Farewell to Death by PowerPoint

A blended workshop of presentation design, best practices, and PowerPoint technique

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Oh, the Pain!

Most members of audiences just expect to be bored during business presentations. Why is that? Why is it that Death by PowerPoint is in everyone’s vocabulary? How is it that we have gotten into this place where our own reputations are called into question just because we use PowerPoint or speak in public?

**Undertrained?**
According to our poll, most of those who are in the presentation industry invested less than one hour of formal training in PowerPoint. A few of the respondents told us that it was more like 15 minutes.

**And delusional?**
The damning results of another poll: Of sixty businesspeople, 86% of them thought they were good communicators. The audience had a different point of view, however.
**Message disconnect**
Most presentations in corporate America start with several minutes about how wonderful the presenter’s company is, not what truly matters to audience members. This creates an immediate disconnect. Resisting this stands as one of the most important changes you can make to your company narrative.

**Stupidity by PowerPoint**
Many good presenters find it difficult to showcase their expertise when they are saddled with speaking to poorly-crafted slides. This is the slide that tennis coach Lon created, and while it is pretty simple, he was derailed by it. He went on “defense” and got stuck explaining the slide, instead of truly sharing his ideas with the audience.

This slide produced a much better result, as he no longer felt compelled to speak specifically to the points on the slide. This was simply his backdrop. Much better.
Start away from the computer
Modern computers are wonderfully sophisticated devices, with which you can produce perfect work. That is not good news for creative thinkers, who should not be trying for perfect when they begin a project. This scribbled sheet of paper is a better way to think creatively.

No phone booths allowed!
Why do we feel as if we must cram so much text onto our slides. There are many reasons for it, and all have solutions. (Except the first one.)

Takeaways
Insufficient training time
Too much text on slides
Overuse of the software
Wrong message to audience
Slides inhibiting the sharing of expertise
Stand and Deliver

There are some who believe that outstanding public speakers were born with their talents and that all the training in the world couldn’t equal that. We won’t participate in that debate, because we’re not interested in whether you were preordained to be a great speaker—we care only about making you better than you are right now. And on that score, there is only good news: there are real, tangible, physical behaviors that you can perform to make you a more effective presenter. That is our focus here.

Be natural, be unguarded
Your objective: to share your thoughts with your audience in the most natural way. As the most important part of the presentation, you want to eliminate as many barriers as possible between you and your audience.

No wonder…
Here is one of the reasons why the deck is stacked against those in the presentation business. Most people consider it more terrifying than dying.
“Don’t be nervous”
That’s really bad advice. You can’t make yourself not be nervous; you either are or you aren’t, and given the choice, it would be better for you to be nervous. Here’s what one of the best pressure performers in all of baseball had to say about it.

Instead of trying to quell your nerves, learn how to control that energy. If you can control the pace at which you speak, then you give yourself the chance to slow down your entire body. Using big muscles helps: laughing uses your diaphragm and large upper-body gestures uses big muscle groups.

Think audience left
If you have the choice, consider standing to the left of the screen. That will be more comfortable for your audience when showing standard text slides. That way, audience members can focus on you and then begin reading from left to right.
Presenting remotely
Webinars are here to stay and they are challenging. To help you thrive, think about writing out your intro, your ending, and key transitions. And if it helps you speak more effectively, stand up, just as you would in a live presentation. Finally, accept the fact that they will multitask.

Because it’s hard to predict the quality of your connection, don’t use ornate animation; just Fade and Appear. If you log in a second device as a guest, at least you will know if there is a lag and you can adjust.

Takeaways
It’s okay to be nervous
Think BIG: Big gestures, show your hands
Work from the left of your screen
You are doing something that most people can’t!
Survival Skills for the Non-Designer

Most people who work in the presentation space are not professional graphic designers. Fortunately, having pretty slides is not what presentation design is about. It is about creating a good foundation for delivering relevant and compelling messages. Once you develop instincts for good presentation design, slide design becomes easier.

World’s most important presentation advice
Nobody enters the room excited to see your slides. When you make them more important than you, everybody loses. You are the reason that people come to a presentation.

