

USING POWERPOINT TO SUPPORT A BUSINESS PRESENTATION

Slides and Reports

Delivering a business presentation is an event that most people find utterly terrifying. A business presentation, however, is just another business skill, combining specific technical aspects with behavioural practise.

There are three distinct components to making an effective presentation:

- ◆ Designing a high-powered presentation
- ◆ Using PowerPoint properly to support your presentation
- ◆ Delivering the presentation effectively

This article, the second of three, will outline how to use PowerPoint properly to support a business presentation. It will identify two distinct kinds of situations in which PowerPoint might be utilized and when it's most appropriate to use each.

Presentation Platform

PowerPoint is an excellent platform to use in developing a business presentation. It is visually appealing and is relatively easy to create. In many ways, PowerPoint has become the accepted business presentation platform. But over time, something has gone wrong with the manner in which PowerPoint is used.

Unfortunately, PowerPoint's proper usage has become confused, because two very different purposes have gotten fused together. What follows will challenge the cultural norms of many organizations and may seem misplaced at first review. The assertion, here, is that the presentation needs to be grounded and focused on *You*, the presenter, and not on PowerPoint. PowerPoint is but an aid to support your presentation.

Reports In PowerPoint

A report that has been developed in Word readily can be transposed into PowerPoint. The advantage of using PowerPoint is that graphs, charts and other visuals are easily incorporated into the presentation. PowerPoint can provide a crisp and yet detailed representation of the original report in a different format.

In this situation, the PowerPoint Report can serve as an excellent foundation for a voice-over webinar or it can be distributed as a stand-alone document. It also can serve as a comprehensive take-away from a business presentation.

A PowerPoint Report also may be used effectively as a reference document when presenting a business case to a small group. In such circumstances, a hard copy, not slides, should form the back-bone of the business presentation.



The History Of The Universe

Let's say that someone has been tasked with making a presentation on "The History Of The Universe". Compiled as a PowerPoint Report, it likely would be quite extensive, with charts, graphs and other representations augmenting and clarifying the text.

Now imagine taking this PowerPoint Report and displaying it in its original form on a screen. This would be an excruciating experience, because the volume and complexity of the information being presented would overwhelm our capacity to process it. This PowerPoint Report is best studied deliberately and methodically.

Reports Don't Work As Slides

You cannot present "The History of the Universe" on a PowerPoint Slide. Well, maybe you could, but the font would have to be shrunk so small that it would be totally unreadable. And yet, something similar occurs with great frequency in many business presentations.

I recently attended a business presentation where the presenter began by saying "You won't be able to read this slide". He then turned to the screen and proceeded to read the slide to the audience for the next five minutes. Does this sound familiar?

Respect Literacy

It is reasonable to assume that your audience has good literacy skills. Being respectful of this, it actually is an insult to read the PowerPoint Slides to them, providing that the font size is large enough to be read by the entire audience. Let the audience do its own reading.

PowerPoint Slides

When making a business presentation to an audience, used correctly, PowerPoint Slides are an excellent accessory for highlighting key points. PowerPoint Slides should be used sparingly and should be spaced throughout the presentation. The slides need to be created in a font size large enough to be read by the entire audience in the room.

Your goal is to ensure that the audience's attention remains riveted on you, the presenter, and is not distracted by a display of continuously changing slides. This is fundamentally different from projecting a PowerPoint Report on a screen.

Each PowerPoint Slide should have no more than three bullets. A bullet is not a paragraph or even a sentence. It is a few words or symbols, maybe a phrase, which captures a critical idea from your presentation that merits special attention. The bullets might be extracted from the PowerPoint Report, in whole or in some modified form.



The Salient Details

A PowerPoint Report becomes the definitive document, as it is comprehensive and detailed. The corresponding business presentation is derived from the PowerPoint Report. Cognizant of time limitations, only salient details can be presented, not the entire PowerPoint Report.

Attempting to do anything more, unfortunately, is guaranteed to lose the attention of your audience. Your challenge is to frame and deliver the business presentation so that your audience will want to subsequently study the PowerPoint Report in more detail.

Slides And Reports

PowerPoint is a powerful and utilitarian tool for creating slides and reports. Reports developed in PowerPoint can be comprehensive, while at the same time providing visuals which substantiate and illuminate the text.

PowerPoint Slides, on the other hand, should be used to highlight and reinforce key elements of a business presentation, adding to the impact of the presenter.

Recognizing these critical differences will help you to develop high-impact business presentations that engage your audience and gain their commitment.

Conclusion

By combining these ideas about how to use PowerPoint properly with suggestions from the companion articles on how to design a high-powered presentation and how to deliver a presentation effectively, you will become much more confident and competent in delivering high-powered and effective business presentations.

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