

# PRESENTING YOUR BEST SELF

## CLARIFY

Before any presentation, ask yourself the following questions:

### What is the purpose?

If you are not clear on the purpose of your talk, you can't expect your audience to figure it out. Is your intention to inform, persuade, decide, ideate, etc?

### What does success look like?

Define success for your audience and for you. How will you know whether your presentation achieved its desired result? You should be able to describe success.

## DESIGN

Design is not limited to creating a slide deck. Don't rush this step.

### Define the core elements

What are the most important points you will include in your presentation?

Ask yourself the following:

- What information do they need?
- What skills do they need?
- What mindset do they need?
- What decisions must they make?

### Support the core elements

After identifying the most important points to cover, consider how to deepen understanding, assist with retention, and apply new information or skills.



#### STORY

Use stories with emotion & tension to reinforce key points and aid in retention.



#### VISUALS

Use photos, graphics, slides, etc, to provide context and create mental imagery.



#### DEMOS

When applicable, it's better to show instead of tell. Let them see it vs describing it.

# DESIGN

Now that you've identified your core elements and how to support them, it's useful to consider audience doubts and address them during your presentation.

In the book [The Human Element](#) by Nordgren & Schonthal, the authors describe four types of friction:



## INERTIA

Is it a break from the status quo? There is a powerful desire to stick with what we know, what's familiar.



## EFFORT

How difficult is it to implement this idea? Even a small amount of real or perceived effort can derail a person.



## EMOTION

Do people feel threatened by the idea? The idea of change can create unintended negative emotions.



## REACTANCE

Does the audience feel pressure to change? Reactance is the impulse to resist being changed.

It's also helpful to ask yourself, **“What doubts or questions might my audience have at the start of this presentation but keep to themselves?”** and address them before you get into your core content.

# DELIVER

Consider the best way to deliver your presentation in order to keep your audience's attention and have impact. This is especially important for virtual presentations since the opportunity for audience distraction is highest.

## Audio

Ensure your microphone is clear and audible so your audience can hear you.

Minimize auditory distractions, whether in the background or unintended (e.g. alerts & notifications, moving items on your desk, throat clearing, sniffing, etc.)

## Video

On video calls, position your camera at eye level, and fill the frame with your head and shoulders while minimizing the space above your head. Ensure your face is lit and visible.

Avoid visual distractions in the background that might deter audience members' attention while you are speaking.



# DELIVER

## Think like a producer

Consider the audience's experience throughout your presentation.

- What do they need to see/hear?
- When do they need to see/hear it?
- What will keep their interest?

## Aim for seamless

Aspire to run a seamless presentation so your audience stays with you from start to finish. This rarely happens on the first attempt, which is why it's important to practice.

## Practice

Mistakes are human. Tech will not always cooperate.

But there's a difference between mistakes & tech mishaps vs a lack of preparation. Your audience knows the difference.

For virtual presentations, record a rehearsal and watch back looking for:

- audio clarity
- camera angle
- managing software
- volume levels
- video framing
- screen sharing
- auditory distractions
- lighting
- transitioning

# CONNECT

Want a strong and engaging presence? Connect with your audience in four ways.

## WHAT YOU SAY

### Refer to your audience

Make reference to your audience throughout your presentation. Acknowledging their presence indicates you are talking to them, not just in front of them.

Help your audience imagine engaging with you by saying your name. For example, when addressing early doubts, ask the question your audience might be thinking and use your name.

*If you are thinking, "Okay Cat, but how is this relevant to my work?"*

This approach combines addressing a question your audience is likely thinking while also helping them imagine asking you a question.

# CONNECT

## WHAT YOU SOUND LIKE

### Match your voice to the message

People hear the sound of your voice before the words you say.

Use vocal profiles to adjust the emotion behind the message. Ask yourself the emotion you want your audience to feel when you are speaking.

Your presentation will likely include multiple vocal profiles, for example:

- opportunity
- excitement
- thoughtfulness
- curiosity
- gratitude
- authority
- concern
- urgency
- hope

### Remember to breathe

Not only does breathing impact how you sound, pausing between speaking gives your audience the chance to register what you just said.

## WHAT YOU SHOW

### Look at the camera

While it's easy to make eye contact in-person, most virtual presenters look at their screen so eyes are cast down. Looking at the camera connects you with your audience—they will feel like you are talking directly to them.



### Increase your energy

The camera steals your energy, resulting in a duller/flatter version of your presentation. You can compensate by increasing your energy levels by 10-20%.

## WHAT YOU DO

### Acknowledge engagement

Connecting with the audience is more than talking to them, capturing their attention, and making eye contact. Your actions impact how your audience feels.

If someone participates, do your best to acknowledge their efforts even if it's not possible to engage directly.