

The Power of Presentations

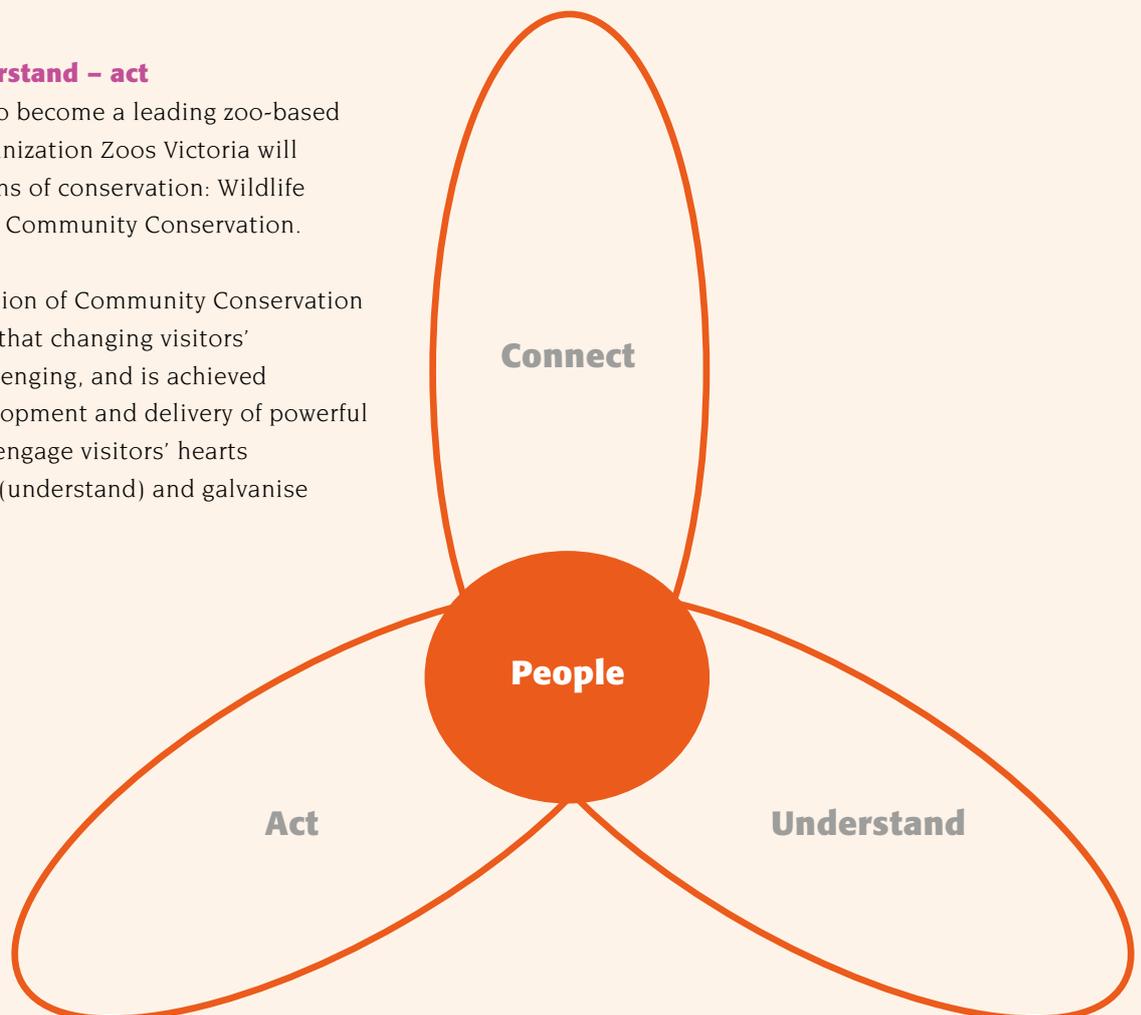
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Think back to a presentation you enjoyed. What worked? Did it have an intriguing beginning, a cohesive story or a captivating ending? Perhaps the presenter had clever ways of engaging you so that you felt like a participant rather than a spectator? These are all the ingredients in a new Presentation Toolkit developed by Zoos Victoria to create powerful wildlife experiences in its endeavour to becoming a leading zoo-based conservation organisation.

