

Foreword

The rapid emergence of visual information in digital media has caused a dramatic shift in the way we communicate. Today, words alone simply cannot capture the depth of expression possible with pictures, video, and animations. Researchers, in fact, now speak of 'visual fluency' to describe the modern use of imagery in everyday conversation. Presentation professionals follow suit by using the phrase 'visual communication' to emphasize the importance of sight-related expression in business and education. Television, movies, the Internet, cell phones, PDAs ... all of us are barraged with rich, visual experiences every day. In the past, human information exchanges primarily revolved around writing, printing and talking; now they also explode with colors, shapes and movement.

As a result, presentation software such as PowerPoint has become about as commonly known as, well, the kitchen sink, with speakers applying it across all imaginable subjects. We who speak publicly clearly have a burning desire for our messages to take visual form. But what does that mean? What IS visual communication anyway? Just because we CAN show something, does that guarantee such visual expression will be effective?

This guide explores a style of PowerPoint communication that allows a speaker to craft visual messages on the fly, with the ease of having a cafe conversation. Learning the techniques described here is a journey that surely doesn't happen overnight. In fact, the pages in this guide are but a quick summary of more than 400 pages found in the [full Relational Presentation textbooks](#). Mastering THAT level of detail does take time and practice. On the other hand, such effort may turn out to be one of the most rewarding activities you'll ever pursue. Starting right now, your delivery style can transform into a flexible, visual dance, where slide content forms an interactive, customizable language. Presenting this way turns public speaking into a satisfying experience many relational speakers genuinely enjoy and anticipate.

We hope you enjoy the trip. Let us know how it goes. Aspire team members will be happy to assist with questions along the way. And to increase your development speed, see the last page of this guide for access to special promotional codes that reduce the cost of workshop sessions and books. HAVE FUN!

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Introduction

This guide explores the emerging field of Relational Presentation, where media-based, interactive performances take visual dialogue to a new level. Speakers tired of traditional, static, linear, sleep-inducing PowerPoint performances will find the following pages a welcome relief. You'll see PowerPoint turned upside down and inside out. In this context, the 'next slide' no longer dictates what a presenter must say—because the next slide is whatever you want it to be, always. Here we begin a journey that one day may become a passionate quest as you pursue new approaches to connecting with audiences.

By some estimates, PowerPoint users create millions of new slides EVERY SINGLE DAY. Imagine the staggering impact such widespread application is having on businesses, educational institutions and organizations. Even so, not everyone agrees PowerPoint's influence is always positive. In fact many communications experts and business leaders discourage PowerPoint's use entirely, claiming it often hurts speaker effectiveness. They cite problems such as audience boredom, slide shows that drone on endlessly from one bullet point to the next, and presenter inflexibility. From their perspective, PowerPoint users tend to lock themselves into a static, linear mindset where they lose sight of interacting with, entertaining and effectively educating their audiences.

Many of us who have sat through (and delivered!) such presentations wonder, "Well, OK. Is there a better way?" The answer is a resounding "yes!" but it doesn't involve throwing out PowerPoint and like software. Doing so would diminish the enormous potential visual media offers. Instead, we must throw away our outdated perceptions. Digital presentation doesn't have to be stagnant and boring. It can be, in fact, stunningly flexible and amazingly interactive. It can tap into people's emotions and interests at the deepest levels. But accomplishing these goals means we must approach audiences differently. It's time to rethink what the word *presentation* really means in our modern, digital, visual age.

Our mission is to help speakers learn and use these ideas with a conversational ease that greatly enliv-

What Is Relational Presentation?

ens their performances. It's the best way we know to become more confident and comfortable when facing an audience. We also hope to see professionals trained in how to build visual platforms needed for supporting Relational Presentation activities.

Relational Presentation is the process of dynamically customizing visual or auditory content to the needs of an audience. It can run the gamut between a speaker selecting slides in completely random order during a question-and-answer session to subtly (or invisibly) shifting focus throughout an otherwise normal-looking show. Some techniques are intentionally obvious and others are known only to the presenter. For example, within a standard linear show, a presenter might have the option of choosing between several parallel, yet hidden tracks.



A slide show might feature two different ways of displaying an example: long (five slides) or short (two slides). Additionally, it might offer an option for skipping the example altogether. The presenter chooses which track is most helpful in the moment. Let's say time is running short in today's performance. Ignoring the example and continuing with remaining slides might be the best choice. On another day, though, audience members show particular interest in the topic under discussion, or seem especially confused by its implications. In that case, the longer example could provide critical extra detail.

