BookGist Summary

The Ultimate Presentation Roadmap: How to Write for the Right Audience and Present with Confidence

by Kelli Y Stonework

Key Takeaways

• Treat presentation preparation as two distinct phases: plan the message first, then develop it. Writing an introduction, body, and conclusion before understanding the audience can produce a polished talk that is irrelevant.

• Define your intended audience response by asking what listeners should do, know, and feel. These outcomes give the presentation a clear purpose and help determine what information belongs in it.

• Analyze who will attend, what they need, and what assumptions or biases they may bring. Use conversations with organizers and attendees, attendee lists, or past event materials to make the message relevant.

• Assess the practical setting before presentation day: audience size, room layout, equipment, timing, presentation order, attire, handouts, and deadlines. Plan alternatives in case technology fails.

• Brainstorm freely before organizing ideas. Then group the strongest material into a small number of main points, each supported by relevant facts or examples.

• Build the body before writing the introduction. Stonework's "chest of drawers" metaphor helps speakers organize each main point as a drawer and its supporting details as the contents.

• Make the introduction capture attention and explain why listeners should care; make the conclusion signal closure, recap the message, and leave the audience with a memorable final thought or call to action.

• Manage nerves rather than expecting to eliminate them. Reducing uncertainty through audience research, preparation, organization, and practice allows nervous energy to support a more engaging delivery.

• Use the roadmap's 3G principle: Grab the audience's attention, Guide them through the message, and Get them to take action.

Who Should Read This Book

This book is especially useful for business professionals, entrepreneurs, managers, trainers, and anyone who knows their subject but struggles to turn that knowledge into a focused presentation. It is also a practical starting point for people who feel anxious about public speaking or spend too much time drafting slides before deciding what their audience needs. Readers will gain a repeatable preparation process, a simple planning template, concrete ways to structure a talk, and techniques for managing nerves and handling presentation-day problems. The book is most valuable to readers who want an accessible, hands-on guide rather than a theory-heavy treatment of rhetoric or performance. Its distinctive strength is that it connects audience research, logistical preparation, message structure, and anxiety management in one roadmap, using a five-minute customer-service presentation as a running example. Readers seeking advanced storytelling, slide-design, or persuasive-speaking methods may want to pair it with more specialized books, but Stonework's step-by-step framework offers a strong foundation for creating relevant, organized presentations and delivering them with greater confidence.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1: Plan and Develop

Stonework frames presentation preparation as two phases: Plan Your Message and Develop Your Message. Planning comes first because even a strong subject can fail when it does not match what listeners care about. For the book's running example—a five-minute talk on why customer service matters to a business—the speaker should research both the topic and the people attending rather than immediately drafting the familiar introduction-body-conclusion structure. Only after the planning work is complete should the speaker develop the introduction, body, and conclusion, while also anticipating possible questions. The chapter's central practical lesson is to reserve time for planning rather than treating it as optional

overhead: knowing the audience and purpose helps the speaker create a focused message and avoid disengaging listeners.

Chapter 2: Identify Your Purpose

The first planning step is to decide what the audience should do, know, and feel after the presentation. These three questions turn a broad topic into a purposeful message: the speaker can select material according to whether it advances the desired response, rather than trying to include everything they know. In the customer-service example, the intended action is for business owners to see service as everyone's responsibility—not simply the work of a designated department. The desired knowledge includes the effect poor service can have on customer retention, along with the customer's role in defining service expectations. The desired feeling is that customer service is vital to the business and worth taking seriously. Together, the three outcomes provide a practical filter for deciding which facts, examples, and recommendations belong in the talk.

Chapter 3: Analyze Your Audience

The next step is to discover what makes an audience distinctive so the presentation addresses its actual needs. Stonework recommends asking the meeting planner questions, obtaining an attendee list, speaking with representative participants when possible, and reviewing materials from previous events. This research can reveal what listeners already know, what they expect, and which concerns or biases may shape their response. A conference example shows the cost of skipping this step: a presenter discussed a product that was not relevant to the attendees, despite the product and presentation being potentially worthwhile elsewhere. For a talk aimed at small-business owners, the speaker should account for possible beliefs that customer service is only for customers, that employee treatment is separate from service, or that training is less valuable than product development. Addressing these concerns makes the talk more specific and helps build a connection with listeners.

