

**BUSINESS
PRESENTATIONS**
*THAT PERSUADE, ENGAGE
& GET RESULTS*

**OWN
THE
ROOM**

David Booth • Deborah Shames • Peter Desberg



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For Example

The Power of Narrative

The roar was deafening. My stomach was in knots. Because I was the lightest, I was at the back of the plane. On my bottom, I inched slowly forward, dreading what was to come. There was no turning back now, unless I lost my nerve and rode the plane back to the airstrip. Glancing out the window, my fellow travelers were colorful specks, drifting on currents of air. Suddenly it was my turn. When I was on my feet and gripping the struts, the flight instructor put her hand against my back and gave a gentle push. With the biggest leap of faith I have ever taken, I dove out the cavernous opening, arms spread like wings and feet extended behind me. My mouth opened to scream, but nothing came out. Somehow I managed to pull the rip cord and felt the parachute open. I will never forget the brilliant blue, red, and yellow billowing canopy above me. At that moment, it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my life. The joy was indescribable.

This is the story I told to open my talk to women executives of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). My topic was on women finding their voice. To grab the attention of the audience right away and establish a connection, I delivered a story from my own experience. I also felt pressure to be compelling. Since the audience considered me a communication specialist, I worried that a case of nerves might affect my delivery. But by using a story where anxiety was already in play, no one would be the wiser; my anxiety would actually help me tell it more effectively.

The analogy of skydiving to the fear of public speaking had potential but needed a clear, strong link. Without the link, or comparison between the two activities, the impact would be lost. This is how I joined the two:

Jumping out of a plane is similar to what many of our clients feel when giving a speech. “It seemed like a good idea at the time, but what was I thinking?” Emotions run the gamut from exhilaration to sheer panic. Anxiety sets in like an unwelcome visitor. Time becomes elastic. There is a sense you’re on a speeding train that takes forever to arrive at the station. Right before your presentation, your entire surroundings are in supersharp focus. Your breathing is shallow or irregular. Some recall an out-of-body experience. Yet somehow you dive off the cliff and begin. And then it’s over. You made it through in one piece. In fact, people were moved. You were successful and accomplished your goal.

For a week after jumping out of the plane and landing safely on the ground, I felt invincible. I basked in my success. Performers will tell you that when they connect with their audience, there is no better feeling. There are risks to making public presentations, but there are also huge rewards. And once you commit to speaking, there are tools and techniques to find your own voice.

EDUCATE = THINK VERSUS PERSUADE = ACT

People respond to stories more than a well-constructed collection of facts and statistics. Hearing an engaging story makes the listener want to know what comes next and gets him or her firmly on your side. A good story sets the stage, creates a visual frame, and becomes the jumping-off point for greater understanding. Whether in business or at a charitable or social function, stories are the cultural glue that binds us together, eliciting empathy, compassion, and buy-in.

A good story sets the stage, creates a visual frame, and is a speaker's most persuasive tool.

In business, stories are valuable tools for engineering the perception you wish to create. For example, when Eloqui was newly formed, we were considered “speaker coaches” who would be called on prior to sales meetings or product launches to work with an executive on his or her keynote speech. In truth, training and coaching in this capacity was only about 20 percent of our business. Our bread and butter is training small groups within companies to become successful pitch teams, to use effective networking strategies in the business community, and to develop leadership skills.

To change the perception that we were primarily speaker coaches, David and I had to tell stories that contained a different message. Instead of focusing on individuals who were successful or experienced less anxiety after taking our course, we needed to emphasize the benefits for teams. Companies are always looking for ways to drive business and measure their return on investment, especially during tough economic times. Eloqui stories had to include the specifics of how our clients became more successful and profitable because of their new communication skills. Quantifiable results that increased sales turned the perception of the skills we taught from “soft” to “hard.” A story directed toward this purpose is based on MPM, an advertising agency in Glendale, California:

One week after they contacted Eloqui, MPM was pitching a large insurance company in Portland that wanted to expand its footprint in the Latino community. The agency that won the pitch would create sizable inroads for their client in this profitable marketplace. Anxiety was high because so much was at stake. Added to that, the CEO of MPM had assigned his Latino ad execs to drive the entire presentation, but this team had never carried a complete pitch before.

