

Make Your Point with a PowerPoint Presentation

By ANN BROWN

You've decided to take your business to the next level and create a dynamic PowerPoint presentation. You want to make it exciting and unique. But, when you open the software and look at all of the options, you begin to think that you're in over your head. Sound familiar?

You'll find myriad layouts, effects and transition options in designing your presentation, but using PowerPoint to create a fantastic slideshow doesn't have to be difficult if you remember a few basic points.

Grab the Attention of Your Audience

Most everyone has sat through a boring sales presentation, counting the minutes until it was finished. When designing your presentation, put yourself in the place of the viewer:

- Is the information on the slides helpful?
- Are the slides cluttered with too much material, or are they easy to read?
- Have pictures and clip art been added to enhance a slide's message?

It's a good idea to gather all of your information first, put it in the order in which you want to present it and then start to add it to your slideshow. For instance, let's say you've decided to put your listing presentation in an electronic format. The order of your slides might be:

- Your company message: your slogan, tagline and so on (one or two slides).
- Your listing process (two to four slides).
- What the client can expect in regards to flyers, open houses, contact from you and so on (two to four slides).
- Your marketing plan (two to four slides).
- Anything special that your broker or

company guarantees, such as advertising commitments (two to four slides).

- Your recent successes or homes you have sold in the neighborhood (one or two slides).
- Your messages stated again with a positive close (one slide).

You'll see from this example that the ideal presentation should be between 10 and 20 slides. If you can't fit all of your information into 20 or fewer slides, you need to cut your presentation significantly.

Grabbing the attention of the viewer is not just about the information you're presenting, but how you present it. To use each slide most effectively, select only elements that contribute to the point you want to make.

Using the Auto Layouts Feature

With a single mouse click, you can choose from many different layouts for your slideshow. To do this, click on the "Format" menu and select "Slide Layout."

Some layouts will have text only, and some will have pictures and graphs, while others will have a combination. By using the Slide Master, you can customize the positioning and appearance of all of your layouts at once. This will save you time because you can change the formatting one time to affect all of the slides in your presentation.

To do this, select "View" in the menu bar, "Master" and then "Slide Master." On the Slide Master, you can reformat the style settings, such as the font and bullets, as well as the size and positioning of the Auto Layout areas.

Using the Auto Layout feature will

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undoubtedly save you time. However, if you're not using it intentionally, it can be a little frustrating. For instance, if you do not want the bulleted text to automatically shrink in size to fit the content you're typing, you can turn off this feature. To turn off Auto Layouts, click on the "Tools" menu and then the "Auto Correct Options" tab. Select "Auto Format As You Type," and click on OK (see Figure 1).

Keeping Your Presentation Manageable

Obviously, you want your client to remember you and what you're presenting. Fancy layouts and state-of-the-art graphics are great, but if your PowerPoint file is so large that it takes a long time to download or it crashes your prospect's computer, clients will remember you for all of the wrong reasons.

If you're sending them a copy via e-mail, save your file as a "Slide Show." This will save the file in a format that will automatically open in the slide show mode.

Under the "File" menu, select "Save As." Select "PowerPoint Show," or .pps, from the dialog box, type in the name of your file and then "Save." You can then attach this to your e-mail, and when the recipient double-clicks on it to open, it will begin the slide show.

When using bullet points, do not use more than three on one slide. Studies have shown that readers will retain the information easier if there are no more than three bullet points at one time. So the old saying "keep it simple" is very true in this case.

If you're going to leave something with your client or prospect that ties into your PowerPoint slideshow, be sure these materials have the same look, font style, colors and so on. Your business and how you present it is all about how your prospect perceives you, and the last thing you want to do is look like you made a few quick copies on the office copy machine. If you don't have the time or the expertise to make a quality, well thought-out and professional presentation with handouts, outsource it to a virtual assistant or graphic artist who can make it look great.

You might also think about putting a shortened version of your presentation on your Web site or blog. Slideshare.net is a free service

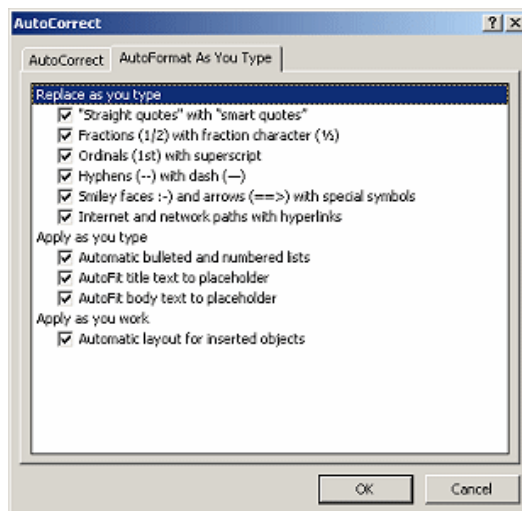


Figure 1

that allows you to upload your PowerPoint file to its server and then share it via a link or embed it into your site. Another service is Imprev.net, which allows you to create a mini-presentation, save it as a flash file and add it to your Web site.

Having a professional PowerPoint presentation can help you look like the seasoned real estate veteran you are. Today's world is full of high-tech gadgets that people you come in contact with are using on a daily basis, and we all know that people want to interact and do business with others who are like themselves. The more you can do on your computer to present that image to your prospects and clients, the more they'll see you as someone who's familiar with and embraces the newest technology trends, just as they do.



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