

## Steve Jobs: 10 presentation tips from the King



**Few people would rival Steve Jobs for the title of best corporate presenter of all time, writes Ian Whitworth.**

Steve Jobs' distinctive presentation style changed the game for everyone else. His Macworld presentations were as vital a part of the brand as his slick Apple stores or the technology itself. Name another corporate presenter whose speeches carried the same sense of lead-up anticipation. Deceptively simple, Jobs's presentations showed a masterful command of theatrecraft, storytelling and decluttering.

**Here are 10 useful tips from the Steve Jobs school of presentations ...**

- 1. Passion for the subject** Jobs was a guy who was on a mission. He famously headhunted Pepsi boss John Sculley with the line "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugar water, or do you want to change the world?" That passion came across in his presentations. You could see it in his eyes.
- 2. Don't write with presentation software** Jobs would sketch out the flow of his presentation old-school, using analog pen/paper technology. He plotted out the essential storytelling elements like a movie scriptwriter. Setting up the characters, creating drama, revealing the product as hero. Only when the story was locked in would they create the presentation graphics.
- 3. No jargon** Jobs used none of the clichés that bedevil corporate speeches, particularly in the IT field. No "seamless enterprise-class solutions". No "best of breed". Just a conversational chat the way any normal human would talk. The subconscious message: it's easy for everyday people to use this product.
- 4. Clear the clutter** Bullet points are a thoroughly discredited means of communicating with an audience. It's like asking someone to memorise a shopping list. Damn, forgot the milk! Jobs' graphics used one short point at a time, teamed with quality photos, which kept the audience focused and lets the message sink in. No ever-present logo bars, event titling, swooshes or other clutter.
- 5. Don't be afraid to create an enemy** When Jobs launched the iPad, he framed the argument by starting with Netbooks: "just a cheap PC that doesn't do anything well". A lot of people will tell you that all negative messages are bad. That advice, though well-meaning, is simply wrong. If your product is the solution to a problem, you'd better spell out vividly how annoying that problem is.
- 6. Instant understandability** Your average business presenter would announce the Macbook Air with slides boasting "At last, a laptop solution that's only 17mm deep at its widest point!" Yawn. Jobs walked on stage with a slim manila business envelope and pulled a laptop out of it. Brilliant showbiz. Not to mention an affordable props budget. Each fact was made vivid. "16GB" is boring. "8,000 songs" is amazing.
- 7. No lectern** Lecterns are a barrier to communication, and lead to dull, static presentations. By ditching the lectern and notes, Jobs was able to present in a way that created a stronger bond with the audience.
- 8. Epic rehearsals** The reason Jobs's presentations looked so effortless was the huge effort he put in behind the scenes. A notorious detail freak, he would spend two days rehearsing the Macworld speeches with an in-house audience, fine-tuning, trimming excess detail, perfecting the slide timings, getting comfortable with every move.
- 9. A distinctive stage look** The Apple stage look is always consistent. You could see a photo of an empty stage with no logo and still know whose show it was, just from the colour, font and stage layout. The Apple stage look has a Zen simplicity to match their products. Even Jobs' constant skivvy-and-Dad-jeans look set Apple apart from the corporate world.
- 10. Don't be afraid of a blank screen** If there's no visual that goes with the words at any point, go to a blank screen. PowerPoint users can do this by hitting the B key. This creates a powerful focus on you, the presenter, with no distractions. When the images return, they have much more impact.



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