There was no time in their schedule to work with Eloqui until the day before the pitch. David and I arrived to see a final run-through and ostensibly to give a few notes before signing off on their presentation. At this late date, no one wanted to change what they had prepared. We knew whatever we said would be weighed against the ticking clock. During the rehearsal, the ad execs began by introducing themselves and relating their backgrounds, which the insurance client had asked them to do. Yet talking about themselves made each of them uncomfortable. They were also missing the point. We knew that even though the insurance company had requested self-introductions, the typical client only cares about its own needs and what the vendor can do for them.

We probed for what else they had. They showed us a video of their successes, which they were planning to include later in the pitch; it was perfect. We recommended that MPM do the unexpected, lead off with the video and then link their introductions to what they do for their clients, as demonstrated in the video.

Then we assigned Miriam, a charming, articulate member of the team, the role of facilitator. We directed her to say why each person on the team was present at the meeting, based on what they would do for the client once MPM was awarded the contract. We coached Miriam on how to keep the agenda on track and support the members who might struggle.

We listened and reshaped the anecdotes of all the team members, so they sounded authentic and engaging. We practiced hand-offs until they were seamless. And we encouraged

them to exhibit their enthusiasm, which ultimately reduced their anxiety.

MPM not only won the pitch and brought a new client on board, but team members now knew they could count on each other to serve as a pitch team and go after more business in the Latino market.

Although this story focuses on the success of MPM, it highlights the specifics of what Eloqui does when called on to work within companies. Yet if we were to say merely that we encourage our clients and give them practical skills, it would be much less effective than to wrap those elements into a story like this one. The goal is to engage the listener, who draws his or her own conclusions.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

Another client of ours, Gary, decided to leave a major financial firm and begin his own consulting practice. We interviewed him to find out what kind of clients he believed were necessary to grow his fledgling business. We encouraged him to look back through his experience and recall the success stories of particular clients who fit this profile. To grow his practice, these were the individuals Gary needed to feature in his anecdotes when pitching potential clients and networking. One of our advisors calls it “following the money.”

Gary’s prime targets were married professionals. He crafted the following story to appeal to other couples who were busy juggling family and business lives:

It took one month to set up the first meeting with Alex and Jamie. Between working fifty hours a week, dragging their kids to after-school activities, and trying to squeeze in a dinner date with each other, they were exhausted. Their finances were a mess, and they felt like their spending was out of control. Added to that, Jamie wanted to leave her company and start her own business, but she had no idea how to plan for it financially.

I shared that I understood, having two kids of my own. I interviewed them at length and determined they were more conservative than they realized. Then I analyzed their spending and cash flow and created a working budget. I reconstructed their portfolio, while also minimizing taxes. I reviewed their college plan for their first child and learned that Alex had chosen a savings plan for a teenager about to start college rather than for their toddler. This meant they could choose a less aggressive option. After I crafted a household budget, Alex and Jamie were also able to save money every month for their second child's college education.

Now that we are working together, Alex and Jamie have a clearer vision of where they will be financially in the next five years. They have a better understanding of what types of investments they own and what purposes each serves.

Jamie decided to leave the big firm and go out on her own. Now her career is more fulfilling. And surprisingly, they were able to take their first real vacation to Hawaii, which cost them ten thousand dollars but was planned for and well within their budget.

When potential clients and colleagues listen to this story, they have a tangible sense of Gary's commitment, creative thinking, and

long-term associations with his clients. But if he were to state these attributes, they would be much less believable. In listing his accomplishments, he would also run the risk of sounding arrogant. This is not a concern with a well-told story.

A well-told story highlights your achievements and conveys your skills without the need to brag.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

By telling an anecdote, you demonstrate your personal investment by revealing what is important to you from your direct experience, your

upbringing, or learning from your mistakes. The weaker position, and one we hear in so many presentations, is a statement like “This is important,” or “You need to do this.” People don’t like being told what they should or shouldn’t do. However, a well-crafted anecdote makes the point without any qualifiers, apologies, or arrogance.

Ben, a labor attorney from Ventura County, is an effective speaker lecturing on what companies need to do to avoid legal hassles with their employees. He typically begins his presentations with a comment that tells his audience that if they listen to him, he will keep them out of jail. This is compelling but doesn’t reveal his personal investment, except from a legal perspective. In our first session with Ben, we discovered he had an insider’s understanding of what his clients were facing. Here is one of the stories that he now tells to lead off his training on employee rules and regulations:

A well-crafted anecdote can make your point without qualifiers, apologies, or arrogance.

