Resonate

Present Visual Stories That Transform Audiences

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

If great presentations were easy to build and deliver, they wouldn't be such an extraordinary form of communication.

Great presentations are like magic. They amaze their audiences. And great presenters are like magicians. In addition to practicing regularly, both are reluctant to reveal the methods behind their performances. In this summary, presentation expert Nancy Duarte cracks the code on how to orchestrate the invisible attributes that shape transformative audience experiences.

By leveraging techniques normally reserved for cinema and literature, Duarte reveals how you can transform any kind of presentation into an engaging journey. You will discover how to understand your audience, create persuasive content and elicit a groundswell of response.

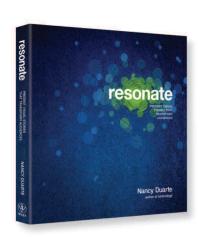
Resonate describes what it takes to be a world-class communicator. It shows you how to evolve information into a story that connects with your audience and rallies them to action.

At the heart of leadership and learning is great storytelling. In *Resonate*, Duarte gives you the tools to teach, motivate and encourage audiences not just to listen, but to change and to act.

Applied with passion and purpose, the concepts in this summary can accelerate your career trajectory or propel your social cause.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to leverage the hidden story structure inherent in great communication.
- How to connect with your audience empathetically.
- How to create captivating content.
- How to craft ideas that get repeated.
- How to inspire enthusiasm and support for your vision.
- How to change the world.



by Nancy Duarte

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: RESONATE

by Nancy Duarte

The author: Since 1988, Nancy Duarte's award-winning design firm has created more than a quarter of a million presentations. Duarte Design is one of the largest design firms and woman-owned businesses in Silicon Valley, and its clients include Adobe, Chick-fil-A, Cisco, GE, HP, Twitter and Google. Duarte is the author of Slide:ology.

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Introduction

Language and power are inextricably linked. The spoken word pushes ideas out of someone's head and into the open so humankind can contend with adopting or rejecting its validity. Moving an idea from its inception to adoption is hard, but it's a battle that can be won simply by wielding a great presentation.

Presentations are powerfully persuasive tools, and when packed in a story framework, your ideas become downright unstoppable. Story structures have been employed for hundreds of generations to persuade and delight every known culture.

It's still the dawn of the information age, and we are all overwhelmed with too many messages bombarding us and trying to lure us to acquire and consume information (then repeat the process over and over). We are in a more selfish and cynical age, which makes it tempting to be detached.

Technology has given us many ways to communicate, but only one is truly human: in-person presentations. Genuine connections create change.

Whether you're an engineer, teacher, scientist, executive, manager, politician or student, presentations will play a role in shaping your future. The future isn't just a place you'll go; it's a place you will invent. Your ability to shape your future depends on how well you communicate where you want to be when you get there.

Why Resonate?

Presentations are mostly delivered to persuade an audience to change their minds or behavior. Presenting ideas

can either evoke puzzled states or frenzied enthusiasm, which is determined by how well the message is delivered and how well it resonates with the audience. After a successful presentation, you might hear people say, "Wow, what she said really resonated with me."

But what does it mean to truly resonate with someone?

Let's look at a simple phenomenon in physics. If you know an object's natural rate of vibrations, you can make it vibrate without touching it. Resonance occurs when an object's natural vibration frequency responds to an external stimulus of the same frequency.

How many times have you wished that students, employees, investors or customers would snap, crackle and pop to exactly where they need to be to create a new future?

If you adjust to the frequency of your audience so that the message resonates deeply, they will display self-organizing behavior. Your listeners will see the place where they are to move to create something collectively beautiful. A groundswell.

The audience does not need to tune themselves to you — you need to tune your message to them. Skilled presenting requires you to understand their hearts and minds and create a message that is tuned to their needs and desires.

