

EXCLUSIVE TRAINING GUIDE

3

**High-Impact  
Ways to Start  
Every Time  
You Speak  
in Public**



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DAWES

**TRAINING**  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS  
THAT REMOVE LIMITS

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# Top 3 strategies to win an audience over, every time you start a presentation, talk, or speak up in meetings!

So much effort is put into the core content of what we intend to say or present, and so little on how we start and finish! Yet these are the most important parts and will determine how you feel as you open and close what you are going to share, and even more so the success of the effect on your audience from the content that you tried so hard with.

The most common way that we start (me included for my initial years of presenting) is to state your name, organisation, and title of what you are about to share with those in front of you. But think about it... They were invited to listen to you talking about your subject, they agreed to it, received the details in the confirmation, and were greeted by the holding slide of your name and presentation title on the big screen as they arrived and took their seats...

So, they probably don't need to be told again, and we would have lost the chance for that initial impact, and there's every chance that we have sent their interest down, to one extent or another. We need to settle ourselves into the upcoming information sharing and grab their attention fully from the get-go!

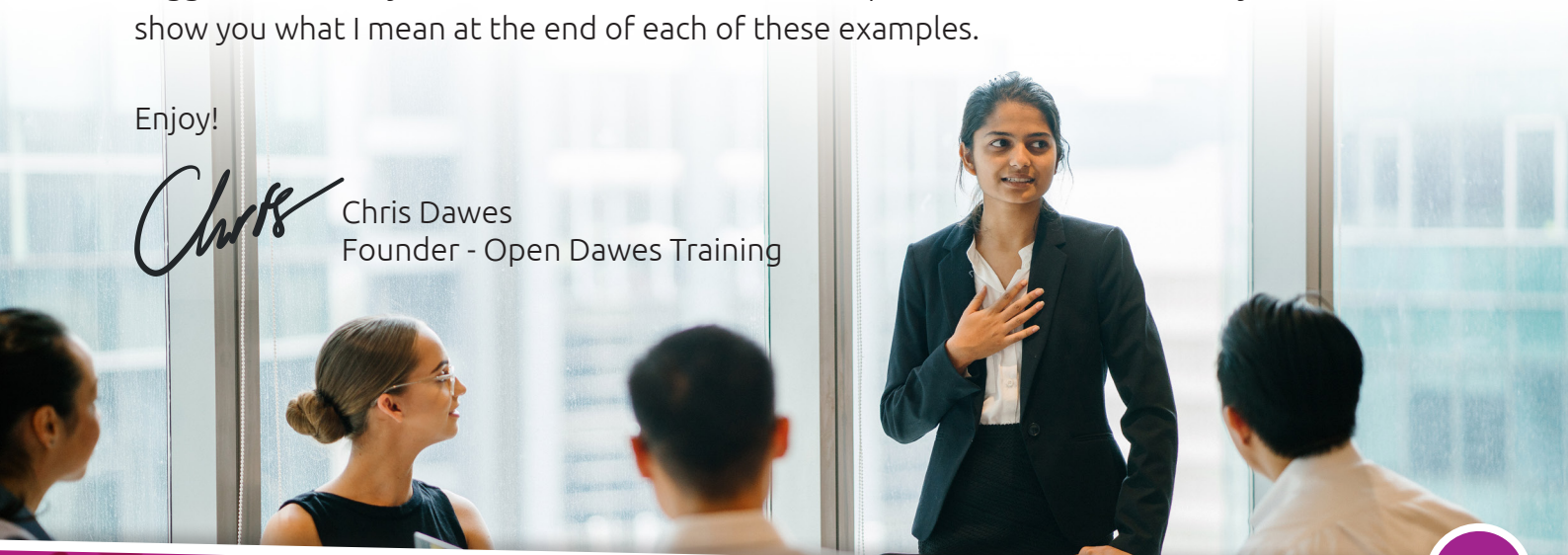
I know that this goes against what feels comfortable for so many, and makes people worry about seeming arrogant by presuming the audience already know who you are. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying that you don't confirm who you are, what you are going to cover, and maybe even get over why you are credible to share it with them. But it doesn't have to be the first thing you say.

In this guide are 3 of the 8 high impact ways to start that we work on in our training, and the suggestion is that you start with one of these 8 examples, AND THEN introduce yourself. I will show you what I mean at the end of each of these examples.

Enjoy!



Chris Dawes  
Founder - Open Dawes Training





## HIGH-IMPACT WAY NO.1

# Rhetorical, thought provoking question

To open up with a relevant, thought-provoking, question is a great way to lead into your subject matter, as it gets your audience aligned with what you are about to share with them and why it is important to listen to it. But you will notice that I am very specific in suggesting that it should be rhetorical, and this is for good reasons.

