

## Speaker Information, Tips & Guidelines

A speaker training breakfast is offered by ACI Committees E-903 (Training of Committee Chairmen and Session Moderators) and TAC (Technical Activities Committee) to assist ACI speakers and to encourage them to present a more effective talk.

### PREPARATION

- Prepare for the given time element.
- PowerPoint Presentations are preferred as visual aids. (Overhead transparencies are discouraged.)
- Keep the quality of the PowerPoint high:
  - ◆ Do not convey too much information per slide.(4 lines per slide.)
  - ◆ Horizontal slides are preferred.
  - ◆ Use proper ACI symbols wherever appropriate.
  - ◆ Lettering on originals should be large and easy to read. (Do not photograph typed text or typed tables.)

### TRAVEL

- If you are flying, carry a copy of your presentation on a CD as well as a copy of the talk (or your speaking notes) on the plane.

### REVIEW

- Arrive early. Check in upon arrival at the ACI registration desk and then meet with your session moderator.
- A Speaker Ready Room is available for your use with computers, an LCD projector, and screen.
- You **MUST** check in to the Speaker Ready Room one day prior to your scheduled session.
- Preview the presentation.
- Check the projector immediately before the session for remote control, focus and a spare bulb.
- Check the lantern's light, pointer and especially the controls for the slide projector.
- Check the sound system, lighting of the room and the involved switches.
- Make 50 copies of your presentation in the speaker ready room.

### THE TALK

- Announce that there are handouts or copies of the paper available.
- Do not show more than 2-3 slides per minute.
- Talk and present...**DO NOT READ!!**

**NOTE:** A number of items above are the responsibility of the session moderator; however, since your talk is of importance to ACI, we suggest that it might be a good idea to see to them yourself. If you do not do these things yourself, see that someone else actually does them.

***THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK!***

## PowerPoint Tips

MUST BE: PowerPoint'97 or 2000

Keep in mind that there is generally no connection to the Internet in the session rooms, so links to external websites will not work.

Notify convention staff in advance if you will require other types of viewers or players to give your presentation, (i.e. real player, Acrobat, etc.).

All moderators and speakers **MUST** check in at the Speaker Ready Room one day prior to their session.

A computer will be available in each session room.

Save presentations on CD, zip disk, 3 1/4 inch disk or send via e-mail to Shannon.herrington@concrete.org

To upload your presentation via the ACI FTP site follow the steps below

- open **Windows Explorer** (not Internet Explorer)
- in the address box type: **Ftp://ftp2.concrete.org**
- user name: Presentations
- password: conv—**ALL LOWER CASE**
- copy and paste your file to the respective day and time folder
- upload complete

## Slide Tips

Use big images with bright, sharp colors.

Be careful of color combinations. What you see on a color monitor will not always show the same way when projected on a LCD projector. Use a dark background and light colors for text and graphics. Do not use red or magenta. Some blues can cause problems.

Be brief. Slides are for visual support only.

The best kind of fonts to use are serif, which includes Times Roman, Garamond and Souvenir. If you are only using one to three words (phrases) as a headline, sans serif type can be used. These include Helvetica, Franklin, Gothic, and Optima.

Mix upper case and lower case for easy reading. Use lower case where emphasis is required.

A slide will be legible if:

- you can stand 6 feet away from a 14-inch monitor and read it
- you hold your slide at arms length facing a window or light source and can read it

Remember, keep it simple. Keep special effects simple.

## **Suggestions for recorded presentations**

Speaker should stay at the podium, as stationary as possible. Limit their movement on riser.

Speaker to use lapel microphone or speak into podium microphone.

Speaker should look at the monitor, not the screen

Use the mouse cursor instead of a laser pointer.

If easel or other aids are to be used, let the video cameramen know ahead of time.

