Display equipment (laptop, projector, tablet computer, flip chart etc).
- Personal physical techniques such as using props, voice, clothing, and gestures.
- Personal verbal techniques such as story telling and using metaphors and evocative imagery.

## Recipe for Persuasion

The word *Persuade* has been defined as:

1. To prevail on (a person) to do something, as by advising or urging.
2. To induce to believe by appealing to reason or understanding; convince.

However the act of *persuasion* is open to many interpretations, and there have been hundreds of scientific studies and countless books written about what persuasion is, and what it means to be persuasive.

**Aristotle** – the famous Greek philosopher (384 BC – 322 BC) – wrote about three modes of persuasion:

- Ethos (appeals to the authority or honesty of the speaker)
- Pathos (appeals to the emotions of the audience)
- Logos (appeals with the use of logic, facts, or data)

**Robert B. Cialdini** - Regents' Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University - in his book *Influence: Science and practice* (2001) defines the 'six weapons of influence':

1. Reciprocity - People tend to return a favour. Thus, the pervasiveness of free samples in marketing and advertising.
2. Commitment and Consistency - Once people commit to what they think is right, orally or in writing, they are more likely to honour that commitment, even if the original incentive or motivation is subsequently removed.
3. Social Proof - People will do things that they see other people are doing.
4. Authority - People will tend to obey authority figures, even if they are asked to perform objectionable acts.
5. Liking - People are easily persuaded by other people whom they like.
6. Scarcity - Perceived scarcity will generate demand. For example, saying offers are available for a 'limited time only' encourages sales.

**Kevin Dutton** Ph.D, in his book *Split-Second Persuasion: The Ancient Art and New Science of Changing Minds* (2011), reviews a wide range of scientific studies and breaks persuasion down into five elements which he calls SPICE.

**S - Simplicity** - Keep the message short, sharp, and simple and we're more likely to believe it is true.

**P - Perceived Self Interest** - Con men agree it's the key to getting us to do something we didn't think we wanted to.

**I - Incongruity, Surprise people** - Tell them your cupcake is 400 cents rather than four dollars and they are far more likely to buy it.

**C - Confidence** - The more confident you are, the more we believe you're right - even when we know your facts are wrong.

**E - Empathy** - Look people in the eye, nod when they nod, tell them you're from the same small town they are. We trust people like ourselves.

**G. Richard Shell and Mario Moussa** present a four-step approach to strategic persuasion in their book *The Art of Woo* (2007). Step 2 is to confront the five barriers they define as being obstacles that pose the greatest risks to a successful influence encounter:

1. Relationships
2. Credibility
3. Communication mismatches
4. Belief systems
5. Interest and needs.

## The Recommendation

It would be easy to get confused by all the options and various viewpoints about what persuasion is. However, when it comes to business development presentations the elements of SPICE as proposed by Dutton offer a simple way of thinking that overlaps other concepts about persuasion and is easy to use.

When developing your presentation refer to the five SPICE factors and make sure you have addressed them within your preparation, content and delivery.

## Common Problem Areas

After working with a wide variety of professionals, technical specialists, managers and business development staff a number of common challenges have been observed. These include:

1. **Lack of preparation.** Usually this problem is attributed to lack of time to prepare. One remedy is to ensure suitable deadlines are in place to ensure time for review by supervisors or peers. Lack of preparation is often displayed during the presentation as lack of confidence by the presenter. Presenters who are unprepared mismanage time, do not understand key details, and wander off topic (because they are not clear on what they should say).
2. **Not paying attention to the desired outcome from the presentation.** Without this clear direction the presenter can easily give ambiguous information, wander off topic and possibly even get lost in the midst of the presentation.
3. **Too much information for the time available.** This problem can emanate from two sources:
  - a. Not being aware of the rate of speech – particularly if the only rehearsals are done in the presenter’s head (not out load).
  - b. Being focused on the volume of data being transmitted, rather the level of understanding being achieved by the audience.  
(Refer to point #2)
4. **Information aimed at the wrong level.** This could be in the form of jargon (special terminology) and/or acronyms; reference to specific applications/situations; personal experience of the audience; or level of authority of audience members (ability to act on the information).
5. **No audience interaction.** Most business presentations should be structured to encourage an appropriate level of interaction and feedback. Audience attention spans can be short, and regular involvement is required to keep everyone focused on the message being presented. The presenter should aim to encourage feedback or interaction, and engage with individual audience members through specific activities such as using questions and answers.