For her summer job, my seventeen-year-old daughter, Jill, came to work for our law firm. She was assigned administrative tasks in what we call “the dungeon.” It’s the basement where client folders are organized, indexed, and filed. After she’d been working a couple of days, I asked Jill how it was going. She said, “Dad, it’s brutal. I’ve got paper cuts. I’m balancing on chairs. I’ve had to change my clothes because it’s so dirty. And by the way, when do I take lunch? And if I take a shorter lunch, can I leave early?” While Jill was talking, I was thinking to myself, “Oh, no. Workers’ comp, OSHA, overtime penalties, meals, and rest breaks.” My own firm had failed to advise a part-time worker of her schedule and rights. It made me realize how easy it is to overlook what we are required by law to cover with our workers.

What if your listener doesn’t understand what it is you do, even though you think you’re being clear? Frame your services in an anecdote.

Link your story to something your audience understands or needs from you.

dote, and whenever possible, link them to something he or she does understand. In the following example, Phil, the vice president of insurance services tied to a major bank, told a story linked to a well-known Las Vegas hotel:

I was standing in my living room drinking a cup of coffee, watching the news, when an announcer said, “Last night the Sands Hotel was blown up in a spectacular display of pyrotechnics to make way for the building of the Venetian.” I was stunned, because I was the broker on that placement. And there was no coverage. That meant if there was a loss, my client was totally exposed! And not only would he be liable for damages, but worse, he potentially could not build the Venetian.

Now understand that we had gone to London to place their implosion coverage. We’d negotiated the price. We’d received approval from the underwriters. It was all lined up. And the only caveat was that the London underwriter wanted twenty-four hours’ notice *before* the explosion so he could initiate coverage. But the consultant on the account had failed to call us in advance, so the building was blown up *without* coverage.

We rallied all of our team members. I immediately called the underwriter in London, found out our potential liabilities, and asked that he backdate coverage by twenty-four hours. I convinced him that the building was blown up in the middle of the night. No one was on the street. It was not done for a media event. And we were in line with his original intent. He said he would get back to us.

For me, the next couple of hours were agonizing. Finally, the underwriter called back and agreed to backdate the policy if the duration of coverage was shortened for any losses that might come in after the fact. I called my client with the news, and he agreed before I even finished my statement.

So not only did my client receive the original coverage, but two months later, when someone came forward and said he was hit on the head with a rock, which could not have come from any other place except the street surrounding the Sands, my client was covered. And the building of the Venetian proceeded on schedule.

When you incorporate specific details, the listener will relate to your story even if he or she hasn't had the same experience or isn't directly connected to the anecdote you are telling. The more specific the story, the better. Did you picture the Sands being blown up when you read this story? Did you picture Phil standing in front of the TV, holding a cup of coffee? In your imagination, was he wear-

The more specific the story, the better. Polite generalities miss the mark.

ing a robe or business suit? To ensure listeners play the movie in their heads, you need to provide specifics. Although it takes only a few details to provide the basis for visualization, it's impossible to picture generalities. For example, "We helped a client solve their toughest problem," is too general and cannot be visualized. We're taught to be general to be inclusive. In reality, the opposite is true. You gain traction and your message sticks when you are concrete enough to make the audience "see" your story.

CUSTOMIZATION

To be most effective, base your anecdote on the audience's experience or area of interest. If you are pitching to lawyers, they want to know what success you've had with other law firms. The same applies to accounting, insurance, and financial services.

Our client Charlotte, who is with a well-known private wealth management firm, could only tell the following anecdote to CPAs, CFOs, or a company CEO. It is too technical for a general audience.

However, the technical aspects are exactly why it is compelling to financial types:

We have a client in Valencia who is a landscape contractor. Mature company, healthy cash flow. But their taxes were high, so they were looking for ways to move their money outside their corporation and relieve their tax burden. We analyzed and broke down their situation. We looked at the entities they had and their overall objective. We recommended a captive insurance company and partnered with their attorney and CPA, while managing the money inside that structure. This allowed the client to defer \$1.2 million in taxes, get the write-off as a business deduction, and change the character of that income from ordinary to capital gains. So they ended up enjoying not only tax relief, but also asset protection, building control claims, and estate-planning benefits.

When listeners can identify, understand, and put themselves into the scenario, they are engaged. Their experience may vary somewhat, but if the core elements of a story are applicable, it is enough to draw them in. And perhaps the best quality of a well-told story or client anecdote is that it becomes portable—listeners will retell it to others.

