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Preface

Let's be honest, most corporate presentations are truly awful. Not just bad, but appalling, dreadful, terrible experiences for everyone. They are often nerve-wracking for the presenter to deliver, but, more importantly, they are usually excruciatingly tedious for audience members to sit through. For most corporate audiences, presentations are tests of endurance – *can I make it to the end without either falling asleep or losing the will to live?* This is why we go so far as to say that these brutal experiences are *inhumane*.

But why should you, the presenter, care? Aren't people paid to sit through corporate presentations? Well – yes. But here's the thing: when human beings are bored, unhappy and uncomfortable, they are extremely bad at taking in and remembering information. In other words, if your audience has a bad time, your presentation will not achieve its objective – because your audience will not engage with, understand or remember what you said. Really – this is a scientific fact.

If we want corporate presentations to be effective, they must take into account the human dimension. We must understand the environmental, psychological and physiological factors that make human beings pay attention to, engage with and remember new information. Hence, the title of this book: *Humane*. Which is defined as: *'that which is marked or motivated by concern with the alleviation of suffering'*. This book is about how to prevent a presentation from inflicting suffering on our audience – not because we're nice people, but because we want our presentation to work.

If you're wondering why we emphasise the 'e' at the end of *Humane*, it's because the 'e' stands for 'engagement', which is what makes your presentation work. Any time you focus on the *Humane* (i.e. no suffering) aspect of delivering your presentation, you will instantly increase your audience's level of engagement – mentally, physically and emotionally. And, as engagement levels rise, so does the chance of your presentation being effective. This is why the nine strategies in this book are all designed to maximise the engagement levels of your audience.

Please note: this book is intended for presenters of all experience levels, in *any* area of business – *regardless of your presentation material*. If you're just starting out as a presenter, you'll find numerous broad strategies you can use immediately – clear, focused

ideas that will not only instantly increase the value of any session, but will also decrease your stress levels while presenting. If you're an experienced presenter, you probably already understand the principles this book is based on, but you'll still find value in the specific, practical ideas to boost your power as a presenter.

Before we dive into Humane presenting, we need to preface everything we're about to talk about with a radical idea. Here it is: *Not all presentations are necessary*. The first step to becoming a Humane presenter is to ask yourself: Do you really *need* to do a presentation on this topic? Is there another way of achieving your goal rather than getting people together in one room and talking at them? For example, could you instead simply send them an email, call them later and get their reactions to it?

The point is, presenting requires a huge amount of time and effort – for all parties. So only embark on it if you genuinely need to. Of course, there are times when presenting really is the best possible means of delivering new information. When this is the case, this book will not only help you create, but deliver a presentation that gets the results you are hoping to achieve – without your audience losing the will to live.

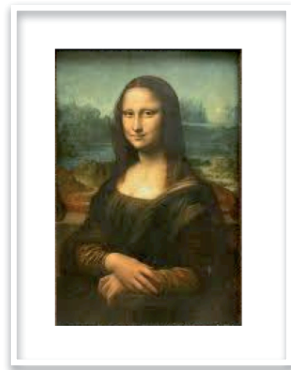
One final thought: Please don't 'read' this book in the same way you'd read a novel. There's no plot here, no sequence of events, no character development to follow and certainly no climax. Instead, *read only the parts that are important to you*. Meaning this book was written to be browsed through, much as you'd browse through a shop. Open it up, thumb through it, find something that interests you and explore that idea. The ideas are presented as succinctly as possible, so you can quickly grasp the idea and decide if it's going to be useful in your specific situation. When you're ready, amble on to another section of interest.

We understand you are extremely busy. By approaching the material in the book in this way, we hope that – in a very short period – you'll be able to get real value out of the time you invest in reading it. You'll become a more confident, effective and, above all, Humane presenter – and your audience will thank you for it!

They do this by saying things like: ‘Let me start by warning you: this content is pretty dry, and we have a fair bit to get through in very little time.’ In this situation, what would your reaction be? Right – we wouldn’t want to be there either!

Presenters say things like this in an attempt to disassociate themselves from the material and the experience that is about to occur. Why do they do this? They want to protect their credibility by not linking it to what’s about to happen. But what they *actually* do is shoot down their credibility before they’ve even begun the presentation. From the very start of the presentation, the audience has a negative perception of the material, the presenter and the outcome – the entire experience.

Look at the two pictures – the Mona Lisa is worth at least \$50 million. What would be your reaction if it were in the frame on the left?



Most people prefer the image on the right, because it more accurately reflects our perceived value of the world’s most famous portrait. Yet, in each case *the painting is the same*. Now extend this idea. In a presentation, your content is the painting. How you choose to ‘frame’ it will determine the audience’s reaction, your credibility and the success (or otherwise) of your presentation.

As presenters, we need to be aware of two primary types of *frames* – proactive and reactive. A proactive frame allows you to plan how you are going to create meaning for the material you are about to present. A reactive frame is when something happens