

## **Appendix: Presentations**

As a manager, you will often have to give presentations. Two basic rules of presentations are (1) know your audience, and (2) be prepared. Most of your presentations can be made using computer projection systems. Modern presentation packages support color, graphics, animation, video, and sound. However, you must be careful to use the features to enhance your presentation—not to distract. Many audiences will find animation and sound to be too distracting. Presentation packages also help you be more prepared. For example, building the entire presentation ahead of time forces you to be prepared. More importantly, the systems also enable you to adapt to your audience. By building in hidden slides and activation buttons, you can jump to new topics or skip certain screens as the need arises.

### **Presentation Foundations**

The first question you must address in a presentation is to learn what size screen you will have. What resolution is supported by the projection device (640 x 480, 800 x 600, or 1024 x 768)? A related question is the size of text that can be read by the audience. If possible, go to the actual presentation room and try reading different font sizes from various locations.

The next step is to build a template that sets colors, typefaces, and backgrounds. Most presentation systems come with several predefined templates. One of the biggest decisions to make is whether you want a light background and dark text, or dark text on a light background. The choice depends on the mood you wish to set, the capabilities of your projection system, and the lighting in the presentation room.

Organization of your presentation is critical. Write an outline and test it with other people to be sure they understand what you are trying to communicate. Remember the presenter's rule: (1) tell the audience what you are going to say (introduction), (2) tell them, (3) tell them what you said (summary). The level of detail in the presentation and outline depends on the time factor and the difficulty of the material. As you develop the outline, try talking through the presentation to see how much time you will spend on each major section.

### **Building Individual Slides**

Each slide will be tailored to the specific presentation. Common types of slides include titles, outlines or bulleted points, tables, charts, pictures, spreadsheets, animation, or video clips. You need to decide which slide best conveys each specific point. Note that images can enhance and highlight text. Icons and simple images can be used to help people remember your main points.

Be consistent when you build individual slides. Use the template to keep titles in the same locations. Use preset color schemes to highlight specific points. Keep your main points centered on the screen. Avoid cluttering the slides. When in doubt, put fewer words on each slide and use more slides.

### **Slideshow Animation**

Most presentation systems enable you to add animation effects to objects on the slides. For example, you can make each bulleted point fly in from the side. Before using any of these effects, be sure that you know your audience. Many people

will quickly tire of the effect. Also, some people like to read ahead, and the effects may interfere. On the other hand, if you are building a standalone presentation and need to attract attention, a few animation effects may attract viewers. You can customize individual animations by setting delays and altering the item after the animation is complete (e.g., hiding, dimming, or changing colors). Finally, if you choose animated effects, pick one and stick with it. Do not use different effects on every slide.

If you want more control over animation, you will have to use an animation package like Adobe's After Effects. With a lot of creativity and effort, you can build a complete animated movie with these tools. However, keep in mind that the file size quickly becomes large. Even a 20 second clip can run to 100 megabytes or more.

### **Slide Transitions**

You can build more useful effects by controlling the transition between slides. Even in more formal presentations, these transitions are less distracting. In fact, the less obtrusive ones such as fades and wipes work as a signal to the audience that you are changing topics.

The transition effects are particularly useful if you build a slide show from a collection of images. Digitized photographs can appear on one slide and you can use transitions to fade in or dissolve to the next picture.

### **Audio Files**

Audio files can be played in the background during a slide presentation, or they can be used as accents. Like animated effects, accent sounds (e.g., clicks) become annoying after a while, so use them sparingly. On the other hand, background audio tracks can add emotion and movement to a presentation—provided you do not have to talk over it.

In PowerPoint, background audio that plays across multiple slides is added in the Slide Transition menu. You might have to convert the file to a standard Windows wave (.wav) file. Other types of music can be played on individual slides, including MIDI files and audio tracks on a CD. With good audio software, you can convert files to the wave format or even create your own presentation CD that contains the tracks you need.

In addition to difficulties with file formats, you have to be careful with your use of sound clips. All commercial clips are protected by copyright laws, which limit how you can use the clips. Even if you purchased the CD, you might not have the right to use the sound clip in your presentation. Generally, if the presentation is to a small organizational group and not used to make money, you should be safe—as long as you paid for the initial copy. If you are using the presentation for marketing or to play to the public, however, you will have to pay fees for the use of the music. The same conditions hold for photographs and video clips.

The situation is even clearer on the Internet. You cannot use any sound, image, or other clip unless you have explicit permission to use it. Be sure that you have copyright permissions to use all of your material.

## **Exercises**

1. Build a slide show to sell your car (make up a car, or choose some other item if you do not own one).
2. Build a slide show of photographs with background music. For example, highlight your vacation photographs, a museum, or your friends.
3. Create the ugliest, most distracting slide show possible. Compete with your classmates to see which is worst.
4. Build a slide show to advertise the Rolling Thunder Bicycle company. Make it run automatically for one to two minutes, and then repeat.