6. **Feeling (overly) comfortable.** If a presenter is giving the same/similar presentation many times over it is possible for them to become so familiar with the material and the audience's issues that they appear to be blasé, or distant from the audience. It is a challenge for regular presenters to maintain their enthusiasm for the message and keep the 'edge' to their personal delivery. When it comes to delivering a dynamic presentation a bit of adrenaline is a good thing.
7. **Poor layout of visual material.** This can apply to PowerPoint slides as well as printed material and handouts. The visual component of a verbal presentation requires a different style of writing and layout than a written document. Less text, short words, more images. In particular if PowerPoint slides are used they should be designed to support the presenter, not replace them.

## Assessing Audience Needs

For your presentation to be a success you must understand what your audience needs from you to help them take the action you desire – and create your presentation with that in mind. This 'desired action' could be to change their way of thinking on a specific issue; to take action on a personal basis; or to commit to using your services or products, or to working with you.

### **Be flexible with your communication style.**

Start by considering your own communication style. Which one of the four Communication Styles are you?

**Amiable** - easygoing; group oriented.

**Expressive** - outgoing; ideas oriented.

**Driver** - task focused; action oriented.

**Analytical** - detail oriented; focused on accuracy.

Also consider your audience... is there a certain communication style shared by the majority? If so, try and cater for that style with the way you present your information - in text, images, and the spoken word.

### **What is the current level of thinking?**

- What does your audience already know, think, and feel about the topic you are presenting?
- How well do they understand key terminology and concepts?
- Are you reinforcing their current state, or asking them to deviate from tradition?
- Do they already know you, or your company? Does this create any particular preconceptions about your message?

### **Plan for the correct size of group.**

Know in advance how many people to expect in your audience. Especially for smaller groups it is important to be able to plan your material and be prepared to involve the audience. If you know numbers in advance you can plan for handouts, prepare suitable interaction, and arrange seating to suit your purposes (e.g. in a circle versus class room style)

### **Keep time in mind.**

Ensure you stay on track to finish on time, or a little early. Use time markers to remain aware of where you should be within your presentation at any given time. Importantly don't cram too much information into the time you have available. Remember your rate of speech should be around 120 to 150 words per minute. Take time to pause, add emphasis, and let key points sink in.

## The PEAC Presentation Model

Even though there are many different presentation opportunities, a model has been developed that can be consistently used to guide the development of effective presentations in nearly all situations.

### The PEAC™ Presentation Model

The PEAC Presentation Model has been developed by Marketing Nous and provides a practical and proven structure for creating successful presentations.

#### **P = Purpose**

This introductory stage of the presentation should give the audience a reason to listen. What will you be revealing to them? What will they learn? What is your promise? What will be the structure of the presentation?

#### **E = Expand**

During this main part of the presentation (alternately called the 'body' of the presentation) you will expand upon the key ideas or concepts and explore each one for the audience, as well as providing proof or evidence to support your concepts. You can also stimulate emotion, creating a stronger affinity with your message. During this stage you will provide the information your audience needs and will meet the promise you made during the Purpose stage.

#### **A = Answer**

Before you close the presentation you must ensure you have answered important questions held by your audience. If you have answered these questions during the Expand stage of the presentation, then summarise here. If you plan to ask your audience "Do you have any questions?" this is the time to do that. It is advisable to not handle questions during the Close stage as the outcome may be somewhat unpredictable and distract from your message.

