



## Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Visually Speaking

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### Welcome

This issue of T.I.M.E. considers the world of audio visual technology and visual aids in meetings.

I am featuring the insight and expertise of Len Potaracki, Executive Director of Vidtech. Len has written a section on selecting an audio visual provider. Len can be reached at (630) 241-0292 or via email at [Len Potaracki](mailto:Len.Potaracki). Vidtech's website is [www.vidtechav.com](http://www.vidtechav.com); here is the link [Vidtech](#)

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### Don't Shoot the Messenger

The message of your meeting is the most important aspect of your meeting. Food, drink, sleeping rooms...yes these are all important. But the ultimate reason for a meeting is to deliver a message. Even an incentive trip to the most exotic, luxurious destination would go awry if the "message" sent to the participants wasn't correct.

The message must be well crafted (clear, articulate, consistent).

The message must be delivered (physically heard).

The message must be received (fall upon receptive ears).

Presenters or paid speakers certainly shoulder responsibility for crafting their messages. Careful behind the scenes planning and coaching can help speakers excel at

presenting to your audiences.

Simple items like:

- Speaker Guidelines
- Background information on the conference, meeting or event
- Demographic details
- Candid discussion of the mood and temperament of the audience

The balance of this issue addresses some other ideas including tips on selecting an audio visual issues partner.

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### Corporate Attention Deficit Syndrome

Many have likened the challenge of getting and keeping our audiences' attention as Corporate Attention Deficit Syndrome.

The book, [The Attention Economy](#), outlines what we pay attention to and divides our attention into 6 types:

- Attraction (victory, super models)
- Aversion (car wrecks)
- Captive (bad weather, movies)
- Voluntary (Hobbies, print advertising)
- Front of Mind (discussion, task at hand)
- Back of Mind (to do list, commuting)

The authors, Thomas Davenport and John Beck, promote the idea that understanding and managing attention is now the single most important determinant of business success.

Are our meetings an attraction or back of mind? Do we and our presenters create environments where our audience is a participant or a captive?

What are you doing to manage your meeting participant's attention?

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### Creating Attention

In the chaotic, multi-channel communication environment in which we operate, commanding and retaining people's attention is challenging. This issue is about creating positive attention (attraction) through your meetings and your speakers.

The majority of people are visual learners (60%). They retain information best when they can "see" the information. Numerous surveys show that retention increased by 70 - 80% when visuals are used. That's one reason, every speaker seems to use PowerPoint. (In addition, to the fact that speakers find it a great crutch!)

So much goes into a "great" speaker - content, delivery, rapport with the audience

(watch for an upcoming issue on Speaker Hints). Here are some ways to make a presentation more visual so you and your presenters shine:

- **Stories** This is not your traditional visual. However, stories woven within a presentation create pictures in people's minds. Stories work to grab attention and create emotional connections. When done in support of a point in the presentation, stories help increase retention and interest. (For more on storytelling, see my back issue May 2003.)
- **Props** Props help make information tangible. Props should illustrate or emphasize a key point. Several suggestions for presenters when using props:
  1. Make sure the prop is large enough to be seen
  2. Allow sufficient time for the audience to see the prop
  3. Don't let the prop become a distraction from you or your presentation
- **Handouts** Handouts need not be the PowerPoint slides reproduced. Handouts can include background information, supplemental charts and statistics, anything that supports the presentation. Handouts have the following advantages:
  1. Handouts can help fill in gaps in the audience's knowledge and understanding of the topic
  2. Add to the presenter's credibility
  3. Keeps everyone focused
  4. Serve as a place to take notes
- **Flip Charts** The old fashioned flip chart is still a work horse in small to mid-sized meetings. Flip charts allow a presenter to:
  1. Create group interest and attention
  2. Focus the group on key points
  3. Allow people to visually trace their conversation
- **Change the scenery** The same part of your brain that controls long-term memory also controls large motor skills. Who among us hasn't sat through a mind-numbing presentation? When a presenter asks the audience to move, they get their attention and re-awaken the part of their brain that controls long term memory.

And finally, although less obvious...

- **Questions** Questions ask the audience if the picture is complete for them. Presenters can ask rhetorical questions or they can ask the audience to respond to a question. Additionally, PowerPoint slides can be crafted in such a way that each slide asks questions thereby inviting the audience to reflect and possibly

express their opinions and feelings.

Of course, none of this matters if your speaker isn't heard or equipped with the correct audio visual equipment. Onto our next section...

