



# Storytelling – Know the pre-mortem!

It is storytelling, not storyshowing.

It's tough to show a series of charts / pictures that tell a story.  
You must TELL the story, and, LEAD your audience to the desired outcome!

I am sure you know what a “post mortem” is. Typically, it is the effort, after someone dies, to find a cause of death.

When you are preparing a presentation – preparing to tell your story, I recommend doing a pre-mortem as part of the preparation.

**The pre-mortem is an effort to find a possible cause of the presentation dying, before it's presented!**  
**Your story needs a pre-mortem to make certain it does not fall over, dead, while you're presenting it!**

The pre-mortem is a process where you practice your final presentation, in front of an audience that you task to find ANY problems! They MUST find something wrong! You take their findings, make adjustments, and, run through the whole process, again. You iterate through this process 2, 3, 4, 5 times – as many as needed, until your test audience fails to come up with anything!

Why does this work? Most people want to be positive and supportive. You'll hear “Great job!” even when they see potential issues in your efforts. In the pre-mortem, they must understand that you REQUIRE them to find issues! You NEED them to find issues!

Consider the usual business environment. Most business level presentations are the result of some team effort. Typically, there is at least one team member that, along the way, sees an issue. They think, to themselves, “I won't say anything, because... I AM A TEAM PLAYER!”.

In the pre-mortem, being a team player mandates that you find something wrong in the presentation. It's your job!

- ❖ Maybe an opening (Grab!) that is weak, or too long, or is not pertinent.
- ❖ Maybe the body (Guts!) are not clear, contain the wrong amount of detail, does not flow sequentially.
- ❖ Maybe the close (Gotcha!) does not leave an impact, does not evoke an action. Maybe it does not allow time for the audience to respond, appropriately.

Now, that team player can STAY as a team player, by bringing up what he/she already knows could be an issue! I have seen this effort almost become a game – see who can find the most real problems in the presentation.

From experience, I can say that people that have run through this process, have a significantly higher delivery success rate!

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