As a professor of communication as well as a communication coach, the two greatest fears I hear about from presenters are:

1. They will forget what they intend to say, and
2. Their audience won’t remember what they said.

These dual fears are certainly understandable and create much angst among nervous and novice presenters. However, by employing specific techniques and practices, all presenters can deliver more memorable in-person and online presentations that both the presenter and the audience will remember.

**SECRETS FOR REMEMBERING YOUR PRESENTATION**

Whether you are going to be presenting live online or in-person, prior to any effective presentation you must both remember and practice it. You can dramatically reduce the likelihood of forgetting your presentation by: (1) preparing properly, (2) structuring your presentation, and (3) practicing the content and the tools you’re using to present.
The best preparation advice sounds like it comes straight from a parenting book. Make sure you eat right, exercise often, and sleep well. Research in wellness and memory clearly point to the importance of taking care of our bodies. In terms of consumption, when drafting a presentation as well as preparing to deliver one, you need to mind your diet. To begin, you should avoid sugar and caffeine. While these items can momentarily boost your energy, they always result in a sluggish fog after time passes. Rather, eat protein and complex carbs. These foods help in memory formation and assist in the retention of ideas; additionally, they provide for a more constant energy level.

Like food, exercise can help memory by enhancing your energy level, reducing your stress, and increasing your memory formation and retention. A regular exercise regimen that supports your presentation preparation and memory should include both strength training and aerobic activity, such as walking or jogging, conducted at regular

**SWEET DREAMS... SWEETER SPEECHES**

Finally, sleep is critical to memory. Sleep researchers have now concluded that one of the most important aspects of sleep is to consolidate memories. You are much more likely to recall information if you are well rested from a good night’s sleep than if you stay up all night trying to memorize your points. Further, getting a good night sleep allows you to better cope with any speaking anxiety symptoms that may arise.

Many presenters’ messages lack a clear and consistent structure. It is no wonder that they get lost in their presentations, and if the speaker can’t follow the presentation, how will the audience do so? Building a roadmap into you presentation is the best thing you can do to ensure both you and your audience follow the presentation. By employing a structure, you can more readily remember where you are and where you are going. In fact, research suggests that people recall structured information 40% better than unstructured information. Many effective structures exist.
When describing a process or informing an audience, the sequential structure of first-second-third or past-present-future are very useful. When persuading an audience, the problem-solution-benefit structure is very effective. In this structure, you first describe a specific problem (or opportunity), and then you detail a solution to address the problem before detailing the benefits to your proposed solution.

The true benefit of utilizing a clear structure arises when you are in the middle of your presentation and you blank out. If you are using a structure, such as the comparison-contrast structure, and you blank out, you can easily get back on track since you know that contrast always follows comparison.

3. PRACTICE OUT LOUD & STANDING UP

To practice effectively—and you must practice in order to remember—you need to stand and deliver. It is not enough to simply think through your presentation. The physical act of standing and speaking your presentation helps you to better remember what you intend to say. Mental rehearsal cements your message, but physical practice prevents forgetting.

One helpful way to rehearse is to practice using the “chunking” technique whereby you divide your presentation into distinct sections based on your structure (e.g., introduction, problem, solution, benefit, conclusion, etc.). Next, you practice each section alone, and then you begin to combine sections. The combinations need not be chronological. For example, you could first practice your conclusion followed by your introduction. This chunking allows you to increase your familiarity with your speech without memorizing it. Memorization invites forgetting because you are more focused on saying it “right” each time, rather than communicating with and connecting your message to your audience. Chunking allows you to speak in a fluently extemporaneous manner.

Employing proper preparation, structuring and practice techniques will help calm nerves and focus better on your audience. Now, we must explore what you can do to make your presentation more memorable for those who listen to it.
In a world saturated with information and presentations, being memorable is critical. One recent survey reported that technology workers hear on average one presentation a day. You need to make your presentations memorable if you are to have any chance of having your ideas live on and get traction. By invoking three key tools—variation, relevance, and emotion—you can help your audience to remember your content and call to action.