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## Ten Simple Steps For Choosing An A/V Company

Written by Len Poteracki, Executive Director, Vidtech, 630-241-0292, [www.vidtechav.com](http://www.vidtechav.com), [Len Poteracki](#)

In my experience there are two types of a/v companies in existence today; those that change with your needs, and those that hope your needs never change.

Whatever the message of your meeting, ultimately the success of the meeting depends upon people hearing, seeing and believing in the message. Many people pay little to no attention to their a/v needs – thinking that a standard set up that will work under all conditions. In reality, a strong a/v partner will work with you and make suggestions to enhance the delivery of your message.

Here are ten helpful steps when incorporating a/v into your meeting:

1. Your a/v needs should be of primary concern from the “get go”. Your meeting attendees are coming to see and hear what you have to present, the equipment to convey your message should be priority one.
2. Choose a company that has a solid reputation in both intimate meetings and corporate events. Ask to see a list of both types of clientele before making a decision.
3. All a/v companies have basically the same equipment. The only thing that sets them apart is the technical staff and expertise. Ask for the credentials of the techs who will be planning and executing your event.
4. Set your focus on a/v companies that are changing with technology. Inquire about their recent acquisitions to their arsenal of cutting edge technology.
5. A good a/v company will have two steps to meet your needs. Their first step is to ask you in-depth questions about your meeting. The second step is to set a time and date to meet with you in person... preferably at the event site.
6. Ask for an itemized list of the a/v equipment that will be arriving at the event site. A good a/v company will also include a set diagram of how the equipment will be incorporated into the venue.
7. Communication is the key to a successful event. Stay in contact with the a/v company you chose all the way up to event date. If they stand behind their service, hearing from you on a regular basis will not be a problem.
8. If you're bidding out your a/v needs, going with the lowest bidder isn't always the best move. Award your contract to the company that fits the criteria that's covered in the previous steps.
9. Depending on the size and magnitude of your event, the person who helped arrange your a/v gear should be there to supervise the set-up to make sure everything goes as planned.
10. A good a/v company will contact you after your event to make sure that everything met with your satisfaction. If there was a problem, they'll work with

you to make things right.

These ten simple steps will not only ensure a successful event, they'll also help you stay in control of how the message of your presentation is getting across.

Len can be reached via email at [Len Poteracki](mailto:lpoteracki@vidtech.com) or lpoteracki@vidtech.com.

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### It's Everywhere...PowerPoint

The spoken language communicates through movement, gesture, posture, facial expression, vocal inflection, tempo, rhythm, pitch, eye contact and sometimes even touch and smell. A presentation is much more than the PowerPoint slides.

But it is ubiquitous! Microsoft estimates that at least 30 million PowerPoint presentations are made every day. It is unlikely, that PowerPoint will go away. But you can utilize these ideas for your own presentations and pass them along to your speakers for your next meeting.

Guideline #1: Create the text for your speech first. Then after your speech is written, build graphics or slides to support the presentation. Many people do this in reverse - they first create the slides and then are "backed in a corner" about writing their presentation.

Guideline #2: Create the look of your presentation with your audience in mind. Fonts have personality. The colors you select for your background will communicate a message. Consider your audience in designing your presentation and visuals.

Beyond these simple guidelines, there are several widely accepted (and often widely ignored) design parameters:

1. Legibility should be your first priority. This impacts font choices and colors. Fonts have their own personality; don't be tempted to introduce too many personalities on a slide. (I favor two font choices per presentation.) Eye fatigue and color blindness also affect legibility. Don't use red for text -- its difficult read. And avoid using red/green contracts.
2. Simplicity. Your layout must be simple with ample use of white space. A presentation will be more pleasing to the eye if the space is divided into fewer rather than more parts.
3. Emphasis - One point per slide. Use symbols or graphics to draw the eye toward a point.

Here are tips on which I rely:

1. Choose your background based upon the place you will be giving your presentation. Conventional wisdom is to use a dark background with light text.

The reality is that the best background can only be determined based upon the presentation location.

2. Don't use more than 4 colors per slide
3. Use the earth to sky formula when sequencing colors. The darkest color should be on the bottom moving toward the lighter colors on top.
4. Limit your words. I use the 5x5 or 6x6 rule. No more than 5 bullet points of 5 words. When pushed, I go to 6x6!
5. You don't have to use bullets. Graphics and text carefully placed on a slide can have more of an impact.

