

Do you know the secrets
of a good presentation?

Hand-out for the workshop

“Getting the message across”

by Thomas Zangerle / WolfVision

It's all about the presentation –

How to grab audience's attention and leave long lasting impressions

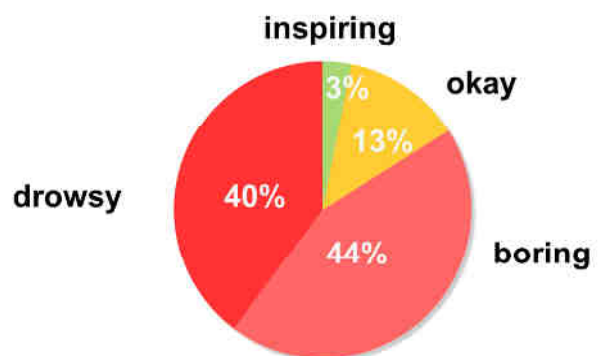
In the last few decades presentations have become the leading sort of communication in business and science. Presentations have one purpose – to impart information and knowledge in a memorable fashion so that the audience will be persuaded and take positive actions as a result. This is a common aim, whatever the nature of the presentation is for corporate, financial, sales and marketing, training courses, education or conferences.

It's essential for the presenter to attract and maintain the attention of the audience, to effectively present, to generate interest to encourage excitement and to captivate the participants. But the omnipresent PowerPoint and users which are just benchmarking their own presentations to previous experiences are the worst combination somebody can imagine.



PowerPoint is the dominating presentation software. Estimations are indicating that between 250 - 300 million computers have installed a version of PowerPoint. About 30 million presentations are done every day, right now more than 1 million presentations are going on.

For a lot of people PowerPoint is the ultimate tool when it comes to doing a presentation, so no wonder that 95% of all presentation are done by using this software. According to a survey in German companies, 84% of all presentations are considered to be drowsy and boring. 13% of the presentations are considered okay, but that means 97% of the presentations done today have room for improvement, sometimes a lot.

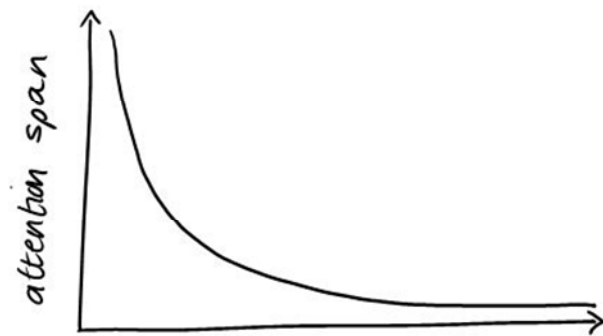


Let's have a look at some challenges which are underestimated right now –

We don't pay attention to boring things

What we pay attention to is profoundly influenced by our memory. Experiences we've had so far predict when we should be paying attention. Culture matters too. Whether in business or in school, these differences can greatly affect how an audience perceives a given presentation. We pay attention to things like emotions, threats and sex. Regardless of who you are, the brain pays a great deal of attention to these questions: Can I eat it? Will it eat me? Can I mate with it? Will it mate with me? Have I seen it before?

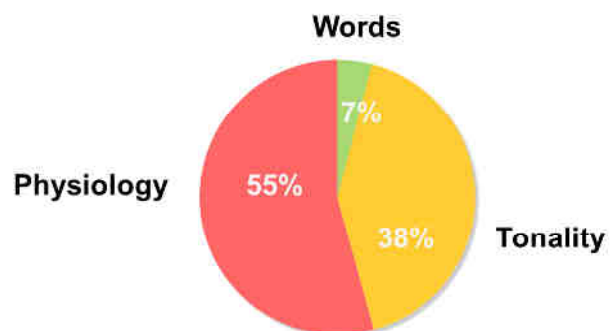
If you surprise your audience you can be sure that you will have their attention. After certain amount of time, disappointing to teachers and Powerpoint- or Keynote-presenters everywhere, audience's attention drops dramatically. You must come up with something emotionally relevant at least every ten minutes to regain their attention.



