



**Helping individuals and companies
break out of their comfort zones
to become more successful**

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When Presenting, Give Signs Like Nature

Here in the New England region of the United States, autumn has arrived and winter is not too far behind. How do I know? The leaves have turned from green to gold and red, there is frost on the grass in the morning and the days are getting shorter. Nature gives clues that signal the end of one season and the coming of the next. These signs tell me what to expect and they help me get ready to rake the leaves, pull out my winter coat and set the clocks back. When you present, you can be like Nature – and give your audience signs as to what's coming next. When you set your audience's expectations, it allows them to follow your message more easily.

Introduction

- In your introduction, share your message – what is the point of what you're going to say and why is it important to them? If you're clear about you want them to get out of your presentation, it's easier for them to focus on hearing that message
- It may help to remind the audience how long you will speak. For example, you can say, "in the next 10 minutes, I will share..." or "as we work together over the next hour..." That clue helps them to calibrate their time, especially if there is a full schedule of presenters.
- Be clear in your organization. Try to group your material into a few sections to make it easier to follow. For example, tell the audience if you're going to cover three case studies or four reasons or five steps.

Transitions

- Make it clear how one section of your presentation is related to the next. Give the audience clues: are you continuing in the same theme, presenting the opposite point of view, focusing on a different company or talking about a different time period?

The End is Near

- Give the audience a sign that you're nearing your conclusion. For example, "the third and final reason you should consider Jimmy's Jammies for all your pajama needs is..." or "the last story that I'd like to share with you about the bride and groom is..."

Don't Tease

- If you give a sign that you're almost done, for example, by saying "in conclusion...", don't go on for another 20 minutes. The audience will get restless and may stop listening.

If you act like Nature and give your audience signs and clues when you speak, it will be easier for them to follow your presentation and make sense of it. Setting their expectations will help them understand and retain your message.

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