



## **Making PowerPoint Work For You:**

In the “good old days” before PowerPoint, creating professional looking presentations was a cumbersome task. Presentations were sent to Genigraphics, which in turn made 35mm slide presentations. While this approach resulted in nice looking presentations, it was slow (remember, there was no Internet to speed delivery of files) and it was expensive. You could also enlarge typewriter pages and make transparencies on a copy machine. The result was not especially attractive. And you could be very creative with fonts as long as it was Courier.

In 1987, along came the first version of PowerPoint. Microsoft did not develop it. A company called Forethought did. It was originally developed for the Macintosh. In 1990, Microsoft introduced PowerPoint for Windows 3.0. Since this introduction, there have been five major new releases of PowerPoint (not counting the minor upgrades). Today, it is the dominant presentation tool with virtually no competition.

While PowerPoint is a great tool for creating exciting presentations, many of the features are too often overused or used inappropriately. In fact, the use of space-consuming graphics and animation became so rampant in the Pentagon a few years ago that a significant portion of the Pentagon’s “communication pipeline” was being consumed with excessively complex, and large PowerPoint presentations. Here are a few suggestions to make PowerPoint work for you:

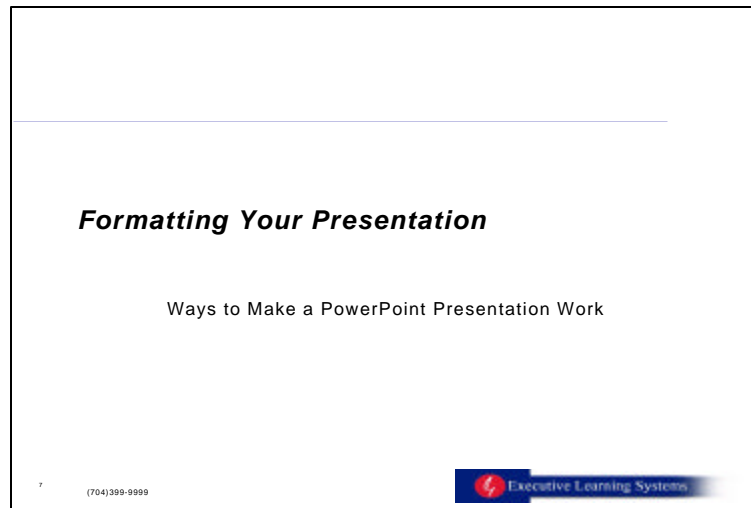
### **Structure of Your Presentation:**

- State your presentation objectives or outcomes on the first slide. Let your audience know exactly what you want to accomplish early on in your presentation. This is a basic rule from ESI but it is especially important in a PowerPoint presentation. Both the senses of sight and hearing come into play when PowerPoint is used. With this tool, you can more clearly emphasize what your objectives are—which also means you must have clearly defined those objectives when you begin the presentation.

#### **Outcomes for this ESI-II Component**

- Provide pointers on using PowerPoint
- Provide opportunity to practice with PowerPoint
- Focus on three components of a presentation
  - Structure: Planning the presentation
  - Format: Guidelines for using PowerPoint in a presentation
  - Tips on making the presentation

- Follow another ESI rule. The rule of 5s and 6s. No more than five lines on a page and each line should be no more than six words.
- Use short phrases rather than complete sentences. Make certain each phrase is parallel in grammatical structure.
- If the presentation is long (more than 10 pages) be certain to insert slides that introduce new sections or new ideas. Establish a heading or theme that is consistent for each section.
- When ending a presentation using PowerPoint, use the tool to reinforce the key points from your presentation. Again, since your audience is both listening to your key points and seeing them on a screen, the potential to emphasize and drive home your points is great.



### **Format of Your Presentation:**

This is where many people get into trouble with PowerPoint. It has so many bells and whistles that presenters try to use too many of them and wind up confusing their audience. Following the KISS (keep it simple and sweet) adage is critical. Some recommendations:

- If you are going to use a logo, make it a consistent size and have a consistent placement throughout the presentation. Use the slide master page (under Views on the tool bar) to establish a template layout that will apply to all slides. Since almost all people read from left to right, putting the logo in the upper or lower right of the screen is best. The audience reads it as the last thing on the page instead of the first.

Keep the logo size small (no more that 1.25" height or width). You want the audience to see an identity but not overwhelmed by it.

Make certain there is an identity (name, company, contact information, etc.) on each slide. You never know when someone will have a question. Make it easy for them to locate you. Make this information small (9 point type) and put it in the lower part of the slide. This can be set in the slide master.

This is Times New Roman. It is great for printed material.

This is Arial. It is great for use where a digital screen is used (digital projector or computer)

- Always use a sans serif type style (e.g., Tahoma, Arial). Serif type styles such as Times New Roman can become fuzzy, especially if you are presenting to a large audience and the projected image is quite large.

