



# 99 PROBLEMS ...BUT THE PITCH AIN'T ONE

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Despite what many may think, sales people have it tough. To many their working day is a series of expensed lunches with ever eager prospects interspersed with the odd bit of networking (ideally on the golf course). It all sounds rather lovely but those of us out there pitching all know the reality is a little different.

Getting to the tipping point when you can share your message with a prospect is the first challenge. Any opportunity to present your story to someone with the money, authority and need is one to savour however all too often this key moment in the spotlight is when things start to unravel.

Why? Because as sales people we've forgotten the power and privilege that comes with presenting. The power is the simple one to get your head around – in the right hands and delivered in the right way, a pitch presentation can still be an incredible thing to be involved in. Great things happen when a presentation hits the target - the conversion of the sceptical to the converted is exciting.

Privilege is a different matter altogether and frequently where things go awry. Despite our hard fought battle to get the opportunity to share a message, all too often presenters turn up with a pre-packaged, generic and homogenized material. Presenting should be recognised as a huge privilege by salespeople the world over because, frankly, our audiences could be doing a whole heap of other things with the time they've set aside to listen to you.

Remember, they are not obliged to be there. The good news is that they've shown sufficient interest in the topic being discussed to carve out time in their schedules so don't waste their time by delivering a presentation that doesn't speak directly to them on their terms. It's not only rude, it also reduces your chance of sales success. Nobody wins.

# SO WHERE TO START

Everything I do in my professional life, from the work carried out by my business, [Eyeful Presentations](#), or through the [books](#), articles and keynotes I deliver, is built upon one simple goal – helping presenters attain the highest degree of audience engagement.

The first rule of powerful presenting is a simple one - the audience is the most important stakeholder in any presentation. More important than you, your fancy slides or the corporate message delivered from on high. If your audience is not engaged, your passionate delivery or awe inspiring USPs will simply fall on deaf ears. Nothing changes (and nothing gets sold).

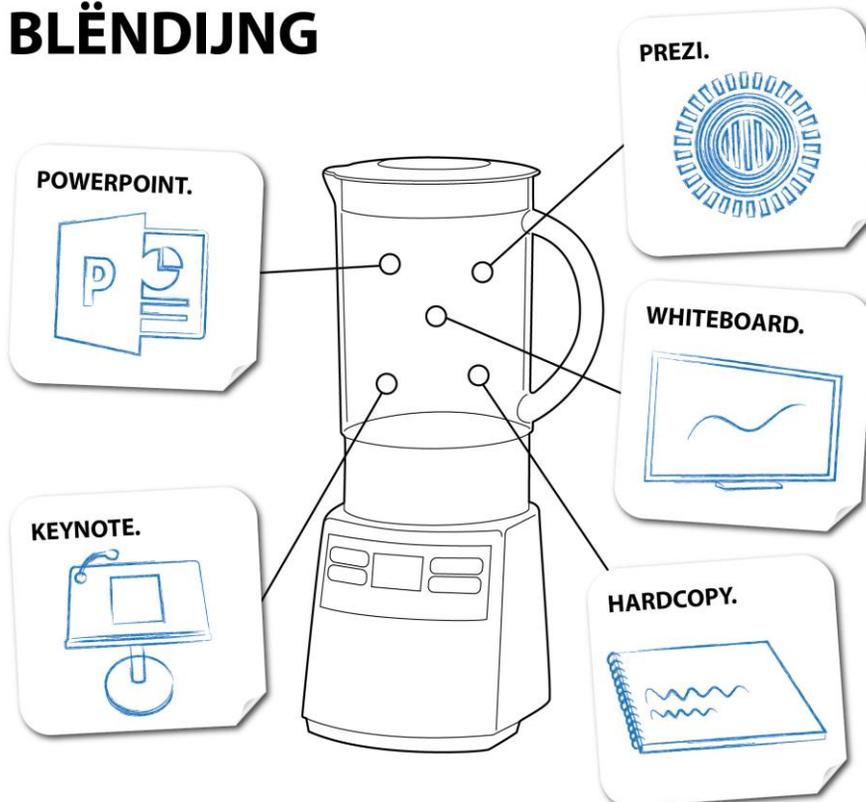
So if we agree that keeping your audience as the prime focus of your presentation is a good idea (and most rationale/experienced salespeople would concur), why on earth do

we all immediately turn to PowerPoint - or, at a push, Apple's equivalent Keynote – as our tool of choice when preparing a presentation?

Eyeful's [Blended Presenting approach](#) implores presenters of all types to consider the wide array of Visual Engagement Tools. This does not mean dropping that “old faithful” PowerPoint completely and swapping it for the new kid on the block. It simply means having a sales presentation story that's strong enough to allow you to use whatever tool best suits your audience to get the message across.

For sales professionals, it is about realizing that your best collateral is your intimate and confident knowledge of the material -- NOT the fancy looking PowerPoint deck you have on your laptop.

## PRESUNTÅSHUN BLÉNDIJNG



## LET ME SHARE A STORY...

I recall working with a company in the UK that had a real problem with their presentation. The relationship built when they tried to sell me HR services for our fast growing company.

