How to Get Heard AND SUPPORTED by Your Church Leadership

MINISTRY spark

Contents

About the Author

Keith Ferrin is a speaker, storyteller, teacher, and author who strives to help people realize that the living Word of God is a reality—not a phrase. He holds tightly to the idea that people can believe the Bible is not only true and applicable, but also fun, engaging, and enjoyable. Keith is the husband to one (Kari) and a father to three (Sarah, Caleb, and Hannah). And…he thinks the world is a better place since the invention of coffee and ice cream (not necessarily in that order).

Part 1: Prepare with a Plan

So, you want to be heard. You have an idea you need funding for. You have a ministry vision you want to implement. You are considered a leader in your church…but you don't always feel that way when you're around other senior leaders. (Heavy sigh)

Hear this clearly: You can get heard. (And I'm going to help you.)

First, a little background. I've spent the last 23 years speaking, writing books, blogging, and helping individuals, families, and church communities truly enjoy the Bible. About a dozen years ago, a guy who attended our church asked me to help him with a speech he had to give. He happened to be in a pretty senior position at Microsoft. Since I love talking to people about the "craft" of speaking and writing, I was happy to help. We talked a couple times, I gave him some tips, and his presentation ended up going really well.

Over the next several years, he hired me to help him (and his team). He introduced me to some other people at Microsoft, and I began coaching individuals and teams. God has graciously opened up the door for me to coach entrepreneurs, authors, pastors, and leaders at companies like Amazon, Samsung, and the Gates Foundation.

I want to share with you exactly what I share with them.

What you do has eternal value. The kids and families you invest in will be forever impacted by how you serve them.

Your impact will be infinitely greater if you are consistently improving the clarity and effectiveness of your communication. And here's the clincher: It's not as hard as you might think!

What you're reading is the first of a 4-part guide. When someone whose career depends on effectively communicating with senior leaders hires me to help them, these are the first four actions we dive into:

1. Prepare with a Simple System
2. Run Better Meetings
3. Write Better Email
4. Give Better Presentations

We are going to cover each of these actions in individual chapters. Here's what I ask: *Read this one first.* (It should be easy—you're already here!). You can read the other chapters in any order, but this one is *foundational* to everything else.

Ok. Enough intro mumbo-jumbo!

Whenever you have a message you need to deliver, you will do so with more clarity, more confidence, and more creativity if you prepare using a simple system. It doesn't matter whether you'll be delivering this message in a meeting with your elder board, in an email to your senior pastor, or as a full-blown presentation in front of the church.

We all know that systems can make things better. We have systems for building cars. We have systems for selling products and services. We have systems for coaching kids' sports. I'm guessing you have systems in place for training volunteers, running VBS/summer programming, and planning major events. Why? Because systems can help us make things better.

And yet, most people don't have a system for developing and delivering messages. Ugh.

A few paragraphs ago, I told you that landing messages with senior leaders (as well as team members, volunteers, parents, and kids) doesn't need to be complicated. It doesn't! In fact, the more complicated your system, the less powerful it will be. The main reason being that you won't actually use a complicated system.

As I tell my clients all the time:

Simple gets applied. Complicated gets set aside.

Communicating effectively is as simple as asking yourself three questions as you prepare your message.

Have I clarified my purpose?

Most of what is labeled as "communication" is actually just information dissemination. We talk and talk without accomplishing anything. We say a lot of words, but people don't know *why*!

The most important question you need to answer is: *Have I clarified my purpose?*

- What do I want *this* piece of communication to accomplish?
- What do I want the outcome of *this* meeting to be?
- What do I want from *this* email, *this* phone call, or *this* presentation?

Most of the time, when we don't get heard or supported by our senior pastors (or elders or leadership team) it's because they don't know what we want. This may sound harsh, but too often we haven't decided what we want. We know what we want to talk about—but we haven't clarified what we want to accomplish.

Another way to think about this is to ask yourself, *"What do I want my pastor/elders/church council to think, feel, or do after this meeting/presentation/email/etc.?"*

Once you have landed on a crystal-clear purpose (your desired *outcome*), you're ready to ask the second question.

Have I simplified my content?

Most of us include too much content in our meetings, presentations, and email. To tie this in to the last question, we share a lot of information that is "on topic" but not "on purpose." This is the information that gets in the way of landing your message!

The first step you need to take if you're going to simplify your content is to filter everything you are considering including through the filter of your purpose. That way, what you *could* say is simplified into what you *should* say.

A quick example: You need more volunteers for your big, summer kickoff BBQ. You've determined that your "purpose" for your meeting with your lead pastor is to ask him to make the ask on Sunday morning.

You could include all of this in your conversation:

1. The number of volunteers you need
2. The number of volunteers you already have
3. The schedule for the BBQ
4. The menu
5. The success of volunteer signups after the last time he did the ask
6. The financial update and/or request
7. The point-of-contact for volunteers

8. The goal for the BBQ after the success of the event last year
9. The location of the signup sheet

Every one of these items could show up in your meeting. After all, every one of them is about the BBQ. They are all on *topic*. However—in light of your purpose of getting your pastor to make the announcement—only items 1, 2, 5, 7, and 9 are *on purpose*.

Ok. Once you have all of your content filtered down, you're ready for the greatest communication magic trick I know: The Hook.

The Hook is so simple, most people pass it by the first time I share it with them. But once they start using it—and see the power of it—they never go back.

The Hook is simply a *plural noun* that you "hang" all your points on. That's it.

There are hundreds of hooks you could use. Reasons. Ideas. Stories. Risks. Challenges. Thoughts. Benefits. Changes. Rules. Questions. Needs. Possibilities. (You get the point.)

Picture this. You walk into a meeting. The person running the meeting opens with one of these three options:

- Meeting 1: "Thanks for coming. We have a lot of stuff to cover, so let's dive right in."
- Meeting 2: "Thanks for coming. I have several things I'd like to talk with you about."
- Meeting 3: "Thanks for coming. I would love your help with four challenges we've seen in family ministry the last couple months."

Which of these three meetings would you like to attend? (Please say "Meeting 3!")

The content could be exactly the same. The Hook for Meeting 3 ("challenges") makes you sound like you've thought this through. You know where you're headed. You know what you want out of the meeting. You are a leader!

If you don't intentionally choose a Hook, your Hook will almost always be "stuff" or "things." Anytime you replace those two words with just about *any other plural noun* your effectiveness as a communicator—and your impact as a leader—will go up.

By the way, my Hook for this chapter is "Questions." I'm guessing if the title had been "Some Stuff You Can Do to Communicate Better" you wouldn't have kept reading! (wink, wink)

Have I served my audience?

How much thought do you give to the person you're trying to land your message with? So often, we spend all our time thinking about our content and what we want, that we give almost no thought to the person we need to land the message with!

Ask yourself a few of these questions:

- Who are the people my message needs to land with?
- Do I know what they've been dealing with already this week?
- Do I need to provide context for this message?
- Does this person like a little bit of social conversation to start a meeting or prefer to get right to the point?
- Do they like to give answers right away, or do they need time to process?
- Do I need to provide anything in writing?

Of course, you don't always have the answers to all of these questions. Nor is every one of these questions relevant in every scenario.

But thinking about your audience will always benefit everyone involved. Always.

Three Questions:

- Have I clarified my purpose?
- Have I simplified my content?
- Have I served my audience?

The next time you have a message you need to land with a senior leader at your church, ask these questions (in order!) and watch what happens. My guess is you'll start to feel heard and get the support you're looking for!

Part 2: Run Better Meetings

Have you ever had this experience? Upon leaving your church staff meeting (or any meeting), your first thought is *"I will never get that hour of my life back!"*

If you are running—or contributing to—a meeting where you need to land a message with your senior pastor or other church leaders, this type of meeting can be devastating to actually accomplishing your goal.

Hear this clearly: Everyone hates feeling like their time has been wasted—especially senior leaders.

Today we're going to walk through ten tips for making your meetings more focused, productive…and even enjoyable. To make sure we fully cover the bases, the rest of this chapter is written as if you are the person who "owns" the meeting. If you're simply contributing to a meeting someone else owns—like a staff meeting, board meeting, or annual meeting—you can make the obvious adjustments (or shoot me an email with any questions).

Three of these tips are meant to be applied BEFORE your meeting. Four are intended to be used DURING your meeting. The remaining three are practiced AFTER your meeting.

Apply these tips BEFORE your next meeting

For a meeting to be successful, you need to make sure you put these first three tips into practice before your meeting ever begins.

Tip 1: Clarify the purpose of your meeting for yourself

The first tip, as you might expect from my last chapter, is to make sure you have *clarified the purpose of the meeting* in your own mind.

The two mistakes that most commonly get made in meetings are…

1. Only clarifying your *topic* (and not the *purpose*)
2. Including more purposes then can actually be accomplished in the time available

When we make the first mistake—having a clear *topic* but not a clear *purpose*—what ends up happening is—instead of having a successful *meeting*—you simply have a *conversation*.

Now...sometimes that conversation is enjoyable, and it may even *feel* productive at the time. But most of the time, when only the topic is clear, people walk out of the meeting and quickly realize that nothing was actually *accomplished*.

The purpose of your meeting is never "VBS planning." VBS planning is a topic. The *purpose* of a meeting that deals with VBS planning *could* be:

- Brainstorm and choose a theme for VBS
- Finalize the daily schedule for VBS
- Determine budget, volunteer roles and number of each needed, and building spaces needed for VBS

When we make the second mistake—having too many purposes—everyone ends up leaving frustrated. You leave frustrated because you didn't accomplish as much as you had hoped. Many of your attendees leave frustrated because much of the content didn't pertain to them. Or worse yet…their particular purpose wasn't discussed at all because you ran out of time.

Always make sure you clarify your purpose ahead of time in your own mind.

Tip 2: Communicate your purpose at the point of invitation

Many times, a meeting will go on the calendar as "1-on-1 with Lindsay" or "Weekly staff meeting."

Let the people who will attend the meeting know exactly what you plan to accomplish. If you don't communicate your purpose ahead of time, each person will come in with their own agenda and their own purpose. This is especially true if you have shared the *topic* without attaching a *purpose*.

For example, sending out a meeting invitation that says, "Discuss Summer Ministry Plans," will lead some people to come in expecting to participate in a brainstorming conversation about the plan for the summer. Others will expect an announcement of a VBS theme. While still others will assume the conversation is going to be around implementing the summer plans they've been making.

The bottom line is that each person will come in with *assumptions* about the purpose instead of accurate knowledge of your purpose. Be sure to communicate the purpose of the meeting ahead of time so everyone comes ready to accomplish the same goal.

Tip 3: Make sure the right people are in the room

The reason I put this as the third tip is because when you follow tips 1 and 2, it's much more likely you'll invite the people who have a vested interest in the purpose.

As you clarify the purpose in your own mind, it will become clear to you who needs to attend and who does not. As you communicate your purpose to others, there is a good chance one of the people you invited will remind you of someone who should also be there if you happen to have missed someone.

So much time is wasted when meetings don't include the right people. Get your stakeholders in the room for the initial meeting instead of relying on follow-up meetings.

Use these tips DURING your next meeting

Let's move on to the four tips to apply DURING your meetings.

Tip 4: Restate your purpose at the beginning of the meeting

Not only does it clarify the purpose for anyone who might have missed it in the initial invitation, but since most people have multiple meetings per day, it also helps to focus the minds and the conversation of all the people in the room…including you!

It sounds simple, but even a single sentence reminding people of the purpose goes a long way toward avoiding tangents.

> *"Hey team. We've got one hour to finalize our theme for VBS."*

Or…

> *"Thanks for coming. I'm excited to brainstorm ideas for equipping parents over the next 18 months. Today is about getting all the ideas on the table. I'll give it some thought and narrow our ideas down for our next meeting. At that next meeting we'll settle on the three ideas we're going to implement and begin developing a timeline."*

Tip 5: Address tangents quickly

If the purpose is clear, it's much easier to identify and address tangents before they get too far off course.

I remember one guy I was working with took this to heart in a really creative way. He had been frustrated with a team project that had weekly meetings that didn't seem to get anywhere.

One week, he only showed one slide for the entire meeting (extremely rare in the corporate world) and it simply had the stated purpose of the meeting, which he had communicated ahead of time. He placed his chair in front of the screen and sat with the simple, one-sentence purpose displayed behind him.

He began the meeting by pointing up at the purpose and saying, *"This is what we are going to accomplish today."*

Anytime someone started going off on a tangent, he would pause, smile, and point toward the purpose statement.

