



How to develop a talk for **TED @ UPS** July 2017



How to develop a talk for TED@UPS

By: The TED@UPS Team

By now, you've heard that UPS has partnered with the TED Institute to produce a third *TED@UPS* event this July!

This creates a wonderful opportunity for UPS to show the world that we're an organization of smart, passionate people full of big ideas that can change the world. Or put another way, that we're *United Problem Solvers*.

We prepared the following "tip sheet" to help you get on the *TED@UPS* stage on July 20th.

This year's theme is: What If? That's an open-ended question that allows our speakers to share their big ideas about ... well, almost *anything*. We're open to talks about technology, global trends, solving problems, thinking differently and more.

To give everyone a start, we've collected the best advice from the TED Institute and other experts on "*How to Give a TED Talk*." We're sharing some of the best advice in hopes this helps you develop a great pitch for your *TED@UPS* talk.

First, let's say what doesn't make for a great *TED@UPS*. Over the past two years, we've received hundreds of submissions from UPSers who wanted to speak at *TED@UPS*. Unfortunately, too many of the proposals started out like this: "*I just want to talk about how much this company means to me and how I'm so proud to be a UPSer.*"

Now, don't get us wrong. What makes UPS great is the passion we all share for this company. "I love UPS" is a great employee testimonial but, alas, is not a TED Talk. A TED Talk – or in this case, a *TED@UPS* talk – is, as the people at TED like to say, a "big idea worth sharing."



The experts say these are the ingredients for a great TED Talk:

Be authentic. Pick a topic that you know something special about. Speak from personal experience, as [Romaine Seguin](#), [Monica Johnson](#) and other UPSers did last year. If you've survived into adulthood, then you have countless stories of perseverance in the face of failure. You have loved and you have lost. You have been harmed and you have harmed.

Ordinary lives can still be punctuated by extraordinary moments. Make sure it's something you're passionate about – something that gets your heart racing. Usually those are the stories that inspire others.

Experts say the best TED Talks are when a speaker presents one idea, tells one story and asks one question. That's a mouthful, but here's how it works:

The best stories are about one idea. Work until you can describe your talk in one very short sentence or question – and no more than one. For [Jan Denecker](#), the idea was simple: "how we can do more with less."

Chris Anderson is the head of the [TED](#) organization. In a 2013 article, Anderson said that the biggest problem he sees in the first draft of many TED Talks is that "they try to cover too much ground." Anderson added:

"You can't summarize an entire career in a single talk. If you try to cram in everything you know, you won't have time to include key details, and your talk will disappear into abstract language that may make sense if your listeners are familiar with the subject matter but will be completely opaque if they're new to it.

So limit the scope of your talk to that which can be explained, and brought to life with examples. Much of the early feedback we give aims to correct the impulse to sweep too broadly. Instead, go deeper. Give more detail."

The exception to this rule is one we learned from last year's speakers. Sometimes, the best idea is stemmed from

connecting two disparate ideas to craft a new solution or new way of thinking. For [Katie Francfort](#), the solution could be found by connecting two problems – vaccine delivery to rural areas and diseases spread by mosquitoes. [Wanis Kabbaj](#) found a way to connect biology and traffic congestion to illustrate what a driverless world could look like.

To create a compelling TED Talk, you sometimes need to begin with the end in mind. Don't just think, "What's the coolest story I can tell?" Ask yourself, "What's the best lesson I ever learned? The greatest joy I experienced? The greatest pain? What idea do I have that I want to share with everyone else?"

If you do start by thinking about an amazing experience you've had, ask yourself, "What's the moral of this story?" The moral of the story is probably your idea. [Amelia Laytham](#) shared her story on giving up her love of traditional Indonesian dance to fit in. But the lesson was that there was a way to embrace her heritage while assimilating into American culture.

Every good talk involves one story – usually a personal story – and the best talks open with that story. Your personal story should really be personal. Tell your own story, as [Laura Lane](#) and [Kate Adams](#) did, and share your observations.

Be humble. You don't have to make the story *just* about you. Your talk is about the idea, made human through you. And it's okay to make others the heroes in your stories. Sometimes the most inspiring stories end with someone else as the hero – a relative, a former teacher, a mentor or maybe even a stranger.

Chris Anderson of TED tells this story about two speakers he heard at a conference – a city mayor and a former governor:

"The mayor's talk was essentially a list of impressive projects his city had undertaken. It came off as boasting, like a report card or an advertisement for his re-election. It quickly got boring.

When the governor spoke, she didn't list achievements; instead, she shared an idea. Yes, she recounted anecdotes from her time in office, but the idea was central—and the stories explanatory (and also funny). It was so much more interesting.

The mayor's underlying point seemed to be how great

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he was, while the governor's message was 'Here's a compelling idea that would benefit us all.'

As a rule, people are not very interested in talks about organizations or institutions (unless they're members of them). Ideas and stories fascinate us; organizations bore us—they're much harder to relate to. Businesspeople especially take note: Don't boast about your company; rather, tell us about the problem you're solving."

Be original, as [Jenna Schilstra](#) did last year when she compared emojis to hieroglyphs. Here is where many TED talks distinguish themselves. Some of the most memorable TED Talks involved [Bill Gates releasing mosquitoes](#) and [Jamie Oliver tipping a wheelbarrow of sugar cubes onto the stage](#). Those are things that we hadn't seen before, and they were memorable. So you should try to make your talk original in terms of the way you deliver your messages.

End with a call to action. Tell us how we can join together to combat, overcome, or erase the universal problem. That can be your question, or your "*What if...*" For [Mallory Soldner](#), her question was, "What if data was donated?"

What you want is that your TED audience thinks at the end "I didn't know that, and I'm glad I do now" or "I must change how I act" for example.

To view all *TED@UPS* talks from the past two years, [click here](#). If you want to get inspiration from other regular people like you giving a TED Talk, you can [click here](#) to view the recorded talks from TED@IBM, [click here](#) to view the talks from TED@BCG, or [click here](#) for the main TED website.

GOOD LUCK!

READY TO SUBMIT YOUR IDEA?

To download a submission form, [click here](#). If you think you have a good idea but would love to brainstorm further, please don't hesitate to contact Dean Foust (at dfoust@ups.com), Dara Otwell (dotwell@ups.com) or Ben Gillespie (bengillespie@ups.com).

If you know a colleague who you think has a good *TED@UPS* talk, submit an application on their behalf and we'll follow up with them.

