Best practices in presentation design

Handout

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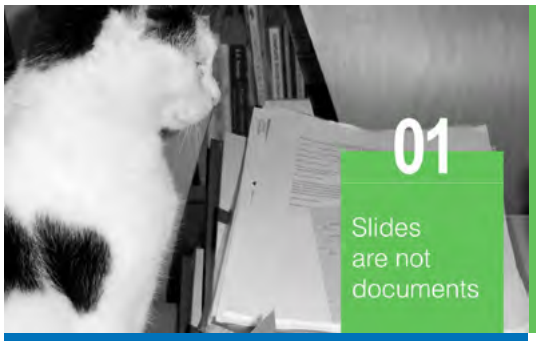


Foreword

Have you ever been in a dark room, sitting in the far back, squinting and trying to read through a slide with 10 bullet points and small text, and you're done reading while the presenter is still on bullet #2?

You didn't like this experience? You thought it's a good time check your email on your phone?

You're not alone.

Remember:

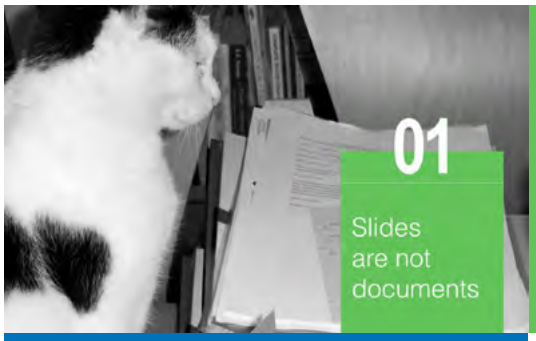
Slides are not for reading, books are.

Slides are not the story, they support your story, you are the story teller.

We'll go through this in seven steps.

We'll start with the first one on the next page.

Note: *use the open space on these pages to jot down thoughts, ideas or anything else you need to jot down.*



Slides are visual aids

Slides are aids

Again, slides are **visual** aids.

They are not your presenter notes.

Slides are **supporting** your story, they are not meant to **be** the story.

And slides should definitely not be your manuscript.

THE TYPICAL SLIDE

- The goal of a presentation is to communicate effectively with an audience using each medium properly (*"properly" - the way it works best for the audience*)
- If your slides look like this, you are using the visual communication medium incorrectly because you are changing visual to written communication
- Audiences will read this slide as soon as it appears on the screen
- Because audiences can't read and listen at the same time, they will read the slide first and then come back to listening to you
- Because you're still on Bullet #1 and your audience has read the entire thing, the need for you as the presenter is gone. You'll never catch up to what your audience already knows by reading ahead

Bullet points are boring

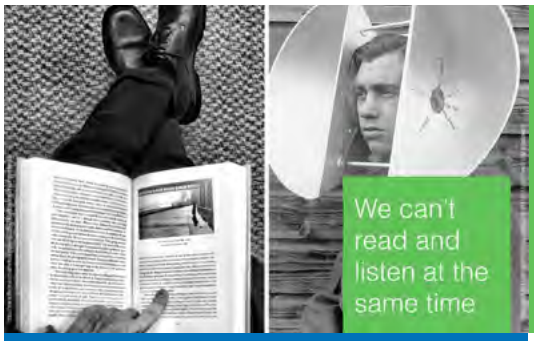
They distract from your story

An invasion of bullet points is what we see all too often, I guess we'd all agree.

Go and try reading it as I am talking, can you actually do it? Can you read **and** listen to me? Would you remember everything you've read **and** heard?

You'd probably think, "I can read faster than you can talk (and read) through each bullet point in your slide.

I'm bored".



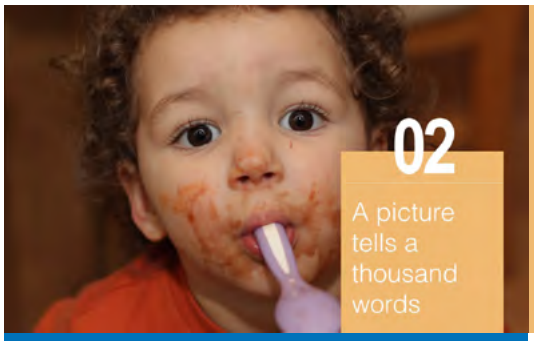
It's confusing

Read **and** listen at the same time?

"I can't focus if you talk to me while I'm trying to read through your bullet points, can't you see that I'm not listening to you?"

"Too many people are hiding in dark rooms flipping through too many words on big screens. There's a reason why I avoid boardrooms."

What comes to mind when you read Richard Branson's comment?



02

A picture tells a thousand words

Pictures are expressive

Remember

We remember pictures.

Data not so much.

Definitely not reams of data in small bulleted text.

Avoid!

Stock photos make it unreal

Everyone notices you didn't bother finding just the right image to illustrate your story.

