

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING POWERPOINT EFFECTIVELY – OR NOT AT ALL

by
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As a professional presenter for over fourteen years, I've seen PowerPoint used well and poorly. Unfortunately, it seems to be used poorly more often than well. Here are some suggestions for making PowerPoint a positive part of your presentation.

The secret to using PowerPoint successfully is to be minimalist – fewer slides and less text. PowerPoint is a powerful tool. Used well, it will enhance a presentation. Used poorly, it can destroy it.

1. **HIGHLIGHTS** – Use PowerPoint to emphasize your key points. Your presentation likely has five or six (or ten) key points. Use PowerPoint to reinforce those points graphically.
2. **NOT A CRUTCH** – Don't use your PowerPoint slides as your script or note cards. Few things are less engaging than watching a presenter read their PowerPoint slides to the audience. (Often referred to as death-by-PowerPoint.) One of the benefits of using your PowerPoint slides to just reinforce your key points is that they cannot substitute for your notes.
3. **MEDIA TOOL** – Use PowerPoint to present media that is better presented graphically than verbally. This likely includes photos, videos and charts. (We live in a media-saturated world. If you have to present charts, make them colorful, 3-dimensional and graphically appealing.)
4. **READABLE** – To the extent you put text into your PowerPoint slides, make it easy and pleasant to read. Keep the type large (no more than five lines per slide, less is better), use a font that is easy to read and make sure there is plenty of contrast between the type and the background. (Keep in mind that the colors will likely not be as rich or saturated when the slide is projected as it is on your computer screen.)
5. **NOT A DISTRACTION** – You are the presenter. PowerPoint is there to support you. Don't make it the other way around. Human interaction is still the best means to communicate. Don't focus on making your PowerPoint slides too animated or splashy. This shows up often when a presenter is uncertain of his or her presentation skills and tries to compensate by creating dazzling slides. Audiences can see through this ploy. They want to connect with you, not your PowerPoint slides.
6. **CAN YOU DO WITHOUT?** – Ask yourself honestly, do you really need PowerPoint for your presentation. Is it going to enhance your presentation? Will your presentation be more impactful without it? Don't feel obligated to use it if you don't need it. Not using PowerPoint will likely set you apart from other presenters. With

PowerPoint so overused, many audiences will thank you if you choose not to use it. Consider it.

And most of all, make your presentation a conversation. Most people enjoy conversations. If your presentation is conversational instead of a lecture, your audience is much more likely to enjoy and remember it.

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