Regardless of which track is chosen, viewers typically don't even know a choice was possible, or made,

What Is Relational Presentation? (continued)

because track selection is invisible to them. All they see is the result, which may well look like a continuous flow of slides. The key idea is the presenter's ability to gracefully customize display in ways that best serve audience needs. In effect, his or her role is to deliver good viewer customer service, doing everything possible to sculpt messages for maximum relevance.

Does this 'random selection' process, therefore, imply performances are chaotic, disorganized or completely spontaneous? Absolutely not! Visually interactive presentation IS NOT a free-for-all where the speaker loses control or meanders aimlessly within a sea of slides. On the contrary, relational delivery is highly organized, methodical, and surprisingly predictable in many respects. Two absolute principles apply: a relational speaker must ALWAYS be in total control of slide selection, and must ALWAYS be able to find any required slide quickly, on demand, even if thousands of choices exist. Think of a relational presenter's role as being like a jockey riding a powerful, well-disciplined horse. In theory the horse could run in a hundred different directions at any moment. Instead, the jockey carefully and methodically finesses and applies its raging power towards winning the race.

Learning how to arrange content in ways that facilitate such fast and easy retrieval is beyond the scope of this guide and is taught as part of Aspire's *Seven Phases* approach in the full-course textbooks and workshop sessions. The principle, though, is to organize information into 'clusters within clusters within clusters'. Each cluster leads the speaker automatically to the next group of slides. Finding information becomes as easy as tying one's shoes, requiring little thought most of the time.

Here are a few more examples of Relational Presentation techniques in action:

Perhaps you have 30 minutes to deliver a speech but the previous speaker just ran 10 minutes over. Now you must condense your topics. Maximizing relevance in this case might mean gracefully skipping a

few less important slides and focusing on high-priority content, rather than rushing through every slide in the show, trying to reach conclusion materials on



time. When using Relational Presentation methods, the audience never sees the slides you spontaneously choose NOT to show.

Another example might be discovering your audience (or class) knows subject matter more (or less) than expected. Rather than forcing overly complex content, or boring them with trivialities, adjust focus on the spot to viewer levels of understanding. In other words, be prepared to offer variations of



the original messaging goals. Perhaps you are a salesperson and your prospect tells you to "get to the point." It's probably not a good idea to continue talking about company history, awards won, or whatever else happens to be next in the canned

What Is Relational Presentation? (continued)

sales spiel. Plan for such moments in advance. Be prepared to immediately access contingency content that addresses his or her interests or concerns. In this context, you might even encourage viewers to help you create the presentation on the fly, by allowing them to point out items of possible interest or wave off topics of little value. Valuable hot-button issues may emerge along the way that previously were unknown.



Relational Presentation methods rely heavily on the use of hyperlinks, both within and between individual slide shows. Interlinked shows create what amounts to a *visual database*, also known as a *Presentation Network*. Presentation Networks resemble Web sites in many ways, except they are based on PowerPoint rather than HTML. Presentation Networks, in turn, are made up of what are known as Presentation Objects. A Presentation Object is similar to an individual page on a Web site. It is a single slide show with a small number of slides (usually between one and five) that are all related to each other. Thus a car dealer might design a Presentation Object for a particular car model, with separate slides showing front, rear, side, and interior views. Additional Presentation Objects might represent other models on the lot. Then the dealer can link these Objects together to form a Presentation Network, thus providing random access to all of them. "You're interested in a Lexus ES? OK. Would you like to see what the interior looks like?" Presentation Objects can be nested within each other, allowing the presenter to drill down into as much detail as necessary, or stay

shallow. The dealer might have further information available regarding crash tests or financing terms.

Relational Presentation is called 'relational', in part, because it mimics the logic of a relational database. Just as a database stores each piece of data only once, individual slides in a Presentation Network exist in only one location, yet can be accessed at any time, from any other slide in the network.

This characteristic is both efficient for designers and practical for speakers wishing to show slides in different contexts. A network, for example, might contain pictures of company products. On a given day, a trainer will use a particular product slide in one context to introduce a learning topic, while at the same time a salesperson displays it to point out important features and an executive shows it during a conference as part of a showcase. That single slide, built once and occupying only one spot in the network, serves multiple purposes for multiple people. Duplicates are unnecessary. The content is accessible by whomever, whenever, for whatever reason.

