



presentation zen

distilled but definitely not zen ;-))

cactus - february 2010

Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

— Leonardo da Vinci

1 - presenting in today's world

- bento style – simple, balanced and beautiful
- presentation zen is an approach not a list of rules
- powerpoint as tool is not bad – it is the bad habits to use it
- presentation skills are more important nowadays in the „conceptual age“ – left & right brain
- storytelling enhanced by imagery & appropriate multimedia
- the first step to change is letting go of the past

Such power there is in clear-eyed self-restraint

— James Russell

2 – creativity, limitations and constraints

- preparing, designing and delivering is a creative act and you are a creative being
- creativity requires an open mind and willingness to be wrong
- restrictions, limitations are not the enemy – they are a great ally
- exercise restraint and keep in mind – simplicity, clarity, brevity

When forced to work within a strict framework the imagination is taxed to its utmost – and will produce its richest ideas. Given total freedom the work is likely to sprawl.

— T.S. Elliot

3 – planning analog

- slow down your busy mind to see problems and goals more clearly
- find time alone to see the big picture
- for greater focus, turn off the computer
- paper, pens and whiteboards for sketching first ideas
- key questions: what is your core point ? why does it matter ?
- if your audience remembers only one thing, what should it be ?
- preparing a detailed handout prevents you to cram everything into your visuals

In order to be open to creativity, one must have the capacity for constructive use of solitude. One must overcome the fear of being alone.

— Rollo May

4 – crafting the story

- make your ideas stick – SUCCESS (simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, story)
- a presentation is never just about the facts
- chunk the most important bits, identify the underlying theme and be true to that theme (core message)
- make a storyboard of your ideas on paper – and then use software to lay out a solid structure that you can see
- show restraint at all times and bring everything back to the core message

**Our lives are frittered away by detail; simplify,
simplify**

— Henry David Thoreau

5 – simplicity: why it matters

- simplicity is powerful and leads to greater clarity, yet it is neither simple nor easy to achieve
- simplicity can be obtained through the careful reduction of the nonessential
- as you design slides, keep the following concepts in mind: subtlety, grace, and understated elegance
- good designs have plenty of empty space – think „subtract“ not „add“
- while simplicity is the goal, it is possible to be „too simple“ – your job is to find the balance most appropriate to your situation

Emptiness which is conceptually liable to be mistaken for sheer nothingness is in fact the reservoir of infinite possibilities

— Daisetz Suzuki

6 – presentation design: principles and techniques

- design is not about decoration or ornamentation – it is about making communication easy and clear
- keep the principle of signal-versus-noise in mind to remove all nonessential elements, remove visual clutter, avoid 3-D effects
- use strong visuals to enhance your narrative – this is better than bullet points
- empty space is not nothing
- use the principles of contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity

**The more strikingly visual your presentation is,
the more people will remember it. And more
importantly, they will remember you**

— Paul Arden

7 – images & text

- create visuals that are simple with clear design priorities
- have a visual theme but avoid tired, overused templates
- limit bullet points or avoid them completely
- use high quality graphics
- build (animate) complex graphics to support your narrative
- think „maximum effect with minimum means“
- learn to see empty space, and learn to use it in a way that brings greater clarity to visuals

Be here now. Be someplace else later. Is that so complicated ?

— David Bader

8 – the art of being completely present

- like conversations, presentation requires your full presence at that time and place
- like a master swordsman, you must be completely in the moment without thoughts of the past or the future
- mistakes may happen, but do not dwell on past mistakes or worry about future ones
- you will make it look easy and natural by preparing and practicing like mad
- being fully in the moment also means that you remain flexible, totally aware, and open to the possibilities as they arise
- don't take yourself so seriously

**By stripping down an image to essential meaning,
an artist can amplify that meaning....**

— Scott McCloud

9 – connecting with an audience

- you must appeal to both the logical and the emotional
- if your content is worth talking about, then bring energy and passion to your delivery – there is no excuse for being dull
- don't hold back – if you are passionate, then let people know
- remember *hara hachi bu* – it is better to leave your audience satisfied yet yearning for a bit more of you than it is to leave your audience stuffed and feeling that they have had more than enough
- keep the lights on – the audience must be able to see you
- remove any barriers between you and the audience – use a wireless mic and remote control so that you can move around freely and naturally

What we think, we become.

— Buddha

conclusion

- the conclusion is there is no conclusion, there is only the next step and that next step is completely up to you
- for many this is just the beginning
- aim to design and deliver your presentation while allowing the principles of restraint, simplicity, and naturalness to be your gentle guide
- enjoy the journey

**A journey of a thousand miles begins with a
single step.**

— Lao-tzu