# Let's Talk (Talking) Tech

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*This presentation
has been modified
from its original format*

- This presentation was conducted almost exclusively in images – no text.

- The <u>handout</u> of this slide deck has removed all images used during live presentation

- This is to make the content consumable in an after-the-fact context
  - The image-heavy version of this deck **would not** make sense without the speaker for clarification!

# Why this talk?

- A confluence of a last-minute cancellation and a business need

- Humanity wrestles with the idea of explaining ideas
  - Always has
  - Whole industries have grown up around it

- It's not a topic I've covered yet, oddly enough

- ***Images used****: none (this is all covered during the title slide)*

# Why me? (1)

- Brian's been presenting since 2006--dozens of conferences and hundreds of talks

- Joy found in teaching and helping

- ***Image used***: *PowerPoint windows of a lot of presentations, using different conference templates from years past*

# Why me? (2)

- Also give talks, present, do panels in my "other life" (fiction writer)
  - So I must enjoy it, right?
  - Tech and fiction have this commonality in telling stories and sharing ideas
  - In another life, I'd probably have become a professor


- ***Image used**: PowerPoint windows showing recent SFWA / podcast engagements for non-technical stuff*

# Why me? (3)

- It all started with MVMUA!
  - A lot of kind folks listened to a nervous kid talk about SSL
  - VM community was kind and welcoming
  - The goal now is to pay forward on that kindness, and share what I've learned from Bit, Alan, Reed, Tracy, and so many others

- *Images used*:
  - *MVMUA webpage*
  - *Edgar Beargen, the green teddy bear / VM Mascot*

# Why you?

- You're an expert!  Whether you think you are or not
  - You have "a certain set of skills" that no one else has
  - You have a point of view we value
  - You've undoubtedly found a "cool thing" or solved a problem from which someone else might benefit!

- It's also a very good thing to have non-vendor presentations at events like these – they're the lifeblood of the community

- *Images used*:
  - *Liam Neeson on a cellphone, from the movie **Taken (2008, 20th Century Fox)**.*
  - *An orchestra, with conductor, mid performance*

# Where do we start? (1)

- "At the beginning."
  - You have a cool idea.
  - This idea becomes the focal point of your presentation
  - Everything stems from this.
  - (It's like a thesis, but don't fret about that.)

- ***Image used***:  *Glinda the Good Witch standing on the Yellow Brick Road, from **The Wizard of Oz (1939, MGM)***

# Where do we start? (2)

- Let's explore the cool idea.  What do you want to say about it?
    - What story do you want to tell?
    - What was your problem, pain point, or starting point
    - What's the cool thing you did / found / demanded of IBM
    - Why are you excited about it, and/or how did it help you
    - Are there tricks and tips to it


- You don't need to call it a "thesis statement" or use the "inverted pyramid" to make the cool idea work for you.


- ***Image used***:  *a cartoon graphic of a lightbulb*

# Where do we start? (3)

- Set the tone at the beginning as well. This should carry through your entire talk.

- Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" – the objective of any work is either
    1. To teach or
    2. To elicit an emotional response

- For tech, it's usually #1.
- *But they're not mutually exclusive.*

- ***Image used****: black-and-white photograph of Edgar Allan Poe*

# How do we build? (1)

- Common advice in tech tells us we have to cover three things:
  - "Say what you're going to say"
  - "Say it"
  - "Say what you just said."

- That's not the only structure you can use, but it gives you a foundation from which to start

- ***Image used***: *three post-it notes in a horizontal line, with the numbers "1" "2" and "3" respectively.*

# How do we build? (2)

- "Saying it" thus becomes the hard part. (Certainly the biggest part!)
  - Don't panic!
  - It's about using the underlying "core idea" to give you things to say
    - What it is, what it does, what problem did it solve, how can it help
  - And if it's a cool idea, it can be easy to lose sight of the point.
    - The opposite of "don't know what to say" is "too much to say."
    - How it's built, other problems and detours, bunny trails and casual asides…

- ***Images used**:*
  - *Keanu Reeves, with his mouth closing up, in **The Matrix (1999, Warner Brothers)***
  - *Overhead view of a large circular hedge maze*

# How do we build? (3)

- How many slides?  "As many as it takes."
  - Could be 2.  Could be 10.  Could be 100.
  - Part of this is personal preference; part of this is timing
  - Part of this is audience
  - We'll get to a lot of that shortly

- But don't feel pressured to go one way or the other.  It's your story.

- ***Image used***:  *two stacks of papers and folders – one large, one small.*

# Know your material (1)

- Nothing more boring than watching someone read slides

- Not bad to glance back, see where you are
  - But the audience can read the slides
  - The focus should be on you
  - "They won't remember what you said; they'll remember how you made them feel"

- ***Image used***: *a picture of an open book, mid-novel, with the hand of a reader holding the cover open, as though we're reading over the shoulder*

# Know your material (2)

- It may be tempting to make the slides dense with text or diagrams – you have a lot of stuff to say about your cool thing!

