



# IT STARTED WITH A SLIDE

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# THE POWER OF POWERPOINT REPURPOSING (AND WHERE TO START)

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When speaking at conferences, I typically start with a simple 'show of hands' question to gauge the lay of the land – “what is the first thing that springs to mind when I say ‘presentation?’”. By far the largest response (90% and over) is ‘PowerPoint’.

This is remarkable for the simple fact that a piece of software has become ubiquitous with an entire form of business communication. This direct association doesn't seem to happen anywhere else (proposal document ≠ Word and balance sheet ≠ Excel) yet in businesses large and small, no matter where you are in the World, ‘PowerPoint’ is the first thing that leaps to mind when people think presentations.

Now this is not an article admonishing you for using PowerPoint. In the right hands, used at the right time and delivered in the right way, it's a truly wonderful presentation tool. No, instead the focus of my message is that you should be using it more effectively and efficiently, allowing it's influence to spread way beyond that of the meeting/conference room.

Let's take a slightly different view of PowerPoint – rather than viewing

presentations as an output (i.e. a set of slides), the reality is that your deck is probably the result of a lot of thought, some late nights and a serious attempt to address a particular issue. Chances are that your slides are an amalgam of your key messages and most important content (and if your deck is like most, some slightly dodgy artwork, bullet point slides and half-baked concepts). Whatever the quality, chances are that your PowerPoint presentation design was created for a specific moment in time...and then left to gather dust on a server. What a wasted opportunity.

The next obvious question is “how can we make them work harder?” The good news is that it's never been so simple - PowerPoint (and its Apple counterpart, Keynote) has evolved to become an incredibly flexible authoring tool for video, infographics and digital documents. Repurposing to all these formats is now quick, easy and powerful when done properly. It's time to get more bang for your buck.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves – as with all business communication, there are some basic hygiene factors we need in place first.





# THE CAVEATS

1

RUBBISH IN,  
RUBBISH OUT

Before we get excited about repurposing, we need to ensure that the information being (re)shared is up to scratch. The phrase 'Death by PowerPoint' will be all too familiar and chances are that you may have inflicted a fair bit of (unintended) pain on audiences over the years. Blindly repurposing substandard PowerPoint presentation design materials is merely a case of dusting down an old failure and sending it back out to inflict more damage and confusion. Not a good idea.

So be ruthless – if the messages are relevant, audience centric and supported with powerful stories, share away. If they don't clearly share your message or could leave audiences confused, they should probably never have seen the light of day in the first place.

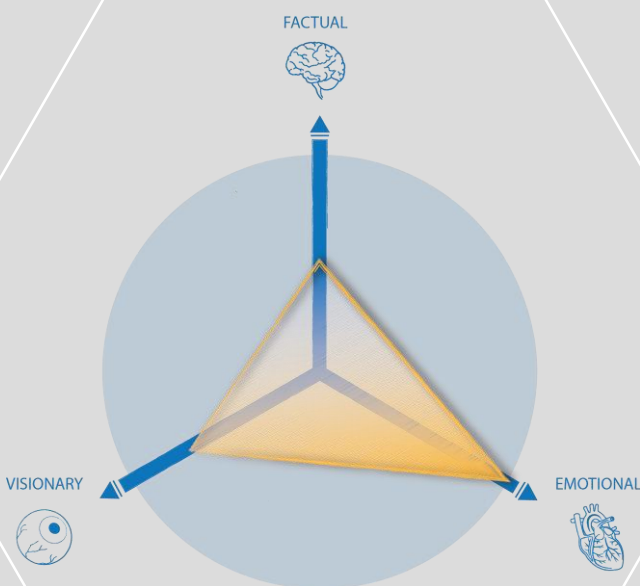
2

2. AUDIENCE  
CENTRIC?

Most presentations fail because they are horribly generic. They fail to resonate with a specific audience by being too vanilla, sharing too much dense content and never hitting the mark in terms of message or call to action. I truly believe that the 'Death by PowerPoint' phenomenon has nothing to do with bullet points or dodgy visuals and everything to do with unedited, untargeted content being thrown haphazardly at an audience who don't understand or care about the topic at hand.

