

Attention Please!

BWSR Academy 2013

Purpose

Audience

Introductions

Good Ideas

Bad Ideas

Presentations

Good ideas

Bad ideas

Other Ideas/Notes

Defining Purpose – from the Audience Perspective:

NOT: My specific purpose is to persuade the audience against drunk driving.

Rather: My specific purpose is to persuade the state law makers from western Minnesota of the need for stiffer penalties for drunk driving.

NOT: My desired outcome is to sell this product.

Rather: My desired outcome is that you will want to buy this product.

NOT: My desired outcome is to explain photosynthesis.

Rather: My desired outcome is that internal staff will be able to describe the workings of photosynthesis.

NOT: My specific purpose is to inform the audience about politics.

Rather:

NOT: My purpose is to teach WCA.

Rather:

NOT: My desired outcome is to explain about my organization to the public.

Rather:

NOT:

Rather:

NOT:

Rather:

Audience Analysis

The more you know about your audience, the greater your chances of success. Answering the questions in the table below BEFORE you begin will help you focus your communication effort on the parts your audience will relate to the most.

Who are they?	<i>What are the main demographics of your audience – what traits are they likely to share? Be as specific as possible.</i>
What are their expectations?	<i>What are they expecting from the article/presentation/memo/report/meeting/etc.?</i>
What do they already know?	<i>Are they subject matter experts? Do they have any previous exposure to the topic? Are they already aware of the project? Again - be specific, if they know something about the topic, what is it you think they know?</i>
Why are they reading the information? OR Why are they here?	<i>Are they tuned in because they are curious? Because they feel they have to? Because they feel threatened? Because they are supportive of the ideas?</i>
How will they use the information?	<i>Will they use the information to make a decision? Will they use the information to become more informed? Will they use the information in other ways?</i>
What do I want them to take away?	<i>What is the one thing you want them to walk away with? Does this match your purpose?</i>
How can I connect with them?	<i>Look at your answers above, Is there an angle, perspective or bit of information that will appeal directly to this audience?</i>

Worksheet

Communication Activity: _____

Define your Purpose: I want my audience to....._____

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10 tips to help you write more effectively:

1. **Keep it simple.**

You may think complex sentences make you sound impressive, but they can prevent your ideas from getting across. Use “during” instead of “during the course of.”

- **Vary sentence length, but avoid overly long sentences.**

Try for an average sentence length of 17 words. Introduce no more than one or two ideas per sentence.

- **Avoid jargon and acronyms.** Avoid Acronyms use “the program” instead of CWF or “the Agency” instead of BWSR.

2. **Use concrete, specific words rather than vague, general ones.**

For example, say, “I have sold three houses in your neighborhood in the last year,” instead of “I’ve worked with several people in your neighborhood.”

3. **Use active verbs to bring writing to life and make it sound conversational.**

In talking we almost always use active verbs: “Jackson hit a line drive to center field.” But in business, we too often say: “A line drive to center field was hit by Jackson.”

4. **Use short paragraphs to break up business letters and increase readability.**

The average paragraph in a business letter is two sentences long. Long paragraphs often contain more than one idea and can be split so that each idea has its own paragraph.

5. **Be careful of gender usage.**

Although it’s grammatically correct to use the male pronoun, “his,” when referring to both sexes, this may offend some people. Make sentences plural to eliminate this problem. “Associates should turn in their call reports weekly.”

6. **Use Dialog to liven things up**

Inserting quotes or parts of conversations can help draw interest and break monotony.

7. **Always edit and proofread your communications before sending them.**

Remember “Spell Check” doesn’t catch everything. And don’t forget to check all property name spellings; the computerized spell checker will miss them. Misspellings and incorrect grammar reflect poorly on you and your company.

8. **Tips for Writing With a Positive Tone**

Establishing the right tone in written communications can make the difference between a positive response and a hostile one. To help create a positive tone: Avoid “I.” Instead use “you” as the subject of sentences to get the reader involved. Replace negative words with positive ones. Instead of saying “Don’t hesitate to call me,” try “Feel free to call me.”

Words with negative connotations include: delay, doubt, difficult, fail, problem. Words with positive connotations include: glad, improvement, service, happy, contribution.

