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PRESENTATION LIFESAVER

How One Expert Coaches Clients To Maximize The Effectiveness of Their Presentations By Using Technology Wisely



For more information on projection technology, go to www.roadwarriortechnology.com

Few would argue that ultra-portable projectors are not transforming the way Corporate America communicates with employees and sells its services and products.

Their appeal is almost palpable. They deliver big, bright colorful pictures. When used together with a laptop computer, Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentation software and multimedia elements like sound, animation and video, they can transform ho-hum meetings into memorable, dynamic events.

Still, serious business demands more than feelings and impressions. Corporate America runs on results. Fortunately, managers weighing the costs and benefits of introducing multimedia projectors into their communications strategy have facts upon which to make decisions. Studies confirm that computer graphics improve presentations and that multimedia actually builds credibility for presenters. One finding of a recent study shows that in a sales envi-

ronment a multimedia presentation was far more likely to be persuasive and produce a sale than a presentation that conveyed the same information but relied solely on a printed brochure. (For a detailed discussion of the studies go to www.roadwarriortechnology.com and click on Business Case.)

Thus, all things being equal, multi-

things better than equal? How can they ensure that they and their employees will cut through the noise with their presentations, stand out from the rest, close the deal, and reap the rewards? Simple: Call on a true presentation lifesaver, Diane West, and take her suggestions to heart.



Three Principles of Successful Presentations

- **Develop An Easily Understandable Story**
- **Less Is More**
- **People Buy From People, not PowerPoint**

media presentations appear to be the right communications solution for sales and training. But that's not good enough. How can managers make all

For the past 10 years, San Diego-based Ms. West has helped presenters polish their skills. She and her partner Jennifer Dreyer run their own presentation consulting firm, 2Connect, which coaches executives and employees at high-technology, bio-technology and service industry companies on how to make effective presentations.

Much of her clientele serve up high-tech hardware, software and services so there's a natural tendency to rely upon presentation technology to pitch ideas and close sales. While Ms. West is the first

The Eyes Have It

An Entrepreneur Relies on Visuals and Wins Over New Customers

Amy Vavrunek is no stranger to the presentation industry. For nine years she painstakingly grew a small mail-order slide bureau before selling the business in 2000 to chase her real dream: owning a design agency.

In the process of marketing her newly formed Artemis Agency, Ms. Vavrunek confronted a challenge that at first glance might seem surprising. She was called upon to actually make a presentation. As she points out, there's a big difference between creating designs used by others in presentations and actually putting one on.

Ms. Vavrunek was asked to make a presentation at the Nov. 21, 2000, meeting of the San Diego chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth. Her topic was her core business, helping corporate CEOs and presidents put together presentations to raise capital.

Not wishing to leave anything to chance, Ms. Vavrunek contacted ZConnect's Diane West to critique a trial run of her presentation. What she learned surprised her.

"I had so much information and so little time to tell it," says Ms. Vavrunek. "Diane changed the flow. She helped me cut down on the technical and focus on the visuals. She emphasized that I should show people what can be done. Telling them how it could be done should be left for a one-on-one session."

"She helped me identify the purpose of the presentation so we eliminated slides that just didn't fit. She gave me insight into what was more interesting and compelling. She viewed my presentation as an outsider looking in."

At the suggestion of Ms. West, Ms. Vavrunek included slides showing the presentation materials of clients before and after they were reworked by Artemis Agency. "I actually showed during my presentation what a CEO might give me and how we would enhance it for the information to come across more professionally from an artistic standpoint," recalls Ms. Vavrunek.

Ms. Vavrunek says she was happy with how Ms. West's coaching shaped her presentation. As a direct result of her projected multimedia presentation, Artemis Agency won two new clients and lots of prospects. One new client, the retailer Charlotte-Russe, hired the agency to rework material used for its annual shareholders' presentation. The other, Acadia Pharmaceuticals, hired Artemis Agency to put together a road show for the company's initial public offering.

She is convinced her experience is typical of how a finely honed presentation delivered with a multimedia projector can impact the bottom line. "The elements of a presentation that will have a lasting impact on your audience are clear, concise information, graphics that enhance the message and a strong delivery," says Ms. Vavrunek. "Practice, practice, practice! The message you send will affect your business, profitability, sales and reputation."

to recognize the pervasiveness of multimedia projectors and PowerPoint and the impact they're having on how presentations are made, she counsels her clients not to lose sight of the most important visual in any presentation, namely the presenter.

