

PowerPoint COOL ^ IDEAS...



10 Biggest Mistakes Companies Make with PowerPoint

How's your PowerPoint? Is this much used (and much misused) tool of marketing and corporate communications up to the high standards you set for your organization? Or do you see it as a problem that cannot be fixed — a necessary evil of the business world. Here are 10 ways that you and your business peers most often fail to make the most of this potent but misunderstood presentation tool.

1. No basic presentation training as part of sales training. It makes sense for most companies to train their employees. They are trained to perform the specific tasks that their jobs require. They are trained to understand the corporate culture. They may even receive sales training — helping them develop techniques and strategies to prospect and to close. But few companies invest in their employee's basic abilities to present effectively to a group: How do you structure a presentation? How do you build connection? How do you motivate an audience, large or small, to act? Presentation training is a small but wise expenditure with very profitable ROI. Plus, it is an investment in the happiness, satisfaction and confidence of your employees.

2. No basic PowerPoint training. I have never quite understood why any business would ignore their bad PowerPoint. However, most do. Sharp-looking PowerPoint makes you look like a pro — and it gets your message across with authority and effective-

ness. Get a trainer who knows how to teach your team members how to do it right. Your operation will stand high above the crowd.

3. Dumbed-down, inflexible templates and guidelines. PowerPoint templates are often created by marketing and/or art departments that have little experience in real-world presenting. They are simplistic in an attempt to make them universally usable (and therefore universally mediocre). Templates should be flexible, professional and updated regularly. And (see No. 2 above) your employees should be trained to use them properly.

4. Over emphasis on branding every slide. This is a pet peeve of mine. It just looks amateurish to see an over-large logo and tagline on every slide. Let's assume your audience knows who you are. Brand the opening and the final call to action — then let them be impressed by your professionalism and not by your constant, insecure logo attack.



and then read it to their hapless audience. Bad form. What is the one thing you want them to remember in a week? Build a presentation around that. Save the tiny details for the brochures and handouts you leave behind.

8. Too many words in too many sentences and paragraphs. This is a byproduct of No. 7 above. The presenter is afraid they will miss something so they write everything into long paragraphs on their slides that they will read to their captive audience. On your slides reduce the paragraphs and sentences to just the keywords you will need to remind you and your listeners what you

will be discussing. Then you, the expert-presenter, can orally fill in the appropriate details. You are the expert, right?

9. Emphasis on features and benefits and not relationships. PowerPoint is at its most powerful when it adds a visual and emotional component to your spoken words. Facts and numbers are fine but relationships are built between people (and over 95% of us are people). Use images that connect and touch people where they live. That often means images of clients, customers, staff, board members, founders, etc. Have people in your photographs and slides whenever possible and appropriate.

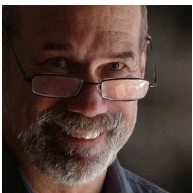
10. Not having enough opportunities to present in or out of the company. Presenting well and comfortably can be learned by anyone but it is a skill that needs regular practice. Organizations would do well to encourage their team members to speak as often as possible both inside and outside the company walls.

5. No artwork library. Most companies have a history of images and designs that have been generated over the years but often no one seems to know where any of it is. Store the images and graphics in a common, accessible location. Know what the usage guidelines and rights are so that your people can use quality images when they need them.

6. Reliance on cheap, childish, free artwork. Cheap artwork makes you look cheap — is that what you want? Today, a vast array of top-quality stock imagery is available at very reasonable prices. The artwork that is available for free online is owned by people with mean, nasty lawyers who write mean, nasty letters — don't use any of it.

7. Failure to establish a clear, consistent message. Presenters are often unsure of what their big message should be. They put everything they know about their product or service into a zillion slides

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Tom Nixon is a recognized authority on all things PowerPoint. Whether he is creating a high-stakes presentation for the CEO of a \$40 billion company in India or leading a hands-on workshop for public health experts at the CDC in Atlanta, Tom knows how to build and deliver powerful, persuasive PowerPoint. For more information please visit TomNixonDesign.com, call 770.289.0752 or email tomn@tomnixondesign.com to discuss.