

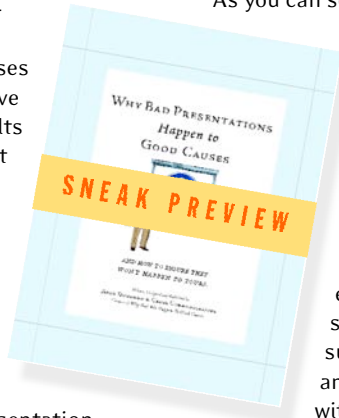
# Think You're a Good Presenter? (Your Audience May Disagree.)

While *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes* won't be published until December, our survey of public interest professionals is complete. And with 2,501 responses in hand, we already have some interesting results to share. Over the next few months, we'll be previewing some of those findings right here, such as the table below.

The middle column shows the basic elements of a typical presentation. On the left, are the percentages of respondents who rated each item "good to excellent" for presentations they give. On the right are the per-

centages of respondents who rated these parts good to excellent for presentations they attend.

As you can see, respondents consistently gave themselves higher marks, with nearly half believing their presentations fell into the good to excellent range overall. They were far less generous to their colleagues, however, with less than a fifth earning good to excellent scores. These numbers suggest that audiences are frequently dissatisfied with what they see, but presenters simply aren't getting the message. And that may be one reason why bad presentations continue to plague good causes. ■



Presentations I Give	Rated Good-Excellent	Presentations I Attend
46%	Visuals (e.g., PowerPoint)	19%
64%	Handouts	24%
64%	Presenter Interacting with Audience	24%
24%	Presenter Having Audience Interact with Each Other	8%
49%	Overall Rating	18%

# free-range thinking

Regular readers of this monthly missive know that July is book month, but before you tackle any of the touted tomes, please consider some advice from a previous July:

money, you inevitably feel obliged to read the whole damn thing. Well, don't. In *Peak Learning* (Tarcher/Putnam © 1991), author Ronald Gross recommends "proactive reading," a time saving technique that boils down to three easy steps:

*Don't feel obliged to read every word.* As a frequent consumer of non-fiction, I have encountered more than a few books that could easily have delivered all their wisdom in a 5,000-word article. The books' authors, however, apparently envisioned a pot of gold at the end of the publishing rainbow, so they expanded what could have been a dense magazine piece into a bloated, repetitive hardback that costs twenty-five bucks.

## The Sixth Annual Summer Reading List

Drop that *Da Vinci Code*. Forget about Faulkner (no matter what Oprah may say.) The books you really need to read this summer are all inside.

**Step 1:** scan the book's description, introduction, table of contents, and index to determine whether the book will be genuinely useful before you buy it.

**Step 2:** read only those parts of the book listed in the table of contents that appear to be directly relevant to your work.

**Step 3:** study the book's index closely to determine if there are other portions of the book (not cued by table of contents headings) that may also be relevant.

And after plunking down that kind of

So caveat emptor, and happy reading!



**a goodman**  
GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

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Newsletter edited by Carolyn Ramsay.

## How To Win Campaigns

by Chris Rose (*Earthscan* © 2005)

For a basic grounding in public interest campaigning—from big picture strategy to nitty-gritty details—Rose’s book is tough to beat. Having directed campaigns for Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and World Wildlife Federation International, Rose speaks from firsthand experience, and his lessons are applicable beyond the environmental arena he knows so well. Veteran communicators may not find many new ideas here, but it never hurts to brush up on the basics. For newcomers, it’s a must-read.

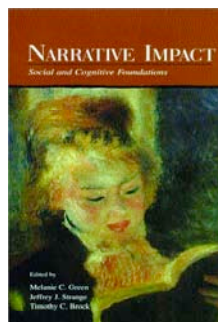


► *In most campaigning, it’s best to abide by the marketing dictum, ‘Start from where your audience is....’ Campaigners who project their concerns and perspectives onto others—trying to ‘sell,’ adding arguments and pointing to benefits, rather than researching audience perceptions, tend to fail.*

## Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations

Edited by Melanie C. Green, et. al. (*Lawrence Erlbaum Associates* © 2002)

Not for the faint of heart, *Narrative Impact* is a collection of scholarly essays that dig deep into the psychological, social and scientific factors that make storytelling such a powerful form of communication.