The most memorable presentations include stories whenever possible. The next section will give you tools to organize your material

Tailor your story to
your audience.

into persuasive anecdotes, using techniques from our work with professionals, concepts from our fellow advisors, and theatrical templates from the world of improvisation.

BUSINESS ANECDOTES

When David and I began attending networking functions, we would frequently hear professionals tell client anecdotes describing their

product or services. A large percentage of these anecdotes were ineffective, boring, rambling, and off-point. Typically, they contained too much context (or background) and often diminished, or left out entirely, what the professional did to serve his or her clients.

Part of the problem is what the Heath brothers, in their book *Made to Stick*, have called the “curse of knowledge.” When professionals use abbreviations and acronyms or leave out specifics entirely, it is because they are removed from the original state of not-knowing and have forgotten who their audience is. They make an incorrect assumption that their audience knows what *they* know. By failing to provide specifics, concrete language, or insights into how they operate, they fail to convince the audience why they should be hired or referred to other clients.

The next time you make a presentation, remember that only *you* hear the melody; the audience only hears the tapping. This means that you have to tap in a way that makes the song clear. This is

Happy Birthday to You

Elizabeth Newton earned a Ph.D. in psychology at Stanford University for the following study regarding the curse of knowledge. Her study shows the difference between what a presenter *thinks* she is saying and what the audience gets from it.

In this experiment, there were two groups: tappers and listeners. The tappers were directed to tap out the rhythm of a common song (“Happy Birthday”), and the listeners were asked to identify it. The tappers predicted that the listeners would correctly identify the song more than 80 percent of the time. The results showed that it was less than 15 percent. Why was there such a huge discrepancy? The tappers admitted that as they were tapping, they were also singing the melody to themselves, but the listeners only heard the tapping; they didn’t have the knowledge the tappers were sure they had.

why anecdotes convey meaning much better than data and bullet points.

The OSB Template

Effective anecdotes are not difficult to construct. First, determine what kind of business you would like more of. This is what Eloqui

When crafting stories, determine the one impression or message that is most important and choose the anecdote that best delivers it.

did when shifting its image from speaker coaches to team trainers or what Gary did when approaching young couples to grow his business. Consider the impression you would like to create or the one message you would like to deliver, then pick the client anecdote that best delivers this impression. Your entire professional career

and personal experience contains stories that can be shaped according to the objective or impression you would like to achieve.

Apply the Eloqui template of obstacle, solution, and benefit (OSB). This three-act mini-play includes only the essential elements of business storytelling. The idea is to tell a compelling anecdote in

Remember OSB (obstacle, solution, and benefit).

thirty seconds to two minutes—the amount of time you can effectively hold an audience’s interest in a networking meeting or in response to the question “What is it you do?”

Obstacle. The first act is the obstacle, or challenge that the client was facing. Interestingly enough, people need very little context or background to become engaged in your story. Listen to great storytellers. Look back at your favorite books, movies, or plays. Most begin with a dramatic challenge or obstacle, providing just enough context to draw you in. Perhaps the most notorious opening line of a book is “It was a dark and stormy night.” As a dramatic hook, use the same technique when beginning your anecdote.

One Eloqui OSB begins with “A custom publishing company in Atlanta found out its largest client of the last ten years was putting their contract out to bid.” Do you want to hear more? Can you relate or empathize? Do you have to be in publishing to understand the problem?

As long as the audience can visualize the “players” and relate to their challenges, you keep your listeners’ attention. (Note: to aid in visualization, be sure to add a descriptive adjective to the characters in your story, and assign a name to key players to keep them distinct.) If you don’t start with a strong obstacle, their minds wander, and it is extremely difficult to draw them back in. Consider the traditional ways professionals tee up their anecdotes, such as “Let me tell you a funny story”; “We solved a problem for a client and saved the company millions of dollars. This is how we did it”; or “A custom publishing company in Atlanta was founded in 1965 and had sixteen divisions specializing in everything from magazine production to Internet surveys.” These outmoded forms of construction cause you to lose traction right from the beginning.

To make the obstacle more compelling, include what was at stake and how it was time sensitive. In the case of the publishing company, we would add “This contract was worth \$5 million per year, and if lost, the firm would likely go under. Also, the pitch was in two weeks, and the publishing company was up against two larger and more well-connected firms from Chicago and New York.” The goal is to have listeners say to themselves, “What happened next?” (For a complete description of this anecdote, see the story of On Point in Chapter 2.)

