

Good CONTROL

Art in the corporate environment

Welcome to another edition of 'Good Control' the Cruse Control newsletter and a very happy Spring to you all, at last!

In this edition we take up the subject of presentations and hope to pass on some of our hard won and often challenged, expertise in this area!

This is kicked off with the help of Stuart Price whose article in an old old edition of the MacUser subscribers newsletter, 'MacUser 2', took the words right out of our mouths back in 1997 when we first saw it.

Well done Mr Price, almost four years later your article is still valid! Perhaps that's not such a good thing, but we'll take it up now anyway!

So with the very kind permission of the wonderful MacUser (leading Mac Magazine), it's equally wonderful editor, Karen Harvey and the no less wonderful writer himself Stuart Price, we are including here the very same article.

My final point is that we share the views of this

coming article and not least of all through experience.

Although primarily a Mac based company, our PC experience is current, constantly updating, and dates back to the days of DOS. Therefore, by combining experience on both of these platforms, we have been putting art in the corporate environment for longer than the company has been registered. C.V. available upon request!

In addition to this - we have found an excellent web site for defining all those technical terms that bamboozle even the most 'in the know' techies. It's <http://www.techweb.com/encyclopedia/>. Go and get an armoury of definitions and put your colleagues to shame!

All that's left then is for me to pass you over to the article and wish you very happy reading.

Enjoy!



Paul Cruse
Founder

Fine Art?

This article, originally entitled "Art in corporate presentations?" is from November '97's MacUser subscribers newsletter, written by Stuart Price.

A cobbler's children are always the worst shod kids on the street. The computer industry suffers a similar fate when it comes to corporate presentations material. This is without doubt, the worst showcase for what technology can do for you.

Very few presenters seem able to master simple computer commands to flick through the slides, and there's always a stray dialog box that flips up somewhere along the line, confusing the poor duffer handling the

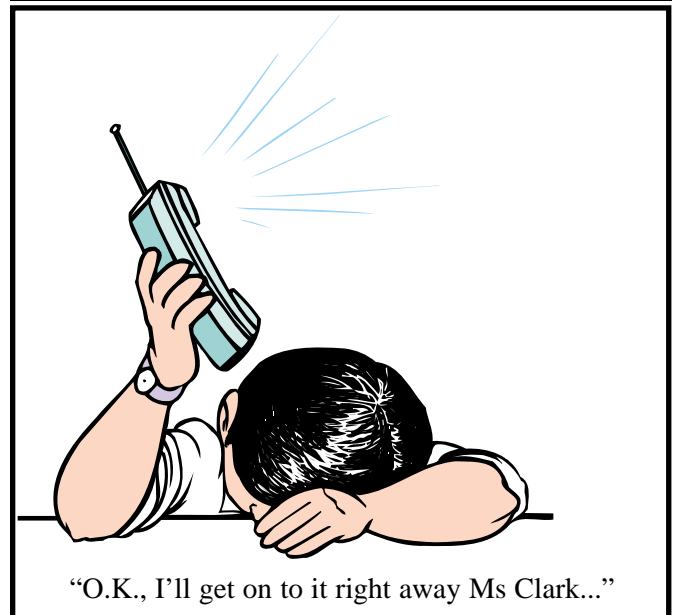
controls. Sometimes, to relieve the mediocrity, the computer crashes completely. Good on it.

Two conferences this year have only made me feel more frustrated. At Millia in February, presenters apologised for the quality of their slides and one even hoped that we'd "forgive him". Well, frankly, no, we won't. This a meeting of the best minds in worldwide multimedia, so you'd hope the presentations material would at least be presentable. So, no, you'll not be forgiven. You can't give a piano recital to a group of professional piano players and keep apologising for hitting the wrong keys.

Copperplate Barney

Cont'd back page

4. The importance of: Knowing your limits...



At the IDC European IT Forum in September, things were just as bad. Presented to some of the most senior IT professionals from around Europe were the same jaggy typefaces, bitmapped images and blue backgrounds.

One IDC analyst had a slide simply composed of the symbol font; he explained that he didn't know what was wrong with this slide and that analysts didn't really know anything about "the technology". This is simply sloppy from an organisation that expects you to pay good - and large - money to attend. You might not be able to take a motherboard to pieces, but at least work out how to run a slide presentation.

