

Be a
better
presenter



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Introduction

“*Death by PowerPoint*”¹ is a phrase that sums up how horrible PowerPoint* presentations have become. In business, recreational use, churches and even in *Child Evangelism Fellowship*®, there are a huge amount of bad presentations.

We want to urge you to let go of everything you ever learned about PowerPoint. It may be hard. You might be completely against the idea, but at least be open to the idea.

Where the problem starts

Most people, when given the task to create a slideware presentation, go directly for the computer. They turn on Word or PowerPoint and stare at a blank page. The problem is, preparing a presentation is a *creative process* and presentation software was never intended to be a brainstorming or drawing tool.

You might think you’re not creative, but creativity shows up in all kinds of ways. As leaders, you will come up with creative ways for handling different situations. How do you recruit people for ministry? How can you get more children to come to Good News Clubs? How do you partner with the churches in your country or region?

Take the example of the space flight Apollo 13. In 1970 a group of engineers had to come up with a way to fix the life-threatening buildup of carbon dioxide in the damaged Apollo 13 spacecraft—all using just some duct tape and spare parts—which they did in a very creative manner.

To be creative is to make decisions. It’s as simple as that.

We are all created in God’s image. We are born with the ability to be creative. So how can you tap your creativity?

Start Analog

Keep that computer turned off. Pick up a block of paper and pen and start brainstorming. Use word association. Sketch out your ideas, even if it’s using simple stick figures. Sticky notes and a black marker can even be a great tool during this process. Try doing a storyboard. If you’ve ever watched the special features on a DVD, you’ll see how storyboards are how directors make movies. They work on the story long before they start shooting the film. Don’t start right away with your very first idea. You’ll want to use this time to come up with different ideas that come along which may be better than your first one.

Don’t edit at the brainstorming stage. This is where you let ideas flow.

Ask the right questions

Questions we should not ask:

1. How many slides should I have?
2. What colors should I use?
3. What typefaces would be best?

Example of word association



¹ A phrase first used by Angela Garber. www.smallbusinesscomputing.com/software/death-by-powerpoint/

4. Which transitions or animations should I use?

Questions we should ask:

1. How much time do I have? You never, ever want to go overtime.
2. Who is the audience? Is it fellow CEF® workers? A church worship service? A missions committee or church leadership?
3. What is their background? Do they know anything about you or CEF? If it's a church, what denomination is it?
4. What do they expect of me? Are they looking for any instruction on how to lead a child to Christ? Do they want help in their ministry?
5. Why was I asked to speak? Will you share your own ministry? Your national work? Is it for a special project? Is it training?
6. What do I want them to do? Don't make your presentation one-way communication! Get the audience involved. Do you want them to support you financially? Are you looking for people to get involved in prayer bands? Are you there to recruit full-time workers? Do you need hosts for Good News Clubs in that area?
7. What is my absolutely central point and why does it matter? Put it this way: If the audience could remember only one thing, what do you want it to be?

Use handouts

Sometimes presenters put every little detail into their slides. The reason is they don't want anything to be left out of their talk. They include everything "just in case" or to show they are serious people. Instead of taking this route, prepare a detailed document as a handout and keep the slides simple. Never distribute a printed version of your slides as a handout. Here's what David S. Rose, an expert presenter and technology entrepreneur has to say:

*"Never, ever hand out copies of your slides, and certainly not before your presentation. That is the kiss of death. By definition, since slides are 'speaker support' material, they are there in support of the speaker ... YOU. As such, they should be completely incapable of standing by themselves, and are thus useless to give to your audience, where they will simply be a distraction. The flip side of this is that if the slides can stand by themselves, why on earth are you up there in front of them?"*²

There should be three parts that make up a presentation:

1. The slides, with a minimal amount of information.
2. The notes that only you will see.
3. Handouts to give to the audience.

If you use these three items together, you will not need to put all your details on the slides.

² Presentation Zen p. 66, New Riders Publishing, 2007

Putting it together

Now you have scribbled a mass of ideas, whether pages and pages of notes, dozens of sticky notes or your whiteboard that's no longer white. Now what do you do? Now is the time to step back, look at the big picture, and put your talk in a logical structure.

Story first

It's easy to create a presentation using facts and figures, but instead you should focus on telling a story. Anyone—including a machine—can give a stream of facts to the audience. That's not what they need or want. Excite, energize, enrich and challenge them. We want our audience to retain what they've heard.

We also don't want to overload them with tons and tons of information. This means you will have to choose carefully what will actually go on each slide. This step is perhaps the most difficult to do, but it is worth it! Think of a block of wood as an example. By itself, it's not very useful, unless it's a paperweight. But if you take a knife and start whittling it down, you can create something beautiful, useful or both, like a block flute.

The maker of the flute had to carve out all of the unnecessary parts in order to create something that had value.

