



LHTAC

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PowerPoint Strategies

Microsoft PowerPoint can be a very useful tool for adding a visual element to a presentation. However we have all attended presentations when PowerPoint was not used to its full potential or even became an annoying or redundant distraction.

When considering using PowerPoint as part of a presentation, there are three components that you must get right: content, design and delivery.

When writing your content, concentrate on being logical, simple, and clear. Figure out what your audience needs and wants to know and tailor your content for the audience.

Regarding design, your number one concern is legibility. Don't put too much text on a slide and keep it large enough to read easily. Graphics should clarify text, not distract from it.

Here are some tips that Microsoft offers to maximize the efficacy of a PowerPoint presentation.

- The screen orientation is landscape, like TV and the movies.
- Elements should be visible from the back of the room. Never say, "I know you can't see this, but..."—fix it beforehand. A page from a book, a table from a report, or a software screen rarely work as PowerPoint images. Parcel the information to gain a clear, uncluttered image. The rule of thumb is no more than seven lines and no more than seven words per line.
- Background and foreground colors should show up in the room. Consider the room's conditions. An image that works on a computer screen may not work when blown up to 10 feet wide in a ballroom.
- Fancy slides are ineffective if the content is missing. Animate the audience, not the slides.

A recent survey revealed common audience annoyances with many PowerPoint presentations:

- The speaker read the slides aloud.
- The text was too small to read.
- The slides were hard to see because of the color choices.
- Full sentences were displayed instead of bullet points.
- The text and graphics were moving around too much.
- The diagrams or charts were too complex.

Delivery is of utmost importance. Be energetic and engaging. Don't depend upon your PowerPoint presentation by hiding behind it; use it as a trusty sidekick who works hard to back you up and make you look good. Together you'll make a lasting impression.

Reference: Technology for Alaskan Transportation, Fall 2007, Volume 32, Number 3