Chapter 4: Assess the Environment

A useful message also depends on the conditions in which it will be delivered. Stonework advises speakers to confirm expected attendance, whether participants will be in person or virtual, room configuration, available equipment, microphone and podium needs, handout responsibilities, submission deadlines, allotted time, other presenters, agenda position, and dress expectations. The time of day and placement on the agenda matter too: a speaker immediately after lunch or at the end of a long event may need especially strong energy and audience engagement. Respect the time limit and prepare for contingencies instead of relying on ideal conditions. Stonework recounts a presentation where both a wireless and handheld microphone failed; she adapted by projecting her voice and checking that listeners could hear. In another talk, a broken projector prevented her from showing family photographs, so she described the scene vividly and let the audience imagine it. The actionable principle is to know

the room and have a workable backup plan.

Chapter 5: Brainstorm Ideas

Brainstorming completes the planning phase. The instruction is to capture ideas quickly without editing for spelling, complete sentences, or polished wording. A sheet of paper or sticky notes is enough; the aim is to get possibilities out of the speaker's head before judging them. This separates idea generation from the later task of shaping a coherent presentation. For the customer-service topic, the brainstorm includes effects on brand and revenue, employee morale and growth, customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth publicity, product improvement through feedback, customer loss after poor service, and differentiation from competitors. These raw ideas are not yet the speech; they are a pool from which the speaker can choose material that fits the purpose and audience. Stonework recaps the planning sequence as identifying purpose, analyzing the audience, assessing the environment, and brainstorming ideas.

Chapter 6: The Body

Once planning is complete, the speaker develops the message using the collected information. Stonework recommends drafting the body before the introduction because the main points establish what the presentation is actually about. She compares the body to a chest of drawers: each drawer represents a main point, while the items inside it are supporting facts and examples. The metaphor encourages clear organization without requiring every point to contain exactly the same amount of detail. In the customer-service example, possible main points are internal customer service, identification of the brand, and training. Internal service emphasizes treating employees fairly so they can serve customers well. The brand point covers keeping promises, exceeding expectations, using customer feedback to improve, and standing out from competitors. The training point treats service as an investment for the whole company and includes researching competitors and building customer relationships. The number of main points should fit the presentation's length; a short talk may have room for only two or three.

Chapter 7: Add the Introduction

After the body is organized, the speaker creates an introduction with two jobs: grab attention and preview the message while making clear why the audience should listen. Possible attention-getters include a surprising fact, a story, an illustration, a question, or audience participation. The choice should connect naturally to the subject and the audience rather than serve as an unrelated gimmick. For the customer-service presentation, Stonework suggests opening with the claim that one unhappy customer may tell many other people about a bad experience. The preview then promises that listeners will learn about excellent customer service and how to turn an unhappy customer into someone willing to recommend the business. This combination makes the stakes immediate and gives the audience a reason to

stay engaged.

Chapter 8: Add the Conclusion

The conclusion should make the ending clear and leave listeners with a thought they can remember. Stonework recommends starting with a summarizing phrase—such as “To summarize,” “Before I go,” or “To conclude”—which signals that the presentation is closing and gives the final remarks a clear frame. The speaker can use this moment to restate the central message or review the key points. The closing should also include a final attention-getter, such as a story, quotation, unusual fact, illustration, prop, or call to action. In the example, the speaker reinforces that customer service is essential to a business and closes with Walt Disney’s advice: “Do what you do so well that they will want to see it again and bring their friends.” The principle is to finish deliberately, rather than simply running out of material.

Chapter 9: Questions—Where Do They Go?

