

Here are some sample tip pages,  
including the full Table of Contents,  
and the introduction pages to each section...

# *Speaking of Tips....*

*Volume 1*

*150 ways to improve your next presentation...  
from concept to delivery!*

*A MediaNet, Inc. Publication*

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# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF EXCITING PRESENTATIONS!

These tips comprise a variety of interesting and practical ideas to help you prepare and deliver effective presentations. The tips cover these categories:

- *Message – the context of your script*
- *Media – the design of your visual support*
- *Mechanics – the style of your delivery skills*
- *More... – the room layout, logistics, etc.*

One tip about how to read this book is that it doesn't matter where you start. It's not arranged like a story or a narrative. It's just a collection of helpful hints.

The tips are grouped into separate categories because there are times when messages are created, when visuals are designed, and when delivery skills are practiced. Although the tips are numbered, they aren't in any specific order within each of the sections. However, some tips do follow a pattern, such as tips #50, #51 and #52, which all deal with the cost factors associated with a variety of media-types.

Perhaps a good way to read this book is to jump around, at first, and see if certain suggestions catch your attention. Another choice might be to look at the index and find key words that relate to a particular issue. Of course, the table of contents can give you some indication of what information a specific tip contains.

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## MESSAGE

The *message* is the content behind your argument. It's the format of your story. It's your *script*. Sometimes that script can last five minutes, sometimes five times that long, or longer!

For most messages, the approach is *persuasion*. You can recognize this quickly by asking yourself, “Do I want *something* (some action or effort) from my audience?” If the answer is “yes”, then you'll probably need to do a bit of convincing to get what you want. Only you can decide how persuasive you need to be.

What you will find interesting about the message tips that follow is the way in which audiences can be approached in order to make your message appeal to the greatest number of people. Too often, we develop a script focusing on just the presenter, rather than the relationship between the presenter and the audience.

The important thing to remember is that a message must be clear, concise, and to-the-point. Yet, to produce a lasting impression, a message must *change* something in the listener to the point of causing some *action*. Once a person has been changed, even in some small way, the memory of that change lingers.

The following tips may help you the next time you need to craft a message that counts.

## #8 THE CALL TO ACTION

The call to action is what you *expect* from your audience. It is directly related to the expression of your objective. For example, if you plan to conclude your presentation with the phrase, “*Thank you very much and I hope you will each buy one of our products,*” then you must have been trying to sell. Each component of your script would then support the objective of SELLING something to the audience, whether it is a product, a service, or an idea.

The call to action, then, is the expectation you have of the audience to help *further* your objective. What homework or action is required of your audience to aid your cause? What must they do NEXT in order for your objective to be realized?

If the objective is *to sell*, the call to action might be as simple as asking for a *check*. The key is in giving the audience some action or direction so they actually know what to do when the presentation is over.

## #9 MEASURING THE CALL TO ACTION

Your ability to quantify or measure the call to action helps you determine the success of your presentation. Your expectation of the audience can be either *real* or *abstract*. The more *real* the call to action, the *more risk* involved if the audience chooses to act (or not act) on the offer.

For example, the call to action for a retail store having a one-day sale is just that, *one day*. This is a very real and measurable call to action. The audience (the public) has only one day to either act or not act. The risk to the retailer is high because after the one-day period passes, the retailer cannot offer the sale price to a now-interested customer.

A more *abstract* call to action carries *less risk*, but is also harder to measure. If the call to action is your *hope* that the audience is *happy* with your proposal, there is no way to measure the level of happiness. Thus, the risk of their being unhappy is lower simply because there is no happiness index for you to quantify. Abstract calls to action offer less *closure* to the issue.

