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Reason: one or more categories
denied
helper='InternetStd_WebBlock'
details='local-exception
(Corporate_Policy)'

Method: GET

Host: www.facebook.com

Path: /plugins/recommendations.php
site=blog.hubspot.com&width=250&

Proxy Rule: HTTP-Client.ALL-
General

**Please be advised that this
system evaluates web site
content in order to protect
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Steve Jobs & Guy Kawasaki -- Powerpoint Best Practices

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Posted by [Brian Halligan](#)
Thu, Jan 18, 2007 @ 12:27 PM

Comments

I have recently come across some interesting Powerpoint best practices that I thought I would share with you.

Steve Jobs

The first best practice was from watching Steve Jobs' presentation at MacWorld this year. What was fascinating about his slides is that they were either just a picture or just a picture with a couple of words in extremely large font. It turns out that Steve wants the audience to listen to him tell the story, rather than read the slides.

Here's a picture of one of Steve's slides:



In contrast to Steve's slide show, here's a picture of a slide from Michael Dell. Michael's would work well if it were designed to be sent to someone who would not have the benefit of hearing the story live, but next to Steve's slides, they just seem cluttered.



Guy Kawasaki

I recently read Guy Kawasaki's "Art of The Start." In addition to being a good author/blogger, Guy was one of the very early Apple employees and more recently has been a venture/angel investor type where he has listened to countless Powerpoint presentations. Presumably because he is tired of seeing poor Powerpoint presentations, he spends many pages in his book talking about Powerpoint best practices. There were a few nuggets of Powerpoint wisdom among a lot of content about it that stuck with me a few days after finishing the book.

His mantra is that Powerpoint should follow a 10/20/30 Rule. There should be no more than 10 slides in the presentation -- very few people take away much more than one concept from a presentation, so all that other stuff is extra. The slide presentation should be designed to last 20 minutes, leaving room for ample questions/discussion between slides or after the presentation. Guy points out that the point of the presentation is typically to initiate a discussion. He says the font should be size should be no smaller than 30 (Arial font). Guy says that audiences read faster than you can talk, so that while you are up there talking, they are trying to read your slides and not listening to what you are saying.

He says that there are something like 60 animation features within Powerpoint and he recommends the less use of it the better. His advice is to use your voice/body to emphasize when a point is important, not some fancy Powerpoint trick. The only place he recommends using any of this is in going through bullet points on a slide, presumably to avoid having people read ahead. Speaking of bullets, Guy suggests that bulleted slides should have one point with bullets and only one layer of bullets (lest you violate the 30 part of 10/20/30).

If you have some great Powerpoint tips, please do share them with us...

-- Brian Halligan.

The Science of Presentations



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COMMENTS

I have been unfortunate enough to have seen my share of powerpoint presentations. Beside the Dell type of person there is yet a third. They are the kind that think every square inch of space needs to be filled with words. They put endless amounts of text on the page and read from it! Pretty boring. I can tell within minutes if someone is going to

be the right person to partner with me after seeing their presentations. Too wordy and vague, bad match. Too animated, wrong match. The guys that can convey their point in a few words and know all relationships are one-on-one, are perfect. So far it has been tough.... Peace.

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posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 1:28 PM by [Charles Wegrzyn](#)

Apple and Jobs don't use Powerpoint, they use Keynote :
<http://www.apple.com/iwork/keynote/>

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posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 2:01 PM by C

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I like the Don Box method. When he goes to a Microsoft lecturn with an actual PC (not just a terminal) the first thing he does is: open a command prompt, navigate to the current Office directory in Program Files, and del POWERPNT.EXE. Then he runs Notepad, and starts his presentation.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 2:23 PM by [Bill Sempf](#)

[The Takahashi Method](#) is similar and uses fewer/shorter words and large letters.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 2:42 PM by prakash

Here is a great how to about powerpoint. <http://www.ispi.org/pdf/BadPwrpt.pdf>

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 4:36 PM by [mike](#)

