

Presentation Placemat *(narrative)*

A company called ForeThought Inc., was the first to produce presentation-like software as we know it. They called it "Presentation." It was bought out by Microsoft in 1987 and then called PowerPoint. Since then, 100's of millions of copies have been sold. It's said 30 million presentations are delivered daily. Why should you care? **Most of this captive audience is school children and most of them are being bored to Death by PowerPoint.**

Did you know some Mammoths were 16 feet tall at the shoulder? They probably weighted in at around 8 tons. A tusk has been found that was 11 feet long. That's a big tooth!
Do you know how they died out? Over- hunting Do you know what we hunted them with? Rocks and sticks.

Our bodies are genetically programmed to be on the move. As hunter/gatherers we walked about 12 miles per day, according to John Medina, author of Brain Rules. As a species we have survived environmental extremes, attacks by predators and numerous diseases. We are incredibly **intelligent and adaptive** animals.

This used to be our classroom.

Here's our classroom today.

We're still hunter/gathers mentally and physically. We want to be challenged and we want to be tested. We want to be engaged, not put into a stupor with slides. **So how can we fix this?**

What's wrong with this slide? — Nothing and yet — Everything (picture of blue background, just text)
There are no typos or really blurry images or microscopic text blocks. It's material straight from the textbook, crammed onto a slide. As a student, I zone out as soon as I see this slide it.

Jerry Weissmann in (Presenting to Win) says there are **5 cardinal sins** that most presentations fall prey to:

1. No clear point.
2. No audience benefit.
3. No clear flow.
4. Too much detail.
5. Too long.

I've tried to come up with a visual aid or graphic reminder that I call the presentation placemat of what to incorporate when building a presentation. None of this is new, it's a compilation of several techniques reinforced by several professionals and their publications. In other words I read a few books and I would like to share that information.

Respect your audience's time. Show them something they're interested in or need to know.

Be Relevant. Give your audience (your students) information with meaning.

We are often caught up in wanting to share our information so bad that we think we will explode before we get to spill it. Our audience may not be as thrilled with truckloads of information all at once. Try and Reduce slide content. I didn't say presentation content.

Use real photographs, don't use clipart installed with the program. Don't use blurry images grabbed from the Internet. Use your own pictures, if you're a decent photographer. Or buy pictures from any of the photo-sharing sites (istockphoto.com)

Use Guy Kawasaki's rules for venture capital business presentations. Limit your presentation to 10 slides. Limit your talk to 20 minutes; this gives you 40 minutes to answer questions. The smallest font size used should be 30 points.

Tell a good story. Make your presentation about something that's interesting to you and your students. We've spent a lot of time huddled around campfires. We remember best by listening to stories.

Don't be bashful about using a pencil. By starting in the presentation software you are limiting yourself. Write out a script or draw a concept map or storyboard of your ideas. Blueprints always come before the bridge or skyscraper. Planning needs to go before PowerPoint.

Have a great idea? Use Brainstorming techniques to get started with a way to express it – brain dump everything on Post-Its and cluster relevant points. Work out how best to communicate your idea. Remember everyone's selling something. Try and find an intriguing way to share your great idea.

Check OUT –TED – it's a presentation archive site. You can find hundreds of presentations at <http://www.ted.com> Study how professionals in a variety of fields share their ideas. Go from a Ben Stein to a Tony Robbins in just one visit.

It was Albert Einstein who said, "Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler."
Don't make any of your slides overly complex. LESS IS MORE.
Make sure and read Garr Reynold's Presentation Zen blog and his book of the same title.

Seth Godin (author of Really BAD PowerPoint and how to avoid it) says his number one unbreakable rule is NO more than 6 words to a slide.

To have a successful presentation, try and make a connection with your audience. Make eye contact whenever possible. The easiest rule to remember is to: Care about what you have to say.

Let's look at that chemistry slide again and apply the presentation placemat. Use real photos; reduce the amount of information on the slide. Limit my words to six or fewer. Make the font bigger. Emphasize my point. Try and engage my audience.

The information from the slide hasn't disappeared its just moved from the slide to Presenter Notes window. The text can still be read off from the presenter's screen it's just not quite so obvious.

Andy Hertzfeld (one of original Macintosh (1984) engineers, tells this story about Steve Jobs; Steve was upset that the Mac took too long to boot up when you first turned it on so he tried motivating Larry Kenyon by telling him well you know how many millions of people are going to buy this machine - it's going to be millions of people and let's imagine that you can make it boot five seconds faster well that's five seconds times a million every day that's fifty lifetimes, if you can shave five seconds off that you're saving fifty lives. And so it was a nice way of thinking about it, and we did get it to go faster.

[You can do the same by improving your presentations. Make engaging slides and save a few lives.]

Thank you,

If you have any questions feel free to email John Swezey at jswezey@gmail.com.