

Ryan Chin's Top 10: Things I Learned About Demos at the MIT Media Lab

With constructive critique from the Media Lab's Web Diva, Jeannie Finks

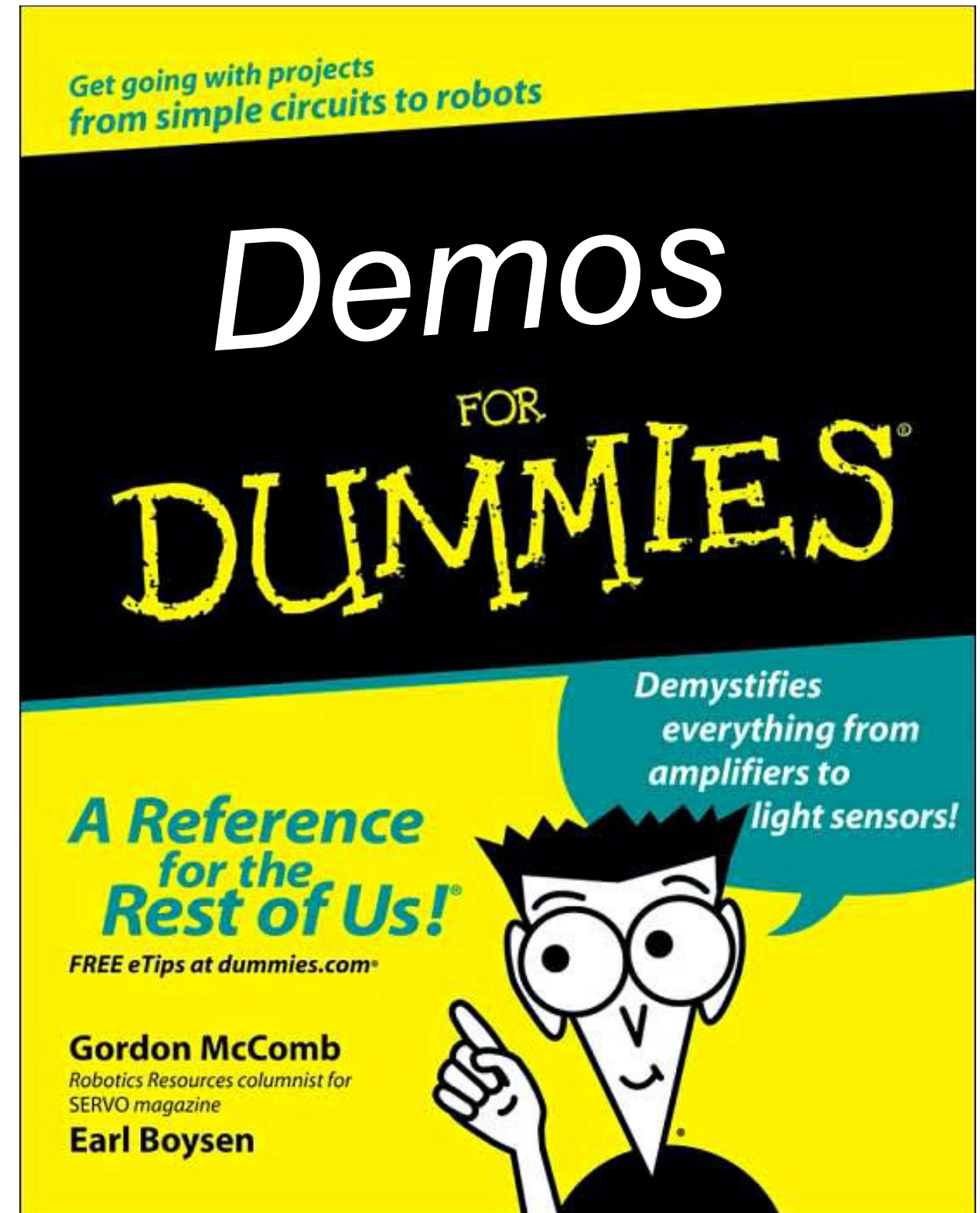
No. 10: Demos Are Like Vegetables: They're Good For You!