It wasn't particularly their salesperson. She was well presented, obviously knew her content, was proud of her product and had run a good meeting up to a point.

It wasn't particularly their slide deck, although this was incredibly corporate and a little too uptight for its own good.

And it wasn't particularly their message – they had a good product and a relatively clear message about the impact it would have on our business.

The problem was the way the presentation had been handled. Up to the point the salesperson fired up her laptop, we'd been getting on well. She'd done a fine job in building rapport, had obviously done her research on our business by asking me sensible and educated questions and in turn answered all my queries clearly and confidently.

However as soon as she went into 'presentation mode', she went from being a warm professional who I had faith in to a robot (and a boring one at that). Over the course of 20 minutes and far too many slides to count, she slowly removed all sense of credibility from herself personally and also her employer.

At the end of the soliloquy, I asked her why she thought the need to deliver a PowerPoint presentation at that stage of the meeting. As a prospect, I was warmed up and ready to do a deal...and then she killed all that positive energy by unveiling and

delivering the living embodiment of Death by PowerPoint.

Her answer shocked me – "Our Sales Director says we have to deliver this PowerPoint presentation every time, in exactly this order and using this exact script".

Worryingly this presentation inflexibility is happening across the globe every minute of every day. It's not only costing sales people the opportunity to close deals, it's dismissive of the needs of the audience. Had it not been for the impressive sales engagement at the start of the meeting, I would have switched off and quickly brought the meeting to a conclusion. In this instance, the salesperson won the deal DESPITE her sales tools rather than being supported by them.

Ask yourself the question – how many potential deals have been lost simply by not thinking beyond the obvious sales tools (PowerPoint etc?).



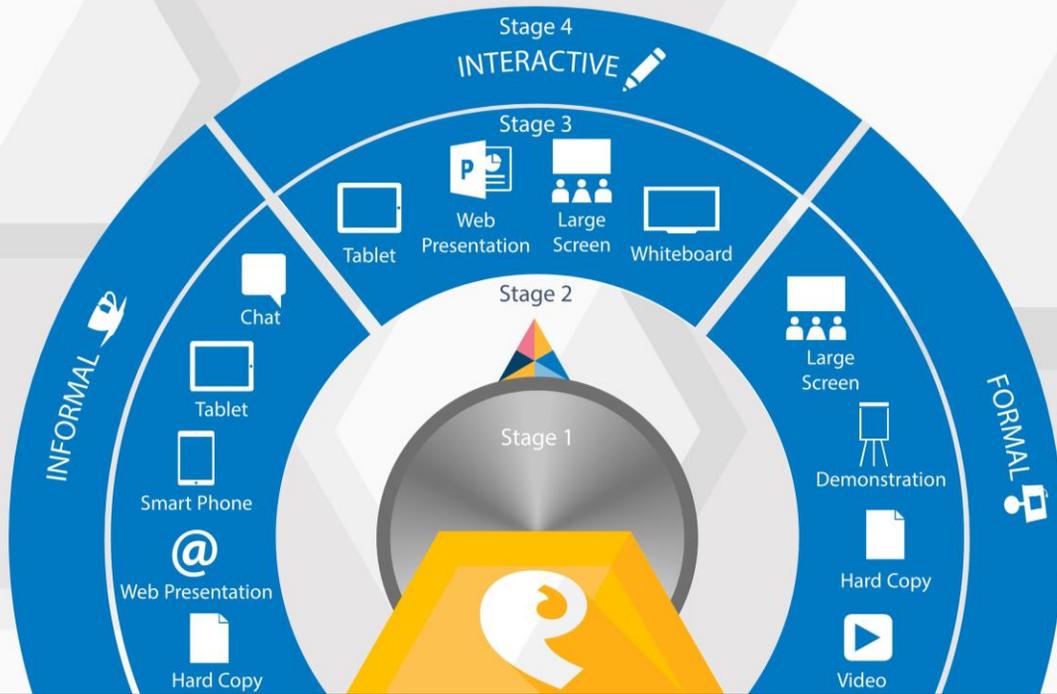
# SO WHAT TO DO

The fact is that as presenters we've never had it so good. We're blessed with a huge array of presentation tools, from the traditional PowerPoint through to tablet devices, whiteboards, hard copy documents, video and product demonstrations. The list goes on...

As skilled sales presenters, we now need to recognize that one size does not fit all – the [type of audience](#)\*, the presentation

environment (formal, interactive or informal) and your intended message should all have an influence on which tool (or combination of tools) you use to help deliver your story.

Ultimately it's about audiences getting the respect they deserve from the presenter. Blended Presenting is about letting the audience and your story take centre stage -- and then using the visual engagement tools you have available to you appropriately.



## SO WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COMPANY PITCHING TO ME?

By taking a Blended approach to their proposition, we were not only able to slim down the vast number of slides required in the company PowerPoint but also offer more visual ways of demonstrating key points. Naturally some of this was via a slide deck

but also on a whiteboard, using a pad of paper or simply chatting. Ultimately we set the sales team free from the constraints of a 'corporate deck' and allowed them to do what they do best – communicate and sell.

*\*A topic for another day is how to analyse your presentation audience using an Audience Heatmap approach but I digress...*