

HORIZON NEWSLETTER

Informing Businesses Using Computers

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Better Late Than Never

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Effective Presentations

The use of computer created presentations has almost become the standard method of communicating with an audience. **Microsoft's PowerPoint** is probably the most popular software used for this purpose. Whether or not you use *PowerPoint* or some other presentation software package, here are some guidelines to considered when creating and making presentations. Like any computer tool, garbage in, garbage out. Therefore preparation and planning are most important to prevent the garbage from going in. A failed presentation never convinces an audience.

Preparation

You should understand the mission target and purpose. Ask yourself...

- **who** is the audience
- **what** do they need to know
- **how** can a presentation get the message across.

Target your presentation to concentrate on what three things you want the audience to remember.

A handy trick is to create the presentation starting with the end and working backwards.

Start with what you want to accomplish at the end and create slides that help lead up to the conclusion.

Before using the computer, plan your work using file cards or sticky notes.

- Make a card for each point or thought you may want to convey.
- Arrange them in a logic order.
- Eliminate what is not needed or does not add to the presentation.

By using cards, you can easily rearrange them to get the desired results.

Slide Content

Make sure each slide builds on the previous slide and that all slides have a logical progression.

A visual graph or chart can be worth a thousand words. Include graphs or charts to backup or emphasis the major issues. Studies show that half of what an audience learns during a presentation are provided by the visuals.

Keep the slides simple. Every slide should be understood within 7 seconds. If there is too much on a slide, split it in two. Use bullets to emphasis major points. A general rule is the '6-6-6' rule.

- no more than 6 words per item
- no more than 6 bullets per slide
- no more than 6 text slides in a row.

Special Effects

Use special effects with caution.

Presentation software will allow you to create different methods of transition from slide to slide. Only use one transition method. Using multiple transition methods only distract from what you actually want to get across. Don't get carried away with animation, bouncing or moving text. Concentrate more on what you want to convey to keep the audience focused.

Fonts

- Use an **easy to read fonts**
- Don't use less than a size of 18 points
- Don't over use italics.

- Don't use more than 2 fonts per slide
- Keep the fonts consistent.

Colors

Keep the same color scheme through out and use colors to highlight or emphasize. In theory,

- black emits authority
- **brown is earthy**
- **red reflects passion**
- **blue reflects coldness**
- white can represent cleanliness or sterility
- **yellow represents confidence and knowledge.**

Length

It is recommended that a presentation should run **no longer than 20 minutes and no more than 15 slides**. If more time is absolutely required, give your audience a break every so often at strategic breaking points.

Make sure there is time at the end of the presentation to allow for questions and answers. Rehearsals will help you determine the length and to trim down the presentation if necessary.

Presentation

Avoid using laser pointers. Most of the time you can't hold the darn thing steady and it can distract from what you are saying or displaying. If your slide is prepared correctly, you should not have to point to something.

The use of a remote control to

change slides is convenient and can make for a smoother presentation.

Don't rely on battery power. Make sure you have your AC adapter connected

Don't turn off all of the lights, unless you want to put the audience to sleep. The audience should have enough light to be able to take notes.

At the end of the presentation hand out printed copies of the slides. Don't hand them out before or you will only invite people to try and match the handout with your actual presentation. You want to keep them focused on you and the screen, not on the handouts.

So are you disappointed because there were no tips on the actual use of *PowerPoint*? *I hope not*. The intent is that these tips will steer and remind you of the right direction to enable you to take better advantage of presentation software with the ultimate goal of presenting a more powerful and convincing story to your audience.

Oops, almost forget. Keep in a mind that a *PowerPoint* presentation can be put on a floppy, CD or downloaded from your web site. Your audience can then view the presentation at their leisure.

Safe Safe

Do you store your tapes in a safe? If so, you may not be as protected as you think. Fireproof safes are designed for paper products and are rated to keep the internal temperature below 350 degrees. To prevent tapes from melting, the temperature must be kept below 120 degrees. Another note is the humidity should be 80 percent. Check the ratings on your safe to verify that you are protected. An alternative is to keep a tape or tapes off site.