Ronald Jacobs essay, “The Narrative Integration of Personal and Collective Identity in Social Movements,” is a stand out, making a convincing case that large-scale public uprisings for civil rights, environmental protection and other issues rely heavily on shared stories to bind participants together.

► *The fate of any group – whether large or small, long-established or still in formation—depends on its ability to marshal and maintain a shared story that allows potential and existing members to feel at home, to say, in effect, that “these are my people, this is my history, and this is my future.”*

## Multimedia Learning

By Richard E. Mayer (*Cambridge University Press* © 2001)

With chapter titles such as “Spatial Contiguity Principle” and “Temporal Contiguity Principle,” Mayer’s book is the kind you would probably pull off the shelf, flip through briefly, and promptly put back. For users of PowerPoint, however, it’s worth another look because Mayer speaks directly to such common questions as “How much text on a slide is too much?” and “When

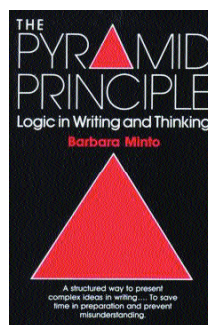


is it better to say it or show it?” Yes, you’ll have to sift through some pretty murky passages, but valuable nuggets await the persevering reader.

► *The modality effect suggests an important design principle: When making a multimedia presentation consisting of animation and words, present the words as narration rather than on-screen text. Words as text and words as narration may be processed differently by learners even when the words are identical.*

## The Minto Pyramid Principle

by Barbara Minto (*Minto International, Inc.* © 2003)



Subtitled “Logic in Writing, Thinking and Problem Solving,” Minto’s book provides a fundamental technique for organizing your thoughts into a coherent memo, report, PowerPoint, or other form of communication. Like

*Multimedia Learning*, this isn’t a light read, and if some of the text starts to make you drowsy, the book’s price tag (\$99.50) will snap you out of your slumber. But for anyone who’s ever experienced the sheer terror of a blank page, Minto’s method can calm your fears and get you going.

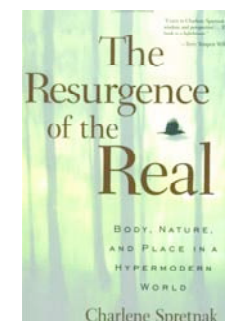
► *...a reader groups and summarizes ideas as a matter of course to remember them. He comprehends ideas presented to him more readily if they are also grouped and summarized, and presented from the top down. All of this suggests that the clearest*

*written documents will be those that consistently present their information from the top down, in a pyramidal structure, even though the original thinking will have been done from the bottom up.*

## The Resurgence of the Real

by Charlene Spretnak (*Routledge* © 1997)

Pharmaceutical companies tell us the body is a machine that can be fixed by their pills. Multinational conglomerates treat the natural world as something to be manipulated and controlled to maximize corporate profits. Starbucks, McDonalds, and Wal-Mart move into our hometowns—making them look like every other hometown—and our sense of place moves out. Put it all together, says Spretnak, and you have the millennial malaise that afflicts so many of us these days. Her book offers hope, however that we are beginning to see a “resurgence of the real” in which some people are rebelling against the false notions that



have been sold to them for so long. If you consider yourself an “employee” in the world-changing business, *Resurgence of the Real* is an eye-opening portrait of the world you are trying to change.

► *We may know immeasurably more about the universe than our ancestors did, and yet it increasingly seems that they knew something more essential than we do, something that escapes us. (Vaclav Havel)* ■