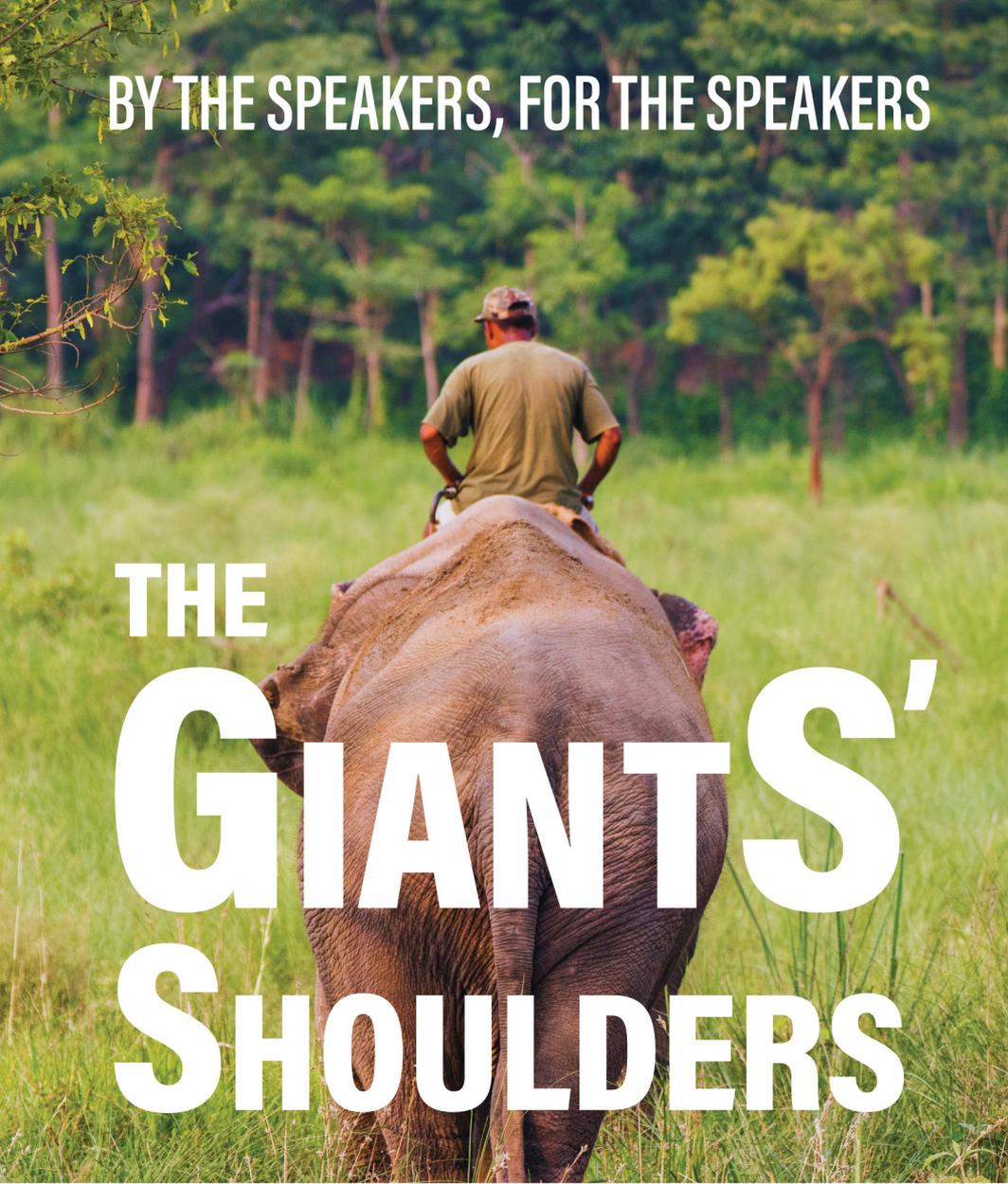


BY THE SPEAKERS, FOR THE SPEAKERS

A photograph of a person riding an elephant through a lush green forest. The person is seen from behind, wearing a green shirt and a cap. The elephant is walking through tall grass. The background is a dense forest of green trees.

