

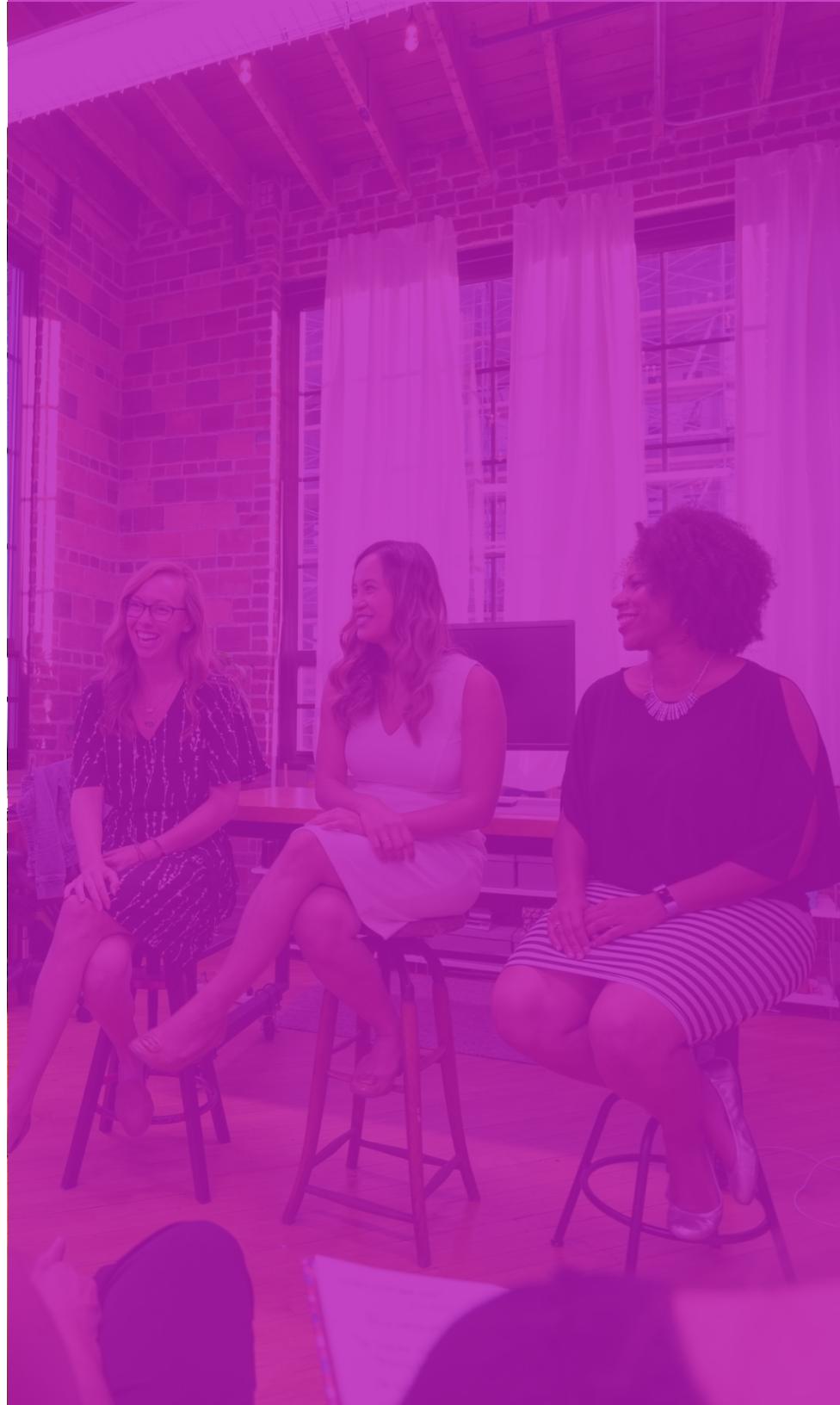
# Powerful Presentations



**Ann K. Emery  
February 2021**

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# What Makes a Powerful Presentation?