When I saw him the next week, he laughed as he told me the story. Then he also added that his team accomplished more in that one meeting than they had in the previous four weeks combined.

Tip 6: State your purpose(s) on your first agenda slide

Tip 6 addresses a question people ask me all the time: *How do you feel about agenda slides?* Really, my tip for agenda slides is simply an extension of what we have covered so far. Make sure that your agenda slide has a list of *purposes*—not topics. And make sure your agenda slide doesn't have more content than you can possibly cover in the time allotted for your meeting.

If this has been a problem for you, your staff, and your volunteers, one way to keep everyone on track with the agenda is to *assign and state* the amount of time that will be given to each of the purposes on the agenda.

It might feel a little legalistic to have someone keep time, but you and your team will quickly learn how much you can actually cover in a 30, 60, or 90-minute meeting. A timed-out agenda also communicates to each person in the room that you—as the owner of the meeting—value each purpose on the agenda—including the one most important to them.

Tip 7: End your meeting early (or at least on time!)

This may sound funny, but my last tip to use during a meeting is to end your meeting early. Obviously, this can't happen every time. Probably not even most of the time. However, if you want people to see you as someone who values them and values their time, occasionally end a meeting ten minutes early and watch what happens.

People are so used to having their time wasted and having meetings press right up to the last minute (or go over), that when someone sets aside an hour for a meeting and only uses 50 minutes or so, you will notice pretty quickly that trust grows, team morale improves, and people will be more likely to prioritize your meetings, because you are someone who gets things done and respects their time. If you can't end early, be absolutely sure to end on time!

Practice these tips AFTER your next meeting

The final three tips have to do with what happens *after* your meeting. Each tip is a question you need to ask yourself.

The first two questions go hand-in-hand, so you can ask them at the same time.

Tips 8 & 9: Ask yourself "Who has a task?" and "Do they have what they need to accomplish it?"

Ask yourself who has a task from that meeting. Even if you saw them jot down the task—if it's something you want them to prioritize—sending a follow-up note is rarely a bad idea.

Along with that, ask yourself if the people assigned tasks have what they need to complete their tasks, or if you need to provide resources or point them in the right direction.

Taking 20 seconds to send a text along these lines can go a long way: *"I'm looking forward to seeing what you come up with for the parent training. Anything you need from me?"*

Tip 10: Ask yourself "Who needs to attend the next meeting?"

The tenth and final tip applies *only if* there is going to be a follow up meeting. If there is, ask yourself this question: *Who needs to attend the next meeting?*

Sometimes, you need to add someone to the invitation who wasn't at the first meeting. Other times, the next meeting only needs to be a smaller group, or even one person, from the first meeting. Make sure you have the right people—and *only* the right people—at any follow-up meeting, and you will have more successful, and fewer, meetings over all.

What I have come to realize from working at a church—and from connecting with hundreds of pastors—is that churches are notorious for trying to cover every *thing*, with every *person*, at every *meeting*. The "Weekly Staff Meeting" we put on our calendars ends up being jam-packed with items we'll never get to or items that are only relevant to a few of the people in the room. (I know *you've* never done that. But we all have that that one co-worker…)

Ten Tips.

Three of these tips are meant to be applied BEFORE your meeting ever starts. Four will help you run a productive meeting when you use them DURING your meeting. And three more tips—questions to ask yourself AFTER the meeting—to make sure any actions or follow-up happens in a timely and effective manner.

I'm guessing you have some meetings coming up. Pause right now and think about your next meeting or two. Apply the first three tips right now. After that…go have a fantastic meeting!

Part 3: Write Better Emails

Email is everywhere. For most people, it is an all-day-every-day activity. In fact, Jocelyn Glei, who wrote *Unsubscribe*—a book completely dedicated to email productivity—says,

> *"The average person checks their email 11 times per hour, processes 122 messages a day and spends 28% of their total work week managing their inbox."*

If we spend even *half that time* reading and writing email, it only makes sense that writing better email is a skill worth investing in.

Simply put: If you want to be heard and supported by your church's senior leadership, you need to become efficient and excellent in your email communication.

This chapter is dedicated to making that happen. As I have talked to ministry staff, corporate executives, salespeople, and entrepreneurs, I have discovered seven mistakes we frequently make when it comes to email.