Presentations Magazine recently published 44 tips and tricks to help turbo-charge PowerPoint Presentations. Write me, if you missed it! [Sue Tinnish](#)

PowerPoint has empowered presenters to allow them to create, modify, and control their own presentation. This has cut down on the time required to create professional looking visuals. Last minute changes can be easily accommodated. The expense and hassle of ordering slides has been eliminated.

The problems occur when PowerPoint becomes the "talk" resulting in flat presentations. While we can now all design slides with great fonts, backgrounds video clips and special effects, speakers often forget to focus on the message.

Presenters get caught attempting to convey too much detail on a slide while at the same time they don't offer enough of their own thoughts and expertise.

See my Freebie for help in using PowerPoint as a Tool and not a Crutch!

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Freebies: [Buzz Words](#)

**FREEBIES:**

Avoid buzz words. Here is a great example: "Our core competency is leveraging knowledge management best practices to provide real-time on-demand support for end uses in risk-averse vertical markets." Hmm...even though I am a consultant and have an MBA, even I can't translate that sentence!!!

Presentations Magazine published a list of Buzz words including

- Core competency
- Empower
- Impactfullness
- Paradigm shift
- Thinking outside the box

- User-friendly

Don't do this to your presentation nor to your audiences.

### More FREEBIES

I am offering up my Speaker Guidelines as an additional Freebie this month. If you would like a copy, please email me at [stinnish@ameritech.net](mailto:stinnish@ameritech.net) or click here [Sue Tinnish](#)

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### Future T.I.M.E.

I am pleased that I will be speaking at the following conferences:

**MPI-Chicago Area Chapter, Meeting of the Minds**, St. Charles, Illinois, Friday, February 20 on Procurement. You can still register at <http://www.cvent.com/1.asp?code=plblrzribzbiviolihiqleiddttbbb263>

**MPI-Pittsburgh University**, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Wednesday, April 14

**National Business Travel Association**, Orlando, Florida, Wednesday, August 4

I was pleased to be a featured columnist in The Meeting Professional in January and February issues.

Meetings with Muscle is taking shape. This book will focus on increasing the productivity of meetings through better communication strategies. Meetings with Muscle will suggest ideas, strategies, and tips for improving the very core of the meeting -- the content. If you have any contributions or are willing to preview parts of the book, I would love to include you on the team! Please email me and offer your suggestions.

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### T.I.M.E. Gone By

If you are interested in past issues, please e-mail us with the month and topic and we will send you a copy of that newsletter. Here's what is included in past issues [Back Issue Request](#):

May 2000: **Teambuilding** and (Freebie) New York Times Reprint On Teambuilding

June 2000: **Green Meetings** and (Freebie) Resource List Of Exercises

July 2000: **Values** and (Freebie) Meeting Analysis

August 2000: **Minimum/Minimal Meetings** and (Freebie) Web Winners

October 2000: **Evaluations** and (Freebie) Sample Evaluation Questions

November 2000: **Politics**

December 2000: **Toys** and (Freebie) Brainstorming Ideas

January 2001: **Sales, Award Presentations** and (Freebie) Sales Tips

February 2001: **Change** and Communicating Change and (Freebie) Change Bombs

March 2001: **Open Space Technology**

April 2001: **Adult Learning Styles** and (Freebie) Learning Style Questionnaire

May 2001: **Trade Shows** and (Freebie) Trade Show Timeline

June 2001: **Emotional Intelligence** and (Freebie) EI Quiz

July 2001: [Presentation Tips](#) and (Freebie) Speaker Introductions  
August 2001: [Ice Breakers](#) and (Freebie) Resource List  
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[Customer Care](#) and (Freebie) Complaints  
December 2001: [Slack](#) and (Freebie) Quiet Time

January 2002: [Teambuilding Options](#) and (Freebie)  
February 2002: [Promotional Products](#) and (Freebie) Case Study  
March 2002: [Multicultural Communication](#) and (Freebie) Multicultural Meeting Tips  
April 2002: [Outdoor Learning](#) and (Freebie) Justification Checklist  
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September 2003: [Training Meetings](#) with (Freebie) Kirkpatrick Challenge  
October 2003: [Unique Venues](#) with (Freebie) Experiential Checklist  
November 2003: [Data, Information and Number Crunching](#) with (Freebie) European Privacy  
December 2003: [Deja View](#)

January 2004: [Branding](#) with (Freebie) Identity vs. Brand

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