



# ROCK STAR COMMUNICATIONS

How to Inspire Action and Commitment



PATRICIA FRIPP

Why are so many executive presentations **boring**? In an era of tough competition, presentations that persuade, educate, motivate, and inspire give you a competitive edge. Good presentation skills are no longer a nice skill to have; they are career life or death.

Welcome to **Rock Star Communications: How to Inspire Action and Commitment.**

I wish you could have been there, sitting in the front row of a ballroom at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. There were 1,500 sales professionals from all over the world. This was the software company's January sales meeting. This meeting was especially a challenge. A few months before they had bought one of their competitors, and 40% of the sales professionals had experienced the inconvenience of being acquired and had nothing whatsoever to do with making the decision.

Pat, the VP of Human Resources, told me, "Patricia, we need everyone to know they are working for the right company, at the right time, that our strategy is sound, and they can have a great career with us. Your presentation skills training and speech coaching with our executives and technical staff has gone very well. We are confident they will do well in their speeches. Now we would like you to work with our president. He is a lovely man, French, brilliant, an engineer, and rather shy. He is not a bad speaker; however, this company does not have any corporate Rock Stars! He lives in Paris and is here next week. Can you transform him into our corporate Rock Star? We can give you four hours!"

Later, his executive assistant whispered, "Ms. Fripp, you will be lucky if you get him for two hours."

You are about to learn the inside secrets of how, in my role as THE executive speech coach, I work with executives to help them create speeches that *inspire action and commitment*. Of course, once you understand the process and the reasons behind what we did, they are no longer secrets. When the techniques are incorporated into your presentations, you too can be a Rock Star communicator in the business world.

## **Inside Secret 1. Personal involvement.**

As an executive, even if you work with the best speech coach, or have an army of speechwriters, or a communications department working for you...if you want to be a Rock Star presenter, you have to get actively involved in the building of your presentation. You will have to make this a priority and find time in your schedule. The impact and results will be worth your effort.

I asked Pat, “Do you have his speech from last year’s sales meeting?” Companies usually record all their conference presentations for the archives or legal department. Nobody ever watches them! If your goal is to increase your effectiveness, you must be aware of both your speaking strengths and distractions. Once you get serious about improving, you may want to consider having a presentation transcribed after you deliver it. Read what you said. Not planned to say. Not what you believe you said!

## **Inside Secret 2. Review and analyze.**

Consider developing the habit of an “after presentation analysis.”

Michael Grinder is the US’s number one expert on body language. He advises speakers to look at the DVD of their presentation and pretend the speaker is NOT them. Otherwise you will be distracted by thinking, “My suit looked good” or “My makeup needed more blusher.”

When you are looking at “that speaker” ask yourself, “What would I tell that speaker they are doing well?”

What do you see and hear that was orchestrated superbly well?

What do you see that was distracting?

Is that speaker making eye contact with the audience?

How about movement?

Does the movement appear strategic with the message?

Or do you see the speaker wandering around aimlessly?

Are the major talking points clear?

## **Inside Secret 2.** Continued...

Would the audience know what they were expected to do with the information they received?

Then come back to you. Based on those impressions, if you were repeating the presentation, what would you do differently?

As soon as you have finished reading this message, if you have one of your recent presentations on DVD, do watch it. However, not immediately! Because when you view a past presentation, it is best to do so with a fresh approach and the new information you will absorb from this eBook.

When I watch an executive's recorded speech or a live presentation, my first focus is to look for the moment the speaker is warmed up and totally hitting their stride. Speaking in public, especially to 1,500 people, is not a natural act. You may be an experienced public speaker and comfortable addressing large audiences. However, Rock Star communicators have learned the techniques that take them from good, to great, to superb, and eventually world class.

What I saw watching Charles's last presentation was that, yes...he was smart, had a great voice, was pleasant looking, likeable, and delivered an acceptable speech. However, he did not hit his stride until seven minutes into his presentation. There were far too many slides that had a tendency to dominate the presentation, rather than his personality and message.

Not the Rock Star communicator the company wanted or he was very capable of becoming.

## **Inside Secret 3. Warm up before you hit the stage.**

Learn from the real rock stars of comedy and music. Before he goes on, Robin Williams does jumping jacks. Mick Jagger has a short running area back stage, and yes, he runs!

