

Avoiding Death by PowerPoint

By Carl Friesen, CMC

When giving an illustrated presentation, you should always stop speaking for 1.5 seconds after you put up a new slide on the screen to give people a chance to read it and bring their attention back to you. This is one of the nuggets of information provided by Dave Paradi, "the PowerPoint Lifeguard," in his presentation on 18 May in Toronto.

Other points:

Structure: Too many presentations are thrown together at the last minute without properly considering the purpose. Start with the goal - what you want the audience to know, do or believe after the presentation - and work back from that.

Use bullet points, not full sentences. Use the slide to provide key ideas, and fill in the rest through what you say.

Text must be large enough. The "six by six" rule says that there should be no more than six words per point, and six points per slide.

Colour choice: Be sure to use contrasting colours so people can read the slides easily. What works well: white text on dark blue or dark purple; or a beige background and dark blue or black text.

Animation: Limit your animations to Appear or Dissolve so that the audience does not have to chase your text all around the screen.

Reading the slides: Don't insult your audience by just standing there and reading off the slide. The visual is just there to provide context to what you say.

Use graphics correctly: Increase emotional connection through good imagery. Graphs can show trends and processes.

To learn more, or contact Dave Paradi, go to www.powerpointlifeguard.com.