- Resist the urge – this causes headaches and frustration
  - Pulls focus away from you
  - Makes audience angry when you skip ahead

- *Image used:  A stick figure recoiling in horror as a massive wall of English-language words falls on top of them. (From **Hyperbole and a Half**, Allie Brosh, © 2011)*

# Know your material (3)

- Some people go all-images in presentation

- This is entirely up to you.  For tech, probably less useful than words

- Images are great for sparking interest, but can cause confusion

- You yourself need to remember what the heck that image is doing there

- ***Image used***: *A graphic of the Death Star from **Star Wars**, above the sentence in cursive script, 'Ceci n'est pas une lune" (French for "This is not a moon"). (And it's not. It's a space station.)*

# Know your material (4)

- It can be hard to know where to draw the line

- Some presenters will do 150 slides, and go way over time, because that's where they're going – omnibus

- Go back to your core idea – anything that doesn't help you tell the story is part of the DVD extras.  Leave it as a surprise for the handouts.

- ***Image used*: *The Lord of the Rings Extended Special Edition*** *Blu-Ray set, with the text "The Best Extras and Special Features on Film Editing" superimposed*

# Know your material (5)

- That core idea, that thesis statement, that guiding light is what matters

- Everything you want to say stems from it

- Keep it as your focus, and you've handled one of the three key components of talking tech

- ***Image used***: *The same cartoon lightbulb*

# Know your timing (1)

- Second is timing
  - Could I give this talk in 60 minutes? 30?  15?  2?
  - What changes with the extras and education?
  - **The core message should not shift** – the timing is about landing the story and delivering supporting evidence

- *Image used:  A human hand holding a stopwatch above an Olympic style swimming pool, to measure race times*

# Know your timing (2)

- This involves practice and rehearsal

- Brian (your speaker today) writes out the first five to ten slides long-hand. Throws that away. Writes them again. Throws that away too. Not because he intends to use them, but because it helps him rehearse flow
  - Brian usually doesn't rehearse a full deck, but that's because he has a good idea of how long he talks and how many slides he does.
  - That's after 18 years of experience, though.

- George Carlin: an immaculate stage presence who prepared every beat down to pauses and breaths. (He was paid a lot more than Brian is!)

- ***Image used***: *A view from the stage of Carnegie Hall, New York City. ("Practice, man, practice.")*

# Know your timing (3)

- "We're running out of time, so we won't get to this part, but…"
  - Don't waste time
  - Don't waste time apologizing for not getting to everything – just skip ahead
    - In Tech education, questions that delay flow are good!
    - Don't panic.  Roll with it.

- Plan for 50 minutes talk, 10 minutes questions
  - But know your audience – more on this in a bit
  - It's not a crime to finish talking at the 55 minutes mark.  (Everyone gets coffee faster.)

- ***Image used***:  *A black-and-white cartoon graphic of a stopwatch with the text, "2 Minute Warning"*

# Know your audience (1)

- The third part is your audience
  - Are they developers? Peers, mentors, mentees?
  - Are they managers?
  - Are they executives, and is this a business pitch?

- This doesn't change the core idea, but it changes how technical you are, how much time you spend, and what they might see as benefits (e.g. "hours saved" vs "ROI")

- ***Images used***:
  - *A statue of Sun Tzu, with the quote: "If you know your enemy and know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles."*
  - *A woman in a blazer holding a black-and-white dart board in front of her face. ("A target audience.")*

# Know your audience (2)

- The references we use as metaphor, citation, or explanation matter
  - Cultural context shifts over time
  - Not everyone gets your references. (Sorry!)
  - Different age groups view different references differently
  - Similarly, lingo and slang are different in different age groups

- This doesn't change the core idea, but it impacts how you help an audience understand it.

- *Images used*:  *three movie stills used side-by-side in a horizontal line:*
  - *Humphrey Bogart in **Casablanca (1942, Warner Bros)**.*
  - *Wallace Shawn, Andre the Giant, and Mandy Patinkin in **The Princess Bride (1987, 20th Century Fox)***
  - *Michelle Yeoh in **Everything Everywhere All At Once (2022, IAC Films and A24)***

# Know your audience (3)

- Keeping a steady pace helps a lot
  - Not necessarily monotone, but speak slowly, calmly, confidently
  - No prizes for finishing in 10 minutes

- Not every audience speaks English as a first language – leave a bit of extra time for the message to land

- ***Image used***: *A stylized cartoon of a turtle running in two legs through a ribbon across a race's finish line, ahead of a surprised-looking rabbit*

# Know your audience (4)

- Humor is hard – not everyone has the same sense of humor

- Not everyone appreciates humor in a technical or business context
  - Some of this is personal; some of this is cultural
  - You'll have to accept that not every joke lands for everyone
  - You'll have to accept that your style may need to shift depending on audience
  - But if you're good at it, enough jokes land for enough
  - Don't force it – not everything has to be (or is) funny

- ***Image used**:  A Monty Python cartoon figure loudly saying the word "Pythonesque"*

# Know your audience (5)

- Nerves happen for everyone (even me, after 18 years)
  - It's okay to be nervous
  - It's okay to make mistakes

- Practice helps, friendly audiences help
  - Jumping jacks, push-ups, walking around – physical activity
  - Breathing exercises, mantras and koans – mental stillness

- ***Image used***: *A small child in front of a large red curtain, covering their face with their hands*

# Let's put it into practice (1)

- "The journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step"

- So let's take the core idea of this very presentation and watch it build in real-time, shall we?

- ***Image used****:  Photograph taken on the stairs underneath Hohenzollern Castle, near Stuttgart, Germany*

# Let's put it into practice (2)

**"Can I explain _how_ to tell a technical story in a way that's engaging and also educational?"**

- **_Image used_**: _the same cartoon lightbulb, on the right-hand side of the slide._

# Let's put it into practice (3)

## Some other "Core Ideas" from VM Workshop 2024

- **Getting Started with IBM Z Cryptography**
"How do I use these crypto features? A hero's journey from hardware to cloud, with value statements and on-ramps to know-how."

- **What's Going Right: Warning Track Support (Maietti)**
"Like a painter, we're going to illustrate and fine-tune this specific problem until we find a solution."

- **z/VM Security News**
"A series of vignettes around a central theme – diligence, patience, care. Value: overall security posture and more tools for the toolkit."

- **Whaddaya mean we can't share the RACF database? (Graves)**
"We hit a problem, and we went through several try-fail cycles on our way toward victory."

- **Trusting your Code**
"It's dangerous out there! Please take this cryptography. Multiple features in response to industry shifts leading toward future adjustments."

- **z/VM Platform Update (Hartmann)**
"A series of vignettes around a central theme – strategy, resiliency, simplification. Value: continued investment and growth into the world's most awesome hypervisor."

# Let's put it into practice (4)

- Once you have an idea, sketch out where you want to go

- In presenting, much like in fiction, some people prefer to outline, and some people prefer to "wing it"

- The distinction is in the editing process
  - Did you want to "pay now" or "pay later"?

- **Image used**: a hand and pen hovering over a piece of paper, taking notes, on the right-hand side of the screen.

**"Let's Talk (Talking) Tech" Initial Outline:**
- Why this talk?
- Why me?
- Why you?
- Let's build a story
- Three things
- Know what you want to say (what's your core idea)
  - Know your material
  - Don't recite or read it
  - Don't overwhelm them
  - Trim the fat (DVD extras)
- Know your timing
- Know your audience
  - Keep to a certain level and stay there
  - Humor
- How was this presentation built? (Examples!)
- Insightful conclusion I haven't thought of yet

# Let's put it into practice (5)

- After an outline, start writing slides
  - Go point by point
  - Focus on words to start – images and cool graphics come later
  - Hold on tight to the core idea

- ***Image used***: *Screen capture of PowerPoint "slide mode" of this presentation in its early draft format, illustrating mostly words that follow the outline and explanatory text*

# Let's put it into practice (6)

- Once the words are together, rehearse
  - You may find that you need to reorder content
  - You may have ideas here about how to "spice up" the content
  - Focus on flow, then on aesthetics

- ***Image used**: A mechanic (in coveralls) and a car owner looking under the hood of a vehicle*

# Let's put it into practice (7)

- Don't belabor it all
  - It's always easy to make "one more change"
  - Try to settle on a stable base; practice that
  - Diminishing returns on modifications

- If it's a cool enough thing, there's always next time

- ***Image used****: A hand polishing a brass plumbing fixture*

# Let's sum everything up

- Start with a core idea

- "Say what you're going to say; say it; say what you've said."

- Keep to your message; practice your timing; remember your audience

- ***Images used***:
  - *Hollerith tabulating machine ("Let's sum up." haha.)*
  - *Three images side by side:*
    - *Lightbulb*
    - *Post-it (the number 3)*
    - *Woman in a blazer with a dart-board blocking her face*

# Questions?

- ***Image used***: *a question mark in a white thought bubble on an orange background*

Brian Hugenbruch
**_Story enthusiast and technical presenter_**


*(The version of this presentation posted to the website will be text-based.  Because it won't make sense otherwise.)*



**Social Media:**

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*Fin*

Thank you for listening