As strange as it may sound, many relational presenters consider their networks to be 'alive' in a sense. This powerful collection of high-quality, reusable slides continues to grow as knowledge, needs, experience and goals expand. The Aspire network, for instance (used for training, sales, speaking engagements, and consultation), now contains more than 1,000 individual slide shows and regularly expands. The 14,000+ slides it holds are full of rich imagery, animations, video clips, audio clips, imbedded objects and Visual Basic code. Certainly revisions and maintenance occur on a regular basis, but we seldom discard anything. Who knows? Material no longer needed today may come in very handy a year or two from now during spontaneous dialogue with a trainee or client. After adopting a visually interactive presentation style, you probably will perceive your slides as having similarly reusable value.

[CLICK HERE](#) to watch demonstration clips on the Aspire site that give a more in-depth overview of Relational Presentation techniques.

How Do I Use It?

Relational Presentation applications are as varied as people's imaginations. Here are a few:

1) **Skipping or Adding Content:** If you are running out of time or realize along the way that a few upcoming slides are irrelevant to your audience, simply skip them. Conversely, if during the talk you remember a slide in another part of the network that will be helpful, go get it, show it, and then return to where you left off in the current presentation.

2) **Answering Random Audience Questions:** Imagine being able to respond, "That's a great question. Let me SHOW you something that might help" or perhaps "That reminds me of something Joan and I worked on last year. Here's what we discovered." Such dynamic use of visuals is a powerful way of attracting and holding people's attention because you are directly addressing their interests.

3) **Changing Focus:** As diligently as we prepare and organize our content, unexpected challenges or opportunities often arise in live speaking venues. Perhaps a conversation with an audience member five minutes before your talk sparks a brilliant idea or reveals an unknown fact. In that case you may decide to subtly or dramatically adjust the event's agenda to take advantage of the situation. Sticking with the original plan simply because you have a 'prepared' PowerPoint show might be silly under the circumstances—so use your freedom to adjust.

4) **Drilling Down into Hidden Detail:** A fun and effective technique is to have hidden information available on key slides. For example, turn a graph into a switchboard. Allow the presenter to click regions of the graph, revealing sets of data underlying the summary data. Many of our slides incorporate hidden zones a presenter can click to pull up more information on related subjects. With such strategies in place, a speaker can choose whether or not to display detail, based on its perceived relevance.

5) **Accessing Supporting Materials:** Most networks contain what we call a *Resources* section. This area holds categorically organized content that

typically is not part of a speaker's primary agenda, yet may be very helpful in several ways, for answering questions, showing spontaneous examples, or providing reference information. Resources categories often include groupings of video clips, picture stories, academic references, Web links, supporting factual information, or anything else that might play a useful supplementary role, even if unplanned initially. Presenters rely on this kind of information for adding occasional depth, but only if needed and when time allows. Typically, every slide in the network links directly to the Resources section, meaning a speaker is never more than a click away from this potentially vast reservoir of interactive wealth.

6) **Varying Endings:** Adding a *Conclusions* section to the network allows the presenter to end performances in what seems like the most appropriate manner. A Conclusions section contains a switchboard that offers various conclusion choices. It might have a short, medium, or long option (one, two, or three slides), a call to action, a humorous closing, or a variety of profound quotes. In the latter case, some quotes might be more appropriate with one group than another, such as a group of all women versus all men. Having the ability to select the most appropriate ending on the fly eliminates the pressure of trying to anticipate it in advance.

Realize, also, that Relational Presentation applications vary according to context. A salesperson, for example, approaches visual interactivity differently than, say, a trainer, educator or conference speaker. Sales networks tend to be highly categorical in nature. That is, information is grouped according to similarity rather than placed into theme-based linear shows. Trainers, on the other hand, often stay mostly linear, but break the linear components into small modular units. This strategy allows them to move through topics in a systematic, sequential manner, while maintaining flexibility. [CLICK HERE](#) to view brief video demonstrations that examine contextual applications in more detail. And [CLICK HERE](#) to explore more about the benefits of using relational methods and how they can enhance your speaking activities.

How Does It Work? An Introduction to Navigation

Navigation—moving around between individual slides and slide shows—is a crucial part of Relational Presentation strategy. We call navigation within a single slide show *Internal Navigation*, whereas jumping between separate slide shows is called *External Navigation*. Most networks take advantage of both internal and external links.

Internal Navigation is simple and easy to build. Several *Navigation Styles* utilize this linking approach, such as *Showcase*, *In-line* and *Zone navigation*. [VISIT HERE](#) to explore common navigation styles popular with relational presenters.

Let's say you are a teacher. You build a normal slide show holding content to be covered during a class period. On the appropriate day, the material is shown in standard, linear order as usual. Now it's a couple weeks later and you are responding to a student's question. Suddenly there is a realization that one or two of those slides from the former show would work well as a quick review, before moving on with the regular lesson plan. Internal navigation makes that on-demand selection process fast and easy.

It is possible to base a small network on internal navigation alone, if a content collection contains around 100 slides or fewer. The 'network' in this case is merely a large, linear slide show containing internal links that allow random access to slides or groupings of slides within the show (Custom Shows). Making such a single-show network has advantages. The structure is easily portable, for example. You can e-mail or upload the entire network as a single PowerPoint file. It also is relatively easy to organize, build and maintain. Plus you can connect several of these smaller networks together later to form a larger, more powerful externally linked structure.

The main disadvantage of single-show networks is that their file size often becomes quite large, especially if holding a large number of pictures. Large file size translates into decreased performance and delays while presenting. And because most networks eventually contain far more than 100 slides, incorporating external navigation becomes a must.

External Navigation involves linking slide shows to each other. Most PowerPoint users are unfamiliar with external hyperlinking, but the procedures are straight forward. In the [RELATIONAL PRESENTATION BOOKS](#), we dedicate an entire chapter to discussing all there is to know—or you can consult PowerPoint's Help files for the basics. When one show links to another, clicking the link automatically opens the target show in Slide Show mode. This means relational speakers can jump smoothly from one presentation to another, without leaving show mode. Audiences hardly even notice the change.

While externally linked performances may well resemble standard scrolling in appearance, that's where similarities end. The presenter now has enormous flexibility to be visually expressive in meaningful ways. **Think about the potential. You can be in one show and instantly access any other show in your collection, at any time during the performance, even if there are thousands from which to choose.** Becoming comfortable with external navigation gives a speaker unlimited freedom for finding supportive material during interactions.

The image below represents a special hybrid navigation style called *Nested* navigation that incorporates both internal and external links. The text-based links on the upper left are external and the thumbnail links on the bottom left are internal. Slide content appears center right. Again, see video demonstrations on the Aspire site to view this navigation style in action. Nested navigation is one of the most powerful, speaker-friendly strategies we've ever seen.

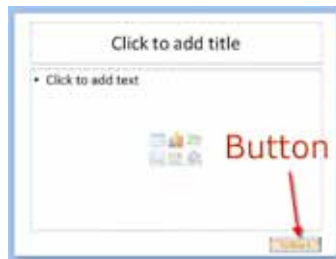


Building Navigation

OK, so you are jumping up and down, all excited. You just can't wait to get started with visually interactive presentation. What now?

Adding what are known as *Navigation Elements* to your slides is the first step. A Navigation Element is an object (usually either a shape or a picture) that sits on top of the slide pane and acts as a source for a hyperlink. In other words, when you click an active Navigation Element, PowerPoint immediately takes you to that link's destination, usually either another slide in the same show or a separate (external) show. A Navigation Element might also be a grouping of such objects. Here are the five arrangements we recommend:

Button: A button is the most basic form of Navigation Element. As mentioned, it usually is either a shape or small picture (thumbnail) located somewhere on the slide pane, most often at the bottom so as not to unduly distract from the slide's primary content. A button might be used to access the first slide in the show, trigger an animation, open another slide show, access a Web site, run code, or any number of other functions.



Bar: When a group of buttons is arranged horizontally in a row, the group is called a *Bar*. Bar elements are found most commonly in In-line navigation (at the slide's bottom) and wherever navigation components must be as discreet and out of the way as possible, such as when important content covers the entire slide.

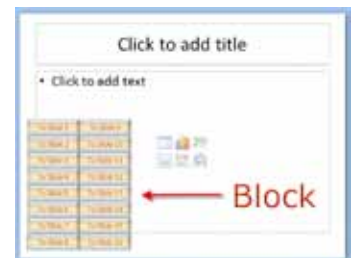


Panel: A vertical arrangement of buttons is called a *Panel*. Panel elements take up more space on the slide pane but offer the advantage of vertical stack-

ing. This fact becomes important when elements are made up of shapes. Notice that bar elements limit you to around seven or eight shapes across before they become too small for recognizable text. A panel element, on the other hand, might easily hold twenty or more shapes without issue.



Block: A combination of bar and panel is called a *Block*. Look back at the previous example of Nested navigation and you'll notice the external navigation at the top is a panel of shapes and the internal navigation at bottom is a block of thumbnail images. When making block elements, we almost always use small thumbnails, rather than shapes, because such images are more space efficient.



Switchboard: When a slide contains one or more Navigation Elements, without otherwise displaying meaningful content of interest to the audience, it is called a *Switchboard*. Switchboards serve a single, important purpose: to move a presenter quickly somewhere else in the network. They offer choices for traveling down various branches of content.

We'll see in a moment that most networks feature a slide called a *Main Switchboard*, which serves a purpose similar to a home page on a Web site. A presenter accesses this switchboard, and then clicks one of its links to reach desired content. The Main Switchboard itself contains no meaningful content.

Switchboards often lead to lower switchboards. For example, a link on your Main Switchboard might read 'Products', and not surprisingly it opens the 'Products' switchboard. That switchboard, in turn, might feature links for 'USA', 'Canada', 'China', etc., which then open the respective country switchboards. As such, the user finds desired material very quickly.

Components of a Presentation Network

Once comfortable with adding Navigation Elements to slides, begin thinking about the bigger picture. How do your topics fit together in a larger messaging system? Answering that question makes possible the next step—building the network structure.

You may be wondering at this point, “Do I REALLY have to take the time to build a large structure full of switchboards and interconnected slide shows? Wasn’t adding navigation to my current shows enough?” Well, not really. Think about it this way:

Let’s say you are having a conversation with a friend in a cafe about a new movie. The conversation flows interactively in different directions as you talk about scenes, characters, and plot. Then your friend wants to change the subject and talk about something else. At that moment, all the previous flexibility you had with movie topics is irrelevant. If you can’t apply the same flexibility to whatever new subject arises, the conversation is dead.

The same is true of interactive presentation. Navigating within a particular show or topic is good, but you also must be able to jump quickly to other related topics. Having a well-built network structure in place empowers you with the visual vocabulary necessary for expressing ideas across a broad range of related subject matter.

So, with that perspective in mind, let’s examine the components found in most networks. These structures are merely suggestions. Your network may contain all, most, or few of them, depending on your preferences.

Cover Slide Show: It’s good to place a *Cover* slide show at the very top of the network hierarchy. This show contains only one slide and, as the name implies, acts like the cover of a book. The presenter physically opens it before the performance begins, and from there accesses all remaining content in the network via hyperlinks. As such, the Cover is a doorway and is the **ONLY** show manually opened. It serves three primary purposes:

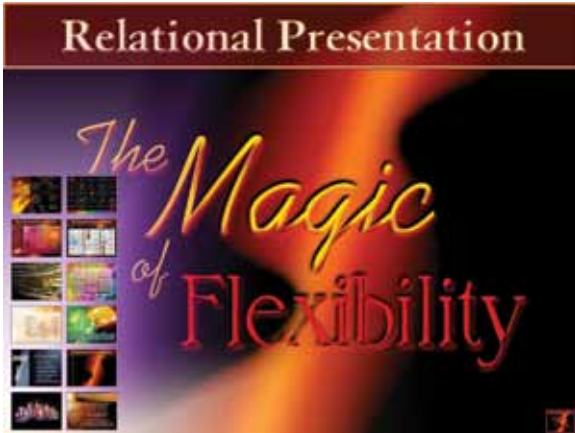


a) **Branding:** Because the Cover is the first image viewers see when entering the room, it provides a ‘first impression’ before you ever say a word. In a sense the Cover is like a generic title slide that introduces the entire network and all the wisdom you have to offer. It should, therefore, contain strong branding elements, along with an attractive, simple design.

b) **Link to the Main Switchboard:** The Cover show normally links directly to the network’s Main Switchboard (described in a moment). In other words, it opens the Main Switchboard and gives the presenter access to all available content.

c) **Shutdown Macro:** When PowerPoint opens a slide show via hyperlink, it places that target show in a separate window on top of the current show window. Clicking another hyperlink opens another window, and so forth. By the end of a typical performance, it is possible to have many open windows stacked on top of each other like pancakes. As you explore Relational Presentation methods more deeply, you’ll probably come to GREATLY appreciate this aspect of PowerPoint’s design because it enables marvelous optical illusions. Nevertheless, a fact of life is that you must close all those open windows at the end of a performance. To do so quickly and automatically, we place a link on the Cover that runs a small macro (Visual Basic code). Your Cover show should contain this macro. To receive a blank Cover show with it imbedded, e-mail us and we’ll send the show by attachment.

