

Ep #17: The Only Presentation Outline You Will Ever Need



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Michelle Barry Franco

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number 16.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

Hello, hello, my speaker friends. Ooh, today is such a fun one. This is a super practical episode. I mean, like, “Grab your laptop and get some actual talk-crafting going while we talk through this...” kind of practical.

And to top it off, it's a perfect companion to the free guide that I often talk about in this podcast, which you can get at michellebarryfranco.com/start – because inside that guide, you have the very tool that I'm going to talk through today. And the reason it's worth it to talk through it on this podcast episode is I'm basically going to give you The Only Presentation Outline You'll Ever Need.

In fact, that's what I call that tool. I call it TOPOYEN, for short. But it's The Only Presentation Outline You'll Ever Need, and the reason is that this is the essential structure of a great talk. Now, of course, there are many different structures to the great talks that are out there, but I want to keep this super simple and actionable for you because the truth is, this outline really can be the basis, the foundation, for every talk you ever craft.

In fact, I still take this outline format in the exact format that you will get it in that guide book at michellebarryfranco.com/start on my website. That same format is what I use every time I have a talk now and every time I work with my high-end clients, one on one clients, even.

There is this very cool moment when I'm working with clients after some pretty deep hours diving into all of their stories and expertise and ideas that is so crazy fun that I wish I could bottle up the energy of this moment and, like, sell it. So the kind of people I work with one on one are pretty brilliant. They usually have captivating stories, even before we work storytelling magic on those stories.

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They're confident, they're successful. The only thing they don't have when they reach out to work with me is a super dialed in way to craft and deliver a talk at the level they know they are capable. So yes, they're good speakers; oftentimes, very good speakers, but they know they're capable of something really great, of something even more amazing. And I want to partner around getting that most amazing content out there.

So often, they've been doing pretty well on their own. They've spoken a lot, and even on big stages, they've wowed the audiences and felt pretty great about what they've pulled together on their own. And of course, they have their processes; their way of tackling a new speaking opportunity. And sometimes, yes, it happens the night before; more frequently than they want it to and that you might actually believe, even of some of the very good speakers out there.

Oftentimes, because they have enough history behind them, enough experience of speaking, they can pull something together that's pretty good, and maybe that applies for you too. If you're a pretty rich expert in your area of expertise, pulling together something valuable and useful isn't that hard. But if you're like so many of the people that I've worked with, you often walk away from those experiences saying to yourself, "Okay, I know that was good, I know it was useful, I know I got good feedback from people, but I know that I could have done better."

So that's often the case with people that I work with as well. They know they've got a way more compelling story to tell and message to share than they've been able to tap into at this point. So we do this deep work together, and after all of that deep work, there's this moment when I deliver their talk outline to them.

And this is the moment I'm talking about because, almost invariably, they are astonished. "Wow, this is brilliant..." they say. And I'm like, "Yep, you said it. That right there is your brilliance in a package." That's what it is; it's what they said to me.

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My job, basically, is to take the brilliance of other people and package it into the most powerful and really most consumable and memorable and useful way of sharing it. So while there are a number of things at play here – not the least of which is the power of digging for the deepest most real message that they're meant to share – the one that seems so magical in this moment when I hand over that outline is actually the beautiful organization of their stories and expertise.

So, do you ever watch those home makeover shows? The ones where they actually use the stuff that the people own already, they add in a few fun pieces, but they take what they already have, they add in a few fun pieces and they create this most amazing delightful new place where the person can live and work and enjoy their life. And it feels like a whole new fresh look, but really, it's so much of what they already had.

So this process I'm talking about is kind of like that; the clearing and the organization, some brightening and refining of all those brilliant ideas get turned into this incredibly powerful expression of their message. It's so fun. And that's what I want you to have after today, because this tool that I'm going to give you, it can help you create that.