These seven mistakes suck up hours of our time and lead to unproductive and frustrating email conversations. If you've been paying attention to the other chapters in this 4-part guide, you won't be surprised by the first mistake.

Mistake #1: Not clarifying your purpose *before* you start writing

What do you want your email to accomplish? What do you want the reader to think, feel, or do after reading (or skimming!) your email? What do you want your lead pastor, ministry staff, church elder, or church council to *do* after they read your email?

Get the answer to those questions clear in your mind *before you ever start writing*, and you will be amazed at how much more quickly you write the email, how much more brief the email is, and—perhaps most impressively—how much more frequently people respond.

Speaking of getting a response…

Mistake #2: Not clearly identifying any requested response

While you need to avoid this mistake in every email conversation, it is especially important when your desire is to get heard by a senior leader!

You sit down to write an email to your senior pastor. What do you want him to do? Do you just want him to share his opinion? Are you looking for funding? A face-to-face meeting?

Your desired response needs to show up in either the subject line, the first paragraph, the last line, or even in two or three of those places!

Speaking of the subject line…

Mistake #3: Not utilizing the power of the subject line

Simply saying "hi there" or "following up" is not enough. You are wasting an opportunity to catch the leader's attention and make him or her *want* to read the email you have written. Try something like "A few questions before our parent meeting." Or how about "Could I get your feedback on two volunteer issues?"

Don't use the subject line as a greeting. Use it to communicate the purpose of your message.

Mistake #4: Not applying simple formatting techniques

This mistake is especially significant if you are writing a longer email.

- Make sure that you put in some paragraph breaks so there is white space for the reader's eyes.
- Every once in a while, make a word or phrase bold or italic—especially if it is one of the key questions you want the person to answer or identifies an action item they need to take.
- Instead of listing things in paragraph form, use bullets or numbering.

Leaders get a lot of email. Most of them have become very good "skimmers." If you format your email to make skimming easier, they will be more likely to read the whole thing.

Now, don't go to the other extreme and over-format! But writing long paragraphs without any formatting and paragraph breaks is a huge mistake that will result in people giving up after the first few lines of your message.

Mistake #5: Not re-reading your email before you hit "Send"

I can't tell you the number of times I have found typos—or the completely wrong word—in an email when I'm proofing it. (Is it just me, or is it way too easy to mix up *their*, *there*, and *they're*?)

Like it or not, most leaders are Type-A people. Type-A people do not like mistakes. The last thing you want is to have your senior pastor or church elder distracted by a typo instead of thinking about the message you need to land!

BTW…I even received email this week that began with *"Dear Kevin,"* Hmmm…

Mistake #6: Replying to email at the wrong time

The last two mistakes fall into the category of my "Philosophy of Email."

This needs a little context. Do you remember the quote that kicked off this chapter? Most people check email all day, every day. Most people also *reply* to email all day, every day…*from their phones.*

When writing an important email to a leader in your church, do not reply when you are on the go. Set a reminder to write the email from your computer. Why? Because your mind will be more focused, and you will write a better email.

When we are writing on our phones, we tend to think in "sound bites". We are in a texting mode—thinking in terms of phrases—not complete sentences.

Sound bite mode is fine when you're telling a friend about a movie or restaurant, but it's not the best way to communicate when you are trying to be heard by your leaders!

And remember Mistake #4? It is a pain in the backside to format on your phone, so you won't do it. And then you'll miss an opportunity to turn a decent email into a fantastic email.

- Sit down at your computer.
- Turn off your phone.
- Close all social media.
- Then craft a well-written, thought-out, simply formatted email. (You'll be glad you did!)

Mistake #7: Using email for emotional or hard conversations

This final mistake shouldn't even need to be mentioned. And yet, I still see this mistake made way too often. It is quite possibly the most damaging of all the mistakes.

Email is fantastic for communicating details, facts, and information. Email is, quite possibly, *the worst tool possible* for communicating disappointment, frustration, or hurt feelings.

When you find yourself in that type of situation, close your email and pick up the phone. Better yet, whenever possible walk down the hallway and have a face-to-face conversation.

If you don't have open-door-access to the leader you need to meet with, send an email that simply says, *"I have a staff issue I don't feel comfortable discussing over email. Could I have 20 minutes face-to-face with you at your earliest convenience? Thank you."*

I can't remember a single time when someone vented or complained over email and ended up with a positive result. Never.

