

Power of the slide

The ability to deliver a bulletproof PowerPoint presentation is a vital skill that can help you on your journey to becoming a great accountant, says **David Parmenter**

Accountants are often guilty of underselling their carefully thought-through suggestions. Far too often the accountant will short-change themselves by 'under-cooking' their preparation and practice time before giving a 'career-limiting' presentation.

Here are my rules for delivering bulletproof presentations. These were first published in my book, *The Leading-Edge Manager's Guide to Success*.

The rules

Rule 1: Attend a presentation skills course

1 This is a prerequisite to delivering bulletproof presentations. The speed of delivery, voice levels, use of silence and getting the audience's attention are all techniques that you need to be comfortable with.

Rules 2 and 3: Prepare notes to go with the presentation

2 Always prepare notes for the audience so that you do not have to give detail in the slides.

3 Understand that the PowerPoint slide is not meant to be a document; if you have more than 35 words per slide, you are creating a report, not a presentation. Each point should be relatively cryptic and be understood only by those who have attended your presentation.

Rules 4 to 6:

Presentation planning

4 Only say yes to carrying out a presentation if you have the time, resources, and enthusiasm to do the job properly.

5 Create time so that you can be in a 'thinking space' (eg work at home, go to the library, etc).

6 Map the subject area out in a mind map and then mind dump on Post-it stickers covering all the points, diagrams and pictures you want to use. Use one sticker for each point. Then place your stickers where they fit best. Using stickers makes it easy to reorganise your subject matter and will lead to a better presentation.

Rules 7 to 15: Presentation content

7 At least 10% to 20% of your slides should be high-quality photographs, some of which will not even require a caption.

8 A picture can replace many words; for more on this, read *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds and *Slide:ology* by Nancy Duarte.

9 Understand what is considered good use of colour, photographs and the rule of thirds.

10 For main points, do not use a font size of less than 30 points. As Duarte says: 'Look at the slide in the slide sorter view at 66% size. If you can read it on your computer, there is a good chance your audience can read it on the screen.'

11 Limit animation; the audience needs to be able to read all the points on a slide quickly.

12 Use Guy Kawasaki's 10/20/30 rule. A sales-pitch PowerPoint presentation should have



NEXT STEPS

- 1 Attend a 'train the trainers' course.
- 2 Use these techniques the next time you have to give a short presentation, setting aside at least six hours over a week.
- 3 Send me an email and I will send you a copy of my chapter on selling change.
- 4 Read the books featured in this article.
- 5 Observe how the best presenters in your organisation deliver and replicate their techniques.

10 slides, last no more than 20 minutes and contain no font smaller than 30-point size.

- 13 Be aware of being too clever with your slides. Creating white space is all very well, providing the labels on your diagram do not have to be small.
- 14 Never show numbers to a decimal place or to the

pound if the number is greater than 10,000. For example, it is better to say, 'nearly £10m'.

- 15 Never use clipart; it sends shivers down the spine of the audience. ■

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