Question periods can be handled in different ways: the speaker may invite questions throughout the presentation, or the event may include a designated Q&A period. When there is a formal Q&A, Stonework recommends placing it after the body and before the conclusion instead of ending the slide deck with questions. This arrangement allows the speaker to answer audience concerns while retaining a planned close. The conclusion remains the speaker’s opportunity to summarize the message and finish on a purposeful note. Moving Q&A earlier also makes the presentation’s structure easier to manage: the audience can participate, and the speaker can then bring attention back to the key message and final call to action.

Chapter 10: Coping with the Presentation Butterflies

Stonework treats nervousness as something to manage, not eradicate. Anxiety is common even among experienced speakers, and its energy can be redirected toward enthusiasm and connection. Her guiding idea is that uncertainty intensifies nerves; the more a speaker can control uncertainty about the audience, content, structure, and setting, the more attention and energy remain for delivering the message. The six preparation strategies are to analyze the audience, know the material, organize the presentation, practice, prepare for delivery, and calm the body and mind. Audience research clarifies expectations; knowing the material means selecting the most relevant points rather than attempting to cover everything. Organization should rely on key phrases or notes as memory cues, not word-for-word memorization that can make delivery robotic. Practice the complete talk and visuals, record or videotape yourself, and consider memorizing only the opening if that helps you begin confidently. Practical delivery preparation includes choosing comfortable, appropriate clothing, arriving early, checking equipment, planning backups, rehearsing in the venue if possible, and anticipating questions. To calm physical symptoms, the author suggests deep

breathing, drinking water, smiling, positive visualization, relaxing the stomach muscles, pausing for eye contact before beginning, speaking more slowly, and moving to use excess energy. Her S.T.A.Y. reminder—“Stop Thinking About Yourself”—redirects attention to the audience and the value they came to receive.

Chapter 11: The Presentation Roadmap Template

The final chapter turns the book’s method into a reusable two-sided planning template. Side one covers the planning phase: identify the desired audience response in terms of what listeners should do, know, and feel; analyze the audience’s needs, biases, identity, and questions; assess the setting, audience size, equipment, time, and place on the agenda; and brainstorm ideas. The template makes planning concrete and helps speakers collect information before writing. Side two organizes the presentation itself: an introduction with a grabber and preview phrase, a body with main points and supporting facts, an optional Q&A period, and a conclusion with a summarizing phrase and final grabber. The template also supplies examples of attention-getters, preview phrases, and conclusion openers. The book closes by restating the 3G rule—Grab attention, Guide listeners through the message, and Get them to take action—and encouraging speakers to use the roadmap for any kind of presentation.

Notable Quotes

> *"“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.”"*

> *"“If you don’t know what you want to achieve in your presentation your audience never will.”"*

> *"“The more uncertain you are, the more nervous you will be.”"*

> *"“The best way to sound like you know what you’re talking about is to know what you’re talking about.”"*

> *"“Make sure you have finished speaking before your audience has finished listening.”"*

> *"“Nerves are not your enemy and you don't have to fear public speaking.”"*

> *"“Stop Thinking About Yourself (S.T.A.Y.)”"*

> *"“I do not claim to get rid of your speaking butterflies; however, my goal is to get those butterflies flying in formation and in the right direction.”"*

Full Summary

Stonework divides presentation preparation into two distinct phases: planning the message and developing it. The distinction matters because a speaker can easily rush straight into writing an introduction, body, and conclusion, only to discover that the finished talk has little to do with what the audience cares about. Even a powerful message will lose listeners if it is not meant for them; they may disengage, thinking that the subject has nothing to do with their interests. Planning first helps ensure the message fits its audience, while development comes afterward, when the speaker shapes the material into a presentation.

To illustrate the process, Stonework uses a five-minute talk titled “Why Customer Service Is Important to Your Business.” Before drafting any part of that talk, the speaker researches both the topic and the people expected to attend. Information from an event planner about the audience’s demographics, for example, can guide what the speaker chooses to say. Stonework’s practical advice is to reserve time for this planning instead of assuming that knowing the standard parts of a speech is enough. Only after the planning phase is complete should the speaker begin developing the introduction, body, and conclusion, while also considering questions the audience might ask.

