

SUGGESTIONS

for DEVELOPING your POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

① KEEP IT SIMPLE

The most effective PowerPoint presentations are simple – charts that are easy to understand, and graphics and images that reflect what you, the speaker, are saying. A PowerPoint show is a visual aid that reinforces your message and is not a replacement for you!

Image Descriptions. And because the Summit's subject matter is Universal Design, we would like to “practice what we preach.” Be prepared to offer a verbal description of the image on the screen should anyone in the audience have difficulty seeing your photograph or chart.

② PAY ATTENTION TO DESIGN

PowerPoint and other presentation packages provide many different ways to add visual “zip” to your slides. Avoid the temptation to dress up your pages with distracting visual and sound effects and focus instead on simple design basics:

- **Make the background simple.**
- **Avoid Clutter.** Keep your slides from looking busy. Avoid lots of text and multiple graphics on the slide. A headline, a few bullet points, maybe an image - anything more than that and you risk losing the audience as they sort it all out.
- You may wish to use a logo, highlight headers, create a special frame for figures/images or the whole slide but don't overload the slides with these elements.
- A 3-D or shadow effect should be used only as emphasis and only occasionally.
- Don't overdo special effects or they lose their impact.
- **Avoid creating text dense slides.**
- **Put dark text on a light background.** This is easiest to read. If you prefer to use a dark background, make sure the text is light (white, cream, light grey, or pastels) and consider increasing the font size a little.
- Color photographs do, however, read well on a simple black or dark field.
- Maintain a consistency: consistently use the same font face and sizes throughout.

③ COLOR

Vibrant colors *used sparingly* can add striking contrast between words, graphics and the background just as easily as a poor choice of colors can “sink” a presentation. If you're

unsure which colors match best, use ColorBlender (PP 2007) and suggested color palettes under Document Theme (PP2008) to get a set of up to six matching colors.

- › Don't weaken the color effect by using too many colors at a time. Match colors for design and good contrast to highlight a message.
- › Use cooler, muted colors for backgrounds, light on dark. Brighter or warmer colors are "sweet"--they are hard to look at for a long time.
- › Highly saturated colors should be used in small areas for emphasis only.

4 TEXT

Some authorities suggest no more than 5 to 6 words per line and no more than 3 to 5 lines per individual slide. And by all means **NO** paragraphs! Reserve the paragraphs of text for your script or handouts. Consider the following:

Typefaces:

- › Use a sans serif font for body text. Sans serif faces such as **Arial**, **Helvetica**, or **Calibri** tend to be the easiest to read on screen. **Gill Sans** is good too if you do not need to use much **bold** type.
- › Use decorative fonts only for slide headers, and then only if they're easy to read. Use "classy: serif fonts like **Georgia** or **Cambria**.
- › As much as possible use the same type family throughout the presentation, one or two font styles only.
- › A potpourri of typefaces looks amateurish and confusing. Too much variation slows down the message.
- › Align text left or right. Centered text is harder to read and looks amateurish. Line up all the text to a right-hand or left-hand baseline - it will look better and be easier to follow.
- › Use effects—bold, italics, etc.—with consistency and restraint.

Contrast:

- › Black text on a white background will always be the best but also the most boring choice.
- › If you want to include colors, keep it easy on the eyes and always keep good contrast in mind so that your readers do not have to strain to guess what is on the slide.

Jumping horizons:

- › Columns that don't start at the same horizontal line across the top of the page distract from the message.

Underlining:

- › Underlining more than a few words causes clutter and confusion. It also can blur the letter "descenders"; instead use bold and italics.

⑤ IMAGES: Use them judiciously!

A good visual cue can help the audience better understand your message. A picture *aids in memory* by making a visual connection to an abstract idea or a concept with which your audience is not familiar. Memory rests on connections and a vivid picture helps form a solid connection.

Do not use PowerPoint's built-in clipart. Most of the “world's” clipart has been seen a thousand times - the images are now tired clichés.

If you use **photographs** consider whether they really do convey your subject. Take a little extra time and make sure they are in focus. Can you have someone upgrade them in Photoshop or other photo-enhancing program?

If **charts** are included in the presentation minimize the detail. Too much detail makes it hard to read quickly.

⑥ PRESENTING

Don't parrot PowerPoint. One of the most prevalent and damaging habits of PowerPoint users is to simply read the text on the PowerPoint slide to the audience. PowerPoint works best with spoken remarks that augment and discuss, rather than mimic, what's on the screen.

Give it a rest. PowerPoint is most effective as a visual accompaniment to the spoken word. Don't be afraid to let the screen go blank on occasion. Put up a blank black slide. Not only can that give your audience a visual break, it's also effective to occasionally focus attention just on your verbal remarks.

⑦ HANDOUTS

Please place the extensive text you may otherwise be tempted to include on a slide into a handout. There is a difference between a handout and presentation slides. Handouts can provide detailed background, but slides should be brief and to the point.

Consider distributing handouts at the end – not before or during the presentation; although inform the audience the handout is coming. Some people may disagree with this, but you are likely to have a more difficult time engaging the audience if they are busy reading a summation of your remarks.

Prepare Handouts so that we can upload them onto the conference website. We will share with all attendees after the conference. You are probably presenting some of the most up-to-date information in the field!

⑧ REMEMBER! Compose your Slides!

- **KISS:** Keep It Straight and Simple.
- Keywords only.
- No sentences!
- Don't copy and paste slides from different PowerPoint unless you reformat them all to match.
- Pick an easy-to-read font face.
- Carefully select font sizes for headers and text.
- Leave room for highlights, such as images or take home messages.
- Do not use images merely to decorate!
- Don't read your slides. Talk freely.