It is that organizing and brightening and packaging tool that helps you turn all of that expertise, lessons learned, your stories, into something so beautifully useful and captivating and engaging for your audience. So I'm giddy about this; can you tell?

So I'm going to talk you through The Only Presentation Outline You'll Ever Need, TOPOYEN. And ideally, you're going to download the Get Started Speaking Guide at michellebarryfranco.com/start – and maybe even have that to refer to as I'm talking.

Now, you might be driving right now or on your walk, because I know I love to listen to podcasts in those ways, so if that's the case, you can absolutely listen to this, and then when you go look at this very simple outline, this simple yet powerful tool, you'll see what I mean as I talk through to these sections.

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It's a simple tool that you can use over and over and over again, but there's a lot that goes into it. So to make this manageable, we're going to talk through this in, guess, wait for it, three parts.

So we're going to talk about the intro, we're going to talk about the body – the intro of your talk in your outline, the body of your talk, in the form of an outline, and the conclusion.

So I know this sounds super simplistic, but as you'll see, there are many pieces to each of these. Now, you might think that we're going to start with the intro because it's first, but we aren't. The intro is actually last. Can you guess why?

I'm giving you a moment so you can guess... You're right, it's because we don't know what we're introducing until we craft the body of the talk. So you never start with the intro of your talk. And if I could just go on a tiny little tangent here, you also never start at your presentation slide software. You don't start with laying things out on your slides because you need to step back and look at the beautiful content here.

In another episode coming up, I'll talk with you about brainstorming, and this beautiful process of brainstorming I call blossoming the content for your talk. But now, we're assuming you've got that blossomed content. You've got all of that rich treasure chest, that garden of content that you can put into your talk.

So now, how do you organize it? So as I said, we're not starting with the introduction, of course, we're going to start with the body and then we're going to cover the conclusion, and then we will talk about your intro.

So the body of your outline is where the richest and most actionable content lives. Here's the thing; your audience can only handle so much information. This is one of the biggest mistakes I see out there in the presenting world.

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And I'll tell you, here's your easy rule of thumb; stick to three main points. Now, sometimes, you're going to have two and sometimes you're going to have four, but if you get above four and you're into five or more, you need some kind of acronym or something to help you remember it. Chip and Dan Heath talk about this in their awesome book *Made to Stick*. It's just too much to try to remember that much content.

I remember one time, I was really excited for this talk I was going to one evening because this woman – I was feeling really overwhelmed in my work and just had so much to juggle. My babies were really small, I was just trying to do so many things and I couldn't figure out how to manage it all.

And we had this productivity time management person coming in to speak at this event I was going to and she had these accolades and had written a book, so I was like, "Awesome. This woman is going to help me simplify my life." And I'm sitting in the audience and there's no question that her heart was in it. She wanted to give us every single thing she had to help us live easier more simple lives.

The problem is, she gave us every single thing she had and she did it in this kind of list format. And I walked out of there, I'm not kidding, more overwhelmed than I went in, thinking about all the things I had to do, all the strategies I had to employ in order to feel like my life was simpler and easier to manage.

This is not what you want. We call this fire-hosing. So you don't want to fire-hose your audience. That's why you stick to three main points. Now, you may already, in talks you've done before, you may have seven points or certain things you've covered in that way and people will get nervous thinking, "I can't get rid of any of these. This is my model. This is the paradigm I use."

So go back to that content and ask yourself – look for themes and almost always we can find themes that allow you to lump together a few of those separate topics that you've been covering, or main points you've been

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covering in your talk, so that you distill it down; you thematize it down into those three main points.

The image that I use in my mind when I talk about and think about these three main points is, you know, each audience member comes into our talks kind of like with a shopping bag. And they're hoping that they get to put things in that shopping bag and take them home with them and use them, right, just like on a real shopping trip.

If there's too much, they don't even know what to grab to put in the bag and they start grabbing maybe in the beginning and the bag starts to overflow and feel really heavy, and eventually, they just set the freaking bag down. They're like, "You know what – I don't need all this stuff."

