

Storyboarding: The Key to Influential Presentations

What is a storyboard?




Simply put, a storyboard is a series of frames for the strategic planning of a presentation. It's a tool borrowed from the movie industry to depict what you want to say and what you want to show. A storyboard lets you see the continuity of your message... identify any gaps... and discover if you told too much or too little.

Why create a storyboard? Stories are part of the human experience. Stories pass family lore from one generation to the next. They preserve cultures. Stories connect people. When you prepare a storyboard, you're preparing to connect with your audience. Think about it. Your presentation has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Also, it flows in a logical sequence. That's a story.

Sample Storyboard

The following is a segment of a storyboard. Although it's somewhat playful, it will give you an idea of how a storyboard may look and the level of detail you should consider. On page 2, you'll learn how to create a storyboard for a business presentation.

Scenario: It's the year 2050 and you're conducting business throughout the galaxy. A group of English-speaking Martians will be landing on Earth. You must teach them how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Tell	Show
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss how peanut butter can be smooth or chunky.• Mention that natural peanut butter separates and must be mixed.• Clarify the difference between jelly, jam, and preserves.• Describe what jars look like as opposed to cans that you can't see through.• Explain how to open jars. (Twist cap counterclockwise.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain what a knife looks like and what it's intended to do.• Mention how to hold a knife so it's safe.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mention that some breads come already sliced.• Explain how to slice a loaf of bread when it isn't pre-sliced.	

How to Create a Storyboard

Storyboarding is where it all begins. Think of a storyboard as a visual outline of your presentation. It can take many different forms—from comic-strip-like frames, to hand-drawn sketches, to a two-column approach focusing on the *tell* and *show*, which works well for a presentation.

1. Create a two-column table

- Populate the left column (talking points) with highlights of what you want to say. Don't include every word, just key words and thoughts.
- Populate the right column with what you want to show to augment your verbal message.

Note: Consider a third column for other purposes such as allocating how much time each segment should take. This will help to keep you on track.

2. Fill in the *tell* column

- Start with the information that's easiest for you to write. Then write what is second easiest—and so forth. You don't have to start with your opening. Many people fret over the opening and waste valuable time. Your opening will “emerge in your mind” as you get into the mode.
- Reinforce throughout your presentation the key point(s) you want your audience to remember.
- Address the questions your audience will have. (who, what, when, where, why, and how)

3. Fill in the *show* column

- Look at your *tell* column and determine what (if anything) you need to support or strengthen each frame. At this point, it's not necessary to design your *show* column, just identify what you'll show. (Remember, you don't need to show something for every frame.)
- Think beyond PowerPoints. Other options may include audios, videos, demos, handouts, polls, chats, Q&A, whiteboards, brainstorming, group or individual activities, or anything else that will enhance your words and help to accomplish your goal..

Sample storyboard for a presentation

The following are opening frames for a presentation being delivered to people who will be in the room and others who will be joining remotely.

Tell	Show
Welcoming words... Mention names of attendees... “For those of you joining remotely, I know I’m competing with your temptation to text and check email, but I’m expecting all of you to join in the conversation. The success of this outcome is a shared responsibility.” A few guidelines... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be respectful of each other—speak one at a time.• Stay with slide deck and don’t jump ahead.	Slide showing names and/or photos of participants