Managing Table Widths

In **Word**, when you create a table, by default it is stretched to fit the page margins and columns are evenly spaced. Have you ever had the problem where you add a column and **Word** extends the table beyond the right margin? When this happens, it appears difficult to readjust the width of the table to fit within the margins. *Even swearing at the screen or the next person that walks in your office doesn't help.* There is an easier way.

- Click anywhere within the table.
- From the menu bar (at the top) Click on **Table** and **Select Table** from the menu bar
- Click on **Table** again and select **Cell Height and Width**
- Click on the **Column tab**
- Click on the **Autofit** button

Your table should now fit the entire page width and each column should be equally sized and your blood pressure is still normal.

Temp Files

It is time for our reminder that occasionally you need to delete the entries in your **Windows** temporary folder and Browser caching folders. It is amazing how fast these folders accumulate old junk. If they are not cleaned out, it can cause performance degradation and sometimes even more serious problems.

C:/windows/temp

This is the most common location for your Windows' temporary folder. Using **Windows Explorer**, it is safe to access this folder and delete all entries. Don't delete the temporary folder, just the contents. It is best to have all applications closed first. Otherwise, you may get a message that a file cannot be deleted because it is in use.

Internet Explorer

If you are using Microsoft's browser, open the browser and do the following . . .

- Click on **Tools**
- Click on **Internet Options**
- On the **General tab**, in the "Temporary Internet Files" section, click on **Delete Files**.
- In the History section, **click on Clear History**.

Netscape Browser

If you are using Netscape's browser, open the browser and do the following . . .

- Click on **Edit**
- Click on **Preferences**

- Click on **Navigator**
- In the "History" section, click on **Clear History**.
- Click on the + sign by 'Advanced'
- Click on **Cache**
- Click on **Clear Memory Cache**
- Click on **Clear Disk Cache**

Now don't you feel better knowing that your system is no longer temporary. *You will probably sleep better at night.*

Quick Navigation

You are working with a large spreadsheet and you need to get to the bottom of the spreadsheet, how do you quickly get there? *No, pressing the page down key 725 times is not the correct answer.* There are actually two easy methods of jumping to the last filled-in cell in any direction.

Using the Control + Arrow keys

By holding the down the control key and pressing an arrow key in the direction you want to move, **Excel** will jump to the last filled row or column.

Double-click on border

The other method is to double-click on a cell border in the direction you want to move. Double-click on the bottom of any cell border, and you will jump to the bottom of the spreadsheet.

Configuration Tool

msconfig.exe is a utility that provides an easy method to view and/or change your configuration files. *For whatever reason, Microsoft does not provide a shortcut selection to this tool.*

By selecting the appropriate tab, you can view or edit . . .

- Flags used when starting Windows
- Utilities/drivers used in config.sys
- Utilities/options executed in autoexec.bat
- Options/parameters used in win.ini
- Options/parameters used in system.ini
- Applications that are automatically started when you

start Windows

To run the utility,

- Click on **Start**
- Click on **Run**
- Enter **msconfig.exe** in the open line
- Click **OK**

This utility allows you to un-check different options for troubleshooting purposes. We recommend not making any changes unless you know what are you doing.

Email for Your Car

If you are looking for a new car soon you should be aware of **GM's** plans for in-vehicle computer and Internet services. They are introducing two systems.

Infotainment System

This feature will be installed in Seville and Deville 2001 models. It will be able to read e-mail messages while the car is in motion. The messages can only be read when the vehicle is stopped. It will also

include an infrared port that will allow you to download the messages to a personal digit assistant (PDA) such as a **Palm Pilot**. There are future plans to also include speech technology that will allow your Email messages to be read to you while moving.

OnStar Virtual Advisor

This system features a built-in, hands-free wireless phone service. It will allow you to place calls with voice recognition technology.

Verizon Wireless is a partner in this development.

Business Applications

There are future plans for developing business applications, such as sales force automation and fleet management. The intent is to create a set of open tools that will allow other developers to create custom applications.

For more information, visit **GM's** web site at www.gm.com.