

Tactic:1

Focus on them, not you.

Typical Situation

Thank you very much for allowing me to present to you today. Our company has handled many issues similar to yours, and we are confident our processes and technology can move your organization forward, so you can meet the challenges you have described to us. We have helped others like you before, and we can help you, too.

Let me review what we have done and why our people and our processes are so revolutionary.



"I! WE! OUR!"

First of all, our people are special.

Special because they have more experience than their counterparts in other firms in our industry. They are constantly being trained at our own state-of-the-art corporate training center, where we employ the finest trainers and have at our people's disposal simply the best research minds in our industry.

Second, there's our commitment to service beyond the norm. We call it Unlimited Service. What a response we are having from our customer base to that concept! It has set us apart from others, pure and simple.

Now regarding our value to your firm, just let me say that we have some benchmarks of how we have delivered to the bottom line of our customers. Let me illustrate how we have used our unique service and technology to advance the ball for firms like yours. . . .

And so it goes. Lots of terrific information about your organization. That is how many presenters begin. Maybe most presenters. It is almost predictable, and many listeners even encourage it by asking you, "Will you please tell us about your organization, because not everyone has met you yet?"

Presenters accept the invitation and leap into a well-produced and usually well-delivered presentation with beautiful visuals, all designed to evangelize your organization's products and services.

It sounds like this . . .

Focus on them, not you.

In fact I (we) have not met all of you before, so let me first tell you about our organization, so you can understand all we bring to the table.

Sound familiar?

Tactic:1

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Listeners ache to have us talk about their needs, but presenters tend to keep the focus on their own company and will do almost anything to talk about what they want to say. Whether you are presenting to change someone's opinion, change an attitude, change some processes, close a deal, or sell your services or products, almost all presenters start out by reviewing their background and experience and their organization's capabilities and successes.

Even custom dog-and-pony shows representing months of research and work by your team won't win customers if you focus on your own products, processes, and organization, rather than on your potential client's needs and concerns. Instead, begin with a very clear statement of your client's needs, outlined on a flip-chart page, and use this as the agenda for your presentation. You will find that the same people, wearing the same clothes, presenting to the same sorts of customers the same products, price points, experiences, and abilities will dramatically increase your win rate.

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A Real-Life Story

A few years ago I got a call from the West Coast office of one of the top five advertising agencies in the world.

The head of business development said that, in the past nine months, he and his team had gone zero-for-sixteen in new business presentations. These were not just capability presentations, but custom dog-and-pony shows representing months of research and work by the team, which was competing in the final round with three or four other agencies.

When I arrived, I found a group of unhappy campers. All of these people were professionals. They knew they were very good, but they weren't winning. They felt angry and frustrated. It soon became clear that, in their presentations, these people were focusing on their own products, processes, and organization, rather than on the potential client's needs and concerns. This is business as usual today: a well-produced media presentation using all the grandeur of PowerPoint to blast out the story of your own organization.

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I suggested they begin their presentations in a different manner and with a different content. I suggested they begin with a very clear statement of their client's needs, which would be outlined on a flip-chart page. This list of needs then became the agenda from which they gave their entire presentation.

The results of this one simple change?

The same people, wearing the same clothes, presenting to the same sorts of customers the same products, price points, experiences, and abilities went five-for-six in their next half-dozen new business pitches.

If you want to stop being predictable, talk about the listeners' issues, opportunities, problems, and needs *first*.

If you begin this way, listeners will say to themselves, *“Boy, this presenter is on the mark. They get it. I should listen to that person because he or she is focused on my issues and maybe, just maybe, we can advance the ball today on our problem/opportunity.”*

You will gain instant attention. Instant differentiation.

So what can you do right now to use this idea?

- 1.** Realize that you can use the important information about your firm as you answer all the listeners' needs and issues. It simply needs to be re-sequenced to be dropped in where it is part of your answer to how you will address each of the listeners' needs. When listeners hear about your organization in the context of what they need, it is truly heard and can make an appropriate impact.
- 2.** Call your listeners and verify just one more time the key needs/issues they want you to address. What are the problems they want you to help them with? Hear one more time how they define their needs.
- 3.** Get them to e-mail you or fax you this list of needs.
- 4.** Also ask them to prioritize their needs and issues, so you can address them in the order they believe is most significant to their situation.
- 5.** Promise the listeners that you will begin your presentation by listing on a flip chart the set of needs they send you and that you will address them in the order they want. (They will hardly believe their ears, because they are so used to the typical scenario described earlier.)

Focus on them, not you.

6. Start your presentation by delivering on the promise: Write the list of needs they sent you, in the order they prioritized them, on a flip chart before they come into the room. Leave it on the flip chart so they see it when they walk into the room. They will say to themselves, “This is what was supposed to happen. So far, so good.”