Source: Brain Rules by John Medina (www.brainrules.net)

Most of our communication is non-verbal

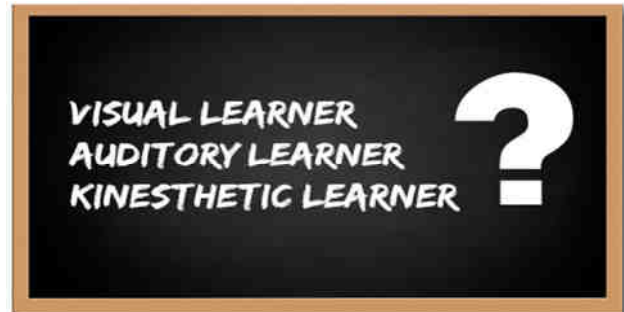
Why is text so inferior during a presentation? Primitive men didn't have a written language – or did they? Cave drawings, carvings, and hieroglyphs actually were a form of written language that happened to consist of pictures. In fact, the type in this document consists of dozens of little pictures – letters, numbers, and punctuation. That is why the brain takes longer to process text – it has to recognize characteristics of each individual letter before it can decipher a word. Indeed, a picture really is worth a thousand words.



Source: Study by Birthwhistle and Mehrabian, 1967

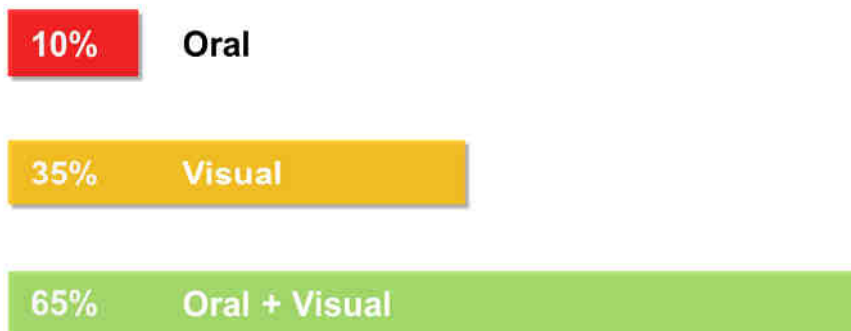
Different learning styles are a fact

Learning styles relate to how you process new information. Knowing your style and the style of others can improve your communication skills and productivity! There are a lot of theories out there, but like all things pertaining to the human brain, it is complex and there is not only one right answer. What we do know with relative certainty is that all of us have different preferred ways of learning, and that we like to combine “styles.” So why not offering different sorts of information to your audience?



The human brain is incredible in remembering pictures

If information is presented orally, most people can recall about 10% of it three days later. If the information is presented visually, most people can recall 35%. That is more than 3 times the retention! The results of combining the two are even more impressive. When information is simultaneously presented orally and visually, recall rate shoots up to nearly 65%. And the most impressive fact is that you even get 63% accuracy a year later.



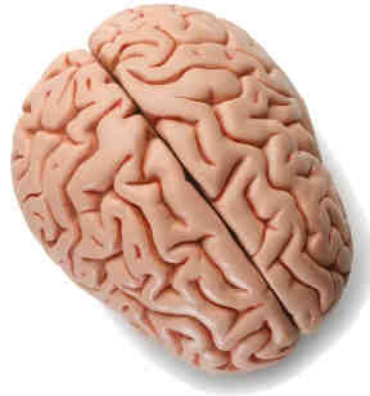
Source: A note on long-term recognition memory for pictorial material study by Nickerson, 1968

What's more convincing: Reasons or emotions?

The left side of your brain deals with analytic thoughts and logic. Language, text, facts and figures are targeting this side of your brain. The right side of your brain is responsible for emotions and creative tasks. Visual impressions and images are attractive for this side of your brain. Although our brain is a small part of the body its energy consumption is enormous (just 2% of body mass, but about 20% of energy and oxygen consumption) and the left side is consuming the majority of that energy. PowerPoint, facts displayed as bullet points and figures are permanently addressing the left side of the brain. While the left side is running out of energy after a while, the right side still has some resources left. Images and visual tools are addressing this area and beside that they will also create emotions. In fact it's emotions convincing us, not the arguments. Emotions will lead to action and reasons will justify the decisions.

**“The essential difference
between emotion and reason
is that emotion leads to action
and reason leads to conclusions”**

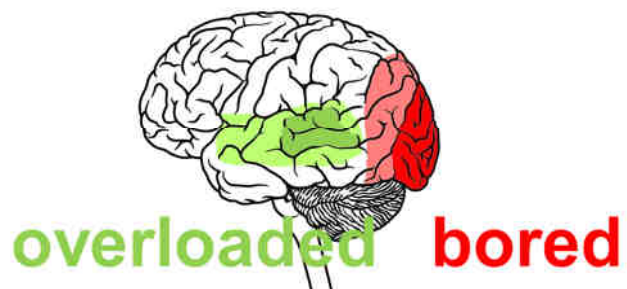
Donald B. Calne, Neurologist



Don't overload the audience

Be really careful not to overload your audience. According to Professor Sweller's 'cognitive load theory', it is simply not effective to speak the same words that are written. It's far better to show a picture or chart illustrating your point. The other problem is that most of the time the majority of the audience is not even listening to you. They're thinking about themselves, their problems, their pleasures and whether or not what you are saying is of any value to them.

Sweller's research into how we recall things from presentations suggests that it is far more difficult to process information confronting you from all sides at the same time. Choose either the written or spoken word and the human brain can process, digest and retain far more information than if it is bombarded with both.



Source: Cognitive Load Theory, New South Wales Research by Prof. Sweller

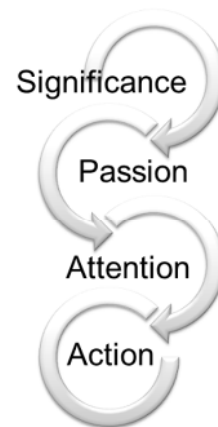
4 steps for designing outstanding presentations

The vast majority of efforts needed for doing a good presentation are not noticed by the audience. Make sure that you consider the 4S before you are doing a presentation and plan enough time for the preparation of content, design of the presentation and rehearsal before you actually do the presentation.

Significance

Why do you present? What's the subject and why it matters to you?

Make sure that your topic (also known as the key message) is significant for your audience and adapt the presentation to their needs. Significance creates passion, passion will attract attention and attention leads to action. Of course we can't always choose the topic of our presentation, but always ask yourself what is the benefit for the people paying their attention to me (WIIFM?... translates to „What's in it for me?“). Try to find the benefit from their point of view and build your presentation around that.



Structure

Structure is how you place the building blocks of your story. A story gives the big picture and helps to digest and retain the information transmitted during the presentation. It also helps yourself thinking about the presentation – what is your story and why does it matter?

It is important to support your audience with a well-structured presentation. This structure will help to make the presentation memorable and convincing and it also helps to make it scalable. Use only 3 to 4 reasons to support your point (the key message) as they will not remember more anyway.

Choices for a structure can be:

- 1) Problem – Pathway – Solution
- 2) Problem – Solution – Reasoning



Simplicity

Try to create your own style of presentation. Forget about common rules to design slides (remember the “7 lines per slide or less and 7 words per line or less” rule?). It’s far better to reduce and minimize written information wherever possible. Use big fonts, making it easy to read even for those sitting in the back. And support that point with a high resolution photo (not a clipart).



There is a lot of advice about designing outstanding presentations, so if you’re interested it’s worth checking out books like Slideology from Nancy Duarte or presentationzen by Garr Reynolds.

