

My PowerPoint Manifesto

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- I. **I don't believe** a PowerPoint presentation should just be an outline of the talk. If I'm a halfway decent public speaker, people should be able to follow the structure of my talk without seeing an explicit indented outline.
- II. **I don't believe** the purpose of slides is to summarize what I'm saying. If I'm a halfway decent public speaker, I should summarize verbally what I'm saying in way that the audience knows I'm summarizing.
- III. **I don't believe** a bulleted list is always the best way to communicate information. A bulleted list may be used to communicate a list, but not every block of information is a list.
- IV. **I don't believe** the slides should be my crutch to remember what I was going to say. I should use my own personal notes, not confuse the audience with what I need to see.
- V. **I don't believe** that the slides should be used to supply the audience with take-home notes on the talk. The audience can take their own notes, or they can have a copy of my notes.
- VI. **I don't believe** that a person must be able to get the basic content of a talk just from reading the slides. If a person wants the content of the talk, they should listen to the talk. If they can't, I'll give them a written report or my notes.
- VII. **I don't believe** in giving out a copy of the slides to those who want just a quick overview of the topic. A written abstract or executive summary is the best way to communicate the main points for those short on time.
- VIII. **I don't believe** I need to remind the audience of my name, my affiliation, my sponsor, my organization's slogan, the date, the place, etc. on every slide. I put that kind of stuff on the title slide and move on.
- IX. **I believe** humans can process information verbally and visually, often at the same time. The best presentation optimizes use of both channels to communicate.
- X. **I believe** that indiscriminate use of bulleted outlines not only makes presentations boring, but also deprives the audience of the true facts in all their richness. How much would you really understand from the TV news or a film documentary if the images were confined to an outline?
- XI. **I believe** that if a audience can get all that I have to say from the slides alone, why should I bother saying anything? I can just sit there enjoying a pint of bitter and periodically clicking the mouse.
- XII. **I believe** the Primary Purpose of slides is to supplement with *visual information* the information I convey verbally.

- XIII.** **I believe** that attempting to make slides serve other purposes such as providing take-home notes to the audience usually undermines their effectiveness in fulfilling their Primary Purpose.
- XIV.** **I believe** that slides should, in a word, *illustrate* a talk.
- XV.** **I believe** slides should mostly contain pictures, photographs, diagrams, charts, figures, tables, graphs, names, formulas, terms, comics, and, yes, the *occasional* outline or bulleted list. Each medium should be selected to best *show* what I'm talking about.
- XVI.** **I believe** the content of my talk is sufficiently interesting that I don't need to resort to gratuitous animation to keep my audience awake. Indeed, this *distracts* the audience from what I'm trying to say.
- XVII.** **I believe** my master slide should be simple and elegant, without graphics or words that interfere with my content. If my master slide graphics are more interesting than my content graphics, there's something desperately wrong.
- XVIII.** **I believe** that a slide can be used to emphasize a statement, but an appropriate visual image is more compelling than any item buried in a bulleted outline. If a listener misses a word or phrase I'm saying, an image that compliments the speech will fill the gap as well or better than simply repeating myself in writing.
- XIX.** **I believe** that the PowerPoint Notes pages are precisely the place to put descriptive and explanatory information for both myself and anyone who gets a copy of my slides.
- XX.** **I accept** that preparing slides this way takes additional time and care. You cannot simultaneously select and outline your content, make the slides for the presentation, and prepare notes and an executive summary for your audience. However, the result is slides that enhance a talk, not repeat it.