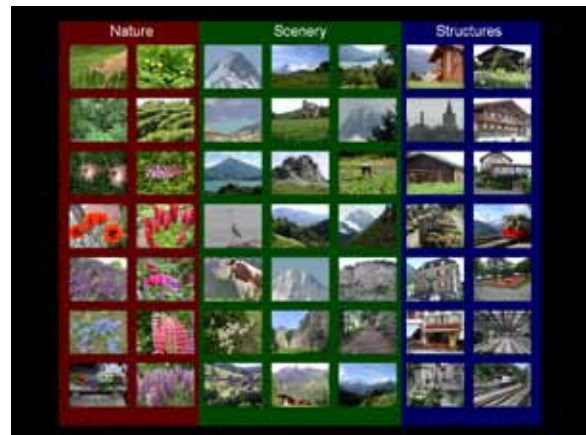
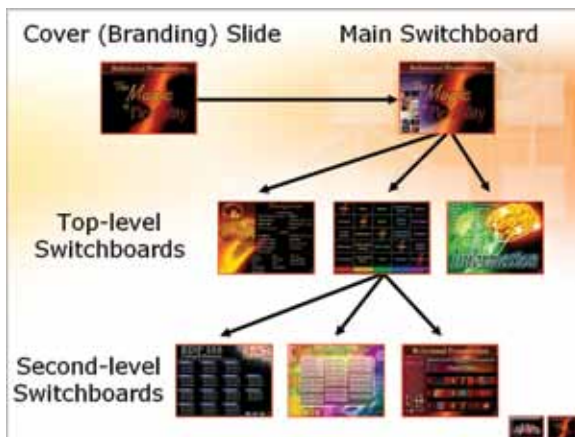
Components of a Presentation Network (continued)



ements. Take advantage of the fact that an audience normally sees this slide over and over during a talk, as part of navigation activities. Show them quality and branding with each return. Notice we intentionally designed the Aspire Main Switchboard to closely resemble the Cover. As a result, the same branding elements carry throughout all our performances.

Subswitchboards: As your network expands and becomes more complex, subswitchboards provide a powerful way of organizing content, allowing you to divide main categories into subcategories, subsubcategories, and so forth. For example, you might divide PAST PROJECTS by CITY and then again by YEAR. This enables a presenter to rapidly find information about a specific project, in a certain city, completed in 2001. Subswitchboards can be as sim-

Main Switchboard: Most large networks are built around a special show (again normally containing only one slide) called a *Main Switchboard*. This show is similar to the home page of a Web site. A relational speaker starts with this slide to access any major branch of content and frequently returns here to select subsequent branches. It is like the network's 'brain' connected to the central nervous system.



ple or complex as you like and can have groupings of subtopics. Note: As a practical consideration, we rarely go down more than two levels of subswitchboards and always integrate navigation buttons on all slides leading back to previous levels.

Conclusions Section: If you use conclusion slides, consider adding a special *Conclusions Section* to hold such material and make this section available from every slide in your network. Being able to gracefully and easily navigate to conclusion slides at any time is a practical and comforting strategy for many interactive speakers. If the talk seems to be running long, they can access conclusion content on

The Main Switchboard links to what are known as *Top-level Categories*. There are the 'biggest of the big' groupings of topics. Examples might be: PRODUCTS, SERVICES, PROJECTS, COMPANY POLICIES, HUMAN RESOURCES, REFERENCE MATERIAL, etc. Usually these top-level categories have their own unique switchboards as well (discussed next).

As with the Cover, the Main Switchboard should feature high-quality design and additional branding el-

Components of a Presentation Network (continued)

demand, whenever they want, and not have to feel rushed during the wrap-up phase.

Consider designing this section in a way that offers a variety of ending possibilities. As mentioned, having the flexibility to give a shorter or longer conclusion can be very helpful. Likewise, sometimes a humorous close is appropriate, whereas on other occasions an emotional appeal, a more serious story, or a quote might work better. Give yourself the freedom to make these decisions in real time.

Resources Section: In our opinion, EVERY network should contain a *Resources Section*. This categorical reservoir of slides can be large or small, but having it in some capacity is extremely useful.



As mentioned earlier, this section contains supplementary and reference material that is not considered 'primary content' in the sense that the presenter does not absolutely plan on showing it during a particular performance. However, any slide available here may indeed be beneficial at any moment during interactions. Perhaps audience members give you a collective look of confusion while discussing a topic. You say, "Hmm...it seems like this topic would benefit from a little more explanation. Do you guys want to see an example of what I'm talking about here?" That example wasn't necessarily planned in advance, but it sits waiting in the Resources Section, ready to be displayed instantly if or when needed.

