Giving a Presentation with PowerPoint

Listening to people speak can be tedious, and by tedious, I mean painful. It is the job of every public speaker to make the experience of being an audience member as painless as possible. This means presenting information in a way that communicates effectively. PowerPoint can help you do this, but only if used properly. The following are some dos and don’ts of using PowerPoint.

First, the don’ts.

--Don’t read off of your PPT. Ever. It is really tedious to watch. See. Told you so. Don't do it.

--Don’t use distracting colors or weird fonts. Stick with neutral colors—grays, tans, white, black. The colors on your slides should not be the most interesting thing about your presentation. Keep them tasteful and boring. Your ideas are what should stand out.

--Don’t crowd the slide with too much information or bullet points. If you do this, people stop paying attention to you and focus on deciphering your weird-ass slide.

Now the dos:

--Do use images if they directly communicate something that cannot be communicated in any other way. You can describe the Mona Lisa all you like, but it's a lot easier to just show the bloody picture.

Do use slides to help you organize your thoughts. Use them as prompts, like this.

Do use the fewest slides possible. This increases the impact of each individual slide, and gives you more flexibility to shorten or lengthen your presentation. You can always say more or less about a single slide and the audience will be none the wiser, but plowing through the last sixteen slides in a wild rush will not make you look like the great communicator that you are.

One last thought, regarding time

--Never. Ever. Even if the world is coming to an end, do you EVER go over time. Even zombies have tight schedules.

Nobody will ever be mad at you for coming in under time. Unless you are absolutely required to speak for a specific amount of time, a good rule of thumb is to try to wrap things up with 20% of your time allotment remaining. This has four advantages:

One: it makes your audience appreciate you.

Two: it condenses your presentation into only your best material.

Three: it leaves time for questions and audience interaction.

Four: it ensures you don’t GO OVER TIME.

How do you not go over time? Practice and time yourself.