Use font size of 24 point or larger in Power point presentation. Anything smaller will be illegible when encoded for streaming media

Some font types work better than others. Some fonts are not crisp and fade once encoded for streaming media. (Fonts recommended are: Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, Sans-serif )

Power Point slides with medium to dark neutral colors as backgrounds with contrasting font colors work the best. (Avoid white backgrounds with dark fonts)

Arrows and identifiers on the Power Point slides help for the web presentation.

Questions should be asked at end of presentations.

Speaker should repeat questions so they are recorded.

House lighting should be dim enough so slides are viewable while still allowing enough light for videotaping of speaker. (Use of extra stage light by video crew)

Moderator should use microphone for introductions of speakers.

Moderator to request audience to turn cell phones and pages off, or set them to vibrate.

Moderator should instruct speaker to repeat questions asked of them before presentation, and remind speaker if they do not repeat questions asked.

## Making Your Speech Memorable

Most people are not born public speakers, so their tendency is to deliver unimaginative and easily forgotten presentations. You have probably sat through countless speeches of this variety. Speakers who rifle through piles of notes and talk to the slides on the wall stretch an audience's fragile attention span to the breaking point. In addition to being downright boring, such speeches can be detrimental to the association because they present an unprofessional image and dilute key messages. Generally, the program lies in giving *lectures* rather than *speeches*. A truly memorable speech engages the audience, draws them in and makes each person feel as though he or she is having a one-on-one conversation with the speaker.

An underlying premise of oral communication is that it is meant to be heard – not read. Make the most of each speaking opportunity by having your audience hear, understand and *remember* what you say.

1. **Provide a “road map” to your remarks.** Tell your audience what you will say, how you plan to say it, and how long you will take to make your points. The speech should contain an introduction, discussion, recommendations, results, conclusions and summary.
2. **Use conversational language.** Keep the language simple. If possible, avoid acronyms, except those commonly used in ACI documents. Use short sentences.
3. **Make your points clearly.** Tell the listeners who or what the subject is. To what or whom do they refer? Use examples. You can improve the example simply by switching the subjects. Watch for indiscriminate use of the word *it*.
4. **Make the most of visual aids.** Visual aids can involve your audience in the speech and make your points easier to comprehend. If used incorrectly, however, visual aids can as easily hurt your presentation. On the downside, speakers have a tendency to use audiovisual tools as crutches. Speakers working from slides or overheads risk losing eye contact with listeners. Visual aids should not replace or reiterate the text of your speech. They should strengthen your message. With that in mind, avoid slides containing long lists or detailed descriptions; visuals with too much information usually have type so small that only the people in the first two rows can make them out. Instead, limit your slides to a maximum of four lines of copy, set in large type.

Pie charts, bar graphs, boxes, arrows, circles and so forth can effectively demonstrate ideas and relationships between seemingly unrelated concepts.

Please remember in timing your talk that it takes at least twenty (20) seconds to show one slide, and longer if detail is to be read. Limit visual aids to 2-3 per minute. If you have any doubt about using a particular visual aid, you probably should skip it.

- 5. Develop good delivery skills.** The way you deliver a speech often means as much as what you actually say. Developing good delivery skills is a fundamental element in becoming a convincing speaker. **Refine your body language.** Stand still, lean slightly forward from the waist and use your hands to emphasize important points. **Maintain eye contact with the audience.** The easiest way to do that is by memorizing your speech. Do not be a slave to your written remarks by reading your speech. Instead, use note cards with bulleted points. **Animate your voice.** Altering the intensity and level of your voice not only keeps the audience interested but also provides them with audio cues to your important points.

Pause slightly before and after important points. Timing is important. It takes two minutes to read a typed, double-spaced page. For a 20-minute talk, this means a maximum of ten pages.

- 6. Practice, Practice, Practice.** No matter how well you think you know the material, run through your remarks several times before delivering your speech. Be prepared for the questions you expect to get, and practice answering them.

