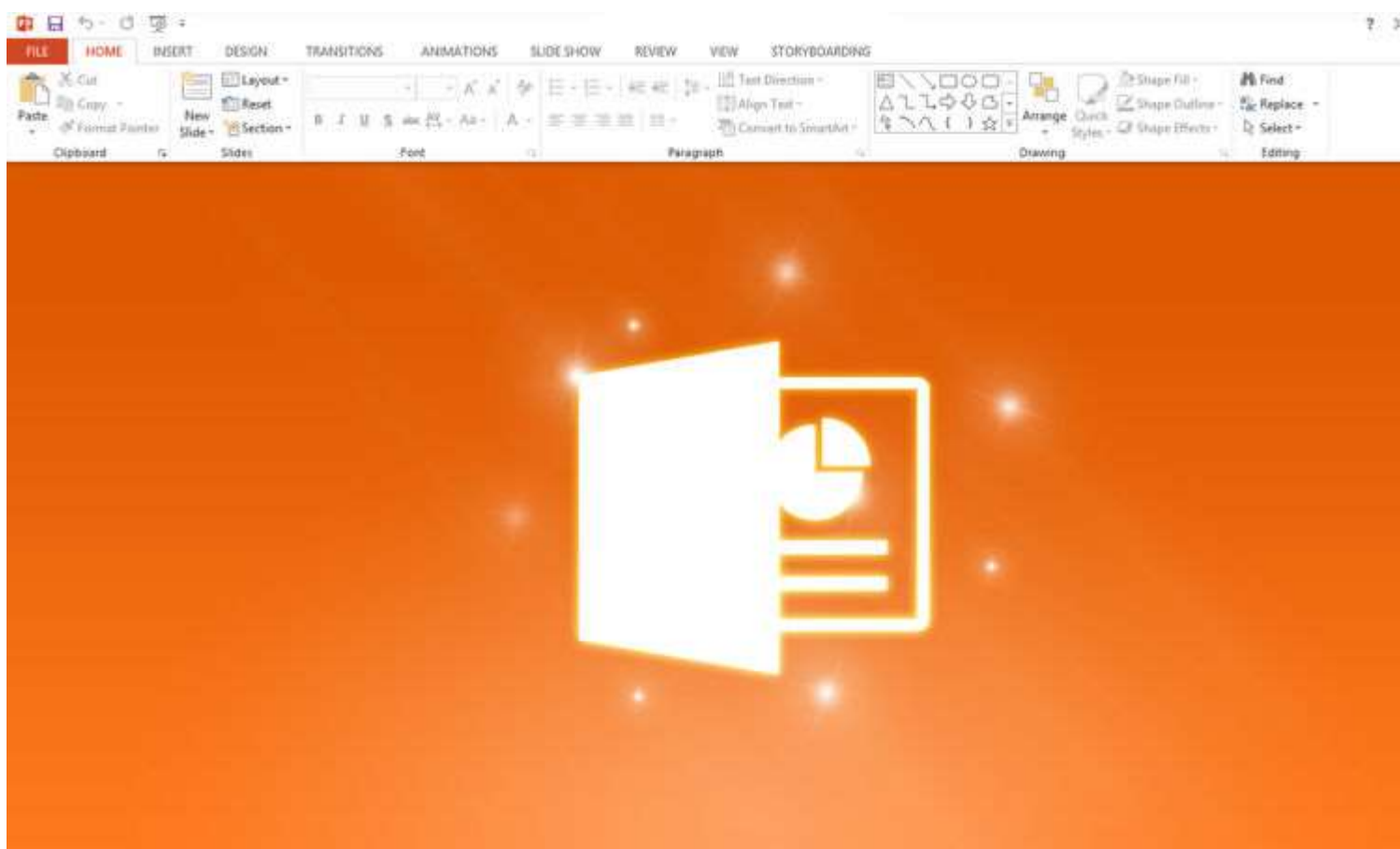


From the website: <http://lifehacker.com/how-can-i-make-my-powerpoint-presentations-amazing-507552122>

## How Can I Make My PowerPoint Presentations Amazing?

**Melanie Pinola**

Filed to: [ASK LIFEHACKER5/16/13 10:00am](#)



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Dear Lifehacker,

I have been tasked to make a slideshow for an event at work. I don't want to make a generic PowerPoint with just boring text or pictures. What are some ways I can enhance the slideshow so it looks impressive and knocks the socks off my audience?

Sincerely,

Panicking About PPT

Dear Panicking,

Giving a presentation is a huge and (sometimes) noble responsibility. After all, only you can prevent [death by PowerPoint](#) for your audience. Thankfully, several tips, tools, and other resources can help you take your slides up a notch and make them more professional and captivating. We're focusing on PowerPoint for most of the add-ins and templates below, simply because that's the most widely used business presentation software, but many of the other principles and tricks here apply to other presentation apps. Let's get you started.