Do not sit down for thirty or more minutes and then walk on the stage from a seated position and expect to be dynamic. You need energy in your body. Back stage or at the back of the room, rehearse your opening lines, practice smiling, and get the rhythm of your speech in your body. Relax your body and remove stress by doing neck rolls and shaking the tension out of your hands and legs.

## Inside Secret 3. Continued...

Whenever possible before the session starts, my practice is to talk to my audience. This is what I call the “schmooze factor.” By doing this, you are warming up your face and vocal cords, and getting comfortable with the words coming out of your mouth. As a bonus, the audience has much more of a connection with the speaker.

At MDRT (*Million Dollar Round Table*) I was about to deliver a ninety-minute presentation on *Powerful Sales Presentations* to an audience of well over one thousand insurance sales professionals. Ninety-percent of the audience members did not speak English and would hear my presentation through an interpreter. However, by extending myself, wandering around shaking hands, and saying “Welcome” to my audience, more than 50 people asked for my autograph. An American audience member said, “Wow! You must be a good speaker! I have never seen such a response **before** a presentation.” To which I replied, “Their response says more about them than me. They don’t even know who I am! However, they can tell I am interested in **them**.” It really **did** impress the MDRT organizers. Afterwards, the attendees mobbed me. The last time I had that many photos taken was after each of my presentations in Taiwan.

For high-level executives, often this practice is not possible. In that case, when you are back stage, pace and talk to yourself. Do NOT get distracted with emails and calls. To deliver a high-impact presentation you need focus and energy.

Making your performance look easy...is hard! Learn from Robin and Mick. When these stars hit the stage, they are ready and engaged!

## Inside Secret 4. Open with impact.

The first 30 to 60 seconds of your speech sets the tone. It helps build anticipation. I compare the opening of a presentation to the opening scene of a movie, which is called the *flavor scene*.

Here is a clue...“Good morning ladies and gentlemen. What a pleasure to be here” may be polite; however, it is predictable, boring, and will not *inspire action and commitment*. Certainly it is not Rock Star quality. Rock Star performers will tell you, “We open with our second best song and close with our best.” Yes, these performers may have some conversation with the audience to thank them for attending or years of support; however, certainly not at the opening!

## **Inside Secret 4. Continued...**

You may be thinking, “Patricia, I have forty-five minutes for my speech. That is plenty of time to warm up and connect.” Wrong. Consider this...your audience is full of stimulation junkies with short attention spans. It is best to come out punching and grab the audience’s attention. We want them to think, “Wow! This is going to be good!” Or at very least, “This is better than I expected.” Perhaps they will even look up from their texting.

Even the more analytical of audiences...engineers, scientists, and accountants...watch sports on large TV screens, play video games with their kids, and go to the theatre and movies. In other words, they want to be educated, informed, and entertained.

## **Inside Secret 5. Don’t be boring.**

One of my speaking mentors, Ron Arden, taught me “An audience of one or one thousand will forgive you anything, except being boring. Being too predictable is boring.”

When I first met Charles for our two- or four-hour meeting, I asked him, “Charles, if you had just one sentence, rather than forty-five minutes, what would you say?”

He said, “This is a brand new company.”

I replied, “Great, write this down. This is your opening line. ‘Welcome, to a brand new company!’”

## **Inside Secret 6. Know your premise.**

What is your central theme, core message, or premise? Your opening remarks must logically transition into the premise. The body of your speech is going to prove your premise. Do not be guilty of fuzzy focus.

## **Inside Secret 7. Answer the audience’s unspoken questions.**

Answer the questions the audience has in their mind. These will vary depending on the situation, the purpose of the meeting, your bio, or topic. Even in a situation where they can ask questions, part of your preparation needs to consider “When they are walking in, what are they thinking? What is probably on their minds?”

## **Inside Secret 7. Continued...**

I asked Charles, “Who decided this would be a new company?” He said, “The Board of Directors.” Where were they? What room looked like...we need to transport the audience into the scene.

## **Inside Secret 8. Help your audience “see” your message.**

As the presenter, when you “see” the scene, it will be easier to talk about it vividly. The result is the audience will be able see, hear, taste, touch, and smell it. In other words, be transported to a different time and place.

I asked, “Who said what to whom?” Charles said, “Pierre, who has been on the Board for ten years asked me, ‘Charles, what can we do once and forever to grab the market share?’”

“What did you reply?” “We could do this, or that, or take the boldest move ever and buy this other company!” Which you already know they did.

