What’s on Your Mind?
Share and Discuss the Corporate Governance Issues Impacting Your Business

Making Effective Presentations to Your Board
Thursday, November 17, 2011
10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
I. What Does Board Expect / Want?
   A. They want to meet you:
      • Management succession evaluation.
      • Extreme Board interest in senior and mid-tier management.
   B. Board wants interaction with management.
   C. Your presentation is a metaphor for your leadership / succession potential.

II. Focus Your Message
   A. What is the “take away” or “action step” that you want to convey to the Board?
      • What is the “goal” of your presentation?
   B. Tell the Board what you want to tell them.
   C. Tell them.
   D. Tell the Board what you just told them.

III. Think and Act “Strategic”
   A. Boards think strategically – so focus your presentation accordingly
      • You are there to help the Board make a decision.
   B. Keep your presentation high-level / general – keep the right “altitude”.
      • But, be ready to do a deep dive if asked.
   C. Tie your presentation to your Company’s strategic plan / initiatives/ themes that Board knows.
      • Remember, Boards don’t meet very often – they tend to focus on major strategic initiatives and themes.
   D. Your presentation should be put into the context of the issues and matters on which the Board is focused.
IV. **Visuals Must Be Clear And Concise**

A. Strictly follow the 10/10 “Rule”
   - No more than 10 slides or 10 words on each slide.

B. Slides must be very readable and very visible.

C. Your slides are not your presentation.

D. Make sure your presentation is included in the advance Board book.
   - Otherwise, the Board will read your slides while you are talking instead of listening to you.

E. Avoid acronyms / jargon.

V. **Be Briefer Than Brief**

A. Be ready to give your scheduled 30-minute presentation in less than 5 minutes.
   - Happens a lot.

B. Don’t re-tell the Board what was in the pre-reading.

C. Be prepared for – and welcome – interruptions.

VI. **Leave Lots of Time For Q&A**

A. Q&A is the most important part of your presentation.
   - Solicit questions!
   - Don’t address everything in your presentation.

B. Ratio of Q&A to presentation – 3:1.

C. Never hide anything.
   - Answers must be open and direct.
   - No BS.
   - Count to 3 before answering the question.
   - Listen more / talk less
   - Don’t guess.
   - Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know” – but then get back to them with the right answer.
D. What questions are you “worried about?”
   • What questions do you hope the Board won’t ask?
   • Practice these answers!

E. If you were a director, what questions should you ask?
   • Solicit these if not asked.

F. Know which visuals will help you answer anticipated questions.

G. Disagreeing with the questioner:
   • These responses may make a bad situation worse, especially if delivered in a challenging, aggressive manner:
     □ “Your premise is faulty.”
     □ “What makes you say that?”
     □ “Come on. That’s not true and you know it.”
     □ “You’re not serious, are you?”
   • These responses are potentially more acceptable than a risky ricochet or the contentious response:
     □ “In theory that makes a lot of sense, however …”
     □ “I don’t quite see it that way, and let me explain why.”
     □ “I have a different way of looking at that” (and go on to explain why without being too aggressive).
     □ “The way we see it … “
     □ “I can’t quite agree with that premise.”
     □ “You know a lot about the situation, but let me fill in a few blanks that may make it clearer.”

VII. Practice, Practice, Practice

A. Practice your presentation 10 times in front of people.
   • Run your presentation by your CEO or Corporate Secretary.

B. Know the proclivities of your directors in advance:
   • Do’s / Don’ts.
   • Perspectives.
   • Who will likely support you and who may be critical?
VIII. It Is Not a Speech
   A. It is an interactive conversation.

IX. Professional But Engaging Tone and Demeanor
   A. Never be confrontational.
   B. Know your stuff, but don’t be arrogant or condescending.
   C. Be interesting.
   D. Dress “better” than the Board
      • Just because the Board is “business casual” doesn’t mean that you should be.
   E. Don’t become a “chum.”
   F. You are not a member of “the Club”.
   G. Be enthusiastic!
      • Smile
      • Humor

X. Avoid These At All Costs
   A. No jargon.
   B. No hidden grenades or hanging sliders.
   C. Never use the “F” (fraud) word.
   D. Never use “poor accounting.”
   E. Don’t overstate or exaggerate.
   F. Never say this is an “eye chart.”
   G. Never say that “this slide is a little hard to read.”
There are many presentation tips floating around the internet today. Some are great. Some are terrible. They commonly have only 5 or 10, so I decided to wrack my brain to come up with as many tips as I could to help you start rethinking how you’re currently presenting.

I commonly break my effective presenting training sessions down to three sections – Preparation, Design, and Delivery. Preparation isn’t just limited to “before you start anything.” It includes preparation before the design and also before the delivery. Design isn’t limited to just PowerPoint or Keynote either.

Some tips are linked to other posts that explain the concepts further. This should help, since I tried to keep the tips short and easily consumable.

It’s not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be. If you have more to add, just let me know in the comments section!

Per request, the tips are now available as a PDF. A big thanks to Matthew for converting it. As more tips are submitted by readers, I’ll try to keep updating the PDF.

**PREPARATION**

- Take time to plan
- Find out who your audience is
- Learn what your audience’s needs/concerns are
● Respect the time necessary to prepare properly – it’s always longer than you think

● Always start with the story

Read *Resonate* (Nancy Duarte)

● Go analog before digital

● Get off the grid, away from distractions, A local coffee shop perhaps?

