



Keyword: Visual Aid

Seven Ways to Avoid Death by PowerPoint

by Kevin Eikenberry

Tom had given presentations before, but never one this important.

He knew if he was successful in making a strong case for the project the company would benefit greatly. Of course he also knew that if his presentation was successful he would benefit greatly as well.

He wanted to be persuasive, and he wanted to be different. He had attended far too many presentations that relied so heavily on PowerPoint that people got lost, distracted or bored.

While lots of PowerPoint slides was the norm, his instincts told him that wasn't the best answer. As he thought about his situation he thought about his Vice President.

Tom had long been a fan of her presentations and wondered if maybe she could give him some pointers. He was nervous to ask for her help, but this was a very important presentation, so he sent her an email.

He was pleasantly surprised to find that she would be willing to help, and that even though her schedule was full, she could make some time for a brief conversation.

Tom opened the meeting by thanking Jayne for her time and telling her again why he admired her presentations so much. After they got past these pleasantries, Jayne said she had seven things she always did when creating a presentation.

As Tom prepared to take notes she said, "First, let me warn you that not all of these ideas are directly about PowerPoint, but all of them will help your presentation be more successful, and you'll avoid death by PowerPoint."

Tom smiled, as he hadn't heard the phrase "death by PowerPoint" before, but he had certainly experienced it.

Then Jayne handed him a list she had photocopied for him with the seven tips on it.

As they discussed the list he added the notes included below.



Seven Ways to Avoid Death by PowerPoint (continued)

Seven Ways to Avoid Death by PowerPoint

Think about the audience. If you want to persuade someone the most important thing is to think first about who they are, what their concerns are and to better understand their perspective. Start planning for any presentation by starting with your audience.

Think about your message. Once you begin to understand the audience, then think about your message. What are your key points? What is your audience's perspective on your message? What details might not be necessary for or make sense to your audience? Remember, your message is probably crystal clear to you, but this may be the first time your audience is even thinking about this topic. Help make it crystal clear for them too.

Think about the action you want the audience to take. Ultimately your presentation is about what happens as a result of what you say. Make sure you clearly understand what actions you want your audience to take and make sure your presentation helps and persuades them to take those next steps.

Use fewer slides. *Death by PowerPoint* is often caused by having too many slides. Though every presentation is different, chances are good that you can cut the number of your current slides in half and double the effectiveness of your talk.

Use fewer words. After you cut the number of slides, reduce the number of words on each slide. Unless it is a definition or a statement needed verbatim, don't include any sentences. Also try to keep your bullet points to four words or less.

Use fewer bells and whistles. Just because the program gives you 100 different fonts, sounds and animation options it doesn't mean you need to use them (all). Remember that PowerPoint is meant to be a visual aid, not to be the show or to get in the way of your message. Less is almost always more.

Use more visuals. Cut the words and augment your message with pictures and other visual cues. They will be more memorable and will help keep your audience engaged and tracking with you.

Stop thinking about the PowerPoint first. It isn't about the slides; it's about the people, the messages, and the actions you want them to take.



Seven Ways to Avoid Death by PowerPoint (continued)

As he reviewed the list, he mentioned to Jayne that there were eight items on her list of seven ways.

She said, "The last one is really the most important one. When we think about our slides first we will create the presentation from the slides rather than creating a presentation and supporting it with a few slides. Besides, no one ever accused me of being an accountant."

She smiled as Tom thanked her.

As he walked out the door, she said, "Don't thank me now, thank me by using these ideas and wowing the group with your presentation."

Tom did follow her advice, and created a few slides to support his key messages. The presentation went great and the first email he received after the project moved forward was from Jayne.

She said she was proud of him and that she looked forward to seeing many more presentations from him in the future.



Kevin Eikenberry is a bestselling author, consultant, trainer, speaker, coach, leader, learner, husband and father. He is the Chief Potential Officer of the Kevin Eikenberry Group (www.KEIKENBERRY.COM) and the Creator of the Remarkable Leadership Learning System (www.REMARKABLE-LEADERSHIP.COM), both of which are dedicated to life-long learning and helping Clients unleash their remarkable potential. Interested in becoming the remarkable leader you were born to be? Go to www.REMARKABLE-LEADERSHIP.COM today!