7. Open with the normal, “Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you today.”

8. Then immediately say, “You asked us to address your issues/needs in this order, and we are prepared to do that. Before we begin, have there been any changes that we should know about, so we can also address those concerns?”

9. If there are any additions or changes, such as order of priority, write them on the flip chart.

10. Then ask if they would like you to present in the revised order. You are showing them that you are not only flexible enough to respond to changing priorities, but you can also adapt if the priorities change yet again. They will be amazed you can. It proves you are there for them; you are there to help them with their needs, not just there to tell them your story. This is Consultative Presenting.

11. Your job right now is to re-sequence all your information in the presentation you have prepared to flow in the order required to explain how your ideas can address their needs. To do this, your visuals must be sequentially flexible. This should not take long. The visuals are in your computer. Just reorder them so you can address the needs of the listeners in the order they requested. Most of the required changes

can be executed by using the “cut and paste” function in MS Word, once you have your listeners’ needs clearly defined.

12. You will give your same presentation, but in a much more listenable form. This will make your presentation stand out from the others, and it will be much more interesting to your audience.

13. Now go make the call to your listeners. Make the offer to address their needs in the order they wish. Get them to send the list to you. And promise to start by addressing their needs in the order in which they have prioritized them. This tactic is easy to accomplish, and it makes you stand out right off the bat. In fact, this tactic makes you stand out even before the presentation begins.

Tactic:2

**Define one or two
needs you believe
they have
that they do not
have a clue
they have.**

Typical Situation

We have addressed all the needs you listed and in the order you requested.

We believe we can bring solid experience and a great team of people to the situation you explained.

And we believe we can help you get to the position you desire.

Define one or two needs you believe they have that they do not have a clue they have.

You may recall that nailing the needs you finally defined took quite a bit of discussion.

So there has been some real progress regarding identifying the real issues as you see them. We have also pointed out the severe problems that will occur, in our opinion, if you don't act with some urgency to install a new process in your production line.

Therefore we recommend you act per our recommendation.

Most presenters have usually not even addressed the needs of the listeners until they are more than halfway through their presentation.

Let's assume you did a great job of this, per Tactic 1. Now why not be truly consultative?

Address some issues you believe they have that they don't even have a clue they have.

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Tactic:2

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In the process, you demonstrate you are trying to help them as much as possible by digging deeper. Digging past the request.

Digging far enough to say:

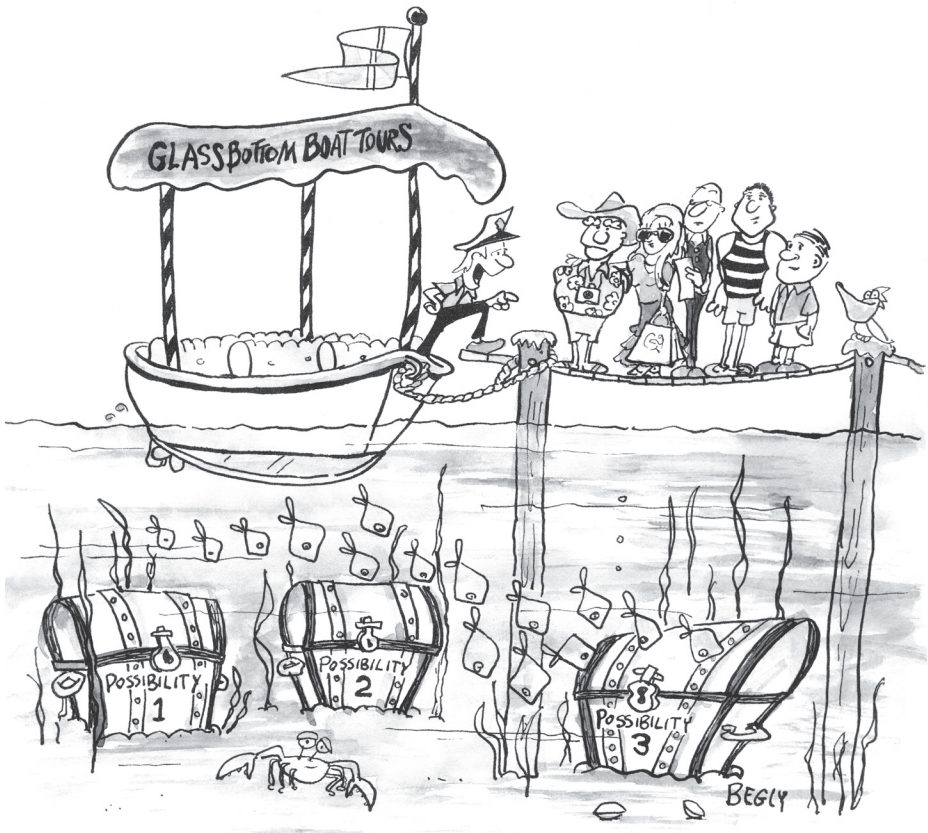
“By doing more homework, we have found out some other issues, and we believe these need to be addressed. In fact, we believe they rank high on the priority list of actions you should initiate to attain your defined goals.”

