

“Customerize” Your Next PowerPoint Presentation

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For years, I’ve been using hundreds of visuals in every presentation from keynotes to training seminars. I believe we have to deliver information with *CNN timing and MTV pizzazz*. Television images change every seven seconds. People are used to digesting lots of data in short periods of time.

Years ago, we used flipcharts, transparencies and 35 mm slides, investing thousands of dollars in production of artwork. With today’s technology, the cost of a new slide went from \$75-\$100 per visual to almost nothing. That’s the good news. The bad news... just because it’s inexpensive doesn’t mean you necessarily should add another visual. *Overuse* and *misuse* of visuals has given PowerPoint a bad name.

The popular misconception today is that PowerPoint is sinful. Nothing could be further from the truth. *“Pitiful PowerPoint”* however, is a mortal sin. Every study done over the years suggests that retention is enhanced with the use of visuals, not hampered. Why then is PowerPoint getting such a bad rap? Perhaps the answer lay in the tool itself.

Any strength, overused, can become a weakness. The big complaint by meeting planners today is:

- ✓ Too many visuals;
- ✓ They all look alike;
- ✓ Speakers stand there and speak to the *screen* and not the *audience*.

“If I want a script, I’ll buy the book,” said one planner to me recently. *“We want the speaker AND we want the enhancements that visuals can bring to their presentation.”* The two can be compatible.

Here are 10 tips:

1. **Dump the traditional PowerPoint backdrops immediately.** They all look alike and people fall asleep on the second visual. Become a *“Goggle Gooney.”* If you want a backdrop to emphasize a point, go to Goggle, click on the second tab *“web images,”* and type in the word you wish to

emphasize. Let's say you are speaking on time management. All you need to do is type the word "time" into the search engine and thousands of images relative to time will appear. Import a backdrop into your presentation. Now you have a colorful backdrop to further emphasize your point. What you put on the screen however, should be your point. The backdrop should only enhance your point, not replace it.

2. Use the Word Art tool to make your idea larger and easier to read.
3. Only use the top 2/3's of the screen. It's hard for people in the cheap seats to see the bottom of the screen. So trash the bottom third or you can utilize it for logos and other subliminal copy that is secondary to your main point.
4. Keep your words to a minimum. You're making a presentation, not writing a book.
5. Use as many visuals as necessary and limit your ideas to one per visual.
6. Use a different backdrop for every visual, unless you're doing a build-on visual that carries forward a theme.
7. Go to your client's website and get permission to download some of their own logos, graphics, pictures and other items so that they can be used as backdrops in your presentation. It "*customerizes*" (a word I invented) the presentation.
8. Use contrast. If you have a backdrop that has a dark image, use white copy in your Word Art. If it's light, use dark letters. Use your color buttons to vary the color of the letters. Or, simply consider dropping in a text box if you're having trouble reading the visual.
9. To make sure the visual is easy to read, build your slide and walk away 15 feet from the computer screen and see if you can read it comfortably. If you can't fix it.
10. You can vary the complexion of your backdrop by clicking on the image and then click on the color button. This will give you four options:
 - ✓ Automatic (the image you imported)
 - ✓ Grayscale (contrasting black on white)
 - ✓ Black and white (another version of grayscale).
 - ✓ Washout (a washed out version of the original visual)

In the late 1970's I took my kids to Disney and as we were going through, I noticed they were videotaping our images and using them as we went through the ride. I thought, "*what a neat idea!*" I wonder if I could do the same thing. So I researched it and found out about 35 mm Polaroid Slide film. I could take pictures of my audience members during say a cocktail hour, develop

them instantly into slides and then use the slides in my presentation. I used them in several ways:

- a- Visual Extravaganza – a collage of pictures at the end of the presentation, featuring the attendees in a smiling-faces, warm-fuzzy closing put to music which I own.
- b- Visual Roast- where I had some fun roasting the subject of the picture.
- c- Visual Newspaper- where I did a summary of the previous day's activities (ala Dale Irvin) but only with pictures instead of words.

With everyone and their brother owning a digital camera today (cell phones), anybody can do this stuff, so I quit doing it because my colleagues basically “*borrowed*” my concept.

I still use visuals, but I use them differently. I’ll hang with the group, take their pictures and use those pictures as my backdrops in my presentation. This “*customerizes*” it even further and you can bet that they’re paying attention because their mug is on the screen.

I also love to quote the previous speaker who was on just ahead of me, especially if he or she is the guy in charge of the meeting. I use two systems:

1. I take their picture with my digital camera, using the picture as the backdrop. I then quote them, using Word Art to drop in the quote (at an appropriate time in the presentation, of course).
2. Or, I use a video camera and collect the clip and simply drop in the entire video clip at the appropriate point.

The impact of this immediate “*customerization*” of my presentation takes it to a higher level, giving me an unfair advantage. And, as I’m fond of saying, “all I want out of life is an unfair advantage.”

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