

6 Tips for Using PowerPoint to Engage People in Dialogue

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PowerPoint. We love it. We hate it. We abandoned it to flirt with *Prezi*. Then we came back.

It's like that relationship we know is not good for us, but we keep it on speed dial.

So, we won't give you the long list of how *not* to use PowerPoint. You've been there and you could write that one.

Here is a list of how *to* use PowerPoint and still get the kind of engagement you want with your presentations.

1. **Consider not using it.** (Sneaky, I know, but at least consider it). If it does not enhance your presentation in meaningful ways, don't use it at all. It has a bad reputation and people have come to expect that they will be passive and unengaged when the first screen comes up. You will have to work against that in the first few seconds.
2. **Set it up with an open question** (i.e. "As you look at the numbers, be thinking about how they will impact the work in your own department in the short term.").
3. **Use it to visually communicate** what you are presenting (that is not the same thing as "textually" communicating). Images stick in our minds, for instance, and some graphs can help people to make meaning of complex concepts.
4. **Use text that the group needs to see in order to react to it.** (And then give them time to do just that). i.e. "Read through this description of the product we are considering purchasing. What jumps out at you from this description? What features are most important to your team?" (Hint, if the text is too long to fit on a slide, use a hand out or a pre-read instead.)
5. **Intersperse it with dialogue** (i.e. "Which of the policies that we've outlined so far might be a challenge for you? Why?").
6. **Divide it into short chunks** (no more than 10 minutes) around core concepts. People won't stay with you much longer than that.

Above all, remember this.

*Your PowerPoint is **not** your presentation. It is a visual aid **to** your presentation.*