THE
GIANTS'
SHOULDERS

Sample Excerpt from Antoni Lacinai

**COLLECTED WISDOM FROM THE
BALI GSS CONFERENCE 2024**

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Nine Memory Hacks for Your Audience

Antoni Lacinai — Sweden

“You cannot act on what you don’t remember.”

I got this quote a few years back from a book about memory. The irony is that I can’t remember which book, so I can’t give the author proper credit. Nevertheless, the quote is a gem for us speakers. You see, I believe that our role, every time we are on a stage, is to facilitate change. Mentally, spiritually, physically.

Change means movement, and movement means action. If I share something in a keynote or lecture, and you forget it the minute you leave the venue, how can I expect you to change? Sometimes we are more interested in looking good, forgetting that we can share something actually transformative to another person. This has happened to me more times than I want to admit, and I am sure it happens to you too. Sometimes, even if you do a great job, or so you thought, your message doesn’t stick. It’s frustrating.

I remember way back when I still had a “normal” job as a marketer at Ericsson, a global telecom company. I was walking down a street in Stockholm, lost in my own thoughts, probably late to a meeting. It was early spring, and the sun was shining. On the other

side of the street, I noticed a man staring at me. Like a heat-seeking missile, he crossed the street to intercept me. At first, I felt uncomfortable. My inner radar released stress hormones and prepared me for fight or flight. But I calmed down a bit when I saw this stranger's happy face. He seemed genuinely happy to see me.

"It's you! It's you!" he half shouted.

"It's me. It's me," I responded. *"Who are you?"*

"Ah, you don't know me, but we are colleagues. I was in the audience when you presented in Florida last year."

The fact that I didn't know him wasn't a mystery. In Stockholm alone, I had more than 15,000 colleagues. I remembered the event clearly. I was part of a market launch team, and I had just taken on a role working with competitor analyses. My presentation at the conference was about helping each other by sharing what we knew about our competition. The title was "If only Ericsson knew what Ericsson knows." And my call to action was for the people in the audience to connect and share their insights with me. Regrettably, I didn't get any traction from them after the event. It bothered me, and I couldn't put my finger on why. But working in a large corporation, you quickly get busy by just attending more meetings, so I had mentally put it aside.

The man continued. *"I saw you rock the stage. You were awesome, man!"*

I smiled and immediately grew an inch. *"Thank you,"* I said, remembering the massive applause I got.

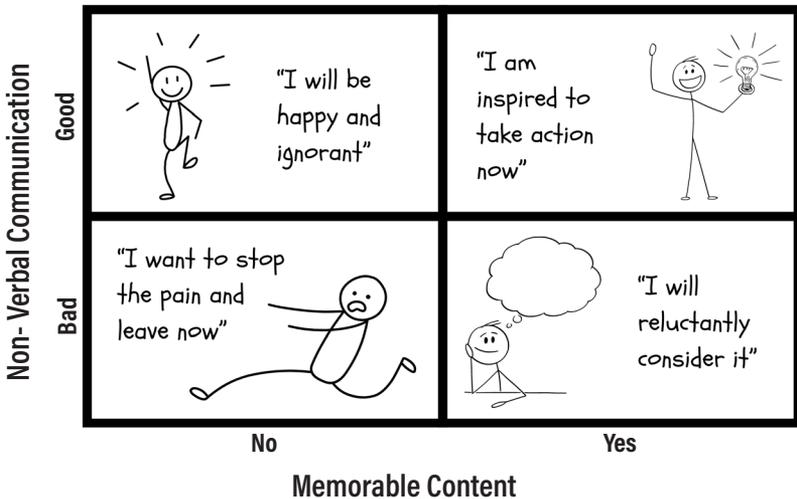
Then came the blow. He said, *"I don't remember anything you said, but you were awesome!"*

That inch I just grew: gone. I muttered another thank you, and after a quick chat, I went on my way. But that encounter planted a seed of doubt in me. I still remember it as a pivotal moment where my life changed, ever so slightly. I realized that it wasn't enough to

get ovations and applause. It was too... shallow. All talk, no action. I needed to up my game.