I'm flattered that Mike posted a link to my book. Guy and Steve learned everything they know from me.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 5:34 PM by [seth godin](#)

Steve Jobs really should just project a picture of himself onto the wall since that what he really wants to talk about.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 6:32 PM by Bobby

I totally agree with the idea of making simple slides that people can understand without reading, but the Dell example isn't a good example of the opposite approach. It's just a logo, the heading "support" and a screenshot of their support application. If his talk is describing this application then it makes perfect sense to project a picture of it. Of course if the topic is support in general then the screenshot is unnecessary clutter.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 7:14 PM by mark

I can't speak for sales, but for technical or intercorporate presentations, don't use PowerPoint. At all. If you must, only use it as a slide projector for diagrams and images. Carry notes and then *talk* to the group. If there's detailed information they need, put it on a handout and give it to them beforehand. PowerPoint is a tool used to give vague and shoddy ideas the impression of clarity without actually improving (and in fact generally hampering) communication of information. Don't use it.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 9:23 PM by [Randall Munroe](#)

Hello Charles,
 The last company I worked was Groove Networks which was acquired by Microsoft. During that acquisition process, I got to spend some time in Redmond -- quite interesting. It was in Redmond where I saw some VERY interesting Powerpoint and Excel techniques.

On the Powerpoint side, there was something going on where folks had to get their point across in either one or a very short number of slides, so I saw slides that had exceptionally small font (i.e. I'd guess 8 or so).

On the Excel side, I saw spreadsheets where you needed a magnifying glass to read the content.

Interesting that of all places, they use it in such an unusual way out in Redmond.

-- Brian.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 11:18 PM by

Thanks to those of you who clarified that Jobs used Keynote and not powerpoint. I guess my post was really presentation software agnostic -- the best practices espoused by Guy Kawasaki and practiced by Steve Jobs apply to either I think.

-- Brian.

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posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 11:23 PM by

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Whenever I'm creating presentations I use LaTeX Beamer. It makes everything look great and does all the hard work for you.

posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 11:54 PM by Daniel Watkins

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The text on this site is unreadable at 800x600 resolution. It goes off the edge of the screen. You might want to spend some time on web page design best practices.

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posted on Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 11:59 PM by userd

Inflexible, mechanical rules regarding PowerPoint presentation design make no sense. Of course all presentations should contain slides that are legible, interesting, uncluttered, and when appropriate, entertaining. In addition, they should be pleasing to look at, and should demonstrate, support, and/or supplement what the speaker is saying. Beyond these points, it is ridiculous to make hard and fast rules about what makes a good PowerPoint presentation. For example, it is nonsense to say that all presentations should contain 10 slides and last 20 minutes. These values should depend on the topic, on what the audience already knows, and on how much the speaker has to say. Nor does it make sense to dictate a minimum font size of 30. The fact that one font of 30 can be much larger than another font of 30 instantly reveals the folly of such a statement. What should be taken into consideration in choosing font size is the distance from the screen to the back row of seats. The bottom line is that it is not hard and fast rules that are needed when designing a presentation, but rather flexibility to provide what is needed for a given situation.

posted on Friday, January 19, 2007 at 11:15 PM by [Dr. Debby](#)

I second Debby's comments.

I work in a presentations department for an investment bank and we produce around 1,000 presentations a month. Every presentation is different. Don't cram your pages, white space is beautiful. I would recommend Adobe Reader to give presentations.

posted on Friday, January 26, 2007 at 2:14 PM by [Tom](#)

Now that we're headed into the world of online meetings and web demos, I'd love to see this same conversation applied to how we use Powerpoint to keep an invisible audience engaged.

posted on Monday, September 10, 2007 at 1:25 PM by [Kelli Schmith](#)

That's an excellent idea for a topic. I'll start thinking about this a bit.

