

IDEAS » PRESENTATIONS

Slideshow smarts from a PowerPoint wizard



HARVEY SCHACHTER
MANAGING BOOKS
harvey@harveyschachter.com

102 TIPS TO COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY USING POWERPOINT

By Dave Paradi, *ThinkOutsideTheSlide.com*, 168 pages, \$30.49

If you've ever wanted to show a website in a PowerPoint presentation, you may have stumbled in figuring out how to offer the best image. Perhaps you managed to use the Print Screen function in Windows. But in his latest book, Mississauga-based PowerPoint wizard Dave Paradi offers a series of other solutions.

Print Screen is the weakest, since it shows the entire screen when you paste it into your slide. If you press on the alt key at the same time as you press Print Screen, you will capture just the application you are using – your web browser in this case – without the taskbar or other surrounding features. With Windows Vista or Windows 7, you can take advantage of the snipping tool under the accessories list, which allows you to draw a rectangle around the information you want to capture.

But he advises the gold standard is a commercial program called SnagIt, from TechSmith, which gives you a host of options for editing what you have captured before placing it in your clipboard for pasting. Or you can try a free program, with fewer features, from the same company, available at www.jingproject.com.

That's an overwhelming number of choices, for one small part of creating an effective PowerPoint presentation. But it's a sample of the thoroughness with which Dave Paradi attacks the subject in *102 Tips To Communicate More Effectively Using PowerPoint*.

He starts with the big picture, and two tips that he warns will make your communication less effective if ignored. The first is an overriding mode of thought: Always ask yourself, in every aspect of the presentation, how what you are doing will help the audience understand the message better. "Any time you are tempted to add a photo, animation, funny video clip or any other element to your slide, stop for a moment and ask yourself if you are adding it because you think it is cool or because it more fully explains your message and the audience will have an 'Aha' moment because you added the element," he says.

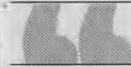
The second tip also focuses on the audience: Avoid annoying them. Often presenters unwittingly irritate, by stumbling

into three approaches that Mr. Paradi's surveys show cause the most distress: The speaker reads the slides rather than amplifies them; the text on the slides is too small; and the text is expressed in full sentences rather than bullet-size chunks.

With that in mind, he urges you to consider the goal of your presentation. A handy way is to complete the following sentence: "At the end of the presentation, the audience will Figure out what the audience will know, understand, change, decide, purchase, or take action on. "This brings clarity to why you are doing the presentation and allows you to have a clear vision of the end state in the room after you are done the presentation," he observes.

If you regularly give the same presentation to groups, Mr. Paradi asks you to reconsider. "You should never give a canned presentation." Every group is different, and you need to find out "where your audience is now." That means learning the positions of the people in the organization attending, their level of knowledge and attitude towards the topic, the credibility they award you, and the format or style they prefer for presentations.

Next, set out a map for the presentation, an outline that you should share with your audience. Mr. Paradi is big on that point. Before you begin



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Dave Paradi

the presentation, state the conclusion, so the audience can see the material in context. "Too often the typical sequence of a presentation is to present every supporting data point before we present the conclusion. By the time we get to the most important part, our audience is overwhelmed and may miss the conclusion or not recognize the significance of it," he notes.

Similarly, before you present a slide, you need to prepare the audience for the information they will be asked to assimilate, rather than have them try to decipher it in the first instant it appears on the

screen without quite knowing what you are displaying.

Mr. Paradi suggests that the future of presentations will be "non-linear." Instead of leading the audience through all the slides in the order you selected, you would start with the overall conclusion, and then ask the audience what back-up data or topics they would like to hear from a menu of choices. When you finish with the first topic they have picked, you return to the menu and choose another.

Beyond tips on structure and sequence, he also offers extensive tips on slide design, content, delivery and handouts. I am a fan of Mr. Paradi's work, having read his previous book *The Visual Slide Revolution*, which I recommended as one of the top business books of 2008, and I subscribe to his newsletter. But I was still astonished at the array of new tips, and the depth in examining them, with loads of technical details that can help you prepare your presentations better and even handle the disasters that he assures you will occur at some point when you arrive for a presentation and a glitch surfaces. If presentations are part of your life, this book is probably mandatory for you – it's that rich.

In Addition: In *How Leaders Speak* (Dundurn, 228 pages, \$19.99), communication skills coach Jim Gray, a contributor to The Globe and Mail's Ca-

reers section, asks you to imagine your CEO has just come to your office and advised you that will be giving a major speech at a forthcoming industry convention. From there, he takes you in detail – but always with admirable clarity – through his five keys to a presentation: Preparation, building the certainty you can pull the talk off, passion, engagement, and commitment to improving your communication overall. Within that format, he covers all the essential elements of presentations, no doubt with some tips that will help you to be more effective.

Just In: In *The Age Of Selfish Altruism* (John Wiley, 201 pages, \$29.95), marketing consultant Alan Fairington reveals how conspicuous consumption will be replaced by a desire for "real values" in purchases.

In *Econned* (Palgrave, 362 pages, \$36), Yves Smith, creator of the popular Naked Capitalism blog, looks at how unenlightened self-interest undermined democracy and corrupted capitalism.

In *Six Sigma On A Budget* (McGraw-Hill, 183 pages, \$23.95), industrial engineer Warren Brussee explains how to use the popular quality control approach without hiring expensive consultants or having to set up disruptive classes for your staff.

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