● Use post-it notes to sketch designs and quickly/easily organize

● *Divorce your handouts from your slides* - they’re not the same thing

● Create with your audience in mind FIRST – *What’s in it for them?*

● Practice, practice, practice

● Get honest feedback from peers

● Know your content inside and out

● *You don’t NEED PowerPoint* (but an effective PPT can help)

● Always ask “Why?” If you have no reason, remove it

● Educate yourself in effective presentation design

● *Create an experience*, not just a presentation

● Don’t try to tell them everything you know

● *Go deeper instead of wider* with your content

● *Watch Steve Jobs present*

● Prepare a proper outfit – appearances matter

● *Be remarkable or be ignored*

● Keep organized

● *Use mindmaps* to lay out your content

**DESIGN**

● *Keep it simple*

● Use effective and relevant images

● Use full bleed (all the way to the edge) images when you can

● Find creative commons images on Flickr at *Compfight* – I love that site

● Understand the rule of thirds

● Use black slides

● *Break the mold* – being different is okay!
● Understand the cognitive load theory

● Break your ideas onto multiple slides

● Use original fonts

● There is no minimum font size

● Avoid serif fonts

● Don’t go overboard with the amount of fonts you use

● There is no optimal number of slides

● Read Presentation Zen (Garr Reynolds)

● Read Slide:ology (Nancy Duarte)

● Logos aren’t necessary on every slide

● Templates aren’t necessary either

● Design appropriate leave-behinds (not just your slides)

● Stimulate multiple senses

● Remember, YOU are the presentation, not your slides

● Use color contrast (Kuler helps)

● Be willing to change and do something nobody else is doing

● Make no excuses – you don’t have to be an artist to design slides

● Design with your big idea in mind

● Don’t split the design work between multiple people

● QUALITY over quantity

● Design for the medium (Projector, SlideShare, Webinar, etc.)

● Include multimedia (but TEST it!)

● Data doesn’t have to be dull – accentuate the positive

● When posting to SlideShare, save your presentation as a PDF for best quality

● If your slides are boring, you will be boring

● Keep the final presentation in mind (you may not be using your own equipment)

● Learn to love your hotkeys – they save immense amounts of time

● Use images with proper resolution (grainy is not okay)

**DELIVERY**

● Arrive EARLY
- Purchase your own equipment if possible
- Bring an extra extension cord
- Test your equipment, then test it again
- Bring your presentation on multiple mediums (computer, USB, etc)
- Use extra time to meet, greet, and create allies
- Place your monitor in between you and the audience
- Keep your introduction focused
- Encourage conversations and involve your audience
- Answer and encourage questions whenever possible
- Ask your own questions
- Be aware of your time, and respectful of your audience’s time
- When in doubt, shorter is better
  - Love your audience
  - Remember, we all make mistakes. ALL of us
- Use a wireless presentation remote – I use the Kensington 33374
- Use the B key to blank the slide
- Make eye contact
- Be passionate or don’t be there period
  - Be confident
  - Remove barriers between you and your audience
- Enter the audience’s space if you can (but not too often)
  - Always be honest – a lie can be a disaster
  - Fear is natural – accept it and move on
  - NEVER read your slides
- Actually conclude your presentation with a summary
- Don’t be timid – You won’t be rewarded for it
  - Don’t underestimate yourself
- Videotape yourself and watch later
- Bring your emotion (but don’t get too emotional)
- Use a laser instead of your arm (remotes have them)
• Don’t blame it on your PowerPoint – good or bad, you designed it

• When virtually presenting, shut off all other programs

• When virtually presenting, have a partner run the technical portion

• Use visual aids other than PowerPoint, like easels, props, and skits

• **Use humor**, but be careful! A bad joke can ruin everything

• Remember, you are **ALWAYS presenting**

• Never sell – if you don’t know what I mean, then you’re doing it wrong

• Always give them what they paid for, even if they didn’t pay anything

• Stay afterward to have personal conversations. These can be very valuable

**USER CONTRIBUTED** (continually updated)

• Reflect on other presentations ([Reinhardt A Botha](#))

• Use language that is concise, clear, and to the point ([Anke Tröder](#))

• Don’t use buzzwords, jargon, or clichés ([Anke Tröder](#))

• Use examples ([Anke Tröder](#))

• Remember, the presentation is about and for your audience. It is not about you. ([Jeff Hurt](#))

• There are no “rules.” Do what works for you! ([Simon](#))

**There you go – 100+ Presentation Tips. I’m sure we could fill this post with 100 more, so keep adding them in the comments!**

*Image courtesy of Leo Reynolds on Flickr*
Reducing the Amount of Text on your PowerPoint Slides

By Jon, on December 28th, 2009

If you've read any of my previous posts, you'll know that the cornerstone to an effective PowerPoint or Keynote presentation is idea of “Simplicity.” Keeping your slides as simple and image-based as possible will keep your audience visually engaged and will help them recall your message more easily.

Filling slides with useless text can be detrimental to your presentation's health. I say “useless” because what's written on a slide is (or should) also coming out of the presenter's mouth. If they're saying it, why does it also need to be on a slide? Too much text can be detrimental because the audience will inevitably read it, thus ignoring the most important part of the presentation – THE PRESENTER! Even worse, since the audience can't read and listen at the same time, they'll sometimes do neither, giving the message a 0% chance of making an impact and being recalled.