### **Avoid the Most Common Presentation Problems**



First, before we take a look at jazzing up your slides, it's a good time to review how to avoid the reasons presentations suck so often.

**Lack of preparation or passion.** Often presentations don't work because the presenter didn't practice enough or he/she fails to convey the meaning of the presentation. When you passionately communicate the significance of your subject (maybe even [with a storytelling structure for drama](#)), audiences pay attention. To do that well, you have to practice giving your presentation; otherwise, even the most beautiful slides won't help you.

**Slides are too complex, overloaded with bullets, lacking in focus, and/or filled with poor quality images.** It's easy to hate on PowerPoint for presentations that suck, but the real problem is how

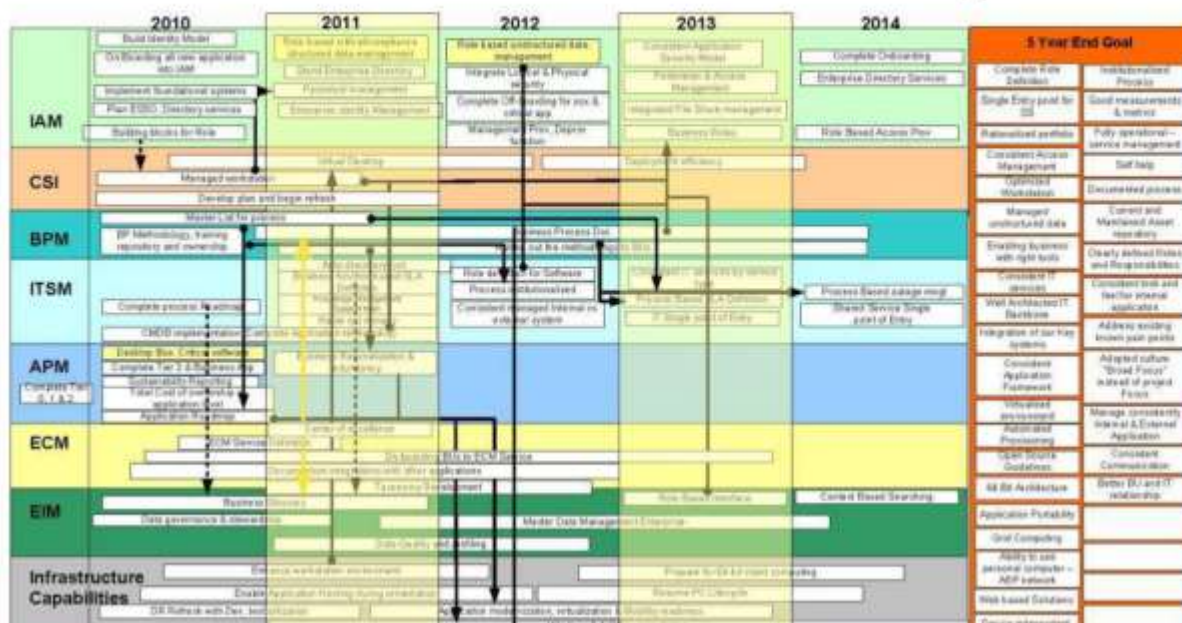
we're using it. Slides shouldn't be used as a prompt to read to your audience nor a place to dump as much data as possible. Instead, they're a visual communication aid to support the most important part of the presentation: you and your message. Just about every presentation advice we've highlighted before (including [5 design mistakes you need to avoid](#) and [how to deliver polished presentations Steve Jobs style](#)) emphasizes three things for all your slides: *simplicity, a clear and meaningful message, and quality visuals*. The opposite of this:



## Deliver Polished Presentations Steve Jobs Style

Whether you're an Apple devotee or not, it's tough to argue that Steve Jobs isn't an ...[Read more](#)

# IT Modernization Roadmap



[Seth Godin's five rules](#) for avoiding really bad PowerPoints are a good guide:

1. No more than six words on a slide. EVER. There is no presentation so complex that this rule needs to be broken. [Also recommended in [another post](#): No bullets. Use a separate slide for each sentence or idea.]
2. No cheesy images. Use professional stock photo images.
3. No dissolves, spins or other transitions.
4. Sound effects can be used a few times per presentation, but never use the sound effects that are built into the program. Instead, rip sounds and music from CDs and leverage the Proustian effect this can have. If

people start bouncing up and down to the Grateful Dead, you've kept them from falling asleep, and you've reminded them that this isn't a typical meeting you're running.

