



- Successful communication through messages and strong pictures
- Differences between boring and exiting presentations
- The main traps of *PowerPoint* and how to overcome

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Introduction

PowerPoint as used here is a synonym for presentation software. This means the following applies equally for Keynote or other software products. All of these applications have one thing in common – they are excellent tools to support presentations with visualisation. You can use them, for example, to project pictures or show films, and to take a step-by-step approach to addressing difficult topics. But over the decades since these products first appeared, a “presentation culture” has emerged with a focus on text lists and “bullet-point language”, often unfortunately accompanied by distracting decoration and embarrassing animation. All too often, “gimmicks” surrounding the presentation seem to be more important than the actual content. This “*PowerPoint* culture” makes it difficult to understand complex topics. In most cases, far too many presentation slides with little to say end up tiring the audience.

The first version of MS *PowerPoint*[®] was launched on the market in April 1987. Over the more than 30 years since then, computers have rapidly evolved from being from rather clunky desktops to becoming elegant, powerful and mobile all-rounders. The archaic, point-eating Pacman games in the past have now become virtual, realistic computer games. And what about *PowerPoint* presentations? They have advanced from black/white to colour, shadows, 3D and rotation! Many of today’s presentations differ from their first *PowerPoint* counterparts 30 years ago only in the additional text attributes that they contain. A *PowerPoint* culture of text slides and bullet-point language arose because high-resolution graphics and pictures were technically not yet possible. In the meantime the technology has changed dramatically, yet the *PowerPoint* culture has remained almost the same.

The following 10 tips show you how to do it better.



1. Use *PowerPoint* when it makes sense

A major drawback of projector presentations is the so-called “cinema effect”. When the lights are dimmed the participants of a meeting will lean back “relaxed” to “enjoy” the presentation. The longer this lasts, the more tired the participants become. To activate the audience members we therefore recommend that you work with them on a flipchart and pinboard to enhance the contents and discussion components of your presentation. These media, however, are not equally suitable for every situation. For example, flipcharts quickly become difficult to read when large groups and big meeting rooms are involved. Moreover, *PowerPoint* and *Keynote* are unrivalled when it comes to conveying vivid images with photos or elaborate graphs. When the following criteria prevail, the use of a projector makes sense:

- when graphs, photos or films must be integrated
- online access is needed to figures, websites or the intranet
- your presentation includes interactive calculations and inputs
- you have a large audience
- systematic: if your company culture dictates it

2. Don't use *PowerPoint* as a teleprompter



The slides should support and strengthen your words, not repeat them. Your audience has come to see and hear you, not to read your presentation. *PowerPoint* slides are not cheat sheets. Cheat sheets (in the truest sense of the word) are pieces of sheets in your hand, on the table or in electronic notes on concealed windows of your computer screen.