- You can't have your pudding without eating your demos first.
- Hiroshi talks about this all the time; without them you can't do the research you want!
- I used to hate my vegetables, but now I love 'em.
- Demo well and often. This leads to more opportunities (e.g., access to data, equipment, consulting)
- Correlation or coincidence? Demo'ing often has positive side effects (more publications, more press, more...)



No. 9: Learning on the Fly

- There's nothing better than learning on the job.
- Be observant of others and take it all in.
- You can't be prepared for everything.
- Improvise and work without a teleprompter (but don't tell them something you don't know).
- My advisor, Bill Mitchell gave our group a tour of the Stata Center ONCE. Now we can present the entire building to anybody.



No. 8: Practice, Practice, and More Practice

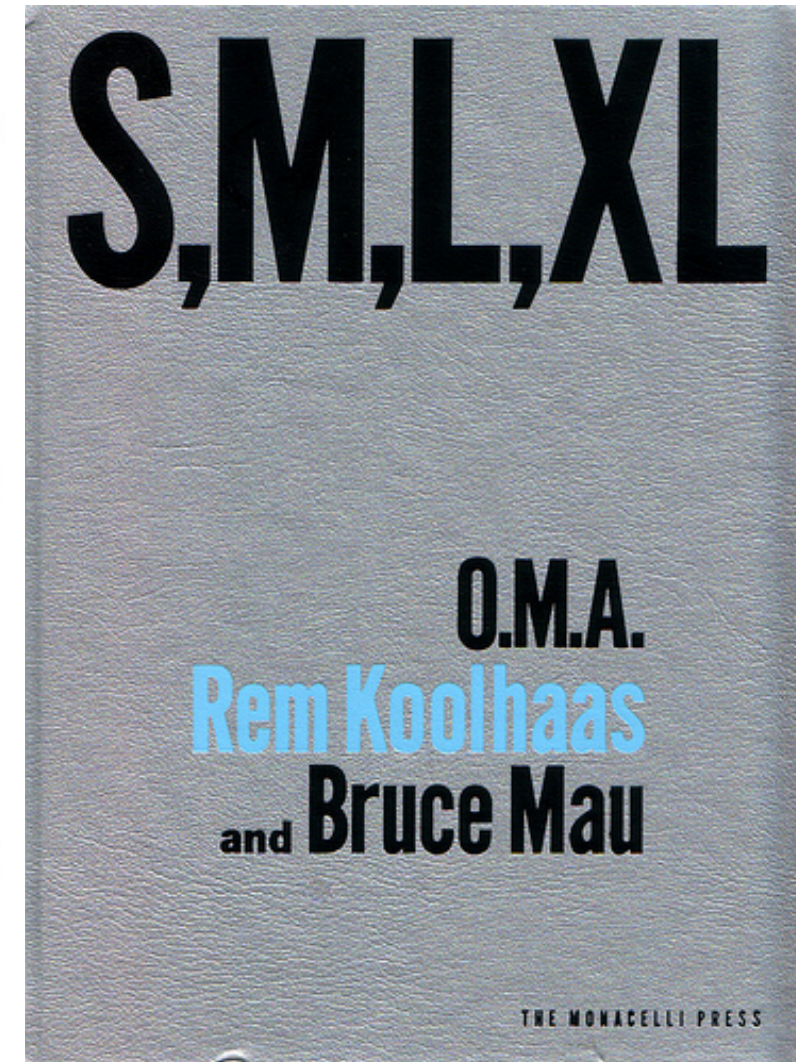
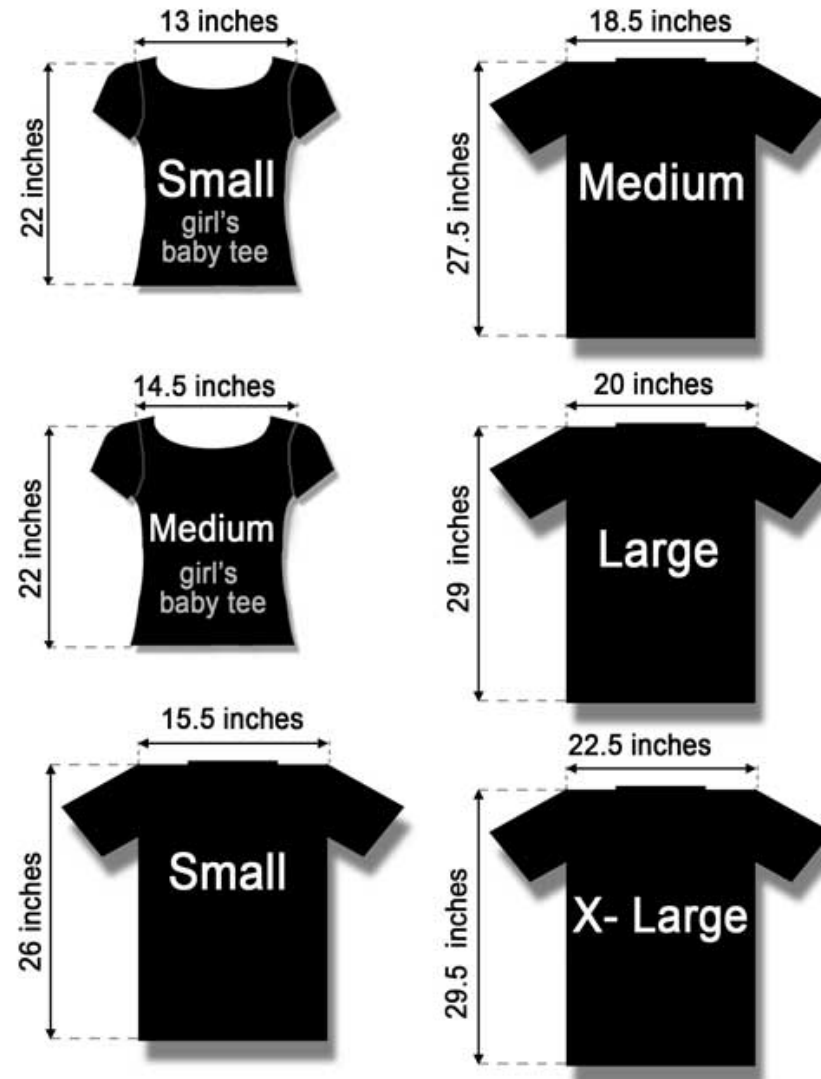
- Nothing replaces practice.
- The more practice you have, the easier the demos become.
- If you are early in the game, tag along on demos and tours.
- Work on your backhand!
- Watch and critique archived Webcasts of previous presentations at www.media.mit.edu/insite.