Design tips

1. **Design is not icing.** Would you want to cross a bridge that had been designed to stand up to great stress, weight and weather, or one that looks pretty? Design is a foundational element, not the decoration we put on after all the important items are on the slide. Design is problem solving. The main problem to solve is how do I effectively communicate a point?
2. **Keep it simple.** PowerPoint uses slides with a horizontal or "Landscape" orientation. The software 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" (the star, of course, is your audience). 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. Nothing in your slide should be superfluous, ever.

Your slides should have plenty of "empty 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.

3. **Limit bullets and text.** Your presentation is for the benefit of the audience. But boring an audience with bullet point after bullet point is of little benefit to them. Which brings us to the issue of text. 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 with out the narration (that is you).

Remember, the slides are meant to support the narration of the speaker, not make the speaker superfluous.

4. Less motion. Use object builds and slide transitions sparingly. Object builds (also called 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 a TV news broadcast). A simple “Wipe Left-to-Right” (from the “Animations” menu) is good for a bullet point, but more complicated animations can be too tedious and slow. Listeners will get distracted very quickly if they are asked to endure slide after slide of animation. For transitions between slides, use no more than two or three different types of transition effects. Don’t feel the need to place transition effects between every slide, either. Sometimes you’ll want a transition effect to stand out, which won’t happen if you use transitions on all your slides.

5. Quality artwork. Use high-quality artwork. You can take your own photographs with your digital camera or phone, purchase professional stock photography, or use the plethora of high-quality, royalty-free images available online. Do not ever, however, use a sample of stock photography that has been watermarked or which states it is not to be used in the final version.

Never simply stretch a small, low-resolution photo to make it fit your layout—doing so will degrade the resolution even further.

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 1993, 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 it carefully.

Remember, your slide is not a frame, but a canvas. Don’t be afraid to use the entire space of your slide.

6. Have a visual theme. You clearly need a consistent visual theme throughout your presentation, but most templates included in PowerPoint have been seen by your audience numerous times. Your audience expects a unique presentation with new (at least to them) content, otherwise why would they be attending your talk?

You can make your own background templates which will be more tailored to your needs. You can then save the PowerPoint file as a Design Template (.pot) and the new template will appear among your standard Microsoft templates for your future use. You can also download or purchase professional templates online.

7. Use appropriate charts. Always be asking yourself, “How much detail do I need?” Many presenters are guilty of including too much data in their on-screen charts. There are several ways to display your data in graphic form; here are a few things to keep in mind:

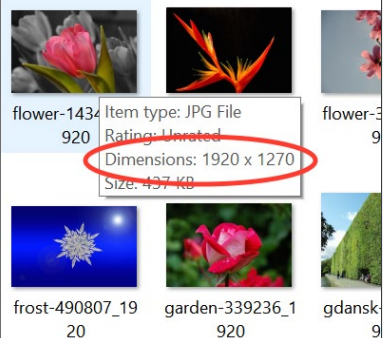
- Pie Charts. Used to show percentages. Limit the amount of slices you

What size image to use?

Images that are too small can look ugly. Too large of images can slow your computer down. The following chart gives *general* guidelines:

<800 pixels	too small
1000-3000 pixels	ideal
>3000 pixels	too large

To find an image’s pixel size, in Windows 10, you can mouse over the image. The pixel size is labeled “Dimensions”.



have and contrast the most important slice either with color or by exploding the slice.

- Vertical Bar Charts. Used to show changes in quantity over time. Best if you limit the bars or sequence of bars to 3-8.
- Horizontal Bar Charts. Used to compare quantities. For example, comparing children reached among the ministries of *CEF*, such as Good News Clubs, Camps, Holiday Bible Clubs and 5-Day Clubs.
- Line Charts. Used to demonstrate trends. For example, the number of children reached over a several year period.

8. Use color well. Color can make or break a presentation. Having poor color choices can make a presentation confusing, hard to read and can distract from your message. It is also good to keep in mind that between 5-9 percent of people are color blind, which can render a poorly planned presentation completely unreadable. You may also have older people in your audience who have difficulty with various color combinations. Using a limited number of colors can actually strengthen your presentation. You do not need to be an expert in color theory, but it's good to know a little on the subject. Colors can be divided into two general categories: Cool (such as blue and green) and Warm (such as orange and red). Cool colors work best for backgrounds as they appear to recede away from us into the background. Warm colors generally work best for objects in the foreground (such as text) because they appear to be coming at us.

It would be a good idea to familiarise yourself with the color wheel, and know how to match one color with another.

Another great way to add colors to your design is to choose colors from an image you're using.

9. Choose fonts intentionally. Fonts communicate subtle messages in and of themselves, which is why you should choose fonts deliberately. Use the same font set throughout your entire slide presentation, and limit the amount of fonts you use. Don't be afraid to experiment with several different font combinations before settling on your final design.

