

Speak Like Yoda, You Must

Despite being famously grammar-challenged, Master Yoda has a thing or two to teach us about being a powerful presenter. No, it's not sharing profound thoughts like: "Always in motion is the future...." (You don't say!) [Yoda's secret is his role as a mentor.](#)

As a mentor, he has vast knowledge – after all he has trained Jedi knights for 800 years – but he's not constantly spouting off about his own achievements or skills. Despite being the expert, his focus is not on himself but on helping young Luke Skywalker to become a better hero. These roles of hero and mentor are ancient [archetypes](#) that occur in almost every story across millennia and speak to us on a deep level. The hero is the central figure who performs the heroic deeds that drive the story. The mentor plays an important but secondary role as trusted advisor and guide.

Become the Mentor

After evaluating hundreds of [presentations](#), the most common mistake I see is presenters who are self-absorbed and self-promoting in their content. They (understandably) assume they're the star of the show since they're in the spotlight.

Let's clear something up: you, as the presenter or speaker, are not the most important guy/girl in the room. Just because you're on a stage or in front of a crowd does not make you the savior everyone has been waiting for. (This applies whether you are addressing a conference of ten thousand or holding a team meeting with three people.) Recognize that you are Yoda, not Luke. The most important people in the room are your audience: [make them the heroes of your story.](#) Defer to them, because if they don't engage and believe in your message, you are the one who loses. Without their help, your idea will fail. Become the mentor in *their* story and whisper guidance in their ear, empowering them to be the agents of change and achieve greatness.

Change Your Perspective

Me. Me. Me. This is what most presentations tend to be about. Somewhere in the front of the slide deck is the dreaded "About Us" slide that typically lists company info, history, and accomplishments. Sure, it is important that the audience knows something about you and your company, but there are other ways to communicate this information, [like in a handout.](#)

Sales people know that customers only care about product features when they are directly linked to clear and compelling benefits. The same is true for presentations, so focus the conversation on the audience. Acknowledge the struggles they are facing and make the solution about them. *Become audience-centric* and focus on your listeners to resonate at their frequency instead of yours. Remember that your audience is all you've got. They are the ones who have to go out and put your ideas into practice. Embody the [servant leader](#) model and empower your champions to go higher by standing on your shoulders.

Give a Magical Gift

Mentors often give heroes a magical or valuable gift, usually a tool, talisman, or weapon to help them on their quest. Think of ways to deliberately enrich your audience in some meaningful way. The best mentors' gifts have a special significance to the hero, so make it something useful, preferably out-of-the-ordinary and memorable. Perhaps you can offer genuinely helpful charts, checklists, sample budgets, industry stats and benchmarks, plans, white papers, diagrams, a PDF of a chapter in your book or a good app. Is there a physical gift you can give, that's not the obvious logo-on-a-mug? What about offering a unique experience, a special tour of a restricted facility, meeting an industry celebrity, or a test drive of a cool new product no one else has seen? Be intentional about giving your audience *something of tangible value to them*. Make sure they don't go away empty-handed but have a gift from you, their mentor, when they leave.

Teach a Special Skill

Mentors, by definition, have specialized expertise which they unselfishly share. They were once heroes themselves and have learned hard-won lessons while on their own quests. As a presenter, don't just stay in the realm of theory or generalities but share your personal trials and victories in a way your audience can learn from. Try to impart a new skill to your heroes and show them how to put it to use. Give practical examples of how your solutions can be applied or share innovative techniques being used in the field. This new ability enables them to reach their (and your) objective. As the mentor, you have much to offer in the name of helping your hero achieve great feats.

Help the Hero Get Unstuck

Heroes can sometimes get discouraged, lose their way, or run into obstacles. As a Mentor, your wisdom can help them see past the "slimy mud hole" they're in. Perhaps your audience is trapped by an inefficient process and you can reveal the escape hatch through your presentation. Or the management team is losing momentum, and you can kick-start them again with a creative idea. Sometimes all it takes is a kind word of encouragement to get your heroes back on the right path.

Expand Their View of the World and Themselves

Like all good mentors, Yoda expands Luke's horizons by helping him to make sense of the world and discover his destiny. As a presenter, you can remind your audience of the bigger picture that often gets lost in the day-to-day grind of operational details. Inspire them to look deeper, find their calling, and make a meaningful contribution to the world as heroes.

When you step up to give your presentation, you might be the most knowledgeable person in the room, but will you wield that knowledge with wisdom and humility? Presentations are not to be viewed as an opportunity to prove how brilliant you are. Instead, the audience should leave saying, "Wow, it was a real gift to spend time in that presentation with (insert your name here). I'm now armed with insights and tools to help me succeed." People will receive your message and be transformed by it — and you won't even need the Force. [Master Yoda would be proud.](#)

> [Read more from Nancy.](#)

Would you like to learn how to become a "mentor" in your role as a speaker? [Connect with an Auxano Navigator and start a conversation with our team.](#)