Is it that presentations programs are just so crap? Or is it that the people who create slides are not designers but insist on "doing their own slides" because the programs "make it so easy"? These programs must be able to

produce anti-aliased type. They must be able to import graphics without bitmapping them. And it really can't be an excuse that they're being shown on a massive screen. Yes, the resolution on these projectors is not great, but no one's asking illuminated type or complex graphics. Like life, there are limitations you work to; you don't ignore them.

Perhaps our expectations of presentations material has been dragged so low after 10 years of "desktop presentations" that most people just don't care any more. Well, I do.

So, if you can't do it properly on screen, get a set of OHP acetates designed in QuarkXPress and a projector and present high-tech in a low-tech way. At least then the technology won't be made to look like a pile of knob.

Stuart Price.
MacUser II Nov. '97

Thank you Stuart for letting us re-produce this. Our full response is in the centre spread....

Quick Glossary of Terms

These definitions apply to the context in which the words are used in this Newsletter only. Other definitions may exist for some of these words.

Bespoke: Custom made to one's own requirements. From Old English 'be-spoken' - to request.

Sans Serif: Without serifs - Serifs are the short horizontal lines added at the tops and bottoms of the vertical part of the letter. Helvetica and Arial are sans-serif fonts.

256 colours: Literally - a monitor able to display 256 different colours. This means that some more subtle shades available on a monitor with abilities to display 32,000 colours or more, will convert to its nearest colour match on a

256 monitor (possibly with some ghastly results). An image can also be a 256 colour image - which means it is only made up of 256 colours.

Bitmapped: a picture on a computer represented as a grid of dots (a map of 'bits').

Pixelated: Showing lots of small squares (pixels) in a bitmapped image rather than a smooth image. An image on screen is made up of a certain number of pixels per inch. Pixelation is caused by making an image larger than its number of dots can cope with therefore displaying squares rather than a smooth image.

Wizards: A way of creating a presentation 'as if by magic' all correctly formatted. You are guided through the set-up of the presentation on-screen.

What do you do?

Here we are then, here it is, another reminder of the services and products that we provide, just in case any of you were unsure! Cruse Control are a bespoke database, graphic design, creative services and 'off-the-shelf' software company. We have extensive experience in the corporate environment and our*

clients include some very recognisable names. We undertake projects from people who we feel we can help and work with in a friendly, professional, ethical and above all fruitful manner. We are not purely a sales driven organisation, our clients are part of the team. If that sounds right for you, give us a call.

Busy?

Is it your responsibility to get things done? Yes No

Want some help? Yes No

If you answered YES to both the above - you need

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Presenting... Presentations

So you want presentations to look good? And what's wrong with blue backgrounds anyway?...

History

We have been producing presentations for the best part of 14 years now - dating back to the days of Lotus Freelance on a PC and Aldus Persuasion version 2.1. The only ways to show presentations in those days was not on-screen but to get 35mm slides made or print out OHP's (overhead projector transparencies).

Well now you can "do it all yourself" - on your desktop PC or laptop, take it with you and plug it in. Everyone can huddle round your machine or you can 'simply' plug it into a projector and show it to a 300 strong audience.

But if, despite all this, Stuart's article made some of you squirm - here's a few hints to help you out in the future.

Bad Design

We weren't all born renaissance artists now were we? *Solution:* Get a template designed for your company and then get taught how to use it (or nominate someone to learn). To try and keep some kind of corporate identity, it might even be an idea to take some ideas from your own web site, use the typeface and even some of the graphics and the colour scheme. This helps keep a "theme" to your companies screen-based presentations.

You could also take a few hints from this article and apply them yourself. Then learn how to present with it.

Which fonts shall I use?

Keep the number of different typefaces to a minimum. Try using a Sans* Serif (block style font such as Arial, Helvetica, Futura) for the main body of the text, and bold and italic versions for emphasis. Arial is excellent for cross-platform use as the font is virtually identical on both Macs and PC's.

Serif fonts such as Times and Palatino (serif means with the little 'coved edges') are not as easy to read on a screen - but can be used with discretion. Palatino is a good alternative to Times and is easier to read.