Here is a variety of categories that might be included in a Resources Section:

- Pictures
- Cartoons
- Picture Stories
- Showcases, such as:
 - Products
 - Areas of Expertise
 - Awards
 - Employee Profiles
 - Completed Projects
 - Marketing/Ad Campaigns
 - Emotional Triggers
 - Optical Illusions
 - Sensory Stimulations
 - Contact Information (multiple locations)
 - OPW (other people's work)
- Conclusions
- Video
- Audio
- Animations
- PowerPoint Libraries
- Automated Slide Shows
- Quotes
- Books (that you recommend)
- Articles (that you recommend)
- Web Links
- Tools (that you recommend)
- Games and Mixers
- Calls to Action
- Associations and Conferences (you recommend)
- Training Opportunities
- Partners (profiles of partnerships and projects)
- Services (you provide)
- Procedures (explanations of stages or steps)
- Solutions (a section for handling objections)
- Model Projects (feature key clients/references)
- Endorsements (publicity, recommendations)

Other Network Components: The textbooks also describe other important categories you may wish to add to your presentation network, such as picture stories, primary shows, collections and seed presentations.

Yeah, but What About...?

Adopting a visually interactive presentation style requires a substantial mindset change, no doubt about it. It also requires dedication, flexibility and creativity on your part. You may be thinking, "Well, I don't know. Maybe interactive presentation won't work so well in my situation. What about...?"

Feeling unsure about leaving the standard presentation model behind is very, very common. So in that case you certainly are not alone. Here are a few initial concerns others have shared with us over the years and what we have found to be true as a result. Perhaps these scenarios can help guide your decision making as well.

This sounds like a lot of work. It looks interesting but I'm REALLY busy and don't have the time or resources to create a fancy presentation network like you describe.

Agreed. Nobody has that much time or resources. So don't start off trying to build a massive structure all at once that encompasses all the world's knowledge. Take very small steps and add little pieces of content over time as needed. You will be amazed at how fast a structure forms on its own, as part of your regular performance preparation activities. You plan to design needed slide content anyway, right? So why not take the extra few seconds required to add links now and then, building your network piece by piece over the months and years ahead? Here's a fact that comes as a surprise to most new designers: Changing to a relational approach actually becomes more time and resources efficient as you go. Why? Because core content material gradually collects and forms a permanent part of your network. As a result, you don't have to re-create or reassemble that material for each new performance. Most of what you will say and show on any given day is just sitting there behind a hyperlink, waiting for a click.

If I eventually have hundreds or even thousands of slides to choose from while presenting, how will I keep from getting off track or lost during the performance? Isn't it safer to have slides come up in order on their own?

While strict linear advancement may seem safer and easier at first glance, it actually hurts your performance in several ways: one being the fact that you can't see previews of upcoming content, and another that you are locked into a rigid sequence without adjustment possibilities. True, PowerPoint 2007 does have a *presenter view* that allows a speaker to see slightly ahead. However, using this functionality has other drawbacks we won't go into here.

Getting back to the point, staying oriented and on track in an interactive environment is quite easy if you use any of several powerful strategies. Here are two that should be in the forefront of your thoughts:

Visual Clues: A *Visual Clue* is any aspect of a slide's design that helps a speaker find content, find hidden hyperlinks, remember what content is available or upcoming, or stay oriented within the network's structure. You add visual clues to slides so that they talk back to you during the performance, giving guidance. Consider this example: Look at the navigation elements in the screenshot below. Those images are actually small screenshots themselves of the content each hyperlink will open when clicked. An Aspire presenter looking at those thumbnails gets an instant preview of all the topics available every time this menu displays. Such previews are immensely helpful and comforting under pressure. They act like a cheat sheet.



Yeah, but What About...? (continued)

Organization: Organizing your network well greatly assists you in finding content and knowing where you are at any moment. Think about this: Let's say I have 1,000 slides in my network. One of those slides contains a picture of an apple. I want to find the apple and show it to you within seconds. Obviously, looking through 1,000 slides for that one slide could take a very long time. But what if I make a Main Switchboard with a link that points to a FOOD switchboard. On that switchboard I place a link to a FRUIT switchboard. It won't take long now to find the apple picture. Organizing content into nested categories allows me literally to find one slide out of a thousand within seconds. And I know exactly where I am at all times. If I next want to show you a picture of bread, I go back to the FOOD switchboard and then go down the appropriate branch.

But I never give the same talk twice. Why should I take the time to make a network when my materials and audiences constantly change?