Ok...I will get off my soapbox now.

Seven mistakes.

1. Not clarifying your purpose ahead of time
2. Not clearly identifying any requested response
3. Not utilizing the power of the subject line
4. Not applying simple formatting techniques
5. Not re-reading before hitting "send"
6. Replying to email at the wrong time
7. Using email for emotional or hard conversations

Now you know the seven mistakes. You know the leader you're about to email. You know the message you need to land. Go write a purposeful, clear, simply-formatted email. Reread it. Then hit "send."

You will feel confident. Your pastor will appreciate it. And you'll be one step further down the road of being viewed as the powerful, effective, Kingdom-impacting leader God has called you to be!

Part 4: Give Better Presentations

This chapter might not "feel" like it's about getting heard by senior leadership in your church. After all, you probably don't spend much time giving presentations to your lead pastor or elder board. (If you *do*, this will be super helpful!)

However, leaders listen to other leaders. If you present well, word will get around, and you will be seen as the leader you are! Make it your goal to present extremely well—whether that's to students on Sunday mornings, to volunteers at your annual *Thank You Dinner*, to parents at an information session, or to the congregation in a main service.

Presenting well results in greater influence. Influencing well results in greater leadership. Leading well results in more visibility, respect, interaction, and support from your senior leadership.

So…let's look at the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Presenters. (It's almost like I stole that from someone.)

Habit 1: Know your purpose

I know, I know. I sound like a broken record. But I focus on purpose so much because it's the most import element of any piece of communication. And not having a clear purpose is the mistake people make more than any other.

25 years ago, when I started standing on stages delivering messages, it seemed like everywhere I turned I heard people saying: Content is king.

It sounds good. After all, without good content, why give a presentation?

Hear this clearly: Content is not king. Purpose is king. Content is the peasant that serves the king.

Is content important? Absolutely. But you can have excellent content and still ramble your way through a boring presentation. You might leave out some amazing content because your thoughts weren't organized around a clear purpose. Or you could simply overwhelm your audience because you have too much content.

Clarity of purpose will help ensure that all of the fantastic content that could be in your presentation is boiled down to *only* the content that serves your purpose!

Habit 2: Know your audience

Almost every blog post, book, or presentation about improving your presentation skills says something about "knowing your audience" or "adapting to your audience." Here's the weird thing: Almost no one does.

Let's make this extremely practical (and maybe a little painful). Do you have a parenting class you regularly facilitate? If not, how about a volunteer training? Get a clear picture in your mind of some "training" type of content you have delivered at least 3-5 times. For this example, I'm going to use the parenting class.

Think back over the last few times you taught the parenting class. Were all these families in exactly the same spot? Had all of them been married the same length of time? Were there any single parents in the class? Did all of them have the same number of kids? Were all their kids the same ages? Were all of them mature Christians, or new Christians, or not-yet-Christians?

Most of the time knowing your audience will not change your entire presentation. Most of the time it will simply show you what needs to be tweaked, added, deleted, expanded upon, or what analogies you should use to make sure your presentation lands with this audience.

Habit 3: Use a Hook

I covered the Hook in detail in the first chapter of this guide. If you haven't read that chapter, you're going to want to stop and read that now. The plan I outline in that chapter is the foundation for everything I write or teach about communicating effectively.

As a recap, the Hook is simply a plural noun you hang all your points on. It is one word that transforms your presentation from something confusing and bland into something clear, engaging, and memorable.

The possibilities for the Hook are nearly endless: reasons, stories, questions, ideas, challenges, benefits, decisions, memories, verses, thoughts, options, etc.

In this chapter, I'm sharing seven habits of highly effective presenters. Imagine if I started by saying, *Here are some things good presenters do.* Would you still be reading? Nope.

Use a Hook. (Just make sure you don't choose "things" or "stuff.")

Habit 4: Start strong

The first 60 seconds can kill a presentation. Or they can grab your audience, draw them in, and make them want to listen to you—however long you speak.

One of the fastest ways to lose your audience is to use a lame intro. **Starting with an apology is almost always a bad idea.** Have you ever heard one of these? *Traffic was crazy getting here today. I'm a little frazzled.* Or...*Sorry, I've got a bit of a cold.* Or…*I was hoping to have more time, but we'll rush through.* When you start like this, you're basically telling your audience, *I don't expect this to go very well. You shouldn't either.* (I'm guessing that's not what you're going for.)