Solution. Once you have related the obstacle, move on to the solution act of the play. Be careful not to begin the solution and then go back to describe more obstacles. Pacing, momentum,

An effective story starts with an obstacle.

The “Solution” is where you get to demonstrate what sets you apart.

and clarity are all key elements of a good story, so keep moving forward. In the solution is where you get to relate all the compelling services you deliver to your clients. This act is the appropriate place for saying what you do differently than other service providers without reading your résumé. Told correctly, we see you *exhibiting* these traits rather than reciting a list of services you provide.

It is important to use concrete language when describing your solution. These precise terms will set you apart. Envision a mechanic about to work on your car. He lifts the hood, assesses the problem, and then picks up the right tool (such as a socket wrench or a screwdriver). Consider what mechanical terms best describe your actions. Did you analyze, craft, design, implement, or persuade? These active verbs allow the listener to envision and reenact your efforts. We literally see how you operate. (In the appendix, we've included a list of active verbs to trigger your imagination.)

Use concrete terms so the listener can visualize what you do.

When describing the solution, our clients frequently say they “worked with” or “helped” their clients. Such terms are endemic throughout business vocabulary, but they are not specific. The audience doesn't see your value or appreciate what you did that was special. Diminishing your role will result in being commoditized; your value will be unclear and contracting for your services will be based on price.

Choose specific, action-oriented verbs for your stories.

Perhaps you have been in business for a long time, and what you do seems simple or straightforward. It may be for you, but that's not the message you want to deliver to your audience or client. Besides, your success is based on years of experience, know-how, and nurtured contacts. Consider what Phil, the VP at the insurance firm achieved with the London underwriter, persuading him to backdate

The Triad

Construct a list of three specific actions using active verbs. People tend to respond to units of three. Consider classic children's stories and nursery rhymes involving trios—the Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, and Three Blind Mice. Modern plays are always three acts. Going back to ancient Rome, one of Cicero's favorite techniques to emphasize key points was called a tricolon, which is a series of three parallel words, phrases, or clauses. The most familiar example is Julius Caesar's "Veni, vidi, vici," or "I came, I saw, I conquered." Even Aristotle said a story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. He prescribed three elements for any good speech: *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* (that is, thought, emotion, and the character of the speaker).

coverage by twenty-four hours to cover the implosion of the Vegas hotel. Only someone with Phil's experience could have negotiated that transaction.

We have been asked by our clients whether to use *we* or *I* statements in describing their solution. It depends on the circumstances. Do you want to promote your team? If so, use *we*. Are you new to the job and short on anecdotes? Interview your team members and tell *their* stories—using *we*. However, if you are promoting your individual efforts as a trusted advisor or sole practitioner, it may be more appropriate to use an *I* statement. You do not have to sound self-promoting. When you describe the solution, inject your enthusiasm, passion, and caring for the client. Listeners will arrive at the correct conclusion.

To make your solution more compelling, add phrases like "what my client didn't expect," "what we discovered," or "what was revealed." This element of surprise draws listeners in and

makes them pay closer attention. Whenever you share an unexpected or surprising discovery, they want to know what happened. Storytellers since the beginning of time have used this element of surprise to keep audiences engaged. Even in business, you are a performer telling a story. Accept this axiom and you will be successful.

Benefit. The third act of the OSB template is the benefit. Businesspeople are especially attuned to how your actions contribute

Use the element of surprise and highlight unexpected benefits of your services.

to the client's success. Most benefits are expected; for example, you won the pitch, you saved your client a certain number of dollars, or you kept the company from being sued. But for a strong and memorable close to an anecdote, also give the *unexpected* benefit.

If you can't think of one, try completing the phrase "Going forward, my client now realizes . . ." If there has been a transformational experience, identify it. Or describe how the client now does business differently. With MPM, the advertising company going after the Portland client, the benefit was winning the pitch. But the unexpected benefit was the team's newfound confidence and skill to go after other, larger clients that focused on the Latino market. Examine each incident for a compelling, unanticipated outcome. This "aha" moment provides a rich opportunity for audiences and clients to see you in a special light. And as we know, great stories have great endings.

Go back and read through the Miriam, Phil, and Gary stories in this chapter. Apply the OSB template to identify the structure, pacing, and active verbs included in each. Did they hook you? Did you visualize the process as you read them? Do you have a better understanding now of what each individual or company does that is distinct from their competitors? Finally, judge the effectiveness of

these stories compared to that of other anecdotes you hear at networking meetings or business events.

