Power Point Presentations

Putting Your Idea on Screen

PowerPoint is a great tool for organizing a presentation and bringing it to life. Some people absorb information better by hearing it and some learn more by seeing. PowerPoint lets you address both learning styles. As with any other tool, improper use can bring disastrous results. Here are a few pointers for making the best use of this innovative technology.

FOR STARTERS

Before you start developing your presentation, keep in mind you have chosen to use PowerPoint as your MEDIUM of presenting. PowerPoint is not your presentation in and of itself. PowerPoint is a tool to help you present to the audience. The audience is interested in what you have to say and how you say it. They will appreciate what PowerPoint adds to your presentation. but they will mostly be looking at you—the presenter.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

This is the first and most important rule for any kind of presentation. An informal presentation for your peers at a 4-H Club meeting will not take the same tone as a presentation to your local Kiwanis Club asking for support for a community project. With an audience you know, you might begin with a tasteful cartoon or humorous quote. The same might work with the Kiwanis Club, but only if the audience is one you know. If the audience is unfamiliar, or if you are dealing with a serious topic, you may need to keep the presentation serious and straightforward.

DESIGNING YOUR PRESENTATION

After you understand who your audience is, you can begin to assemble the design. Choose an overall design at the beginning and stick with it. Avoid trying to pack too many colors and too much fluff into your design. Remember there will be other opportunities to use all the bells and whistles available with this program. Remember the design is a tool and shouldn't distract from your message.

Use design and color to reflect your topic and to show who you represent. Take time to choose the most appropriate colors, fonts, and images to convey your message. For example, dull yellows and greens in a presentation project a military atmosphere. Brighter greens and yellows look like springtime and growth. Purples and pinks are fun. Reds, blues and blacks are useful for more serious topics.

Color Schemes—A color scheme includes all the colors used in your presentation and the manner in which the colors complement each other for most effective presentation. Although it may be tempting to try elaborate color schemes, remember that your audience needs to be able to read what you place on the screen. Do not use grey text on a black

background, for example, or teal text on a purple background. If you have trouble finding the color scheme that best reflects your topic, choose from one of the templates included in your PowerPoint program. These templates come with predefined colors and fonts that complement the background images.

Addressing Colorblindness with PowerPoint Presentations—Colorblindess of some sort affects millions of Americans, so it is important to keep this in mind when designing your PowerPoint slides. If possible, avoid mixing green and red on a slide. Red/green colorblindness is one of the most common. The next combination to avoid is mixing yellow and blue.

Fonts—Fonts can add a lot of character to your presentation, but be careful of the type of fonts you choose. Remember that not all fonts on your computer are also available on other computers. Fonts common to most computers are Times New Roman, Arial, Verdana, Garamond, Comic Sans, Century, and Courier. Also avoid mixing fonts. If you must use more than one font, stick with plain-looking fonts when you have a great deal of text and use fancier fonts only as accent.

Graphics—Graphics are the most useful tool for PowerPoint because they help your audience visualize your thoughts. Words and bullet points can help you organize your thoughts, but images give life to your presentation. Do not overuse images, however, because you want your audience to focus on you, not the screen. Choose a few images and use them sparingly for greatest impact. Graphics can be a little trickier if you are using a template, because most templates already include graphics used as background. You may individually select slides to remove your template background so that graphics do not cover your professional background.

Animation—Animation is useful for drawing attention to particular words or graphics. One use for animation is to hide text until you are ready to show it to the audience for the purpose of keeping their attention on the topic you are addressing at the moment. However make sure the cartoon or "fly-in" on the screen does not distract the audience from what you are trying to say. Limit use of animation, and save it for emphasis or you will lose the audience's attention.

Sound—Avoid overuse of sound in your presentation, because speaker systems are not always available. Repetitive zips, zings, and whistles may be novel at first but can become annoying. Background music can be soothing as long as you are not forced to speak over it. If you have to consider whether music or sounds are appropriate, most likely they are not.

Secret Slides—A great way to show your audience you are prepared is to anticipate their questions with secret slides. Using hidden slides gives you the advantage of having lots of detailed information on hand in case you need it. Secret slides during the question and answer period can easily address more specific questions. When you design hidden slides, use the same template you used for the initial presentation. Hidden slides can be placed anywhere within the presentation. To hide a slide, select it and go to SLIDESHOW, then HIDE SLIDE. In the slide sorter view, hidden slides will appear with a gray box around them but will not appear in your slideshow. When you are ready to access a certain hidden slide, right-click with the mouse or remote and select GO from the menu and choose either BY TITLE or SLIDE NAVIGATOR. The hidden slides will appear in either menu with parentheses around the

number. Be sure to label these hidden slides clearly so you can them when you need them.

GIVING THE PRESENTATION:

Using a PowerPoint presentation is like doing an illustrated presentation. The PowerPoint is only a visual aid for you to use to inform your audience about your subject. The same guidelines apply to giving a PowerPoint presentation as they do to other talks, illustrated talks or demonstrations. Your PowerPoint presentation will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Speaker
• Appearance (neat and appropriate)
• Voice (clear, fluent, articulate, projection)
• Poise and Posture
• Eye Contact

Presentation
• Introduction
• Organization of Material
• Delivery
• Conclusion
• General Effect
• Proper Use of Visual Aids

Subject Matter
• Originality
• Speaker's Understanding of Subject Matter
• Suitability of Topic (specific)
• Information (accurate, up-to-date, complete)

It is important to remember that you, the speaker, and your ability to organize and present information, are the main attractions, not your PowerPoint presentation. Here are some tips to remember:

• Stand out from behind the podium and the computer equipment.
• Stand to the left of the screen at a 45-degree angle to the room. This will make your audience more comfortable, as most of us read from left to right.
• Use movement, gestures and eye contact to emphasize points in your presentation.
• Do not read your presentation from the screen.
• Bring an extra copy of your program on another disk, along with printed handouts of your presentation.
• Mechanical failure is always a possibility. Don't panic. Make sure all the cords are plugged in. If that doesn't work, ask the judge for assistance. If the problem can't be fixed in a timely fashion, move on with your presentation using your printed handouts. The judge will be understanding. Remain calm and continue with your presentation in a confident and professional manner. This will impress the judge more than your PowerPoint would have.

PowerPoint is a technology that is widely available and that can be fun both for the presenter and the audience. Just remember it can never replace you, the presenter, and is only as good as the preparation you have made. Always remember, you are making the presentation and giving information to the audience. PowerPoint is a tool to help you convey the message. Be confident in your presentation, and use PowerPoint to enhance and illustrate your speech.