5. Don't hand out print-outs of your slides. They don't work without you there.

Similarly, for our guide on [how to create presentations that don't suck](#), communications expert Nancy Duarte offered this helpful mnemonic to keep in mind as you're making your slides:



### **How to Create Presentations that Don't Suck**

Bad presentations are painful—for both the presenter dying a slow death in front of a crowd and the ...[Read more](#)

**Simplify**

**Lose the cliches**

**Information needs emphasis**

**Designate elements**

**Empathy for the audience**

**Less is more when it comes to presentations (except for font size):** The [10/20/30](#)

[Rule](#) recommends limiting the number of your slides to 10 and your presentation time to 20 minutes, but using at least a 30-point font size.



### **Use the 10/20/30 Rule to Avoid Disastrous PowerPoint Presentations**

An oldie-but-goodie post from entrepreneur Guy Kawasaki directly addresses the kind of problems the ...[Read more](#)

Those are the basic slideshow creation principles. Once you've got them down, take a look at how you can improve the design of your slides and the elements on them.

**Enhance Your Presentation**



PowerPoints and other presentation tools are visual aids. You want to connect how your slide looks to what you're saying. As Godin writes:

The home run is easy to describe: You put up a slide. It triggers an emotional reaction in the audience. They sit up and want to know what you're going to say that fits in with that image. Then, if you do it right, every time they think of what you said, they'll see the image (and vice versa).

To make your presentation stand out visually, use and choose these carefully:

**Fonts:** Use your own font instead of the default fonts on your computer. Smashing Magazine has a list of [sources for free, quality fonts](#) or you could buy a font at [many other typography resources](#). Godin likens this to "dressing better or having a nicer business card. It's subtle, but it works."

**Images:** Professional quality images, rather than cheesy clipart, will make your presentation stand out. You can buy photos at sites like [Getty Images](#) or find a free stock photo using the [Everystockphoto.com](#) search engine.

**Diagrams and shapes:** Simple graphics and diagrams can illustrate or highlight your information better than text can, but using them effectively can be tricky. This [non-designer's guide to creating diagrams for slides](#) will help you make sure the visuals you use for emphasis are consistent, appropriately sized, and otherwise communicate well. Similarly, [choose the best chart for your data](#) so you're presenting your information as clearly as possible.

By following just a few simple rules, anyone can create diagrams and illustrate information more...[Read more](#)

**Templates:** Even if you don't want to use a cookie-cutter approach to your presentation, a template could be a good starting point for later customization. Microsoft offers a [collection of PowerPoint templates](#), many of them professionally designed. Even better, [Microsoft's picture and text effects templates \(over 150 of them\)](#) include bold and captivating slides that combine graphics with simple or animated text—and the instructions for how to create them. [VisualBee](#) not only offers free PowerPoint templates, it can automatically design your presentations for you. One last resource: [Slidevana](#) provides over 150 truly beautiful slide templates. It costs \$79, but if you often make PowerPoint presentations, it might be worth the investment.

**Add-ins:** Boost PowerPoint's capabilities with third-party add-ins. [PPTools](#) offers several, including this [starter set](#), with tools to help you zoom in and out easier, import pictures faster, and more (it's an old add-in, but still available). [Previously mentioned pptPlex](#), now part of Microsoft Office Labs, gives you the ability to jump directly to specific slides and zoom in and out of slide sections. [TechRepublic](#) offers a list of a few other potentially useful add-ins.

### **pptPlex Puts PowerPoint Slides on an Interactive Canvas**

Windows with Office 2007 only: pptPlex, a free Office add-on, makes PowerPoint presentations less...[Read more](#)

**Other presentation helpers/tricks:** Work your presentation like a pro with a few shortcuts. [PowerPoint keyboard shortcuts](#) help you create and advance slides with just a few keystrokes. To redirect the focus from the slide to yourself, you could [temporarily black out the screen](#). Check out the [other tools that can make your presentation more memorable](#), including apps that can focus on just part of your screen.

### **Explore Additional Resources**

Finally, there are a wealth of other resources on the web that can help boost your presentation, including alternative presentation software.

**Alternatives to PowerPoint:** PowerPoint is still the most widely used presentation tool, but if you find it to be overkill or its linear format too limiting, [many alternatives](#) can fill in for your presentation creation needs. These include [Prezi](#), with its unique zooming interface, and [Haiku Deck](#), which is [the easiest way to](#)

[create gorgeous presentations with an iPad](#). Even if you stick with PowerPoint or are required to use it, just looking at Haiku Deck's sample presentations might inspire you.



### **Five Best PowerPoint Alternatives**

When you need to create an interesting and engaging presentation for your boss, new clients, or a...[Read more](#)

**Learn from masters of presentation design.** For further reading, check out these great sites, which focus on making presentations beautiful and effective: [Presentations Zen](#), [Beyond Bullets](#), and [Duarte](#).

Good luck with your presentation!

Love,

Lifehacker

*Have a question or suggestion for Ask Lifehacker? Send it to [tips+asklh@lifehacker.com](mailto:tips+asklh@lifehacker.com).*