Putting significant amounts of text onto a slide seems so natural though. It's the way 99.9% are presentations are made. It helps the presenter stay on track. It aids the presenter in remembering all the points they wanted to touch. While these points bear some truth, they're all excuses in my book. With a little education in effective presenting (and by reading this blog, you're already ahead of the game), ample preparation time and lots of practice, you won't need any text on those slides to make a killer presentation.

So without further adieu, here are 5 ways to reduce the amount of text on your slides: (Click images to enlarge):

1. **Remove all text from your slides and place them in your notes section**

   If you're working from a presentation you've already made, this is the first place to start. You can use the notes section while you practice presenting the slides, and even keep...
them near you while you present (in printed form) if you simply can’t part with the text. This is also a great way to disseminate your slides AFTER you present. Thus, you’re not inclined to have text on your slide because you want to use it as a leave-behind (which is often used as an excuse for using so much text).

2. **Find an image that represents the point you’re trying to make**

I realize this is easier said than done, but the sweat equity you put into it will pay major dividends. Even if your audience doesn’t “get it” right away just by looking at the image, that’s okay! You’re right there, as the presenter, to fill in the missing pieces to complete the puzzle. Once they view the image, their attention come right back to you because you hold the valuable information. If you have text on your slide, their attention may remain on the slide as they read instead of listening to you.

3. **If necessary, add a short title or data point**

Not every slide can be one singular image. The slide from the previous point probably needs a little more to help the audience member along. Slides with a short one or two-word title, statistics, diagrams, or quotes can be effective. A number of these exist in all of the presentations I make. Just try to keep the text to a minimum and the font to a legible type and size.
4. **If you must, break up the bullet points onto multiple slides**
   Sometimes it is required that you leave the text unaltered, or maybe you’re redesigning a PowerPoint for someone else and can’t personally ensure that enough preparation and practice will be done. When bullet points are entered on a slide, presenters will often put as many as they can fit, resulting in font sizes nearing single digits. Instead, ditch the bullet and put each “point” on its own slide. This should give you ample space to jack up the font size. It also prevents the audience from reading ahead.

5. **If all else fails, you can use different colors and font sizes to highlight the important points**
   Okay, so this doesn’t technically reduce the amount of text, but it can help highlight the important points. Choose colors that contrast to ensure that the important words catch the eye. I like to use brighter colors, like a lime green, for the important words and darker colors, like black, for the rest.
With all presentations, try your best not to compromise. If it can be expressed in a sole image, leave it that way. If it can’t, use as few words as possible. Simply remember that the audience is there to hear you, so the important information should come out of your mouth, not typed on the slide for them to read.

If after reading this you’re still having trouble trying to simplify a slide, just shoot me an email and I’ll be happy to give you my thoughts, free of charge of course 😊

*All images have been created under the Creative Commons license. You are free to copy, distribute, and transmit the work as long as appropriate credit is given.

Comments

Add New Comment

Type your comment here.

Post as ...

Showing 11 comments

**Jonathan Thomas** 1 year ago

Scott,

Thanks for the comment. Let me clarify my thoughts.

Knowing your message and planning your presentation to maximize the retention of the message is EXTREMELY important. You are very right when you say that.

The “message” and the “presenter”, to me, is a chicken and egg situation. There are valid arguments for both being important, because without one (or the other) there is no presentation. A presenter with no message is a mannequin. A message with no presenter is, well, an empty room. Regardless, I think a more appropriate way to express what I was thinking is to say that the presenter is the star of the show, not the slides.

Many presentations fail due to a presenter’s dependence on the PowerPoint to BE the presentation. Their slides become a script, and...
As a presentation designer, I've dealt with a wide array of clients. Designers of all types probably have stories of clients who try their best to impart their own design advice, but go horribly wrong. It's not their fault though and it never angers me. A vast majority of the population have never been taught or researched on their own what effective PowerPoint design is. Thus, most people don't even realize that the status quo (think bullet points, small font, clip-art, boomerang animations) is wildly ineffective.

I wanted to share with you some of the presentation “advice” that has been imparted on me by clients that, if I had actually implemented them, would have landed me in presentation prison. And surely in presentation prison they subject you to listening to hours of monotone presentations that are painfully boring and abrasive to your eyes, complete with the hammering duck. All of these requests were really asked of me. Naturally I don’t answer them in real life as I answer them here. I make the same points, only nicely.

1. That font is too big

I'm sorry, what? It's too big? Too big for you to read? How close is your face to the screen that you can't read a sentence/phrase that fits on a PowerPoint slide. How big is this screen you're using? I realize that using large fonts is startling to many because we're so used to squinting while trying to read bullet point sentences. So to see a slide with just one big impactful word is a bit jarring. However, using large font is effective and only makes it easier for everyone in the audience to read.

2. I realize this graph is confusing. How about we make it so small and have it appear and disappear so quickly that the audience only gets a glimpse of it.
Presentations are created for nearly every industry and topic, so it is inevitable that the content and data displayed in a graph may be confusing to some. However, if you believe it is important data that needs to be imparted, don’t let the fact that it is a graph get in the way. There are many ways to display your data without the dull, and even if there is a lot of data, you can use certain techniques to bring out what is most important. That way the audience focuses on the important bit of the graph and understands that the rest is important but secondary. Nancy Duarte’s slide:ology book (see right column) does a great job of showing you how to creatively and simply display your data.