The first planning step is to identify the purpose by deciding what the audience should do, know, and feel. These outcomes give the presentation direction and help the speaker choose which information belongs in it. For the customer-service talk, the desired action is to change how listeners think about customer service: rather than seeing it merely as a department, they should understand it as the act of meeting customers’ needs through professional, helpful, high-quality assistance before, during, and after a purchase or service. Customer service, in this view, is about meeting the needs and desires of any customer.

The speaker also wants the audience to know that, according to information cited from Harvard Business Review, 82 percent of customers leave one business for another because of poor customer service. Customers may leave not because of a product, but because of their experience with the business. Stonework also draws on customer-service expert Shep Hyken’s idea that customers define what service means to them; their definition becomes their expectation, and businesses and their employees must not only meet that expectation but exceed it. Finally, the intended feeling is passion: listeners should leave understanding that customer service is vital to their business. Together, these desired actions, knowledge, and feelings establish a clear purpose before the speaker starts building the talk.

The second planning step is to analyze the audience and discover what makes its members unique. The speaker needs to know who will attend and what concerns, expectations, and assumptions they may bring. Stonework recommends asking the meeting planner about the audience and, if possible, speaking directly with attendees. An attendee list can help identify people to contact before the event, making it possible to hear their needs from them rather than guessing.

Her experience at corporate vendor conferences shows why this work matters. At one conference, Stonework was asked to discuss a new product with attendees who had never used it but were familiar with her company. Her subject was why they should use the product. Another presenter, by contrast, discussed a product that did not concern this particular audience. Stonework likens the mismatch to a plumber addressing a bowling conference about welding tools: the topic might be worthwhile elsewhere, but not for those listeners. A presentation can be well delivered and still fail if its subject does not meet the audience’s needs.

For the customer-service example, the anticipated audience is made up of small-business owners, so the speaker should focus on issues that affect them. The analysis should also uncover biases. The event planner, attendees, or materials from previous years’ conferences may reveal that these owners think of customer service mainly in terms of their clients or potential clients, without considering how employees must be treated. They may also doubt the value of investing in customer-service training and believe their money is better spent creating a stellar product. Knowing these assumptions lets the speaker address genuine concerns and connect the message to the audience, rather than offering general advice that misses the point.

The third planning step is to assess the environment, gathering practical details from the event organizer and considering how the setting will affect the presentation. The speaker should find out how many people are expected and whether everyone will be in the room or some will attend virtually. Equipment needs matter: will a projector be available, and will the speaker need a podium, a wireless microphone, or a handheld one? The room setup, and whether it can be adjusted, can influence how the speaker moves and interacts with listeners. The speaker should also clarify whether handouts are required, who supplies them, and whether they will be placed in a conference binder or distributed during the session.

Timing and event logistics require equal attention. The presenter needs to know the allotted speaking time, the deadline for sending materials to the organizer, how many other speakers there will be, and where the talk falls on the agenda. A presentation just before or after lunch, or at the end of the day, may call for especially high energy. The conference’s expected attire is another detail to settle in advance. Whatever the setting, a speaker should respect the time limit. For the five-minute example, running for ten or fifteen minutes would disregard the other presenters and the audience’s time. A stopwatch or another timing aid can help keep the talk on track.

Stonework urges speakers to plan for equipment failure rather than assume everything will work. At one vendor conference, her wireless microphone failed, and then the handheld microphone failed too. Because the room was small enough, she could walk around and project her voice, checking with audience members to make sure they could hear her. On

another occasion, a projector stopped working while she was preparing to share a personal story and family pictures. Instead of showing the images, she described the event so vividly that listeners could imagine it. The slides would have been preferable, but a backup approach allowed her to continue. These experiences make the setting more than a checklist: anticipating its limitations helps a speaker remain responsive when circumstances change.

The final task before developing the message is to brainstorm. At this point, the aim is to capture possibilities, not to shape them into polished sentences or decide where each belongs. Write down whatever comes to mind; spelling and complete sentences do not matter. Ideas can be recorded on a sheet of paper or on a sticky note. The important thing is to keep thoughts from disappearing while they are still coming.