Change Is Healthy

Presentations are about change. Businesses, and indeed all professions, have to change and adapt in order to stay

It takes gutsy intuitive skills to move toward an



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Rebecca S. Clement, Publisher; Sarah T. Dayton, Editor in Chief; Andrew Clancy, Senior Editor; Edward O'Neill, Graphic Designer; Chris Lauer, Contributing Editor

unknown future that involves unfamiliar risks and rewards, yet businesses must make these moves to survive. Companies that learn to thrive in the chronic flux and tension between what is and what could be are healthier than those that don't. Many times the future cannot be quantified with statistics, facts or proofs. Sometimes leaders have to let their gut lead them to uncharted territories where statistics haven't yet been generated.

An organization should make continual shifts and improvements to stay healthy. That makes even simple presentations at staff meetings a platform for persuasion. You need to persuade your team to selforganize at a distinct place in the future or it could bring the demise of the organization.

Rallying stakeholders to move together in a common course of action is all part of the innovation and survival process. Leaders at every level in an organization need to be skillful at creating resonance if that organization is to control its own destiny.

Rule #1: Resonance causes change.

Lessons from Myths and Movies

Presentations have the potential to hold an audience's interest just like a good movie. You might be thinking that it takes years to write a successful screenplay, and you have a real job to do. But isn't part of your "real job" to communicate ideas well, help people understand objectives and persuade them to change? Building your presentations with some of the attributes from myths and movies will help your ideas resonate with others.

Great stories introduce you to a hero to whom you can relate. The hero is usually a likeable sort who has an acute desire or goal that is threatened in some way. As the story unfolds and trials are met with triumph, you cheer for the hero until the story is resolved and the hero is transformed. As storytelling expert Robert McKee explains, "Something must be at stake that convinces the audience that a great deal will be lost if the hero doesn't obtain his goal." If nothing is at risk, then it's not interesting.

Your communications follow a similar pattern. You have a goal that needs to be reached, but there will be trials and resistance. However, when your desire is realized, the outcome will yield remarkable results.

The most simplistic way to describe the structure of a story is situation, complication and resolution. From mythic adventures to recollections shared around the

dinner table, all stories follow this pattern.

Crossing the Threshold

There is one indisputable attribute of a good story: There must be some kind of conflict or imbalance perceived by the audience that your presentation resolves. This sense of discord is what persuades the audience to care enough to jump in. In a presentation, you create imbalance by consciously juxtaposing what is with what could be.

Clearly contrast who the audience is when they walk into the room (in their ordinary world) with whom they could be when they leave the room (crossing the threshold into a special world). Drawing attention to that gap forces the audience to contend with the imbalance until a new balance is achieved.

The Presentation Form

Drawing insights from mythological, literary and cinematic structures, a presentation form emerged. Most great presentations unknowingly follow this form.

Presentations should have a clear beginning, middle and end. Two clear turning points in a presentation's structure guide the audience through the content and distinctively separate the beginning from the middle and the middle from the end. The first is the call to adventure — this should show the audience a gap between what is and what could be - jolting the audience from complacency. When effectively constructed — an imbalance is created — the audience will want your presentation to resolve this imbalance. The second turning point is the call to action, which identifies what the audience needs to do or how they need to change. This second turning point signifies that you're coming to the presentation's conclusion.

The middle of the presentation form moves up and down as if something new is happening continually. This back and forth structural motion pushes and pulls the audience to feel as if events are constantly unfolding. An audience will stay engaged as you unwrap ideas and perspectives frequently.

Each presentation concludes with a vivid description of the new bliss that's created when your audience adopts your proposed idea.

Presentations are meant to persuade, so there is also a subsequent action (or crossing the threshold) the audience is to do once they leave the presentation.

Rule #2: Incorporating story into presentations has an exponential effect on outcomes.

Get to Know the Hero

The instructions your high school speech teacher gave you about picturing the audience in their underwear is now officially obsolete. Instead, you need to picture them all in colorful stockings and tunics with superhero emblems — because these are the heroes charged with carrying your big idea to fruition.

It's important to know what makes your audience tick in order to connect with them. So how do you get to know them and really understand what their lives are like? What makes them laugh? What makes them cry? What unites them? What incites them? What is it that makes them deserve to win in life? It's important to figure this out.

Though your heroes might be lumped together in a room, you shouldn't view them as a homogeneous blob. Instead of thinking about the audience as a unified clump when preparing your presentation, imagine them as a line of individuals waiting to have faceto-face conversations with you. You want to make each person feel like you're having a personal exchange with him or her; it will help you speak in a conversational tone, which will keep the audience interested.