3. **I know the presentation looks better with images and less text, but I need my bullet points to remember what I’m talking about**

   This is unfortunate, because the presenter isn’t addressing the real problem, which is the fact that he or she doesn’t know their content well enough to be presenting it to an audience who is sacrificing their time (and sometimes money) to listen to them. You don’t “need” your bullet points, **you need to PRACTICE!** It’s not fair to the audience that they are subjected to a bullet point ridden PowerPoint presentation because the presenter failed to prepare and practice. I realize that time is sometimes an issue. Just today I was asked to give a short presentation with only 10 minutes to prepare. In that case, with or without PowerPoint, it is still acceptable to bring notes with you. Avoid having notes on a large sheet of paper – opt for index cards instead. Olivia Mitchell offers some great tips about the **lost art of notes** at her blog.

4. **Don’t worry about the number of slides. If I can’t get to them all, I’ll just skip the last few.**

   I’m not worried about the number of slides – I’m worried about you presenting all of your slides and delivering what you promised you would to your audience. **The number of slides is generally irrelevant.** I tend to **use many slides**, but other presenters have successfully used few, or none. It’s not about how many, it’s how well. Timing is essential. I so often see presenters mistime their presentations and end up flying through the last few slides, so fast that I only get a fleeting glimpse of what’s on them. What if that was the most important information to me? It’s like having a story read to you but the last chapter is just skimmed over. Make sure you practice your presentation enough so you know exactly (give or take a few minutes) how long it will take to deliver all of your slides. If you may go over time, start removing them (but make sure you’re not removing slides crucial to your story).

5. **Make sure my logo, website, and phone number is on every slide**

   Of course, my first response is “why?” Are you afraid that the audience is going to forget who they’re talking to? If so, you have a bigger problem. Or will they want to call your 800 number during your presentation? Or visit your website? I hope not, because you’re up there presenting! It’s absolutely **not necessary to have this information on every slide.** You’re chewing up valuable real estate if you’re putting a logo/URL/phone number on every slide. The first and last slide is perfectly fine. It’s a common understanding that contact info is usually found there. Granted, it’s not impossible to design a nice looking template which includes pieces of information like this, but it’s rare.

   I get requests to do some wacky things when designing presentations. I love my clients and I love when requests like these come up because it only fosters good discussion, which

is always welcomed. When you hire a presentation designer, you're not only paying for their design skills, but you're also paying for the time they spent researching this topic, along with related topics like brain research and principles of education.

Image courtesy of maistora on Flickr

Comments

Add New Comment

Type your comment here.

Showing 14 comments

Sort by Popular now

Like One person likes this. Be the first of your friends.

Lisa Fields 1 year ago

Jon,

When I explain I design presentations, many times I hear folks say "Oh, I know how to do PowerPoint/Keynote so I do myself."

I know I don't make my candle any brighter when I attempt to blow somebody else's out. Unless I can show a potential customer some of my before and after examples I have found it difficult to explain the difference. If you have coaching ideas and or feedback I'd love to learn how you handle this objection.

Jon, I also agree it's not helpful to our audience when we are asked to attach a company logo, website and/or phone number to every slide. I know some refer to this repetitive corporate identity as noise. If I were making a simple verbal presentation with no visual aids I would never stop and mention the name of the company every few minutes. This additional information is distracting and makes a negative impact upon both the function and design of a slide deck. The goal is always to create a clean and clutter free slide presentation so our clients can concentrate upon the message from the presenter. Great Post, I so enjoy your work.

Cheers,

The Webinar Blog 1 year ago

Everything You Know About Presenting Is Wrong

how the heck do we spread the news to more people that their preconceived notions about presentation construction and delivery style are so often SO WRONG?

Jonathan Thomas 1 year ago

Thanks Theresa!
The world's worst PowerPoint presentations
What not to do with your business presentation

Convoluted flow charts? Tacky, out-of-focus graphics? Huge blocks of text? Welcome to PowerPoint Hell. Most of you have probably had to make a PowerPoint presentation, so you probably know the basic PowerPoint rules: Use a lot of bullet points. Don't overload the text. Avoid multimedia excesses. Etcetera.

It might seem like pretty basic stuff to you, oh PowerPoint Guru, but unfortunately it's not so obvious to some other people. We took a stroll through the PowerPoint presentation-sharing site, SlideShare.net, and found a scary large number of really bad PowerPoint presentations. Here are some of the worst (or should we say best?) ones of the bunch.

You, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from these examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

Merger and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
Top 12 green IT products
MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
Network management on a budget
Top tablet PCs
What's hot in space?

News

AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue more...

US creates 88,000 jobs in October
Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market more...

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses more...

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September more...

British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
IAG also said it would buy BMI, a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub more...

RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
The post-nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis more...

BT Global Services remains loss-making
Despite overall group profit hike more...

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What not to do with your business presentation

Images and text do not mix

The PowerPoint presentation on cars (we know it's about cars because an introductory slide consists of the word "CARS" in huge, garish orange -and-blue letters) puts all of its images in the background (after applying a little tasteful fading), with paragraphs of text overlaid on them. This accomplishes the difficult feat of making the images hard to look at and the text hard to read. Perfect, a lose-lose situation!

The presenter could have consolidated the text in one part of the image, using the image's horizontal guiding lines, but that didn't happen didn't so the slide manages to look sloppy as well as unreadable. Bonus points for misspelling "carburator."