Connect – understand – act

In its aspiration to become a leading zoo-based conservation organization Zoos Victoria will pursue two streams of conservation: Wildlife Conservation and Community Conservation.

Central to the notion of Community Conservation is the realisation that changing visitors' behaviour is challenging, and is achieved through the development and delivery of powerful experiences that engage visitors' hearts (connect), minds (understand) and galvanise action (act).



At the heart of this connect – understand – act journey are the people that visit and the people that work at the Zoo. The interaction between visitors and staff, including volunteers, plays a vital role in taking visitors on this journey towards making a difference for wildlife and wild places.

Recognising the power of face to face interpretation to engage visitors, we set out to equip our presenters with tools to help them create powerful and memorable experiences that would build emotional connections with wildlife, help visitors understand issues facing wildlife and provide visitors with the opportunity to take conservation action.

The first step was to review existing presentations to identify where staff could be best supported.

The review

With the assistance of John Pastorelli from Ochre Learning, presentations across Zoos Victoria’s three properties – Melbourne Zoo, Werribee Open Range Zoo and Healesville Sanctuary – were reviewed. This process revealed that:

- Presenters were doing a good job at delivering face-to-face experiences.
- Staff strengths varied. Some delivered strong introductions for example, whilst others would deliver more memorable conclusions.
- Some staff often lacked the confidence or the strategies to try new presentation approaches.
- Many staff had never had the opportunity for formal training in presentations.
- There was a lack of consistency in how presentations were being delivered and in the experiences visitors were receiving.

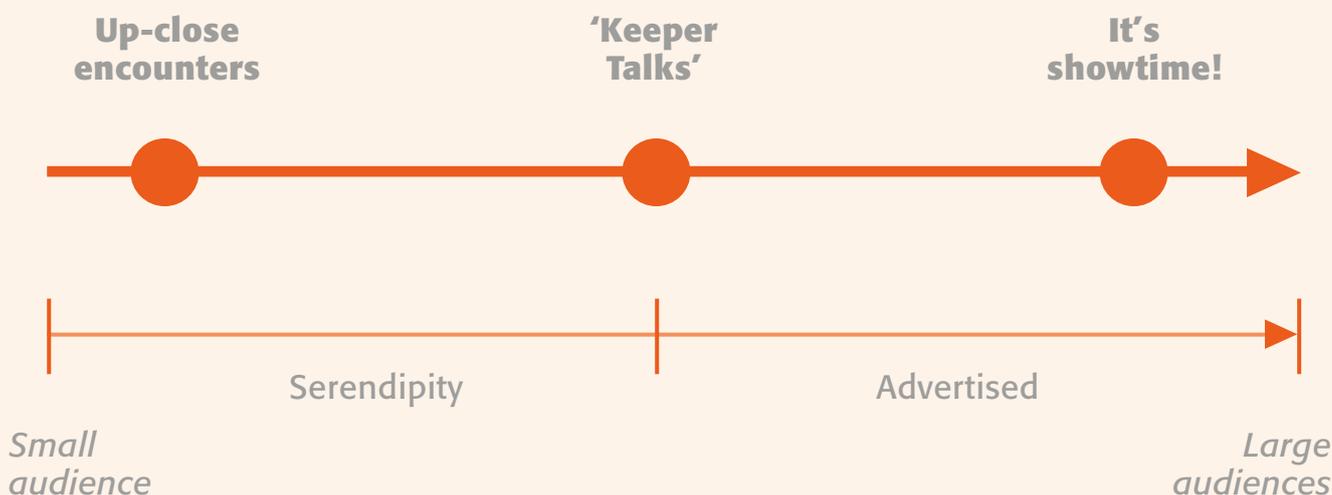
- Presenters were delivering a wide range of experiences including intimate, chance encounters and ‘casual conversations’ 15 minute ‘Keeper Talks’, hour long Behind the Scene and Safari Bus tours, presentations for large audiences and overnight camps. This variety of style, audience capacity and duration is depicted at the bottom of this page.

In essence, staff were doing a great job delivering a wide variety of presentations. Most staff included key elements of a good presentation some of the time but no one was including all the key elements all of the time. Many presenters relied on instinct rather than any established consistent framework to help ensure their presentation’s effectiveness.

