

11 Ways to Make Your PowerPoint Presentations Stand Out

Virtually everyone has sat through dull, boring and unimaginative PowerPoint presentations. Although this piece of software is very easy to use many sales people make a variety of mistakes that actually detract from their message and their presentation. Here are 11 ways to ensure your next PowerPoint presentation keeps your prospect's attention.

Limit the amount of information. Too many people rely on their slide show to convey all the information in their presentation. However, if you include too much information your slides become difficult to read. Or worse, your prospect will simply read the text while you are talking. Avoid paragraphs of text. Instead use bullet points.

Use a large font. Here is a general rule of thumb to follow: print a slide on a sheet of paper and place it on the floor. If you have difficulty reading it, it is highly likely that your audience (or prospect) will not be able to read it either. I recommend that your font size is at least 32 points if not larger.

Use graphics. Interesting or humorous photos capture attention. An effective strategy is to fill the slide with graphic and add text on top of the photo or picture. The graphic catches the audience's attention and the text reinforces the point you want to make.

Limit yourself to one key point per page. This is challenging for most people but it actually easy to apply when you follow the other recommendations in this article. I prefer this approach because it allows you to elaborate as much or little on each point as you need to during your presentation.

Use the build feature. Rather than show your entire slide, use the build feature to reveal one key point at a time. This prevents people from reading ahead and tuning you out while you are presenting. Remember, if someone is reading your slide, they are likely only half-listening to you.

Avoid special effects. This includes sounds and wild transitions. Although these effects and transition may seem cool they only serve to detract from your message. I once attended a program and the speaker used different effects on every slide and it got very tiring after a while. It seemed that she was relying on the effects to enhance her presentation when in fact it took away from her message.

Use a variety of fonts and colors. The most effective presenters use different fonts, colors and font sizes on their slides. This makes your slides more visually appealing, easier to read and more memorable. It takes a bit more time but it is definitely worth while.

Lose your logo. In my opinion, logos are an ego thing. I will admit to making this mistake when I first started my business, however, I stopped using my logo several years ago. It may feel great to see your corporate logo on a big screen but your prospect doesn't want or need to see your logo on every slide because they already know who you are. Logos take up valuable space that could be used for more important information. The exception to this rule is on your opening or closing slide. This also applies to the footer or header; you don't need to put your company name or contact information on every slide.

Avoid using templates. Pre-loaded templates may look great but most people have seen them all before. Many companies want sales people to use their "corporate template" but in most cases, they include the companies logo (see previous point). I prefer to use a blank slide and add my material. I may change the background color but I never use an existing template.

Follow your proposal. Many sales presentations are accompanied by a proposal. It is easier for your prospect to follow your presentation if you follow the key points in your proposal because many people will read along as you present.

Rehearse. Before you deliver that important presentation to a new prospect make sure you invest time to rehearse it first. I use slides in most face-to-face sales presentations and have learned first-hand the importance of investing time to run through my presentation.

Remember, a slide presentation should reinforce your key points, not deliver your entire presentation. Here is a suggestion. Visit slideshare.com and look at the range of presentations that are posted. Compare the ones that capture your attention to the slideshows that are dull and boring.

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