An audience is a temporary assembly of individuals who, for an hour or so, share one thing in common: your presentation. They are all listening to the same message at the same moment; yet all of them are filtering it differently and gleaning their own unique insights, points of emphasis and meaning. If you find common ground from which to communicate, their filter will more readily accept your perspective.

As an option, you might want to create a narrowly targeted message for specific people in the audience so that your presentation comes across as a personal conversation with the highest-priority individuals. Even if only one person gets it — as long as it's the right person — it's worth it!

You need to get to know these folks. You are their mentor. Each one has unique skills, vulnerabilities and even a nemesis or two. The audience must be your focus while you create the content of your presentation. Stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about connecting with them.

When an audience gathers, they have given you their time, which is a precious slice of their lives. It's your job to have them feel that the time they spent with you brought value to their lives.

Rule #3: If a presenter knows the audience's resonant frequency and tunes to that, the audience will move.

Define the Journey

Presentations should have a destination. If you don't map out where you want the audience to be when they leave your presentation, the audience won't get there. You have to set a course, and that means developing the right content. The destination you define can serve as a guide. Every bit of content you share should propel the audience toward that destination.

Keep in mind that a presentation is designed to transport the audience from one location to another. They feel a sense of loss as they move away from their familiar world and closer to your perspective. You are persuading the audience to let go of old beliefs or habits and adopt new ones. When people deeply understand things from a new perspective to the point where they feel inclined to change, that change begins on the inside (heart and mind) and ends on the outside (actions and behavior). However, this typically doesn't happen without a struggle.

That struggle usually manifests a resistance — something that can be harnessed if you plan for it. When a sailboat is sailing against the wind, the sails are positioned to harness the wind. If done well, the boat sails faster than the wind itself — even though the gusts are opposing it. While you might not be able to control the severity of audience resistance, you can "adjust your sails" (message) and use it to gain momentum. When harnessed properly, the seemingly counterproductive force creates forward progress. However, just like sailing, it needs to move back and forth to get there (just like the presentation form).

The journey should be mapped out, and all related messages should propel the audience closer to the destination.

The Big Idea

A big idea is that one key message you want to communicate. It contains the impetus that compels the audience to set a new course with a new compass heading. Screenwriters call this the "controlling idea." It has also been called the gist, the take-away, the thesis statement or the single unifying message.

There are three components of a big idea:

- 1. A big idea must articulate your unique point of view. People came to hear you speak; since they want to know your perspective on the subject, you should give it to them.
- 2. A big idea must convey what's at stake. A big idea should articulate the reason why the audience should care enough to adopt your perspective.

3. A big idea must be a complete sentence.

Stating the big idea in sentence form forces it to have a noun and a verb.

Rule #4: Every audience will persist in a state of rest unless compelled to change.

Create Meaningful Content

It's rare that the first, most obvious idea generated is the best one. Tenaciously generate ideas along a theme until you've exhausted all possibilities. Usually, the truly clever ideas appear in the third or fourth round of idea generation.

You will use divergent thinking — the mental process that allows idea creation to move in any direction you imagine. Divergent thinking enables new, original content to emerge. This is a messy phase, so suspend neatness and allow yourself to stay unstructured — you'll be scouting for new ideas and mining existing ones. Broadening the amount of possibilities creates unexpected outcomes, so explore every solution and suspend judgment.

Generate as Many Ideas as Possible

- Idea collection: While you can avoid starting from scratch by collecting presentations from peers, that's not the only type of information out there; and regurgitating someone else's slides is not the best way to connect with your audience. Collect readily available ideas — but more importantly, purposefully mine for inspiration from all other relevant resources. Go both wide and deep. Gather as much as possible about the competitor's messages so you can position yourself differently than they do. Find out everything about the subject, and roam into tangential topics for insights.
- Idea creation: Inventing new ideas is a different process from mining existing ones. This is where you need to think instinctively — from your gut. Be curious, take risks, be persistent and let your intuition guide you. Draw from your creative side to generate ideas that have never existed or been associated with your big idea before.

