

# 4 Ways for Engineers to Create Better PowerPoint Presentations

Have you ever sat through a presentation that was so bad that it was painful? Presentations can go poorly very quickly. Yet, being able to create effective and engaging presentations is vital, because presentations demonstrate to others what an organization can offer, how an organization operates, and why potential customers should trust the organization. Poor presentations risk:

- Boring and confusing audiences
- Damaging an organization's reputation
- Scaring away potential customers and partners
- Wasting opportunities to earn customers' trust and business

Engineers often have to give PowerPoint presentations to potential and current clients as well as superiors within their organization. So, here are 4 guidelines to help engineers create better presentations that are clear and easily understood.

## 1. Keep designs simple.

A presentation should make information digestible; that is, it should NOT complicate the information for the audience. If it takes more than five seconds for your audience to understand your poster, slide, handout, or some other part of your presentation, the information is too complicated and needs to be simplified.

## 2. Adjust technical information.

The level of technical detail in your presentation should match the audience's knowledge. How much does the audience know about the topic and how much do they need to know to understand your presentation?

## 3. Use a storytelling framework.

Humans love stories. Stories engage us and help us to make sense of the world. So, leverage that fact by using a storytelling framework in your presentation. Think of the framework in this way:

- Beginning: What's the problem and why is it a problem?
- Middle: What causes the problem and what is the path to a solution?
- End: What's the solution and what must the reader do to obtain that solution?

## 4. Use fonts, colors, font size, and white space to organize information.

When everything looks the same, nothing is emphasized. So, use the aforementioned design elements to your advantage. We caution you, though: don't go too crazy with this. You don't want to violate guideline #1 of this list.

Each design choice should have a purpose and ensure that each section or slide centers on one main idea. If communicating more than one idea, add another section or slide. This will keep information digestible.

Keep in mind that colors may have connotations, such as red implying urgency or negativity (i.e., "we're in the red and losing money") and green indicating approval or positivity (i.e., profits). Also, some colors—such as red, green, yellow, and brown—may be difficult for color-blind people to see. Ensure that you have contrast between your background color and font color to make your presentation accessible.

### Application Tool

Question	Answer
Do any of my designs take longer than five seconds to read and understand?	
Does my level of technical detail match my audience's knowledge?	
What is the beginning, middle, and end of my presentation?	
What information do I want to emphasize and how have I emphasized it?	

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