



TOPTIPS

USING POWERPOINT IN CHURCH

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The PowerPoint presentation has been in existence for 25 years. Its impact on business and church life has been massive but often PowerPoint can hinder a presentation more than it can help. In this Top Tips, we look at how to make a good PowerPoint presentation, especially for use in church.

Use it sparingly

Used well, a PowerPoint presentation can bring alive a sermon or talk with visual illustrations but it can be a distraction for your congregation as they focus on the screen and not on what you are saying. Think then about whether PowerPoint is the best way to get your message across, whether it will inspire your congregation to think about and possibly discuss what you are saying. You and your message should be the focus, not the PowerPoint presentation. If you are a good speaker, quite often you should be able to capture people without it. A good PowerPoint show can't make up for bad preaching or lack of preparation.

Keep it simple

Avoid using too many slides with too many bullet points as your audience will not be able to process or remember them all. Focus on the most important points that you want them to remember. Use keywords – don't put too much text on each slide (use keywords) as it will take a long time for people to read. If they are doing this, they won't be listening to you.

Slides should illustrate points not state them. Use images/photographs instead of text wherever possible but avoid overusing things like clip art. Don't use flashy graphics – effects like text flashing or flying onto the screen can be distracting. Make the transition between slides simple –fade in and out of slides rather than switch abruptly.

Try to vary the content of your slides so they are not all lists of bullet points but a mixture of text and images.

Make it visible

When you produce a PowerPoint presentation something that looks good on a computer screen can lose definition and contrast on the big screen. So, in general, keep text big, bold and white/black. Use outlining and shadowing to enhance text against a background. Begin presentations with a test slide that has a border round it (to make sure everything will fit on the screen) and text on it (to check the focus). Keep your fonts straightforward, consistent and as big as possible. If the same text (eg a heading) appears on consecutive slides, make sure it's in exactly the same position on each. Also make sure that the screen that your presentation is being projected on is not obscured by sunshine or any other obstacle.

Print out your presentation

If you use PowerPoint throughout a church service, always print out a paper copy of the slides as a guide for the slide operator. Handouts of the slides are worth producing for those with sight difficulties, or if talking at a conference or seminar, to remind people of the points you have raised.

Check for errors

Look out for typos and grammar mistakes on your slides as this will distract people not only from what the slide is saying but also what you are saying.

Don't become a PowerPoint slave

Don't over rely on PowerPoint – be well prepared for the possibility that it may not work and that people will have to simply watch you! And you don't have to use Microsoft PowerPoint – Tim Hyde from St Helen's Baptist Church recommends Impress, which you can download for free from the internet and reads PowerPoint presentations <http://www.openoffice.org/product/impress.html>

Our thanks to Tim Hyde, David Stone and Phil Creighton for their help with the compilation of these top tips.