

## **Take care with PowerPoint. Is it a technology in search of a methodology?**

New technology is very much a part of our contemporary presentation and communication-orientated society. Before we utilise it, perhaps we should question whether it meets our needs. Is it a technology in search of a methodology? This applies to PowerPoint© and we are beginning to see a reaction to either its overuse or misuse. At a recent convention, a participant was overheard to say: “It was a great session, especially as it did not have the drone of PowerPoint.” Some things to consider.

- It can get in the way of proper communication and the audience, especially when the speaker spends much of the time standing sideways to the screen and audience.
- It can lead to lazy presentations where the projected texts and graphics are talked-through. Everyone can read, so why do it for the audience, especially when they have been given booklets containing the same screens? The audience’s contribution to the activity being to add a few extra annotated comments.
- The energy of the presenter is reduced when a speaker is sharing the platform with another party – the projector. A less-than energised speaker leads to less-than energised listeners. The audience becomes passive and is not energised by the emotion and passion of the speaker.
- The presenters are not likely to be skilled graphic and layout designers. The consequence is that the screens may be one-dimensional, with inappropriate fonts, colours, graphics, too much text and distracting animations.
- Unless an enormous number of screen pages are used – a problem in itself - , there is a limit to how much data an individual screen can contain. The result is that complex and nuanced ideas can be squashed into terse bullet points.
- If a series of pages are used, the presentation can give the impression of a **hierarchy of ideas** when the reality might be more complex. A series of **linear** linkages can distort the topic under study.
- Think about being different and consider other media and techniques when giving a presentation. Stand out from competitors or colleagues. You want to make your presentation memorable and other strategies might be more effective.
- Of course, the hardware might break down – so what is your contingency planning? Reference: E Tufte The cognitive style of PowerPoint (Yale Univ)