

Nearly half the business presentations today are delivered via a computer with the help of a presentation graphics software package, such as Microsoft PowerPoint. But software alone does not guarantee success. If you want punch-packing electronic presentations, follow these tips.

➤ **Know your audience**

Action-packed multimedia presentations are not the answer for every situation. The medium should be relevant to the audience. First, determine *what* you want to say and *who* you want to say it to — then decide *how*.

➤ **Take time**

Allow one or two days' lead-time for a text-based PC presentation, or a week for anything more complex. This will give you leeway for developing content, overcoming technical hurdles and polishing delivery.

➤ **Colour me beautiful**

When projecting onto a white screen, use a dark slide background with text and graphics in lighter hues. Stick with primary colours that fit the mood of the occasion.

➤ **Keep it brief**

Do not be tempted to type a speech on screen. Slides are only there to act as a prompt to the person making the presentation. Minimise the number of slides and the amount of text on each — about five words per line and five lines per slide. Additional information can be given as a handout.

➤ **Be clear and consistent**

Use large-sized, easy-to-read block text and ensure typefaces, colours and other details are consistent from slide to slide. Sudden changes jar.

➤ **Jazz it up**

Add graphics, animation or sound to enhance a presentation, but do so sparingly as it can distract and detract. Graduated slide and bullet transitions can also enliven text.

➤ **Proof-read everything**

Spelling mistakes, or typos, and grammatical errors say one thing — unprofessional — and never more so when several inches high on a screen.

➤ **Practise, practise, practise**

Run through slides on-screen beforehand, preferably with a live audience. Make sure you are comfortable with the content, timing and software logistics, including how to move slides forward and back. Get hold of a handheld device if you can — it is much slicker than hovering over a keyboard.

➤ **Know your venue**

Double-check the availability of power sockets, screens and extension cables. Do not assume anything, including the reliability of your own equipment. Bring back-up copies of the presentation and arrive at least 30 minutes early to set up.

➤ **Do not hide behind the computer**

No matter how good the software, tone of voice, eye contact, body language and physical appearance account for more than screen images. "Focus on the audience, build a rapport with them and put your own personality into the presentation", says Jonathan Hulse, PowerPoint product manager at Microsoft.