Using PowerPoint® in 4-H Presentations

PowerPoint® is a presentation software that comes with Microsoft Office®. While there are several brands of presentation software on the market, PowerPoint® is the most widely known. This is a very effective method for creating presentations. Multimedia such as audio, video, text and pictures can be incorporated into the presentation. It is a great tool for organizing a presentation and bringing it to live. It can be used in place of posters or other visual aids. PowerPoint® is not your presentation in and of itself. PowerPoint® is a tool to help you present your ideas to an audience.

Before you start selecting backgrounds and transitions you need to have a clear idea of what you want to present. Plan your project before you begin. Here are some things you should keep in mind as you create your presentation.

Use lists and bullets to accentuate your points. Remember 666! No more than six words per item, six bulleted items per page and no more than six text pages in a row.

Background
Use simple backgrounds: a solid color, or perhaps a blend of two colors.

The easiest combination for the audience to read is a light background color with dark text. However, if the room is bright, a dark background with lighter letters will be more readable. It is also wise to preview your presentation in the scheduled room. Like all projected presentations, the quality of the image in a PowerPoint® slide may be affected by the amount of sunlight streaming into the room, the type of overhead lights, and your ability to control these lights.

Traditionally, dark backgrounds are used for on-screen presentations (compared to overhead transparencies) because light colors are too bright and make your audience uncomfortable. However, medium backgrounds can also work when you want a softer impact. Just make sure that the text is clearly visible.

Fonts
The font style you choose will affect how your message is received.

Pick fonts from families
Use variations within one font. The italicized version or large size for a heading will draw attention. Try to use no more than 3 to 4 different fonts in a presentation.

Avoid ornate fonts

Text written in ornate fonts is difficult to read, especially from the back row. When designing for online or slide viewing, use fonts that look good online. The Verdana, Tahoma, and Georgia fonts are designed specifically for online viewing. Arial and Times New Roman also work well.

Color

According to the research, color communicates more effectively than black and white. How much more effectively? Here's what the research says:

- Color visuals increase willingness to read by up to 80%.
- Using color can increase motivation and participation by up to 80% (Green, 1984).
- Color enhances learning and improves retention by more than 75% (Walker, 1991).
- Color can also exhibit "moods": green is typically more relaxing, red and yellow are urgent colors, blue can be sad or relaxing depending on the hue, black can be a power color.
- Avoid certain color combinations which may be difficult to look at or which some people cannot distinguish: red/green, brown/green, blue/black, and blue/purple.

Warm or Cool: Warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows) come forward and command attention. Cool colors (blues, green, and some purples) recede from our eyes. Backgrounds in cool colors are easier to get away with because they provide contrast with text. If you put in a warm color background your text may be lost or overpowered. This means people will pay attention to the color not the message.

Contrast is the key to using color effectively. To keep from losing the text in the background color you have to have contrast.

Experiment to find the color scheme that works best for you and your presentation. Choose a color scheme and stick with it.

Images/Graphics

A variety of still formats can be displayed in PowerPoint® including GIF, JPG, PNG, BMP, PCT, and others. Still images help create an awareness in the audience's mind. Remember that pictures should be kept to a minimum per page while using PowerPoint®. The standard guideline is that 50% of your slides should have some graphic element.

Animation

Animation can be a powerful tool. That's because animation helps us break our information down and present it to our audience visually as we deliver it verbally. And, whether its bullet slides, bar charts or illustrations, the gradual introduction of information helps the audience to remember it.

Pick one type of text animation, and use it every time. A gradual introduction of text

keeps your audience tracking with the presenter. Pick one primary transition and stick with it. Subduing the previous bullet when the new one comes on can allow an even stronger focus. If you're using a dark background, select a subdued color for the previous bullet a few shades lighter than the background. Using a totally different color will have the exact opposite effect by drawing attention to the text you're trying to de-emphasize.

Animate graphic images when telling complex stories. Because we think in terms of communicating with words, our first choice for displaying information is often text. The problem is most audiences remember more when content is graphically presented. An animated progression of objects that graphically tell the story while the presenter fills in the details can be more effective than text by itself.

If you use animations, use natural transitions. The most natural, is text that moves from right to left because that is how we read. Too many things flying around on the screen detracts from the message and slows down the presentation. An occasional burst of music or sound during a transition or animation can focus the audience on the slide show. You can also play videos that might enhance the story. But remember not to overdo it – frequent use of special effects can draw attention away from the content of your presentation. Not every slide needs to be animated.

Presentation Techniques

- Do not read your presentation from the screen. Use movement, gestures and eye contact to emphasize points in your presentation.
- Arrange the LCD projector and screen so you are not standing directly in front of the screen and blocking the view.
- Stand to the left of the screen.
- Have a blank slide or two at the beginning and the end. If you end your presentation by clicking out of slide show, you will show the audience the "backstage" view of your presentation. It's better to have a slide at the end that says "Thank You" or a duplicate of your title slide. (Then put one blank slide at the end, anyway, so you don't mistakenly click out of your slide show.)
- Bring an extra copy of your presentation on a disk for emergencies.

To learn more about how to create a PowerPoint® presentation go to this Web site: http://www.actden.com/pp/

Reference Sources:
Green, R. (1984). The Persuasive properties of color. Marketing Communications.

"Microfsoft Office-Microsoft PowerPoint" Web site (Microsoft, http://www.microsoft.com)

Walker, M. (1991). The power of color. Avery Publishing Group.

Additional 4-H Communications resources include:

- The Versatile 4-H Presentation
- The Four P's of Planning A Presentation
- Getting Ready to Give a 4-H Presentation
- Presentation Visuals
- Using PowerPoint® in 4-H Presentations
- Evaluating a 4-H Presentation
- How to Prepare a Multimedia Presentation
- How to Prepare a 4-H Radio Public Service Announcement

Visit the Nebraska 4-H Web site for additional resources (http:4h.unl.edu).

Written by:
Sandra Stockall
4-H Youth Development Specialist
University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension