

It's LIFE WITH ... not DEATH BY ...

I heard a few moans the other day about using PowerPoint to do presentations, but as I see it, as long as you stick to a few rules and think about how an audience might react to the content then they will be happy to sit through them.

Here are TEN things that I think about when creating or running a presentation:

1. How many slides can I show in the allotted time?
Above all don't try to pack it all in. Just make a few good points.
On average, I might speak on a slide for 2 mins, so for simplicity I use this formula:
Number of Slides = Minutes/2
2. Is all the text readable?
I don't crowd a slide or try to cram everything on.
I use a font I like at a size that is readable, tending to opt for a modern sans serif font like *Calibri* or *Tahoma* or *Trebuchet* that is clean and easy on the eye and I use *Size 44* for titles and *Size 32* for the rest.
3. Am I telling the story myself? and Do I know the subject well? – if you are going to read out the presentation you may as well give your audience the presentation print out and send them off home!
I use bulleted keywords to keep myself on track.
Again, I don't crowd a slide – I try to keep to *6 BULLETS PER SLIDE*, using a continuation slide if necessary
4. I try to keep the audience with me at all times so I *NEVER REVEAL EVERYTHING AT ONCE*.
For this reason, I like to use simple consistent animations to reveal the next point when I want it and I never distribute handouts prior to the talk. This will prevent people from reading ahead or asking questions that anticipate points from later on.
5. I try to use a good balance of humour, animation, and special effects to enhance the talk.
Trying to be funny all the time may well ring the death-knell for the message you're trying to communicate, unless the presentation is meant to be a light-hearted humorous one, of course!
6. Is the colour scheme consistent and non-garish? Splashing on too many colours is not good. If you have company colours use them and don't confuse!
7. I often use (but not over-use) video, audio, graphics, charts and pictures – I find that my story is told more quickly and effectively that way.

8. Am I standing in front of the presentation? it should be readable by all.
Also, eye contact is key so I try to remain connected to my audience as much as possible and only glance at the screen to keep myself on track!

9. When in the middle of a PowerPoint presentation I use these *Keyboard shortcuts*:

B	Blackens the screen to answer a question from the audience
A	Hide the arrow mouse pointer
Esc	End the presentation early
- ® N Spacebar	Any of these will show Next slide (or animation)
- ↵ P Backspace	Any of these will show the Prev slide(or animation)
Ctrl+ P	Change to Pen mouse pointer for <i>Doodling</i> on the slide
E	Erase doodles
Ctrl+ A	Change back to Arrow mouse pointer

10. Finally, I try to remember to spell check the text and get somebody I know and trust to proofread the content.

In summary, presentations are an excellent way to share information with people. In a way, there is a psychology to controlling the audience and telling your story. All it will take is for some presenters to perhaps make a few changes and they will do better with it.

Think about the points I've raised and please try out and maybe adopt some of the things that I've mentioned. I guarantee that after a while you will wonder how you coped without them! I'd like to ban the phrase "Death by PowerPoint" and always have "Popping PowerPoint Presentations" instead!

See you next time.

"Les is more!"