

Presentation Design For Ministry

What is a presentation? Is it a bunch of slides? The speech? The presenter himself? What about audience interaction? All these things (and others) contribute to the presentation experience.

I'll make some comments here about how presentation design for ministry might differ from that done in the secular business world.

The Creative Strategy Document

The Creative Strategy Document (CSD) is a basic document that describes some of the basic attributes of the event or project. This document is essential in keeping any team (even an individual) on track with the project goals. Every project decision or element that is created should be held up to it and examined in that light. It is also a useful, simple exercise that will quickly identify if consensus exists on a team, and if not, in what areas.

The CSD answers these strategic questions:

- What is the purpose of the event or project?
- What is the desired outcome of the initiative?
- How will we measure success?
- Who is my audience? What are their attributes? Example attributes might be: age/generational group; income levels; ethnic or cultural background; level of familiarity with you or your work; believers/nonbelievers; purpose for attending.

It also addresses these tactical considerations:

- What are the existing or required design elements or brand assets for these pieces? Answers could be: logo, typography, existing print pieces, color palette, photography (say, from an event), video or music.
- What created elements are required for this project? Examples could be: brochures, handouts or "leave-behinds", posters, companion website, presentation design, lighting, sound & music, etc.

It's quite crucial that these things be written down and agreed upon by all the stakeholders. If not, expect confusion down the road!

Usually, I like to see the CSD in Word .doc form (email-only tends to get ignored or watered down). The required elements list is most naturally at home in a spreadsheet, where additional requirements or info can be recorded.

Sidenote: Consider using online documents like Microsoft Office Live¹ (probably overkill), Writeboard² or Google Docs³ (which has both live docs and spreadsheets, very nice – and free, too) for this purpose. You'll be amazed at how much faster this process can move forward. We also use the online collaboration application Basecamp⁴ (we used it for this project!).

1 <http://www.officelive.com>

2 <http://www.writeboard.com/>

3 <http://docs.google.com/>

4 <http://basecamp.com/>

LPA Presentation Slides & “Behind-the-Scenes” Insights

In this section, I'll present some of the slides we use in our development presentations and discuss some of the techniques and philosophy behind them.



I personally draw inspiration from the example of Bezalel, the master craftsman who God tasked with creating the tabernacle.

Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers— all of them master craftsmen and designers. *Exodus 35:30-35*

It seems clear to me today that the Lord is calling craftsmen to Himself once again to honor Him with new tools and in new ways.

The Tools

Presentation Software

"Power corrupts. PowerPoint corrupts absolutely". – Edward Tufte

Presentation software is an application that shows text, images, video & audio for the purpose of supporting a spoken presentation. It should be easy to use, powerful, and have the ability to be remotely controlled.

A true craftsman will not be defined by the tools, but by the ideas that are being represented. However, some tools make this easier than others.

The best choice in our experience is Keynote⁵ running on Mac OS X. There are other alternatives to PPT on Windows, but they are mostly not up to the same feature set as PPT. PPT lacks good support for importing and exporting videos, artwork (notably PDF), and animation (such as Flash). Third-party plugins and hacks can improve this, but it's not trivial.

The latest Vista-only version of Powerpoint improves on some of these quality issues, but still isn't up to Keynote's quality and ease of use.

Here's a comprehensive comparison of presentation applications for all platforms⁶. The Peat Group does a lot of work with ministries, too.



Apple Keynote

Slide Show Software

Sometimes, all that is required is to show photos without animation or a lot of text. The best dedicated tool for this purpose we've found is FotoMagico⁷. (I'd like to do a little demo here). It is easy to use, resolution-



Boinx FotoMagico

independent (all the way up to HD displays), and requires no rendering to present. It allows impressive control over panning & zooming. It can export to video clips (a technique used to embed them in our Keynote presentations) and to DVDs. It can be controlled interactively, too. Yes, it's Mac-only.

Other slide show tools: video editors (Premiere Pro, Sony Vegas, iMovie/iPhoto, Final Cut), digital asset management tools like iView Media Pro, Picasa, or ACDSSee.

5 <http://www.apple.com/iwork/keynote/>

6 <http://www.thepeatgroup.com/MforM/presentation.html>

7 <http://fotomagico.com/>

Getting Your Project Done: Three Paths

Do it yourself. Pros: cheaper, self-contained, no intermediaries. Cons: limited by your skillset & tools, time-consuming.

Hire a volunteer. Pros: cheap. Cons: lower quality media, no “money authority”, time-consuming. Communicating your intent clearly can be a challenge if either party isn’t used to doing so.

Hire a professional. Pros: Top-notch media. Cons: costs money.

If you’ve created the Creative Strategy Document mentioned earlier, communicating with producers will be much, much easier.

Professionals Who Can Help

Full-service ad agencies like Spirit Media⁸ and The New Group⁹ here in Portland can do everything from event design & management, advertising and collateral, manage your online presence, create original videos, and create presentations.

Don’t need the full treatment? Have video pros like Dan Hyatt¹⁰ or Chad Crawford¹¹ create an original video or documentary (high-definition, too). Multimedia gurus like Nathanael Merrill¹² can also provide design, interactive (web) and animation services.

It’s certainly possible to manage all these creatives separately; however, that will cost you more time and the burden of getting various specialists to synchronize their efforts will be on your shoulders.

It’s common to receive a detailed quote from the producer. Be prepared to pay up to a third of the total down to initiate the project. Unless the producer offers, It’s considered rude to ask for “spec” work – work done without any guarantee of compensation (“do a few sketches then we’ll see”). They have to eat, too! Feel free to ask for a discount, however – non-profits regularly receive such discounts. Some may even offer to do it pro bono.

Hopefully you can find a talented craftsman who is also a believer. Better yet, seek them out and invite them to participate in your ministry at some level. You’ll find that design & video professionals are experts at helping you tell your ministries’ stories and messages in a powerful and persuasive way.

8 <http://spiritmedia.com>

9 <http://thenewgroup.com>

10 <http://redemedia.com>

11 <http://crawfordgroup.tv>

12 <http://merrillinteractive.com>

Recommended Reading, Authors

- Garr Reynold's Blog, *Presentation Zen*. <http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/>
- Ira Glass, *Tips on Storytelling*. http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2007/03/ira_glasstips_o.html
- *Signal-to-Noise ratio and the elimination of the nonessential*, http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2007/03/signaltonoise_r.html
- *Inspiring Visual Presentations*, http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2006/10/inspiring_visua.html
- An in-depth look at Duarte Design, who helped design Al Gore's "*An Inconvenient Truth*" presentations, using Keynote. http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2006/06/duarte_design_h.html
- A great list of books and other goodies related to the art, craft, and philosophy of presenting and presentation design. http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/2006/12/as_2006_comes_t.html
- Edward Tufte's Books & Essays, <http://edwardtufte.com>
- A good list of sites for free or cheap images: http://presentationzen.blogspot.com/presentationzen/2006/01/where_can_you_f.html
- SermonSpice.com <http://sermonspice.com>.

I'll be posting this online as soon as possible at <http://allanwhite.net/>.