3. Create a handout as a written document

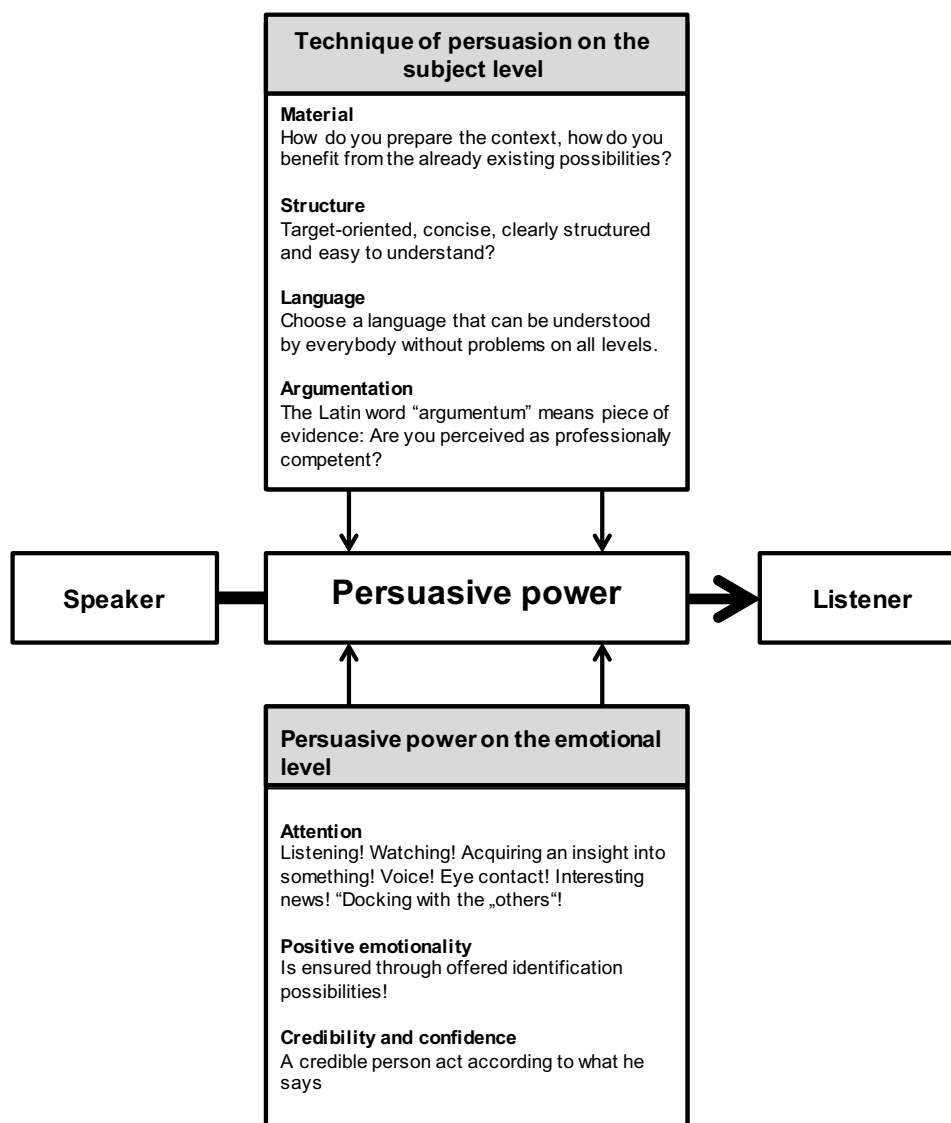
PowerPoint does not replace your documentation. A presentation aims to sell your most important messages and their arguments emotionally. The handout can follow up on this by providing more facts and details in order to convince the reader through an intellectual approach. If the audience members can rely on a proper handout they do not need to write so much. That way they can focus more on the emotional and intellectual aspects of the presentation.

If time is lacking, a compromise would be to place the image and text on two slides. During the presentation itself the text slide is faded out, whereas the handout can contain a printout of both slides on one page.



4. Persuade your audience through the strength of your presentation's contents and the appeal of your personality

If everyone in the room knew what you know and all had the same opinion, you would not need to hold your presentation, right? That is precisely the reason why every presentation contains elements of selling and persuasion. Persuasion takes place at two different levels – objectively and emotionally. The latter is by far the much stronger of the two. Ultimately, in fact, technology won't accomplish this persuasion, the person will.



Stage V CA Training programme: Persuasion takes place at two different levels



5. Invest in the preparation of your message and arguments

There is no short-cut to creating an excellent presentation! Directors don't make movies without a script. Begin conceptionally on paper, not in *PowerPoint*. Use the "Yes, I SEE" formula (i.e. Yes, I understand!). First, think about the messages that you want to convey. These are your statements. Every statement needs 2-4 arguments and subarguments, which – like a pyramid – support the message and provide an explanation. Include 2-3 examples that support each of your messages and arguments.

Statement
Explanation
Example

The amount of time you should budget for the presentation depends on the number of messages you wish to convey. In contrast, if your time is limited you need to reduce the number of messages. A rule of thumb is that you will need about 3-7 minutes of presentation time for each message. This ensures that a message won't get swept under the table due to a lack of time.



Your audience will understand your messages and most important arguments only if they can see them. It is therefore necessary to visualise them on the slide and to "prove" them with an image. You then should explain additional arguments in the free presentation and supplement them further in the supporting documentation. A living example strengthens the image on the screen, enhances memory retention and enables precise time management though adding or omitting details.

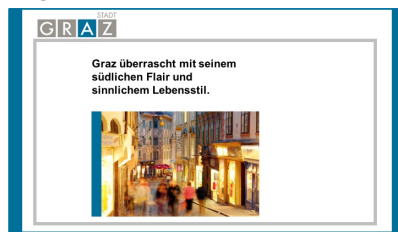
6. Replace your text with impressive images

Text is to be spoken and provided in the handout for reading. Images support the spoken text and are primarily intended to bolster memory retention. If quotes need to be cited in some places, it is important that the presenter reads the text as shown on the slide in order to support the audience member who is reading the slide. It provides a change of pace if you read the passages to be quoted together with the participants in the documents.

Display your images so that they always fill the screen. That way they make a much better impression than when they are "compressed" into a frame. Write the message above the image, or even better – directly in the picture.