So you don't, again, you don't want that to happen. You want to have it so simple that they're like, "Oh, there's the piece I can put in my shopping bag. Oh, there's the second one. There's the third..." And they walk out with this beautiful shopping bag of useful content that's easy to remember, because there's something magic about threes.

John Medina talks about that in his book *Brain Rules*, the magic of threes. So that's why I like to encourage you really strongly to stick with three main points. Now, what do you talk about within those three main points? So within these three main points, you want to use what I call the magic mix of content.

Have you watched or listened to Steve Jobs' Stanford commencement speech? That is, from the outside looking in, not the magic mix of content. Actually, he tells three stories. He even says, "I'm going to tell you three stories, just three stories." And that's what he does. But here's the thing; he's Steve Jobs. His level of experience, his level of expertise, also makes him an expert.

So really, every time he tells a story from his experience, he's also sharing some expert content. So actually, every story that he tells has some mix in there of both storytelling, in that engaging storytelling way that brings in our

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hearts, but also that more analytical logical aspect that's part of the magic mix of content.

So what is the magic mix of content? The magic mix of content is the use of stories and then research data, kind of analytical content, and then audience engagement activities and the use of powerful imagery. So really, the combination is, you've got heart and mind, both, stories, powerful images. They really pull on our hearts.

They also teach us things. Of course, they activate our mind, but they really kind of pull more viscerally. And then, we've got the logical part, which is the research and the data. And audience engagement can bridge across many things, but sometimes, it even brings us in kinesthetically.

So when you have a mix of these kinds of elements within your talk, within those three main points, you are far more likely to engage and reengage your audience throughout the rest of your talk. It makes it much more powerful.

So here's the thing – you and I are not Steve Jobs, so we need this magic mix of content. So I'm going to cover the magic mix of content in a future episode in more detail, but for now, the idea is to just mix it up within those three main points. In any given point, in one of those three main points, try to make sure that you have at least two different of the magic mix of content; two variations. Maybe some research in a story, some audience engagement activity and a story or a piece of research. Mix it up like that

Okay, so that's some essentials for the body of your talk. And if you're looking at the outline with me, you'll see that the body of your presentation is spelled out really clearly there and it's kind of in the middle of the page.

After your body is crafted, you're going to move on to your conclusion. We're not going to do your intro yet, remember. The job of your conclusion in your talk is to reiterate the most important message of this talk and to motivate the audience to action. So a beautiful example of this is a TED Talk by T. Morgan Dixon and Vanessa Garrison, called the Trauma of

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Systematic Racism is Killing Black Women: A first Step Toward Change. And in this powerful and incredible talk, it's both poetic and profound, so much amazing richness from their own experience – you'll see a beautiful magic mix of content in there. But as they conclude this talk, they bring us back around to the ancestors who fuel their fire, which is actually how they begin their talk as well.

So these are the ancestors who fuel the fire on their own mission and they explicitly invite the audience into action. They pass the fire onto us in the audience; the physical audience there and also those of us watching this, you know, over a million views TED video.

So this is a great example of a powerful conclusion. In your conclusion, you can restate your big idea or your thesis or your core message of your talk – that's how you sort of bring us back around. Just say it again, and then tell us what you want to do about it. Close with impact, a rally cry, and invitation, a path forward immediately, a donation envelope if you want us to give money to your organization or your favorite nonprofit organization.

Okay, so now we know what's in this talk. That's the gist of this powerful conclusion. We've talked about what to put in the body of your talk. Now, let's talk about the introduction, because it's time to craft an introduction that draws us magnetically into the riches of this talk.

This is what's going to bring us into the body of your talk and keep us really captivated and engaged. So your introduction draws us into this talk, it captivates, it orients and it lays the path ahead. It establishes or anchors your credibility and it tells us why we should listen to you.

