

Better Presentations

NLTN9 Conference, June 29, 2017
Harold Bamberg BS, MA, MS

If you have ever:

- Presented a slide that was way too full of information?**
- Made a presentation longer than you could present in the time allotted?**
- Apologized for a slide?**
- Read all the words on a slide to your audience?**

Four rules for immediately better presentations!

- Never more than 6 words on a slide, ever. Your PowerPoint should reinforce your words, not repeat them.
- Never use cheesy images.
- No dissolves, slides, swipes, swooshes, or spins. Avoid Transitions.
- Always create a leave behind document – not your PowerPoint.

The goal of your presentation is to have your content learned or for your audience to process the information in short-term memory, and store that information in long-term memory – to be acted upon later.

Consider the nature of the human memory.

We process thousands of bits of information each day most of which is forgotten. Information must be processed in short-term memory or working memory before it can be remembered from long-term memory.

Working memory has a limited capacity and dual channels.

Working memory can process about 7 bits of meaningful information at a time. (Miller's Rule 1956)

The multimedia principle states that people learn more deeply when the right words and the right images are presented together in the right way.

Our brains are horrible at listening and reading at the same time. **You have basically guaranteed – No learning and no remembering if you read your presentation slides. (Cognitive Load, John Sweller 1980s.)**

Realize the fragility of attention and the limited, dynamic capacity of working memory.

Connection

If there is no connection to your audience, there is less learning. Basically, 50% of the words you present to your audience will be forgotten within a few hours – unless there is some type of connection or effort to strengthen the memory. (Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve, 1885)

Core Message

If the audience remembers only one thing – What is that message? Simply stated - What is your Core Message? (think elevator pitch)

Clarify your Core Message by asking yourself these and other relevant questions:

What is it I want my audience to know?

Why do I care about this?

When and why did I start to care about this?

Why do I want my audience to care about this?

If they don't remember anything else from my presentation, I want them to remember . . .

Or more simply and this is very important:

What is the point?

Why does it matter?

So what? (How should this impact the listener? What should they do after hearing you?)

Preparation

Remember, creating a presentation is more than rules, it is a creative endeavor and a philosophy! The first step in preparing your presentation is to **get away from your outline and from your computer**. Computers and PowerPoint do little to help with the creative process.

Creativity: **"You can find creativity in a million places, in a million ways – but probably not in your same old routine."** Garr Reynolds 2012, Presentation Zen

Consider Storytelling to make your point

Consider your story or a story you have heard. Consider the elements of story: Character development, setting, conflict or arc, plot, and theme). Consider painting a picture of suffering it that what it take to make your point, but paint the picture!

Consider the power of an emotional connection. Your message will be remembered and it will help you make your point if you connect on an emotional level.

Planning to Present

Planning is so important to your presentation. Focus on how many words you will say and script that many words (generally people speak about 100 words per minute). Then edit ruthlessly – 20% of your words will account for 80% of the effect (80/20 Rule). Remove anything that is not on point and message. Consider your core message and build around that.

Make sure you are answering these three questions:

What is the point? Why does this matter? So what? (How should this impact the listener? What should they do after hearing you?) So what? Could also be your call to action.

Develop these three elements for your presentation:

Your **PowerPoint slideshow** – that your audience will see, but not understand unless you are there.

Your **Speaker Notes** – script for you and you only. You memorize and perform from this script.

Your **Leave Behind Notes** – This is the document you will leave with your audience.

The point of a presentation is not the slideware or the slides, but you, the speaker and connecting your audience to your message. Your slideware should reinforce your words not restate them. You are the presentation not the slideware!!!

References (in order of appearance)

Garber, Angela. 2001. **"Death By PowerPoint"**. Small Business Computing.

Godin, Seth. 2001. ***Really Bad PowerPoint*** eBook.

Sierra, Kathy. 2005. **"Stop Your Presentation Before it Kills Again!"** Blog post in Creating Passionate Users Blogsite.

Sweller, John. 2007. **"Research Points the Finger at PowerPoint"**. Sydney Morning Herald.

Reynolds, Garr. 2012. **Presentation Zen**, New Riders.

Dirksen, Julie. (2016) **Design for How People Learn, 2nd ed.**, Berkley, California: New Riders.