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NEWSLETTER

FINANCE FOR NON-FINANCE

MANAGERS

Public Workshop

Mar 1-2

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DYNAMIC PRESENTATIONS

In-house programme

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GIVING TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

One of the challenges that technical experts faced when presenting to a non-technical audience is making themselves understood.

Very often, as an expert, you tend to know your topic too well. As a result, you dwell so deep into it that others have a problem understanding you. That's often called the Curse of the Expert. Your topic could be IT, engineering, finance, accounting or legal, just to name a few. You could be presenting at a level that is too detailed for your target audience. They may be senior management or end users, but your problem is the same--not getting understood.

In this article, we shall explore a simple framework for presenting your ideas. It is called the Foretell, Tell and Retell structure. You might have come across something like it. It is known as: tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them and tell them what you have told them.

While this may sound simplistic, it is actually a very effective structure to keep the audience on track with what you are going to tell them, where you are taking them deeper and why.



Tell them what you are going to tell them.

Tell them.

Tell them what you have told them.

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Why it works

A structure acts as a mental template for the audience to fill in the blanks. It prepares their minds to receive a more detailed explanation from you. The audience has less resistance to your message as they do not waste time in trying to figure out how your detailed information fits into your overall presentation.

Provides Context

In other words, the structure keeps your details in context for the audience. The audience knows exactly where they are in the scheme of your presentation, why and where they are going deeper. This provides the audience with greater psychological control, thereby ensuring they will not tune out due to being overwhelmed by what they consider as unnecessary detail.



Illustration:

For example, to a layperson, financial ratios may not mean much. So to start off, a financial controller can tell her audience that she is going to tell them about something called financial ratios which can help her audience assess a company for investment potential.

She then goes on to tell them about the first ratio which is ROE, or Return on Equity, which is calculated as $\text{Net Income} / \text{Equity}$. She then continues her presentation by breaking down what is Income and Equity, their key components and how ROE can be influenced by each factor.

She summarises her presentation by repeating the key ideas of what she has told the audience.



About the author

James Leong C. Foo, Chartered Accountant, is CEO of VisionsOne Consulting Pte Ltd and Adjunct Associate Professor with National University of Singapore. He is also the Year 2000 Toastmasters International Pan Southeast Asia Humorous speech contest champion. His highly popular workshop, Finance for Non-finance Managers, coaches managers and executives on using financial numbers to drive their business better. James can be reached at jamesleong@visions1.com.sg.

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