



The Art of Presenting.
An Informative Series

NO **3**

Cathy Monetti – RIGGS – Columbia, South Carolina



Cathy Monetti, President and Creative Director at RIGGS in Columbia, SC; has won countless industry awards. However, she is most proud of cofounding the national CreateAthon network (createathon.com), a small agency partnership that has donated more than \$7 million in marketing and advertising services to nonprofits in North America. Having been awarded the elusive silver medal in debate at the Buckley School of Public Speaking, she also knows a lot about presenting. I had the honor of meeting Cathy during an interview and was impressed by how she can exude toughness while maintaining her naturally pleasant personality.

1. *How do you prepare for a presentation?*

I make sure I know my stuff. Then I actually write out what I plan to say, and I rehearse it. But in the pitch, I NEVER EVER read from my script – I write it out so that I can organize my thoughts, scrap parts that aren't strong enough, that sort of thing. Edit, edit, edit. I also plan my outfit. Great shoes are essential.

2. *Describe your overall presentation style.*

Conversational. Passionate. Earnest. Here's a tip:

In every pitch, I always work in at least one “a little too truthful” truth: an inside peek at how we developed one aspect of the work; a comment made during a creative session; a road we traveled but abandoned – something that is clearly truthful but slightly inappropriate for a formal presentation. I want them to know I am leveling with them. I also want to demonstrate for them (albeit subconsciously) the power of being truthful and direct.

3. *Do you still get nervous during presentations?*

Having great work to present greatly calms the nerves.

4. *How do you deal with a limited or set presentation time?*

Limited presentation time is always a hassle on the front end (preparing) and a blessing on the back end (presenting). Forces you to cut out all the crap and get to the point quickly.

5. *What's the biggest mistake you've made during a presentation?*

Outlining strategy rather than demonstrating it. It's the curse of PowerPoint.

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6. *How do you know when a presentation is going south – and what do you do?*

Oh, it's clear. The alpha dog checks his/her blackberry, cell phone, other digital equipment. Then everyone who is deferring to the alpha dog gets anxious. Not a good situation.

And I swear THE NEXT TIME I'm going to stop wherever we are and say, "Clearly, Mr. Big, you are distracted by other commitments. Why don't we reschedule for another time?" That dude places no value on what we do and he's in charge. Run for your life, I say.

7. *What's the best advice you can give creatives to help them present better?*

It's perfectly acceptable to be yourself – clients enjoy (and need) creative contact. But speak with authority. Also, present logically. Creative is a journey; let the client walk with you.

8. *How important are presentation skills for an artist/creative?*

More important than creative talent. A good presenter can sell a bad idea. A bad presenter can't sell anything.

9. *Anything else you'd like to say on this topic?*

Ask for feedback on the spot. Here's why:

Any negative reaction will come in the form of questions, which you can address right there while you are still in control and sounding smart. All the positive stuff will come as comments, and you will walk away from the pitch (and so will they) with a client endorsement. That's powerful. ✎

To learn more about Cathy and her agency, RIGGS, simply visit www.riggsspeak.com

To learn more about the CreatAthon network Cathy cofounded, visit www.createathon.com