



HOW TO PREPARE A PRESENTATION

Good presentation visuals will dramatically enhance your presentation, while poor ones severely detract from it. Presentation visuals that follow the guidelines below will uphold your image as a quality professional. Following are some guidelines.

Purpose

- The purpose of presentation visuals is to illustrate the main points of your paper.

Visuals can:

- Arouse interest
 - Encourage participation
 - Prevent misunderstanding
 - Focus attention
 - Save time
 - Reinforce ideas
 - Add humour
 - Enhance credibility
 - Explain abstract ideas.
- Visuals also significantly enhance the audience's retention of your presented material as is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1		
Retention of presented material after:		
	3 hours	3 days
Tell only	70%	10%
Show only	72%	20%
Show and tell	85%	65%

Approach

Your objective is to develop visuals which will enhance your presentation and will enable the audience to leave with a better understanding of your material. A good approach is to consider the following while you are developing your visuals.

Content: Does each visual add something that the audience needs to know? Delete anything that is not unique, specific, and relevant to comprehension. Streamline, rearrange, and split up content so that each visual covers only one topic.

Conciseness: Can the audience grasp the main message within five to ten seconds? Watch the length of phrases. Break sentences into bulleted lists, giving only the main points. Eliminate extraneous or redundant words, numbers, and labels.

Consistency: Are all the grammatical constructions consistent? Make bulleted lists parallel in construction (eg. all noun phrases or all verb phrases). Establish and follow a consistent style of capitalization and labeling. Use correct grammar and vary your use of language.

Correctness: Are all elements of the visual correct? Verify all spelling - remember that your spellchecker cannot determine if the correct word is being used, only whether it is a valid word; eg. to, two, and too; or mean and bean. Be especially careful about people's names. Double check all numbers and data.

Format

- All presentations should ideally utilize multimedia for the visuals. The visuals will need to be formatted so as to be compatible with Windows 98 + SVGA (800 x 600 image with 256 colours). A LCD projector and a laptop will be provided
- Presentations in Power Point will be preferred. If you use other standard presentation graphics applications, such as Persuasion, in the development of your presentation, the presentation must be converted into a PC compatible Power Point presentation

Content

Presentation visuals *should not* be a duplicate of the hard copy of your final paper. The two media have different purposes. Your paper is used for the proceedings and your visuals are used for presentation impact. Our customers expect to hear and see more than what they read in your published paper.

Avoid a lengthy introduction to your organization. The focus is a competition. Invest your time on the project.

Use only the key words as opposed to complete sentences. The less text you put on each visual (the less total area taken up by lettering), the larger the letters can be when projected on the screen.

Only one point or concept should be made with each visual. For a concept with several points, consider using a "build", ie, a progressive disclosure - a series of visuals which introduces only one of the bulleted points at a time while retaining the others (usually in a subdued colour).

Each visual should be displayed no longer than 60 to 90 seconds so that the audience stays attentive. If you have multiple points on the slide which would require you to exceed this guideline, consider breaking the material into several slides or use a build sequence of slides.

Vary the kinds of visuals in your presentation. Builds can be a valuable pacing tool, but do not overdo it.

Clarity

- Clarity refers to the amount of material in a visual and its legibility. For example, if a drawing is too busy, the audience will not be able to understand its intent
- A well-designed visual tells one story at a time
- Use only a part of a complex drawing instead of the entire drawing. A part that relates directly to the point being made delivers the message without clutter.

Layout

- Keep in mind while preparing your visuals that the conference room accommodates 150-200 attendees
- Having over 35-40 words on a slide undermines your delivery by forcing the audience to choose between listening to you and reading the visual. At worst, it may force you to read the visual verbatim, damaging your credibility as a speaker.
- Use no more than five bullets or eight lines on a single visual with seven words or fewer on each line. Expand a lengthy subject to multiple visuals, or reorganize the bullets by topics, each with its own visual. Avoid sub-bullets unless your audience really needs them; often, they represent a level of detail better left to your own notes.
- Ideally, a total of 20 words per visual is best. No visual should have more than five vertical columns.
- If you must show a complicated form, or output, display the entire object but quickly focus in on the section which you are discussing using another visual
- Avoid long or meaningless titles. Make titles say something, whether to encapsulate your point or titillate interest. Vague, cryptic, or pointless titles simply take up valuable space on the visual
- Remember that the audience includes individuals from virtually every type of industry and level of experience. Buzz words, acronyms, abbreviations, and jargon can belittle and baffle an audience. Do not use them unless you are absolutely sure that all of your listeners are familiar with the terms
- Do not crowd information to save space. The total spacing between lines should be at least 100%
- Bullet points that do not sound similar grate on the sensibilities and hinder comprehension. Strive for the rhythm and logic of like-sounding phrases; eg. start all bullets with a verb or with an adjective or noun phrase
- Be innovative - but do not sacrifice comprehension for cleverness.

Fonts

- Presentation visuals are viewed from a relatively long distance. Each visual must be legible or the audience will not pay attention and your message will be lost. Use font sizes of 20 points or larger (other than for slide identification or graphics labels)
- Use no more than three letter sizes on a visual. Try to keep the size of titles and labels consistent throughout
- Times New Roman or Arial font styles are preferred. Mixing text font styles on one slide is discouraged
- Also, use the same lettering style throughout the presentation. If you change style, make the change for a specific reason and be consistent
- Use of all capital words, underlining and italics should be minimal. If you need to emphasize a word or short phrase, use colour, a slightly larger size, or bolder lettering in the same style
- Spacing between words should be slightly wider than the normal one-space standard. A rule of thumb is that the space between words should be the equivalent of an 'n'
- Avoid the salt shaker approach to punctuation and capitalization. Every extra jot inhibits quick understanding. Too many capitals dilute a message by making everything seem important.

Colours

- Remember that light colours will not be as intense as they are on your monitor since the viewer will see a reflected not projected image (ie. they will appear more "washed out"). It is up to you to maintain the proper differentiation between the text and the background
- Do not use dark letters on a dark background or light letters on a light background
- Be careful when using a background which is not a solid colour. Backgrounds such as pictures, clip art, or patterns may add spice to your presentation or make it unique. They can also ruin your presentation if the audience cannot read the text. Consider using a separate frame/area for the graphics with the text on a solid background. In all situations, make sure that the contrast between the background and all the text is such that the text will be legible when projected
- Use colours that contrast well. The most legible colour combinations are:

Background	Foreground
black	white
black	yellow
deep blue	white
deep green	white
white	deep blue
white	deep green
white	black

WARNING: Avoid using Red and Orange. While they look very attractive on the computer screen, they usually show up as a dark brown when projected on the display screen.

Illustrations and Tables

- Make sure the darkness and width of all lines are sufficient to set it off from the rest of the graph. If a graph is lighter than the text, there will be little or no contrast to catch the reader's eye. This is especially important when producing the artwork. If the artwork is too light, it will not show up on the screen
- If you absolutely must show a detailed ledger page or a form, break it down. First, show the whole page for the overall appearance. Then show several projections that break the form down into segments as you discuss each one.

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