No. 7: S, M, L, XL

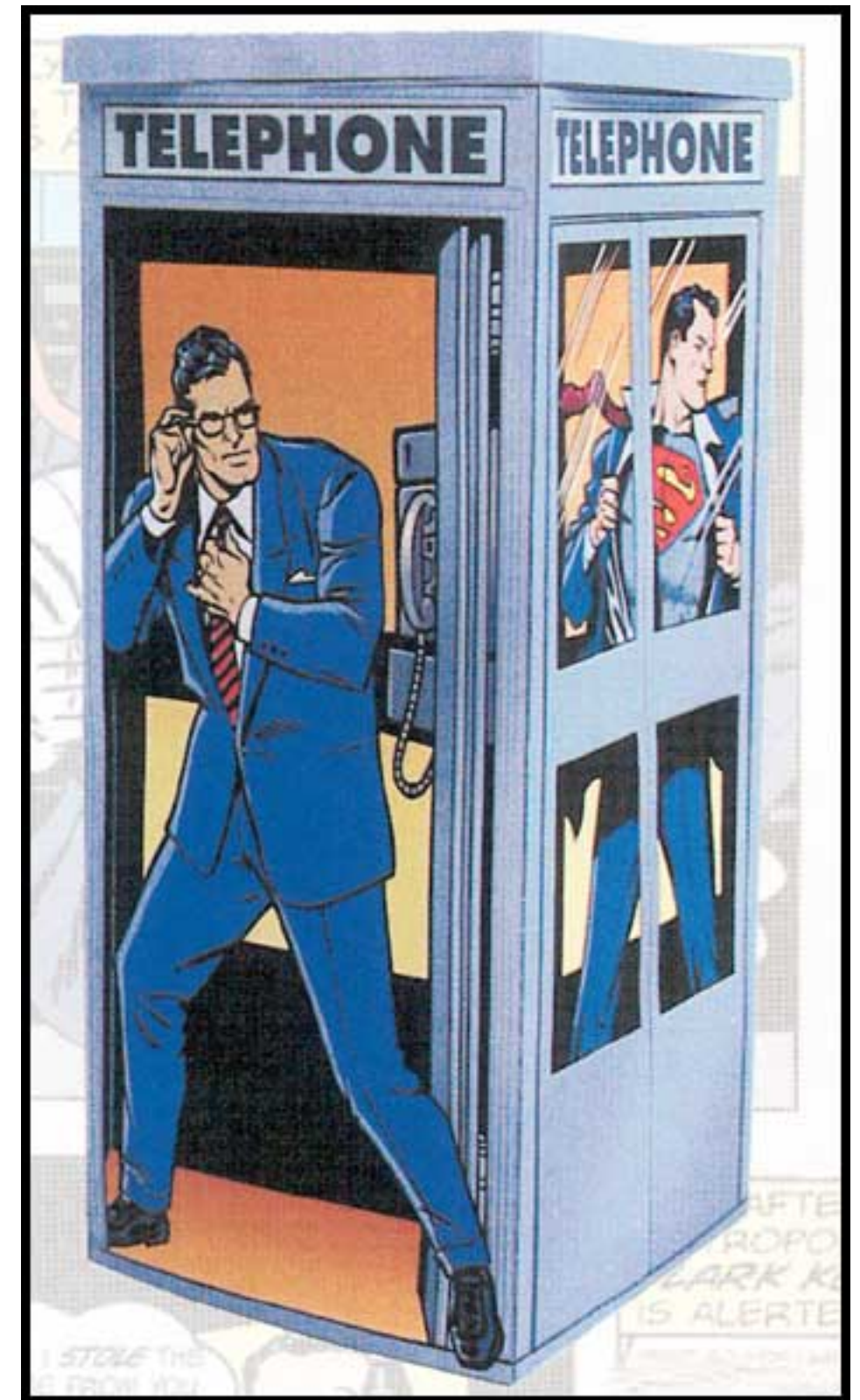
Size does matter:

- Individual (one-on-one, can be more intimate)
- Medium size groups (more casual, can be interactive, Q&A)
- Large groups (can be unwieldy, speak louder, and take charge!)
- Extra-large groups like in Kresge or 10-250 (more formal, use the Practice rule, include contact info in presentation, reduce the “ums”, try to reach the back of the crowd)