You obviously didn't care about us, your audience. Why should we listen to you, why should we trust you?

When looking for pictures choose unique images, ones that support your story.

Stock photos won't cut it.

Just think of it, what story are these four people telling? Does it match what you are trying to say?

Avoid!

Clip art is no better

It's not only **not** unique, but it degrades the perception of your story.

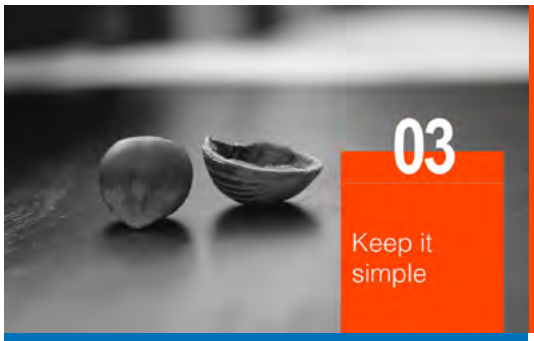
It pays to invest the time to think about it a bit more.

"I encourage people not to prepare formal PowerPoint presentations for meetings with me."

What would a meeting with Sheryl Sandberg look like?

Would the outcome be different?

Or not?



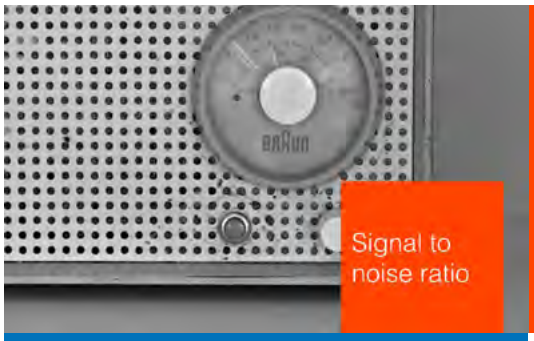
Please keep it simple

This is very important

People can't remember all the details you want them to know.

Focus.

Know your audience.
What makes them pay attention?



Signal to noise ratio

Not too much noise

Keep that noise ratio low

Remember, this applies not only to slide content, but also to the presenter.

On the next page you'll find a handy sheet, the signal to noise Glance Test ™, you can use to determine this ratio for your presentation.

Or for someone else's.

Signal to noise: Glance Test™

"Think like a designer and guide your audience in a way that helps, not hinders, their comprehension."

Nancy Duarte
autor, Slide:ology

Glance Test

	signal	NA	noise
Did it pass the glance test?	○		○
One Message (one point vs. many)	○	○	○
Audience Relevance (resonant content vs. inapplicable)	○	○	○
Visual Elements			
Background (supporting vs. distracting)	○	○	○
Text (scannable vs. document)	○	○	○
Color (system vs. random)	○	○	○
Photo (simple vs. involved)	○	○	○
Data (emphasis vs. non-emphasis)	○	○	○
Diagram (shapes clarify relationships vs. confuse them)	○	○	○
Arrangement			
Contrast (clear prioritization vs. indistinct)	○	○	○
Whitespace (open space vs. cluttered)	○	○	○
Hierarchy (identifiable parent|child vs. no relationship)	○	○	○
Unity (structured grid or look vs. unstructured)	○	○	○
Flow (clear path for eye vs. meander)	○	○	○
Proximity (intentional placement vs. random)	○	○	○
Animation (intentional meaning vs meaningless distraction)	○	○	○
	○	vs	○

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Signal to noise ratio

Don't hide your main point

Edward Tufte says, "There's no such thing as information overload, only bad design."

For our purposes as designers the signal is the information you want to communicate to your audience, the message you are trying to convey.

Noise is pretty much everything else. It's all the extraneous information that doesn't serve to communicate your message.

"We eliminated presentations. Materials are sent out 24 hours in advance so people can familiarize themselves with the content."

What are the pros, and what are the cons, of this approach?

04

Keep it consistent

We like it

It makes us comfortable

Consistency helps us understand.

Especially when it comes to complex thought.

We do like consistency

It applies to the use of fonts too

And to consistency in slide templates as well.

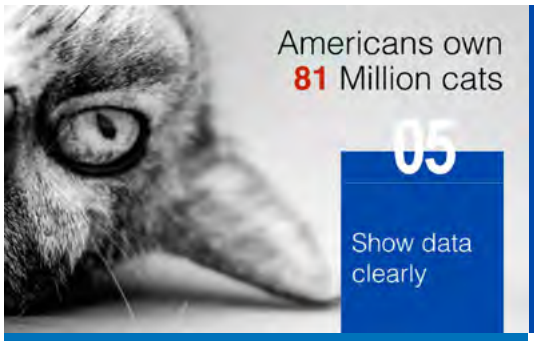
To watch this related video type the URL below into your web browser:

http://www.duarte.com/edy/?p=80

Jeff Bezos follows a very different approach from our current one.

