

# 4 All-Too Common Mistakes Presenters Make Using Visuals

By Dianna Booher

## Don't Let Visuals Dominate

Don't let your media upstage you. Watch for thoughts like, "As long as I'm preparing slides, I may as well do 25 as 15." Any technique—even the most creative slides—can get monotonous. As a rule of thumb, your presentation should average no more than one visual per minute. *Average* is a deceiving word here, however. For example, during a presentation to a group of proposal writers, I may use three slides in five minutes to present examples of unclear documents. On the other hand, I may use no visual at all for 20 minutes during a keynote address on life balance or communication. Vary number and selection based on topic and purpose. Less is more.

Your purpose is not to guide your audience from visual to visual. If this is your approach, you may as well prepare bound sets of visuals and distribute them to your audience members for self-study. *You* should dominate; your visuals should *support*.

## Don't Talk to the Visuals

Visuals are for the audience, not the presenter. Never face your visuals while talking or, worse yet, read them to your audience. Know your material well enough to be able to maintain eye contact while elaborating on the key points using your own words. The visual is the beginning point, not the end.

## Don't Get Too Fancy with Transitions and Builds

The types of builds and transitions you decide to use will affect the pace of your presentation dramatically. Transitions that "fade through black" will seem to take forever, whereas those that "appear," "fly in," "wipe right," or "wipe left" will feel faster.

## Limit Each Slide to One Major Concept

One purpose of a visual is to simplify complex data. If listeners have to study the visual to understand it, the visual misses the target.

Consider both the pros and cons before letting the possibility of what you *can* do dictate what you *should* do.

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323 words

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*For more tips on using visuals effectively, see Speak with Confidence: Powerful Presentations That Inform, Inspire and Persuade (McGraw-Hill) by Dianna Booher.*