"The tendency is to use very technical means to make these presentations," she explains. "But what we advise presenters is that their message needs to come from the presenter. You can't rely solely on a PowerPoint presentation to convey your message. You have to put it across." According to Ms. West, there's a tendency among some presenters to hide behind their visuals. Doing so, she warns, defeats one of the main purposes of any presentation, building a rapport. To succeed, presenters must connect with their audience, and that requires the visuals to augment presenters in their eyes, not shield them from their attention.

When used effectively, visuals help presenters express a finely honed message in a way that audiences will remember. They make it easier for presenters to convey information more vividly so that the visuals conjure up mental pictures. Successful presenters know that these mental images will stay with an audience long after the presentation, says Ms. West.

However, too often visuals obstruct clear, memorable communication. "If you don't use PowerPoint judiciously," she says, "it can create a data smog that's really easy for the audience to get lost in." At ZConnect, Ms. West coaches presenters on ways to clear out the haze and improve their presentations.

One recent example was a San Diego-based pharmaceutical company. "I was working with this company's sales management team, and much of the goal of their presentation was to get in front of the field sales team and get them excited about selling product," she recalls.

"The presenters were talking from PowerPoint slides, and you could literally feel the energy level going down and down because they were stuck reading slide after slide, after slide."

"I coached them to reduce their slides, get up in front of the group and deliver their message so that it comes from the heart."

The company's sales managers took her

Straight From the Heart

A CEO Relies on The Natural Storyteller Within

Multimedia presentations can be an important catalyst for medical tech companies like San Diego-based CardioDynamics International Corp. (NasdaqNM: CDIC).

They often serve as a venue for analysts and institutional investors to investigate new business ideas and overlooked opportunities. They also can generate corporate life blood: investment capital.

So when the AEA, a high-tech industry trade group, asked company CEO Mike Perry to participate in a program to critique his presentation before he delivered it at an AEA-sponsored

meeting of financial analysts, he agreed.

"We believe we have a strong message for the investment community," says Perry. "With proprietary technology, significant financial resources and no debt, we have the chance to fundamentally change healthcare. I give about 100 presentations a year to the investor community, and I know the importance of telling our story."

CardioDynamics International's story is noteworthy. An innovator and market leader in impedance cardiography, a technology that non-invasively allows physicians to assess the heart's ability to pump blood, CardioDynamics has achieved significant milestones this year, including national pricing for Medicare reimbursement and a joint technology agreement with GE Medical Systems. The worldwide market potential for the company's technology is about \$5 billion with an additional \$800 million in recurring annual revenue, estimates Perry.

The challenge Perry faced was telling that story in a clear, concise way. On the panel critiquing the presentation was 2Connect's Diane West. She suggested that Perry reduce the number of slides in his presentation and rely more upon his ability to convey the company's story. She found Perry to be a natural storyteller.

"She would ask, 'Do the slides tell the story or do people?' and the answer was clearly people," recalls Perry.

At the AEA event, presenters must make 11 45-minute presentations, so cutting the duration was crucial. "Diane suggested we hone down the number of slides," says Perry. "In some instances, three slides were combined into one. In others, we dropped slides completely."

When the big event came and Perry launched into his marathon, investors heard a finely honed story. While it is rare for investors or analysts to commit funds at these sorts of events, the goal is to share the company's vision and peak interest. Perry regards his presentations to have been a success.

"Out of 30 investors attending the CardioDynamics presentation, we have five investors who are doing due diligence," explains Perry. "They are wringing out the technology, talking to physicians or getting their healthcare specialist involved."

advice, dumped a lot of the PowerPoint slides and threw themselves into the presentation. The result: a motivating presentation and an energized corporate sales force.



According to Ms. West, the single most important thing a presenter can do is connect with the audience. Based on the data 2Connect has collected, there are three principles that presenters who wish to be successful must follow if they are to accomplish their goal of building an interpersonal rapport with an audience.

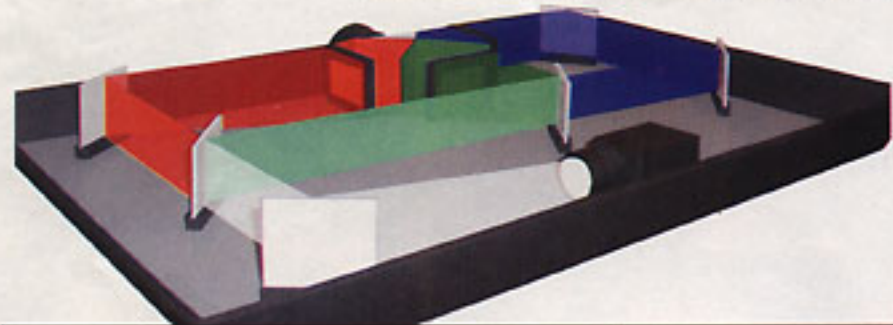
"First, your presentation needs to tell a story," she says. "Whether presenting to an audience of 100 or to the person in the seat next to you on an airplane, you want your audience to get your message quickly with or without slides. Just like a story, your presentation should be simple, easy-to-understand and memorable." Audiences, especially those in a business environment, are busy people. They have short attention spans and are averse to trying to figure out what a presenter is attempting to say. They appreciate an easy-to-understand story and are far more likely to remember and act upon one than they are to decipher a convoluted message.

