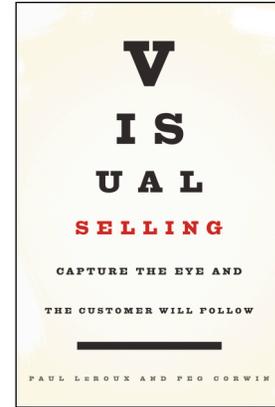


**For Immediate Release**

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**The Lost Art of Persuasion:  
Drop the PowerPoint® Crutch—and Win Over Even the Toughest Group**

*Presenters from salespeople to CEOs have embraced PowerPoint, but they're using it incorrectly and undermining their own messages. Paul LeRoux, author of Visual Selling, offers six tips for regaining control and delivering presentations that truly persuade.*

**Hoboken, NJ** (May 2007)—If you present for a living—whether you're a CEO selling your ideas to the board or a salesperson trying to win new business—your job is tougher than ever. You face relentless competition. People are bombarded with messages from the media, the Internet, and other sources. It's getting harder and harder to break through the clutter, yet that's what you must do in order to persuade your audience. And ironically, in a time when you most need to hit your prospects with a powerful pitch, you're likely to fall back on an ineffective crutch: PowerPoint.

“Sellers have become projectionists, throwing words onto a screen while listeners read ahead and sellers plod behind, mouthing what's already been displayed,” says LeRoux, coauthor (along with Peg Corwin) of *Visual Selling: Capture the Eye and the Customer Will Follow* (Wiley, April 2007, ISBN-10: 0-4717936-1-2, ISBN-13: 978-0-4717936-1-8, \$24.95). “PowerPoint's electronic barrage of words, bullet points, and sentences threatens to turn the art of persuasion into a lost art.”

That's right. LeRoux is on a mission to break presenters from the seductive PowerPoint routine. When you allow yourself to play second fiddle to PowerPoint text, you cripple your own selling efforts. By adopting the principles of visual selling—which basically means drawing attention to yourself and shaping images, room environments, personal appearance, and gestures for maximum impact—you can give dynamic presentations that truly persuade.

Interestingly, says LeRoux, presenting your ideas with images rather than text says four important things about you:

1. You're different from the average presenter. From the first visual, you're separating yourself from competing ideas, dramatically and non-verbally.
2. Your work and service also will be personalized. Tailored image presentations are more difficult to create than text slides, and they show you'll go the extra mile.
3. You're smart enough to speak without huge cue cards on the screen.
4. You're creative. Rather than presenting the same old material the same old way, you've demonstrated your ability to think conceptually. Your images reflect your imagination.

“People respect individuals who exhibit these four qualities,” says LeRoux. “Even without saying, ‘I’m dependable; I deliver,’ you’re conveying these facts. They understand implicitly that the person who is creative, who is smart, who makes an effort, and who is different is more likely to deliver than someone who is not.”

Here are six tips, excerpted from LeRoux’s book, on regaining control of your presentations:

• **People remember pictures, not words. Use this principle to your advantage.**

Researchers tell us that the mind stores and retrieves pictures more efficiently than words. A face is easier to remember and recall than a name. Cognitive psychologists call this phenomenon “the picture superiority effect.” You can leverage it to sell your ideas by presenting powerful images to your audience, unsupported by text, as you give your pitch.

“In its anti-smoking campaigns, the Canadian government makes the connection between tobacco use and impotence,” says LeRoux. “On cigarette packages it shows an image of a flaccid, burned cigarette. This is clearly a far more effective and memorable way to get the point across than text alone.”

• **Use PowerPoint images, but stay away from text.** Let’s say you’re a financial planner trying to get your audience to buy into a retirement plan. Instead of posting a lot of dry bulleted points stating that 57 percent of retirees must continue working to maintain their lifestyles—and parroting the words people see on the screen—you simply show them an image of a senior citizen serving fast food. Emblazoned on his apron is “57%.” People look at the screen momentarily and then quickly shift their focus to you.

“If you don’t read text aloud, you can bet your audience is reading it and not paying attention to what you’re saying,” says LeRoux. “If you do read it aloud, your audience is insulted. Aren’t they smart enough to read for themselves? Either way, PowerPoint text takes the focus off you and drains the persuasiveness right out of your presentation.”