Boy, will they want to talk to you! You are not just talking about how hard you will work for them, but you are also demonstrating your thinking. This differentiating technique is so unique that it many times becomes what the listeners will talk about most after you leave.

**Digging
deeper**

**Digging
past the
request**

Define one or two needs you believe they have that they do not have a clue they have.



"WAIT 'TILL YOU SEE
ALL OF THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS
IN STORE FOR YOU!"

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A Real-Life Story

Frank, a senior salesperson for a major national news magazine, was so excited when he called me. He had just gotten out of a key presentation to a prospect, and at the end they had said, “You are the first presenter who thought past what we asked you for. We look for people who think. That is who we want to partner with, pure and simple.”

Frank had suggested that his client, a national advertising agency, should look at two additional needs to help its own client with. The client of this national advertising agency was a state business development office. Frank had checked the trade press and had dug deeper into his own large publishing organization and quickly identified two areas where it was obvious that his publication could assist the agency in helping its client, IF the key players at the agency understood these two additional areas of opportunities. These included some database research and additional publications the client could make use of because of special sections.

Frank presented these suggestions after he had responded to what the agency had asked him to address. Then he reviewed the research that revealed these two additional areas of opportunity and how his publication could assist the agency in targeting those possibilities. The agency in turn presented these ideas to its client and looked as if its own representatives had been doing some real consultative thinking by going past the requested assignment.

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The advertising agency convinced its client that these additional issues had to be addressed.

Frank enjoyed a much larger sale than if he had presented only what he had been asked to focus on. Plus, Frank laid the groundwork for a long-term relationship with the agency because he had helped its representatives look smart and consultative. Frank made himself stand out by demonstrating that he cared and by doing more homework than had been requested. Once you start offering ideas you believe the listeners need that they don't realize they need, you will never go back to addressing just what they asked for.

Never.

Define one or two needs you believe they have that they do not have a clue they have.

So what can you do right now to use this idea?

1. Ask your entire team what they believe the listeners need that they have not asked you to address. It is not uncommon that you will hear one or more of your own people say: “Well, what they really need is this. It’s obvious! Don’t you see what will happen if they did thus and so; they would have an incredible opportunity to leap ahead of their competition. Why can’t they see that?”

2. Call an editor of the major trade publication in the listeners’ industry and discuss current trends. Attempt to discover where your listeners are coming up short strategically. Bounce your observations off the editor and get a reaction. Explore your fresh thinking with this expert, who writes monthly about your listeners’ industry. Ask what they believe the companies in that market must do to bring more progress to the industry in general. Trust me, they will have some hot “to do list” ideas.

You can ask what the editor believes the outlook is for organizations similar to the one you are presenting to, if they do not pay attention to these trends. Just keep asking why, and you’ll get new, fresh observations you can use.

Editors are a fountain of current information and industry trends. They also must present fresh ideas and write provocatively to engage readers and keep their publication in

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business. They are usually quite opinionated, so you should get some crystallized ideas that are maybe even outside the box.

3. These ideas will stimulate your own thinking as to how you and your organization can help the listeners by addressing an area that has, up to now, escaped their attention as well as yours. List these new ideas.

4. Start digging. Investigate additional sources to quickly find information that will help define any areas you can zero in on to demonstrate your thinking:

a. You'll be amazed at how much magical information you can unearth by spending one hour browsing the Internet.

b. Have a discussion on the phone with the head of the trade association in which the listeners' company is a member.

c. Call one of the listeners' salespeople. Salespeople, because of their relationships, are usually closest to the truth about what is actually happening in the marketplace. They almost always will have a comment about how their company is missing the target on some critical opportunity, which, in their opinion, will open the floodgates to more sales.

d. Call a competitive salesperson to unearth your client's strengths that are not being used or weaknesses the competition is homing in on and must be addressed.

e. Call key distribution channels to hear about new products, new markets, and new trends.

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- f.** Call a few academicians who teach and publish on your listeners' type of product, service, etc. They may be ahead of the curve about what must change in the marketplace.
- 5.** Create some visuals about these ideas. Crystallize your thoughts. Remember: The listeners do not even have a clue about these ideas. Don't get ready to pontificate; just be consultative.
- 6.** Make these new ideas/observations separate from the information you are going to present based on the needs they have defined.
- 7.** During the actual presentation, after you have addressed the needs they defined, you can say, "We have done some extra digging and thinking, and we believe we have uncovered other issues you may need to address to get to where you defined you want to go. Would you like us to review them before we summarize?"
- 8.** Never leap into any hot news you've discovered until you address what they defined they needed. If you do, they will say to themselves, "Another presenter who did not listen to what we said we needed."
- 9.** Now go and add to what they asked you to address, and demonstrate you can think, not just respond!