Negative



Better



More impressive



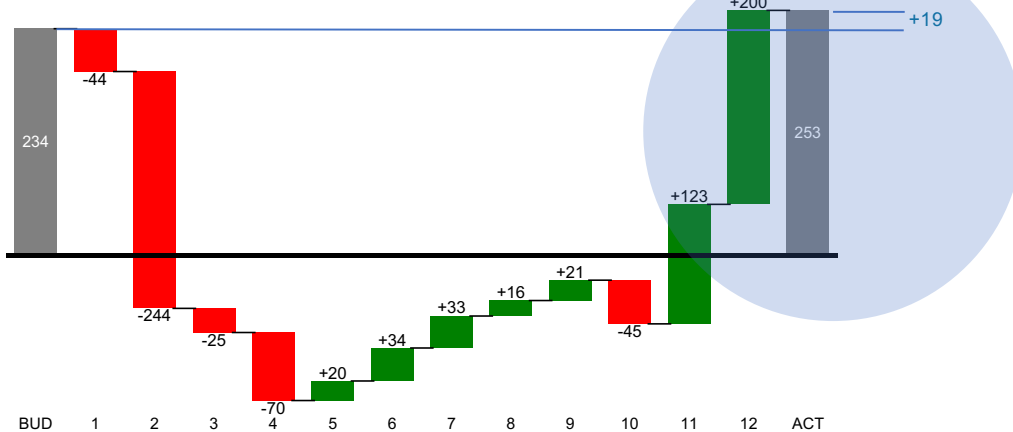
7. Replace the figures with business charts containing a high level of information density

The same is true for figures as with text – they are not particularly well suited for visualisation. Figures belong, like the text, in the supporting documents. To underscore the presenter's message we refer either to the supporting documents or show the figures using appealing business charts. Instead of a boring row of numbers we present, for example, a waterfall chart:

BUD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	ACT
234	-44	-244	-25	-70	+20	+34	+33	+16	+21	-45	+123	+200	253

We could increase our profit by 19 TEUR because of the Christmas business in Nov and Dec.

Profit in TEUR



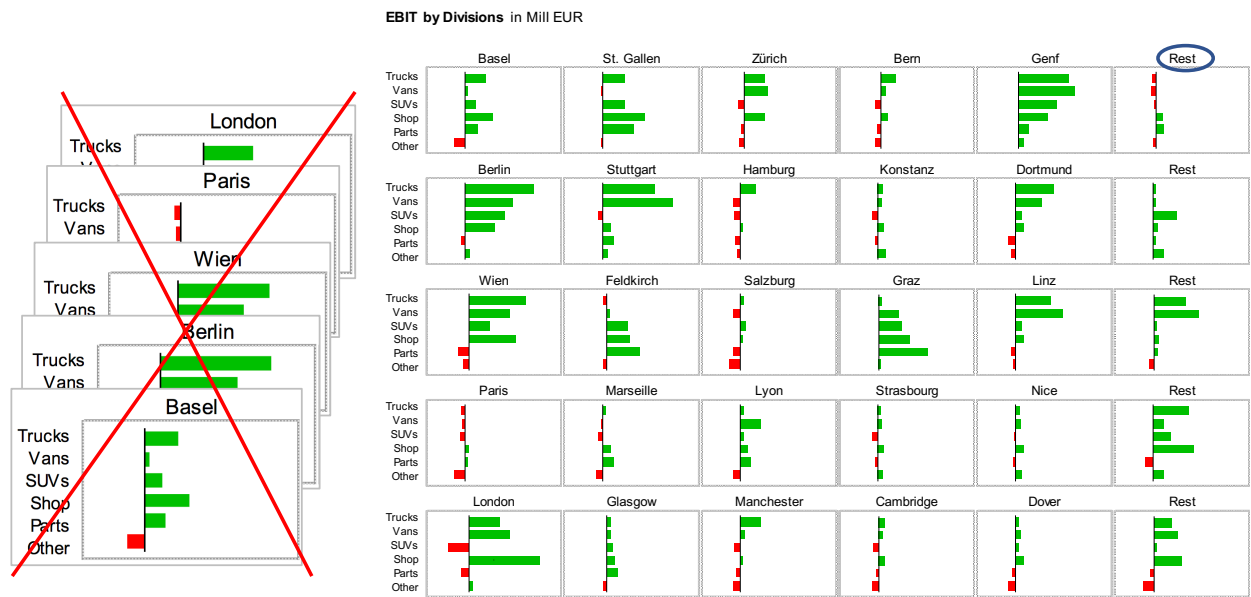
Anything that belongs together should be fully displayed on one slide in order to understand the relationships. Instead of individual charts in a sequence of slides we

International Business needs

Clear Communication and Presentation



show multiple charts on one slide. We do that by minimising the chart just enough so that you are still just barely able to recognise it.



