

# Get to the point! Tips for simplifying PowerPoint

You know a presentation is going badly when audience members start tapping on their BlackBerrys. These days, especially, it isn't easy to capture and hold a group's attention.

Keep your presentation clear and effective with these PowerPoint tips:

**Save the presentation** as a .pps file, rather than a .ppt file. That saves the presentation as a full-screen slide show, so you don't have to make the audience wait while you open PowerPoint, find the right file and (finally) hit "view slide show."

**Maneuver easily** through the presentation with this trick: Hit the "F1" key once in "Slide Show" mode. Now, you have the option of hitting Control + P to make the marking pen appear, allowing you to highlight, circle and make notes on the on-screen image. Or, you can hit Control + A to make an arrow appear that you can maneuver by mouse.

**Keep it simple** by choosing effective graphics. Using PowerPoint visuals that only Einstein could decipher doesn't make the presenter look smarter. Complicated visuals will cause an audience to focus less on what the presenter is saying and more on trying to figure out the images.

So, when creating a PowerPoint presentation, follow these seven rules for keeping visuals clear and powerful:

- 1. Follow the "Six-by-six rule":** Use no more than six words per line and no more than six lines per visual.
- 2. Apply the "billboard" test** to each slide or transparency: "Could people read and understand the information while driving?"
- 3. Realize that people may forget lists,** but they'll recall images. Just don't overdo the graphics.
- 4. Avoid using "chart junk,"** fancy shadings and patterns in most drawing software. You'll create the "Two C" effect—comical and confusing—by trying too hard to jazz up a chart.
- 5. Think "thin" when deciding** on line thickness and "discreet" when picking colors. *Reason:* Thick lines and garish colors will distract readers.
- 6. Use the "one" principle:** Limit each visual to one idea, one concept or one point.
- 7. Put it to the one-minute test:** If the audience will need more than 60 seconds to figure it out, it's too complex.