Designing a Visual Presentation

When creating a visual presentation, try to think visually and embrace the notion of *design*. There are numerous tools available for visual presentations; one of the most common and also most misused is PowerPoint. PowerPoint is a visual medium and because of that it uses its own visual language (Core Concept #2). Here are some basic design concepts that apply to most visual displays from a PowerPoint slide to a magazine layout.

- 👁 **Bigger Is Better**—Make your images as big as possible. Bigger visuals look better and are easier to read. When designing a visual display, one image should dominate; this makes it easier for the eye to know where to go first. The largest size often makes an image dominate.

- 👁 **Celebrate Diversity**—Have as much variety of shapes and sizes of images as possible. Try to crop your images whenever possible to change the shapes into long horizontals or tall verticals. Sometimes it looks great to have custom shapes that are not geometric.

- 👁 **Show Don't Tell**—Try to illustrate your ideas rather then write about them. Your text should be minimal and communicate in titles, bullets or short captions.

- 👁 **Less is More**—Images that look similar, or tell the same story can easily be redundant and boring. Ask yourself if the image is absolutely necessary. While some repetition of patterns, colors and fonts can be unifying, try to eliminate images that are redundant or weak.

- 👁 **KISS—Keep it Simple Silly**. Don't clutter the page and be strategic in your use of white space. Try to avoid creating a collage with lots of stuff and instead consider the visual aesthetics of the design of the entire page.

- 👁 **Image Quality**—Improve your photos through cropping off any unnecessary parts. Make sure picutres are not too dark or too light, you can also increase or decresase the contrast of images. Crop photos to create different shapes and eliminate all but the essential elements you want to show. This also allows for more space to make pictures bigger.

- 👁 **Graphic Elements**—Consider all sorts of different graphic elements such as titles with Word Art, silhouettes, lines, fonts, shapes, etc. Photos often look better with borders and shadows to help them separate foreground from background and jump off the page. Be strategic in your use of symmetry or asymmetry because symmetrical compositions tend to be less appealing, yet balance is an important aspect of composition. Also consider creating contrast, visual elements look more interesting when they are **very** different and not just a little different.

- 👁 **Color**—Think about choosing colors that compliment and don't clash. Like choosing clothing, you want the colors to work together and be visually appealing.

- 👁 **Photographs**—Be careful when using photographs because they can get distorted easily by being stretched narrow/wide or tall/short. Whenever you change the size of a photograph, be sure not to distort the dimensions by stretching it thinner/wider at the sides or taller/shorter at the top and bottom. It is important to maintain the proportions of the photograph and the best way to do that is to change the size only at the corners. Do not pull or push your photo from the middle of the edges, only from the corners. Another option is to hold down the shift key when you change the size.

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