

## PSY 201 Module 5 Video 2 Transcript

Welcome to my presentation on extreme makeover, the PowerPoint edition. What we're going to do in the next little while is have a look at PowerPoint as a digital storytelling tool, first of all and just some really basic ways in which we can use it, I think more effectively than we have. Teachers are probably most comfortable with it, of all of the multimedia tools that are available. And as teachers we often, you know, as presenters as well, we use this tool a lot and it's been misused in many ways I think. So, I think if we can kind of just, uh, look over some basic principles around using it effectively I think it will help both ourselves and our students as we use this tool.

So, I mean the first question is "Why would we even use a tool like PowerPoint?" And I think most of us recognize the fact that any message is usually contained in two ways and, visually as well as verbally and sometimes we don't recognize how both of those things work together. But, there's no doubt that what we want to do with PowerPoint is use it as a complimentary tool to our story, and not rely on it exclusively, but use it to balance between those two ideas. Here are a couple things that I see and you'll recognize these, certainly, as you go along, how people really do a terrible job of using it. And a lot of the things are: it's not peoples' fault, it's the way the program is set up and designed, and the way it sort of comes out of the box. And... let's just have a look at some of these things.

First of all, the most common thing I think is people like to use templates. They look at this list of templates and think "well this looks pretty cool, well that looks cool". And they are; they are well designed templates, but I think they can detract very easily. Typically kids will use one. There's one there with the fireworks. Well, they think that's just cool-looking. Well, it has nothing to do with the presentation. Even other times, I think it doesn't really support it.

Bullets is a very common tool. We put all our points in bullets. And it's really all about yourself to organize your information so that you can know what you're supposed to say next. But really a good presentation would require you to prepare in advance those things, and so I like the idea of getting rid of the bullets. We'll talk about that later as well.

Here's the common one, of course; it's the use of all the graphics and animations, and the fancy transitions and sounds. Kids typically are guilty of this tool, but adults as well sometimes can get carried away with using some of these tools.

Overload. Here we have Bill Gates, the actual founder of Microsoft, and I guess in some ways, being that this is a Microsoft product; I mean he's sort of the creator of this product. I mean here's this slide... here's an example from a presentation that he's done where he's put absolutely every piece of information related to this idea on this slide, and I think it really goes against some of the principals of storytelling is that trying to cram everything in. To give you a contrast to that, here's Steve Jobs, founder of Apple computers, and look at the difference there. He's trying to get across one point

about a new machine, and with it he has one big graphic, some large text, and that really is the idea; try to get one idea across.

And of course, we see this a lot, and this is one of the most irritating ones that I find is people that will read the slide; that'll read every single word on the slide and you're following along as if you're some sort of idiot that you can't read it yourself. So, that's a very common mistake. When we do that it's very difficult. If everything has the same emphasis, we can't tell what's important. When all the text is the same size and all the images are the same size, the same color, everything, it's hard to distinguish what's important.

Another common one is background issues. Typically here, people, when they're designing their slides, they're sitting just a few feet or a few centimeters from their screen. So when they're looking at their screen, they think well that looks actually pretty good and when it's going to be projected, which in most cases these are, they don't take into account that the distance that their viewers are away from the big screen is much greater than what you are when you're actually creating the slide. Again, high contrast is critical and you can see, of these three pieces of text, how much more visible the bottom one is. So that's just important to keep in mind. Even though you think it looks pretty good on your screen, go with more contrast.

I think at times people may see the PowerPoint as just frivolous. It's just extra stuff and really this book here, *A Whole New Mind*, really goes against that belief and really tries to argue for the fact that design is important. I think if we look at what we see in advertising there's millions and billions of dollars spent on design because it's critical in terms of communication. So, we can't ignore it, we can't see it as decorative. We need to see it as a really intricate part of our message and that book there by Dan Pink explores the whole idea of creativity and design in terms of really educational impact. Cliff Atkinson is an author of a book called *Beyond Bullet Points* and I would encourage you, if you're really interested in this; that would be the book to get. That really is specific around using PowerPoint.

I was telling a quick story about him. He was hired by a Dallas attorney about a year ago to create a presentation for an opening statement he had in a case in which he was defending a client in a civil case against a pharmaceutical company who produced a Viagra-like drug that basically ended up killing this woman's husband. So, the lawyer asked him to put together... he had about a four hour opening statement that he was going to give, outlining all the details of the case. And so Cliff Atkinson was hired to create a presentation for him. As a result of this presentation, according to the lawyer specifically, they won the case. And interestingly enough he created 253 slides, and they actually won \$253 million making each slide possibly worth \$1 million. The point of it was, and I happened to see a few of these slides that he created and there was nothing outstandingly artistic or anything like that, about the slides. They were really simple, but they really helped tell the story. And that's, again, such an important part. You're telling a story.