Think about the word “presentation”. The first part of that word is “present”. You are giving a present-ation. A great present has beautiful gift-wrapping, and inside is content that is appreciated. What I gave the audience in Florida was the gift-wrapping. Great energy, great body language, great tonality. But inside the box was only air. No relevance, no value, no content.

I am not saying that the gift-wrapping is unimportant. If you are a wine collector and I brought you wine wrapped in newspaper previously used in the fish market that gave you gag reflexes from the stench of rotten fish, chances are you wouldn't bother to unwrap it to find out what was inside. The way you present matters. But if that is all your audience remembers, you will not facilitate change. Your personal brand might get a boost, and perhaps your minutes on stage gave some of them relief from their daily worries, but that's it.



I believe we can do better. And it starts with them remembering at least some important messages we shared.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” — Maya Angelo

I think we can all agree that this is a beautiful piece of wisdom. The problem is that for you as a speaker, this is not helpful. It is not enough. It is, in fact, useless. By realizing this, you can take on the challenge and create and deliver something memorable. You can facilitate change. You can be a change maker. You don’t have to experience the whole “I don’t remember anything you said but you were awesome...” thing (which at least is better than “I don’t remember anything you said except you sucked”).

So, what can you do to be more memorable, and specifically to make your content stand out? In the rest of this chapter, you will get nine concrete hacks on how to create and deliver memorable content. You probably already do most, if not all, of them. Compare yourself with 99 per cent of any business presentation and you will excel. Pat yourself on the shoulder and check the box. Then ask yourself how you can hone your skills even more. If you notice there is something you haven’t tried, then I challenge you to test it – more than once. If you fail the first time, don’t give up. The advice is solid. You might just need to execute it better.

The Nine Steps:

1. Once Upon a Time

There is no single method, no technique as powerful, as storytelling. You will not only reach out, but you will also reach in. It is borderline magic!

Imagine that everybody has an intellectual bouncer in their brains. You start showing slide after slide with text, text, text, plus some stats, etc. The bouncer can easily stop any of that from entering the brain, claiming that *“This brain doesn’t believe that.”* But if you share a story, the bouncer will be utterly confused and say, *“I don’t know what to do with this. Here, let me open the door. Step inside. Go and find the CEO, located somewhere around the limbic systems... yes, right there where it says ‘emotions’. Talk to my boss instead of me.”* Brains cannot refuse to listen.

It is part of our DNA to sit around a fireplace and share stories. You simply must share stories, examples, anecdotes, etc. And the better you are at telling your stories, the more the audience will enjoy and remember them.

Apart from the basic ingredients of

- a time
- a place
- a person
- a problem
- a solution

you will add senses, so that your audience can imagine and experience what you say. Can you make them see what you see, hear what you hear, feel what you feel? It will help them “be inside” your story.

If you also act out with dialogue and “become” the different people in the story, you increase energy even more. People remember more

when they feel a heightened state of energy, so this will also improve their recall.

A word of warning: A story without any relevant lesson or connecting insight is just entertainment. A lesson without a story is often boring. Together, though... *wow!*

2. "Honey...aaa Sugar Sugar"

Charismatic people use 50 per cent more metaphors than the average Joe. Charismatic people also use storytelling, the power of three, and basically every other memory hack I will share with you. On top of that, they show courage and set high goals, they show empathy, and they use their body language as well as their voice. They ask rhetorical questions (many of these skills also trigger memory, so regard them as bonus hacks). But I digress. Let's explore why metaphor is so valuable.

A metaphor takes anything abstract, unknown or complicated into familiar and concrete territory. Who can really grasp 5G? I, who spent eight years in the telecom industry before leaving in 2006 to be a speaker and coach, cannot explain it in any technical terms. Even if I could, you wouldn't get it. But if I say that 5G is a superfast highway compared to 4G, which is a country road, and 3G, which is more of a gravel path, you get the concept. Fast. That's probably all you need to know, unless you are a propeller head (see? a metaphor for tech geek) and a telecom nerd.