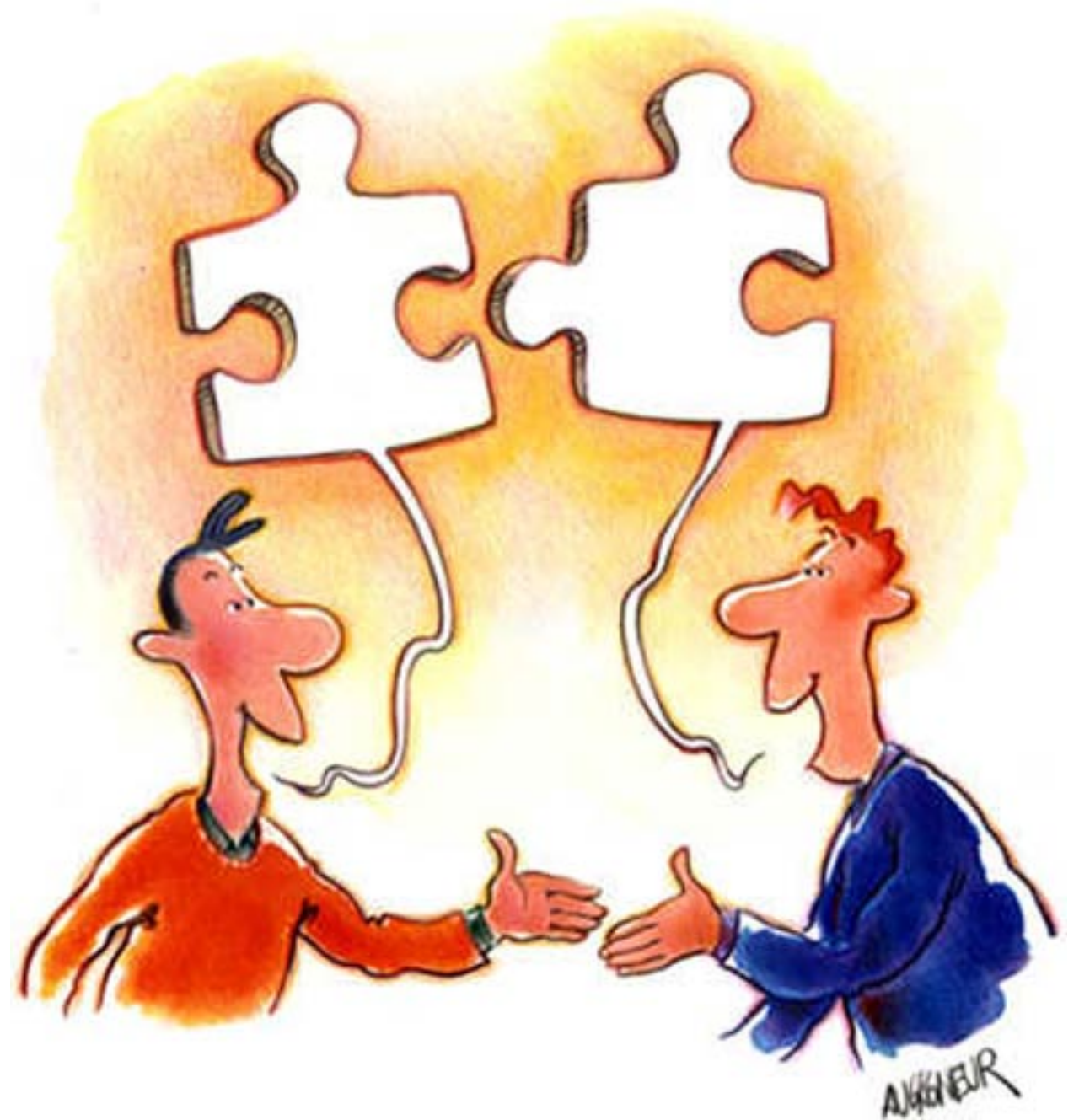
