The simple guide to engaging your audiences like never before.

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Imagine going through life constantly asking questions and learning. That’s how children go about their day. They use that great WHY question non-stop, and the adults around them usually (depending on how much sleep they’ve had) give them the answers they need.

Now imagine going into adulthood with all this knowledge you’ve accumulated, all these opinions that you’ve formed, and all of these ideas you’d like to share.

Then imagine being sat in a room and politely told to shut up for an hour or two whilst someone talks at you. You might get 5-10 minutes at the end to interact (if you’re lucky), but for the most part this interaction is a one way deal. That’s what 99.9% of presentations are today. Is it any wonder that it’s so hard to hold an audience’s attention?

Since I was a child so much has changed about the way we communicate. Skype, Facebook, Snapchat, smartphones, smart watches, the list goes on. All of these are great for getting our messages out to a wider audience, but what about when we have a room of people directly in front of us and are going to present to them? That interaction, the way we think about it and plan for it has not advanced at all. If anything, it’s gone backwards.

In this busy world of countless communication channels, having the opportunity to interact with people in person should be something we relish, not squander. We should welcome and seek to build in the opportunity for them to interact with us constantly. We should allow them to guide the flow of our presentation based on what their interests are. And we should not be afraid to have ‘conversations’ rather than traditional presentations.
THE BENEFITS OF CONVERSING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

The benefits of switching to a more conversational style of presenting far outweigh any unease you might feel about breaking away from the norm. The following benefits are all things that I have experienced myself personally.

- **Saving time**
- **Focused and engaged audience**
- **Less pressure on the presenter**
- **A memorable experience**

The next page explains these benefits in more detail.
Saving time

Think of the last presentation you sat through. It might have been an hour, ten minutes, or even a day’s worth of presenting. What percentage of the content was actually relevant to you?

The answer of course should be 100%. Unfortunately, that’s almost never the case!

All across the globe, even right now as you read this, millions of audiences are sitting through content that isn’t relevant to them and they don’t need to see or hear about. In other words...

TIME IS BEING WASTED!

Conversational presenting allows the audience to dictate which areas of content the presentation focuses on. That means that even if you have an hour’s worth of presentation content, your audience might only need to see half of it. There’s no pressure to try and cover everything, and therefore TIME IS SAVED.

Imagine that!
In the past decade, people’s attention spans have lowered by a considerable amount. This is why presenters have such a tough job these days. And it’s not just badly designed slides that switch audience members off, it’s the irrelevance of the content they are being shown.

Most audience members admit to switching off during a presentation and waiting for the interesting part (for them) to get mentioned before paying attention. It’s almost acceptable these days to be openly using your smartphone and checking emails whilst someone presents to you. How did that happen?

Conversational presenting focuses in on what’s important right from the start. I’ve found that the best way to begin a presentation is to ask:

*What would you like to focus on?*

That simple question gets people sitting upright, paying attention, and more importantly, interacting. A big win for any presenter.

People paying attention.

*Imagine that!*
Less pressure on the presenter

In my experience of teaching presentation skills, the thing that scares people the most is forgetting their lines. Obviously there are ways to address this when presenting in a traditional way, but it seems to be a huge fear amongst most new presenters. I’ve seen people at big events forget their lines on stage and it always makes me feel so bad for them. There’s just so much pressure to perform and get it right in that time slot you’ve been given. It’s no wonder people fear public speaking so much.

Conversational presenting removes that pressure completely. The term conversation means ‘a talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged.’

As we’ll see later on in this book, a conversation is a two-way interaction. For that simple reason presenters are under no pressure to remember and recite a scripted flow of content.

A presentation that doesn’t feel scary to deliver.

_Imagine that!_
A memorable experience

All of the benefits I’ve mentioned lead to one of the biggest benefits of all: people remember you and your content.

How many times have you started a sentence with, “I remember on slide 12, bullet point 2 of this presentation…”

Never, right?