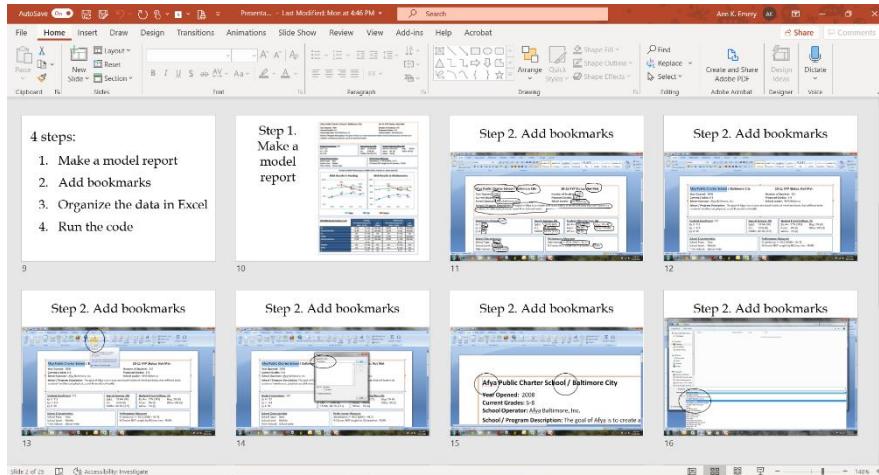
I give a *lot* of presentations—about 50 a year.

Everything from hour-long keynotes in front of a couple hundred people to full-day trainings for a few dozen people.

I'm going to tell you a secret.

Not all of these presentations have been good.

My old presentations either had *no* design...



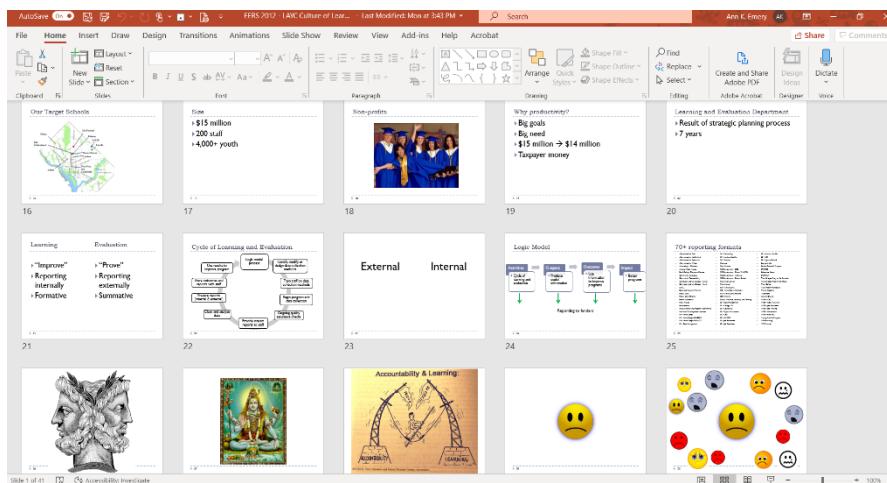
... or mediocre, mismatched images.

A bigger problem than the design was the impact. The *lack* of impact.

My old presentations didn't have any call to action. I was just sharing my experience with fellow conference attendees.

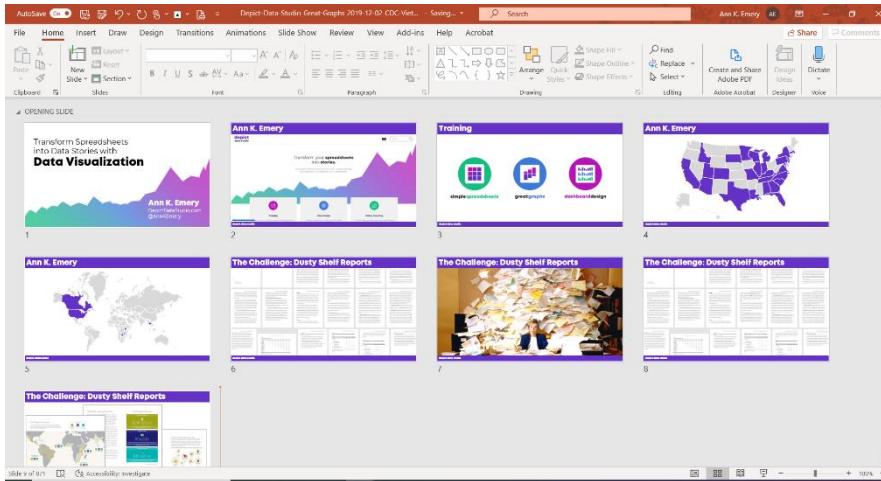
I seriously doubt that anyone felt differently after my presentations.

And they certainly didn't act differently or do anything differently after my presentations.