For the example presentation, “Why Customer Service Is Important to Your Business,” Stonework’s brainstorm includes the effects of service on a company’s brand and revenue, employee morale, and growth. Listening to customers can produce feedback that helps improve a product. Customers may talk about a business, whether their experience is good or bad. Good service keeps customers happy, while poor service may drive them away. And strong customer service can distinguish a business from its competitors. These are raw materials, not yet a speech: the speaker can gather them without worrying about order, then choose and arrange the ideas that best serve the presentation.

With the planning work complete, Stonework moves into developing the message. Rather than begin with an opening line, she recommends building the body first. The brainstorm supplies material for the main points, and the body gives that material a structure: each point has supporting facts or examples that explain it. The number of points depends on the presentation’s length; in a brief talk, two or three may be all the speaker can deliver.

Stonework uses a “chest of drawers” metaphor learned at the Speakers Training Camp® Workshop. A speech’s main points are like drawers, and the supporting details are the items placed inside them. At home, socks, shirts, and pajamas belong in different drawers. In a presentation, related ideas should likewise be grouped together, so listeners can follow how each detail supports the point it belongs to.

For the customer-service talk, one drawer is internal customer service. Its contents begin with the people who help run the business, even if that means only an administrative assistant. They need to be treated well and fairly. They contribute to the business, and the way they are treated affects how they, in turn, treat customers. This point makes clear that customer service is not solely the work of a designated department or a front-line employee; it involves the way the business treats its own people.

A second drawer is identification of the brand. The business needs to preserve the integrity of its brand by keeping its promises and going above and beyond to fulfill them. Customer

satisfaction can fuel growth, while feedback can help improve the product. The quality of service can also set a business apart. These ideas fit together because they show how the customer’s experience shapes what the brand stands for and how it develops.

A third drawer is training. Everyone involved in the company—including the owner and an administrative assistant—has a part in serving customers. The entire team should understand that customer service is an investment, not simply a cost. Researching the market can help a business learn how other companies offering similar services treat their customers and identify ways to improve. Relationship-building is another supporting idea: strong relationships matter to the business, so developing them belongs in this drawer as well.

The resulting body has three clear main points: internal customer service, identification of the brand, and training. The supporting material gives each point substance without scattering related ideas across the presentation. Once the body is organized, the speaker can add an introduction that prepares listeners to hear it.

The introduction’s job is to capture attention and explain why the audience should listen. Stonework calls these two elements the grabber and the preview phrase. The grabber draws listeners in; the preview phrase tells them what the speaker will discuss and why the subject matters to them. A strong opening therefore does more than announce a topic. It begins a connection between the message and the audience’s interests.

A grabber might be a startling or unusual fact, a story, or an illustration. The speaker could also ask a question, invite audience feedback, or ask for a show of hands. In the customer-service example, one possible opening fact is that an unhappy customer may tell nine to twenty people about a bad experience. The preview can then promise that listeners will learn how to turn an angry customer into a happy one who is willing to tell others about a good product or service. Together, the fact and the promise create a reason to pay attention: the opening makes the consequences of poor service vivid and points toward what the presentation can help the audience do.

Confidence does not require eliminating nervousness. Stonework argues that even experienced presenters feel some anxiety; the difference is that they manage it and channel the extra energy into enthusiasm, confidence, and passion. The more uncertain you are, the more nervous you are likely to feel. Reducing uncertainty, then, is not a way to make every sensation disappear, but a way to free your attention for the audience and the message.

One way to reduce that uncertainty is to consult people who represent the audience before the presentation. Rather than walking into the room and hoping your material will meet listeners’ expectations, ask what they want to learn. You might run your agenda by a few people to see whether anything important is missing or whether too much has been included. You can contact participants by email, or greet them as they arrive and ask why they are

there. These conversations help you feel surer that the presentation is useful, while making the listeners' reaction less of a mystery. A presentation that surprises the audience with irrelevant material leaves the speaker less control over how the room responds.