## **Inside Secret 9. Don’t report on dialogue, give us the dialogue.**

I hope you are noticing the secrets in the examples you are reading about. When your other character in the story is speaking, you can add your name into their dialogue. This makes it obvious to you, and the listeners, who is speaking. Charles’s next talking point obviously was about strategy. I asked him, “When was the first time you realized the importance of strategy?”

He said, “When I was a fourteen-year-old ball boy, before the French Open. Spectators came in to see the match and did not realize they would first be watching the ball boys. I was playing against my best friend. We were equally matched as far as skill was concerned. However, in this case, the ball boys were girls. At fourteen, girls are enough of a distraction. Our ball boy...girl...was my friend’s sister. She wanted him to win, so she was sabotaging my game by the way she was throwing the balls. I had to play with this disadvantage. And that, Patricia, was when I first learned the importance of strategy.”

### Inside Secret 9. Continued...

Charles, like many of my executive speech-coaching clients, asked, “Is the audience really interested in these stories?”

YES, a resounding YES!

The reason this story was so amazing and important to the speech leads us to...

### Inside Secret 10. Help the audience know the person behind the position.

If you are a Rock Star communicator who inspires action, the audience must see the person behind the position. This is the person they would fight in the streets for, work long hours, and feel confident in the corporate strategy. We respect the **position**; we get emotionally connected to the **person**.

### Inside Secret 11. What do they know you don't have to tell them?

It is not only **what** you say that communicates your message, it is the subtext. That is what the audience knows, or assumes, that you don't actually say! They are thinking, “Our corporate strategy must be good. Our president has been studying strategy since he was fourteen.”

Later in his speech, he was talking about corporate citizenship. It was soon after a tsunami, and the company matched the \$360,000 the sales people and employees had donated. This was a wonderful subject, and I could tell Charles felt passionate about it. Yet we needed more emotion.

I asked, “Charles, how do you describe corporate citizenship to your children?”

He said, “It was the day after Christmas. I sat my two children down and said, ‘You are very lucky young people. You have generous parents and even more generous grandparents. Perhaps you would like to give back one of your gifts or certificates, and we can take the money and give to the children who no longer have homes.’”

He said, “I was so proud of my fourteen-year-old son. He came back the next day and said, ‘Papa, how do I know how much to give? I could give you all of my Christmas gifts, all of my



## Inside Secret 11. Continued...

pocket money, all of my savings, and it still would not be enough to make a difference.' I told him, 'Oh, you never give it all; just enough that it hurts a little.'"

Then I said, "Charles, if you want to *inspire action and commitment*, you need to tell your sales professionals specifically what you expect. What do you want them to do? On behalf of the company, what do you commit to do to support them? How will it be in their best interests to do so, as well as the company's?"

## Inside Secret 12. Appeal to their rational self-interest.

Rock Star communicators realize to inspire action, you need to appeal to the audience's rational self-interest. Understand that people make decisions for their reasons, not yours. When you want them to perform for you, they need to understand what is in it for them.

Next, I recommended Charles go back to his opening comments. "You close your presentation with the same words, thought, or vision in your opening. Then remember, your last words linger. Leave them with a reinforcement of a key idea or an inspirational thought contained within your presentation. Such as, 'Together, the best is yet to come.'"

After five hours, the managers kept popping their heads around the door and running around saying, "Charles is still with Patricia!" They were amazed.

I understand when Charles walked into our meeting, he had no idea what to expect. However, I was reassured he was finding the approach productive. What we were doing was conversationally writing his speech in the order he would be delivering it.

When professionals consider working with a speech coach, they often think, "The coach will tell me what to do with my hands, improve my gestures, body language, and movement." These are all part of the delivery. We work on this **last**. As important as these aspects of the presentation are, why would you want to perfect a badly structured and poorly written presentation?

Let us discuss what I mean by written. It is difficult to write how we actually speak. I frequently say, "I do not write speeches for my clients. I ask them questions, take my client's words, polish them up, and pop them back in their mouths. Then say, 'This is what you write down.'"

### **Inside Secret 13. Sound conversational.**

A speech is not a conversation; however, it needs to sound conversational.

The real secret is to have what you want to say a cleaned up, tightened, edited, more specific conversation. As actress Raquel Welch said, “Style is being yourself...on purpose.”

With real conversation, we open our mouths and start speaking. Often we ramble, use run-on sentences, and do not use specific language. The slopping, non-specific word choices may be stuff, lots, bunches, tons, and things. For a conversational-sounding speech, we do not want to use language more formal than we would use in business conversations. We do need to edit, clarify, remove redundancies, and add specificity to what we may say in conversations. We make it more clear and concise. With specificity we build credibility.