Don't be content with just the fonts that are on your computer! Look for fonts that will strengthen your design. It's important to understand fonts have meaning. You wouldn't use a font that looks best on a horror movie poster for a wedding invitation, would you? Fonts also have rules. Some fonts were never meant to be used in all capital letters.

Fonts also have families. A font family is otherwise known as a typeface. Helvetica, for example, can have regular, bold, italic, bold italic and so on. You can use fonts from an entire family in a presentation for different uses.

Fonts also have partners—other fonts that work well together.

Finally, fonts don't like crowds. Limit the amount of different typefaces (font families) in your slides.

Sampling colors



- 10. Spend time in the slide sorter.** Before you call your slideshow finished, take one last look in the slide sorter view, where you can see all of your slides at one time and see for yourself if you are putting everything together in a logical way. If you need to modify the sequence of your slides or hide them, the slide sorter is the easiest place for the task.

Six tips for presenters

- 1. Use presenter mode.** This will enable you to see what is currently being viewed on your screen, as well as the previous slide and following slide. You will also see any notes you have. This prevents you from looking at the screen.
- 2. Use a remote control.** Nowadays, remote controls are very simple to use, having only the basic buttons needed for presentation work. They allow you to roam the room, giving life to your presentation.
- 3. Use keyboard shortcuts.** While I just mentioned using a remote, there are some times you will need to go to your computer. Using shortcuts can help make your presentation run a lot smoother, especially when there are times of unexpected pauses. By simply hitting the “B” key on your keyboard, the presentation screen will turn to black. Conversely, if you hit the “W” key, it will turn the screen white. Be sure to hit the same key again before continuing with your presentation. If using a Windows computer, you can quickly go to presentation mode by pressing F5. If using a Mac and PowerPoint, hit Command + return. If using Keynote, hit Command + Option + P.
- 4. Keep the lights on.** Several years ago, video projectors were not very bright. In order to see what was being projected on the screen, the lights in the room had to be turned off. When lights were turned off, presenters were lost in the blackness, making the presentation lifeless. It made it easier for the audience to fall asleep.

In the past several years, projectors have become much brighter, enabling you to keep the lights on, which allows you to keep connected with your audience. It also makes it easier for them to take notes on the handouts you’ve given them. You *did* give them handouts, didn’t you?

- 5. Don’t read your speech.** This will prevent your audience from falling asleep!
- 6. Don’t look at the screen.** When you turn your head to look while talking, your voice will no longer be projected at your audience. Keep your focus on them, instead of your slides. Since you hopefully will have your laptop in front of you, glance down to see where you are, and if you’re in presentation mode, you’ll even have your notes there, if you added them.

Resources

Images

Free images. For most of the sites listed below you are required to create a free account and sign in. Some of them require that you include a photo credit on

your publication or site. *Be sure to read the copyright and licensing agreements with each photo you download!*

www.pexels.com

www.freeimages.com

www.freerangestock.com

www.morguefile.com

<http://pixabay.com/?safesearch>

<https://unsplash.com>

www.photogen.com

www.freestockphotos.com

www.freepixels.com

www.stockvault.net

<https://foter.com>

www.vecteezy.com/free-photos

<https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Microsoft Office allows you to download photos and images for free from a link directly in PowerPoint and Word. When you select “insert clip art”, the clip art gallery will open, and on the bottom is a link that says “online”. That will take you to a large selection of artwork, photos included, which you can search through and download.

iStockphoto is another great resource for finding low-cost images. There are millions of images you can search for, and you can download in different sizes. While the images are not free, they are much less expensive than traditional stock photography.

Color

To find color combinations using the color wheel or to create your own:

<http://paletton.com>

<http://www.perbang.dk/color+scheme/>

<http://color.adobe.com/>

For color theory and explanations:

<http://www.colormatters.com/color-and-design/basic-color-theory>

To find colors from within a photo:

<http://html-color-codes.info/colors-from-image/>

Fonts

The following websites have some great fonts available, most of which are free, reliable and authorized for commercial and home use.

www.fontsquirrel.com

<https://www.google.com/fonts>

<https://www.theleagueofmoveabletype.com>

<https://www.behance.net/collection/4860923/Free-Fonts>

PowerPoint templates

Some of these have great templates. Others are not-so-great. Even if you don't use any of the templates found on these sites, you can still find great ideas.

<https://templates.office.com/en-gb/templates-for-PowerPoint>

<http://www.slidescarnival.com/category/free-templates>

<http://www.templateswise.com>

For further reading:

Garr Reynolds wrote his first book, *Presentation Zen*, which inspired this class.

www.presentationzen.com

Nancy Duarte, author of *slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations* also has some fantastic resources on her website.

www.duarte.com/resources

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