• **You wouldn't propose marriage with a handout. Don't try to sell your ideas with one, either.** Imagine you are about to propose marriage to someone with whom you are madly in love. In your mind, you know what you want to say. You are confident that you know you can make a compelling argument to convince her to say "yes." You get down on bended knee and you begin your proposal. But first, you provide her with a written summary of your main points.

"Obviously, this is ludicrous," says LeRoux. "You would draw her attention away from you eloquently emoting on bended knee and direct it toward the piece of paper. That's what happens when you distribute a handout before your speech. I'm not saying you can't give your audience a handout or deck at all; I'm saying that you should delay doing so until after your presentation."

• **When presenting to a group who insists you use a handout, give them an "image deck." You'll satisfy their need to "follow along" without distracting them.** It's true that there are situations in which a group demands a handout. When this happens, print full-page versions of your image slides and duplicate them to create your handout. This is an acceptable compromise. With an "image version," your audience will not be overly distracted.

With a text-driven handout, heads are down and eyes are glued to the copy. With "image handouts," people rapidly peruse the entire document and return their attention to you. The viewer's "fast take" occurs because image pages only broadly indicate where the seller is heading. It gives the skeleton of your message, but it doesn't flesh it out in a way that is absorbing. Images need a presenter to fill in the details. As a result, your listeners will listen that much harder while you speak.

• **Do use strategic hand gestures.** When you're under pressure, your adrenaline surges and you want to do something with your hands. Don't try to squelch this natural impulse by hiding your hands behind your back or jamming them in your pockets. Instead, use gesturing to your advantage—to indicate size ("small" costs or "huge" margins) or action (sales will "skyrocket" or we'll "check off" results). (LeRoux's book provides illustrations.)

Proper gesturing has five specific benefits:

- ✓ Burning off energy—Instead of fidgeting, pacing, or making inappropriate movements, gestures provide a positive outlet for your increased energy.
- ✓ Looking professional—Gestures, executed correctly, become positive movements instead of negative, embarrassing ones. The right gestures can convey confidence and commitment to your prospects and customers.
- ✓ Supporting the message—It's not uncommon for gestures, even more than words, to carry the message. (Think of how an obscene gesture can enrage the viewer.)
- ✓ Involving listeners—When sellers gesture, people pay attention. Viewers find it mentally hard to turn away from the "action."
- ✓ Slowing down—It takes a half-second to match the words to the gesture, so you naturally slow down into a conversational pace.

• **Learn the simple technique that creates instant enthusiasm.** No doubt about it, enthusiasm sells. In fact, “enthusiasm” is a Greek word that translates roughly to “the god, the spirit, and the energy within you.” Yet, it’s the hardest of all delivery skills to learn or to teach. But LeRoux says there’s an easy technique anyone can use to convey heart, drama, and passion: just speak up.

“Increase your volume and, like magic, enthusiasm usually appears,” says LeRoux. “It is a direct, one-to-one relationship. When you speak more loudly, you are also more likely to display body language that communicates your enthusiasm. Oh, and by the way, a microphone does nothing to produce enthusiasm. It’s a crutch. I suggest that, unless you’re in a large room speaking to forty or fifty people, you don’t use one at all.”

It should be clear from these tips that there’s no mysterious “speaking gift” involved in delivering compelling presentations. With practice and coaching, anyone can learn to sell visually. And speakers who do, consistently outshine the competition to win new accounts, convince stockholders, or bring home venture capital monies.

“You don’t have to be a ‘born speaker’ to convince a group,” says LeRoux. “That’s a myth. You simply have to be trained in proven techniques for *selling* your ideas, not merely ‘telling’ them. You must abandon the put-’em-to-sleep-with-a-PowerPoint approach and seize the attention of your audience. Selling visually is a tangible skill—and *you* can master it.”

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**About the Authors:**

**Paul LeRoux**, the founder of Twain Associates, Inc., has been coaching salespeople on visual selling for more than twenty-five years. His specialty is rehearsing executives for high-stake competitive presentations, outside funding pitches, and large audience addresses.

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**About the Book:**

*Visual Selling: Capture the Eye and the Customer Will Follow* (Wiley, April 2007, ISBN-10: 0-4717936-1-2, ISBN-13: 978-0-4717936-1-8, \$24.95) is available at bookstores nationwide, from major online booksellers, and direct from the publisher by calling 800-225-5945. In Canada, call 800-567-4797.

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