News

AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue

US creates 80,000 jobs in October
Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,600 mentors to help women set up their own businesses

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September

British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, boosts forecasts
IAG also said it would buy bmi, a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub

RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
The pan-European lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis

BT Global Services remains loss making
Despite overall group profit rise

Other Slideshows

Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
Top 12 green IT products
MIT Media Lab turns 25:
A gallery
Network management on a budget
Top tablet PCs
What's hot in space?

Winners of the Ig Nobel 2010 prizes
Seven ways to exercise in the office
CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What not to do with your business presentation

SwATo Flow (variant)

1. buzz.google.com
2. status.net
close.net

To be fair, social networking is complicated

The first rule of flow charts is that they should be intelligible. In a presentation, you do have a chance to explain what's going on, but a good PowerPoint slide makes sense on its own. The flow chart presented here is simply baffling, and the pictures don't help much. What's going on? Who's getting what? What's the difference between a box in a big black square and a box in a little red circle? What is a "follower feed"? And why are some of the "salmon" going downstream?

Nor does this social networking slideshow ever give the viewer a flow chart: it later shows a series of email screen caps that are ugly at best, and incomprehensible at worst.

Yes, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from these examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

- Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
- Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
- Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
- Top 12 green IT products
- MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
- Network management on a budget
- Top tablet PCs
- Winners of the Ig Nobel 2010 prizes
- Seven ways to exercise in the office
- CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
- 15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

News

- AMD cuts 15 percent of staff
- Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue
- US creates 88,000 jobs in October
- Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months done points to strengthening labour market
- Government calls for business mentors for women
- The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses
- Corporate insolvencies rise
- The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September
- British airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
- IAG also said it would buy bmi, a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub
- RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
- The nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis
- BT Global Services remains loss making
- Despite overall group profit hike

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations
What not to do with your business presentation

A symmetrical rainbow of confusion

Colours are great for attracting an audience. But stick with two or three, not six or seven, and use them consistently. The colours in this "social business map" don't clarify anything. Why are "Social Web" and "Social Enterprise" in different colours but "Cloud/SoA/S" and "On-Premises" in the same colour? Why do blue and green dots populate orange and white areas as well as blue and green areas? Why does "Trend" appear as two converging white areas while "Standards" appears as a single vanishing brown area?

The whole chart looks like an alien Venn diagram, and the big labels along the bottom appear in random colours that correspond to nothing else on the chart. Why?

Yes, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from these examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

- Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
- Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
- Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
- Top 12 green IT products
- MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
- Network management on a budget
- Top tablet PCs
- What's hot in space?
- Winners of the Ig Nobel 2010 prizes
- Seven ways to exercise in the office
- CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
- 15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

News

- AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
- Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue
- US creates 80,000 jobs in October
- Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market
- Government calls for business mentors for women
- The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses
- Corporate Incompetencies rise
- The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September
- British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
- IAG also said it would buy bmi, a Lufterthos business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub
- RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
- The part-nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis
- BT Global Services remains loss making
- Despite overall group profit hike

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What not to do with your business presentation

Modeling customer dynamics

- Model 1: Lost-for-good (Dwyer 1989)
  - Two-state model: customer/lost customer
  - Customer who has left never returns
  - Modeling issue: lifetime analysis

- Model 2: Always-a-share
  - Multi-state model
  - More complete dynamics (includes Lost-for-good dynamics)
  - Modeling issues: describe state changes
  - Classical model: Markov Chains
    - Basic assumption: the probability of a state change (hazard rate) does not depend on the past. In particular not on the sojourn time!

Flow chart on steroids

The left side of this PowerPoint slide on customer lifetime value in service contracts does pretty well. But it looks like a slide template: the weak segmentation and the inconsistent framing of the "Modelling issues". The text is in small font, and the arrows are not connected. The presenter used a basic slide template (when in doubt, use a template).

But then we get to the flow chart. Presumably the red arrows are there to explain what's going on in the maze of black arrows. The red arrows are somewhat helpful, except for the jarring overlay of red on black. As for the 10,000 black arrows, they probably make a point, or something, but not really.

Other Slideshows

- Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
- Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
- Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphones: A visual tour
- Top 12 green IT products
- MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
- Network management on a budget
- Top tablet PCs
- What's hot in space?
- Winners of the Ig Nobel 2010 prizes
- Seven ways to exercise in the office
- CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
- 15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

News

- AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
- Manufacturing issues impact company's third-quarter revenue

- US creates 83,000 jobs in October
- Less than expected, but unemployemnt falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market

- Government calls for business mentors for women
- Government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses

- Corporate insolvencies rise
- The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September

- British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
- IAG also said it would buy bmi, a London-based business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub

- RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
- The bank's nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis

- BT Global Services remains loss making
- Despite overall group profit hike

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What not to do with your business presentation

US Wireless Market – Q2 2010 Update

Executive Summary

The wireless data market remains in high gear. While carriers are facing challenges, mobile data services remain the biggest driver of growth and service providers are enjoying increased margins.

Executive Summary

The endless "summary"

Filling an entire PowerPoint slide with text is never a great idea, especially when the content is printed in 10-point type and is three or four times longer than the Gettysburg Address. Even worse is the idea of using an impenetrable slab of 10-point text to provide an "executive summary" of the ensuing presentation. It was only a matter of time before the presenter thought this slide would accomplish, no one is going to want to read the text, and if the presenter does so, what's left to say in the presentation?

The most surprising part of this cautionary tale? The audience hasn't even seen the entire "executive summary" yet, it continues on the next slide.

No, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from these examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
Top 12 green IT products
MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
Network management on a budget
Top tablet PCs
What's not in space?
15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

News

AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue more...

US creates 80,000 jobs in October
Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market more ...

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,600 mentors to help women set up their own businesses more ...

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September more ...

British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
IAG also said it would buy bmi, a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub more ...

RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
The part-nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis more ...

BT Global Services remains loss making
Despite overall group profit rise more ...

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations
What not to do with your business presentation

100 graphs in one little slide

Graphs and charts are usually PowerPoint presentation gold. They're visual, informative, and hard to screw up. So, obviously, the more graphs and charts, the better, right? Like, say, 100 graphs and charts. And to sweeten that deal, let's put at 100 of them on one slide. What could go wrong?

Or rather, what couldn't go wrong? The whole PowerPoint presentation on lung cancer surgery is pretty bad, but this slide showing 100 charts neatly stacked like coffins in a ten-by-ten array takes the cake. Not only are the graphs so small as to be unreadable, but did we mention there are 100 of them? Oh, and a slide heading that makes sense in English would've been nice.

News

AMD cuts 19 percent of staff
Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue

US creates 80,000 jobs in October
Less than expected, but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months, data points to strengthening labour market

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September

British airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
IAG also said it would buy tiny, a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub

RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
The privatized lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis

BT Global Services remains loss making
Despite overall group profit hike

Other Slideshows

- Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
- Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
- Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
- Top 12 green IT products
- MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
- Network management on a budget
- Top tablet PCs
- What's hot in space?
- Winners of the Ig Nobel 2010 prizes
- Seven ways to exercise in the office
- CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
- 15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What not to do with your business presentation

By Sarah Jacobson Punwai | PC World
Published 16:11, 29 August 10

Slides with ads, are they clickable?

What's worse than using generic Microsoft clip art in a PowerPoint presentation? Using a web banner ad as the top image across all of the slides, that's what. The creator of this presentation about a “snoring solution” didn't even bother to crop off the “Special Offer...” part of the graphic (which looks as though it were made to run on Yahoo Chat pages, circa 1999).

Hey, we're all for blatantly touting your website during a PowerPoint presentation (though you really should limit your self-promotion to the first or last slide, not both, or you may induce slide fatigue), but decorating a presentation with your company's online banner ads is pretty cheesy.

Yes, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from these examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
Meet the world’s wealthiest individuals
Acer’s upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
Top 12 green IT products
MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
Network management on a budget
Top tablet PCs
What's hot in space?

News

AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue

US creates 80,000 jobs in October
Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September

British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, beats forecasts
IAG also said it would buy bmi, a Luftansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub

RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
The part-nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis

BT Global Services remains loss making
Despite overall group profit rise

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What to do with your business presentation

The case of the invisible text

PowerPoint slide transitions are best left to the fourth-grade science fair crowd. But if you insist on using them (don't say we didn't warn you), make sure that your text doesn't behave like a Cheshire cat.

In a PowerPoint presentation on the future of learning technology, the slides leading up to this one (slide 18) are visually interesting and don't cover the text or graphs. But slide 18 contains three bullet-type points that appear and then disappear as the presenter clicks through it. The only thing worse than putting multiple paragraphs of text into a slide is putting up text that vanishes unexpectedly. It's supposed to be a visual aid, not a magic show.

Yes, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from these examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
Top 12 green IT products

MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
Network management on a budget
Top tablet PCs
What's hot in space?

Winners of the Ig Nobel 2010 prizes
Seven ways to exercise in the office
CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

News

AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
Manufacturing issues impacted company's third-quarter revenue

US creates 80,000 jobs in October
Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September

British Airways parent reports Q3 loss, beats forecasts
IAG also said it would buy half a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profile at its Heathrow hub

RBS returns to profits, warns against conditions ahead
The part-nationalised lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis

BT Global Services remains loss making
Despite overall group profit hike

The world's worst PowerPoint presentations

What not to do with your business presentation

The Delegation Temptation

Leaders are understandably tempted to outsource or delegate responsibility for social media initiatives for the following reasons:

- They are already extremely busy pursuing a host of other priorities and feel unable to add one more thing to their already packed to-do lists.
- They have limited time with social media themselves and have rarely begun to assess their own social media listening activity. Consequently, they may not feel qualified to assign it a suitable spend.
- Their lack of form or plan also contributes to the perspective that social media initiatives are expensive, action projects rather than projects that should be integrated into the normal of the organization's mission and priorities.
- Businesses see few benefits in automating and using many social media platforms and tools, as well as a seemingly low financial commitment. They may undertake a strategic competency of social media.
- Unfortunately, the strategy complexity of social media can lead them to stop once the necessary approaches are implemented, an assumption that reinforces the widespread emphasis on specific tactics such as tweeting, mirroring, and social networking. Consequently, they may continue to do these activities can be carried out and handled by someone who is less engaged in these organizational functions.
- There's no shortage of "free" media source content providers who reinforce the idea that social media tools can be used and put up on their job as results.

Bad bullet points

In a PowerPoint presentation, reducing paragraphs to bullet points helps your audience follow the presentation more easily. But "reducing paragraphs to bullet points" doesn't mean sticking bullet-point icons in front of paragraphs.

As a rule of thumb, if you have to resize your text to 12- or 10-point type to get it to fit, you have too much text. This presentation on social media is a great example of bullet points gone bad. The text is tiny, the bullet points are longer than ten words each, and at least one of them is a full-sized paragraph.

