

Presentations Newsletter

The Guide to Delivering Persuasive Presentations

November 22, 2005

Extreme Makeover: PowerPoint Edition



Background: As managing director, corporate alliance and cause-related marketing for the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the daughter of a long-time diabetes sufferer who lost his fight at age 61, Nancy Stinson-Harris has a compelling story to tell. She sensed, however, that her story was getting lost in the reams of text and data that filled her PowerPoint slides.

“We thought our slides were too lengthy and had too many words,” says Stinson-Harris, who is responsible for signing on corporate sponsors in the fight against diabetes. “When you are close to a project it’s harder to be objective. We thought someone not connected with the ADA could help us tell our story differently.” *Selling Power* turned the ADA’s slides over to Erin Ferree, founder of Belmont, California-based elf design. Ferree shares her thoughts here.

Slide’s Objective: To convince audience members to join the fight against diabetes by aligning with the ADA.

Audience: Corporations looking to form a partnership with a nonprofit organization.

Challenges: Ferree says Stinson-Harris was right on target in sensing her slides were too text-dense. Many of the headlines were three lines long – one line is ideal, says Ferree – and were followed by as many bulleted text lines as the slide could hold. One slide often addressed multiple topics, and the text was corporate and cold – a lot of data and facts but nothing that would emotionally engage audience members.



[Click Here](#) to see the PowerPoint slides

From a graphic standpoint the overall design template did not match the ADA’s graphic standard. Most notably the logo wasn’t an exact match and the clear space around the logo didn’t adhere to the organization’s guidelines. The original slides also used a yellow bar that Ferree says looked heavy and too clunky for the slides.

Changes: Ferree, a graphic design specialist, started by addressing the graphical issues. She incorporated the correct corporate logo and then moved the identification bar from the top to the bottom of the slide. She scaled down the yellow bar from about a 3/8-inch thickness to about a 1/8-inch thickness to make it more streamlined. Then she added a darker yellow bar at the top of the slide to give the slide a barrier or anchor for the eye for when the slide is projected on a white screen. Finally she expanded the Join the Fight slide from one to four slides, allowing more white space on each

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- Jimmy Carter
- Ronald Reagan
- George H.W. Bush
- Bill Clinton
- George W. Bush

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slide and telling the ADA's story in a more compelling and emotional way.

Results: By decreasing the height of the identification bar and moving it to the bottom of the slide, audience members' eyes are pulled through the lines of text all the way to the bottom so they'll read each point rather than skimming the first two or three lines and stopping. Since the ID bar is no longer competing with the headlines at the top, those headlines are more readable. The logo size reduction also opened up more white space per slide. When coupled with the reduced amount of text this opens up the slides visually and makes them easier to read.

When Stinson tells her own story in conjunction with these slides, her presentation should grab the audience's heartstrings and captivate their interest, which means they'll be more likely to sponsor the ADA. "You always have to keep in mind that you're talking to a person in these corporations and that people buy on emotion. If you can't get people on board emotionally, you won't make the sale," observes Ferree. "Remember that audience members might have to go back and convince others that your product or service is a good idea so you need them to really get emotional about the cause. Fact and figures, while essential to a presentation, won't help you make that emotional connection."

About the Expert: Erin Ferree is the founder of elf design, a brand identity and marketing design firm that creates big visibility for small businesses. Erin helps her clients create a unique, consistent and memorable Visual Vocabulary for their businesses, then designs stationery, brochures, PowerPoint presentations, other collateral materials and Websites with that Visual Vocabulary as a foundation. She also empowers her clients to reach their markets – online, in print and in person – with well-crafted marketing copy and marketing campaign planning and execution. For more information or to reach Erin, visit <http://www.elf-design.com>.

Note to readers: *Need help with a PowerPoint slide or two? Just email the slides you think could use a makeover to powerpointhelp@sellingpower.com. If your slides are selected, we'll turn them over to a presentations expert for an overhaul. You'll receive new slides that will wow your prospects. Then you can read here about how they were overhauled.*

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