Present ideas as possibilities, not as difficulties to be overcome.

Presentation Zen

How to Design & Deliver Presentations Like a Pro

By Garr Reynolds
(info@garrreynolds.com)

Practical Implications for better PowerPoint Presentations

- Presentations must be both verbal & visual.
- Too much slide information overloads people's cognitive systems.
- Can your visuals be understood in 3 seconds? If not, redesign them to **support** your talk.
- Slide design & delivery must *help* people organize, integrate information.

Organization & Preparation Tips

PowerPoint is not inherently a bad tool. In fact, if presenters just avoid a few of the most common PowerPoint pitfalls, their presentations will greatly improve. Below, many of the items discussed in the presentation are highlighted in brief.

(1) Start with the end in mind. Before you even open up PowerPoint, sit down and really think about the day of your presentation. What is the real purpose of your talk? What does the audience expect? In your opinion, what are the most important parts of your topic for the audience to take away from your, say, 50-minute presentation? Remember, even if you've been asked to share information, rarely is the mere transfer of information a satisfactory objective from the point of view of the audience. After all, the audience could always just read your book (or article, handout, etc.) if information transfer were the only purpose of the meeting, seminar, or formal presentation.

(2) Plan in "analog mode." That is, rather than diving right into PowerPoint (or Keynote), the best presenters often scratch out their ideas and objectives with a pen and paper. Personally, I use a large whiteboard in my office to sketch out my ideas (when I was at Apple, I had one entire wall turned into a whiteboard!). The whiteboard works for me as I feel uninhibited and free to be creative. I can also step back (literally) from what I have sketched out and imagine how it might flow logically when PowerPoint is added later. Also, as I write down key points and assemble an outline and structure, I can draw quick ideas for visuals such as charts or photos that will later appear in the PowerPoint. Though you may be using digital technology when you deliver your presentation, the act of speaking and connecting to an audience — to persuade, sell, or inform — is very much analog.

(3) Good presentations include stories. The best presenters illustrate their points with the use of stories, most often personal ones. The easiest way to explain complicated ideas is through examples or by sharing a story that underscores the point. Stories are easy to remember for your audience. If you want your audience to remember your content, then find a way to make it relevant and memorable to them. You should try to come up with good, short, interesting stories or examples to support your major points.

(4) It's all about our audience. There are three components involved in a presentation: the audience, you, and the medium (in our case, PowerPoint). The goal is to create a kind of harmony among the three. But above all, the presentation is for the benefit of the audience. However, boring an audience with bullet point after bullet point is of little benefit to them. Which brings us to point number five, perhaps the most important of all.

(5) Reduce the text on your slides to an absolute minimum. The best slides may have no text at all. This may sound insane given the dependency of text slides today, but the best PowerPoint slides will be virtually meaningless without the narration (that is you). Remember, the slides are supposed to support/supplement the narration of the speaker, not make the speaker superfluous. Yes, it is true that many people often say something like this: "Sorry I missed your presentation, Steve. I hear it was great. Can you just send me your PowerPoint slides?" Well, you could. But if they are good slides, they may be of little use without *you*.

(6) Do not read the text word for word off the slide. Audiences can read, so why do presenters insist on reading long lines of text from slides? Also, it is very difficult — if not impossible — to read a slide and listen to someone talk at the same time. So again, why all the text on slides these days? One reason may be that it is convenient for the speaker when organizing the presentation to write out his/her thoughts one bullet point at a time. But as Yale professor and visual communications specialist, Edward Tufte points out in a September Wired Magazine article "...convenience for the speaker can be punishing to both content and audience." Speakers also may be thinking that their wordy slides will make for better handouts, a common "handout" technique. However, the confining, horizontal orientation of a slide (one slide after another) makes for difficult writing and reading. Which brings us to the next point below.

(7) Written documents (research papers, handouts, executive summaries, etc.) are for the expanded details. Audiences will be much better served receiving a detailed, written handout as a takeaway from the presentation, rather than a mere copy of your PowerPoint slides. If you have a detailed handout or publication for the audience to be passed out after your talk, you need not feel compelled to fill your PowerPoint slides with a great deal of text.