Speak in shorter sentences and phrases. No more than one idea per sentence. When you use shorter sentences, you do not fall over your own words. If needed, you can take a breath, or look at your notes.

Finally, Charles’s associates whisked him off to another meeting.

Before he left he asked, “Patricia, this has been very valuable. How can we continue?” As Charles lived in Paris, I went into their building at 6 a.m., and we video conferenced our coaching sessions.

Once we had the speech script, we looked at the place where he absolutely HAD to have a PowerPoint.

### **Inside Secret 14. Visual aids are visual and aids.**

Visual aids are a tool, not a crutch. They support the speaker. When you are not talking to them, turn the screen off by hitting the “B” for black button, or use your remote control.

If you are going to be a Rock Star presenter who *inspires action and commitment*, do not compete with yourself! Your audience can’t listen and read. A PowerPoint with too many words, or too much information, can sabotage what could be a great presentation.

As I told Charles, “Once you have your structure and script, and know where you need the visuals, you are halfway there. Now you have to internalize your presentation. Your goal is to know it so well you can forget it.”

## **Inside Secret 14.** Continued...

In other words, you do not want to think too hard about what comes next. This way you can focus on your audience. Gene Perrett is a prolific comedy author, and for 30 years was Bob Hope's head writer. He says, "You need to know your content so well your words fall flawlessly from your lips."

## **Inside Secret 15. Be personable.**

You do not have to be perfect; you have to be personable. It is recommended you take an outline of your speech with you to the lectern or table. This gives you security even when you do not need it. However, you can't read and look at the audience. That is why we need an outline and not a script. You may start with a script; however, as you internalize the presentation, you keep taking content out until you only have your opening and closing lines, bullet points, perhaps a word or phrase that reminds you of examples, and names of people you want to include with their names written phonetically.

Relax, your audience does not know what you intended to say. If it does not come out exactly as you planned, that is OK.

Let's do a review. If you want to be a Rock Star communicator:

1. Know central theme.
2. What are talking points to make your case?
3. Add personal stories.
4. Conversationally talk through what you are going to say, then write that down.
5. Have a strong outline, and at least script the opening and close.
6. Talk through your speech and record it. Have it transcribed and use as a script.
7. Ultimately, you will not read your speech. You will use the transcript to tighten, edit, add more adverbs, adjectives, action words, and specificity.
8. Add visuals.
9. Do NOT use PowerPoint to write your speech.

## **Inside Secret 16. Internalize your message.**

Once you have your speech with the visual aids, start internalizing the message. You are busy; build rehearsal into your everyday life. Tell each story at the dinner talk and at the coffee pot. Practice with your assistant, and have a dry run at a staff meeting. Talk to yourself while driving. My best rehearsal is on the treadmill. You enjoy the benefits of exercise, and you find the rhythm of your presentation gets into your body.

## **Inside Secret 17. Rehearsal is the work, performance is the relaxation.**

Once you have your message internalized; know your structure; could wake up in the middle of the night and deliver your opening and closing scripting; and have informally told your stories and examples, then it is time to get serious about the rehearsal and delivery. I am disgusted that with many speakers, this is often a totally overlooked step.

Oscar-winning actor Michael Caine said, “Rehearsal is the work, performance is the relaxation.” Show me a natural looking Rock Star presenter, and I will show you someone who values the importance of rehearsal. They make it look so easy.

Sir Laurence Olivier, another Oscar-winning actor, said, “The art is hiding the art.”

Now it is time to focus on the presentation delivery.

When you walk on stage, stand front center. Stand still while you deliver your opening remarks. When you move, do not wander around aimlessly or look like a caged lion. No, that does not make you look dynamic; it makes you look nervous or that you drank too much caffeine!

*Move with purpose...*it is obvious to the audience you mean to move. When you get to a key point or idea, stand still. This is verbally and visually underlining what you are saying. What I consider “verbal punctuation.”

*Move on transition...*when you go from one idea to the next. You may use phrases such as “Fast forward seven years...,” “Our second strategy is...,” or “And what do we expect from you?”

*Move on a movement specific phrase.* Examples may be “As I walked into the hotel lobby...I stopped to admire the fountain.” Your audience “sees” you walking into the lobby. If you say, “stopped to admire the fountain” and keep walking, they imagine you are walking in the

## Inside Secret 17. Continued...

water. The visual and the verbal are in disagreement. They add confusion.