Grab a sheet of paper or a stack of sticky notes and jot down everything you can imagine that supports your idea. The goal is to create a vast amount of ideas. You'll filter, synthesize and categorize all of them and craft a meaningful whole later on.

More Than Just Facts

Now that you have begun to collect and create content, this first batch you brainstormed might be primarily comprised of facts. Facts are one type of content to collect — but they're not the only type needed to create a successful presentation. You must strike a balance between analytical and emotional content. Yes, emotional. This might not be a step with which you're comfortable, but it's an important one nonetheless.

Stating fact after fact in an hour-long presentation doesn't signal to the audience why these facts are important. Use emotions as a tool to bring emphasis to the facts so they stand out. If you don't, you're making the audience work too hard to identify the decision they are to make. Staying flat and factual might work in a scientific report but simply won't work for the oral delivery of persuasive content.

Rule #5: Use the big idea to filter out all frequencies other than the resonant frequency.

Structure Reveals Insights

A solid structure is the foundation of a coherent presentation and shows the relationship between the parts and whole. It's similar to the couplings on a train or the string of a pearl necklace; it keeps everything connected in an orderly fashion, as if the content were destined to fit together neatly within a given framework. Without structure, ideas are easily forgotten.

Most presentation applications are linear and encourage users to create slides in a sequential order. One slide follows the other, which naturally compels the user to focus on the individual details instead of the overarching structure. To help your audience "see" the structure, move out of the linear format of the presentation application and create an environment where you can look at the content spatially.

There are several ways to do this. You can use sticky notes, tape slides on a wall or lay them on the floor. Any method that pulls your content out of a linear presentation application will work. Moving out of a slidecreation environment helps identify holes and keeps you focused on the bigger picture. This will help move your presentation from being about a bunch of small parts to being about a single big idea.

Clustering your content helps you visually assess how much weight you've given to various portions and how many supporting points you need to get your message across. Use this technique to confirm that you're emphasizing the correct content and allocating appropriate time for each message.

Keep in mind that the structure should accommodate the audience's comprehension needs and should be

assembled in a way that's palatable to them. It's natural for subject matter experts to prepare material linking ideas that are closely connected in their own minds, but remember that the audience might not see these relationships as readily. Connect your messages in a way that your audience can follow. The structure should feel natural and make common sense to them!

Most presentations that fail do so because of structural deficiencies. When the structure works, the presentation works. A good structure helps you work out the kinks and eliminate the extemporaneous.

Everything has inherent structure. A leaf, a building and even ice cream each has a (molecular) structure. Structure drives the shape and expression of everything. The same is true for presentations. How they are structured determines how they are perceived. Changes to the structure, whether grand or small, alter the receptivity of the content.

Structure allows your audience to follow your thought process. If you don't have clear structure then you end up jumping around and making random connections to ideas that are unclear to the audience. Solid structure causes ideas to flow logically and helps the audience see how the points connect to each other.

Rule #6: Structure is greater than the sum of its parts.

Deliver Something They'll Always Remember

Create a moment where you dramatically drive the big idea home by intentionally placing Something They'll Always Remember — a S.T.A.R. moment — in each presentation. This moment should be so profound or so dramatic that it becomes what the audience chats about at the water cooler or appears as the headline of a news article. Planting a S.T.A.R. moment in a presentation keeps the conversation going even after it's over and helps the message go viral.

Since you might be presenting to an audience that sees lots of presentations — like a venture capitalist or a customer who is reviewing several vendors — you want to stand out two weeks after you presented, when they're making their final decision. You want them to remember you instead of all the other presenters they encountered.

Create a S.T.A.R. Moment

The S.T.A.R. moment should be a significant, sincere and enlightening moment during the presentation that helps magnify your big idea — not distract from it.

There are five types of S.T.A.R. moments:

- Memorable Dramatization: Small dramatizations convey insight. They can be as simple as a prop or demo, or something more dramatic, like a re-enactment or skit.
- Repeatable Sound Bites: Small, repeatable sound bites help feed the press with headlines, populate and energize social media channels with insights, and give employees a rally cry.
- Evocative Visuals: A picture really is worth a thousand words — and a thousand emotions. A compelling image can become an unforgettable emotional link to your information.
- Emotive Storytelling: Stories package information in a way that people remember. Attaching a great story to the big idea makes it easily repeatable beyond the presentation.
- Shocking Statistics: If statistics are shocking, don't gloss over them; draw attention to them.

