

Three Ways to Deliver Effective Presentations

Learn how to:

1. Plan your presentation

2. Fix boring text slides

3. Choose the right chart for your data

Presentations have to either inform or persuade, or do both. For example, trainers and educators want to drive understanding of new concepts. Consultants must present their recommendations for change, often to a skeptical audience. With sales presentations, a purchase decision is the ultimate action you are trying to influence; depending on your stage of the sales process, however, you may have other intermediate goals for a presentation.

If you can engage your audience, demonstrate credibility, and leave them with your message clearly articulated, you'll get the results you seek.

Here are three ways to make your presentations more effective.

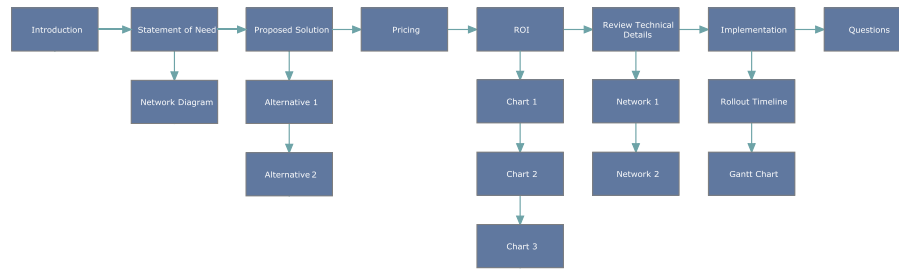
1. Plan Your Presentation

Using business graphics instead of bullets and text is one way to improve your presentation slides. However, good visuals can only carry you so far. If your message is not clear and your story does not flow well, your presentation will fail to persuade. With some up-front planning though, you'll be clear with your message and add power to your story line. As a bonus, you'll spend less time making slides and more time rehearsing or doing something else productive.

The starting point for any effective presentation is to ask what action you want the audience to take. Even when your goals seem obvious, it helps to write them down. This exercise is harder than it seems because each presentation depends on the audience and the exact point in the given process.

Mind map your message

How can you keep track of all the factors involved? A great way to do this is to mind map out your situation, your topic and your goals. A mind map helps you keep it all in play, find patterns, and



One technique is to list the main flow from left-to-right and add supporting ideas below each topic. Eventually, you'll map these boxes into slides. For now though, just organize your thoughts into an effective flow.

Here are some more things to think about when developing your story line:

Above all, strive to match your message to the audience. Is everyone there to hear your final recommendation? Then start with the recommendation and then present the evidence. Don't make them sit impatiently while you drag them through methodology and data-gathering before getting to your recommendation.

Are they likely to be a hostile audience? Build your case issue by issue. But provide intermediate conclusions along the way. In either case, the least effective way is to keep the audience in suspense with a lot of preamble and supporting facts while making them wait for your recommendation or conclusion.

With your goal clearly defined, your message understood, and your storyline created, you are ready to create your slides! Just make sure you follow the guidelines in the section "Fix those boring slides."

For more details on how to storyboard your presentations with flowcharts, read [Working Smarter with Presentation Storyboards](#).

2. Fix Boring Text Slides

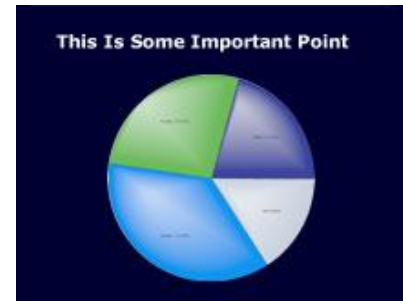
We have all attended one of those meetings. Slide after slide of bullet points in a font that is barely readable. You flip between listening to the presenter recite the slides and trying to read the slides yourself.

The weakest presentations are ones where the slides are loaded with text and the speaker just reads through them. The audience is not only bored by this, but they also resent it as a waste of their time (couldn't you have just sent me the document?) and as an insult (I *can* read, you know!) As a result, your audience isn't likely to participate. And much worse, they are not likely to remember anything said.

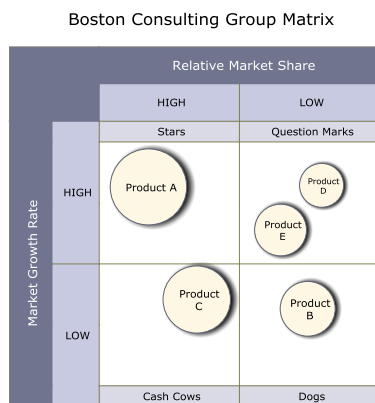
This Is Some Important Point

- One amazing fact that you didn't realize
- Another amazing fact that maybe you knew
- A third fact that you might have know, but didn't realize was relevant
- And, of course, a fourth fact that needs to be stated because you can't just say it and expect them to remember
- And a fifth point, just for luck
- Oh, and did I mention point #6 too?
- And there's an important conclusion too

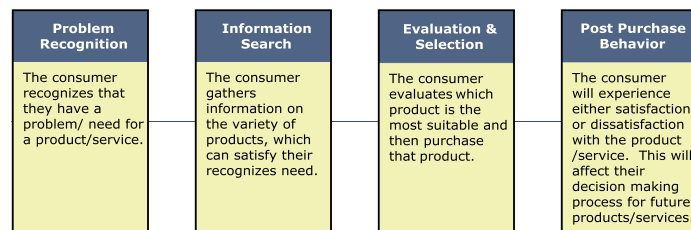
So how do you avoid conducting one of these universally loathed meetings? The best way to do this is to use visuals that *support* your message and give attendees something to lock away in memory. Using graphics to replace text and bullets is easier than you think. It all starts with selecting the right business graphic to replace your text. You probably already use charts instead of tables, but there is so much more you can do.



Put relationships, processes and descriptions into pictures.