The challenge

We realized that we needed a practical, easy and fun to use presentation framework that would:

- Apply across all three properties.
- Help with a range of experiences from brief encounters and longer ‘talks’ through to hour-long safari bus tours and overnight camps.
- Work with different sized audiences.
- Help staff target presentations to build emotional connections, enhance understanding or facilitate action or a combination, in line with our zoo-based conservation strategy.
- Acknowledge and build on staff’s experience and expertise.
- Provide a framework to enable a consistent approach to presentations.



Toolkit: all the tools you need to build great presentations



The solution – Presentation Toolkit

To make building presentations easier, presenters have been equipped with their own Presentation Toolkit.

The toolkit's DIY Guide provides a simple presentation framework that removes the 'guess work' out of building presentations. The DIY Guide is accompanied by a series of tool cards created to help presenters build purpose-built 'connect', 'understand' and 'act' presentations.

DIY Guide

The DIY Guide outlines a presentation framework developed collaboratively by Zoos Victoria and Ochre Learning. The framework describes three 'building blocks' of a presentation, the things you say and do before and after the story is shared (POWER), and the story itself (Hook, Line and Sinker). It encapsulates all elements of preparing, delivering and evaluating a presentation rather than simply focusing on the 'talk' or 'story' part of the presentation.

POWER

We describe the building blocks either side of your story as the 'foundation' for your presentation. It provides a 'powerful' platform to build your presentation. Laying a strong foundation is just as important as having a strong story. *POWER* creates a simple checklist to help plan and deliver the things you say and do before and after your story rather than relying on intuition alone.

Prepare • prepare yourself, space and your resources

Overview • build rapport with your audience

Wrap-up • bring your presentation to a close

Evaluate • continue to improve what you do

Refresh • try something new!

Hook, Line and Sinker

The story you'll tell

P O

BEFORE your story

W E R

AFTER your story

Building blocks of a presentation

Hook, Line and Sinker

This analogy, based on the saying 'got you hook, line and sinker,' helps you craft a story with a memorable beginning, middle and end.

Hook • How will you capture your audience's attention from the very beginning? Hooks can include a question, an amazing fact or a personal anecdote. Hooks are also used throughout a presentation to focus the audience's attention on your key points.

Example...

"Who in the audience has a mobile phone? Please hold it up. Now take a look at your phone. You may simply see a mobile phone, but I see the secret to helping save gorillas in the wild. Let me tell you more."

Line • This is the thread that ties your presentation together. It includes your theme or key message and your three to five main points used to illustrate your theme.

Example...

Theme: Helping save gorillas in the wild is as easy as recycling your old mobile phone.

Key points:

- The Zoo's gorillas
- Gorillas' rely on habitat
- We also rely on gorillas' habitat
- Coltan used in some mobile phones is mined in gorilla habitat
- Recycling old mobile phones reduces demand for coltan, helping save gorillas

Sinker • How will you help ensure the key message sticks? A great 'sinker' closes the loop on the presentation. For example, if a question was asked at the start of the presentation then a sinker will answer that question. Regardless of the style, a strong sinker will be concise, one or two sentences in length and aim to stir emotions, provoke thought or facilitate action.

Example...

"So next time your mobile phone rings, remember gorillas are calling on you!"



Tool cards

The toolkit also contains a series of 'tool cards' divided into five sections; Connect, Understand, and Act and Engage.

The tool cards have a relaxed and quirky graphic style created by designer Tania Enor, and helps make them easy and enjoyable to use. Each tool card has a title, a definition to explain the tool and an example of how it can be applied being applied.

Connect • These tools will help build emotional connections between the audience and your subject.



Get personal



Revealing personal details transforms an 'animal' into an 'individual'. "Suma the orang-utan really enjoys painting. She will often mix red and blue paints to make her favourite colour purple."

