

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS for PowerPoint and Other Visual Aids



On the day when Moses had finished editing his last slide, anointing and consecrating it with special sound effects, and had just plugged in his slide projector for a trial run, the Lord asked, *“Moses, what exactly do you plan to do with all that fancy equipment?”*

And Moses replied, *“Behold, I seek to make a presentation, for my audience will not believe me or listen to my voice and will otherwise say, ‘You did not use PowerPoint!’”*

The Lord shook his head wearily and said to Moses, *“What is that in your hand?”* Moses replied, *“my wireless mouse.”* And the Lord said, *“cast it on the ground.”* So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent...and Moses said to the Lord, *“Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech and tongue.”*

Then the Lord said to him, *“Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”*

But Moses said, *“Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person, for without my PowerPoint I will be lost.”*

“That’s pathetic,” said the Lord, *“now just pull yourself together and keep these guidelines--or commandments, if you will--in mind.”* And the Lord presented Moses with the attached hand-out:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

for

PowerPoint and Other Visual Aids

Thou shalt:

1. Speak to your audience before launching your visuals.
2. Keep eye contact primarily with your audience, not with your visual aids.
3. Avoid reading your slides or overheads to your audience, please.
4. Keep text to a minimum; let images and graphics illustrate and dramatize your points.
5. Use a font style that is simple and large enough (generally sans serif styles at least 20-24 points) to be read at a distance.
6. Keep the number of points to 3 - 5 per slide.
7. Ensure consistency of syntax on each slide (e.g., if the first bullet point starts with a verb, all subsequent bullet points should start with a verb—it's easier to comprehend and more powerful).
8. Take time to introduce--and pause to allow the audience time to absorb--any complex information (e.g., from a graph or chart).
9. Put your slide titles to work: they should help deliver the message--not merely give a name to the slide.
10. Turn off the projector or overhead to focus attention and re-claim the spotlight.

IN SUMMARY, remember that PowerPoint and other visual aids can offer useful support for you and your message, but they are no substitute for your own words spoken with sincerity, passion and clarity. Develop your message first. Then, if necessary, use visual aids sparingly and creatively to support it.