# **Making Your Presentation Communicate**

By David G. Kittridge, ACI Fellow

## **Introduction**

It is important that all talks be developed from the standpoint of the listener who may not have had a paper to review prior to the talk. Therefore, the speakers must have a positive speaking style, present four or five main points that can be remembered by the audience and conclude with a succinct but unique statement about the subject.

However, even an excellent talk can be enhanced with well-constructed visuals and that is the subject of this guide. There are many excellent presentation programs available with built in templates, text styles and color palettes. While it is not necessary to have one of these programs, it is highly suggested that they be utilized in developing your visuals.

## **Discussion**

Visuals should be used to accompany a speaker in much the same way a pianist accompanies a singer. The singer carries the melody and sings the words, and the pianist provides background and structure, never intruding or overshadowing the singer. Hence, visuals should support the spoken word. They help clarify key points, show relationships and provide supporting material. Each visual should present a concept or point, and then explain it with your talk.

This guide will cover five areas in constructing your visuals that will greatly enhance the communication of your subject matter to your audience. These areas are: content, the typeface or font, the color, illustrations and the use of clip art.

## **Content**

The first step in developing the content and flow of your talk is to visualize the concepts you want to present. You must decide what are the important points that can be presented in the time allotted. Pick out those four or five main points and develop your presentation around them. Do not attempt to present all the ideas in your paper. Not only will it probably take too long, but also the audience will not be able to remember even a fraction of all the points you have presented.

The rule of thumb is that the audience will only remember about six elements of your talk within a few hours and one or two in a few days. Therefore, it is better to develop a strong presentation for a few items than a forgettable presentation with dozens.

It has been found that any visual is worthless if it cannot be thoroughly comprehended in 20 seconds or less. Also slides should not be left on the screen more than one minute. If it takes longer than that to explain, then it is too complex and needs to be broken down smaller, more easily digested parts. It has also been found that a concluding slide should be read and absorbed in five seconds or less. If a slide holds the attention too long, the impact of the oral discussion is lost.

One certain way to improve your visuals is to keep them simple and basic. It has been shown that up to six items on a visual is maximum amount. These items include headings, axis's and their titles, lines on a graph, pieces of the pie chart, etc. Hence, a normal graph would have a heading, two axis's and three lines for a total of six items. Once this total exceed six, then the audience can become confused. The visual would not only lose its effectiveness, but may have a negative impact on your talk. Remember if it takes more than 20 seconds to comprehend, simplify!

## **Content-continued**

It is also good to interlace your presentation with text, illustrations and photos. It provides variety, breaks up the monotony of a text only presentation and maintains the audience's attention. A good rule of thumb is that 60 to 75 percent of your talk should be text slides, 20 to 35 percent should be data information graphs, diagrams and photos, and 3 to 8 percent should be titles and other transitional slides.

## **Type**

There are two main font styles or type that are used in visuals and there are Sans Serif and Serif. Typical Sans Serif fonts are **Arial** and **Helvetica**. It is used primarily for titles, but can be used to highlight a word or phrase. A font size of 44 is good for titles. Typical Serif fonts are **Times New Roman** and **Times Roman**. The bulk of the text should be in Serif and should be used in both upper and lower cases. All upper case can be used for effect, but with few words. A font size of 32 to 36 is good for the body of the text.

The common practice is to have a maximum of SIX words per line and a maximum of SIX lines. However, the fewer the words the better as it aids in the audience's retention of the concept.

## **Color**

Like a good graphic, color attracts the eye and adds focus. Studies have shown that color can increase comprehension by over 70%, and have been shown to be over 80% more effective in selling an idea. However, like everything else, do not over do it. Normally, two or three colors in a single visual are plenty.

It is important to use contrasting colors to produce attention-getting visuals. Use a light color on a dark background. The eye will be drawn to the light areas where the message can easily be read. White, light yellow, light blues and light greens jump forward from a dark background such as dark blue, black, maroon and brown. A deep blue background is very effective with either light yellow or light orange lettering. Also what seems to work well in a small room, may not work at all in a larger room. The farther away the projector is from the screen the more contrast will be required in the two colors.