So what are the solutions? If those are sort of some of the negative things we see and some of the things that are wrong with using PowerPoint, what are the solutions? Well, the first thing I'd say is let's get rid of the templates. Start with a blank slate. Don't use one of these slates, and again, I've seen this particular template used many times where there's sort of idea of connecting and community or whatever the theme may be. I would say get rid of the templates. Start with a blank slate.

Here's an example of a slide that may be used. Now if I was trying to get a point across about this particular topic; web blogs. And my point is there, you can read it. Here I've picked a typical template, and I've got a couple of points that I'm trying to get across and a bullet point. Basically the idea is that blogs are fluid; they're dynamic, they're really vibrant. Well, that's one way of doing it, but I think this next slide is a better way of getting that idea across; that blogs are like sharks. The visual there is really what's going to capture your audience, and again, help them to remember and connect to your ideas.

Using a black screen is another solution. There are times when you want the audience to focus on you. You don't want them constantly staring at the screen, so, in fact you can just hit your "B" key while you're in your presentation and it will black the screen. So if you sense your audience, or there's a time where you just want to pull your audience away from the slides, it's a great little technique.

So really the strength of the presentation is that you just have one idea on a slide. Don't try to put too much on there. That's what you want to do. Slides don't cost any money, so why not have more slides? Put as little as possible on that slide. We've known this for years. Show me what you mean, don't just tell me, show me what you mean. Illustrate it; find different ways. There are people who are... certainly we know are more auditory learners, but we also know there are people who are visual learners. This is just an easy way to try to address both of those learners.

When we see a lot of the animations and things that are on there... again, we're not trying to animate something. We're trying to sequence. We're trying to tell the story in a way. Let me just give you an example here – a before and after. I did a workshop like this with a group of special education teachers and I went through a similar presentation that I'm going through now and then we took about an hour and a half to look at some of the work that they were... presentations that they were working on and see if we could apply some of these concepts to them. And so, graciously, one of them allowed me to take her before and after slides and I think she does a great job here, I think, of incorporating some of these good principles. So here's her first, initial slideshow. We'll go through some... I think there were... she had about... I don't know... around fifteen slides or so to do a presentation, and this was on auditory processing disorders. She's trying to explain to her audience what this is about, and she's got the ideas there, she's got... and she's not even doing a bad job, I think... using, with text. But she's talking about each of the ideas. So she's kind of focusing on one idea at a time, so that part of it is good. She goes through the causes and... and more causes. And it goes on. I'm not going to show you all the slides.

Here's her "after" project. So there's her opening title slide "When the Brain Can't Hear." And again, you've got an image that grabs you right off the bat. Here's the resource that she's using. So rather than just telling you about it, she gives you a screenshot of the book that she's probably basing a lot of her information on. Again, very clear titles, graphics that really support her ideas, images that I think help to create emotion. A little bit of humor in there is always a great thing. Here's an image that, very quickly, points to what the issues may be around these complications in children's auditory development.

Even when she does go to bullets I really like the use of graphics she used that are really big and very clear and easy to see. And then she goes through the characteristics here one by one, with each of these ideas, with a single piece of text, single word in most cases, and an image.

So I think, in my mind she does a tremendous job of conveying her ideas. And even though... one of the things people has said... well, I want to give this to someone else... I think there's... for them to use... and I think there's... there is value in that. And if you just see this slide by itself, they don't stand alone as a presentation. But PowerPoint, I don't think, is meant to stand alone as a presentation. You are the most important part and your story, your script is the most important part and your presentation, not the slides... they are a supplement.

It is simply storytelling that we're talking about. This is just a way to enhance your stories. So, what makes a good story? Well, it's always been the same, right? A beginning, a middle, and an end. So, that's it. So, what are the things that we can do to... tips that you can use is... first of all, have a detailed script or outline. Don't start with PowerPoint. Start with writing your script out. You can see there on the bottom, one of the things that's great is to use this... and most people don't use it I don't think... is the notes section of your presentation. Put all of your notes there and then your slide is built to sort of frame that and summarize, crystalize your ideas, but use the bottom part for your script.