*Move for the timeline.* If you talk about the past, gesture or move to your right, the audience's left. This is the way they read. When you talk about the future, gesture or move to your left, the audience's right. Pause between ideas and thoughts.

Think of verbal punctuation: pause at the end of a sentence, paragraph, and introducing a new topic area. In the pauses you draw the audience to you. This is when they digest what they have heard.

My brother, legendary guitarist Robert Fripp—who according to *Rolling Stone* magazine is “The 42nd best guitarist in the world”—practices his guitar while watching high-action films. When I first heard this I commented, “You can't be paying much attention to the movie.” He replied, “Sister, I am building the muscle memory in my hands.”

This is what you are doing building rehearsal into your daily life. Rehearse in your own environment, then rehearse on the stage where you will be speaking. Make friends with the stage.

When I was at the Bellagio working with Charles and all the presenters, their rehearsal on stage was mandatory. You need to know how many steps it takes to get to the center of the stage. Work with the production company and audio visual technicians; these professionals are experts and your friends. Their job is to make you look as good as possible. They can't do their job as effectively if you do not take your sound checks and rehearsals seriously. If possible, do this the day before. Once you see where you will be and have walked the stage, you will sleep better.

After the software company's opening general session, I was amazed walking around the lobby of the Bellagio Ballroom. Imagine my excitement hearing what seemed like hundreds of sales professionals say, “I'm excited. Can't wait to go out and sell. This really IS a new company. He has my commitment. What an honor to be part of it.”

And “Wow, that was so great! What happened to Charles?”

I knew...it was me! He was Frippnotized!

Charles is obviously one of my favorite clients because he realized this was important to him personally, the company, and shareholders. He took our work seriously.

## Inside Secret 17. Continued...

An amazing speech that *inspires action and commitment* is a masterpiece and does not happen overnight. It does not happen, unless you make it a priority.

You have just learned 17 inside secrets from someone who has invested more than a quarter of a century studying how to more effectively communicate. As a bonus, here are a few of the mistakes my executive clients make **before** they meet me. As you know the Secrets of Rock Star Communicators, you recognize how easy they are to solve.

1. **Waiting until the last minute** - So many executives don't start preparing their message early enough to get the impact and results they want. They overlook what a dynamic difference a great speech can make to morale and their stock price.
2. **Unfocused thinking** - Often they can't explain what they want to say in a clear and concise way.
3. **Weak starts** - They start their presentations by waffling around and not getting to the point fast enough.
4. **Not recognizing the big picture** - Once they have developed their script, or at least a strong outline, they think they are done.
5. **Not rehearsing** - Very few of my clients appreciate the importance of adequate rehearsal. I promise them the more they rehearse, the more they can relax and enjoy their performance. And every presentation IS a performance.
6. **Letting visual aids dictate contents** - They prepare their PowerPoint before they work on their specific message and appropriate wording.
7. **Not using stories** - They fear their speech won't be seen as "high content" if they illustrate key points with compelling stories and metaphors. Actually, they are the best way to make complex points.
8. **Closing with answering questions** - This is good to do before you close, not as the close. Remember, your last words linger. They should present a key theme, a call for action, or a motivational challenge. When in doubt, I always suggest going back to the opening and closing with the same thought or idea.

**9. Not getting help** - The biggest mistake ever. So many executives just don't realize how close the help they need is. Let's talk about your next presentation, or check out [www.FrippVT.com](http://www.FrippVT.com). (Fripp Virtual Training)

Good luck with your journey to *inspire action and commitment* as a Rock Star communicator.

Hope you will remember me...FRIPP. Much more important, remember what it stands for: FRIPP...**F**requently **R**einforce **I**deas that are **P**roductive and **P**rofitable.

Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE, is an authority on powerful, persuasive, presentation skills. The first woman President of the National Speakers Association, a Hall of Fame keynote speaker, executive speech coach, and sales presentation skills trainer. She is the author or co-author of five books including *Speaker's Edge*. *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* wrote, "Patricia Fripp's speaking school is the sixth best way you can invest in your career." *Meetings and Conventions* magazine named Patricia "One of America's most electrifying speakers."

Individuals and companies who want the competitive edge that comes from powerful, persuasive presentations call Patricia Fripp. She can help you in person and through Fripp Virtual Training.

Why not call and have a conversation...before your competition does!

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