Colors can also suggest a topic. Different topics lend themselves to certain colors. These associations can be at the subliminal level for your audience. As an example the color red projects danger, problem area or hot; the blues are stable, calming or cool; and yellow is caution, positive or warm. Complementary colors lie opposite each other on the color wheel. Use complementary colors in developing a visual. Normally a cool color for a background and a warm color for the text or data works the best. Many presentation software programs offer a variety of professionally designed palettes that can be used without modification. As a start use these palettes and, as you gain experience, you can modify them to fit your subject matter.

Colors can be used for organizing. If you are discussing three aspects of a problem, show a beginning slide that color codes each aspect with text and, perhaps, a symbol. Then each reference to that aspect would use the coded color and symbol. The same technique can be used for introducing three steps in a procedure or three parts in a structure. As an example use yellow, light blue and light green titles on the same background color. Another effective way to add interest to your visuals is the use of drop shadows. A drop shadow is a color behind a letter that makes the letter appear to protrude from the surface. While we tend to think of drop shadows as being gray or black, they can be a color. Generally make the shadow a darker shade or tone of the letter or original.

**Color-continued**

Want to stress a bit of data in a bar chart? Use one color bar for all existing data and another for projected data or averages. Use a contrasting, bright color to emphasize one slice of a pie chart to call attention to the most important portion. However, watch out using too much color emphasizing or too many colors. Too much of a good thing will diminish its usefulness. Remember, the Rand McNally Co. uses only five colors to render maps of the entire planet.

One last item on using colors. The colors you see on your monitor can differ significantly from the hard copy. Therefore, it is prudent to do a color test for every output device you use. Project the resulting visual and compare the colors with those on your monitor. Look at the color number on the software palettes and note which number produces the colors you want. Then select colors using a predetermined palette or color numbers rather than by screen appearance. The colors will then be consistent among presentations.

## **Illustrations**

Illustrations are a great aid in communicating an idea to your audience. Most people will remember a concept better with a well-developed graph, bar chart, pie chart or other visual. You will also be adding a credibility to your presentation and make it more professional looking. However, to make your visuals memorable, it is quality not quantity that counts. Also, slides of job sites, test apparatus and other similar items can add another level of communication for the audience. They help to identify situations that otherwise may be unclear. They are also very useful when they illustrate a process leading to a finished product.

## **Clip Art**

Deciding whether to use clip art and which to use can be difficult. Clip art is “canned” figures, illustrations, cartoons, icons or photos that comes with many of the presentation programs and additional clip art elements can be purchased quite easily. When used judiciously, clip art can add interest and impact to your presentations. Therefore, review the clip art that comes with your presentation program and try a few in your next talk.

## **Summary**

The following list highlights the main points to creating effective slide presentations of a paper:

- Develop simple visuals to present only the main points.
- Limit text slides to a maximum of six lines of text, with six words per line.
- Use a mix of upper and lower case letters.
- Keep colors, patterns and text styles consistent for all the visuals in a presentation, using light colored text or data against a dark background.
- Color can be used to suggest a topic, help organize your talk or highlight a point. However, do not get carried away.

## **References**

The Power Presenter: How to Organize, Develop and Deliver Successful Presentations, by Justin Joseph, Amberline Press, P.O.Box 211772, Bedford TX 76095

PowerPoint Presentations by Design, by Roger C. Parker, Microsoft Press, Redmont, WA  
Brilliant Image, 7 Penn Plaza, New York City, NY 10001

Look Sharp! How to Design Better Looking and More effective Slides with Your Personal Computer, by Eastman Kodak Company

Design and Delivery of Winning Presentations, Dag I. Knudsen & Associates, Inc., 8761 Lakeview Road, Bloomington, Minnesota, 55438