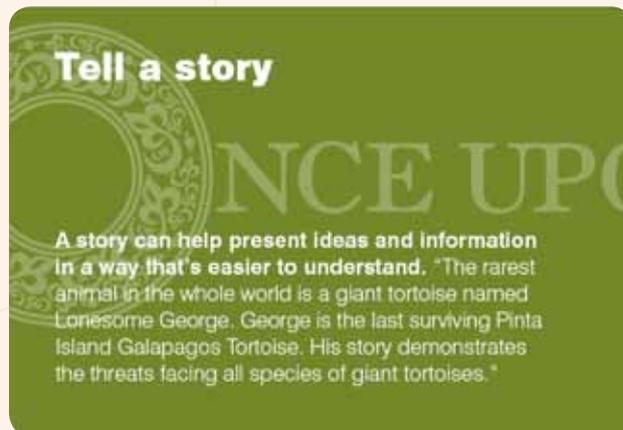


Close encounter



An animal encounter whether contact, feeding or a close-up view, promotes wonder and connects visitors to animals. "Hold your apple out in front of you, nice and still and the elephant will take it from you."

Understand • These tools help build presentations that aim to increase the audience's awareness of an animal or related issue.



Tell a story



A story can help present ideas and information in a way that's easier to understand. "The rarest animal in the whole world is a giant tortoise named Lonesome George. George is the last surviving Pinta Island Galapagos Tortoise. His story demonstrates the threats facing all species of giant tortoises."



Get active



Physical activity is fun and helps put learning into action. "Heard the expression 'eyes in the back of your head'? Well an owl can literally turn its head to look behind. How far can you turn your head? Give it a try!"

Act • Effective behaviour change targets ONE behaviour at a time. Always start by working out your one target behaviour.



Incentive



Incentives enhance people's motivation to act. When trying to influence people to make sustainable timber choices, Melbourne Zoo provided discount vouchers to a furniture store that uses sustainable timber.



Prompts



Prompts remind people to act sustainably. Wallet-sized sustainable seafood cards remind people to purchase sustainable seafood when at the supermarket.

Engage • Think about a presentation you enjoyed... how did the presenter engage you?



Ham it up

Sprinkling a little humour or performance helps relax your audience and spark their interest. "These animals don't have computers, so rather than emails they rely on wee-mails. Of course, they have to make sure they do a smell-check!"



Imagine

Evoking imagination is a powerful tool. "Close your eyes and imagine you're a tree. Your arms are branches, and your feet are roots. If you were a tree in a rainforest, you'd have animals living on you from head to toe."

40 tools have been developed to date. New examples of tools will be captured on-line to create a growing resource. The format of the toolkit means that new tool cards can be easily added.

A sustainability note

Environmental sustainability underpinned both the development of the content of the toolkits as well as the toolkit's physical form. Waterless printing process using 100% renewable energy and soy ink along with recycled paper are used in the production of the DIY Guide and tool cards. The toolkit packaging itself is made in Australia using 100% recycled post-consumer waste and is 100% recyclable.

Conclusion

Zoos Victoria aspires to become a leading zoo-based organization. In recognizing that the presentations we deliver are a key ingredient in achieving this goal, the Presentation Toolkit was developed to empower staff to deliver powerful and memorable experiences that would take visitors on a journey of connect – understand – act and help visitors make a difference for wildlife and wild places. The simple, practical and easy to use presentation toolkit is now being used by over 200 presentation staff across Zoos Victoria including animal keepers, horticulture staff, educators, safari bus guides and other dedicated presentation staff. The following quotes provide a reflection of how the framework has worked for staff to date:

"I got a headache ... in a good way ... from all the hooks I've been using!"

"I now have more confidence to develop and deliver presentations."

"My presentations now feel stronger in that they have a point whereas before they were rambling bits of information."

Regardless of whether the presenter is a new or an experienced presenter, all staff have benefited from some aspect of the framework and toolkit. For some it is the simple POWER checklist that helps to ensure all aspects are covered whilst for others it is the Hook, Line and Sinker that has helped to redefine the 'purpose' of the beginning, middle and end of the stories they share with visitors.

The presentation framework has also received interest from zoos and other organisations around Australia and overseas. Taronga Conservation Society in Australia and Wellington Zoo in New Zealand have also adopted the framework. It has been presented at a number of national forums and recently at the international conference of National Association of Interpreters, a USA-based organisation.

What started as a simple solution for one organisation is promising to help others to develop and deliver powerful presentations.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS REFERENCES

The Presentation Toolkit could not have been developed without the collaboration of Zoos Victoria staff and John Pastorelli from Ochre Learning. Zoos Victoria thanks John for his expertise and insight into face to face interpretation.

The toolkit has also been inspired by Sam Ham, Douglas McKenzie-Mohr and John Pastorelli (see references).

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