I do some online .ppt presentations, but would probably need some thoughts who do more of them than I do to start cranking out any thoughtful analysis on the topic.

posted on Monday, September 10, 2007 at 1:28 PM by [Brian P Halligan](#)

i'm going to implement this 10/20/30. I'm a lecturer, and always present up to 40 slides. i was thinking that my student go bored. People are pay attention to the first 30-40 minutes in whatever occation or presannation.

posted on Friday, November 23, 2007 at 2:41 AM by [exinco](#)

Well "A picture is worth a thousand words" - and psychologically a picture/image makes better impression in attendees mind.

I usually prefer this way of presentation.

But you won't find images for all the concepts... then I usually do what Guy Kawasaki had suggested...

posted on Friday, December 28, 2007 at 10:32 AM by [Sumanth Krishna](#)

You need to check out this blog from PacketTrap about powerpoint. Boy or Boy are you right. If you're in IT you know what I mean...stop the powerpoint torture!
<http://www.packettrap.com/blog/?p=28>

posted on Friday, February 08, 2008 at 7:07 PM by PowerPoint Hurts

I fully agree on 10/20/30 rule. As Debby suggested, I have used PDF viewer presentation for a longtime and it is very efficient.

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posted on Saturday, February 09, 2008 at 9:56 AM by [Healthbase](#)

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I think you must be thinking of somebody else's comment. I disagree with any hard and fast rule and never mentioned PDF viewer!

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posted on Sunday, February 10, 2008 at 4:35 PM by [Dr. Debby](#)

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I agree with the "concept" of few words or only graphics on a PPT, but it only works if the presenter is the master of the content. Most presenters aren't, especially sales people who use the slides that marketing creates. And many who create their own, only use PPT as an organizational tool of what they want to say. They don't try to present concepts, they want to remind themselves of what they want to say.

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posted on Tuesday, March 18, 2008 at 12:39 AM by Glenn Gruber

I find it interesting that people rail against the tool, PowerPoint, when what they really despise is the fact that the large majority of people out there (and you know who you are...) never learn to use the tool effectively. Effective communication is the key, and PowerPoint provides another means to that end.

If you blame the tool, it's like blaming the television for all of the violence we see in the world today.

Kudos to all - teachers, collaborators, and even vociferous complainers - who help us to communicate our thoughts better!

posted on Wednesday, April 09, 2008 at 10:54 AM by Tmiller

Death by PowerPoint! My favorite is the technical presentation right after lunch when they dim the lights - I shut down every time.

When used well, PowerPoint is a great resource. Depending on the verbal content, both Steve Jobs' and Michael Dell's presentations probably landed very well with the audience.

posted on Wednesday, April 09, 2008 at 3:15 PM by [Robert](#)

"The text on this site is unreadable at 800x600 resolution. It goes off the edge of the screen. You might want to spend some time on web page design best practices." Dude--800x600? It's not 1997 anymore. Get a better display.

posted on Saturday, April 26, 2008 at 11:17 PM by [Tom Crawford](#)

You want a great powerpoint tip? Don't use powerpoint.

posted on Sunday, April 27, 2008 at 6:45 AM by Phelim Brady

"The text on this site is unreadable at 800x600 resolution. It goes off the edge of the screen. You might want to spend some time on web page design best practices." Yeah, and you might spend some cash on a new display I guess...

posted on Sunday, April 27, 2008 at 6:56 AM by Zampano

Having been trained many years ago (pre-PowerPoint) at the Elish Shamash school of vuegraphs, I'd like to contribute "The title line is prime real estate."

posted on Sunday, April 27, 2008 at 2:44 PM by Tom Zahm

Jobs is not worthy to kiss Mikey's shoes!

posted on Sunday, April 27, 2008 at 9:05 PM by [steveballmer](#)

John Steele makes an excellent point in his book "The Perfect Pitch" which is that slides/visuals support a presentation so the presentation should be written as a script first. The slides that are required are then developed later. Even if you don't deliver the script verbatim, note cards or a good memory will do and the presentation will be far better for it. Also slides/visuals are very different from handouts when well made and too many people try to get the slides to do both.

