

## ***How to Do Everything with PowerPoint 2003***

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### **The Impact of Multimedia**

Why use multimedia? A great deal of scientific research shows that visual aids and the use of color significantly increase the amount of material your audience understands and remembers. Moreover, presentations including visual aids and other multimedia effects have been shown to be more effective in convincing an audience to take the course of action suggested by the presenter.

### **The Importance of Design Templates**

Design templates are backgrounds for your slides. A background comprises both a colored background and design elements that appear on every slide. The template also includes other features such as a color scheme, bullet design, specific fonts, and font sizes. You can also add text animation to the template. Using a design template creates a unified look for your entire presentation.

### **Develop an Outline**

You should spend a great deal of time and thought in creating your outline. It determines the content of your presentation—what you are going to say—and is the first and most important step in creating a presentation. First decide the objective of your presentation, whether it's selling a product or service, explaining a program, or training employees. Then narrow your objective, such as training supervisors how to interview prospective employees. Get as much information as possible about your audience. What do they already know? Why are they coming to the presentation? What do they want to gain? Then research your topic, always keeping in mind the objective of your presentation and the type of audience. Next, decide on the structure of your presentation, the body of the presentation. Let's say you are recommending a strategy for reducing costs in the Human Resources Department. Your structure might be the following:

1. State the objective.
2. Explain the present situation.
3. List the possible strategies.
4. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy.
5. Recommend one or more strategies.
6. Offer action steps for implementing the strategy or strategies.

## Place your structure inside a broader framework

- **Opening** Tell your audience the subject and, if appropriate, the objective of your talk.
- **Agenda** If appropriate, list the key areas you plan on covering.
- **Body** This is the main part of your presentation.
- **Examples and anecdotes** Give examples, tell anecdotes, and show pictures or video clips to add interest. These can be integrated into the body of the presentation
- **Conclusion** Repeat the key areas you covered, including next steps to take.

Now, write the outline, pouring the results of your research into the structure you want to use. When you are done, format the outline as explained in the section “Prepare the Outline.” Use level 1 headings for main topic, the slides. Use level 2 headings for subtopics, the main bullets. Edit and rewrite the outline until you are happy with it. You may want to run it by a colleague or your boss. Leave out anything that might not be clear or necessary. Of course, you can always change your text later.

## Make Text Count

The first rule for making text count is readability. Here are some pointers that will help you ensure your text is legible:

- Shadowed text can make text stand out, but make sure it looks good on your background color.
- When you place text over a full-color graphic, be sure that the text is readable everywhere on your slide. If the graphic has many colors, some of its areas may blend in too well with your text.
- Be careful about rotated and vertical text—it can be hard to read
- To get text to stand out, concentrate on the right font, the right size, the right color, and a contrasting background instead of using all capital letters or a very fancy text effect. One of the text styles (bold, italics) or effects (shadow, embossed) can also work wonders.
- Don’t use more than three fonts on a slide. The effect is chaotic and therefore distracting. A better choice is to limit yourself to one or two fonts.
- Associate a font with a type of element. For example, make all your slide titles the same font.
- Keep the font type fairly simple for legibility.
- Have someone else read your presentation, on paper or on-screen, to make sure the flow of ideas is clear. For example, if you set up two columns and three rows of text, in which direction are readers supposed to look first—down the first column or across the first row?

## Create Clear Charts

Charts are an essential component of many presentations. However, many charts are unclear and require extensive explanation before the audience can understand them. A chart is created to make a point. Suppose you're creating a presentation about your company's financial results. You could put a summary of the company's balance sheet into the presentation. However, if what your audience really wants to see is the company's debt-to-equity ratio, which is buried somewhere in the balance sheet, a simple pie chart of the debt-to-equity ratio would be more effective.

Once you determine that the key point is to show the improvement in earnings per share, for example, you can create your chart, perhaps a column chart. But even a simple column chart should be designed to serve a purpose. Choose colors and fills so that the eye is drawn to improvement, rather than past losses. Decide if you want data values on the top of each column or values on the Y axis—but both are unnecessary and confusing. The border around the chart that PowerPoint creates by default is also unnecessary. Also, 3-D charts are notoriously hard to evaluate—it's difficult to see exactly where the top of the column is. If you wish, add an arrow to guide the attention to the latest earnings. If there is a recent improvement, add a text box or AutoShape and explain it in a few words. Shadows and shaded fills on the columns enhance visual appeal. Here are some basic rules of thumb for charts:

- Guide the attention to your main point. Use an arrow, animation, or a contrasting color to guide the eye.
- Reduce the number of lines or bars. Try to use one data series (line or row of bars) per chart. If necessary, create two charts on separate slides to present all the data.
- Use an axis scale or data points, but not both.
- Remove details. Gridlines, footnotes, and other details detract from the message.

A well-designed chart needs very little explanation. The audience gets the idea quickly and can pay more attention to your analysis and follow-up discussion.

## The Three Stages of Rehearsing

Before you present, you need to rehearse your presentation until you are thoroughly familiar with it. You should know your presentation so well that you almost have it memorized, but not well enough that you can repeat it by rote.

Practice delivering your presentation in three stages. The first stage is to talk through the presentation in front of your computer. You can look directly at your slides, which is OK for a first run. Repeat this step a couple of times. Next, attach your mike to your computer and use PowerPoint's narration feature to record what you have practiced saying, going through the entire presentation. (See Chapter 10 for details.) Now, sit back and run through the presentation again, just listening to the presentation. How was the tone? Did you speak too fast or slow? Were you clear? You are sure to find room for improvement. Make adjustments and go through the cycle of practicing, recording, and listening until you are happy with the results.

The second stage is to run through the presentation using the equipment (laptop, projector, and so on) you will use when you actually deliver the slide show.

New elements at this stage are becoming comfortable with the equipment, talking without looking directly at the slides for more than a second, and standing up, even walking around a bit, while you talk. You should practice your opening remarks, when you will turn the lights up and down (if at all), how you will start and end the presentation (for example, opening and closing remarks; ending with a final slide or black screen), answering questions, and so on. A great idea is to rehearse in front of a real person to get feedback. If you can videotape yourself, do so. Just like narration lets you listen to how you sound, video lets you see how you look as you present.

The final stage is to run through your presentation in the actual physical environment you plan to use, if possible. (If you are presenting in-house, you can combine stages two and three.) If you will use a projector and screen, set them up and use them. Where will you stand? Check out the view from the last seat. Can you read the smallest text? Learn everything you can about the room—where the lights and thermostat are, where to get more chairs, where the outlets are, and so on. Once you have completed these steps, you will be well rehearsed and ready for anything! The confidence you have gained from being prepared will shine through.

## **View Your Presentation in Grayscale**

If you need to print in black & white, you can view your presentation in grayscale to see how it will look. To do so, choose View | Grayscale. Unfortunately, if you use the common technique of using a template that includes a bitmap image or if you insert a bitmap image using Format | Background your background does not appear, making it hard to judge the final look of your presentation. On the other hand, if you use a template that does not include any bitmap images or if you open the Slide Master, use Insert | Picture, and then choose Draw | Order | Send to Back from the Draw toolbar, you do see your background.

## **Arrive Early**

Professional speakers generally plan to arrive about two hours early to check out the room and their equipment, make any necessary adjustments, and do a dry run of their presentation. If you find that the room doesn't have enough chairs, how long will it take to get them? Will you have to help carry them in and set them up yourself? If so, will that leave you enough time to check out your equipment? (This is the stuff that nightmares are born of.) Don't be afraid to ask others for help setting up.