Many years ago, before Relational Presentation came into being, we felt the same way. Every audience was different, topics changed, slide shows came and went. Then patterns began to emerge. We noticed that although we never gave the same *exact presentation* twice, certain aspects of the messages were universal and did span multiple audiences. We also realized that occasionally a slide from 'that conference six months ago' suddenly might be helpful right now—if we could just remember where the heck we put the darn thing! And, moreover, it dawned on us that maybe the core ideas behind our messages really didn't change as much as we thought. Perhaps many of our slides could be engineered in a more permanent, reusable way to cut down on the amount of preparation required for each event. Try applying these same lines of thinking to your speaking materials. We guarantee you will see opportunities for getting rid of duplication and wasted design time. Think to yourself, "OK, I'm going to make this slide for the event next week. But what about upcoming events? Might it be useful then too? If so, how can I design it one time now, for universal display later?"

My speaking activities are very mobile. I can't afford to be tied to a particular computer or be forced to rely on having an active server connection.

Actually most relational speakers don't present from a server and are not dependent on any one piece of equipment. Generally they do store their network directly in a laptop, but they also can burn it onto a CD or DVD, or save it onto a memory stick. As long as you place all the content inside a single, large folder (we call the *parent folder*) your network is ultraportable and all the links continue to work, no matter where it's stored. Our entire structure, containing thousands of pictures, hundreds of video clips, many sound clips and various embedded files, easily fits on a 4 GB memory stick. In a conference environment, we can hand the stick to the tech guy running the show computer and instantly access our full interactive potential. As a rule, you should always use your own equipment if possible, but there's no need to worry about portability.

The slides in your presentation materials and examples are very graphical in nature, which does give them an attractive and professional look. However, I'm not a graphic artist and don't have access to (or resources for) that kind of talent. What do you suggest?

Many PowerPoint users feel uncertain in this area. The word *graphics* might as well be a four-letter word, a topic best avoided if possible. There is both good news and 'not so bad' news here. First of all, you can be far more graphically and visually creative than maybe you realize, even using nothing but PowerPoint (especially 2007). Nearly a third of the books' contents and workshop sessions are devoted to helping you expand your visually expressive potential. So don't consider these skills out of reach. The 'not so bad' news is that you will do yourself a HUGE favor by mastering basic graphic design techniques. It isn't necessary to become a digital artist. Just learn the fundamentals. Relational Presentation is all about flexible, **VISUAL** communication. Learning all you can about visual design is good.

Getting Started

About the Author

The human dynamics possible with Relational Presentation are truly delicious, and there's a good chance you will find this style of communication highly rewarding. But you need to take those first baby steps and get started on your journey. Your ultimate goal will be to reach a state we call Visual Fluency, where navigating gracefully within the network becomes as easy as rolling words off the tongue. Here's a summary of the steps needed:

- 1) Try adding a few hyperlinks to your existing shows and become familiar with navigating to content on demand. During performances, stay mostly linear at first but experiment with skipping a slide now and then or jumping to supporting material such as a slide that contains Web links or references.
- 2) Experiment with the different Navigation Styles. Tutorials explaining how to build Showcase navigation are available [HERE](#).
- 3) Map out your message system and determine how topics relate to each other. This mapping out process can serve as a guide while forming the network structure. Think about everything you might want to show at any moment and determine the nested categories needed that will help you find any visual within seconds.
- 4) Spread development out over time and set priorities from the very start. Don't try to do too much all at once. Be patient and build gradually.

For those of you wishing to learn Relational Presentation techniques more quickly by working through the books or workshop sessions, here's a special offer for you. The link below takes you to an unmarked, nonindexed page on the Aspire Web site where you can find promotional codes that reduce the cost of books and workshop sessions beyond otherwise posted discounts or promotional offers. This link is solely for those who have read this guide. Please do not distribute the link. THANKS!

[Click Here to Access the Discount Page](#)



As director of Aspire Communications, I have the privilege of working with a diverse and dedicated team of like-minded professionals around the world. Our goal is to see you succeed. Without your success, all our efforts are for naught.

I completed my undergraduate work in physics at the University of Arizona and, for the past 100 years or so, have been finishing a master's degree in Educational Technology (pretty sure the diploma came in the mail the other day). When not in front of an audience myself, I write the books, build the workshops, and consult on projects implementing Relational Presentation approaches. The most fun of all, though, comes from interacting with you during conferences or via Web-based workshop sessions. So let's plan to meet up soon!

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