Try to keep the font size at least 16pt and above on bullet points - but not more than 28pt (on a standard 24cm x 18cm screen presentation), and do not type too much copy. 5 bullets per slide is ample - this makes them easier to read. Your speech itself should be the main source of the audiences information.

Bitmapped pictures

Training on how to create pictures in the correct file format, size and pixel depth would be the best answer. Here goes...

- preferably convert all files to 256* colours - this will ensure that no matter which monitor it is shown on it will be able to display all the colours you have chosen
- if the presentation is to be shown on a PC - get the images saved in a PC format
- the best file formats are *jpeg* and *tiff* as the majority of packages can accept these - but do check (before the person supplying the images goes home) that they do actually work
- 72 dots per inch is all that is required for the size of the image file - as this is all the screen will display anyway. This will cut down on the size of your files and increase the speed at which your presentation will run. If your image needs to fill the whole slide - make sure that it is only supplied in exactly the right size; too small and it will look pixelated*, too big, and it will make your presentation slow

What's happened to the colours!

If you checked your presentation in the office and it looked great, then you see it projected on the big screen and the colours have gone haywire - it was probably created in 32,000 colours or even 16million colours, and now the monitor you are using can only cope with 256 colours. For safety - create them in 256 colours to start with.

These show what a dramatic difference the switching of colours can make. Some good advice, if presenting in a darkened room - use a dark background for your slides, if presenting from a screen (back lit or computer monitor) in daylight - use a light background. It makes them easier to read. And try to stick to a simple colour scheme too. Using shades of two colours for graphs makes them look more 'designed' rather than thrown together.

Blue backgrounds - yellow text

No real problem here - at least they are smart, but any colour can be used providing it has design integrity and plenty of contrasts - useful tip - don't get too inventive with the wizards*.

Clip art or not to clip art?

Don't get too clever with clip-art, blends, transitions, shadows etc - it just looks awful - and your machine is more likely to crash in the midst of a whizzing rabbit or a roaring lion - an anti-climax.

Launching Internet pages

If you wanted to fire off into your internet or intranet site during the presentation - try and use a downloaded version of the site (with links adjusted to work on your machine), or screenshots - it will work much quicker than dialling up live over a telephone line and is far less likely to crash. Make sure that all the applications for any other files you want to launch are loaded onto the machine too.

Plug and play?

If you are not taking your own computer with you, make sure that the place where you are doing your presentation has the software that you have, (and the fonts). If you are using your own computer - always take a back-up kit and paper copies in case both fail. If the site does not have your software - get them to purchase a copy or provide a copy yourself.... a "borrowed" version is not good enough.

How to operate a presentation

Usually a down arrow or a mouse click is sufficient - if the software has to be told what method to use, get the presentation designer to make the buttons work in a very simple way, and practice before the big day.

Handouts

Many presenters request that their whole presentation be printed - one slide per A4 page - in colour - for the audience to write notes on. It is much better for the audience to be supplied with a small image at the top of each A4 portrait page and plenty of space for notes underneath.

Time to prepare

And finally, as you can see there are solutions to all the problems mentioned by Stuart. It's about knowing your parameters and planning a bit more. A willingness on the part of the presenter to get a bit more involved in the creation of their own presentation is very useful - but if you really don't want to fail - learn about the 'techie' stuff too - or call in a professional - after all, it is your company's PR that's at stake if you don't.

PowerPoint

The leading edge presentations software today is Microsoft PowerPoint. For a free downloadable 'Cruse Controlled' (PDF) Training manual, go to www.crusecontrol.com - then click on 'Resources'.

Fact File

Here is a short-list of well-known companies for whom we have helped create presentations

- ✓ BBC Worldwide
- ✓ Debenhams Retail Plc
- ✓ Eurostar/Railtrack
- ✓ Global Internet
- ✓ Goldman Sachs
- ✓ Granada Sky Broadcasting
- ✓ W H Smith

And here is a short list 'do's and don'ts' to summarise:-

- ✗ Don't prepare too late
- ✗ Don't present without practising
- ✓ Do keep it simple
- ✗ Don't use too many colours
- ✓ Do get help if you need it!