There's every chance that many of you have sat in a presentation, meeting or talk where one or more questions are used to kick start things, and maybe even heard it being justified with also trying to get the audience involved and active. However, this is a very risky move, could fall flat, and could even alienate you or some of your audience members.

Remember that you aren't the only one NOT fully relaxed in this environment. A varying proportion of your audience will not feel confident saying/sharing things with a room full of people, that they may or may not know (as covered in the nerves section of our training, either side of that coin cause issues to different people), and you won't know in advance how favourable that ratio may be. So, the last thing you want is to create a tumbleweed moment with no-one getting involved, or even worse making some of your audience disliking you or regretting being here...

Therefore, at this stage, I suggest that the best thing to do is to ask a question that can be internalised, or at the absolute most, require nothing more than a show of hands. All the while eliciting internal thoughts of things such as "oh yeah!", "good point!", "I hadn't thought about it that way!", "I had forgotten about that!", etc. All of which will create the response to sit up and want to hear the answers or relevant information that is now whirring through their minds.

After all, the definition of a "rhetorical question" is "a question asked in order to create a dramatic effect, or to make a point, rather than to get an answer".






## HIGH-IMPACT WAY NO.2

# Powerful Quote

Powerful quotes are commonplace on social media, whether on memes or just quoted by supportive friends/colleagues. The beauty of them is that it is not something that you have had to sit there for ages and come up with and hope works, but something that someone else was able to conjure up and, by design, has already been proven to resonate and evoke emotions with many.

Therefore, don't always feel the need to reinvent the wheel, but instead make use of something that relates to what you are about to speak about and has a proven track record of making people think and feel things about your subject matter.

My advice is, where possible, to avoid controversial or sensitive quotes or sources. Although this does edge into another area of the training where we share that our opinion is that you can never play "too safe", but you can (inadvertently or otherwise) stray too far the other way. When you start with a quote, it should grab the audience's attention, make them think, and thus add impact and relevance to what you are about to cover.



Inspirational  
Quote...

But always make sure that you don't attempt to claim it is your quote/sentiment (you never know how many people may have also heard it and would make you look silly and call your authenticity into question from that starting point onwards for those people), and that includes not suggesting it is yours by omission of acknowledgement – always attribute the quote to its source, even if in passing.

**EXAMPLE ▶**







## HIGH-IMPACT WAY NO.3

# “Why?”

My overriding opinion is that it helps all presentations, training, or meetings to start with the “why(s)”, as it helps people focus or even choose to listen at all. Not everyone is always there by choice, or even if they are, their expectations/requirements may be quite narrow/focused initially. If you can get people to think things such as “ah, ok, this IS relevant/useful to me actually”, or “oh right, there is even more to this than I was expecting”, then you have them sitting forward and ready to pay attention/interact.

In reality, the other potential starting suggestions could all include the “why” within them, or we even have the opening section of our full training being about the “why” (“Reasons & Benefits of Public Speaking” – which almost always results in people saying the likes of “I hadn’t considered that as well...”). But if you are not able to find a creative way to achieve the other 7 options, or don’t have time, then this would be my recommended focus or bare minimum. Give it a focus, a justification, and an “attention grabber”!

## Example

“Others can only grow if we share our knowledge, skills, experiences, and opinions. And we can only grow if we are heard sharing them. This training is not designed to necessarily turn you into the next TED Talks superstar speaker, but for all of us to have the right levels of confidence, skills, and preparation to be willing to and successfully let our voices be heard. My name is Chris Dawes of Open Dawes Training, and in this session...”

### Write up your why...

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# Final Thought...

Whilst there are a further 5 suggestions available in our full “Speaking with Impact” 8-part audio training product, I would like to leave you with another consideration based on another regularly suggested additional method when we open it up to our audiences/candidates in our live training sessions.

Many people suggest humour as being a good way to open up. Whilst in our full training we discuss how you should only ever play to your strengths, and if cracking jokes is not something you are naturally comfortable or adept at in the real world then you shouldn't do it in presentations/speeches, it is also important to consider the standing, structure, and positioning of humour.

To suggest starting with humour in isolation, it is in effect suggesting opening up with a joke. I would question the professionalism of bluntly opening with a joke, the risks of connection/alienation with your audiences, the risk of a ‘tumbleweed’ non-reaction, and whether this would engage your audience with your content as much as your attempt to engage them with you.

I am not suggesting avoiding humour, in fact, far from it! It can be a great way to relax both you and your audience. But there is a huge difference between making your opening gambit humorous and telling a joke to start.

Therefore, if you feel that you can pull it off, structure your start to grab their attention, provide motivation and context for the rest of your content, and to relax you and your audience into a worthwhile period of time spent together, hopefully making use of one of the 8 suggested ways to start, and then make that humorous.

***“Sizzle without the steak can miss the spot just as much as steak without the sizzle”***

~ Chris Dawes - Founder, Open Dawes Training Ltd