Purchase Process



Conceptual charts convey ideas or entities that are ranked, have a relationship, occur in a time order, or convey magnitude differences; but do not necessarily concern the actual data values. Many concepts from marketing, sales, business strategy and project management can be communicated more effectively with graphics. Below are some examples. (Click the links for detailed articles on each.):

1. Marketing
 - a. [Product Positioning with Matrix diagrams](#)
 - b. [Target market with a Venn diagram](#)
2. Sales and Finance
 - a. [Presenting ROI](#)
 - b. [Region performance with a territory map](#)
3. Business Strategy
 - a. [Presenting a process with a flow diagram](#)
 - b. [Decision making process with a decision tree](#)
 - c. [Problem analysis with a cause-and-effect diagram](#)
 - d. [Presenting ideas with a mind map](#)
 - e. [Organization structure with an org chart](#)

4. Project Management
 - a. [Presenting a project timeline](#)
 - b. [Project roadmaps with a Gantt chart](#)
 - c. [Roles and responsibilities with a team chart](#)

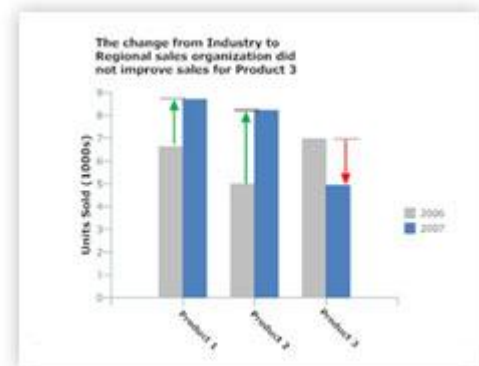
Conceptual charts may be pictorial in design or they may be more structured, such as a flow chart or organization chart. These ideas represent the tip of the iceberg. You can review your existing slides and find many more opportunities to turn text into graphics.

For more information on how to fix boring text slides, read [Working Smarter: Replacing Text with Graphics in Presentations.](#)

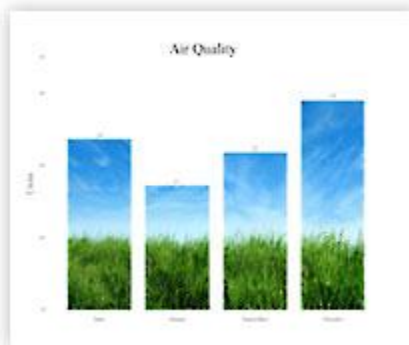
3. Choose the Right Chart for Your Data

Data-driven charts allow the audience to absorb the meaning behind the data faster than just a list or table of data. It is easier to see trends and comparisons than to calculate them from raw data. You can then speak to any additional insights or conclusions with the chart as support.

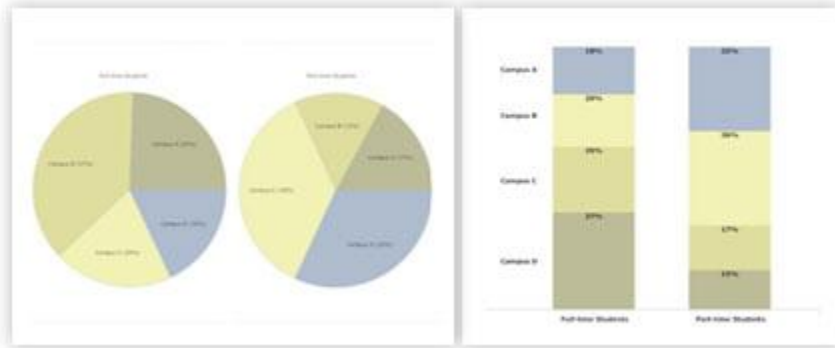
	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
2006	7	5	7
2007	9	8	5



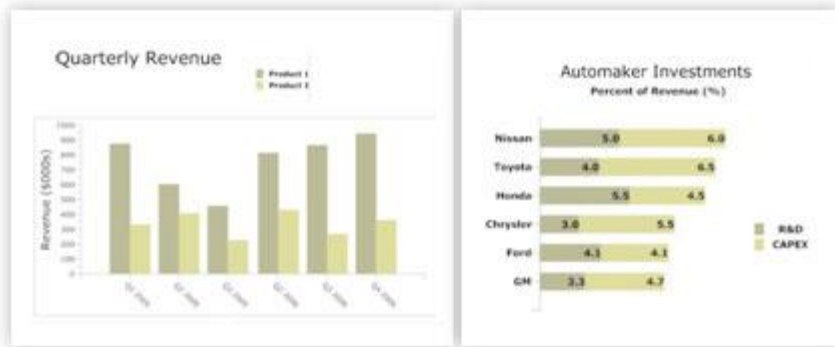
There are three types of data-driven charts that will cover most visualization tasks: the pie chart, the bar chart and the line chart.



If your presentation is about share or distribution of a total, a pie chart or linear pie chart is appropriate. If you are comparing shares from different categories, then a stacked bar chart works better than multiple pie charts.



If your presentation is about a comparison of values, the bar chart is appropriate. Again, if you have multiple categories, such as years or product lines, a grouped bar chart or a pairing of bar charts work best.



If your presentation is about a trend over time, the line chart can not only show the values but also give a visual feel for the rates of change. To show just the values in discrete time frames, such as sale total per quarter, a vertical bar chart may work better than a line. More complex charts can be created for very technical data such as frequency distributions and correlations. These charts will use line, vertical bar charts and scatter plots.



For more information on how to choose the right chart for your message and data, read [Working Smarter: Presenting Data with Persuasive Charts](#)

This document is part of the *Working Smarter* Series—a collection of publications describing proven tactics for improving business operations, provided free by SmartDraw.com

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