

POWER POINT TIPS

7 Deadly Sins' of PowerPoint Can 'Kill Your Presentation'

by Terri Lackey

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The sins of wimpy contrast, multi-colored text, small font size, crowded text, copious transitions, bountiful bullets and boring slides can condemn a PowerPoint presentation and render it worthless, a specialist said.

"I call these the seven deadly sins of PowerPoint presentations because these are the things that will most assuredly kill your presentation faster than anything. And they are the seven things I see most often," Steve Williams told discipleship leaders attending Discipleship and Family Week in Glorieta, N.M.



Powerpoint is a computer software program for visual support of lectures, conferences, sermons and other presentations.

"I have about four or five passions in life, and helping churches and people become more effective visually is one of them," said Williams, a discipleship specialist with LifeWay Christian Resources.

People remember 30 percent of what they hear and 70 percent of what they see and hear, Williams said.

Additionally, he said, people comprehend three times as much when they see an image.

"So they not only remember it, but they understand what it means. That's very important in today's church. We want them not only to remember it, but we want them to get it and do something about it."

Churches use PowerPoint presentations to teach and train, promote events and convey information during worship services. If the presentations are ineffective, there is no reason to spend the money on computers, software, projectors and screens to show them, he said.

"Many newer users [of PowerPoint] are so excited about what it will do, they try to use every trick they learn in every presentation they create. When they do, the medium often obscures the message."

A PowerPoint presentation should never become the message, he said. It should only complement and reinforce the message.

Williams listed and explained what he considers to be the seven deadly sins of ineffective PowerPoint presentations:

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Deadly sin # 1

-- Too little contrast is the result of using text and backgrounds of similar colors. "A basic rule is there should be enough contrast between them so text can be easily read. The greatest contrast is white text on a black background or black text on a white background."

Deadly sin # 2

-- Too many colors used for text and objects can result in a rainbow effect. "The brain tries to figure out why are there so many colors, and if it's doing that, it's going offline."

Two text colors per slide are usually enough to look good and be readable. Three different text colors are enough for an entire presentation.

"It is good to use different colors for the titles and body text, but try to use the same color all the way through your presentation for titles and the same color for body text. That will keep people's attention focused on you and not your presentation," Williams said.

Deadly sin # 3

-- Too much text makes a slide look cluttered and hard to read. "Use the five and 10 rule. Limit each slide to about five lines of text that can be read in about 10 seconds. Six lines are OK, seven if you have to ... but when you get beyond that you have too much text."

Williams said if the presentation requires more text, automate the text so it doesn't come on the screen at the same time. Present part of it on half the slide, giving the viewer time to read it, then put the remainder up on the bottom half of the slide.

Deadly sin # 4

-- Text that is too small means people will have to strain to read it. "This will distract them and cause them to miss hearing the point."

"Step back and look at it yourself on a large screen," Williams advised. "If in doubt, make it larger."

Deadly sin # 5

-- Too many bullets makes a presentation predictable and boring. "Bullets are great if used sparingly and wisely, but I've seen presentations where

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the number of bullets used reached the regurgitating stage." Williams suggests using "unbullets" like pictures or placing text inside various shaped objects like ovals, rectangles or circles.

Deadly sin # 6

-- Too many transition effects can disorient the viewer. "Transition effects are used to change from one slide to another during a presentation. PowerPoint 2000 gives you 60 or 70 effects, but they shouldn't all be used in one presentation."

Williams suggests using the K.I.S.S. principle with transition effects. "That's 'keep it simple, sweetheart.' Use a maximum of two to three different effects throughout your whole presentation. Use them when you are switching content."

Deadly sin # 7

-- Using boring slides can put the audience to sleep. "I've described a lot of excesses when creating slides, but under-doing it can be as bad as overdoing it, Williams said.

Effective use of colors and graphic objects can add appeal to presentations and make people want to watch them, he said. Clip art, photos, WordArt and autosshapes help make slides more visually appealing when used correctly.

"By eliminating the seven deadly sins from your presentations, you will encourage your audience to focus on your message and learn more," Williams said. "And they won't think you started using PowerPoint yesterday."

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