

Quest

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Information and ideas for your quest

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This issue

PowerPoint:

- Planning tips
- Design basics
- Web resources



Creating Effective PowerPoint Presentations

Whatever happened to overhead transparencies and purple markers that smell like grapes? Microsoft PowerPoint happened. PowerPoint has become nearly as common on computers as word processing software.

The next logical question then becomes “How can we effectively use this technology to enhance our presentations?” The answer can be found in careful planning and practice. The following techniques will help you determine if PowerPoint is right for your presentation and provide you with the necessary know-how to create computer visuals that will strengthen your message.

To PowerPoint or Not to PowerPoint

Avoid using PowerPoint or any type of presentation software simply because you have it on your computer. Always ask yourself “Are computer-generated visuals appropriate?” Before creating computer visuals for a presentation, consider these three important factors:

1. **Your audience** – How receptive will your audience be to computer-generated visuals? Is it an appropriate occasion? What is the tone of the meeting? Traditional visual aids like a flip chart, whiteboard or overhead projector might be a better choice.
2. **Your confidence using technology** – Measure your comfort level and be realistic. Speaking in front of an audience can be an anxiety-producing endeavor and using computer visuals can only add to that stress. You must consider the additional time required to prepare the visuals, conduct a dry run, and setup and test the equipment.
3. **The venue** – Although increasingly more meeting/conference facilities are designed for the use of computer visuals, many are still ill-equipped. To determine if a venue is suitable, you will need to keep in mind the configuration of the room, the lighting, and the brightness and resolution of the projector.

Develop Your Message First

Resist the temptation to create your visuals first. Begin by organizing your message and then adding visuals to reinforce your message. If you use PowerPoint, the Outline View is an excellent place to start.

Create Visuals with a Purpose

Once you're ready to create your visuals, remember that *each* visual should serve a specific purpose (e.g. illustrate a point, simplify a complex concept, bridge a transition). Avoid creating a slide for every point in your presentation and using bulleted slides as cue cards. Some common types of visuals include: charts, photos, cartoons, video clips and text. In addition, consider what will be on the screen when the audience enters the room (e.g. a thought-provoking quote, quiz, interesting statistic). This extra step can set the tone and heighten the audience's anticipation of your presentation.

Remember Less is More

Cluttered slides can complicate the message and diminish the impact of your presentation. Avoid overdoing:

- **Text** – Keep text to a minimum and avoid using complete sentences. Replace text with graphics whenever possible.
- **Font Styles** – Select two or three fonts that work well together. And never sacrifice readability for style. Certain fonts are more legible than others. Sans-serif fonts offer the best readability. (See Figure 1)
- **Colors** – Remember colors play an important role in setting the mood of your message (e.g. peacefulness, harmony, contemplation, cheerful, etc.). Establish a color scheme that best fits your message and use it throughout the presentation. PowerPoint offers a wide variety of color scheme options. Cool colors (blue, green, purple) are excellent background choices. Warm colors (red, orange, yellow) are perfect for text, charts, images and clip art. And white is ideal for text when using a dark background.
- **Background Design** – Consider a “visual” theme you can carry throughout your presentation. Select a background that will not detract from your text, and a design that provides adequate space for charts and images.

Graphic and audio elements can liven up your message, however, be careful not to overuse these design options. Monitor your use of:

- **Images/Graphics**
- **Movement/Animation**
- **Sound Effects**

Font Styles	
SERIF	SANS-SERIF
Times New Roman	Arial
Garamond	Verdana
Georgia	Univers
Courier New	Tahoma

Figure 1

Serif fonts have flared or tapering ends called serifs projecting from the top and/or bottom of the letters. Sans-serif fonts are plain or without serifs. Fonts in the sans-serif family (e.g. Arial and Verdana) offer the best readability and are ideal for headings.

Have a Backup Plan

Expect the unexpected when dealing with technology (e.g. equipment failure, computer-projector conflicts, burned out bulbs, etc.). Save yourself a lot of stress and embarrassment by establishing a backup plan. Here's a sample checklist of things to have handy:

- A backup computer file of your presentation (Zip disk, CD, floppy)
- Overhead transparencies of your presentation
- Hard copy of your presentation

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- Backup equipment (LCD projector, computer, overhead projector, flip chart)
- Replacement bulb for equipment and a glove or towel to remove the blown bulb
- Technical support (Have someone “on call” if possible or meet with the technician prior to your presentation to determine common equipment problems and repair techniques.)

Under the right conditions, PowerPoint can be an effective presentation tool. Creating that ideal scenario requires deciding if PowerPoint is the best choice, carefully selecting visuals that reinforce your message and being equipped with a backup plan. Plus, having a few purple markers handy can't hurt.

Presentation Resources on the Web

Digital Juice – This comprehensive library of presentation graphics includes backgrounds, photos, textures, video clips, animated elements and much more. To order Digital Juice for PowerPoint & Multimedia Design, visit <http://www.digitaljuice.com> or call 1-800-525-2203.

Gettyworks.com – This web site offers a variety of design solutions including PowerPoint templates, photos, fonts, video clips and sounds. Select the product you want, pay for it, download the file and use it in minutes. (This is clearly one of my favorite web sites ... high-quality products at a great price. And you can save even more by purchasing an annual membership.) Visit <http://www.gettyworks.com>.

Microsoft Knowledge Base – Search more than 250,000 articles to find PowerPoint solutions. The Knowledge Base is constantly updated, expanded, and refined to provide the very latest information. Visit <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=fh;rid;kbinfo>.

Microsoft Newsgroups – Communicate with other PowerPoint users and receive tips from peers and experts in an open on-line forum. You can get started now by visiting <http://communities2.microsoft.com/home/default.aspx?LID=28001275>.

PowerPlugs – PowerPoint users can “plug-in” sound effects, animated 3D title slides, sophisticated 3D charts and much more. For details, visit <http://www.crystalgraphics.com> or call 1-800-394-0700.

Presentations.com – Find new-product reviews, best presentation practices, updates on industry trends and how-to articles. To learn more about this comprehensive presenter's resource and *Presentations* magazine, visit <http://www.presentations.com>.

Presenter-to-Go – Forget about carrying a laptop computer for presentations. Handheld users can use Presenter-to-Go to connect their handheld directly to a projector or VGA display. For more information on how this expansion device works, check out <http://www.presenter-to-go.com>.



Jennifer is a professional speaker, author and president of CommuniQuest, Inc. Through her seminars and keynotes, she delivers fresh insight and proven techniques on how to work smarter and live a more satisfying life. For more information on her workplace strategies and inspirational programs, visit www.communiquest.com or call 1-888-866-0821.

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