If you want to create a strong intro, start by thinking about your audience instead of making the presentation about yourself. Be sure to ask yourself: *What do they need and want? How am I going to help and serve them?* Answer those two questions in the intro, and they'll be hooked.

One last tip to start strong: Don't look at your notes for the first 3-5 minutes. Sometimes you have a lot to cover and you need notes—but not in the first few minutes. Nothing says *I don't know my stuff, and I don't care about my audience* more than keeping your eyes on your notes when your eyes should be on them!

Habit 5: Transition well

When you prepare your presentations, do you give any thought to how you're going to transition from Point A to Point B to Point C? If not, you're missing two huge opportunities!

First, you're missing the opportunity to transform a decent presentation into an excellent one. Decent presentations have logical points that accomplish their purpose. Excellent presentations take audiences on a *journey*. Excellent presentations tell a story. Stories require transitions.

The other opportunity you're missing is the opportunity to cement your content in your audience's mind. Even a simple transition that revisits the points you have already made will help your message stick.

Habit 6: Finish well

Most people think the only good way to close a presentation is with a heart-stirring story that leaves your audience gently brushing a solitary tear from their cheek. (Aww...)

Now, if you've got a story like that…use it! However, a good closing doesn't have to be emotional or complicated. In fact, simple is frequently your best bet when it comes to an effective closing.

I've been doing this a long time, and my most common closing is to walk back—at a very high level—through my points. Remind your audience of your purpose, of how that purpose will benefit them, and of how the points you've made accomplished that purpose.

One more thing. Remember what I said about memorizing your opening? The same is true for your closing. Always end your presentation looking at your audience.

Habit 7: Practice correctly

If you want to turn a good presentation into a fantastic presentation, you need to practice. After all, can you think of *anything* you can simply decide to do—not practice at all—and be outstanding at the very first time? That's what I thought.

There are four main elements I encourage you to practice. You can guess—from what I said about memorizing—that two of them are the opening and the closing. You want to make sure those are both clear, smooth, and delivered with confidence.

The third element is the story (or stories). Think of those times in your day when you don't have be fully engaged in what you're doing. Taking a shower. Washing dishes. Driving home. Leave the radio off and tell one of the stories—out loud!—you are going to share in your presentation.

I want to emphasize the importance of practicing your stories out loud. There are words that flow in your brain that do *not* flow through the lips. When you hear yourself tell the story out loud, you'll change the words, figure out what you want to emphasize, and increase your confidence and emotional energy with each round of practice.

The final element isn't really an element. It's the whole presentation. Walk through the whole presentation as if you were speaking the outline. List the intro story/stat/analogy/welcome. Then list the points with the main idea, concept, or story of each point. Finish with how you're going to close the presentation.

This whole exercise should take you about three minutes. You are not *giving* your presentation. You are cementing the *storyline* of your presentation in your mind. Doing the 3-minute version of your presentation a few times will have a tremendous impact on your confidence, your ability to remember everything, and your ability to connect emotionally with your audience.

Increase the impact of your presentations

Ok…that's enough for today. There is so much more we could cover about purposeful gestures, working a stage, voice inflection, humor, and body language. Those are all terrific. But the seven habits we just walked through are foundational!

If you get a little better each time at clarifying your purpose, using a good Hook, adapting to your audience, starting strong, transitioning smoothly, finishing well, and practicing, you will see your confidence—and the impact of your presentations—skyrocket.

The amazing thing about becoming an effective presenter is that you will be pleasantly surprised at how much the skills and confidence you develop as a presenter will spill over into how you lead meetings and how you “show up” in the room when you’re with your lead pastor or elder board.

Sign Off

I said this earlier, and I want to say it again: What you do has eternal value. The kids and families you invest in will be forever impacted by how you serve them.

Remember that as you approach these communication practices. Having purpose, clarity, and better communication will help you accomplish what it is you are working toward.

Present well.

Influence well.

Lead well.

You *will* get heard and supported by the leaders around you.

We hope you enjoyed this guide. As you prepare for and lead your ministry, we hope to walk alongside you. If you liked this guide, you may want to check out the free resources section of MinistrySpark.com and grab what you need!

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