



Presentation Skills

Everything I know about making a presentation I learned while skiing

Skiing and presenting have many things in common. Here, a list of the top ten ways both skiers and presenters can deliver an outstanding performance.

Breathe. Especially when you've been thrown off balance by something unexpected—a bump, deep powder—or a question or comment from an audience member. Breathe. You need oxygen to think, to react, to stay balanced.

Have courage and believe in yourself. When you hit a rough patch, believe in yourself and keep moving forward. Don't stop. Don't freeze up. You can do this!

Keep your thoughts positive at all times. Banish negative thoughts. Keep your focus on the horizon.

Prepare – Prepare – Prepare. Take lessons. Get a coach. Mentally rehearse. Go through the entire run—or speech—in your mind before you point your skis downhill (or open your mouth).

Push past your fears. Notice all the people around you who have done and are doing what you want to do—successfully.

Learn to use your equipment and put your trust in it. Become thoroughly familiar with your equipment ahead of time—before you get out on the mountain or face an audience. The time to learn how to put your skis back on—or restart your

PowerPoint—is not when you're on a steep mountainside in boot-high powder or looking out at a roomful of people. Know what all the buttons do on your laptop, projector, remotes, monitors, speakers, consoles, and other equipment. Ski boots and bindings are simple by comparison!

Enjoy the ride. Both skiing and presenting can be exhilarating. Stay in the moment and take it all in. When going down the mountain, feel the wind in your face. And when speaking to a group, relish the nods, smiles, and questions of a grateful audience.

Find opportunities to practice. Sure, skiing in Utah or Colorado provides breathtaking vistas, unparalleled snow, and super-long runs, but a weekend at a local ski resort will still keep your skills honed. Same thing with making presentations. Seize every opportunity, write a stellar PowerPoint, rehearse, and present. Get experience every chance you can find.

Take a risk every now and then. It's how you get better. Ski the bumps. Venture out of your tried and true presenting style. Try a new way of engaging the audience. Begin with a bold opening.

Know when to stop. After five or six hours flying down the mountain, fatigue can hit like a fist. Experienced skiers know that they need to stop before exhaustion sets in, no matter how much fun they're having. When presenting, plan your speech so that you have a



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clearly defined conclusion, and then end your presentation when you planned to.

Finally, remember that both skiing and presenting are performance arts. It's you—with all of your skills, preparation, energy, and enthusiasm—delivering the intended results in just a few, focused moments. There you are—descending from the top of the mountain, one smooth turn after another, or informing, persuading, or inspiring the audience.

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