It answers questions like, why should I care? What's in it for me? Why should I listen to you? And the elements of your into are as follows; your introduction has an attention-grabber, something that captivates your audience immediately. And you really want to think about that one.

We'll talk more about that. You clarify the purpose of your talk. There's a benefit to the audience for listening. Literally, why should they listen to you?

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And then sometimes, in certain circumstances, you need to establish your credibility. And then there's your big idea and the preview of what's to come. So there's a lot that needs to happen in your introduction, and it can't go on and on forever because your audience is anxious to get into the juice, the meat of this presentation, right.

So you've got to move through those things quickly and powerfully. Your attention-grabber is the very first thing; the very first thing your audience experiences. And for many of my clients, because I help people tell their stories of transformation, that is often what opens up their talk; not always, but often, because this is such an important part of their thought leadership.

So if that's the case for you, it might be that you're opening with that action moment within your own personal story. You want to get straight into the action. But even if you're going to start somewhere early on with your personal story, that doesn't mean that has to be the very first thing. It could also be a shocking statistic that you start with. It could be a question to the audience; a rhetorical question or one where you actually want them to raise their hands or otherwise answer and respond.

It could be an audience engagement activity. So I was recently at the World Domination Summit, as I've mentioned, and I went to Jonathan Fields' talk. And during his talk, he started off actually with this super fun activity where we made it rain with our hands and our feet. You know, it was sort of a rubbing of our hands, a clapping, a tapping, tapping on our laps.

And I've seen variations and been parts of variations of this, but this one, in this particular room, which was like a theatre and there was all these balconies, like layers of balconies, it sounded so amazing and it felt really good, and I think it energized the audience.

So the key with an activity like this is that you tie it into your content in some way, in a way that matters. It could just be that you want to help the audience get into an energetic space for, you know, attending to what you're about to share with them. Whatever it is, tie it in for them so that it doesn't have that kind of kitschy feel.

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You want it to feel on purpose, but also fun and engaging. Your purpose, your benefit, and your credibility, as I've said, all depend on the audience; really, as does everything, right? But it might sound something like this; when you know how to dye your own yarn, you'll save hundreds of dollars a year on high-end yarn. Or, I'm going to change the way you think about money forever, such that you will be excited to give it away at the next opportunity to give with love.

So in these two examples, I'm just kind of mixing in the benefit to the audience and the purpose. It orients the audience. Here's what we're going to talk about and here's why it matters to you.

People often ask me, "Do I really need to say that? Isn't it obvious or didn't they get that out of the talk title and description? Or why would they be sitting there if they didn't know how it was going to benefit them?" You never want to assume that in that moment they are connected with what they're wanting out of this talk.

You want to actually directly say to them, "I've thought of you, I know what you're needing and wanting and here's how your life is going to be better because you are here and because you attend to this content of my talk."

Now, when it comes to credibility, as I said before, it may or may not be necessary, but I just want to put this note in here that if you do need to establish credibility, this can be kind of tricky. You don't want to lay out a bunch of your credentials, "Well I've been doing this for 35 years and I got my Ph.D. and then I have six licenses after that and..." You know, even if you have all that, which is awesome, cool, great for you and great for your expertise and your audience, it can just be off-putting.

But a story is a really graceful way to establish credibility. Saying things like, "20 years ago, when we started this project..." Right there, you've established that you've been a part of this for 20 years. "When I started studying this back in the 70s... Or back in the 90s..." Whatever, so those are – you tell a little story that helps establish your credibility.

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Now, it's really engaging. A story is powerful for human connection, as I've talked about in other episodes of this podcast. So as you move from the, sort of, setup and orienting of your audience, you want to start to lay the path forward.

So you're going to tell the audience where you're going, where they're all going, but don't be too explicit. Don't give it all away such that their brains say, "I already know all this. I could just leave or I could just check out." Sometimes when we're too direct about exactly what we're going to cover, the audience just goes, "Oh, so I already know about all of this."

