



Bob's PowerPoint Tips

Teaching Stinky, Old Dogs, New Tricks

Let's establish something right up front here—I am a dog. A miniature Dachshund-mix to be somewhat specific. But that doesn't mean that I don't know anything about business presentations! In my ten years, I have seen my share of presentations—some phenomenal and some so bad that I left with my tail tucked between my legs. My attention span and tolerance for poor presentations are shorter than my legs and that has fueled my passion for helping people become better presenters!

Today's "Stinky Dogs" and "New Tricks" involve the use of PowerPoint. There are times I wish Bill Gates and his pups had never invented PowerPoint, but even then, we would have found some other program to put people to sleep with! The truth is PowerPoint (and any other presentation program such as Freelance or Google's soon to be released presentation program) can be used to make fabulous slides that aid a presentation...if used correctly.

When I see someone use spinning and swirling text or blinking letters that come in one at a time with stupid sound effects like a typewriter (who even recognizes that sound anymore?) or worse, a race car (why would race car sounds be used for letters that are coming onto a screen...except that the sound is DRIVING people crazy!) I want to run up and bite the presenter on the ankle. I would go for the jugular, but remember I'm a Dachshund. So our first "Stinky Dog" is OVER-ANIMATION!

It is a sure sign that the presenter is a novice and has learned to impress him or herself with the new tricks such as phrases that swivel—not to be confused with the phrase Furshizzle by my pal Snoop Dog! If done correctly, animating the text on your slides is a great way to control where your audience is looking—which is the main purpose text animation serves.

When you put too many bullets or too much text on the screen at once, your audience will not be able to listen to you. It is like when someone is holding a treat in their hand and they're trying to get me to listen to them. I can't focus on anything but the treat. When you put text on the screen, your audience will stare at the text, trying to read it (they won't be able to since you are talking and interrupting their concentration). Animation will only allow them to see what you want them to see, when you want them to see it.

So here is how to perform your first "New Trick!" (These instructions are for Windows XP—if you are using an earlier Windows program, these will be similar but you may find slight differences.)

1. When you have your text in a bulleted text box, simply select the box itself. (You will know the box is selected when your cursor is no longer blinking inside the box.)
2. When the box is selected, go up to SLIDESHOW
3. Choose CUSTOM ANIMATION
4. Now select ADD EFFECT
5. Select ENTRANCE, since you typically only worry about the text coming in.
6. In the drop down menu, you want to select APPEAR—not CRAWL IN, FLY IN or SWIRL—just APPEAR! Oh sure you will be tempted to try those others, but resist the urge. Remember your audience has the attention span of a gnat. They want things to be there quick!

Now what you have done here so far is typically enough for most presenters. Your bullets will come in one at a time on a mouse click. If you want to take it to that next level, let's continue to have each bullet fade or disappear after you are finished with it and as the next bullet comes in—to again, control where your audience's eyes are focusing.

7. You should see your command to animate in the “custom animation” panel to your right (this may be in the middle if you are using an older version of Windows)
8. Select the drop down arrow next to your text and choose EFFECT OPTIONS.
9. Do not add sound, do not animate text by letter or word
10. Select AFTER ANIMATION and you can now either HIDE ON NEXT MOUSE CLICK or DIM AFTER ANIMATION and choose a color to fade to. Be careful not to select HIDE AFTER ANIMATION since this makes it disappear immediately after it flashes on the screen—you want to control when it disappears with a mouse click.
11. You are now finished and have learned a NEW TRICK that most old dogs will never take the time to learn.

This may seem like a lot to do just to animate the bullets on a slide, but in reality, it only takes 30 seconds per slide—and it is well worth it! Once you get the hang of it and practice a few times you will have them animated in no time.

Today's second “NEW TRICK” will also help you control where your audience is looking while you are speaking. There are times you should black out the screen to be sure the eyes of the audience, and more importantly, the attention of your audience is on you and what you are saying. You may only have one bullet on the screen, but there is something mesmerizing about a screen with *anything* on it—kind of like a television screen—even when there is nothing good on, you will sit and stare. If you are spending time going deeper on a subject or perhaps you are deviating slightly to answer a question someone in the audience has, simply black out the screen. If you are in SLIDE SHOW MODE (which you should be) you walk over to your laptop and hit the letter “B” key. Your screen will go black. To resume, you simply hit the letter “B” key again. Remember, you must be in SLIDE SHOW mode. To be sure you are in SLIDE SHOW

MODE and not in “NORMAL VIEW” hit the F5 key. This is the key that will start your slideshow when you are ready to begin.

Now it is time for you to practice these NEW TRICKS. Go ahead and open up PowerPoint and design two or three slides. Use a bulleted format for at least one and now practice animating it. Hit F5 and start your slide show. Black out the screen and resume. Wow, who said you can't teach an Old Dog New Tricks? Now while other dogs are putting people to sleep, you will have your audiences standing up begging for more!



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