Rule #7: Memorable moments are repeated and retransmitted so they cover longer distances.

There's Always Room to Improve

A presentation broadcasts information to an audience in much the same way that a radio broadcasts programming to listeners. Thus, the signal's strength and clarity determine how well the information is conveyed to its intended recipients. Communication is a complex process with many points at which the signal can break down. Once a message has left its sender, it is susceptible to interference and noise, which can cloud its intention and compromise the recipient's ability to discern the meaning.

Communication has the following parts: sender, transmission, reception, receiver and noise. The message can become distorted at any step of this process. Your top priority is to ensure that the message-carrying signal is free from as much noise or interference as possible.

Presentation development works the same way. Every step of the process either enhances the signal or creates noise that causes the audience to tune out.

Amplify the Signal, Minimize the Noise

The signal-to-noise ratio is an important factor in how well your message is received, and it's your job to minimize the noise. If the audience receives a message that includes any interference, they receive distorted information.

You must expend energy minimizing the noise in each step of the communication process to ensure that a

crystal-clear message gets through to your audience.

There are four main types of noise that can interfere with your signal:

- 1. Credibility noise. Speaker's believability or likeability creates interference.
- 2. Semantic noise. Language and interpretation create interference.
- 3. Experiential noise. Speaker's delivery or venue creates interference.
- **4. Bias noise.** Speaker or receiver filters ideas through bias or dogmatism.

Noise can be reduced or eliminated through careful planning and rehearsing.

Rehearse and Re-rehearse

There is always room to improve. So be tenacious in preparing yourself ahead of time. Rehearse and rerehearse. Then, solicit feedback. If the presentation was taped, review the recording and then start the refinement process all over again.

Successful people plan and prepare. To be successful in any profession requires discipline and mastery of skills. Applying that same discipline to the skill of communication will attach the audience to your idea and improve your professional trajectory.

Rule #8: Audience interest is directly proportionate to the presenter's preparation.

Change Your World

If you say, "I have an idea for something," what you really mean is, "I want to change the world in some way." What is "the world" anyway? It is simply all of the ideas of all our ancestors. Look around you. Your clothes, language, furniture, house, city and nation all began as a vision in someone else's mind. Your food, drink, vehicles, books, schools, entertainment, tools and appliances all came from someone's dissatisfaction with the world as they found it. Humans love to create. And creating starts with an idea that can change the world.

Staying passionate and tenacious about your idea requires that some part of you be uncomfortable with the status quo. At times, you must have enough resolve to put your reputation on the line for the sake of advancing your idea.

Changing the World Is Hard

Ideas are not really alive if they are confined to only one person's mind. Your idea becomes alive when it is adopted by another person, then another and another,

until it reaches a tipping point and eventually obtains a groundswell of support.

President John F. Kennedy gave a speech declaring that by the end of the decade, the United States should land a man on the moon and bring him home safely. He wanted support from every American. He said in the speech, "In a very real sense, it will not be one man going to the moon — it will be an entire nation. For all of us must work to put him there." He wanted the entire country to feel responsible for supporting his vision. Later in the 1960s, Kennedy was touring NASA headquarters and stopped to talk to a man with a mop. The president asked him, "What do you do?" The janitor replied, "I'm putting the first man on the moon, sir." This janitor could have said, "I clean floors and empty trash." Instead, he saw his role as part of the bigger mission that was to fulfill the vision of the president. As far as he was concerned, he was making history.

Use Presentations to Help Change the World

Presentations really can change the world. Who would have thought that a movie about a presentation would win an Academy Award, create global awareness and incite change? Long before An Inconvenient Truth was on anyone's radar, former Vice President Al Gore had delivered his presentation hundreds of times to influential audiences around the world.