This is where mystery is really powerful. That said, a preview or a map for our journey feels really good. It's like saying, "Come here, let me show you something. I want to show you where you're going." It might sound like, "We're diving in today to the hardest lessons I've learned. First, the one that took me down so low I had to remake myself to imagine rising up again. Then, the one that showed me I'm not alone on this journey, ever. And then finally, the lesson that taught me that no matter what happens in my external world, I am always and completely well within. I can't not be, it's my divine nature."

So in this example, you've just given a preview, you've given a path forward for this journey they're going to take with you through this talk that you're going to give, but it doesn't give away all the content. It actually creates the mystery, "Wow, I wonder what took her down so low that she had to remake herself just to imagine rising up again. I wonder what lesson showed her that she's not alone ever." Right, so there's that intrigue and our brain wants to find out, wants to solve that mystery.

So that sums up what goes in your introduction. Remember, the introduction is the time when your audience decides whether they're going to pay attention to you or not, even if they keep their butt in that chair, it doesn't mean they're going to attend and engage.

So very quickly, in the introduction, you want to captivate their attention. You want to show them that you understand them; that you're here to

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actually serve them in a way that matters to them. And then you want to give them an idea of where you're going so that they can kind of join in with you. They can take your hand and start moving forward on that journey. That's the power of a great introduction.

And again, you'll see all of those elements in the outline that you can download at the link that I shared earlier and I'll share again at the end. But basically, it's michellebarryfranco.com/start and this outline format is in there and you can use it over and over and over again.

So let's look at what we just went over; quick review. You've got an intro, you've got a body, you've got a conclusion. The body has three main points. Does this sound familiar to you at all? Like maybe anything from, I don't know, would it be fifth grade or sixth grade? Like, maybe the five-part essay format? Yes, that's exactly right.

And you're probably thinking something like, "Really? This is high-level speaking?" And here's my answer; it is absolutely the foundation of high-level speaking. This is the place to start. After you've totally nailed this kind of a framework, you can begin to experiment and then let your creative energy drive more and more and you'll move these elements around and you'll expand things and you'll find your own way of taking this structure and making it your own so it doesn't feel formulaic.

But I want to tell you that even now I use this, even some of my best speakers use this same format and it doesn't have to sound formulaic; not at all. It actually can be a beautiful way of guiding your audience, like taking their hand and guiding them through a really valuable and memorable experience.

You've heard the saying, "We learn the rules so we can break them." So we have to know what the rules are first to be sure that we're actually breaking them, right? Plus, honestly, this outline format, TOPOYEN, The Only Presentation Outline You'll Ever Need, will make crafting presentations and talks so much easier for you all the days of your speaking life going forward.

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So I'm just so excited to give this to you. So take this and use it. Use this podcast, couple it with the actual outline format and use this to guide you in crafting your next talk and all your talks going forward. And know that thousands of clients, students, and people around the world have tested this same format that I've been sharing for decades and they've found it a beautiful guide over and over again.

So again, that actual template for this outline is included in the Get Started Speaking Guide, which you know is also an uplevel your speaking guide, if you're already speaking, along with some written guidance to help take you through the process, plus some speaking anxiety management suggestions and so many other tools in that guide.

So get your guide now. It's at michellebarryfranco.com/start. So that is a wrap for this week, my friends. Just know that I am giddy right now with the pleasure of giving you one of my favorite and most valuable tools in my entire toolbox, which, might I say, overfloweth after all these years of doing this work. And even still, this has got to be the most valuable tool that I can share with you.

I hope that you know I am over here cheering you and your beautiful impact on every single day. Take good care of yourself and remember, you were made for this. Go make your beautiful difference. See you next week.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Beyond Applause*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, head on over to michellebarryfranco.com/start to get your free complete guide to stepping into leadership speaking right away.