## 👁 MEDIA

**The *media* is the physical evidence you choose to support your argument. In many cases, the media takes the form of visual elements such as overhead transparencies, 35mm slides, or electronic images.**

**Some may suggest that a good presenter needs no visual support. In that respect, a good singer needs no accompaniment. But singers do use background orchestration to add a third dimension to the way a song sounds. And so, presenters benefit from the use of good visual support to add another dimension to the impression of the message.**

**With the advent of software and technology, however, many presentations tend to over-use or abuse the media to the point where the support information displayed takes precedence over the manner in which the information is presented. The message becomes confusing and the impact is lost.**

**A visual can only help you or hurt you. You must control the extent of your visual content so that the focus of the presentation stays with you and not with your support material.**

**The tips in this section will help you reduce the clutter within your support materials and allow the message to be received with the least distraction.**

## #58 THE TIMING OF HANDOUTS

Many people ask, “When is the best time to distribute handouts, before or after the presentation?” The answer is definitely “Yes.” That’s not an answer because there is no definite answer, one way or the other. The timing of handouts depends on your objective and your ability to keep the attention span of the group.

If the group needs to refer to the handout materials DURING the presentation, then a copy of the handouts is required before you begin the presentation. If the handouts are not required but are merely supportive of your message, then decide if the handouts will distract the audience from your presentation as you speak. If the answer is “yes,” distribute handouts at the end. If the answer is “no,” you can give them out at the beginning or at the end of the talk.

Regardless of when you distribute handouts, always announce them at the beginning of the presentation. Let people know what you have, what it covers, and when they can expect to receive it.

## #59 GIVE YOUR PRESENTATION THE EIGHT SECOND TEST

Eight seconds! That’s the average attention span on any visual. Audience members will spend about eight seconds scanning and processing a visual (transparency, slide, electronic image, etc.) before they will allow their attention to be drawn elsewhere, such as listening to the presenter’s words. You can leave the same visual in view for as long as you want, but the first eight seconds are critical for an audience to understand the support image in relation to the words that are spoken.

Since we can’t read and listen at the same time, review each of your visuals and determine if the text and graphics can be deciphered in eight seconds. If not, then expect the presenter to have a more difficult time delivering the explanation while the audience is busy interpreting the visual.

Check your text visuals for excessive data. Bullet points that wrap to a second line are too long. Full sentences should be removed and replaced by short, key phrases. Figures 2-A and 2-B show the difference between a busy visual and an easier-to-read image.

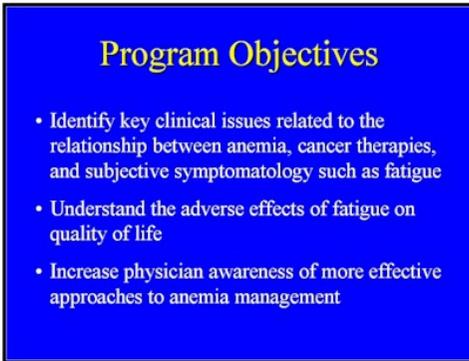


FIGURE 2-A

*When bullet points extend beyond one line, the audience tends to spend more than 8 seconds “reading” the information and less time listening and watching the presenter.*



FIGURE 2-B

*By reducing the text to short phrases and adding depth with a photo, the content can be scanned within 8 seconds. The image can remain in view until the presenter chooses to move to a new visual.*

## #60 READABILITY FROM A DISTANCE

Will everyone in the room be able to see everything on the screen? Whether you use overheads, 35mm slides, or electronic images, the audience must be able to read your support information or why show it to them? You can use several ways to test whether your images are going to be readable from a distance, even before you consider templates.

For overheads, place a transparency on the floor and stand over it. If you have no problem reading the text, then the audience member in the back of the room will not have a problem reading the information when projected.

## ✂ MECHANICS

The *mechanics* of your delivery involve both EXTERNAL and INTERNAL skills and are separated into four areas:

- BODY
- VOICE
- MIND
- HEART

The body and the voice are external or the mechanics of FORM; the mind and the heart are INTERNAL or the mechanics of FUNCTION. There are 100 different skills to master within the mechanics of form and function. These tips touch on some of those.

Since form usually *follows* function, it might seem logical to establish the internal skills, first, before refining the external techniques. But, the majority of us are visual creatures and we prefer the most tangible or visible elements of a skill before concentrating on the strategy behind that skill.

Hence, the following tips concentrate primarily on the mechanics of *form*, with a few tips on the mechanics of *function* appearing toward the end of this section.

The logic is similar to learning the technique of hitting *each note* on the musical scale (form) before choosing the type of music and adding individual interpretation to the selected piece (function).

The goal is to reduce the *distractions*, which may haunt you from time to time whenever you present in front of any group, regardless of size.

