

Organising a Talk

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Planning

How Long?

First consider you audience and their boredom threshold. How long is your talk going to be? You could consider this in terms of minutes or in terms of the number of projected images.

In business circles people refer to long tedious presentations as “Death by Powerpoint”. Don’t do it.

There is another maxim: “Less is More”. If you can tell your story in 50 images, why use 100?

As a guide, go for one or two images a minute. So, for a 30 minute show, choose 30 or 40 slides. This, of course assumes you have something to say about each slide. If you are just putting up the pictures and not saying much then you will need more images to prevent that glazed expression appearing on your audience’s faces.

Structure

A talk is not just a random sequence of ideas and images. They come in an order to allow you to tell a story. In other words, a talk should have a “beginning”, a “middle” and an “end”.

The beginning tells the audience why they should be interested – why they should bother with the rest of the talk. In particular it is likely to include:

- A title
- Something to set the scene. A travel story might include a map. If the story involves history there might be a timeline.

The middle is like the chapters of a book which take the audience on a journey.

The end could just be an image saying “the end”. For something larger there could be a reprise of what has been said – where the journey has taken us. A slide or two from the beginning – a map or timeline - might be repeated.

If you have a lot of images they need to make sure you don’t say so much about one thing that you have no time left for anything else. Suppose you have decided to use 30 images for the talk.

Whole talk	30 images
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Having decided to use 30 images you can break this number down between the beginning, middle and end.

Whole talk	30 images
beginning	5 images
middle	22 images
end	3 images

Finally you can break down the middle section into a number of topics.

If you trust your breakdown, then you can't end up using 30 images for topic 1 and nothing left for topics 2 and 3.

Whole talk	30 images
beginning	5 images
middle	22 images
topic 1	7 images
topic 2	8 images
topic 2	7 images
end	3 images

Getting the Images to Project in the Correct Order

Alphabetic and Numeric Ordering

Using a tool such as PowerPoint guarantees that the images will be in the correct order. However, not everyone has, or wants, PowerPoint. So, you are left with creating a set of JPG files to support your talk. In this case you will get the images in the order in which your operating system chooses to list them. The problem here is that different operating systems do different things.

The solution would seem to be a sequence number on the front of the file name. The trouble is that there are two possibilities: alphabetic and numeric ordering. Some operating systems actually examine the filename to try to guess what the user wants!

Alphabetic ordering is like the index of a book: all words starting with "a" come before any words starting with "b". Translate this into numbers and all numbers starting with "1" come before any numbers starting with "2". So, "10" comes before "2".

To add to the confusion, early operating systems used the ASCII encoding in which all capital letters come before any lower case letters; "Z" comes before "a"! Luckily we don't have upper and lower case numbers.

The solution is to find a numbering system in which both the alphabetic and numeric systems produce the same result. This is actually very easy. Use sequence numbers of constant length, packing out with zeros on the left where needed. In this case all numbers starting with "0" come before any numbers starting with "1".

Alphabetic order:

1 filename.jpg
10 filename.jpg
2 filename.jp

Numeric order:

1 filename.jpg
2 filename.jpg
10 filename.jpg

Both:

01 filename.jpg
02 filename.jpg
10 filename.jpg

These examples assume a two digit sequence number. It can be any length you like depending on the number of files to be indexed. Just remember to keep them all the same length and pack out with zeros to the left

Adding Extra Files

What happens if you want to add in a couple of extra file? In this case you may find yourself going through a large number of files, renaming them to fit the new sequence. The solution is to number in tens rather than ones.

So, the first two files rather than being numbered "01" and "02" become "010" and "020". That way a new file can be placed between, It would be numbered "015".

Date Order

There is another little trick which can be useful. If, for some reason, you want the files to be in date order, then create a sequence number from the date.

Make the sequence number in the form: YYYYMMDD.

You will need four year numbers if you want to go into the last century, and don't forget the zeros. January is "01" not "1".

So, July 6th 2019 would be 190706.

Sequence Numbers for Planning

If you use the way of breaking down a talk which I described earlier, you can allocate sequence numbers in blocks as you go.

Suppose you have a talk on Cornish harbours and castles with 50 images. First plan a title with sequence number 0000 and an end image with number 9999.

Now divide the remaining 48 images between harbours and castles: 24 images to each section.

0000	Title "Cornwall"	1 image
9999	End Image	1 image

0000	Title "Cornwall"	1 image
1000-5000	Harbours	24 images
6000-9000	Castles	24 images
9999	End Image	1 image

Finally, reallocate images for each of the castles and harbours sections to particular places.

You now have a talk which is the correct length and, by allocating the sequence numbers in blocks, you can work on each section separately and when you put them all together they will automatically form the correct sequence.

0000	Title "Cornwall"	1 image
1000-5000	Harbours	24 images
1000-2900	Boscastle	12 images
3000-5900	Polperro	12 images
6000-9000	Castles	24 images
6000-7900	Tintagel	12 images
8000-8900	Pendennis	12 images
9999	End Image	1 image

Technical Options for Projection

Try to match the mage size to the projector.

The Camera Clubs in Thornbury use two common sizes. In pixels (px) they are:

	Width (px)	Height (px)
Thornbury Camera Club	1600	1200
Thornbury U3A	1024	768

If you use the wrong size, the driver will probably get the conversion right!

To convert images to a new size there are several software options:

- xnConvert
- xnViewMP
- Photoshop

You may know of others.

For projecting the final images there are, again, several options.

PowerPoint This requires Microsoft Office to be loaded. Not everyone wants to spend money on Microsoft and if you are visiting somewhere to give your talk you may not find it is available. On the other hand it does solve the problem of sequencing.

xnView Good for producing stand –alone executable files for Windows

xnViewMP Full screen file viewer

Windows/MacOS if in doubt you have to fall back on what the operating system provides!