An analogy is the same as a metaphor but with one difference. You start an analogy saying "It's like..." They both do the trick and help your audience understand what you say, thereby increasing the chance of remembering your message by infinity compared to not grasping any meaning at all.

If a picture paints a thousand words, a metaphor paints a thousand pictures. —Michael Henderson

3. THREE is the Magic Number

Think about all the stories and fairytales you heard when you were growing up. A surprising number of them include the magical power of three.

- How many wishes did Aladdin get from the genie?
- How many bears did Goldilocks encounter?
- How many musketeers are there in the classical story from France? (Actually, there were four. But we remember the “Three Musketeers”, don’t we?)

I can go on with other triads. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Or Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva?

It seems that as soon as we go above three messages, we put a cognitive overload on people. I am guilty of this all the time, when I share 7 motivational boosters, 9 steps for great feedback, or 20 communication insights. Not to mention “9 memory hacks”... But I also work hard to give them in chunks of threes whenever I can. For instance, the three communicative superpowers that I constantly preach about are **Energy** (so people believe that you believe), **Empathy** (so they feel that you get them), and **Clarity** (so they get you). By the way, this whole chapter is – almost – exclusively about the superpower of Clarity. Except for tip number 5.

One of my sons is studying mathematics at university. When he was a very young boy, he once counted something. I still remember him saying, “*One, two, three ...many.*”)

Say one thing and give three examples.

Say two things – like you will see in bullet point number 8.

Or say three things – but not more.

4. Fill in the _____

Which word comes next?

- Faith, hope and _____
- Blood, sweat and _____
- Sex, drugs and _____

If you didn't know the answer, the words are *love, tears, and rock'n'roll*. Most people know at least one or two of them. The trick here is that your brain naturally supplies the word that completes the trio. It's the same with your audience. When they get it right, or when you share the correct answer, they are rewarded with a dopamine rush. It feels good. It also makes them remember that content better. So how can you create a mantra of three things that sit together within your own presentation or topic?

For example – Start, middle, end; red, yellow, green (stop–pause–go); hard, medium, soft.

5. You Had Me at Hello

When Tom Cruise stands there in front of Renee Zellweger in the movie *Jerry McGuire*, his character is overwhelmed by emotion when he explains his true passion and how he has been an idiot. Renee's character waits and then delivers the epic line, "*You had me at hello.*" Not only is it an awesome one-liner (another bonus hack for jogging memory), but it shows that passion beats logic and helps us remember more since we are now emotionally invested. I mentioned this briefly in hack #1, where I said that if you are acting out your story, then you will be more energetic.

By the way – Energy is one of the three superpowers of communication!

The cool thing is that we have these mirror neurons in our brains. If you smile, I smile. If I see you fall and hurt your knee, the same areas that light up in your brain will light up in my brain too. By

demonstrating your passion for your topic – by emphasising what’s important, using strong gestures and facial expressions – you will get people to remember more than if you have a poker face and restrained body language. Unless you are a comedian.

6. Do the Yin and Yang Dance

Polarities create tension. I was at a European speaker summit, where I shared views on how to make your speech more personal. On one side of the stage, I had a flip chart where I drew an angry face. On the other side, I had a flip chart where I drew a happy face. That was it. Now I could approach the different sides depending on the examples I shared.

When using polarities, the audience gets involved with their own questioning of is it right or left? Right or wrong? Black or white? Yes or no? Good or bad? This makes people take a stand. They become activated, searching for the right answer. This increases their chance of remembering the opposites – the polarities – you present.

7. Bring the Popcorn



Using props instead of PowerPoint is often refreshing, and used right they will act as a trigger; when that trigger is released, your audience will suddenly remember what you said. I often use a bag of microwave popcorn in my speeches when I talk about employee engagement. I do a whole act on why people are like the corns in the back, how it takes time and energy to make them pop, and how some refuse to pop. I tell them to think about their own situation as a leader or colleague the next time they make some popcorn. This will trigger their memory.