Again, we've talked about this before. One idea per slide, and use animation and sound minimally. I think they can be effective when used sparingly, but not overdone. If you recall, one of the first slides I had... I don't know how effective it was, but... the bullet slide I had where the bullet came across and cleared out the text bullets, I mean... That's an example, maybe, of where it's used minimally and hopefully effectively.

Another little technique is just to frame your text, and you can see the top piece of text is difficult to read and even though we've got some contrast there, simply putting a box around that text with a border to frame it, highlight it is just visually more appealing.

Let me just talk a little bit about images because this is the key part. First thing is, if you're going to show something, and if I'm going to talk about a bird, that's not a bird. That's a cartoon. That's a piece of clipart. Find a good image. Again, one of the things I think is not peoples' fault... PowerPoint comes with an enormous amount of clipart, also

which I think is garbage. It's not effective storytelling. There may be times where a piece of clipart may be what you want to have, but I think, for most of us, a high quality photograph is much more compelling. Find images that convey emotion. Any good story... and it could be... I don't care if it's business, if it's education, what it is. Every good story should have emotion, should get people engaged in it so find images that convey emotion. Whether it's something in that regard, or humor; humor's always great to do, so find it in images that makes people smile and laugh. Even notice the font that I used there... and this is where I think... it's another little element of design here. I mean that font is certainly... Let me just go back one. Does font type have a message? I think it does. I think that's a humorous-type font. So that can be another way of adding to your story. I think using kids' drawings is a powerful tool, especially as educators. We're working with kids all the time. The nice thing with a lot of our PowerPoint slides is that's actually a photograph of a drawing, not a scanned image. Scanning sometimes is a time-consuming process. So, just take a picture of children's work every time you see it and have a little collection of that for you.

I'm using a remote mouse and, not that it's really critical here. I'm only a few feet away from my computer, but it does free you from being tethered to your computer. It allows you to roam, especially when you're giving a presentation, to be a little bit more a part of the audience, and distance yourself even from the presentation so that you you're watching the screen with your audience, not you're part of the screen. So I think it does a couple of things.

Just as I'm finishing here, I'm going to leave you with a couple thoughts here. Here's some presentation people... I've already talked about Cliff Atkinson in the corner. Lawrence Lessig is a Stanford lawyer who deals a lot with copyright issues. He has a very unique style in that he uses almost exclusively text in his presentations, but he just does it in a very effective way, and again, limiting the amount of text but also he does a lot of contrasting. He'll go with a black slide with white text and a white text with black... with a black background and kind of alternates that... but keeps it really moving quickly.

Seth Godin there is... works in the business world as a marketing guru. He does a lot of... I think he's more on the line of the kinds of things that I'm talking about today with using images effectively and keeping a good pace but really relying on good quality image. And you'll see a link here on the bottom to one of Seth's presentations. It's about eight minutes that I think is worth watching. Cliff Atkinson I already mentioned before.

Another good resource here is Presentation Zen, which is a web blog dedicated to the idea of presentation, and you'll see things like how you find good images, where you get quotes, just analyzing different presentations; what's effective, what's not, that kind of thing. An image resource is... it's really important that you are able to locate good images and use them in your presentation, and most people are fairly familiar with using Google Images. Without getting into the copyright thing again, one of the things that I would point out is that Google Images has a size option. You can see it right there. Choose large sizes because you'll... when you hit that dropdown menu you'll see a choice of large sizes. You're going to have a lot better images. A lot of times people use

these images, stretch them out, and they're pixelated. There are even some examples in the presentation today that you saw that were pixelated. So, if you can avoid that, that's all the better. Flickr is a tremendous resource. I think there's close to a billion photos on that site. These are all photos taken by people. I have almost two thousand photos on there myself, and a lot of them I'll use in my presentations. You can search through the creative commons which are copyright-free. People will say "hey, use my picture". You can search that way and copyright issue is kind of taken care of that way and there's some really great images. There's professional photographers that use this site to showcase their work as well.

Another one that I use sometimes is Morgue File. Again, mostly amateur photographers, but they put up very high quality images and I find it really good for things like close-ups of... you can see there an example of a rose, or close-ups of objects and things like that. So it can be a really great resource.

So that's the presentation. I hope that it gives you some idea of maybe the things that you can do. And I think if you can follow a few of those little pieces of advice I gave, I think you're going to find that your presentations are much more effective. And if you introduce this to kids in the classroom, I think they'll begin to see how this tool can be used effectively and not simply done to post information that can be read, or... the use of graphics detracts from the storytelling. It's still about the storytelling, and if used correctly it can be really powerful.