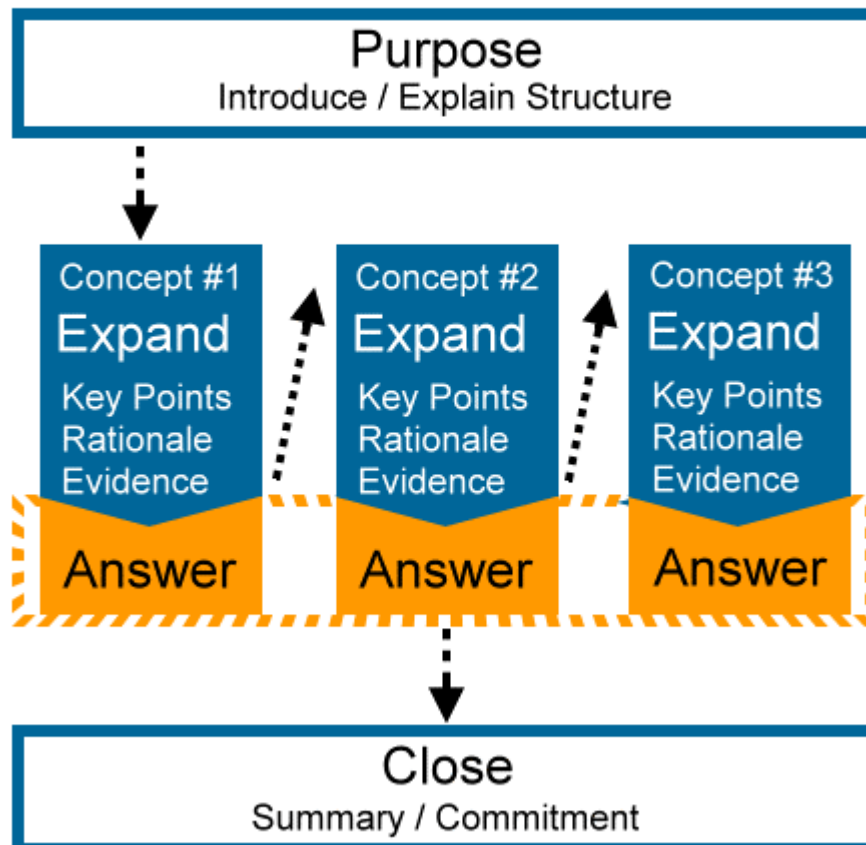
#### **C = Close**

When closing a presentation it is always recommended to summarise what has been covered – emphasise the key points – and draw specific reference to the action (the commitment or call-to-action) you would like from the audience.

Examples of call-to-action:

- See our advisors before you make your next investment decision.
- I recommend you approve the quote so we can get started to meet your deadline. Would you like to do that?
- Read our special report that gives you more detailed action steps.
- Make an appointment today to see how this impacts your own situation.
- Fill in the enquiry form and we will contact you within 24-hours.
- I look forward to meeting with the committee to present this concept in detail to them.

## The PEAC Presentation Model



## 5-Step Preparation Process

Personal presentation skills cannot be 'fixed' overnight. It takes understanding, practice, feedback, adjustments, and more practice.

Certainly some presentation material can be produced at short notice. Within hours you can create a deck of PowerPoint slides and get some handouts printed. But will they be effective? Has enough time been invested to fully consider the underlying message – the value – and the actions required by the audience?

Too often, to develop a presentation, the presenter will start by reaching for their laptop and firing up PowerPoint. And that's the first problem.

**A more effective strategy is to:**

1. **Reflect on the purpose and outcomes of the presentation.** Who is the audience? What do they want from you? What do they need to know? The content of your presentation must suit the needs of your audience.
  - Does your audience prefer facts and figures?
  - Do they need to be entertained?
  - Do they want to see proof?
  - Do they need to hear industry-specific terminology?
  - Do they already know the subject matter?
2. **Develop a suitable story line** that has a beginning, middle, and end using the PEAC Presentation Model. The 'story' doesn't have to be silly, or like a child's fairytale. Make it real and relevant for the audience. For example the story could be about a business problem, an organisational issue, a potential threat, or a customers dream.
3. **Think about how to best communicate each of the key concepts.** Use data, photos, charts, stories, polls, interaction, as well as text. As an aid to develop your message consider using paper or a whiteboard to spread out, storyboard your concepts, and check the sequence.
4. **Think ahead to address key questions** your audience may have. Either incorporate the answers into the presentation or have them at the ready if needed to answer before you close. It can be helpful to ask your

audience (or a representative) in advance so you can be sure you are covering the right issues.