I am playing with a similar idea of using coffee filters while talking about either core values or about leaving negativity behind when

you enter your workplace. (I have some work to do before getting it right.) If I succeed, every time they bring out a new filter, chances are high that they will remember what I talked about. I know that some of you have giveaways. It's not necessarily the same as a prop within a keynote, but it can still aid their memory, done right.

What can you use as props? The legendary speaker Tim Gard, CSP CPAE, does this extremely funny piece where he has three chairs on the stage, and talks about how he ends up in the middle seat. It is brilliant! He could have done it without the chairs, but they add to the experience. I, too, sometimes use a chair when I speak about coming home after being held at gunpoint. The chair symbolizes the bedside and how I sat down on the bed, unable to lie down, because I suddenly realized that I had just escaped death...

8. SURPRISE!!!

Consider what would happen if you did something truly unexpected.

- What if you brought a real brain or a dead chicken to the stage when you talked about consciousness and neuroscience?
- What if you created a stunning painting or sketch of your topic while speaking?
- What if you suddenly SHOUTED OUT LOUD, danced, or stripped to reveal a costume?
- What if you shared a fact that was mind blowing, or an idea worth spreading?

I guarantee they will remember it. Most people don't use the element of surprise. I sometimes struggle with this in my communication keynotes, getting responses like "*That was great! And so good to be reminded...*", meaning that I offered nothing new, even if I packaged it differently. I have worked quite a lot to find some elements of surprise, with the hope they will also say, "*I hadn't thought of it like that,*" or "*I didn't know this. Now I must...*"

People do like some predictability. Total chaos will exhaust them. If they had an inner traffic light, you want that light to turn green, so that they are at ease and open to your ideas. But don't underestimate the power of variation and dynamics. People also like surprises. Find a nice balance where they get both. What surprises them will stand out – just make sure it is the right kind of surprise, and not the ones you get in the next hack...

9. I would do anything for love, but I won't do that.

Here is what not to do: If you go for surprises, don't do a gimmick that distracts the focus from your content and lacks any relevance to what you will say. It's cheap, and it is stupid.

Here are two examples I have heard from friends:

1. They: *"I remember my first day at university. The professor came up on stage and accidentally dropped all his papers on the floor. We all gasped. Then he picked them up and started his lecture. I later found out that this was a gimmick. It was so funny. I still remember it!"*

Me: *"But do you remember what he talked about?"*

They: *"No..."*

2. They: *"It was so funny. I saw this speaker. She promised us that she would show a picture of herself naked at the end of the speech. And she did. She showed us a picture of herself as a two-year-old. Naked! It was hilarious!"*

Me: *"But do you remember what she talked about?"*

They: *"No..."*

I once witnessed a woman who ran an ad agency giving a brand message presentation. She decided it was a good idea to have angel wings attached to her clothes. She also hired an artist who created

a painting behind her – none of which had anything to do with brand messages. Nothing at all. I have no idea what she said. But I do remember the angel wings...

In summary

- People cannot act on what they don't remember!
- If you want to be a change maker, you must reach both their hearts and minds.
- Whatever you say or do should strengthen your message and help the audience remember the right things.

You got this!

Thanks for reading my mind

Antoni

About Antoni Lacinai

The Workplace Motivation and Communication Expert

Antoni Lacinai left corporate life in 2006 to focus on emcee and presentation skills training, before moving into the keynoting speaking. Today, he inspires with strategies for super-engaged teams through top-notch communication and empathy. Antoni is giving keynotes and trainings around the world. Even though he doesn't enjoy the actual traveling part of running between terminals, stressed out and anxious, he still feels it is worth it once he meets his clients and audience. Antoni has authored/co-written 14 books. He is a regular columnist in various magazines and is often interviewed on Swedish national TV.

Antoni lives in Sweden where he loves to create simple illustrations for his keynotes, even simpler songs for his friends, and not simple enough business blueprints for his customers.

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