

# You Suck at PowerPoint, by @jessedee

## 5 Shocking Design Mistakes You need to Avoid

Approximately 350 PowerPoint presentations are given every second around the world, and approximately 99% suck. But it's not PowerPoint which sucks. It's the speaker (you) who needs to use it properly. Your slides are an aid, and not a crutch. Unfortunately, if they suck, so do you. Let's learn good presentation design from other people's mistakes with...

## 5 Shocking Design Mistakes You need to Avoid.

### Mistake 1: Too Much Info

- Don't vomit every piece of information on your slides.
- If you're going to put word for word what you're going to say, hand over the slides and take a seat instead. You're not giving a document, you're giving a presentation. If your audience is reading what you're saying, then what's the point of you being there?
- A good trick is to keep one main point per slide. This helps you with timing and prevents your audience from skipping ahead.
- Keep it relevant. Effective communication is knowing what to cut out, so be a merciless editor. Less slides means more time for interaction.
- Don't overdo it with senseless data. Do the hard work for your audience and turn that data into something which is meaningful.

### Mistake 2: Not Enough Visuals

- Deliver a bigger punch with strong visuals.
- There are endless sources of visuals you can sue to bring your presentation to life. A good place to start is [iStockPhoto.com](#): Royalty Free or [Compfight.com](#): Creative Commons, Free with conditions. If you're going to use standard Microsoft clipart, there's no hope for you, sorry.
- You don't have to use cheesy stock photos. Whichever visuals you use, just remember to design for this guy (anonymous person in a crowd). If it's unreadable, don't use it.

### Mistake 3: Crap Quality

Don't bore your audience with childish visuals. Invest time in learning great design.

- There are two shortcuts to great design:
  - 1) Buy it: Good design costs money. Invest in professional images and typeface. A little \$\$\$ can give you a significant advantage.
  - 2) Steal it: You can reverse engineer almost any good design. Take apart your favorite presentations, infographics, websites and figure out how it's done and remix it into something new. [EverythingIsARemix.info](#) is a great place to start to learn how to steal great design.
- A quick tip on typeface: DON'T USE %!#@& FONTS! Google "beautiful fonts" and you'll find plenty of handpicked fonts by some of the best designers. Here's an example of a free font that looks, um, delicious (various examples of the font named Delicious).

- While 95% of your colleagues use PowerPoint, it doesn't need to be your only option. For 22 years PowerPoint has been the standard for delivering presentation. But not anymore. Experiment with different presentation tools and see which one produces the best results.

## Mistake 4: Visual Vomit

- Whitespace is a good thing.
- Be mindful of spacing and alignment... and keep everything nice and tidy.
- Having a consistent use of colors, images & alignment gives a cohesive look to your presentation. It also helps to separate your presentation into recognizable sections.
  - Use a collection of visual assets that belong together...and always stick to a color scheme. ColorLovers.com is a great source of color schemes.
- And the most shocking design mistake...

## Mistake 5: Lack of Prep

Most presentations suck because not enough time went into making them. Period.

- You need to craft the perfect story, create beautiful looking slides to support it and then rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. ....and not the night before.
- An outstanding 1 hour presentation can take 30 hours or more of prep time. It's all about being organized and planning ahead.
  - Have a system for collecting your ideas to rework them into a masterpiece.
- 86% of top executives say that communicating with clarity directly impacts their career and income. Yet only 25% spend more than 2 hours on high-stakes presentations.
- design, don't just slap something together. If your presentation sucks, don't blame PowerPoint.

Let's recap...Mistakes to avoid:

- 1) Too much info
- 2) Not enough visuals
- 3) Horrible quality
- 4) Visual vomit
- 5) Lack of prep

But wait! A nicely designed presentation is not the most important part. Yes, the best speakers grip an audience by telling a story and showing some slides to support that, but... the boldest among them do away with slides entirely and go naked.

Before you become a master presentation designer, you must be a great storyteller first. One of the best resources to help you with this is the book Resonate, by Nancy Duarte.

I promise to never design a presentation that sucks ever again.

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