5. **Create modules of content**, producing a flow to the presentation that ensures optimal understanding and drives momentum towards your desired outcome. When creating your presentation it is a good idea to firstly identify the key points, or key sections of information, that you wish to convey in your presentation. These sections become 'modules' of information in the overall presentation (within the Expand stage of the PEAC Presentation Model).

Importantly, the modules also dictate the content of the presentation. When you determine which modules are needed and have a clear purpose for using each module, the next question to address is "What do I say?"

In this way using a modular approach prevents you from going off on a tangent and including information you might think is 'interesting' but is not really needed.

**Now start up your software** and use the PEAC Presentation Model to create an effective structure and content to achieve the objective of your presentation.

**And remember... as the presenter you are the main attraction, not the slides, brochures, or handouts.**

## Presentations as Workshops

When you run an interactive workshop there are some fundamental differences to running a standard presentation.

### Presentation vs. Workshop

A presentation is usually the one-way delivery of a message. Sure there may be some questions asked by the audience, but essentially the presenter is doing the communicating (delivering a pre-defined message). The audience's job is to listen.

In contrast, a workshop is usually much more interactive, and progresses in a different manner to a presentation, taking into account the participation of the audience. The audience - that is, the workshop participants - actually help create the meaning of the session. Importantly the outcome of a workshop often requires participants to actively create something as a result of their participation (such as a plan or a new way of doing something).

### **Layout of Room**

Seating/Tables - For a workshop it is best to use seating that facilitates the activities the participants will be doing. For example, for group discussions seating in a circle is suitable. If writing is required it is best to use a table to provide a suitably sized writing surface. If the activity is likely to be noisy (e.g. loud voices) consider separating the groups as much as possible, or use a breakout area for more space.

Lighting - Ensure adequate lighting for the tasks. If people are writing or reading the light must be strong enough (without shadows). Many meeting rooms have adjustable (dimnable) lights, or multiple switches for spot lights, down lights, and fluorescent lights etc. Test them out and use the best combination to suit your group. For workshops lasting more than 2-hours it is advisable to have some natural light, as much as possible.

### **Involve Everyone in the Room**

Make sure you pay attention to everyone in the room - move around amongst the participants wherever possible. Some people may be naturally more talkative or outgoing and demand more attention. Don't make the mistake of ignoring the quieter members of the group.

If someone is a bit quiet, gently ask for their ideas or input on particular topics. Never use strong or confrontational tactics that may alienate people or cause them to stop participating. Keep the environment open, friendly, and non-threatening.

### **Practice Using Your Visuals**

Whether you are using PowerPoint displays, a whiteboard, flipchart, posters, or other props and visual aids, make sure you practice using them.

- Run through using a demonstration product. Know exactly how it works.
- Practice drawing your diagrams on the whiteboard.
- Double check any sums or calculations you will be using.
- Be comfortable with using a flipchart (limited space on page) and make sure your writing is large enough to be seen by everyone.
- Be prepared for where to position charts, posters, or other material you may want to stick on the wall, hang up, or keep on display for reference during the workshop. Check with your venue: some do not allow anything to be adhered to the walls.

### Interact One-to-One

For participants, one of the main benefits of a workshop is to interact and learn from the presenter. Additionally, other participants may have value to add through their personal experiences, training, or background. Therefore it is important to involve the participants and facilitate full communication to realise maximum value from the session.

- Move off the stage, away from the podium, and into the audience space.
- Be sure to fully answer all questions - ask to check that you do.
- Thoroughly discuss key points (as much as time permits) asking for other experiences to expand upon the situation being discussed.
- Ask for, and explore, opinions from the audience.
- Help participants take part in activities - offer advice and guidance.

### Get the Timing Right

Know how much time will be needed for participants to reach the outcome you desire. Plan your timing to allow for a short break at least every 90-minutes. Allow time for people in groups to set themselves up and get comfortable with each other. Allow time for you to gain feedback from everyone and summarise progress.

Let participants know how much time they have for each activity - this helps them self manage and forewarns them of when you will be moving on from that activity.

