

## How to Develop an Effective Summary (Real or Pseudo Summary?)

Most business or technical-related presentations are divided into a number of main topics. Speakers usually tell their audience at the beginning what points they will cover in the outline. It's usually given in a way similar to this: *"First I will talk about...secondly, I'll discuss...and finally we'll be looking at..."*

The speaker then transitions into the body of the presentation – and after 20-40 minutes arrives at the summary. And that's when things get strange. After announcing, *"Let me now summarize my main points"*, a great many speakers end up not giving a summary at all. What they give their listeners is the outline topics again – only this time in the past tense. This is what is known as a **pseudo summary**. No key information is distilled out of the talk and no interpretation of that key information is offered.

### \*\*\* Example \*\*\*

<b>Summarizing</b> (the outline topic again)	<i>- <b>To sum up</b> - <u>we've looked at</u> the various strategies we should take to remain competitive in the face of new environmental legislation. <u>We've also seen</u>, the probable costs involved at implementing these strategies. And finally <u>we've seen</u> the results of our market research in connection to customer views on recycled paper products.</i>
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Look familiar? How many times have you heard a summary like the one above? Somehow, it has become standard in the business world today. And yet, no one seems to notice that nothing is being said. What's worse, the chance to tell the audience one last time what is really important - is wasted.

A complete summary is composed of two parts. The first part involves summarizing concisely the **key information** contained in the core of your presentation. If you had 3 points in your outline, then you will need to extract the key idea from each point. But that's not enough. You should go one step further, which is part two, and *interpret* the summarized points into one memorable **key message**. It's what you want your audience to go away with – and absolutely remember! A classic example of the content and differences between a summary and key message can be taken from a Hollywood courtroom drama. At the end, after the whole procedure is just about to end, the dueling lawyers make once last appeal to the jury. The defense attorney might summarize by saying, "We proved that my client's DNA did not match the DNA found at the crime scene. Indeed, we also established that at no time was my client ever at the crime; three witnesses said they saw him somewhere else on the night of the murder. And finally, we have also been able to verify that there was no motive on the part of my client. **KEY MESSAGE:** Ladies and gentlemen, my client *is innocent*."

A **good test** to determine if you've formulated the summary well – is to ask whether someone entering the room just as you begin your summary would get the essential information and key message of your talk. If not, there's a good chance you're offering your listeners only a pseudo summary.

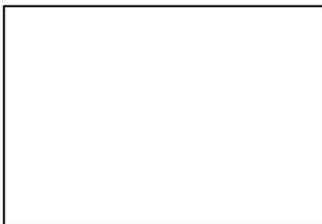
\*\*\* Example \*\*\*

<b>Summarizing key information</b>	- <b>To sum up</b> - <i>we've seen that to survive today we need to expand our current capabilities by moving into "recycled packaging". We've also seen, that apart from a modest investment cost for some new equipment, production costs for recycled paper decrease a full 40%. And finally we've seen that customers will accept recycled paper products if they meet industry standards for <b>quality</b> and <b>strength</b>.</i>
<b>Interpretation (key message)</b>	- <b>In other words</b> , <i>the addition of recycling technology will not only make us more flexible, but it will open up a lucrative new market for us.</i>

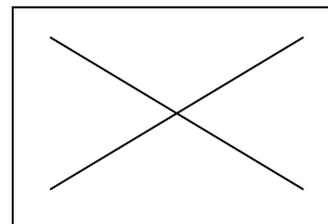
(in Diagram Form)

The classic presentation imperative of **"tell your audience what you're going to say, tell them, then tell them what you've said"** – has been misunderstood with regard to the last instruction. "Tell them what you said" does not mean to repeat the outline again, but rather, to tell the audience what the essential information and message was – for those who may not have grasped it or were not paying attention at that time.

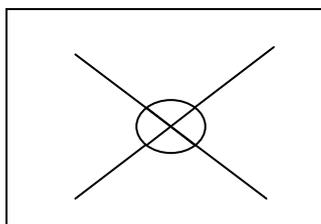
1. The outline sets the parameters of your talk to a limited number of points.



2. The body of the presentation provides the content to the frame. It fills it in.



3. The summary identifies the essential core information for each point.



4. Key information plus interpretation is an effective summary.