Repeating the same crimes in a different format is not only pointless but verging on the cruel.

Getting your message finely tuned for your audience is key. We recommend employing a process called '[Audience Heatmapping](#)' (see image below) which not only allows you to gauge the needs and drivers of your intended audience but then also matches your message and content to them. Make no bones about it – the audience is the most important stakeholder in any presentation, repurposed or not. Get it right and your information will be readily consumed and acted upon. Get it wrong and you're merely repeating the crimes of yesteryear.



# THE CAVEATS

3

## DESIGNED TO STICK?

Much has been written about the power of story in presentations. They not only help audiences engage with content but also remember the key messages. They allow presentation content to spread throughout an organisation by being wilfully shared by your audience. In short, they're the secret sauce behind many successful presentations so they need to be part of your repurposed content.

Look for stories within your source material and check their relevance to your new audience. Do they need updating? Do they need swapping out for something more relevant?

*NOTE: It won't have escaped your notice that these three caveats are not the exclusive prevail of repurposed presentations. They are relevant for ALL presentations, be they brand spanking new or dusted down and repurposed. Great content, audience centric messaging and engaging stories are the basics for any presentation – ignore these at your peril.*

# GOING BEYOND SLIDES

So what are the repurposing options open to us? The truth is that the list is almost endless with your slides now easily converted to web friendly HTML5 formats or tablet ready toolkits but rather than get bogged down in the technical, let's look at a three simple options:

## INFOGRAPHIC

The creation of [content rich graphics](#) is very trendy at the moment. Everywhere you turn, people are reaching for icon libraries and interesting fonts to create graphics that are printed on posters, animated for websites and loaded onto tablets.

Chances are that your lowly PowerPoint features some visuals that could easily be developed into something more powerful. That system diagram that took an age to create in PowerPoint? Revisit, polish and repurpose it as an infographic for your sales team to share with clients.

That set of flowchart slides that documented the on-boarding process for new customers? Dust it down, freshen it up and get it printed for your project management team to use at kick off meetings.

## VIDEO

Corporate videos used to be the preserve of those with big budgets - they were expensive, took forever to shoot and edit and once released, destined to date quicker than a popstar's haircut.

PowerPoint now puts the power of [animated videos](#) in the hands of everyone. Anyone armed with a recent version of PowerPoint and the ability to record their voice is equipped to produce videos that engage and inform your audience across a range of mediums, from online sites like YouTube and Vimeo, as a video on your internet/intranet sites through to burning them to DVDs as part of a marketing campaign.

It's easy, inexpensive and a great way to ensure your original presentation message gets shared to the widest possible audience.

## PDF

One of my pet peeves is when people take a PowerPoint deck that was intended to visually support a presenter and send it on to people who could not attend the presentation. This compromises both the live presentation (too much content = Death by PowerPoint) and the 'reading audience' (not enough content to fully explain the presentation message). No one wins.

The good news is that there is a way of creating an aesthetically pleasing hard copy presentation from visual PowerPoint slides by using the Notes section. In much the same way as background templates can be designed for maximum 'on-brand' impact, the Notes format doesn't have to be the conventional slide image atop a block of Arial font text. This allows you to maintain the strong visuals used to present as well as feature the accompanying text in a well designed format.

The net result is a 'slide document' that covers all the bases - visually appealing, the right level of detail on slide with supporting content covered sufficiently in well crafted copy when required. Everyone wins.





## WHAT NOW?

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The chances are that your server/hard drive is home to some extraordinary and powerful content that deserves another moment in the sun. There's also a very good chance that your audiences are clamouring for new content, new ideas and new ways of engaging with you. Finally, there's every chance you have fallen into the trap of 'reinventing the wheel' to meet the growing demands of your business and audience.

The answer may be staring you in the face and, with a little repurposing and studious editing (never forget the best practice caveats!), your message can be easily renewed and consumed by a grateful audience.

Over to you...