Pay attention that the information on a slide is complete. That means, for example, that due to the physical limitation of the projector's resolution (number of possible pixels) it may not be possible to place all of the branches on one slide. In that case you should create a "rest branch" that summarises any additional smaller branches. If necessary, apply the drill-down principle on a second slide to show the branches contained in the "rest branch".

For further information, please also refer to www.IBCS-A.org, the International Business Communication Standards, for the conceptual and visual design of comprehensible reports and presentations.

8. Show pictures of the sources of information

Do you need to show individual values from a table, key performance indicators from a system or a graphic from a report? Don't necessarily recreate them in *PowerPoint*. That is also more efficient. After all, it is quick and easy to make pictures with your mobile phone. First, show the media, the source of the information, the computer screen, the screenshot, the printed annual report, the complete table and then a close-up of the information to be presented. In films you refer to the "long shot, the big picture" (e.g. the printed report you refer to), "medium long shot, the zooming-in" (e.g. the page inside the report) and a "close-up" (e.g. the message you want to show). That provides the viewers with objects to identify with and an orientation where you are located.



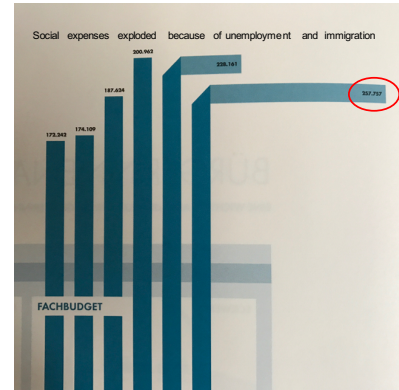
Big picture



Zooming-in



Close-up



You can then place facts and figures in an overall context. This approach makes the presentation more vivid and noticeable.

Another example: “Our products have a competitive advantage of 95 points. That is the outcome which our experts determined during the strategy workshop at Lake Starnberg.”

Close-up

Evaluation from customers point of view

Criteria	Weight	5	4	3	2	1	Points
Quality	15	++	+	=	-	--	75
Handling	30						90
Punctuality	20						80
...
...
100 %							300
							395

Competitive Advantage: 95 points

Zooming-in



Big Picture



9. Use transparent buttons to increase flexibility

To provide flexible access to further examples, details or backup information, you can create transparent buttons with links to additional slides in your presentation. To do that use the right-mouse-button and click on the object (form, chart, text, etc.) for which additional information is to be provided. Select the option “Action settings...” from the context menu and select an action that is to be carried out either via mouse-click or mouse-over. Not only can you switch to slides (also other presentations), you can also execute programmes, launch videos or start a music recording.



10. Prepare for the moment when actually making your presentation?

First, decide whether you want to distribute the supporting documentation either before, during or after the presentation. Prepared documentation allows emphasis and the addition of personal notes on the relevant contents; however, it also makes it possible for the audience to read ahead of what you are currently presenting. If you need to refer to text passages or figures during your presentation, you need the supporting documents on the table. If you have “surprises” or solutions to tasks, you will choose to provide the handout either during or after the presentation.

During the presentation pay attention that you don't cast a shadow on the screen. If the projector is not installed above your head, you should stand to the side. In such a situation you should occasionally switch from side to side in order to maintain eye contact with everyone in your audience.

Use a remote control so that you don't need to run back to the PC to move to the next slide. Devices that include a built-in laser pointer are particularly well suited for this. Smartphone applications are usually not quite as effective because you don't hold the devices favourably in your hand from an ergonomic perspective, and this restricts your gestures.

Use the “black screen” button on the remote control (or press the “B” button on the PC) to focus the audience's attention on you. The “W” button on the PC creates on the projector a white light, which can be very helpful to illuminate a flipchart (e.g. to write notes on the actions agreed to be taken).



The pointer option in the *PowerPoint* slide-show mode adds dynamics to your presentation and enables the addition of trends and highlights. To do that click on the right-mouse-button during the presentation and select in the pointer option either laser pointer or pen.

The use of a tablet PC allows you to write on the screen with the pen provided for this purpose. That makes it possible to finalise (deliberately) unfinished presentations live during the presentation together with the audience. That way we can use the benefits of a projector and a flipchart at the same time. That makes your presentation more dynamic and creates a strong connection to the audience members.