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Completing a Presentation

4 Learning Objective Outline four major tasks involved in completing a presentation.

The completion step for presentations involves a wider range of tasks than most printed documents require. Make sure you allow enough to time to test your presentation slides, verify equipment operation, practice your speech, and create handout materials. With a first draft of your presentation in hand, revise your slides to make sure they are readable, concise, consistent, and fully operational (including transitions, builds, animation, and multimedia). Complete your production efforts by finalizing your slides, creating handouts, choosing your presentation method, and practicing your delivery.

Finalizing Your Slides

Electronic presentation software can help you throughout the editing and revision process. For example, the slide sorter view (different programs have different names for this feature) lets you see some or all of the slides in your presentation on a single screen. Use this view to add and delete slides, reposition slides, check slides for design consistency, and verify the operation of any effects. Moreover, the slide sorter is a great way to review the flow of your story.22

In addition to using content slides, you can help your audience follow the flow of your presentation by creating slides for your title, agenda and program details, and navigation:

Navigation slides help your audience keep track of what you’ve covered already and what you plan to cover next.

Title slide(s).You can make a good first impression with one or two title slides, the equivalent of a report’s cover and title page.

Agenda and program details. These slides communicate the agenda for your presentation and any additional information the audience might need, such as hashtags and WiFi log-in information.

Navigation slides. To tell your audience where you’re going and where you’ve been, you can use a series of navigation slides. A simple way to do this is to repeat your agenda slide at the beginning of each major section in your presentation, with the upcoming section highlighted in some way (see Figure 14.10).

Figure 14.10 Blueprint Slides

Here are two ways you can use a blueprint slide as a navigational aid to help your audience stay on track with the presentation. Figure 14.10 (a) visually “mutes” and checks off the sections of the presentation that have already been covered. In contrast, Figure 14.10 (b) uses a sliding highlight box to indicate the next section to be covered.

Figure 14.11 on the next page illustrates some of the many options you have for presenting various types of information. Note that although these slides don’t follow a rigid structure of text-heavy bullet points, they are unified by the color scheme (silver background and bold color accents) and typeface selections.

Creating Effective Handouts

Handouts—any printed materials you give the audience to supplement your talk—should be considered an integral part of your presentation strategy. Handouts can include detailed charts and tables, case studies, research results, magazine articles, and anything else that supports the main idea of your presentation.

Use handout materials to support the points made in your presentation and to offer the audience additional information on your topic.

Plan your handouts as you develop your presentation so that you use each medium as effectively as possible. Your presentation should paint the big picture, convey and connect major ideas, set the emotional tone, and rouse the audience to action (if that is relevant to your talk). Your handouts can then carry the rest of the information load, providing the supporting details that audience members can consume at their own speed, on their own time. You won’t need to worry about stuffing every detail into your slides, because you have the more appropriate medium of printed documents to do that. As Garr Reynolds puts it, “Handouts can set you free.”23

For a quick review of the key steps in creating effective visuals, see “Checklist: Enhancing Presentations with Visuals.” For the latest information on presentation design, visit http://real-timeupdates.com/ebc12 and click on Chapter 14.

Checklist ✔ Enhancing Presentations With Visuals

Plan your presentation visuals.

Make sure you and your message, not your visuals, remain the focus of your presentation.

Follow effective design principles, with an emphasis on simplicity and authenticity.

Choose structured or free-form slides.

Structured slides using bullet-point templates are easy to create, require little design time or skill, and can be completed in a hurry. Best uses: routine, internal presentations

Free-form slides make it easier to combine textual and visual information, to create a more dynamic and engaging experience, and to maintain a conversational connection with the audience. Best uses: motivational, educational, and persuasive presentations

Design effective slides.

Avoid the temptation to create “slideuments,” slides that are so packed with information that they can be read as stand-alone documents.

Use a key visual to organize related ideas in a clear and meaningful way.

Write text content that will be readable from everywhere in the room.

Write short, active, parallel phrases that support, not replace, your spoken message.

Limit the amount of text so that your audience can focus on listening, not reading.

Use color to emphasize important ideas, create contrast, isolate visual elements, and convey intended nonverbal signals.

Limit color to a few compatible choices and use them consistently.

Make sure your slide background doesn’t compete with the foreground.

Use decorative artwork sparingly and only to support your message.

Emphasize functional artwork—photos, technical drawings, charts, and other visual elements containing information that is part of your message.

Choose typefaces that are easy to read on screen; limit the number of typefaces and use them consistently.

Use slide masters to maintain consistency throughout your presentation.

Use functional animation when it can support your message.

Make sure slide transitions are subtle, if used at all.

Use builds carefully to control the release of information.

Use hyperlinks and action buttons to add flexibility to your presentation.

Incorporate multimedia elements that can help engage your audience and deliver your message.

Complete slides and support materials.

Review every slide carefully to ensure accuracy, consistency, and clarity.

Make sure that all slides are fully operational.

Use the slide sorter to verify and adjust the sequence of slides, if needed.

Have a backup plan in case your electronic presentation plan fails.

Create navigation and support slides.

Create handouts to complement and support your presentation message.