PowerPoint(less)

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PowerPoint is everywhere.

Starting a High-Tech Business

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Together we can bring order to galaxy
If you only knew the power of the Dark Side
➢ Force is with you — but you are not ready yet
➢ Join me and I will complete your training
➢ You can destroy the Emperor (and give me this)
   - It is your destiny
➢ I am your father
   - Search your feelings. You are quite true
➢ Together we shall rule the galaxy, father & son
➢ Come with me. It is the only way!
➢ It is your destiny!

For more info visit my webpage at www...
We make information brain-friendly.

Our job, in part, is to engineer learning and communication.
Unfortunately, the majority of ppt presentations out there aren’t helping make information accessible. The reason, simply put, is that ppts aren’t brain-friendly. In fact, often times, they are actually creating a barrier for audience.
Today I’m going to share some things with you need to do to avoid creating really painful presentations. Some of these recommendations might sound familiar, and in that case, I’d like to help you understand some of the whys behind them. Hopefully though, you’ll find some new things that will be of benefit to you.

So, on with the show.
You may have heard that slides shouldn’t have more than 5 lines of text or something like that. Well, I’m not going to give you a rule, but I will say that text is a real pain point in most presentations.
You’ve probably been to presentations that had slides like this. This is what I call a slideument. A slide/document. Actually, I didn’t come up with the name... but it’s very appropriate isn’t it?
People create slideuments when they treat their presentation like a written
document that needs to stand on its own. But, good slides shouldn’t be able to
stand on their own. In other words, you should not be able to print them off as a
handout and have them make sense to people who haven’t seen your prezo.

Documentation is important, but Powerpoint is not for documentation. That’s what
Word is for.

So, let’s talk for a minute about why it’s so important to avoid the slideument.
People are visual creatures. When you put a slide up, their attention automatically turns to the slide, and will not return to you until they’ve figured the slide out. Slides with lots of text take time to figure out b/c they create a lot of work for you audience.

While they struggle to figure out the slide, they’re also trying to listen to you so they don’t fall behind. As a result learning and retention suffer. Scientists have a name for this, it’s called the split-attention effect, and it’s something that most presenters do to their audiences the whole time.
The other problem is what’s called the redundancy effect. This is created when presenters read their slides. The brain gets verbal input from two different sources and can’t process it efficiently. This unintentionally creates additional cognitive work for the audience, and as a result, negatively impacts retention.

So what should we do instead? Let’s take a lesson from Bill Gates. Here’s Bill in 2005.
This is Bill Gates in 2008.

If you look at most of his more recent presentations, you’ll see that text is used sparingly. It's very easy to digest the slide and then return your attention to the speaker. And this is the key, slides must be easy to digest so that they don’t create a barrier for your audience.

Remember, your slides are not your presentation, you are. In fact, if they’re done right, your slides shouldn’t make a whole lot of sense without you.

So, instead of creating slides like this....
Women in the Workforce

- According to recent statistics, women currently make up 40% of the world’s workforce.
You can create slides like this...

If you need documentation, then you should create a separate handout. Interestingly enough, last week the CEO of Toyota requested that employees refrain from printing off ppt slides and using them as handouts. In his opinion it was wasteful. Instead, he requested employees create one page handouts to accompany their presentations.
Use strong images.
We’re all familiar with 7+or- rule. And what’s the main idea of that rule? why 7+or-2? That’s right, mind can only hold so much at once.

The problem is, we often don’t apply this rule to .ppt. We tend to cram a lot of info on a slide and in our presentation, and then assume, or hope, that it’s getting through. In a sense, we treat communication like a direct pipeline into someone else’s brain. We know of course, this isn’t true.

Instead of a pipeline, it’s more like the eye of a needle. Even if you do everything correctly, only a small portion of all the information will get through and stick.

Text does a good job of clogging up the eye of the needle, and this is one of the main reasons we need to use pictures.
Pictures need to be used wisely, however. Research shows that pictures used for decoration actually hurt learning because they give your audience something extra to contend with. So, never use pictures just because you think you need to fill up space. Instead, use pictures that directly relate to your points.

So, if your presentation was something along the lines of standing out from the competition, you’d be better off with an image like this....
than a generic feel-good image like this...
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So, if your presentation was something along the lines of standing out from the
competition, you’d be better of with an image like this....
Humans are visual creatures, and we need to acknowledge that in our presentations. A good image can communicate ideas and emotions that would otherwise take many words to explain.
Sometimes we can use them to communicate an abstract concept like perseverance or the love of a parent.
And sometimes we can use them to communicate very academic ideas like how Apple’s iphone uses its gps function. If you wanted to do that in text, how many words do you think you’d need?

The real power in powerpoint isn’t in the bullet points, it’s the pictures. It’s tempting to get pretentious and say that pictures are dumbing things down, but that’s not true. A picture like this one cuts to the heart of the idea and makes it readily accessible. Now what’s so dumb about that?
Guide their attention.
It seems like the presenter is doing all the work, but the fact is, your audience’s brains are working hard to take your understand what you’re saying, prioritize the information, and fit it within the larger framework of their own thoughts and experiences. So, it’s very much an active process that’s occurring.

Unfortunately, many presenters make it hard for their audiences to know what’s important and what’s not. Let’s look back at that really terrible slide from Bill.
Let me ask you: What's the most important piece of info on this slide?

Is it the big digital lifestyle/digital workstyle text on either side. Is it the fact that calendars and scheduling are shared by both? What about these big orange people right in the middle of the tornado of icons? Are they the important part? It's hard to tell isn't it? While Bill is talking, you can bet his audience is trying to figure out exactly what that slide means.
Now here’s a more typical slide. There’s a lot of info here, and mostly it looks equally important. There’s the text in bold, but it doesn’t actually tell you anything. It just makes you wonder what the heck the focus areas are.

So, the audience is forced to connect the dots... and while they’re doing that, you can be sure they aren’t listening to you.
Templates can really create trouble for your audience b/c every slide looks the same. Plus, most templates encourage you to create really vague titles like the one we saw on the last slide. What that means is that your audience has to do the work of separating major ideas from minor details... something you should be doing for them.

Templates, of course, are nice because they create a unified look and feel, and that’s a very good thing. You can use them, but you need to build in visual clues that will help your audience organize the information.
One way you can begin to do this is by spending some time looking at your presentation in the slide sorter view.
Here’s a typical presentation in slide sorter view. Notice how all the slides look the same. Now some of these slides have major points, and some are just minor points, but you can’t tell which is which. This is a problem.

In the presentation I’m delivering today, how do you know what the main points are? Exactly, the black and white slide with the brain on it. It’s a visual clue that let’s you know I’m starting a new idea.

Speaking of main ideas, when you look at individual slides, how do you know what’s important? Exactly, the headline at the top.
So, here’s this presentation in slide sorter. The slides are not identical, and if you look closely, you can see where the major ideas begin and end.

So, am I saying templates are evil? Absolutely not. Just be sure to build in some ways to keep your audience clued in to where they are and what's important. It could be as simple as inserting some bold pages here and there that indicate where your big ideas begin.
So, I'd like to leave you with some ideas on how you can quickly apply this to your ppt.
Read Beyond Bullet Points.
Visit presentationzen.com

The back of the napkin

Brian Solis may be my favorite book of the year, but The back of the napkin by Dan Roam is also one of the most important business books of the year (no, it is not available as audiobook).

The Back of the Napkin is an incredible, useful and practical book. Remember, using multimedia is not the only way to...