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## ***Three Proven Techniques to Add Credibility and Memorability to Your Presentation***

Presenting your ideas and having them perceived as credible and truthful is one of the most important skills you can develop. The bottom line is the ability to sell your ideas is “*Not only Mission Critical, it is Career Critical.*” In this Newsletter, we are going to look at three techniques: Rhyming, Mantras and Parallel Construction, that will not only help what you say be more memorable, it will help you be perceived as more credible and truthful.

### **Rhyming**

In looking at how to make your ideas memorable, Master Presenter and expert on persuasion Sam Horn says, “*To Rhyme is Sublime*”. Meaning that if we can make something rhyme it is much more likely to be remembered. Just think of some of the most memorable advertising jingles you have heard such as:

Fill it to the rim with Brim (Instant Coffee)

Don't get mad. Get Glad (Garbage Bags)

Takes a licking and keeps on ticking. (Timex)

These advertising slogans have endured, and one of the reasons that they are so memorable is that they rhyme. Likewise, it is no accident, that most books for children use rhymes. The rhyming makes the subsequent phrases more predictable and eventually the child will participate in the rhyme. For example, one of the most ubiquitous in English is “Peek a boo — I see you!” In looking at how this works, the researchers explain that:

[R]hyming phrases are characterized by greater process fluency: They're mentally processed more easily than nonrhyming phrases. Because people tend to base accuracy evaluation, at least partly, on the perceived fluency of the incoming information, the rhyming statements are actually judged as more accurate.

And accuracy is a large part of credibility. In other words “the rhyming may not only increase the likability of the message, but also its perceived truthfulness.” The authors of this research give one more example that may have even helped tip the scales in one of the most famous or infamous law trials in the past 50 years.

During O.J. Simpson's murder trial, Johnnie Cochran, Simpson's defence attorney, told the jury, “If the gloves don't fit, you must acquit!” Considering the subtle influence of rhyme, the study's authors may be right to question how the verdict might have been affected if Cochran had instead implored, “If the gloves don't fit, you must find him not guilty!”<sup>1</sup>

You can also go on-line and there are rhyming dictionaries to help you. For example, I looked for words that rhymed with rhyme and the phrase that was created was, *“Using a Rhyming Dictionary can help you find a rhyme in time”*.

## **Mantras**

Almost every presentation should have a mantra. Mantra is Sanskrit for sacred meaning. And just like the refrain in a favourite song, it needs to be repeated. If you want people to have an 80% chance of remembering something, it needs to be repeated at least seven times. It is also a good idea to tell your audience about the 80% rule, so they will understand why there are certain phrases that you have them repeat. For example, in my negotiation course the mantra is *“You can not change someone’s mind if you do not know where their mind is.”* Meaning it is critical to understand the other person’s interests. The second mantra that is part of the course is: *“Negotiation is 50% talking and 100% listening”*. In my presentation course, the mantra is: *“Most people over-prepare on content and under-prepare on delivery”* and in my course on conflict resolution, it is: *“The tone you set, is the tone you get”*.

## **Parallel Construction**

If a presenter goes to enough trouble to use parallel construction, it will greatly increase both the memorability and the credibility of what is being said. Parallel construction uses the same number of words both before and after a conjunction such as the word “and”. For example, when Rosa Parks, the mother of the civil rights movement who refused to move to the back of the bus, died she was paid thousands of tributes all of which she fully deserved. There were many speeches including an emotional and heart-felt tribute from Oprah in which Oprah stated that she would not be where she is today if it were not for Sister Parks. However, the best and most memorable tribute was from Rosa Park’s 96-year-old friend, who used the following nine simple but powerfully words — *“A woman sat down and the world turned around”*. In addition to the love and utmost sincerity which with these words were spoken, one of the features that made them so powerful was the parallel construction of four simple but powerful words before the word “and” and four simple but powerful words after the word “and.”

President Clinton also used parallel construction when he said: *“America should be known not by the power of it’s example but by the example of it’s power”*. In this case he used the word “but” with six words before the “but” and six words after.

Another of my favourite examples is from the 2002 film *Bloody Sunday*. The movie shows a re-enactment of the events of January 30, 1972, during a civil rights demonstration when 13 civilians were killed by British police in the streets of Northern Ireland. In the director’s cuts, Jim Sheridan said, *“Bloody Sunday is the story the Irish can’t forget and the British don’t want to remember”*.

Among the most memorable uses of parallel construction occurred during President Kennedy’s inaugural address when he said: *“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”*.

**Exercise: Have you used rhyming, mantras and/or parallel construction to make something that you wanted remembered, more memorable and credible? If so, please give an example or examples.**

**Where can you use rhyming, mantras and/or parallel construction in a current or upcoming presentation to help make it both more memorable and credible?**

**Who can you turn to for help as a colleague, coach or mentor in helping you to develop and master the use of rhyming, mantras and/or parallel construction?**

**For more information on how you can develop and/or enhance your leadership, negotiating and presentation skills, contact:**

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**ALDI offers courses and keynotes on: “Tipping Point Leadership”, “Become a Master Negotiator” and “Become a Master Presenter”. Custom-designed courses can also be created to meet an organization’s specific needs and requirements.**

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<sup>1</sup> Goldstein, J.J., Martin, S.J. and Cialdini, R.B. (2008). *Yes: 50 scientifically proven ways to be persuasive*. N.Y.: Free Press, p. 166.