Alternate Story Template

There are times when OSB will not serve your purpose. For instance, when you would like to share a story where a transformation or lessons learned are the essence of your interaction, another template may better suit your objective. Even though a story has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end, these elements do not have to be linear. You can consider story progression as circular and begin anywhere along the circumference of a circle, as long as it has a meaningful conclusion. The following alternative template is derived from the world of improvisational theater and has been adapted for business purposes; there is a brief explanation of what each line accomplishes:

1. “I have a client who . . .” or “Once I worked on a project that . . .” (identifies a character or theme)
2. “Every day (week, month, or year) . . .” (establishes a routine)
3. “Until one day . . .” (breaks the routine)
4. “Because of that, . . .” (faces the consequences)
5. “And because of that, . . .” (faces the consequences of the consequences)
6. “Until finally . . .” (brings the developments to a head)
7. “Ever since that time, . . .” (resolves the issue into a new reality)

Like when you’re learning to ride a bicycle, you first need to practice with training wheels. To practice with this template, that means telling a fictional anecdote—the more outrageous, the better! In a group, have one person take each line. Because you have no idea what the person before you will say, you cannot think ahead and

fill in the blank. Have fun with it and let your imagination loose. I would employ a version of this template, called the Never-ending Story, with young children. Children have an unbridled freedom to be creative. They will express their own version of the world through colorful characters and improbable transactions.

For example, a group of seven-year-old girls told a version of the following story:

Once there was a frog who sang opera. Every day, while the rest of his family croaked to each other, Teddy practiced hitting a high C. The rest of the frogs had to cover their ears because Teddy's singing made them crazy. His mother worried that he would never amount to anything.

Until one day, Teddy saw a fire coming close to the town. He hopped to the firehouse and sang his froggy heart out. Because of that, the firefighters stopped eating dinner and came out to see who was making all the racket. And because of that, Teddy sang like never before. When they tried to catch him and put him on the local news, he hopped away toward the fire, and they had to chase him.

Until finally, they saw the fire, rang the bell, and took off in the fire engine. And ever since that day, the firefighters no longer need the fire bell. Teddy's singing lets them know when a fire is nearby.

Now try applying this template to a client interaction. Make each line brief and keep the story moving. The template will lead you through a logical progression. When you begin, first give the client or project a vivid descriptor or challenge. For example, "We have a CEO client in insurance who micromanages all of her top executives." (I admit, the CEO is not as colorful as Teddy the frog, but there are limits to how colorful we can be in business.)

Here are a few more examples of opening lines with vivid descriptors of potential characters to spark your imagination and jump-start the exercise:

- Linda was the most compassionate HR director we ever had, until we learned she was stealing from the company.
- Harry, the leading rainmaker of a Century City law firm, wanted to retire and still receive his seven-figure income.
- Jones never gave a talk without a boring PowerPoint presentation.

Following is a complete anecdote using one of these opening lines:

Harry, the leading rainmaker of a Century City law firm, wanted to retire and still receive his seven-figure income. Every day, the rest of the attorneys looked forward to the projects Harry would bring in, accumulating billable hours while sitting in their offices. Until one day, Harry came to work dressed in golf clothes and told everyone he was moving to Palm Springs. Because of that, the firm's partners huddled and, in a frenzy, sent out calls to recruit a marketing director. And because of that, I was brought in to energize the firm, from its website and collateral material to the staff's networking skills. Until finally, we had a contemporary brand, a freshly designed website, updated offices, and business communication training for all the partners and associates. Ever since that day, the rainmaking has been distributed among more of the attorneys, and profitability has increased.

APPLICATION

Every speaker must consider his or her audience when constructing a presentation. I am frequently asked how to appeal to those personality types with a short attention span (such as a CEO or an entrepreneur), while at the same time satisfying the rational ones (including a CFO, an engineer,

A well-told anecdote can satisfy people with both short- and long-term attention spans.

or a CPA) who need to delve deeply and understand how things work together before they are persuaded. A well-told anecdote is the answer.

Client anecdotes can open a presentation and let you immediately connect with your audience. They can be used as elevator speeches or to answer the question “What do you do?” Anecdotes are effective vehicles for explaining and bringing to life a technical point within the body of a presentation. If your presentation needs a more persuasive close, an anecdote is always a good choice. And anecdotes from your own experience are the best way to alleviate anxiety, exhibit what makes you different from your competitors, achieve buy-in, and ensure that your talk will be memorable.