Remember: (1) your slides should contain only a minimum of information; (2) your slide notes, which only you see, will contain far more data; and (3) your handout will have still far more data and detail.

Slide (PowerPoint) Tips

(1) Keep it simple. PowerPoint was designed as a convenient way to display graphical information that would support the speaker and supplement the presentation. The slides themselves were never meant to be the "star of the show." People came to hear *you* and be moved or informed (or both) by you and *your message*. Don't let your message and your ability to tell a story get derailed by slides that are unnecessarily complicated, busy, or full of what Edward Tufte calls "chart junk." Nothing in your slide should be superfluous, ever. Your slides should have plenty of "white space" or "negative space." Do not feel compelled to fill empty areas on your slide with your logo or other unnecessary graphics or text boxes that do not contribute to better understanding. The less clutter you have on your slide, the more powerful your visual message will become.

(2) Avoid using Microsoft templates. Most of the templates included in PowerPoint have already been seen by your audience countless times (and besides, the templates are not all that great to begin with). You can make your own background templates which will be more tailored to your needs or you can purchase professional templates on-line (for example: www.powerpointtemplatespro.com).

(3) Avoid using PowerPoint Clip Art or other cartoonish line art. Again, if it is included in the software, your audience has seen it a million times before. It may have been interesting in 1992, but today the inclusion of such clip art often undermines the professionalism of the presenter. There are exceptions, of course, and not all PowerPoint art is dreadful, but use carefully and judiciously.

(4) Use high-quality graphics including photographs. You can take your own high-quality photographs with your digital camera, purchase professional stock photography, or use the plethora of high-quality images available on line (be cautious of copyright issues, however). Never simply stretch a small, low resolution photo to make it fit your layout — doing so will degrade the resolution even further.

(5) Use animations and slide transitions judiciously. Animations, such as bullet points, should **not** be animated on every slide. Some animation is a good thing, but stick to the most subtle and professional (similar to what you might see on the evening TV news broadcast).

(6) Synchronize your speaking with the builds and transitions. In other words, show the next item (new slide or new build) at the same time you begin talking about it. This requires practice, but it takes only a short time to get the hang of it. Watch the evening news on TV and you'll notice that bullet points and graphics appear at the same time or just after the reporter speaks on the particular item.

(7) Use video and audio when appropriate. You can use video clips within PowerPoint without ever leaving the application or turning on a VCR. Using a video clip not only will illustrate your point better, it will also serve as a change of pace thereby increasing the interest of your audience. You can use audio clips (such as interviews) as well. Something to avoid, however, is cheesy sound effects that are included in PowerPoint (such as the sound of a horn or applause when transitioning slides). The use of superfluous sound effects attached to animations is a sure way to lose credibility with your audience.

(8) Limit your ideas to one main idea per slide. If you have a complicated slide with lots of different data, it may be better to break it up into 2-3 different slides (assuming no side-by-side comparisons are needed).

Delivery Tips

(1) Move away from the podium — connect with your audience. If at all possible get closer to your audience by moving away from or in front of the podium.

(2) Remember the “B” key. If you press the “B” key while your PowerPoint slide is showing, the screen will go blank. This is useful if you need to digress or move off the topic presented on the slide. By having the slide blank, all the attention can now be placed back on you. When you are ready to move on, just press the “B” key again and the image reappears. (The “.” key does the same thing).

(3) Use a remote-control device to advance your slides and builds. A handheld remote will allow you to move away from the podium. This is an absolute must. (<http://www.keyspan.com/products/>).

(4) Make good eye contact. Try looking at individuals rather than scanning the group. Since you are using a computer, you never need to look at the screen behind you — just glance down at the computer screen briefly. One sure way to lose an audience is to turn your back on them.

(5) Take it slowly. When we are nervous we tend to talk too fast. Get a videotape of one of your presentations to see how you did — you may be surprised at the pace of your talk.

(6) Keep the lights on. If you are speaking in a meeting room or a classroom, the temptation is to turn the lights off so that the slides look better. But go for a compromise between a bright screen image and ambient room lighting. Turning the lights off — besides inducing sleep — puts all the focus on the screen. The audience should be looking at you more than the screen.