Design vs. Décor
Many involved in presentation design don’t actually know what the word means. They mistake design for decoration. Both are important but good presentation design supercedes attractive slides.
**Are you too prepared?**
Many content creators work too hard and many presenters don’t prepare enough. Here are three questions to which presenters must be able to answer yes.

How would you do with a slide like this? It would take a prepared and disciplined presenter to not go on defense. If you could answer yes to the questions above, you might stand a good chance.

Irony alert: if you were that prepared, you wouldn’t need your slides to act like a script. You would do just fine with this slide instead, and your audience would prefer it.

**DESIGN**
Do you know your stuff?
Have you prepared diligently?
Could you give the presentation without any slides at all?

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**The Standard Edit Procedure**
- Run pre-census files(ERS) which take several hours and should be scheduled at night
- Download file and upload it to the CSU, Chancellor’s Office computer
- Run edit routine on the Chancellor’s Office computer
- Download basic spreadsheet error report from Chancellor’s Office
- Merge edit report with census file and bring in a set of fields typically associated with errors
- Send reformatted spreadsheet to Records to investigate and clean data in PeopleSoft
- Carry out these steps repeatedly to clean up as many errors as possible before census date
- Run census files on census date
- Process remaining errors on flat file extracted after census (Records does the same in PeopleSoft)
- When clean, submit census file to Chancellor’s Office

**LOCAL EDIT CHECKS**
Seven steps to perfection
1. Run ERS overnight
2. Upload to Chancellor’s office
3. Download error report
4. Merge with census file
5. Send to Records to investigate and clean
6. Repeat until perfect!
7. Submit to Chancellor’s Office

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The three-word challenge

Slides with fully-formed thoughts are confusing to the audience and deadly challenging to the presenter.

Honing and distilling your thoughts is the first step toward better presentation design, and is an excellent way to become more familiar with your content and what the truly important messages are.

After removing all extraneous words, the resulting slide would provide a much better backdrop, even if you chose to go no further with slide design.

The beauty of clearing out all that flotsam, though, is that you can go further, and it starts with locating a visually evocative photo that supports the theme.

By creating a semi-transparent shape over the photo, you can create sufficient contrast to ensure text readability over the photo.

That’s good presentation design...
The handout dilemma

A good presentation consists of what you say, what you show, and what you give. Those three things should be different! When dealing with deadlines, collaborative issues, and arcane software behavior, it’s all too easy to create a slide like the one at top right and call it a day. That usually compromises all three of the components (say, show, and give).

Usually, slides this busy represent a sure sign that a slide was intended to be printed. If the presenter begins with “You can’t see this, but...”, your suspicion is confirmed.

You might be tempted to use Microsoft’s Handout engine, but all that does is print the slides in smaller form with lines next to them. Printing your slides never works! There will always be better ways to approach the creation of printed material to support your presentation.
The handout solution
The solution is to approach the handout as a related but separate project. While it will seem like extra work at first, it will be better work: you will be able to produce better visuals and better handouts, making the entire product better.

Our recommended approach is to use the Notes page for your handout, as this contains everything within one PowerPoint file. Using the Notes Master, you can design a branded format for handouts that will prove much more versatile than just printing slides.

By simply copying and pasting from the slide to the Notes page, all of the detail you want to provide audience members is captured in a better form. This will be better than a slide on many levels: portrait, not landscape; 12 or 14 point, not 18, 20, or higher; room for much more detail. In fact, this page includes the detail for two slides, all in perfectly readable form.
Without regard for the handout, you can design a cleaner and more impactful slide for the live presentation, highlighting the most important statistics.

Now you are creating a presentation package, which speaks much better to your sensibilities as a communicator. You show that you understand the best way to provide information to an audience: in highlighted form for the live presentation and in detailed form for the handout. The handout at right incorporates the details from two slides, as well as related material, set in small type at the bottom.

Both of these pieces travel with the slide deck if you use this technique of creating the handout on the Notes page. To print it, you simply choose Notes Page when printing or creating the PDF.
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with the most inflammatory title.
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The Presentation Summit
October 23-26, 2016
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