

Five Ways to Make Your PowerPoint Sizzle

1. What's your story?

- An effective presentation requires a narrative; you want your audience to remember your message.
- It's the free-time paradox: We don't have 30 seconds anymore to listen to a sales pitch (DVRs are a blessing), but we have 30 minutes to hear a great story.
- Find the story at the heart of your presentation by asking, "What are your audience's needs? What do they care about? What problems are keeping them up at night? How will your product or service make their lives better?"

2. Focus on one idea.

- If your audience should retain one thing, what would that be?
- What's the one reason you're standing up there presenting? Make sure every bit of content in your presentation revolves around that idea. If it doesn't, you have to scrap it.

3. Shatter your template.

- PowerPoint templates are inherently constricting. If the template doesn't give a wide variety of slide options, it will inhibit you. If you can ditch the template, ditch it. If not, see how far you can take it.
- Can you use full-bleed images?
- Does the logo *have* to be on every slide?

4. Images, images, images.

- What was revolutionary five years ago is now old hat — but it's a very important hat. Using vibrant images brings your presentation to life and provides a visual cue that your audience's brains can attach to your message.
- According to John Medina, PhD, author of “Brain Rules,” vision is our most dominant sense, using half our brain's resources. Adding an image to a text-based message can increase recall by 55%. (Use tools such as Compfight to find free images to augment your ideas.)

5. Give your ideas room to breathe.

- When multiple ideas are delivered on one slide (often as bullet points), there's little opportunity for the audience to attach a visual cue to each idea. Thus, audience recall is drastically reduced.
- Put each important idea on its own slide, along with supporting imagery. (Don't worry about how many additional slides this creates.)