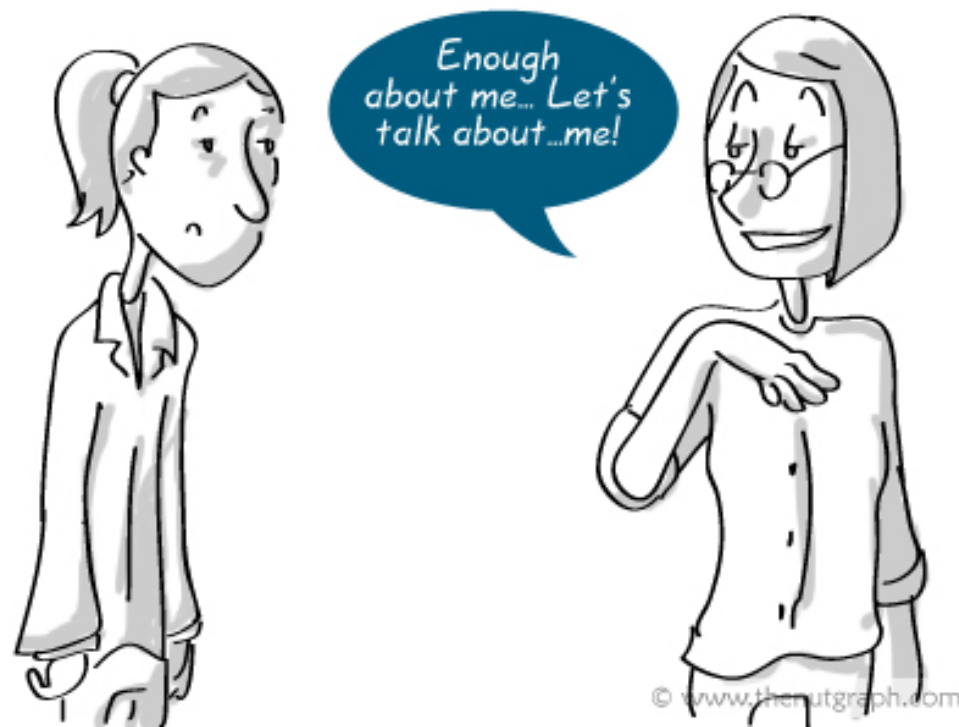
No. 6: Change It Up