Yes, people who think that it's okay to put 100 graphs on one slide do exist. Learn from those examples how not to make PowerPoint slides for your next big meeting.

Other Slideshows

Mergers and acquisitions rule the IT market in 2011
Meet the world's wealthiest individuals
Acer's upcoming tablets, smartphone: A visual tour
Top 12 green IT products
MIT Media Lab turns 25: A gallery
Seven ways to exercise in the office
CEOs still getting big perks despite pay backlash
15 laptop future concepts: The fascinating and the far-fetched

News

AMD cuts 10 percent of staff
Manufacturing losses impacted company's third-quarter revenue

US creates 60,000 jobs in October
Less than expected but with unemployment falling and job gains in previous months data points to strengthening labour market

Government calls for business mentors for women
The government plans to provide 5,000 mentors to help women set up their own businesses

Corporate insolvencies rise
The number of companies going bust jumped in the three months to September

British Airways parent posts Q3 fall, acts forecasts
IAG also said it would buy bmi, a Lufthansa business, in an attempt to boost profits at its Heathrow hub

RBS returns to profit, warns of conditions ahead
The pan-European lender said it had cut its exposure to Greece and Italy due to the debt crisis

BT Global Services remains loss making
Despite overall group profit hike

REALLY BAD PowerPoint
(and how to avoid it)
by Seth Godin
Yes, it's bad on purpose. Sheesh.

Feel free to print this out and share it. The file isn’t copy-protected, so you are able to share the digital version, but if you buy this from Amazon by clicking here, 100% of my share of the proceeds will be donated directly to charity, so please do.

This book is a companion to the much longer and more detailed *The Big Red Fez*. Click here for more on this bestselling e-book on web design.

You can get all sorts of information on other Do You Zoom products (including free books, free newsletters, new books, old books, etc.) by clicking here. Or visit http://www.sethgodin.com.

And you can tell a friend about this product by clicking here. Thanks for your support.

©2001, Do You Zoom, Inc.
Why Are Your PowerPoints So Bad? (Hint: it’s not your fault)

What would we do without Microsoft PowerPoint? How would we communicate with each other?

PowerPoint was developed by engineers as a tool to help them communicate with the marketing department—and vice versa. The programmers behind PowerPoint saw it as a clever hack—a way to save time and money instead of creating slides the old fashioned way. Once unleashed, though, PowerPoint took on a life of its own.

It’s a remarkable tool because it allows very dense verbal communication. Yes, you can send a memo, but no one reads anymore. As our companies are getting faster and faster, we need a way to communicate ideas from one group to another. Enter PowerPoint.

PowerPoint could be the most powerful tool on your computer. But it’s not.

It’s actually a dismal failure. Almost every PowerPoint presentation sucks rotten eggs. And much of the fault lies with Microsoft.

Microsoft has built wizards and templates right into PowerPoint. And those “helpful” tools are the main reason that we’ve got to live with page after page of bullets, with big headlines and awful backgrounds. Let’s not even get started on the built-in clip art.
I am not making this up! When I set out to write this piece, I worried that I might not be able to find sufficiently bad stuff—I figured that people would hide it. Amazingly, I found this slide and the next one built in to PowerPoint. These are supposed to be the good examples!
This Is Not “Communicating”

That’s the magic word. The purpose of PowerPoint is to communicate with your audience. Unfortunately, rather than communicating, PowerPoint is used to accomplish three things, none of which leads to a good presentation.

The first thing that most people use PowerPoint for is a teleprompter! Think of all the presentations you’ve been to where the presenter actually reads the slides. Did your audience really have to come all this way to a meeting to listen to you read the slides? Why not just send them over?

The second task is to provide a written, cover-your-ass record of what was presented. By handing out the slides after the meeting (or worse, before), the presenter is avoiding the job of writing a formal report, and is making sure that she can point to the implicit approval she earned at the meeting.

The third task is to make it easier for your audience to remember everything you said. Sort of like reading your slides, but better. After all, if you read your slides, and then give the audience a verbatim transcript of what you read, what could be wrong with that?

Communication Is The Transfer Of Emotion

If all you want to do is create a file of facts and figures, then cancel the meeting and send in a report. Do it in PowerPoint if you want, but it’s not a presentation, it’s a report. It will contain whatever you write down, but don’t imagine for a second that you’re powerfully communicating any ideas. Communication is about getting others to adopt your point of view, to help them understand why you’re excited (or sad, or optimistic or whatever else you are.) Unless you’re an amazing writer, it’s awfully hard to do that in a report.

The three tasks that most people set out for a PowerPoint are in direct conflict with what a great presentation should do. Our brains have two sides. The right side is emotional, musical and moody. The left side is focused on dexterity, facts and hard data.

When you show up to give a presentation, people want to use both parts of their brain. So they use the right side to judge the way you talk, the way you dress and your body language. Often, people come to a conclusion about your presentation by the time you’re on the second slide. After that, it’s often too late for your bullet points to do you much good.
You can wreck a communication process with lousy logic or unsupported facts, but you can’t complete it without emotion. Logic is not enough. If all it took was logic, no one would smoke cigarettes. No one would be afraid to fly on airplanes. And every smart proposal would be adopted. No, you don’t win with logic. Logic is essential, but without emotion, you’re not playing with a full deck.

PowerPoint presents an amazing opportunity. You can use the screen to talk emotionally to the audience’s right brain (through their eyes), and your words can go through the audience’s ears to talk to their left brain.

