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Columnist

Professional Development

Put Pizzazz in your PowerPoints

Most of the PowerPoint presentations I've seen are, frankly, rather boring. Do you want to bore your listeners or give them a powerful presentation?

If you're not using PowerPoint now, you should. If you do, here are five of my top ten tips to make your PowerPoints dazzle.

Begin with a black slide. This avoids glare from the projector in people's eyes, and it saves your opening slide until you're ready to show it. I like for my opening slide to show my title, my company logo, and the logo of the company or organization I'm speaking to. I use spiral animation and a drum roll to bring the logos in.

Use slide transitions. The first thing you want to do, beginning with your black slide is to select a "slide transition" (under Custom Animation) and click "Apply to All." My favorite transition is "Box Out." It looks so much better than jumping to the next slide(s) just like old-time slide shows (without the projector noise).

Use color and graphics. The only time I use a white background is with a logo or graphic that has a frame around it, because I want only the graphic to show, not the box around it. There are so many textures and variations of fill colors that make your slides look better. For starters, you could use a dark blue background with yellow or other light-colored font, then play with the options until you get the look you want.

I like to see a graphic – click art or photo – that relates to the topic on each page. If talking about job stress, for example, you could use click art of a stressed-out cartoon businessperson.

Use animation. Don't just pop your slide text in all at once. Use animation, like "stretch across" for your heading first. Then "dissolve" or "wipe right" for each line of text. You want the audience to read what you're talking about and not read ahead. That's also why I either give my handouts to participants after I've talked (for short presentations) or give handouts with blanks they fill in as we go along (for longer training sessions).

Use sound (sparingly). Humor is good in even the most serious presentation. People like to see their logo fly in with a drum roll in your opening slide. Then you can use other sounds to keep them interested. For example, if you're showing them how to increase revenues, use a bar wiping up from the bottom, accompanied by the "ca-

ching” of a cash register. Don’t overdo sounds, though, or your presentation may get silly.

I’m going to be doing a presentations skills workshop at the Easley Chamber on May 23, from 9:00-11:30am and would like to invite you to attend. For more information, go to www.easleychamber.org and check the events calendar on the left.

More tips next time.

Annette Estes is a Certified Professional Behavioral and Values Analyst, Coach, and Consultant. She is a professional speaker and author of the book, *Why Can’t You See it My Way? Resolving Values Conflicts at Work and Home*. Annette won Matrix Awards in 2004-05 from Women in Communications for her columns in *The Easley Progress*. Contact her through her website at www.CoachAnnette.com.

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