

4 PowerPoint Tips You MUST Know Before Making Your Next Slide Presentation

(Hint: Stop Doing THAT and Start Doing THIS!)



1

STOP using slides as places to put large quantities of information. Why? Because “cognitive overload” kicks in and your audience will quickly begin to ignore your slides. Slides are not handout pages, nor should they look like your lecture notes.

START using each slide to illustrate (literally) one major point, with an image and a word, phrase, or (at the most) one sentence per slide. What do you do with all that content that is no longer on the slides? Put it all on index cards and use the cards to lecture from – they are easy to hold, you can walk around the room with them in your hand as you talk, and you never have to turn your back to your audience.

2

STOP reading your slides aloud. Why? Because your audience can read faster than you can talk! This creates “cognitive dissonance” as people try to listen to you and read the slides at the same time.

START using “The Pause” instead: When you click to a new slide, pause for about 2 - 3 seconds before speaking, so that your audience can silently read the word, phrase, or sentence on the slide. Then verbally add the details you want them to hear. Use your voice, gestures, stories, and movement to hold your audience’s attention as you speak.

3

STOP using slide templates. Why? Because using a template is about a company’s brand recognition; it’s *not* about learning. The human brain is hardwired to quickly ignore anything that is routine, repetitive, or boring, including slides that all look the same.

START creating slide sets that change things up a lot. Insert topic-related, full-photo images between text-only slides. Play with a palette of 3 - 4 bold colors for both backgrounds and fonts. Make sure each slide is different in some way from the one before.

4

STOP using teeny-weeny fonts, icons, and clipart. Why? Because no one can see them! Even if *you* can read the words or make out the pictures from where *you’re* standing, the folks in the back of the room (and the ones with older eyes) probably cannot.

START using photos of real people, places, and things (all topic-related, of course), and enlarge the photos to fill the slide (the photo can be the background for the text). Photos elicit emotions; icons and clipart do not. Use really big fonts (48 pt minimum – font sizes show up differently, depending upon the computer, software, and font type, so experiment). Do an Internet search for “free big fonts” and “free photos.” Or create and use your own topic-related photos. The whole point is to show slides that *enhance* your presentation, using evocative images, colors, and designs that all help your audience *remember* the information you’re telling them.