- Don't always go straight into the normal routine.
- Repetitive presentations are boring for sponsors and for you too. Who wants to be a boring speaker!?
- Have many different ways to explain a concept.
- Instead of the usual presentation, make it interactive. Have sponsors participate (involve them in the demo act!)
- Other techniques: try a conversation, Q/A, or even a brainstorm.



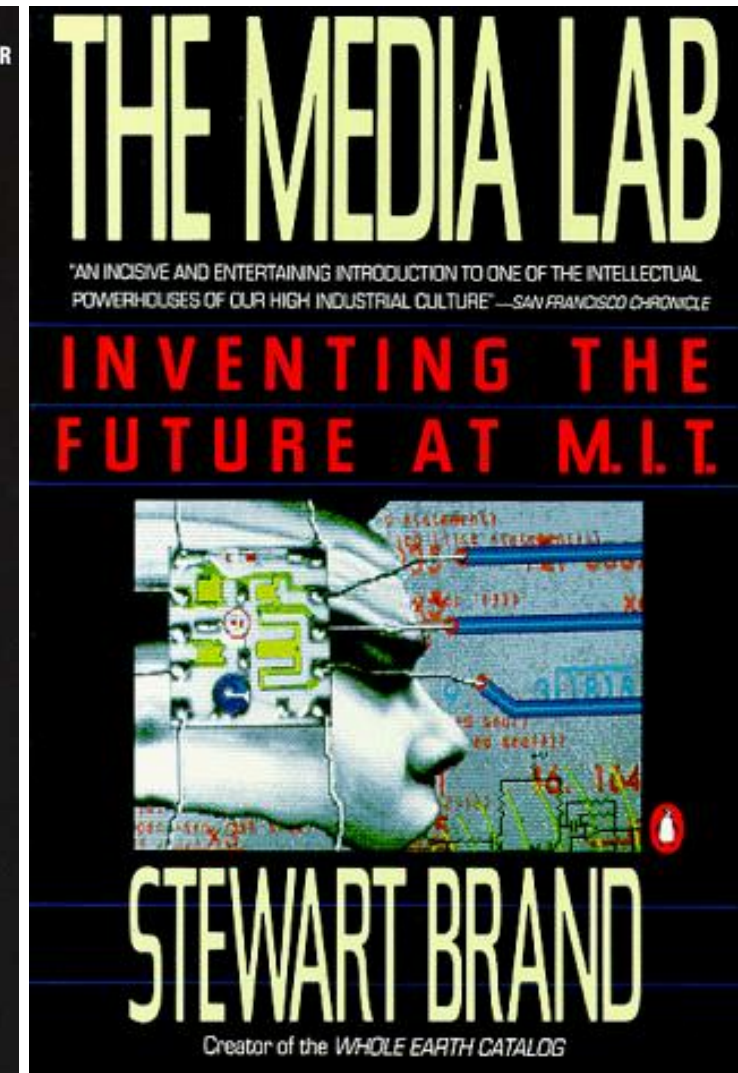
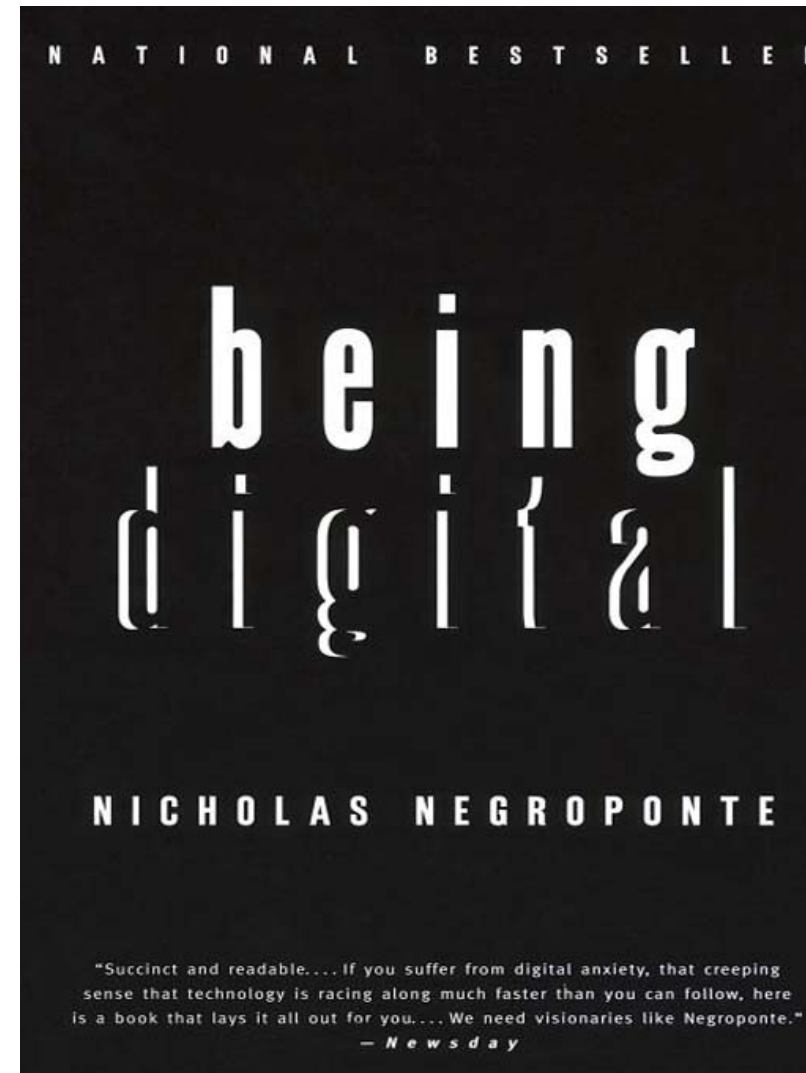
No. 5: Creating Dialogue Sparks Collaboration

