

# Seven things you should know about . . . creating more impactful presentations.

## the scenario

You're sitting in a crowded conference room waiting for a presentation to begin with great hopes of being informed, mildly entertained or simply gifted with new and relevant information. The title slide looks exciting so your hopes are up for a great presentation. The presenter approaches the front of the room with clicker in hand. The presentation moves to the next slide - the agenda. The agenda looks promising as you read the items while the presenter looks at a laptop on the conference table. When the presenter is done, the agenda is reviewed as it is read word for word - what you just read to yourself. The presentation transitions with a dizzying spin to a slide jam-packed with words - a lot of words. The presenter proceeds to read every last word on the screen with a few improvised words in between. You finish reading the slide before the presenter does so you start to think about what's for dinner. The next slide transitions with another dizzying spin and there it is - a blend of words with a lot of bullet points. The presenter begins to read them and you finish reading first so your mind drifts into thinking about what you will bring for lunch the next day. The presenter continues in the same fashion until the question slide is staring you down and your biggest take-away from the presentation is your meal plan for the next two weeks.

## 1 what is it?

Impactful presentations creatively inform, inspire and engage. Presentations do not have to be all text and bullet points and this is the very reason why PowerPoint has a bad reputation. Is this to the fault of PowerPoint? The answer is no. The fault belongs to the creator of the presentation when it is heavy with text, animations, dizzying transitions and anorexic on visuals. PowerPoint can lead to dynamic and creative presentations when used to its fullest potential. Impactful presentations use creativity and sometimes a dash of humor to connect and engage their audience. Designing impactful presentations allows your audience to walk away feeling informed, inspired, and maybe looking forward to the next one instead of dreading it.

## 2 how does it work?

Impactful presentations are designed instead of just pulling together facts and numbers. Great presentations happen when presenters speak to their audience, not the screen. It also happens when slides use visual elements to provoke thought and interest that also support the message. They are more effective when an audience does not have to stare at text and bullet points while the presenter reads them aloud. No one wants to be read to or lectured. No one wants to have dizzy spells with each slide transition or animated line of text. Audiences want to feel comfortable and to be informed, inspired and engaged but this doesn't happen automatically. Presenters have to consider the target audience and design presentations that connect with them using color, visual elements and consistent themes. Impactful presentations become impactful when they are designed with the audience in mind by considering what elements are relevant and important to them. They work when the audience can consider and reflect on the message as opposed to reading the bullet points.



### 3 why is it significant?

PowerPoint has been the most used presentation software for 27 years. It is estimated that 350 PowerPoint presentations are given each second. More than 120 million people use PowerPoint in business and education. (Statistics source) With this many users for this long, PowerPoint is significant and is a powerful means of communication. The significance of impactful presentations begins with one question: do you want your audience to walk away bored or do you want them to feel inspired? In this age of digital media, presenters are faced with new challenges of engaging their audience and keeping them interested. Most people are faced with boring and uninspiring presentations at some point. A clear goal should be to avoid this since it defeats the purpose and meaning behind the message. Impactful presentations are significant because it is the only effective way to engage your audience and make your message meaningful to them.

### 4 who's doing it?

Presentation designers can be found in both business or educational settings and both have the same goal of sharing information with their audience. They have a message and the ones who design impactful presentations, take the time needed to design them based on their audience and how the message will be best received. Presenters who design impactful presentations are those who consider their audience when determining what colors and themes will be used, what visual elements will be included and how the presentation is organized. Impactful presentations have to connect with the audience and the presentation is designed as such. Designers of impactful presentations think like a designer. Designers of impactful presentations research to understand their audience and consider the best possible way to relate the message to them. They strive to inspire their audience in relatable terms.

### 5 what are the downsides?

Can there be a downside to designing more impactful presentations? Maybe. There are time restraints that could get in the way of the design process since they may take longer to prepare. Presentations deserve the time spent to consider the audience and the message that will be delivered. Inexperience with design thinking could be a downside. It takes time to develop a design-thinking process and this is something that takes practice. Learning more about the design process should be viewed as an investment and is worth the time.

### 6 where is it going?

PowerPoint is going no where. Impactful presentations have potential to grow and improve as presenters learn how to use them effectively. PowerPoint faces many criticisms due to its misuse or it not being used to its fullest potential. There has been more and more attention to this topic which leads to more information that can help improve presentations and the use of PowerPoint. Because of the internet, it is now easier more than ever before to learn and develop a creative thinking process for designing impactful presentations.

### 7 what are the implications for teaching and learning?

The implications for teaching and learning whether in business or education are endless. Impactful presentations will keep audiences interested and engaged thus leaving with many more take-aways besides a two-week meal plan. When presentations are dynamic instead of static, audiences will feel inspired and may even want more. They may not dread presentations but rather look forward to them. Another implication is for the presenter. When a presenter sees that their audience is engaged till the end, they will feel good about the presentation and confident that the intended message was received.