While some more cautious, set-in-their-ways individuals might challenge the advice that “variety is the spice of life,” when it comes to presentations, there is no doubt that variety is helpful in engaging your audience and aiding them to remember your content. The variety of which I speak includes variation in your voice, visuals, and evidence. The primary type of presentation variation that most people think of is vocal variety. Engaging speakers vary their voice and rate to gain and hold their audience’s attention and interest, while unengaged speakers present in a monotonous manner. Adding variation in your volume and speaking rate serve to keep your audience’s focus and motivates them to listen. Yet many nervous and novice presenters do not feel comfortable speaking with an expressive and varied voice.

Additionally, for presenters who do not speak English as their first language this varied vocal delivery can be very challenging. I often coach these less vocally expressive presenters to use emotive words, such as “excited,” “valuable,” and “challenging,” in their presentations. Then, when they speak these terms, they can inflect their voice to reflect the meaning of these words. If you are speaking about an exciting experience, then literally say “exciting” in an exciting manner. With time, you will feel more confident and comfortable presenting in an expressive way.

Variation in the evidence you use to support your ideas is also critical to engaging your audience and helping them to remember your
content. Presenters tend to favor one type of evidence, such as data, to the exclusion of other types (e.g., anecdotes, testimonials, definitions, etc.). Academic research has shown that triangulating your support provides more compelling and memorable results. So this means that you should vary the types of evidence you use to make your point: Use a data point, a testimonial, and a story. Try to be like marketers and advertisers who regularly rely on multiple types of evidence to sell their products and offerings. Varying your evidence types reinforces your point and gives your audience multiple opportunities to connect with your idea and remember it.

Humans are very poor multi-taskers, but we love to attempt to do multiple things at once. Variety invites focus on the task at hand and guides your audience to stay engaged in your talk without wandering off. This is why variation in your voice and the evidence you use can help make your ideas stick. Similar to a droning voice and singular evidence, slides crammed with words and gestures that repeat themselves cause disengagement and distraction—the archenemy of compelling, memorable presentations. Really, it all boils down to cognitive load. When trying to read bullet point number 12 out of 15 on a slide or being distracted by spurious gestures and movement, your audience has less cognitive capacity to pay attention, let alone remember, your words of wisdom. One technique to help you vary your gestures and movements is to audio record yourself giving your presentation, and then, play the recording back while you practice your gestures and walking. Since you do not have to think about what to say, you can play with adding variation without being distracted by thinking of your words.

**LESS IS MORE: THINK VISUALLY**

**Think visually** to rescue yourself from the trap of creating verbose slides that act more as eye charts than helpful aids. A helpful visualization tool is Google Image search. Type in the idea or point you are trying to convey and see what comes up. Since many images have copyright issues, you are better served to use what you find as a starting point for your own creative ideas, rather than adding the exact photos you find to your presentation.

Variety truly is the spice of life and memorable presentations. By varying your voice, evidence, movements, and slides, you help your audience to stay engaged and remember what you’re saying.
5. RELEVANCE IS THE KEY TO MEMORY

When you present, you must tend to your audience’s needs so that they can understand, remember, and ultimately act on your messages. To begin, you need to make your message easy for them to understand. This does not mean you make your message simple; it means you make it relevant. In order to create a relevant message, you need to do some reconnaissance to determine your audience’s knowledge, expectations, and attitudes, and then you need to adjust your message to your audience’s needs. This tailoring is especially needed when presenting numeric data. Too often, presenters deliver numbers devoid of context and relevance, which makes it hard for the audience to comprehend and remember. As an example, I worked with an executive at a global financial institution who presented an astonishingly large number when referring to how much money went through his firm’s banks everyday. Unfortunately, the number was too large for me to grasp and remember. To facilitate comprehension and memory, we determined that he should relate that the amount of money going through his firm’s banks was equivalent to 25% of the world’s money each day. By translating the amount into something relatable, the number sticks. Context is important. By making your content relevant to your audience, you ultimately make it more memorable.

**Analogies** are another great way to make your content relevant for your audience. By definition, an analogy connects what you want your audience to understand to something that they already know. In other words, your new information becomes relevant by linking it to information that is already known. This connecting of information allows for faster thought processing and deeper retention because you are activating what psychologists call schemas or the mental constructs we already have in memory. For example, another company I consult for provides cloud based, data mining services for marketing firms. Many of their clients are not sure of the value of data mining. My client uses the analogy of a Ferrari parked in a garage to illustrate the missed opportunity many marketing firms are experiencing. Just as a Ferrari is not meant to waste away in a garage; your data should not waste away in your systems. This analogy allows my client’s prospects to understand the loss of value they are experiencing in a vivid and memorable manner. Further, it
provides added benefit by allowing my client to talk in terms of speed, elegance, and attention to detail.