You’ve probably said something like, “I remember when I was talking to Jo Bloggs about her new widget system….” and that’s because you remember the conversation. You were involved in it, and interacting with all your senses.

Viewing the presentation visuals.
Listening to the content being presented.
Talking and asking questions.
An audience that remembers you.

Imagine that!
THE FINE ART OF CONVERSATION

Being an adult doesn’t automatically make you good at a conversation, although some of us would like to think so. With that in mind, let’s take a moment to look at some conversation basics that will help all of us be better communicators.
HOW TO DESIGN A CONVERSATION

By now I’m sure you understand the benefits of presenting conversationally, and probably want to know how to make it possible for you and your colleagues.

There are two sides to answering that question. Firstly we need to think about and plan what kinds of conversations we are going to have, and secondly we need to design the visual element of our conversation in a way that gives us complete freedom and does not disrupt the flow of our conversation.
1. It’s not about you

However you present, one rule stands true at all times. It’s not about you.

As much as we all enjoy talking about ourselves (myself included), a great conversation is one that has equal input. It’s okay to share relevant stories that involve you, but make sure you always try to relate things back to the person (or people) you’re talking to.
2. Listen more than you talk

Remember, a great conversation is one where your points of view feel appreciated, and you feel as though you have been listened to.

Try to do more listening than talking. That might sound like a strange concept as you are the presenter but trust me, people will definitely appreciate you listening to them rather than talking at them.
3. Open questions

Using questions that start with Who, What, Where, or How always helps to open up a conversation and get things flowing.

Closed questions that only have a YES or NO answer will stop a two way conversation dead in its tracks.

A good salesperson will know how to use open and closed questions at the right time like some kind of Jedi mind trick!
4. Don’t interrupt

Giving your audience permission to verbalise their thoughts always leads to better conversations. Interrupting can be extremely annoying and diminishes any engagement you may have built up.
5. It’s okay to not know

People respect honesty and transparency these days, and with that in mind it’s perfectly okay to admit you don’t know something. So long as you show willingness to find the answers as soon as you can, people won’t be annoyed.
It doesn't matter if you're in sales, fashion design, or architecture, designing a conversational presentation is very simple. Here's a step by step guide to how I approach building my own conversational presentations:
1. Record a conversation

It’s important to have a good starting point and a solid foundation to base your presentation around. When I started my own business I asked a few of my prospects if they minded me recording the phone or in person conversation we were having. I did this with several new prospects who I’d never spoken with before and when I explained why I was doing it nobody refused.

I simply used the video camera on my phone, put my office phone (with the prospect on) on loudspeaker, and recorded the whole thing. There are tonnes of other apps and ways to do this but don’t over-complicate it with technology.

I ended up with 5 conversations that were all focused around my company’s services and offerings, and of course contained lots of different questions from the people I spoke with. They were all from different industries, and all had different job titles so my recordings had a great mix of content.
2. Break it down

I listened to each conversation again and listed the key areas that kept popping up. Most of these were fairly obvious to me when presenting about my business, but there were a couple of areas I wouldn’t have planned for without listening to these recordings. The key areas I ended up listing were:

My story
I had no idea people would want to know about me personally, but this seemed really important to them. I guess it’s good to know who you might be doing business with and what their background is. I was very flattered by this one!

Our design services
This one seemed fairly obvious as it’s the main reason people contact us.

Our training services
Again, this is a key service for us so I knew it would have to be added in to my conversational presentation.

Our clients
I expected people to want to know who else we had worked with, but this question came up in every conversation. It was definitely more important than I had realised.

What Prezi Expert status means
One of the reasons people contact us is because we are affiliated with Prezi. However, I wasn’t expecting people to want to know how that relationship worked in so much detail. I decided to make it one of my presentation’s key areas.

