Power Pack Your PowerPoint

Are your PowerPoint presentations putting audiences to sleep? You can take your PowerPoint from boring to boardroom quality with just a few simple tips.

Instead of using PowerPoint as the visual equivalent of a roadmap to your speech, try thinking of PowerPoint as a magazine, a great website, or even a movie. PowerPoint is an excellent visual tool that can be used to win people to your point of view, but most people don't take advantage of all that it has to offer.

Don't give your audience the same old/same old. Make your presentation more powerful by putting these expert tips into action.

1. **Use words sparingly.**

A common rookie error is to write everything you want to say on the PowerPoint slide. Bad idea. Your audience can read too, and they'll be bored in minutes if you're just reading the presentation word for word.

In order to engage your audience in what you are actually saying, use words sparingly on the PowerPoint slides. One sentence to make them think is far better than ten bullet points that put them to sleep. Use text sparingly to point out key issues, ask questions, or make a call to action.

If you need notes to remember what to say, keep the notes with you. Use the slides to keep momentum going.

2. **Make it visually appealing.**

"A picture is worth a thousand words" is definitely true in PowerPoint. A single image can make a powerful statement about your message—and make your message much more memorable.

Thankfully, you are not limited to the clip art that comes with PowerPoint. One of the best resources for royalty-free, high-quality images is at dgl.microsoft.com (DGL stands for Design Gallery Live.) There is a box at the top of the page that allows you to search over 150,000 images, including photos and clip art. They're easy to download and add to your presentations, and they make a huge impact.

Or consider adding your own images. Would you rather see an Excel spreadsheet of the shipping department's fourth quarter results or a photo of the guys in the shipping department, hard at work and smiling in front of a sign that says "98% Delivery Reliability"? Which one would you remember?

3. **Keep it simple.**

It can be tempting to use all of PowerPoint's bells and whistles, including dissolving transitions, sound effects, and slide printouts. But the most effective presentations are not the ones that use a *Star Wars*-style title fade or a door knock sound; they're not the ones with fifteen-page handouts. They're the ones that leave you thinking about the key points of the presentation after the slides are all done.

Keep it simple when you design a PowerPoint presentation. You don't have to use every single PowerPoint feature to be a power user. Determine what your main points are and focus on those. Sell the message you want to get across. Use PowerPoint as a tool to communicate with your audience.

By using PowerPoint to power pack your presentations, you'll make your message —and yourself—more memorable. Change the way you think about and use PowerPoint, and all of your presentations will be a success.

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