He abandoned slides altogether in favor of a written narrative.

What would it take to make that work for us?



One fact per slide

Show what's important

Be clear about what's important.

Nobody can make choices on the fly to understand many different thoughts all on one slide.

There should be **one idea** on one slide, **one fact, one number** that really matters, nothing else.

Well, you can always add a cute cat picture for emotional impact.

Focus

Don't make me guess

Remember, **focus** on what's important—for me in the audience.

Everything plus the kitchen sink probably is not.

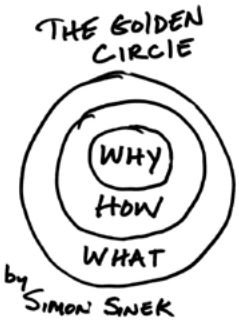
Focus on **one thing.**

"The cost of being wrong is less than the cost of doing nothing."

–Seth Godin

What doe this quote of Seth Godin mean to you?

Here is a similar one: "Looking and not finding is not the same as not looking at all."



06

Start with WHY

The golden circle

Start your strategy with WHY

WHAT

Every organization on the planet knows what they do. These are products they sell or services they offer.

HOW

Some organizations know **how** they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

WHY

Very few organizations know **why** they do what they do. Why is not about making money, that's a result. It's a purpose, a cause, a belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.

For example, Apple Inc. starts with the "WHY":

"Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. We challenge the status quo by making beautifully designed products that are simple to use."

Learn more about this successful strategy in Simon Sinek's TEDxPugetSound talk, it currently has 26.2 Million views: http://bit.ly/1VRtDRB

Engage the audience

Make them part of your story

A great tool for audience engagement is the 3-second glance test.

Give them 3-seconds to look at a picture.

Then ask them:

"What did you see?" "And why?"

Here is more info on the 3-second glance test: http://bit.ly/1Rxu6TN (more about this on the last page, Resources)

"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe."

What does Simon Sinek's quote mean to you?

And how does it compare to how we do things here?

07

Don't read, tell a story, turn off the screen

Story time!

Use a black slide

When you tell a story you want the audience to pay attention to you, not to the slide on the screen.

You are going to paint pictures in their minds and you want those pictures – and emotions – to stay there as long as possible.

Turn the projector off, or show a black slide to make your point – it's story time.

Be personal, passionate, honest, funny, interesting, anything really …

Just try not to be boring.

Express emotions

We don't remember facts that well

Emotions impress us much faster, much more direct, and they stay in our memory much longer.

A great story teller can paint pictures full of wonder in our mind, brings the story very much to life for us in all it's detail.

Remember those moments as a kid when you were sitting around the camp fire, or at home at the fireplace, and you listened to the exciting stories your grandpa had to tell? Remember how **vivid and clear** you could see all the details he described?

You remember, I know I do. I don't remember so much the facts, but I can still **recall the feeling** I had when listening to his stories.

"You never forget a good story. Stories stick with us, beyond bedtime and beyond the boardroom."

Here is how Nancy Duarte puts it:

"You never forget a good story.

Stories stick with us, beyond bedtime and beyond the boardroom."

Good presenters have a variety of stories ready, and depending on the audience and the right moment, stories can make a huge impact.

Create Slides People Will Remember

Remember this 1 thing

Create slides people will remember

Watch the video:
https://youtu.be/OeV2fHEM4RI

Best practices in presentation design

Resources

Books:

Nancy Duarte, **Slide:ology,**
http://amzn.to/1RxsV6K

Nancy Duarte, **Resonate,**
http://amzn.to/1RxsXLU

Garr Reynolds, **Presentation Zen,**
http://amzn.to/1RxvLsq

Nancy Duarte, **HBR Guide to Persuasive Presentations,**
http://amzn.to/1RxsN7f

Videos:

10 episodes on the ABCs of creating great presentations,
http://duarte.com/edy

Links:

Alex Rister, **Join the Presentation Revolution,**
http://wp.me/P1RxKL-Nc

Vinod Khosla's **Five-Second Rule,**
http://onforb.es/vOhTAE

HBR-Do Your Slides Pass the 3 Second Glance Test?
http://bit.ly/1Rxu6TN

Kipp Bodnar, **10 Rules to Instantly Improve Your Presentations**
http://bit.ly/1RxuoKi

Nancy Duarte, **Structure Your Presentation Like a Story**
http://bit.ly/1RxuxNR

Simon Sinek, **How Great Leaders Inspire Action**
http://bit.ly/1VRtDRB

Garr Reynolds, **Signal-to-Noise ratio and the elimination of the nonessential**
http://bit.ly/1RxwERl

Steven Bradley, **What's The Signal to Noise Ratio Of Your Design?**
http://vanseodesign.com/?p=1469

Infographic:

http://bit.ly/26aOe89

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