Working Party of Senior Budget Officials

SUGGESTIONS FOR POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

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SUGGESTIONS FOR POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS

1. **Keep it simple.** The less clutter on a slide, the easier it is for the audience to see and, when accompanied by a more complete verbal explanation, understand the slide. This applies to both slides with text and slides that use charts, graphs and tables. Page numbers are very helpful because of the need to refer to slides during and after the presentation, but identifying logos and even dates are best reserved for the first, and perhaps last, slide.

2. **The bigger the type, the better.** If you want the audience to read the slide, always try to use the biggest typeface possible for the slide in question. For example, if you wish to make 3 main points with an explanation for each point, use 4 slides, not one: the first slide should have as a heading what the 3 points refer to with each point listed below. Each of the subsequent 3 slides should have the individual point as the heading with whatever explanation is required listed below. Footnotes and other references in smaller type at the bottom of a slide are frequently impossible to read on either the slide as presented or in the printed version. If the footnote or reference is that important, use readable type on the slide or include a slide at the end with footnotes and/or references in readable type.

3. **Do not read your presentation.** Reading a presentation word for word—either from very detailed slides or from a prepared written speech—is monotonous and puts the audience to sleep. Of course, the less comfortable you are in the language in which you are presenting, the more you may have to rely on a written text, but avoid reading from it word for word as much as possible.

4. **Bullets are better than complete sentences.** Use bullets to highlight the most important items in your presentation and as a memory tool for you to emphasize these points as you speak. If you feel you must use bullets that are complete sentences instead of just words or phrases, don’t read the sentences word by word; use them as memory tools for you to emphasize verbally the points you want to make. If you want to include a specific quote word for word and read it to draw emphasis to it, put it on a separate slide and tell why you are doing this.
5. **Charts, graphs, and tables can help if they are easy to understand.** Remember that the goal of using a chart, graph, or table as opposed to just including the point in words is to help the audience better understand a point—not to demonstrate to the audience how adept you (or your assistant) are in utilizing the latest technology. Colour can help if the audience can see the different colours (avoid yellow), but don’t overuse it or it diminishes its effectiveness. Moreover, because copies of presentations are frequently made in back and white, use dotted and dashed lines and areas in addition to colour so that the differences are visible in the black and white copies too. Laser pointers can also help you refer to specific points on a chart, graph, or table as you talk.

6. **Handout copies of your slides before your presentation.** This allows the audience to make notes on the handouts of the points that are most important. Although this also means that many in the audience will be going from page to page on the handouts as you go from slide to slide, so what? The goal is to get the information across to the audience, not to have them watching you personally every minute of the presentation.

7. **Speak slowly.** The faster you go, the more difficult it is for the audience to understand your points, particularly with simultaneous translations. Rehearse your presentation; the more you do so, the more comfortable you will be in presenting it.

8. **The most common mistake presenters make is to present too much detail.** Presenters frequently have worked hard for a very long time to perform the research and analyses that supports their presentations, and thus there is a natural tendency to make a long, detailed presentation to demonstrate their hard work. But long, detailed presentations frequently don’t do a good job of getting the message to the audience. Rather they make it less likely that the audience will recognize the key points of the presentation. In addition, other problems such as cluttered slides and speaking too fast can arise because the speaker is trying to cover too much ground. It is better to strip your message down to the essential points with only such supporting detail as is necessary to make your case persuasively. Your work (and you!) look better the more straightforward and clearer your message.