You might not need to change the entire world, but you can definitely change your world using a presentation. To see a systemic adoption of your idea, you may have to deliver multiple presentations. On your way to change the world, there will be key communication milestones that become catalysts for your success. Each milestone is an opportunity to adjust the strategy, collaborate and realign the team. Milestones include product pitches, product launches, board-member updates and keynote addresses.

An understanding of the strategic value of a presentation is important to your career. Make sure your world-changing ideas are in your organization's presentations. If not, you'll inherit someone else's thinking and implement their ideas instead of influencing innovation with yours.

After the ideas are presented and agreed to, work activities are generated from the presentations. Most presentations persuade people to take action, so presentations spawn a lot of activity. Also, after the brilliant thinking in the presentation is solidified, it ripples through and informs other related materials needed to support and spread the idea, like websites, social media, brochures and so forth.

Remember, just because you communicated your idea once doesn't mean you're done. It takes several presentations delivered over and over to make an idea become reality. Well-prepared presentations will speed up the adoption and change your world!

Gain Competitive Advantage

There's a constant push and pull related to what's perceived as right or wrong, based solely on how it's communicated.

Most communicators are visionaries who can see where to go and how to get there. An executive "sees" where the company needs to go; a manager "sees" how to build a strategy; an engineer "sees" how to construct a product; and a marketer "sees" how to promote it. Your job as a communicator is to get others to "see" what you are saying so your ideas gain traction.

Getting stakeholders to understand your ideas while the competitor's concepts remain obscure ensures a victory. If presented well, a smart idea acts as the igniting spark for an explosion of human and material resources. A great presentation gives smart ideas an advantage.

If your presentation is great, it can become a broadly reaching social media phenomenon. Now, more than any other time in history, great presentations transcend the moment in which they're given, because they can be seen by millions of people who weren't there in person. When a presentation is great and is recorded, people will watch it again and again. If your message is clear and worth repeating, it will be repeated. If your message is repeated, you win!

Be Transparent So People See Your Idea

You must be willing to be you, to be real and to humbly expose your own heart if you want the people in the audience to open theirs. You must be transparent, and this is difficult.

Being transparent moves your natural tendency of personal promotion out of the way so there's more room for your idea to be noticed. The audience can see past you and see the idea.

There are three keys to being transparent:

- Be honest. Be honest with the audience and give them the authentic you. If you are honest with yourself and your audience, your presentations will have more moments of vulnerability and sincerity. Openly sharing moments of pain or pleasure endears you to the audience through transparency.
 - Be unique. No two people have experienced the

Give a Positive First Impression

Successful first impressions introduce you and your message in a way with which the audience can identify. It's the nature of all audiences to compare themselves to you and look for similarities and differences. Make these similarities and differences clear as they size you up, so they get over that phase quickly. Create a common identity between you and them.

exact same trials and triumphs in life. Though we often tend to conceal our differences in an effort to fit in and be accepted, our unique perspective is what brings new insights to a topic.

• Don't compromise. If you really believe in what you're communicating, speak confidently about it and don't back down. It won't be easy to try something no one has done before or speak loudly about a topic that no one has the guts to confront. Call it like it is.

You Can Transform Your World

Your ideas may be simple or they could contain keys that unlock unknown mysteries. However, if you don't communicate them well, they will lose their value and add nothing to humanity.

The amount of value you place on your idea should be reflected in the amount of care you take in communicating it. Passion for your idea should drive you to invest in its communication.

Your ideas are potent. A single idea from the human mind can change the world. You have the opportunity to shape the future through your imagination. Imagining a future where your idea has been implemented will keep you inspired to communicate your idea passionately. So be flexible, be visionary and go rewrite all the rules.

Rule #9: "Your imagination can create a reality." - James Cameron

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Resonate*, you'll also like:

- 1. The Power Presenter by Jerry Weissman. Learn why your body language and voice are more important than your words, how to present with poise and confidence naturally, and how to connect with any audience.
- 2. Words That Work by Frank Luntz. Luntz offers sound advice on how to tactically use words and phrases to get what you want in life.
- 3. The Lost Art of the Great Speech by Richard Dowis. An in-depth, how-to guide on organizing, writing and presenting a distinctive and potent speech.