Preparation also means knowing the subject well enough to speak about it without trying to include everything you know. Stonework cautions that a presentation overloaded with material will probably be long and boring. Choose the points most relevant to the audience, and add other information only if time permits. Questions to listeners can make the material more memorable and invite them into the exchange. They also create a break from one-way speaking, allowing the presenter to talk conversationally and giving the audience a role in the learning.

For the same reason, Stonework recommends organizing rather than memorizing the entire talk. A fully memorized speech can sound robotic, and if a speaker forgets one word, the disruption may throw off everything that follows. Instead, keep key phrases on an index card and use them as prompts for what comes next. If slides are part of the presentation, those phrases can also guide transitions. This gives the speaker a reliable route through the material without requiring a word-for-word script. It reflects the book's "3G" principle: grab attention, guide listeners through the message, and get them to take action.

Practice builds familiarity with that route. The goal is not to recite mechanically but to deliver the words naturally, from a clear understanding of their order and meaning. Stonework suggests memorizing the opening if that helps a speaker start smoothly, while learning the organization of the rest of the presentation. Video can reveal what the speaker looks like to others; an audio recording can expose habits of tone or speed. The speaker can then decide what to adjust. She recommends rehearsing the complete presentation, visuals included, at least six times. Repeated practice makes the material feel familiar enough that attention can shift from remembering each sentence to communicating with the audience.

The physical circumstances of delivery deserve their own preparation. Choose clothing that is both comfortable and appropriate, arrive early to set up equipment, and consider what could go wrong. A backup plan matters if technology fails or something needed for the presentation is forgotten. If possible, do a final run-through in the room itself. The speaker should also prepare for likely questions. Stonework acknowledges the possibility of a heckler and offers a way to avoid being drawn into a contest with one person: ask the rest of the audience, "How do the rest of you feel?" The question turns attention back to the group, which may speak up in response.

Even with careful preparation, nerves affect the body. Stonework attributes many of these reactions to adrenaline and proposes simple ways to interrupt the cycle. Deep breathing counters the shallow breathing associated with adrenaline, brings oxygen to the brain, and can help steady a quivering voice. Water can ease the dry mouth that makes a speaker

tongue-tied; taking a sip can also provide a brief pause, especially before an important point. Smiling is another small physical action, one Stonework describes as a natural relaxant that sends positive chemicals through the body.

Imagination can help set a more confident expectation. Rather than picturing a hostile room, visualize listeners as interested, enthusiastic, and responsive. Contracting and then relaxing the stomach muscles is another way to prompt the body's relaxation response and release tension. Immediately before beginning, pause, make eye contact, and smile. That moment gives the speaker time to adjust to being the center of attention instead of rushing into the first words.

Once speaking, slow down. A pace slower than ordinary conversation, with longer pauses between sentences, can calm the speaker and make the message easier to hear, particularly for people at the back of a large room. Moving around can use some of the nervous energy rather than letting it build. Above all, Stonework urges the speaker to "S.T.A.Y."—stop thinking about yourself. The audience is present to receive information, and the speaker's job is to get it across. That shift of attention changes the question from "How do I feel?" to "What does this audience need from me?" It is a practical way to put anxious energy to work, while giving listeners the focus they came for.

The final step in developing the message is to add a conclusion. It should signal clearly that the presentation is closing, then leave the audience with something memorable. A summarize phrase—such as "To summarize," "Before I go," or "I want to leave you with these thoughts"—works like a bell, alerting listeners that the end is near and wrapping up the presentation. After that, use a final attention getter: perhaps a startling fact, a story, an illustration, a prop, or a quotation. The ending can also provide a call to action. In the customer-service example, the speaker sums up by urging business owners to embrace customer service as essential, then closes with Walt Disney's words: "Do what you do so well that they will want to see it again and bring their friends." The quotation reinforces the message and gives listeners a thought to carry with them.

Questions need a deliberate place in the presentation. A speaker can invite questions at any time, but when there is a designated question-and-answer period, Stonework recommends putting it after the body and before the conclusion. The familiar question-mark slide should therefore not be the final slide. Taking questions before the closing allows the presenter to respond while still reserving the conclusion to summarize the message and finish on a strong note. It also helps the speaker maintain control of the presentation's structure.

