

4 REASONS WHY YOU
CAN'T SEEM TO GET
YOUR POINT ACROSS.

By Anett Grant

How many times has your boss told you to get to the point when you're trying to explain something—whether it's giving a speech, or outlining the reason why you chose an approach over another? No matter how hard you try, you still can't seem to do it.

So why is that the case? Here are four significant roadblocks that might be getting in your way.



1) You believe in an education model, and not an influence model

You think that by explaining context, background—all the details, you're helping your audience understand. You feel like once they see why something is a certain way, they'll agree with you.

This might be the case in science and academia, but in my experience, the business world doesn't see things that way. They want you to tell them the meaning and relevance of your conclusion.

When I was training engineers to report to the army about specifications for tank performance, I kept challenging the engineers to go beyond the following statements when they're giving recommendations to the commander in the field.: "Under this condition the tread does A," "Under this condition, the tread does B," "Under this condition the tread does C." They needed to illustrate how options A, B, and C impacted maintenance. People want to hear the meaning and possible consequences of a decision. They want to connect with what you're trying to say. You educate by describing, but you influence by making a connection.

2) You feel the pressure to jump in immediately

Some people choose to think as they speak, hoping that they'll get to the point eventually. However, the problem with this approach is that as you're getting lost in your thoughts, your audience is also wandering, wondering, and then disengaging. To get to the point, you have to learn how to jump to a conclusion. Just as a diver needs a springboard to launch into a dive, you need a structure to get to the point.

Having observed thousands and thousands of businesspeople talking, I noticed that the speaker who got to the point used an oral bullet point structure. They bounced off the question and then jumped to their answer.

For example, someone asked them, "Why was there a spike in likes on a particular social media effort?" They began, "One of the reasons we saw a spike in likes in that particular social media effort was the timing of the release..."

Humans think at an average rate of 750 words per minute and speak at a rate of 150 to 200 word per minute. By beginning with a connection to the question, not only did they gain time, but they also got into a pattern that allowed their thoughts to flow—like cruising down a one-way street.



Next time you feel that pressure to jump into the conversation, begin by rephrasing what you're trying to connect your message to, and you'll discover how quickly you can get to your point with power and precision.

3) You don't want to risk exposing your idea

You might also be worried that if you just come right out and deliver your message, you'll experience immediate rejection. So, you bury your key concept and hope that your listeners will pick up on it. It's like serving a smorgasbord—everything you can imagine. But this approach will probably backfire. Even if your audience understands your idea, they might not get the impact and significance that you want to convey. There is also the risk that they won't identify the message that you're trying to make.

To get to the point, you need to focus on strategy—why does the audience care? You need to focus on calculating your best shot, not covering it up. By shifting from fear to focus, you'll be able to get to the point and increase your odds of making a difference through your message.

4) You care too much about sounding smart

Like a peacock, you want to display how smart you are. You want your audience to appreciate



the depth of your thinking, the breadth of your understanding, and see you as a thoughtful leader.

Guess what? Your audience doesn't want to be dazzled by your brilliance—they want to get your point quickly. Your job isn't to wow them. It's to help them feel smart. You have to make your points crystal clear. When your audience gets confused or overwhelmed with your barrage of facts, they tune out. Or worse yet—they ask for more detail—code for "I don't understand what you're saying." Rather than add in extra PowerPoint slides, you have to get to the point clearly and succinctly to influence and get the outcome you want.

In today's business world, getting to the point is not an option—it's a mandate. Leave your fears and insecurities behind, and make sure that you make your message loud and clear. Your boss and your listeners will thank you.