Everything discussed in these recordings fell into one of these five categories. This gave me a great structure that will later become how I navigate around my presentation and keep things flowing naturally.
3. Add levels of detail

Within each of our 5 key areas there were certain questions or pieces of detail that came up from myself and the audience (remember it's a two way interaction). By listening to the recordings further I was able to determine just how much detail I'd needed to add.
My story

10 years Graphic Design background
Move into presenting and training for 8 years
Feeling limited by PowerPoint
Discovering and falling in love with Prezi
Being approached by publisher to write first Prezi book
Being invited by Prezi to become an expert
Here I am today
Meet our team

Our design services

Prezi design
Bespoke design for events & conferences
Branded Prezi templates
PowerPoint to Prezi conversion
PowerPoint design
Branded Ppt templates
Touching up design of existing Ppt decks
Animation design
Animations for the web
Animations with voiceover and music

Our training services

Prezi training for beginners or advanced users
Onsite training
Online training
eLearning
Presentation skills
For groups 1to1

Our clients

Healthcare
Automotive
Banking
Sports
Education
Technology
Travel
Display client logos

What Prezi Expert status means

We are recognised by Prezi as experts
We don’t pay to be an expert
Prezi recommends us to new users in our country

For the purposes of this guide I’m listing these different levels of content. A great way to do this yourself is to create a mind-map on a whiteboard or flip chart paper.

Essentially what we’ve done here is create a road map for our conversation.
4. Prepare your why’s

Even though we’ve planned a lot for our presentation, conversations can be somewhat unpredictable at times. You just never know if someone is going to throw you a curve ball and request a deeper level of content that might not have been requested before.

This is a lot like when my 3-year-old asks me questions I’m just not expecting. Daddy, why doesn’t our house fly? Or, where did all the T-Rexes go? All great questions and easy to answer, but surprising to say the least!

Remember, when you are dealing with adults (or kids) don’t be afraid to say you don’t know something, or you just don’t have that info to hand right now.

If you want to be super prepared then you can plan in some of these curve ball questions and add another level of detail. Of course you don’t always have to take your audience to that level of detail, but knowing the answers are there when needed is a great comfort. Here’s an example of where I have some extra detail in my presentation:
What’s next?

When I have the structure of my conversation in place I like to take some time to find the relevant imagery, video, and other media that’s going to help me present it. For many of you, much of that will be inside old PowerPoint slides or reports.

Create a folder for your new presentation design. Inside that folder create subfolders all pertaining to the content areas outlined in the planning portion. Then save all the media needed into the relevant folders, and boom! You’re organized and ready to design the visual elements in the final stage.

And the best way to build your presentation is, of course, in Prezi Next.
Conversational presenting has changed the game for me as a presenter, as well as my audience. Content that’s more engaging is more effective, and just plain cool. Believe it or not, people absolutely love to be so immersed in something they forget about their pocket-size screens. Go ahead, ask anyone if they’d like to hear a story that’s so good they won’t even think of their phones until it’s over. I bet you won’t get a single rejection!

Prezi continually reminds me that a presentation can be about so much more than those few minutes on stage or at the front of the room. Conversational presenting makes it about dialogue and engagement and learning, and Prezi Next, the company’s newest platform, will bring analytics into the fold. Imagine if you knew how your audience felt about your content before you delivered it. What kinds of things could you accomplish during the actual event? Or, what if you had insights into what they thought of your presentation once it was all over? How could that help you with your follow-up content?

Prezi has reinvented the wheel with conversational presenting, and it looks like they’re going to do it again with Prezi Next. And I can’t wait to see what the combination of this new way of presenting and insights is going to mean for presenters like me (and you!).

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Click here to get more details on Prezi Next, conversational presenting, and how you can leverage the lifecycle of a presentation.

Click here to get started with our Prezi Next online course for beginners.

Click here to view the conversational Prezi discussed throughout this ebook.
Thank you for reading.

If you’d like to expand your skills with Prezi, visit: www.theprezenter.com for additional training.

Have a question? email – info@theprezenter.com