

Guest Author

Tips for Effective Electronic Presentations

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A power point presentation shouldn't compete with you as the speaker. It should complement what you are discussing. Consequently, the screen should be as clean as possible. The combination of strong words and powerful visuals will make your presentation memorable. The following are key tips for creating effective electronic presentations.

Use a sans serif typeface

Use a typeface that is easy to read, such as Arial, Tahoma or Verdana. These typefaces use "stick" lines and are called *sans serif*. *Serif* typefaces have little lines above and below the letter, and are easier to read on paper, but detract when on screen. Times New Roman and Garamond are *serif* typefaces. Arial and Tahoma are sans serif.

5 x 5 Rule

You want people to concentrate on what you say. You do not want them trying to read at the same time that you are speaking. To keep onscreen text as brief as possible, use no more than 5 lines per screen, no more than 5 words per line. The audience may be distracted if you use long phrases or complete sentences rather than brief text. Even short phrases that wrap around a line can be distracting. It takes time and thought to condense where needed, but it will pay off in the long run.

Use a simple background color

Don't use patterns or dark colors for background. A distracting background may compete with the text and graphics that you've chosen. Another consideration is that if you present in a darkened room and use dark background colors, people may get drowsy and not concentrate on you. White or pastel

colors make the best background colors. If you select a colored background, make sure the audience can read a typeface that's black or another dark color.

Project early and often

You probably have spent a lot time creating your presentation, and are comfortable with how the presentation looks on your computer. Remember that in a large room, the images and text on the screen will probably look very different than what you see on your computer eighteen feet away.

Edit visually: trust your instincts

Most people aren't accustomed to editing visually. Look closely at each screen. Ask yourself, "Does this work?" Trust your instincts. You will know if something isn't just right. If you aren't quite sure what is not working, enlist the help of a colleague.

Show what you're talking about

An array of graphic elements can help you show what you're talking about. Use clip art, photos, diagrams, charts, tables or graphs. Clip art can be effective if used sparingly and appropriately. Photos can really draw people into your story. Diagrams can show the relationship of one item to another. Tables are often more concise than narrative. Charts and graphs show numbers effectively when they are created well and accurately. Graphics are dense with information, so don't present a series of different graphics in succession. While it is not good to read from text slides, describing a graphic to an audience can be intriguing.

Print early and often

If you plan on giving a handout, print a draft copy early. You may find that you need to adjust background colors, headers and footers. For example, you may only want to print a summary slide of a progression of slides in your presentation. When ready to print the hand out, **always** use *Save As*, to save a different version. On the "saved version," adjust the colors, customize the headers / footers, and utilize other techniques that will leave a professional looking handout. Remember that

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the handout may be the only thing the audience keeps to remind them of your talk.

Creating effective visuals is a challenge and should be done only after you have drafted your remarks. By taking time to do them well, you ensure that your audience will understand. Once the audience understands, your task of moving them to take action increases dramatically.

About the author:

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