

10 presentation hacks that win over decision-makers

1. Open with a number that feels personal

Many presenters begin with a broad statistic. The problem is that broad statistics usually feel like they apply to someone else. Not to me, not to us, and not to the people in the room. A number with immediate personal relevance is often far more effective.

Instead of this:

"Seventy percent of companies fail at digital transformation."

Try this:

"There are 12 executives in this room. The question is not whether AI will transform our industry. The question is which of you will help shape that transformation."

Or:

"Your company is investing valuable time and resources in this presentation. Fifteen minutes from now, you will know whether that investment was worthwhile."

The difference is simple. Abstract numbers create distance. Personal relevance captures attention.

2. Create a contradiction, then resolve it later

When a presentation is too predictable, the audience begins to tune out. Contrast creates tension, and tension keeps people engaged.

For example

Slide 1:

"Our product costs significantly more than many competing options."

Slide 2:

"Here are five reasons why the lower-cost options may look attractive."

Slide 3_

"Yet many industry leaders still choose us. Why?"

People naturally want to resolve contradictions. Introduce one intentionally, and your audience will continue thinking about it until you provide the answer.

3. Voice objections before your audience does

Your audience is having an internal conversation while you speak:

"We have already tried this."

"We do not have the resources."

"This sounds expensive."

Address those thoughts before they become resistance.

For example:

"You may be thinking, 'We have tried this before.' That is exactly why I want to show you what was different last time."

Or:

"Yes, this requires an investment. But the cost of doing nothing is already higher."

When you acknowledge concerns early, you reduce uncertainty before it turns into a barrier.

4. Name the decision beneath the decision

Business decisions may appear entirely rational, but they rarely are. Decision-makers are often considering unspoken questions.

- Will this make me look innovative?
- Am I choosing the safest option?
- Am I accepting risk, or protecting myself from it?
- How will this decision reflect on my leadership?

Acknowledge that reality directly.

"Today, you are not simply choosing between two solutions. You are also deciding how your organization will position itself strategically."

This recognizes the personal and professional responsibility that comes with leadership.

5. Set the frame before presenting the facts

Your opening words influence how the audience interprets everything that follows.

Instead of saying:

"I am going to walk you through our third-quarter results."

Say:

"As you review these numbers, consider one question. What would you have said six months ago if someone had predicted this exact outcome?"

This changes the audience's reference point and encourages them to view the information from a different perspective.



6. Give your competitor genuine credit

Praising a competitor may seem counterintuitive, but it can strengthen your credibility.

For example:

"Our main competitor is an excellent choice for organizations that need a standard system they can deploy immediately."

Then explain the distinction:

"If you are looking for a strategic solution that requires a greater investment but delivers more flexibility and long-term value, our approach may be the better fit."

People place greater trust in advisors than in salespeople. Honest comparisons demonstrate confidence, good judgment, and respect for the audience.

7. Show the friction before showing the solution

Many presentations move directly to features and benefits. A stronger approach is to begin with what is not working today.

"This is what your current process looks like."

Let the audience see, and feel, the delays, complexity, or inefficiency.

Then show the alternative:

"And this is what the process could look like."

When people first experience the frustration and then see a clear solution, they often feel an immediate sense of relief. That emotional shift is memorable.

8. Admit a real weakness — and explain the trade-off

When a solution appears flawless, people become skeptical.

Acknowledge a genuine limitation:

"Our solution is not the easiest to learn. Your team will need time to become comfortable with it."

Then explain why the trade-off matters:

"That learning curve is also what gives your team capabilities that simpler systems cannot offer."

Transparency addresses criticism before it arises and makes your strengths more believable.

9. Take your audience into the future

People often evaluate decisions based only on their current situation. Help them visualize the future consequences of the choice in front of them.

“Imagine it is next year and you are presenting your results. Which decision made today would you want to stand behind?”

Future accountability often carries more emotional weight than a list of abstract benefits.

10. Use AI as a sparring partner, not as your author

Do not simply ask AI to build the presentation for you. Use it to challenge your reasoning and identify weaknesses.

Ask questions such as these:

- **“Which claim in this presentation has the weakest evidence?”**
- **“What three objections would a skeptical CFO raise?”**
- **“Which slide is most likely to be misunderstood?”**
- **“What information would a decision-maker still need?”**

AI can improve your structure, wording, and narrative flow. You remain responsible for the facts, logic, tone, and relevance. When you rehearse, tools such as PowerPoint Speaker Coach can also provide feedback on your pace, filler words, and tendency to read directly from the slides.

BONUS: The “real question” moment

Instead of ending with: “Do you have any questions?”

Try this: “Before we begin the discussion, take a moment to think. What question would you ask one another after I left the room? That is the question I would most like to hear.”

This moves the conversation beyond polite questions and brings the real decision-making concerns into the room.

Most presentation advice focuses on slide design, text length, and visual structure. Those elements matter, but they are not always enough. These techniques address something deeper, how people think.

- Do not just present data. Shape how the audience interprets it.
- Do not just try to persuade. Understand the internal conversation.
- Do not just deliver information. Account for the psychology behind the decision.

Good presentations inform. Great presentations shape decisions. In the C-suite, that difference can change the outcome. To apply these principles more quickly and turn them into polished, professional PowerPoint slides, explore [empower® Slide Generation](#).