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# The Introvert's Guide to Great Presenting



By [Steve Knight](#) , INSEAD Adjunct Professor of Business Communication

**It is not about becoming someone you're not, it's about allowing yourself to become who you are truly capable of being.**

Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) are often among the most boring members of organisational leadership teams when it comes to communication. Stepping up on stage to deliver the numbers after the CEO has given a back-slapping, rousing speech about progress and the next year's strategic priorities, the crowd returns to silence as they sleepily settle down for the CFOs part about how much money is being made or spent.

CFOs are not the only ones out there who often lack communication finesse and flair. In the ever more technological workplace, the geeky ones who write code or crunch numbers are increasingly being called upon to give confident addresses to shareholders and potential investors. They're often the ones starting companies and taking them public.

The solution to such awkward situations has been some training to make the CFO more like the CEO. The issue with a lot of presentation training, however, is that it teaches a one-size-fits-all version of what a good

presenter looks like. There's a lot of focus on eye contact, hand movements and walking up and down, none of which is necessarily wrong. But it often encourages the natural introverts to assume a persona which isn't them at all.

## **What makes a great presenter?**

At the heart of how I coach MBA participants and executives is the mantra: it is not about becoming someone you're not, but about becoming who you are truly capable of being. What does this mean in practice?

The art of good presenting, whether on stage or in a meeting room is to make the audience comfortable enough to forget about the medium (you) and focus on the message. We've all experienced fumbling presenters who not only fail to impress, but overshadow their own message with a messy performance. The same is true of TV presenting. Those we enjoy watching the most are those who really seem to be talking directly to us, as if they're not talking through a camera at all, but they're being beamed directly into our presence.

In essence, good presenters have learned not to present but to be consciously aware of their presence. There is a big difference between the two. Confidence, style and passion enable them to enhance the power of their voice, their body language and ability to deliver a memorable presentation.

## **Find your true self**

Being yourself will also make you more confident. Once we get comfortable with who we are and who we are capable of being, the context no longer matters. The same person should show up whether in small meetings, video conferencing, telephone calls, one-on-one conversations, not just in the spotlight on stage. When we wear masks, we are not ourselves.

Once you've found your true self and you bring that self to all situations, focusing on connecting with others will help you be the "captain of the ship". To give the audience the best experience and get your message across effectively, here are a few tips:

1. Focus on the experience you want the audience to take away. This means listening and picking up on cues as well as speaking.

2. Don't try to be like anyone else when you present. Focus on being the best possible you.
3. Remember that people need the story behind the numbers or the technical nature of what you're getting across. Remember that you're the expert and what you're saying is more credible coming from you than anyone else.

**Steve Knight** is an Adjunct Professor of Business Communication at INSEAD. Follow him on Twitter at [@SteveKnightComm](#)

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**About the author(s)**

**Steve Knight**