

## Presenter's Toolbox™ Workshop outline

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**Background and Description:** As designers, Illustrators and artists, we must all be able to talk about or “sell” our creative ideas to our audience. That audience may be a fellow designer, a Client, an Account manager, a Creative Director or perhaps a group of all of the above. Even the most abstractly designed creations can be successfully and meaningfully understood by your audience if you know how to talk about, sell and verbally communicate your ideas in conjunction with a well rehearsed presentation.

This workshop is about the relationship between the spoken word, unspoken language and design. It is intended to teach all levels of designers how to improve their ability to articulate their thought process, explain the development of their ideas from concept to finish, and present design work in a way that is ultimately more effective and convincing.

We will learn, through lecture, individual and small group exercises, how to describe in plain words as well as standard industry terminology, to talk about your creative compositions (designs, layouts, drawings, etc.). You will learn that you will no longer need, and eventually not be allowed to say, the word *like* when describing one of your creations, as in "it's kind of like" or "it's like..." or "I just don't like it".

As designers need some reliable frame work, tools, standards or systems in which to describe our visual communication ideas. Without proper descriptive techniques others will not understand our work, their context and meaning and not buy into the ideas or designs.

The goal is to learn how to objectively, strategically and intelligently talk about your work through the use of voice, gesture, and supporting visual materials to communicate your ideas either one-on-one, to a group, in meetings, or in critiques and have the audience understand and "buy" your design message. Though weather they agree with that message is not the point, it's about the understanding of the solution you propose.

In the workshop we will do a variety of exercises in a variety of mediums. My overall concern in teaching how to *Present* can be summarized as the following:

**Presentation Content** = How well do you know your subject and it's *reason for being*? Its strategic position, the thinking and the research behind the strategy and the brief? What is your ability to convincingly articulate this (through your design solutions) to your audience in a believable professional way?

**Presentations Visuals** = The size, simplicity and clarity of your presentation in terms of organization of images, graphics and type size. The level of professional production (printing, alignment and cleanliness) of the presentation boards, files and /or documents. What does it mean to keep the presentation *transparent*, so the ideas are the have the best chance to convincingly support for your design argument?

**Speaking Style** = Your clarity, volume, body language and how well you connect with your audience, ie: can you be heard and understood, and is your audience engaged in the presentation? How about your posture and physical comfort, what is your confidence level, are you a credible, believable and convincing?

**Sample Workshop Topics and Exercises** (*order of segments and exercises TBD*)

**1. Introduction:** I will give an overview of Presentation. What is presentation and why is it important? Why do we need to be skilled at concisely and objectively talking about our design work? We will do a few introductory in-class exercises. Brief Q and A with participants to learn his/her experience with Presentation. Exercise: Participants present to the group, a piece of work (in any medium) that you have done recently.

**2. Descriptive techniques:** How we describe our work (verbally and in writing) is an important way of getting us to think and speak objectively about our work. We will practice describing objects and ideas using *Descriptors* as our main tool. We will also learn and practice *Descriptive Language*. With the main goal of describing the work objectively.

**3. Presentation Tools and techniques.** We will review a handful of presentation tools and techniques including a *Development Matrix*, a *Word Association (Using Brand Attributes)* and *Mood Boards*. We will then do exercises using one or more of these techniques and discuss what works and why.

**4. The Unknown Logo (exercise):** Participants are divided into teams and are given an unfamiliar logos to re-work (re-design, create a new name and describe a new context). The teams create and present their re-worked logo ideas and findings using techniques we have learned so far.

**5. Size & Position is Everything:** We all can make mood boards, but in this segment we talk about how our brains perceive images, colors, moods and how size and position of images very much effects how an audience understands the data we are trying to convey. We look at examples of mood board that work, don't work and why.

**6. Building Consensus:** Building consensus in a creative and hierarchical organization can be challenging. During this segment we look at the key elements of the consensus decision-making process and how personal agendas start to become irrelevant. Consensus decision-making process involves identifying and addressing concerns, generating new ideas, combining elements of multiple alternatives and checking that people understand the proposal or assignment, focusing on the objectivity needed for ultimately deciding what will be a successful solution to the design problem at hand.