"Second, remember that less is more," she explains. "Hone your message down to the essentials. Later, after you've made the connection, you'll have a chance to fill in the details."

If a presenter's story cannot be told in three or four main points, there is a good chance that the message will remain hidden in a foggy soup of unclear communications, says Ms. West. When presenters hone a presentation down to three or four main points, they are forced to cut away all extraneous material and clarify their message.

"Third, people buy from people, not PowerPoint," she continues. "Don't let the technology get in the way of your message. Use it wisely. Audiences will buy your product, idea or initiative, whatever you are selling, from you, not PowerPoint slides. Technology is a tool that should aid your message, not be the message."

See Lifesaver on page S12



In an LCD projector, dichroic mirrors split white light into red, green and blue. To see inside an animated LCD projector, go to www.roadwarriortechnology.com.

VGA (640 by 480 pixels), SVGA (800 by 600) and XGA (1024 by 768).

Native resolution is the image specification that describes the inherent resolution of the projector's imaging device. Because projectors are often fed a variety of signals, most include electronics to scale the resolution of the incoming signal to the native resolution of the projector. When evaluating projectors that will be fed a variety of signals, observe the quality of scaled images to determine if

the projector meets your requirements for image quality.

Keystoning and keystone correction are the final advanced projection topics on the syllabus. Keystoning causes an image to appear wider at the top than it is at the bottom, or vice versa. It is caused by there being a shorter distance between the bottom of the image and the projector than that of the top and the projector. A projector suspended over a projection screen would have the opposite problem.

Most projectors have built-in digital

keystone correction that returns the image to its proper rectangular shape. This capability is often quoted in degrees of correction. The degree figure refers to the maximum angle off center screen at which the projector can still maintain an image without visible keystoning. The higher the keystone correction figure, the greater the flexibility in projector placement.

Understanding the basics of projector operation and key projection concepts should put potential projector buyers ahead of the game. Equipped with an understanding of ultra-portables, you're ready for graduation. It's time to take on the world and begin evaluating ultra-portables for yourself.

Oh, and if you ever need a quick refresher course or more information on ultra-portable projectors and presentations, teach's got you covered. Just check out www.roadwarriortechnology.com, and you're likely to find the information you need.

LIFESAVER cont. from page 54

Putting these principles to work requires presenters to take some concrete steps prior to the big show, says Ms. West. When it comes to building an understandable story, presenters should learn all they can about their audience. Finding out what's important to the audience, their daily concerns, business challenges and needs, who their customers are and what they already understand about the presenter's topic are good steps in building such a story.

Ms. West advises that presenters turn to resources such as the internet, company pamphlets and brochures and even others who have presented previously to the audience for such insight.

Next, use a simple structure to build the story: an opening, a body and a close. All good stories have a structure. As for keeping presentations lean, Ms. West offers some useful hints. Know the purpose of the presentation. Understand its central message and why the audience should

care about it. Presenters should keep in mind what action they wish the audience to take when the presentation is finished.

As for PowerPoint slides, Ms. West advises, use no more than five lines of text per slide and five words per line. Text should be a sans serif font that's 24 point or greater. Don't be afraid to use white space to keep slides from becoming cluttered and plan to project no more than one slide every one or two minutes. This will ensure that the message is coming from the presenter.

Finally, when it comes to people buying from people, Ms. West says, there's more to it than simply guarding against an over-reliance on PowerPoint slides. Delivering an effective presentation, in the words of Ms. West, "is about being real."

"A lot of people coach presenters on what to do with their hands and feet or how they should stand in an effort to make

them more charismatic," she explains.

"You can do those things, but you also need to be you. When you are up in front of a group, be real and don't be something that you are not. It is about being you. Audiences connect with what is real. So if mistakes happen, it's OK. That is part of being real."

To maximize a company's return on its investment in presentation technology, such as laptop computers and ultra-portable projectors, the wise manager must find ways to improve the effectiveness of the company's presenters.

There's no better way to cut through the noise than to develop a clear, concise, memorable message. Following the advice of Ms. West is a good place to start.

The author wishes to thank Diane West for her insights. Her company offers presentation coaching and sells an informative presentation handbook. She can be reached at 858-638-7544 or dwest@twoconnect.net.