This imaginary area in front of the audience in which you can move is called the **Presenter's Triangle™**.

To build your triangle (see Figure 10), construct an imaginary line from the eyes of the person sitting on your far **RIGHT**, to the left edge of the screen. This line becomes the long end of the triangle, or an “angled wall”.

From each end of this angled wall, imagine two lines meeting at a 90-degree angle to complete the shape behind you. Now you are standing inside an imaginary triangle, facing the angled wall. The most important point to remember is that the angled wall is a boundary that you cannot penetrate. If you step through the wall, people on your right will not be able to see your screen.

The Presenter's Triangle forms the basis for all movement throughout the entire presentation and offers the speaker the best chance to stay consistent. Remember — there is **ALWAYS** a triangle, even if that triangle is only big enough to allow movement within it by just shifting your weight.



FIGURE 10

*The imaginary “line of sight” from the person to your far right to the left edge of the visual creates an invisible boundary for the Presenter's Triangle.*

## #103 THREE POSITIONS OF THE TRIANGLE

While movement is important, some wonder **HOW** the movement is done when using the Presenter's Triangle. The good news is that there are only **THREE** positions of the triangle that your body ever has to occupy. That's it — only three spots — the front, the middle, and the back. Figure 11 offers an enlarged view of the three positions.

## ① MORE...

**More...yes...there is always more!**

**Beyond the message, the media, and the mechanics, the event itself adds another dimension to the planning process. In addition to the way you dress and appear, the environment plays a significant role in how the presentation is received by the audience.**

**For example, when you go to a movie, the lobby, the concession stand, the seats, the size of the screen, and the general conditions of the place will affect how much you enjoy the movie. These environmental elements won't really change from day to day, so they become issues you can learn about in advance of going to that particular theatre.**

**It matters if your outfit distracts from your delivery. It does make a difference if you are presenting in a hotel ballroom or outside, under a tent, or in a cramped conference room. It means something if you run over your allotted time. The *setting* does matter and the more you know in advance about the environment, the better prepared you will be to handle any limitations.**

**The tips in this section cover some environmental and logistical elements, which may affect your presentation.**

## #137 USING PLATFORMS & RISERS

If given the chance to place yourself at a higher level than the floor, take it! The audience will get to see more of you, and thus get more of your physical expression of the message. Risers can range from as little as 6 inches high to larger stage platforms that adjust from 18 to 24 inches. You can even use a fixed stage, if available, which is usually 36 inches from the floor. In some corporate auditoriums, the seating is fixed, as well, and the rows are sometimes raked (built up on an incline), similar to a playhouse or movie theatre.

When seating is not fixed, as in most hotel situations, you can request platforms. These platforms are usually 6'x8' or sometimes, 4'x8'. In addition, most of these platforms have extension supports, which can change the height from 18 inches to 24 inches.

For audiences of about 50 to 100 people, 18 inches should be the minimum height. For more than 100 people, use the 24-inch height setting for maximum visibility. Of course, if the best you can get are 12-inch risers, take them. Any opportunity for the audience to see you better is worth it. Figures 15 and 16 show room layouts with platforms for both theatre-style and classroom-style seating.

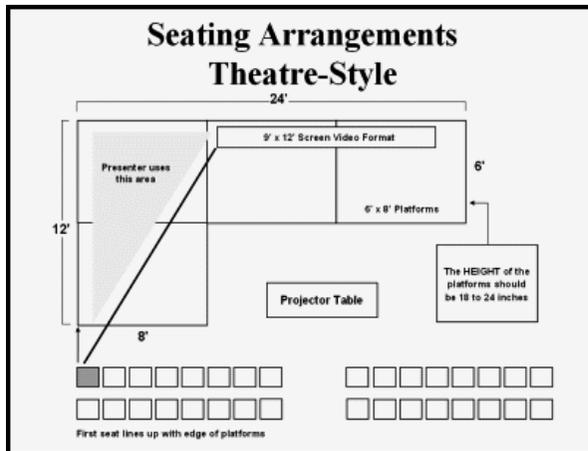


FIGURE 15

*This room layout diagram keeps “line of sight” issues intact while adding height (platforms) to the presenter for distance viewing.*