**DELIVERY MATTERS**

**Be Prepared**

**Start with the end in mind.** Before you even open up PowerPoint, sit down and really think about your presentation. What is the purpose? What is the most important message(s) for the audience to take away? What is your point? Why does it matter?

**Plan with pen and paper.** Rather than just starting to make your slides, scratch out your ideas and objectives with a pen and paper. Maybe you are comfortable using a whiteboard or sticky notes to organize your thoughts - imagine how it might flow logically when PowerPoint is added later. Also, as you write down key points and assemble an outline and structure, you can draw quick ideas for visuals such as charts or photos that may appear in the PowerPoint.

**Edit, Edit, Edit.** When you are building the content of your presentation you should always put yourself in the position of the audience and ask ‘so what?’ Most of us have seen people include data, facts, graphics or a seemingly unrelated anecdote that just did not contribute to the overall point. A fact may be cool, it may be even be interesting or make you feel smart – but if you can’t answer this question – you need to cut it from your content.

**Do not read the text word for word off the slide.** Most audiences can read, so why do presenters insist on reading long lines of text from slides? Also, it is very difficult — if not impossible — to read a slide and listen to someone talk at the same time. While a lot of text on slides may be convenient for the speaker - “…convenience for the speaker can be punishing to both content and audience.”

**Have a visual theme.** In addition to clarity in message, you also need slides that make sense visually. Without some sort of theme it can look like you just pulled together slides from unrelated presentations at the last minute. This doesn’t mean every slide needs to look exactly the same. In fact it is recommended to stay away from the templates provided on PowerPoint or Keynote.

**Good presentations include stories.** The best presenters illustrate their points with the use of stories, most often personal ones. The easiest way to explain complicated ideas is through examples or by sharing a story that underscores the point. Stories are easy to remember for your audience. You should try to come up with short, interesting stories or examples to support your major points.

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**Keep it Simple**

**Reduce the text on your slides to an absolute minimum.** The best slides may have no text at all and will be virtually meaningless without the narration (from you). Remember, the slides are supposed to support/supplement the narration of the speaker, not make the speaker unnecessary.

**Keep it simple.** PowerPoint was designed as a convenient way to display graphical information that would support the speaker and supplement the presentation. The slides themselves were never meant to be the “star of the show.” People came to hear you and be moved or informed (or both) by you and your message. Your slides should have plenty of "white space" or "negative space." Do not feel compelled to fill empty areas on your slide with your logo or other unnecessary graphics or text boxes that do not contribute to better understanding. The less clutter you have on your slide, the more powerful your visual message will become.

**Written documents (research papers, handouts, executive summaries, etc.) are for the expanded details.** Audiences will be much better served receiving a detailed, written handout as a takeaway from the presentation, rather than a mere copy of your PowerPoint slides. If you have a detailed handout or publication for the audience to be passed out after your talk, you need not feel compelled to fill your PowerPoint slides with a great deal of text.

Remember:

1. your **slides** should contain only a minimum of information
2. your slide **notes**, which only you see, will contain far more data
3. your **handout** will have still far more data and detail

**Limit your ideas to one main idea per slide.** If you have a complicated slide with lots of different data, it may be better to break it up into 2-3 different slides (assuming no side-by-side comparisons are needed).

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**Connect with the Audience**

**Find out what the audience knows and adapt**. Learn as much as you can about the audience when you are asked to present – this gives you time to adapt and tailor your message in a thoughtful way. On the day of ….if possible connect with audience members as they arrive. If there are other speakers - sit in the audience to hear what they have to say and refer to their comments in your presentation. You can also plan activities right at the start of your presentation to get people sharing their knowledge on the topic. It gets people engaged and lets you know what they know so you can adapt.

**Move away from the podium.** If at all possible get closer to your audience by moving away from or in front of the podium.

**Remember the “B” key.** If you press the “B” key while your PowerPoint slide is showing, the screen will go blank. This is useful if you need to digress or move off the topic presented on the slide. By having the slide blank, all the attention can now be placed back on you. When you are ready to move on, just press the “B” key again and the image reappears.

**Use a remote-control device to advance your slides and builds**. A handheld remote will allow you to move away from the podium. This is an absolute must.

**Make good eye contact.** Try looking at individuals rather than scanning the group. Since you are using a computer, you never need to look at the screen behind you — just glance down at the computer screen briefly. One sure way to lose an audience is to turn your back on them.

**Touch of humour.** Whether or not to insert jokes is largely up to your own comfort with being funny in front of a crowd and each situation is different. But if you are comfortable (and actually funny) humour can go a long way.

**Take it slowly**. When we are nervous we tend to talk too fast. Get a videotape of one of your presentations to see how you did — you may be surprised at the pace of your talk. Keep a glass of water close by – take a drink – relax.

Text adapted, just a little, from *Presentation Zen - How to Design & Deliver Presentations Like a Pro* by Garr Reynolds ([http://www.garrreynolds.com](http://www.garrreynolds.com/)