

The Colon technique (punctuation : not your gut!)

Remember it?! The moment when you've got to give 'the pitch'... credibility and even sales hang on how you do in the next 90 seconds. It might be that moment over coffee... other times it's the feared 'introduction round' at a networking event - perhaps one you've forced yourself to go to. You might even have paid to go! Other times it's a party (or even a coffee queue!) when you suddenly find yourself standing next to your ultimate ideal client...

You stand there, and your inside-the-head-voice says 'Oh hell! What do I say?'. Then you spend so much time thinking about what to say that you miss the opportunity to say it. (The number of girls I *didn't* ask out as a teenager are testament to how powerful this effect can be!)

But what's **even worse than missing the chance to say something effective**, is when you say something about what you do. Boring. Say to me "*I'm an accountant*" and my eyes glaze over. Not been stupid, you notice this and then, in desperation, you add "*But I'm not a typical accountant! I do all my work naked and hanging from the ceiling*" but it's too late. I've stopped caring - and I've stopped listening. At least if you said nothing you've not screwed up and you might get another chance later... but if you bore someone like this it's Game Over.



You won't get another first impression opportunity.



Good news - no one cares

Here's the bad news first. When someone listens when you tell them what you do, they don't actually care. Even if they've asked you "So what do you do?" they don't care! It's axiomatic that they're thinking 'What's in it for me?' and they will **only** care if what you do helps them.

You know that's true. You do it to other people so you know it's true. Admit it.

No one cares if you do things differently. No one cares if you've won awards. No one cares. Get over yourself. The only person who cares **how** you do things is... you!

Hard as it might be for me to admit, **very** few people come to see me as a professional speaker because they think "Oh! It's Simon! He's awesome! I need to get a ticket to see him!".

Nope.

They think

I'm an add-on

...just an after-thought.

I'm **not** the main reason for coming.



Oh, the content sounds cool. I wonder if I should go...
Ah! It's Simon speaking. He was good last time.

So what should you do?

When you (try to) lose weight, the rules are simple:

- eat less
- move more

But simple doesn't mean it's easy. And here, the simple trick is this... just make them care **before** you tell them how you do things. But remember the bad news... just like losing weight might be simple it doesn't mean it's **easy**. Making people care can be tricky.

We think people care about how we **do** things, because **we** care about how we do things. Let's be honest, we do it day in and day out, so that it's hard to see the wood for the trees, too!

No one else cares. They care about what you do, does, so to speak.

Think of it like this. The chances are you've used Excel as a spreadsheet to sort columns of data. The people who code the software care hugely about how that algorithm work and if you ask them about it they'll tell you at great length (trust me!). You, on the other hand, like any normal person only care that it's a black box.



You care that you put random data in and you get sorted data out. That's it!

You don't care if it's clever computer code inside the black box or millions of clever, tiny teddy bears running up and down the spreadsheet with your data in their paws!

You just care that it does what you want it to do, not how it does it.



There's no such thing as a silver bullet

... but if there was, it would be a colon.

A colon is a piece of punctuation one level of importance down from a full stop. It links things that are, well, pretty linked, with one flowing from the other. Here's an example. "*Jim was a remarkably popular man: he was also one of the 10 richest men in the city*". Great, but how do you use that in your pitches? Use this simple structure...

You give them a pain - specifically **their** pain - first, before you tell them anything you do. Then, by a not-too-surprising coincidence the solution to their pain just happens to be you, of course!

pain : solution

The point is that the pain gets people's attention and gives them a reason to care. Let's take our boring accountant again and give his pitch the colon treatment...

Pain	Solution
Almost everyone hates doing their taxes. And almost everyone screws it up in some way.	We make the misery of doing taxes go away and we save you more in tax than we cost in fees.

Be honest... you've got to be some kind of muppet not to ask for their business card at this point. They've described a pain you're suffering from and offered to make that pain go away!

It's not rocket science: all it takes is some thought.

It works for the positive, too

I've introduced it as a formula with pain:solution but it works for a positive too. Take this example...

If you're a parent of a young child, how would this pitch from a local school work for you?

You're probably pretty interested - because before they told you how good they are they reminded you why you *care* how good they are.

Pain	Solution
Every parent wants the very best for their children, in terms of being happy and having the opportunities to grow and be challenged.	We have better results than any other school in the region; and we have the second highest scores for pupil engagement.

The underlying magic

It works because you answer first the question on your audience's mind: WIIFM. (*What's in it for me*). You give them a reason to care, a reason to listen... and **then** you give them the stuff that other people **start** their pitches with. And that's why their pitches don't work.

As an aside, it's worth mentioning that you don't just have to use it in the literal sense of a one-sentence pitch. I've seen this approach used very successfully in presentations where the 'pain' part of the formula was several minutes long. And I've seen it in a written document when the 'pain' part was over a side of A4.

Want a famous example?

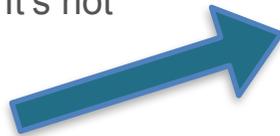
Remember the adverts for that chocolate bar with Rowan Atkinson? Remember how it messed everything up as an inept ninja, falling through a roof etc?

There's the pain. And the solution? Eat something - specifically the 'something' that they make...
“**You're not you when you're hungry: eat a Snickers**”.

Your turn

Put the column headings I've used in the examples above (Pain: Solution) onto a biiiiiig sheet of paper - or a clean whiteboard - and blitz, brainstorm and play. Capture ***all*** your ideas. Then have a cup of tea to come back with a fresh head. Now refine the best ideas. And refine and refine and refine and refine. (I teach people how to do this kind of process in other places but for now I'm sure you get the idea!

Here's one of mine. It's not been refined yet, to give you an example of a starting point.



By the time we've trimmed it down, it might read something like the rather bold statement in the sales blurb on the next page...

Pain	Solution
Almost every business presentation fails. Not only do they fail, they suck. And they suck the life out of the presenter as well as the audience.	If you act on the tools we give you on our training courses, your presentations won't suck - and they're much, much more likely to be successful.
That makes them an expensive waste of time.	That makes them a great investment.

If you hate making presentations you probably screw them up. We'll train you to do them right - and we're so confident that if you don't think we have, you don't pay.

Dr Simon Raybould is one of the UK's most respected presentation and communication trainers.

Clients range from pre-start up companies all the way to multi-nationals such as DELL computers and Renault.

He also trains professional speakers, but it's not something he's proud of. He stands by that no-fee promise, by the way. That's a real thing, not something he made up just for this Ebook.

To get a feel for him, try his blog at presentationgenius.info/blog. You

might be a good fit!

You can also find him at youtube.com/presentationgeniusinfo

He lives in Newcastle with his wife, who's generally regarded as a saint. Simon spent 24 years as a researcher and has also been a teacher, an author, playwright, fire-eater and lighting designer for dance companies.

The last one was fun, but hard work and the pay is rubbish.

Email him at simon@awareplus.co.uk

Paying it back

If you've found this useful, all we ask is that you tell someone. Email it to them or post a link or two on social media. There's no catch. We won't even collect email addresses. It's just to help more people.