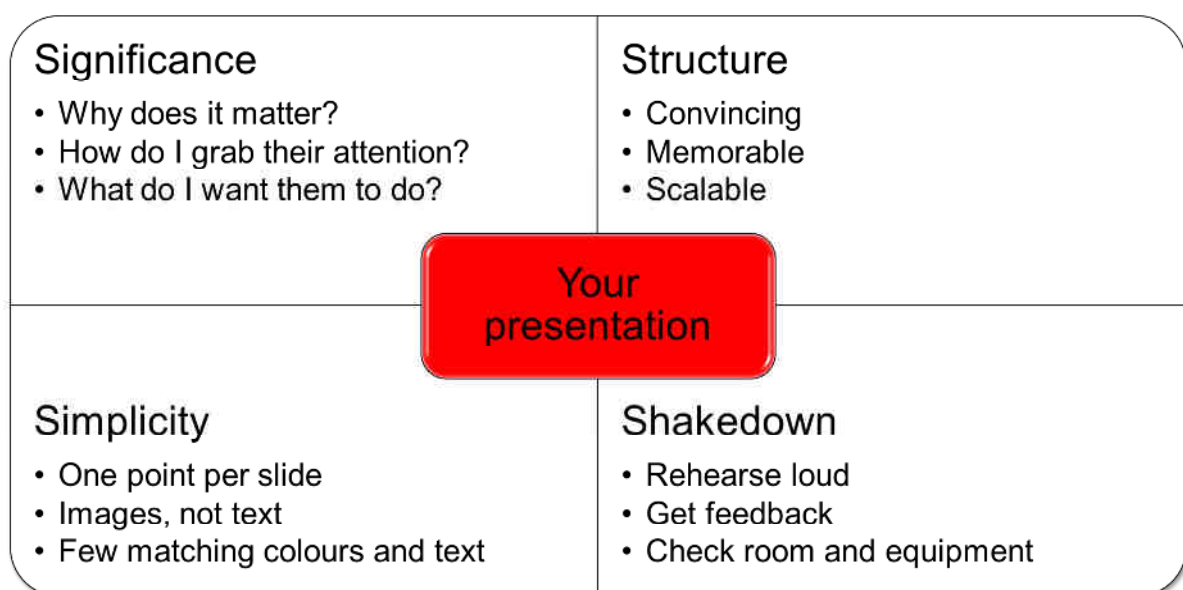
Shakedown

A shake down is done by pilots, captains or as a preparation for a rally. They train and practice to get better and better because it’s crucial for their job. How crucial is the next presentation for you?

Be yourself and be authentic. Rehearse until you feel confident delivering the content of your presentation. If you don’t have a test audience present it to the furniture, but aloud. Try to find a memorable entry and exit, because these are the most important parts of your presentation.