By being empathic to your audience's needs, you can make your content relevant which not only helps them understand your message, but it assists them in remembering it.

Rhetoric is the study of argumentation and its roots date back to the ancient Greeks. Even back in the time of togas, it was well known that emotion sticks. People remember emotional appeals much more readily than simple, factual ones. To see this in your own life, reflect back on your childhood memories. Many of the most powerful and fully fleshed out ones are likely to be emotional in nature. Unfortunately, some presenters almost exclusively focus on the attitudinal and behavioral impact of their messages, and thus, miss out on an opportunity to bolster engagement in the moment and memory in the future. To help your audience remember your message, work to have your tone and delivery match the emotional impact you desire. You must take time to reflect on the emotional response you want and then work to make sure that your delivery is congruent with the emotional impact you desire. However, be careful not to be too scripted or theatrical. For emotion to help you, it must be authentic and credible.

I am often challenged when I assert that emotion is an important ingredient for engagement and memory. My technical and scientific clients and students claim that their presentations need to be highly detailed and descriptive, and, thus, emotion is antithetical and incompatible to their speaking goals. I fully believe that even the most technical and scientific talks can infuse emotion in them. Further, I have seen firsthand how emotion can elevate the involvement, impact, and memory of these types of presentations. The best way to bring emotion in is to focus on benefits and implications of the technology or science. Benefits are inherently emotional….saving time, saving money, saving trees, saving lives…these are emotional. I recently worked with a large graphics chip maker whose standard presentations are jammed full of technical detail, jargon, and data. These presentations lead to what one of my former students termed “verbal anesthesia.” Audience
members were overwhelmed with the presenters’ information and underwhelmed in their comprehension and retention. However, once he focused on the benefits of the graphics chips to the audience’s lives, such as powering their mobile devices, car navigation systems, etc., the presentations had more impact. By including an emotional component to your presentations via your tone, delivery, and connection to your audience, you can expedite engagement and increase long-term retention.

FROM NOW ON...
By invoking specific techniques and practices, you can deliver a presentation that is memorable for both you and your audience, no matter your presentation environment or topic. To help you remember your presentation, focus on your preparation, message structure, and practice. To aid your audience in remembering your presentation, tend to your message’s relevance, variation, and emotion. When combined together, these tools will lead to confident, compelling, and connected presentations.

ABOUT MATT ABRAMHS
Matt Abrahams is a passionate, collaborative and innovative educator and coach who teaches Strategic Communication for Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business and Presentation Skills for Stanford’s Continuing Studies Program, while also teaching at De Anza College. He has published research articles on cognitive planning, persuasion, and interpersonal communication. Matt recently published the second edition of Speaking Up Without Freaking Out, a book written to help the millions of people who suffer from anxiety around speaking in public. Additionally, Matt developed an iPad app called eValue8 that provides instant, prescriptive feedback to presenters.

Matt is also Co-Founder of Bold Echo Communication Solutions, a presentation and communication skills company that helps people improve their presentation skills. Matt has worked with executives to help prepare and present keynote addresses and IPO road shows, conduct media interviews, and deliver TED talks.

ABOUT CITRIX
Citrix (NASDAQ:CTXS) is the cloud company that enables mobile work styles — empowering people to work and collaborate from anywhere, easily and securely. With market-leading solutions for mobility, desktop virtualization, cloud networking, cloud platforms, collaboration and data sharing, Citrix helps organizations achieve the speed and agility necessary to succeed in a mobile and dynamic world. Citrix products are in use at more than 260,000 organizations and by over 100 million users globally. Learn more at: www.citrix.com, http://www.citrix.com/

**GoToMeeting** is the extremely simple, extraordinarily powerful web conferencing service from Citrix. Hold unlimited online meetings in HD for one low flat fee.

**Citrix GoToWebinar** is the do-it-yourself webinar tool that projects your message — including HD video conferencing — to up to 1,000 online attendees for one low flat fee. You can also reach even larger crowds with GoToWebinar Premier Event.

**Citrix GoToTraining** is the easy-to-use online training service that allows you to move your live instructor-led training programs online. Hold unlimited online training sessions — including HD video conferencing — with up to 200 attendees for one low flat fee.