- Keep the font size large but not too large. Generally, a font size of 24 point or less will suffice in most presentations. Again, if you are making a presentation where the image will be on a large screen, it is probably worth a test to see what size works best given the lighting.

- Use colors with care. Remember, there is likely to be a significant portion of your audience that is color-blind so they may not be able to see the colors anyway. Select 2 or 3 tasteful but contrasting colors. It is useful to print some of the slides in black and white to see if the colors you have chosen do have sufficient contrast (for those who see only contrasts).

### Colors and Backgrounds

- Pay attention to colors. Fewer colors better
- Background patterns tend to confuse. Be careful
- Test your color choice before putting it on the screen
- Which colors work for you?

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- Make your backgrounds simple. If you are using any kind of backgrounds, make certain they do not overwhelm the information on the screen.

- Put variety in your charts and graphs. This is an area where you should follow Winston Churchill's adage that he would "rather be right than consistent." If you do have charts in your presentation, mix up the type. If you have a bar chart on one slide, have a line

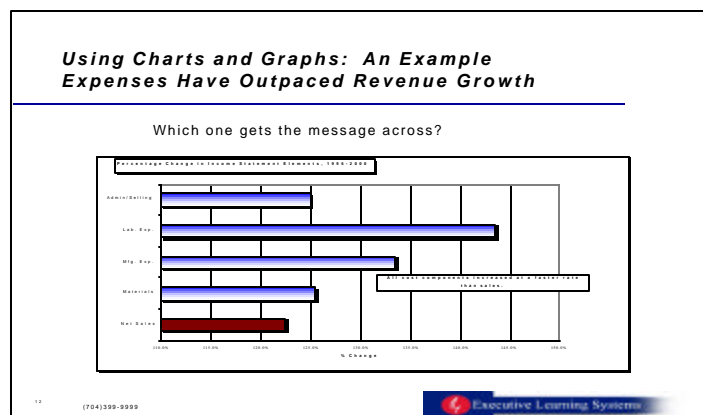


chart on the next. Use the visual medium to drive home and emphasize important financial points. In fact, it is a good idea to use a chart whenever possible to display financial information. In this case, a picture is truly worth a thousand words.

- Using slide builds and animation. This is one area where the power of PowerPoint can get you in trouble. Use slide builds (where each bulleted point is added to the slide) but be consistent about the way you do it. Pick an approach, generally Wipe Right, and stay with it. Avoid the use of sounds in animation (e.g., typewriter, etc.). This just serves to distract.

With today's technology, you can integrate film clips into slide presentations. Use this only when you want to emphasize a critical point and the film clip does it in an exceptional way.

- Proofread your presentation carefully. There is nothing worse than have a typo or some other silly mistake on a presentation. It is up there for everyone to see and it will detract from your presentation.

### **Making Your Presentation:**

Now comes the fun part, making PowerPoint an integral part of your presentation. Some things to keep in mind:

- Position the screen to your left (audience's right). Again, people read from left to right so by positioning the screen to your left, they are less likely to forget the presenter.
- Do not turn your back on the audience. Never talk to the screen. This means practicing your presentation is critical. Also, make certain that you adjust the screen on your laptop computer so that you can easily glance down to review the points you wish to make.
- Always have a presentation dry run. It may be nothing more than a quick shuffle of the slides but always do this. You do not know how that slide will look until you actually see it on the screen.

### **Summary: Points to Remember!**

- Be consistent—background, fonts, logos colors, etc.
- Pre-plan and prepare all audio-visual support. Check it out to make certain it is working.
- Edit, edit, edit. Focus on the essence of your presentation.
- Remember the dry-run. Rehearse with all support elements.

- Less is better. Too much clutter can sabotage your presentation.
- If adding a graphic, comment, or extra bullet doesn't clarify or add value, don't include it.
- Audio-visual support is a powerful tool. It supports and does not replace the presenter. Your audience needs to see you, the presenter, as the primary part of the presentation.

Listed below are some web sites that you may find helpful in constructing your PowerPoint presentation.

[www.presentersuniversity.com](http://www.presentersuniversity.com): This site is hosted by InFocus, a provider of projection equipment. It is quite helpful and has lots of good tips, ideas, and templates.

<http://www.presentationpro.com>: This site provides PowerPoint templates if you want to add more visuals to your presentation. The caveat: Too much can be a bad thing.

<http://www.functionx.com/powerpoint>: This site provides a free tutorial on how to set up your PowerPoint presentation. Great for the beginning PowerPoint user.

<http://dgl.microsoft.com/>: Microsoft provides PowerPoint users with a large selection of picture inserts. Some are well done; some are not. A good way to add zip to your presentation.

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