posted on Monday, April 28, 2008 at 7:36 AM by Graham

My rule when it comes to PowerPoint is never have more than 5 bullets, and no more than 8 words per bullet. Language must be short and punchy, headlines-style. Background images suck unless they serve some purpose. Branding in the form of large logos to be avoided and transitions is the number one sin. flying text is okay, if they are quick. None is best. A "Funky" PPT is a cop out for not having good presentation skills. With a charismatic speaker, there wont even be a need for PPT to drive home the message. Who makes Powerpoint? Exactly...

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posted on Monday, April 28, 2008 at 11:54 AM by [M](#)

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I've swum in both the geek and sales worlds, and each merits a different approach, such as white boards for geeks and short, bullet point, large font tick lists for sales presentations. However, the best tip is how one sets-up the meeting. Granted, Jobs is usually addressing 1,000s at MacWorld, so he needs large-scale presentation graphics. I prefer to have all the players in a roomy conference room, mid-morning, with a large white board. Then a simple pitch or idea, legibly sketched then frames the discussion and quickly becomes an inter-active idea session, as if someone wants to add to the discussion, you give them the sharpie and they're off! If alert, one quickly grasps who has the power, who knows the problem best, and also, it quickly establishes the pecking order, rather than simply talking at people. Lots of intel can be gained in such meetings. PPT has it merits, but it really should be a k.i.s.s. tool at best and I have never wished death by ppt on anyone if possible. These are all great points-

posted on Wednesday, April 30, 2008 at 12:15 PM by [jeffwas](#)

I just wrote post highlighting a very similar concept.
<http://www.nextlevelexecutives.com/blog/>
We've all experienced "death by PowerPoint" and it is ugly every time. There truly are few things worse than watching someone read slides to the audience. Check out "Presentation Zen" by Garr Reynolds. Your audience will thank you for it.

posted on Friday, May 02, 2008 at 3:06 PM by [Mike Langford](#)

I learned a lot from this page and all the comments about presentations.

posted on Tuesday, May 06, 2008 at 11:46 PM by [Lowline](#)

Powerpoint is a visual tool.Using any visual tool gives respite from dreary audio inputs-talking.Besides what we should think of is how much is going to be 'retained' by the audience and the right media mix.Please don't give up on Powerpoint as of now.

posted on Friday, May 09, 2008 at 5:22 PM by [Bala](#)

Hi
Great information on this page... If a presentation has to be sent over by email, the above mentioned rules wouldn't be useful.
Very useful page otherwise.

posted on Sunday, May 18, 2008 at 2:11 AM by [Kunal](#)

Bala is wrong. Slides are not a visual tool! They are strictly an auditory exercise, because you have to read the text, and as most of you have already mentioned most people use slides to put words on a wall instead of pictures. So, how do you get an ovation after a presentation? It's not in the slides, it's in the way you present the information, in the way you message, how well you understand your audience, and you have to do it from the heart.

posted on Saturday, June 14, 2008 at 11:36 PM by [Lilia](#)

You **must** check out this presentation [Death By PowerPoint](#)

posted on Wednesday, September 10, 2008 at 3:30 PM by [Dave](#)

I am helping highly technical people give presentations to upper management, and ask them to see this link when we start working together:
<http://wavoka.mmalliance.acrobat.com/preskills1wavoka/>

posted on Friday, November 28, 2008 at 12:50 PM by [fritz gartner](#)

Yes, I too have been the victim of PPT that seem to never end. Hence, I endorse this blog a hundred times over. Thanks.

posted on Saturday, December 20, 2008 at 6:55 AM by [Medical Tourism](#)

a comment about powerpoint that made me laugh:

power corrupts. powerpoint corrupts absolutely

posted on Sunday, July 19, 2009 at 5:37 AM by S

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Comments have been closed for this article.

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