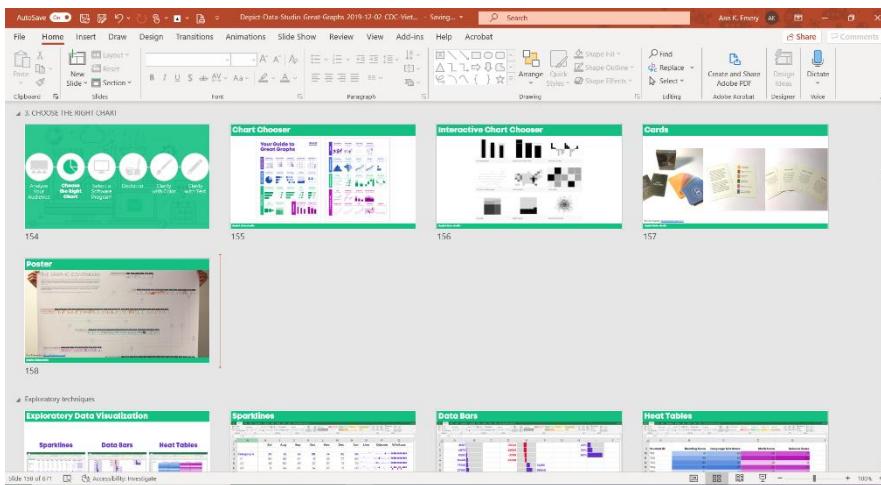
Let me show you how my message, design, and delivery have improved.

Today, I use *brand colors and fonts*—rather than random colors from some freebie template.



I use *Divider Slides* to organize the content for my audience.

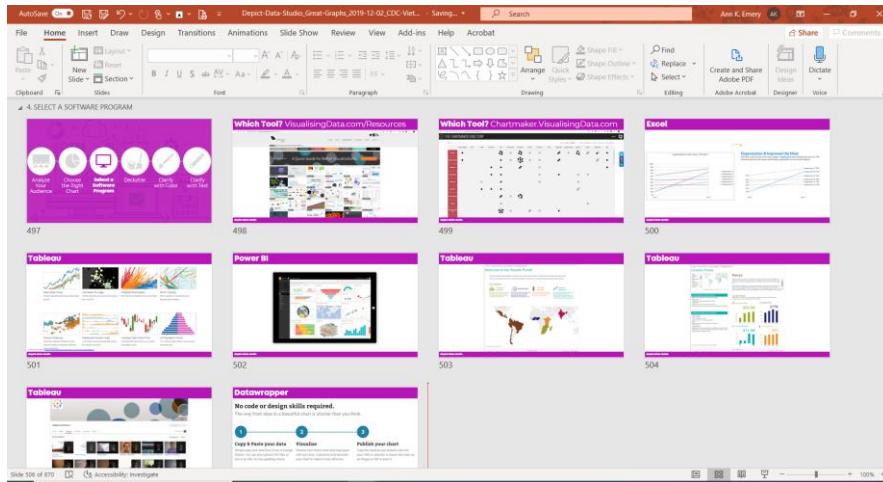
And I use *sections* to organize the content for myself.



I color-code the content. Every time I begin a new topic, the color changes.

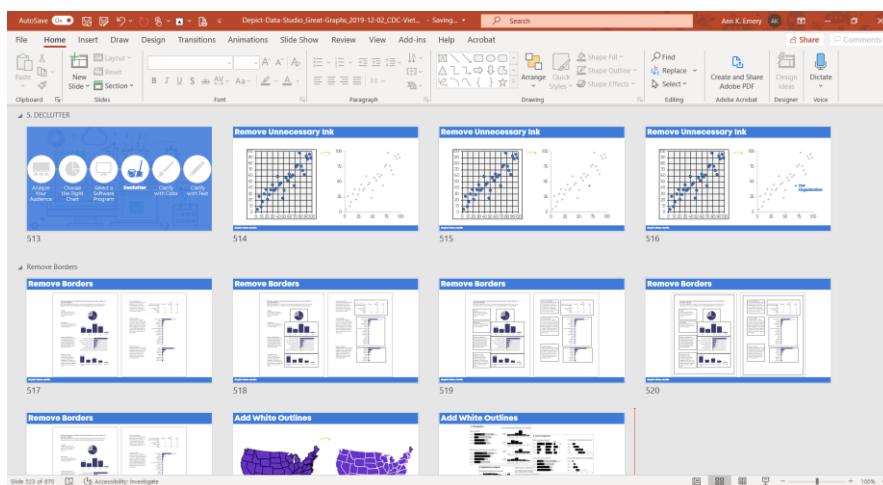
It helps the audience feel less overwhelmed by data-heavy presentations.

And it forces me to be crystal clear about the Framework that I'm covering.



I also add instructions to my slide titles: “Remove unnecessary ink” rather than just “unnecessary ink.”

These small visual cues have made a big impact.



# The Powerful Presentations Ripple Effect



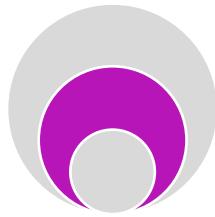
## Message, Design, and Delivery

Presentations are about much more than just slide design. I learned this framework years ago, when I was asked to be on the Advisory Board of a professional society's Potent Presentations Initiative: *Message—Design—Delivery*.