## Managing Group Presentations

Preparing for and managing the delivery of a presentation by a group requires more attention to detail and more time than for a solo presenter.

### Planning

In addition to the 5-Step Preparation Process outlined above, the planning process for a group presentation needs to consider:

- The speaking skills of each presenter.
- The degree of authority (or perceived authority) held by each presenter. Will that help or hinder their delivery and impact on the audience?
- Who will be presenting each section (or module/s) of the presentation?
- Who will be the best person to present the Purpose and Close stages?
- How much time will be allocated for each section?
- How will visual elements (such as PowerPoint slides) remain consistent?
- Who will be the timekeeper?
- Who will manage responses to questions asked during 'general' question time?

### Roles & Teamwork

The presentation is really a performance. Like any stage show the performance needs a cast, and must be choreographed. The roles within your presentation may be decided upon seniority, the amount of input provided into developing the content, whoever knows the audience best, or those with particular expertise. Regardless of who is chosen, each role must be clearly defined so presenters can play their part to best effect.

Do all presenters know where to stand (or sit) during the presentation? Is the layout of the room understood? Has there been a rehearsal (or two) to give everyone confidence as a team?

Is there agreement on the best way for presenters to introduce themselves? How much should they say? Is that consistent with the other presenters?

How should each presenter pass over control to the next person? Will that transition happen smoothly and professionally?

### Consistent Message

Every presenter has his or her own style. This is great. But it can also be a hindrance when trying to coordinate a group presentation. One factor for gaining consistency is to allocate roles with clarity, so everyone knows what they must achieve. Another important factor is to closely review the 'script' used by each presenter. Is it on message? Is it timed correctly?

Key themes can be stated in a variety of ways, preventing boring repetitive messages coming from each presenter. It is also important for each presenter to clearly understand how their content (logic and emotion) contributes to the overall impact of the presentation.

### Handling Questions

Following the PEAC Presentation Model, questions may be managed individually by presenters during delivery of their allocated content/modules. Alternately (and this is often the case) questions may be taken after all content is delivered but before the Close stage. In this situation it is recommended that a key presenter be tasked with the responsibility of determining who should answer each question – sort of like the Chairperson managing responses at a panel discussion.

This ensures only one person (the most appropriate person) speaks at a time, and avoids the potential for perceived conflict of views between presenters, who individually may give answers from varying perspectives.

## About Stuart Ayling



**Stuart Ayling specialises in sales improvement strategies and soft skill development for companies that sell services or complex products. Stuart has worked in sales/marketing for over 20 years and holds a Bachelors Degree in Marketing and a Graduate Certificate in International Business.**

Visit Stuart at LinkedIn <http://au.linkedin.com/in/sayling>

With a background in corporate sales and marketing management roles Stuart founded Marketing Nous in 1999, and has worked with leading businesses across Australia and internationally. He regularly conducts in-house sales and presentation skills training programs based on his SOX™ Question Technique, and the PEAC™ Presentation Model.

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**Bruce Watson, CEO, AUSCOAL Super (Industry Super Fund):**

"AUSCOAL Super was looking for refinement and improvement for our Australia-wide based team of financial advisers, planners and managers who constantly present face to face seminars and workshops. Being a not for profit AUSCOAL Super needed the presentation skills without the hard sell and after extensive research Stuart Ayling was a clear leader to partner with AUSCOAL Super. The professionalism of our organisation has been lifted through both presentation content design and presenting skills thanks to the great support and assistance from Stuart."

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**James Holbeck, Career Adviser, Queensland Reds (Rugby Union):**

"The feedback from our coaches and management team was very positive and more importantly the structure and communication at meetings has since improved markedly, with the coaches now more comfortable in presenting because they have a simple formula that works."

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**Richard Green, Managing Director, CatapultBI (Software):**

"I had to present in a lead spot at a major Australia-Pacific conference where our company was a major sponsor. I engaged Stuart to turn this into a great presentation. He drilled me hard and certainly provided me with an edge that moved my presentation from a likely mundane talk to an engaging high impact presentation."

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**Contact Marketing Nous to explore training options.**

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