**7. Product Redesign (exercise):** Participants go out to the street (at any drug store or supermarket) and bring back a product, in any category. Then, through the use of sound strategic reasoning and using techniques we are working with they redesign the package while taking the item up-market. Considerations: What design cues will indicate that the

product is now more exclusive, more expensive, or has a higher perceived value? Present your findings using descriptors and descriptive language.

**8. Building a Design Argument:** Like attorneys, we are in the business of convincing. Whether convincing a person or audience, it is our job to objectively sell our design solutions that meet a specific design brief. Designers and Clients can be the toughest critics and therefore the hardest to convince. In this segment we look at the "design argument" and how you can build the best, most objective case for your design solutions.

**9. White Board as a presentation tool:** Often overused, sometimes overlooked the white board is a staple of any idea driven organization. In this segment we look at how the white board is used in your organization, and how that can be improved upon for idea generation and consensus building. We will do exercises that will make these points more clear and relevant.

**10. Presentation, Buy-In and the difficult Client:** Getting your audience to buy-into your design solution takes skill and lots of practice. Some of us go as far as to rehearse (as memorizing a script) our presentation in order to keep on target, clear and convincing for an important presentation. In this segment we look at strategies for maintaining your focus and clarity with a Client who just says NO and in many cases can not even express why they don't like (code for *not understanding*) what they see.

**Note:** This is a sample of segments and exercises we can do your workshop. There are many other segments and exercises that we can arrange for your workshop, but will need to meet with your team to discuss what is most appropriate for the group.

**Logistics:** We will need a conference room that comfortably seats all participants. I suggest an 8 person minimum and 12 person maximum for the workshop. Larger than that and we run short on time for exercises and work.

**Cost:** The workshop is charged by the day. The most common are 1 to 2 day workshops, depending on the skills of those attending. Additionally, I might suggest a half-day follow up with in 3 to 4 weeks to see where the participants are in their usage of the materials in their work and what can be improved or added or tweaked.

1 to 2 Days @ \$1750 - \$2000 per day, plus expenses (approx. \$75 per day).

Half-Day can be added @ \$1000. per ½ day, or \$250/hour, plus expenses.

**Note:** Each group and organization is very different, some already possess a high level of proficiency in presenting. So I will need to get further information in order to assess if, what and how I can be most effective with your group. There is no charge for this meeting. If customization of the workshop is required in order to accommodate your requirements, we will agree on a set number of hours where I will work to make the best use of the workshop for your group. \$250/hr.

**Brief Bio:** Rodney Durso has been a designer and creative director in New York for 15 years. He founded and was Creative Director of Stormhouse Partners, an award-winning branding and design studio in West Chelsea. His work has won praise in more than a dozen International design competitions and publications. Rodney works in print, package design as well as interactive design and environmental signage. His work has been featured in fashion, design and packaging journals as well as the *Creative* annual series, Ad Week and Woman's Wear Daily.

He has worked as an Adjunct Professor at Parsons School of Design in the Communication, Design and Technology Department, has participated in the Annual Senior portfolio reviews and has guest lectured at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Currently his work can be seen at the website: [www.stormhousepartners.com](http://www.stormhousepartners.com).

Rodney is a fine art painter and has shown his work in New York at his Chelsea studio and in San Francisco. His website, [www.rodneydurso.com](http://www.rodneydurso.com), contains sample pieces of his work from the recent show *Mega Something*. His latest show, *Out with the New* will be added to the site later this year.

References and resume upon request.

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**Some comments on the workshop:**

“Our designers came away from this workshop with a greater array of presentation *tools* in their arsenal. The broad skills acquired in the workshop could be used in all aspects of designer's role, including critiques, client presentations, and day-to-day communication about design.

The workshop was certainly a day and a half well spent. Without question, we will have Rodney Durso return to run this workshop again and again”

*-Ira Beckman, Director Human Resources, LANDOR, New York, February, 2008*