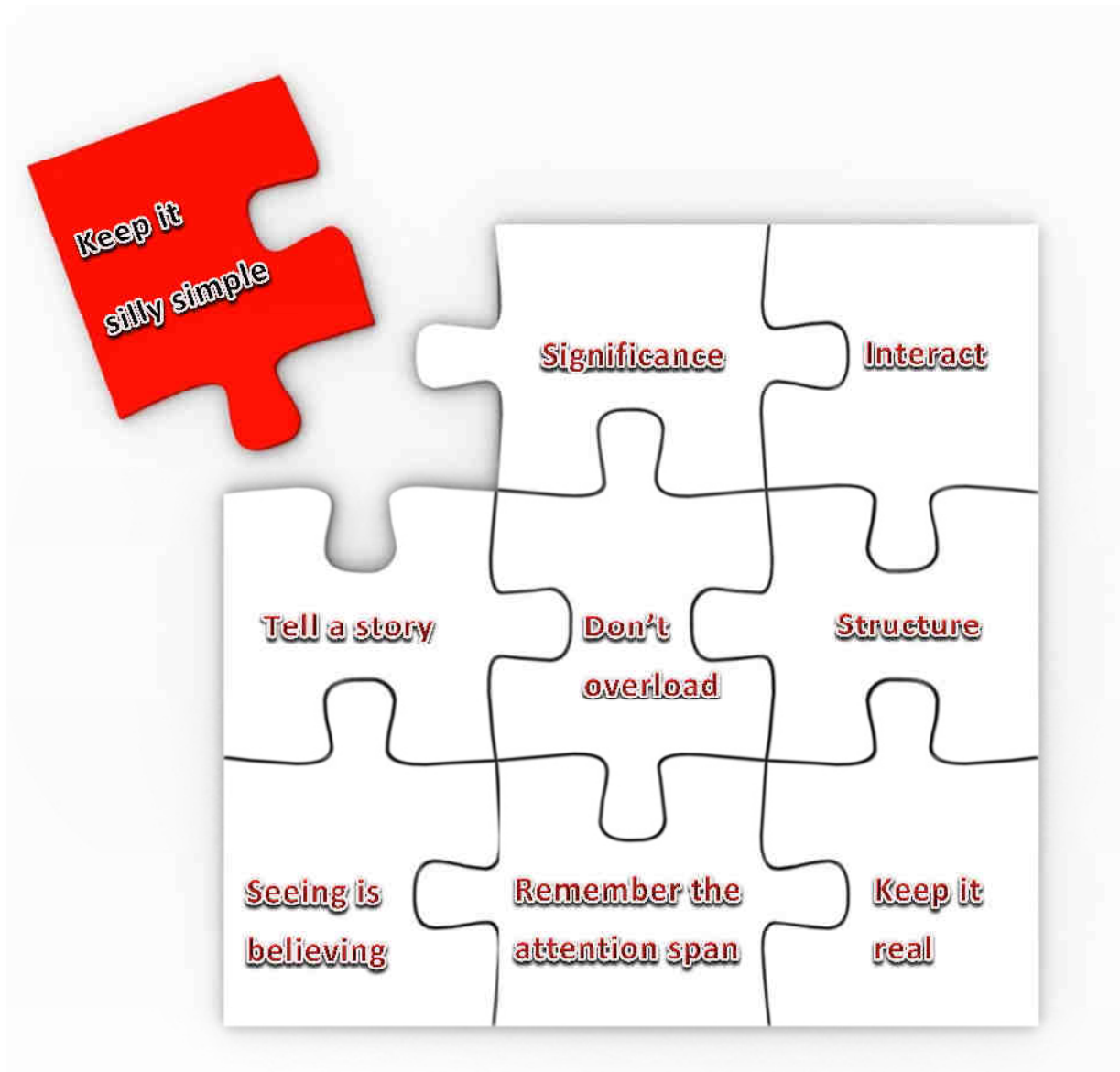
The last part of your preparation is shortly before you do the presentation. Arrive early and make sure you have enough time to check out the room and the equipment. Always have a back-up plan just in case something is not like you have expected.

Presentation checklist



The summary –

A couple of issues to consider



Significance

Why do you present? Make sure that your topic (i.e. the key message) is significant for your audience and adapt the presentation to their needs. Significance creates passion and passion will attract attention.

Structure your presentation

It is important to support your audience with a well-structured presentation. This structure will help to make the presentation memorable and convincing. Use only 3 to 4 reasons to support your point (the key message) as they will not remember more anyway.

Don't overload the audience

Be careful not to overload your audience. It is simply not effective to speak the same words that are written on the slides. It's far better to show a picture or chart illustrating your point.

Keep it silly simple

Try to create your own style of presentation. Forget about common rules to design slides (remember the "7 lines per slide or less and 7 words per line or less" rule). It's more effective to reduce and minimize written information wherever possible. Use big fonts, making it easy to read even for those sitting in the back. Support that point with a high resolution photo (not a clipart) to create emotions.

Interact and you will engage

Creating content spontaneously and live will be a highlight of any presentation. Ideas and comments contributed by the audience can be integrated easily by the use of a Visualizer (with its annotation surface for instance). Interaction will lead to engagement resulting in action.

Tell a story and they will listen

A story gives the big picture and helps to digest and retain the information transmitted during the presentation. It also helps yourself thinking about the presentation – what is your story and why does it matter?

Don't forget the almighty attention span

We don't pay attention to boring things. You must come up with something emotionally relevant at least every ten minutes to regain audience's attention. Changing media for instance will help achieving that aim.

Seeing is believing

Props are powerful because they hit people between the eyes. With a Visualizer you can integrate these objects easily without compromising the quality of your presentation. Try to deliver a presentation rich in visuals. By the way, text displayed through presentation software is no visual aid...

Keep it real

Be yourself and be authentic. Rehearse until you feel confident delivering the content of your presentation. Try to find a memorable start and end, because these are the most important parts of your presentation.

www.wolfvision.net

itsallaboutthepresentation.net

Printed in Austria, May 2011

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