- Don't always talk about yourself (I mean your project).
- Ask about them. This leads to more interesting in-depth conversations on pertinent topics.
- What do they do?
- What problems are they working on?



No. 4: Know the Entire Media Lab

- What is the history of the Media Laboratory?
- How does the Media Lab fit into MIT and the world?
- Read about other groups.
- Direct your audience to other research areas/groups.
- Walk around during open houses and see what others are doing.
- Know the key consortia administrators, ML staff members.
- Make friends in other groups. They can help you, especially with unscheduled demos.



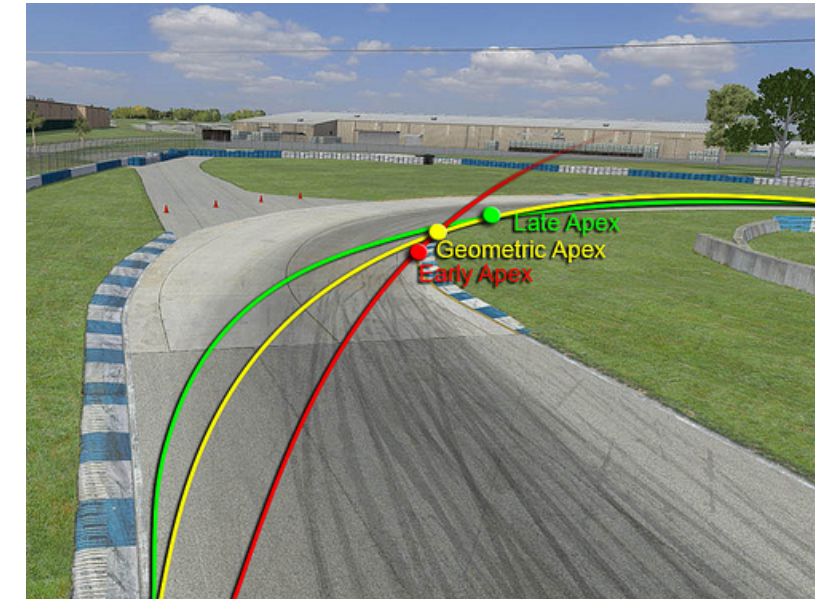
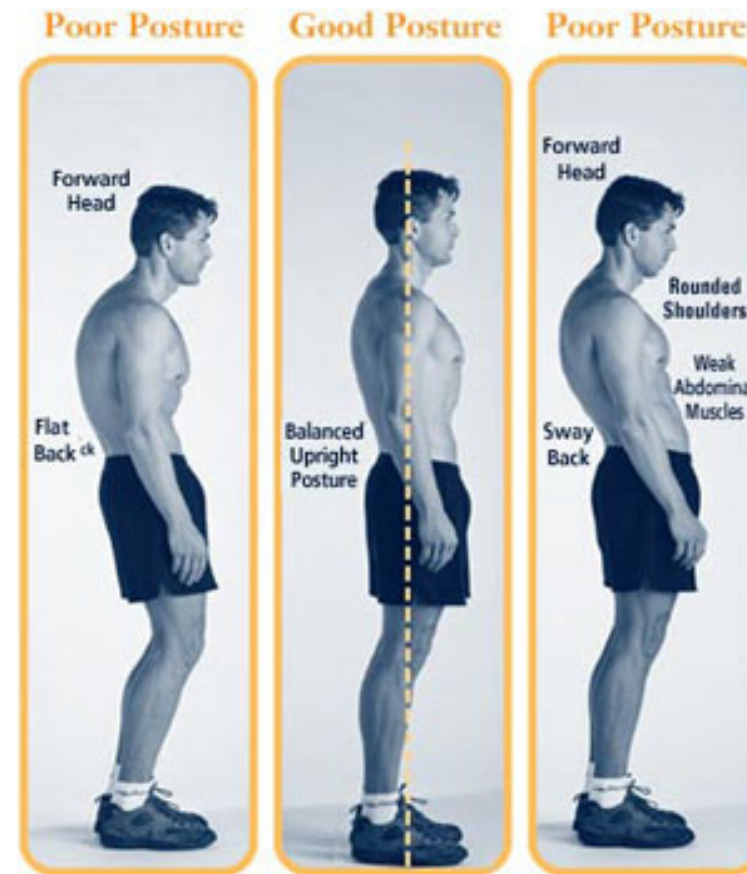
No. 3: Showmanship NOT Salesmanship

- People come to the Lab to see something they won't normally see.
- They are looking for a vision. Provide them with one, but don't try to sell them anything.
- Do not be overly formulaic; demos are an art, not a science.
- Think of demos as something you craft, like something you sculpt with passion.



No. 2: Utilize Good Technique

- Speak clearly. Not too fast, not too slow (even worse!). Be composed.
- Know your audience. Do some background research if necessary (they might be a CEO or president of a country).
- Avoid visual laziness, visualize for them. If it can be described in a simple picture or diagram, use it.
- Silent crowd? Ask them questions.
- Give them something to remember you by (business cards, pamphlets, websites, follow-up email).



No. 1: Cross Check. Is My Fly Open?!

- Is my demo working?
- Is the video linked in the PowerPoint?
- Do I have anything stuck to my teeth? How's my breath?
- Get some sleep and use Cloccky! (www.cloccky.net)



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By: Gauri Nanda
www.clocky.net

Thanks for your time!

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