That’s what Stephen Spielberg does. It seems to work for him.

**It’s Selling**

If everyone in the room agreed with you, you wouldn’t need a presentation, would you? You could save a lot of time by printing out a one-page project report and delivering it to each person. No, the reason we do presentations is to make a point, to sell one or more ideas.

But selling is hard. Most people don’t even like to admit that they’re selling. So, instead of taking a chance and *trying* to sell people in a presentation, we make our presentations boring. What a waste.

If you believe in your idea, sell it. Make your point as hard as you can and get what you came for. Your audience will thank you for it, because deep down, we all want to be sold.

**Four Components To A Great Presentation**

First, make yourself cue cards. This feature should be built in to PowerPoint, but it’s not. You should be able to see your cue cards on your laptop’s screen while your audience sees your slides on the wall. Alas. In the meantime, you’ll just have to resort to writing them down the old-fashioned way.

Now, you can use the cue cards you made to make sure you’re saying what you came to say.
Second, make slides that *reinforce* your words, not repeat them. Create slides that demonstrate, with emotional proof, that what you’re saying is *true* not just accurate.

Talking about pollution in Houston? Instead of giving me four bullet points of EPA data, why not show me a photo of a bunch of dead birds, some smog and even a diseased lung? Amazingly, it’s more fun than doing it the old way. But it’s effective communication.

Third, create a written document. A leave-behind. Put in as many footnotes or details as you like. Then, when you start your presentation, tell the audience that you’re going to give them all the details of your presentation after it’s over, and they don’t have to write down everything you say.

**IMPORTANT:** Don’t hand out the written stuff at the beginning. Don’t! If you do, people will read the whole thing while you’re talking and ignore you. Instead, your goal is to get them to sit back, trust you and take in the emotional and intellectual points of your presentation.

Fourth, create a feedback cycle. If your presentation is for a project approval, hand people a project approval form and get them to approve it, so there’s no ambiguity at all about what you’ve just agreed to.

**So What’s On Your Slides?**

Here are the five rules you need to remember to create amazing PowerPoint presentations:

1. No more than six words on a slide. EVER.
2. No cheesy images. Use professional images from corbis.com instead. They cost $3 each, or a little more if they’re for ‘professional use’.
3. No dissolves, spins or other transitions. None.
4. Sound effects can be used a few times per presentation, but never (ever) use the sound effects that are built in to the program. Instead, rip sounds and music from CDs and leverage the Proustian effect this can have.
5. Don’t hand out print-outs of your slides. They’re emotional, and they won’t work without you there. If someone wants your slides to show “the boss,” tell them that the slides go if you go.
The home run is easy to describe: You put up a slide. It triggers an emotional reaction in the audience. They sit up and want to know what you’re going to say that fits in with that image. Then, if you do it right, every time they think of what you said, they’ll see the image (and vice versa).

Alas, This Is Harder Than What You Do Now

But what you do now is lazy and ineffective. It bores people and doesn’t communicate with them. Once you get the hang of this process, it’s actually easier to make a great presentation. An audience that wants to hear what you have to say is more likely to listen, and you’re more likely to get what you want. And isn’t that the point?

What’s really cool is the way you’ll start making presentations in the future. Instead of making slides that follow your bullet points, you’ll organize the presentation emotionally, letting the slides drive the process.

Remember that every slide doesn’t have to stand on its own. You can use one slide to set up a point and then the next slide to bring it home.

A Few Examples To Get You Started

Let’s say you work for a non-profit and are doing a presentation for your backers at the United Way. You want more money for a program that helps aging Vietnam Vets get the social and mental therapy they need as they grow older.

In the old days, you’d start with a bar chart about the aging population and then five bullet points about how you’ll approach the problem.

Instead, why not use this photo:
Then, while the audience gasps at the memories this image brings back, tell your story. Tell it the way you’d tell it to a colleague. Explain why you want to run this program and who it’s going to help. And then refer your audience to the facts and figures you’ll be happy to hand out in a few minutes. Show some digital snapshots of the people already in your program. Insert a few photos of graduates, now leading productive lives without your help…

Or, how about something a little simpler. You’re trying to sell your boss on getting a budget to redesign your website. It seems that your competition is gaining market share because your site is so lame.

Instead of regaling her with statistics, show her. Do ten screen shots, one after another, demonstrating the process of buying stuff from your online store. Then show the three steps it takes your competitor’s customers. It will only take you thirty seconds to step through the steps, but once you’re done, you’ve established a real need in your audience. Show the problem and it’s easier to sell the solution.
Sorry that this e-booklet is so short. Actually, if I hadn’t spent so much time on it, it would be longer. What I’ve just described is simple, effective and difficult. You’ll resist at first. You’ll point out that it’s not the way your company works. You’ll remember the last time you saw someone fail with a similar approach.

My goal in making it short and vivid and hyperbolic is to dare you to try it. Try it without compromise.

I hope you’ll give it a shot despite the long odds. If something is worth getting ten (or a hundred) people in a room, it seems to me that it’s worth doing right. You may not be as tall as Abraham Lincoln or as eloquent as Winston Churchill, but you are able to make great presentations. Have fun.

SETH GODIN is the author of the bestsellers Permission Marketing, Unleashing the Ideavirus and The Big Red Fez. His new book, Survival is Not Enough is due from the Free Press in January, 2002. And his PowerPoints are not boring.