Even a well-planned talk can feel daunting to deliver. A queasy stomach, sweaty palms, or a blank mind before the opening are common signs of presentation nerves, but the goal is not to eliminate anxiety altogether. Experienced speakers feel it too; they learn to manage the energy and use it to communicate with enthusiasm and confidence. Stonework's central

principle is that uncertainty fuels nervousness. The more a speaker can reduce uncertainty, the more energy remains for the audience and the message.

Her first strategy is to analyze the audience before speaking. Learn what makes its members distinctive, ask representative attendees what they expect, and run the agenda by a few people to find out whether anything important is missing or overemphasized. Contact participants by email if possible, or speak with them as they arrive and ask why they are there and what they hope to gain. A presentation that meets real needs is less likely to surprise the audience or provoke an unpredictable reaction.

Second, know the material. The speaker need not be an expert before preparing, but should understand the subject thoroughly by presentation day. Audience research helps identify which material is most useful; there is no need to cover everything one knows. Select the most pertinent points and add more only if time allows. Occasional questions to listeners can make the material engaging, invite participation, and give the speaker a brief break while making the delivery more conversational.

Third, organize the presentation rather than trying to memorize it word for word. Exact memorization can make a speaker sound robotic and leave the whole talk vulnerable to a forgotten phrase. Instead, write key phrases on an index card and use them as cues for what comes next. If slides are being used, the phrases can also guide transitions. This organization gives the speaker confidence about the order of the talk without requiring a rigid script. Stonework connects it to her “3G” rule: grab the audience’s attention, guide them through the message, and get them to take action.

Fourth, practice repeatedly. Familiarity makes delivery more natural, even though memorizing the whole presentation is not the aim. Learn the order and structure; if memorization helps, reserve it for the opening. Videotaping a rehearsal shows what the speaker looks like to others, while an audio recording reveals tone and pace. Adjust what needs improvement, and rehearse the complete presentation—including visuals—at least six times.

Fifth, prepare for the practical demands of delivery. Choose clothing that is both appropriate and comfortable, arrive early, and set up equipment in advance. Anticipate difficulties and have backups in case equipment fails or something is forgotten. When possible, rehearse once in the actual room. Prepare answers to likely questions, too. If a person in the front row behaves like a heckler, the speaker can ask the rest of the audience, “How do the rest of you feel?” Often the other listeners will respond and make clear that the disruption does not represent the room.

The sixth strategy is to calm the body from within. Adrenaline can lead to shallow breathing and a dry mouth, so take deep breaths and keep water nearby. Smile, visualize a receptive audience, or contract and relax the stomach muscles to release tension. Just before

beginning, pause, make eye contact, and smile. Speak more slowly than in ordinary conversation, leaving longer pauses; this helps settle nerves and makes the speaker easier to hear. Moving around can use up nervous energy. Above all, apply S.T.A.Y.—“Stop Thinking About Yourself”—and remember that the audience is there to receive information. Nerves are inevitable, but they need not take over; preparation and a shift of attention can turn anxiety into useful energy.

The roadmap template gathers these practices into two sides. The planning side prompts speakers to identify the audience response they want—what listeners should do, know, or feel—then analyze who the audience is, its needs, biases, and questions. It asks speakers to assess the setting and occasion, including place, audience size, equipment, allotted time, time of day, other speakers, and order of presentation. A final space is reserved for brainstorming. The development side provides a structure for the presentation: an introduction with a grabber and preview phrase, a body containing main points and supporting facts, a question-and-answer period, and a conclusion with a summarizing phrase and final grabber. Suggestions for attention getters include facts, stories, humor, quotations, props, questions, audience participation, and demonstrations; sample phrases help speakers preview and summarize.

The template’s final value is that it makes the process usable again and again, for any kind of presentation. Planning first helps ensure the message is right for its audience; development then gives that message a clear shape, while nerve-management strategies help the speaker deliver it with confidence. The destination is not merely a polished talk, but a presentation that grabs attention, guides listeners through relevant ideas, and moves them to act.

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