## Message

*Message* is about crafting the right content to speak about. You'll choose three to five topics, organize them into an outline, and develop a visual framework for explaining those topics to others.



## Design

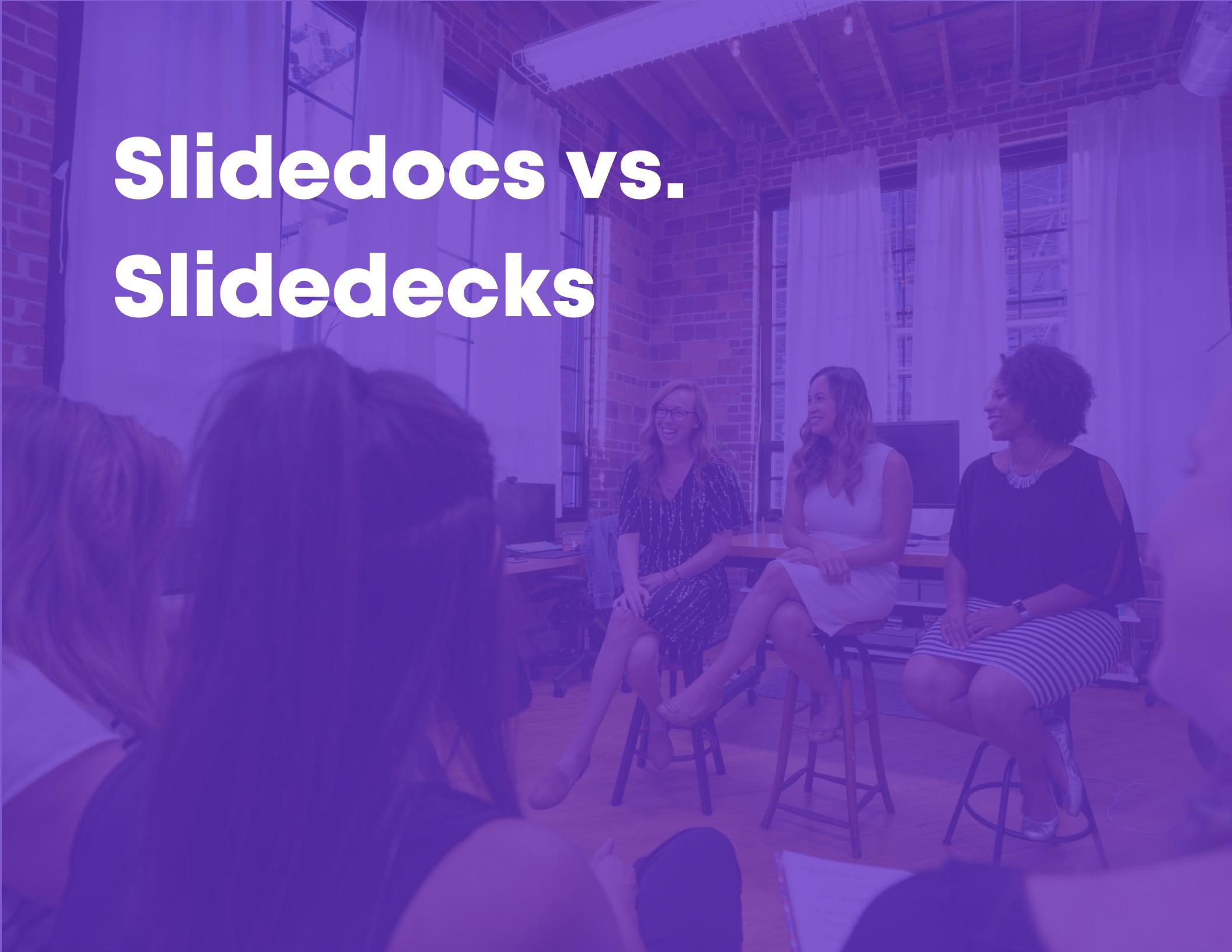
*Design* is about branding, visual structure, and designing body slides with more than just bullet points. You'll aim for one visual per slide—no text-only slides allowed!—using our checklist of 15 ideas for visuals.



## Delivery

*Delivery* is about your speaking skills, body language, storyboarding, and tech set-up. You'll use your hands productively, click through your slides one at a time to explain complex topics, and get behind-the-scenes tips for presenting in a variety of settings.

# Slidedocs vs. Slidedecks



Before we dive into the *Message, Design, and Delivery* framework, let's cover some foundational terminology.

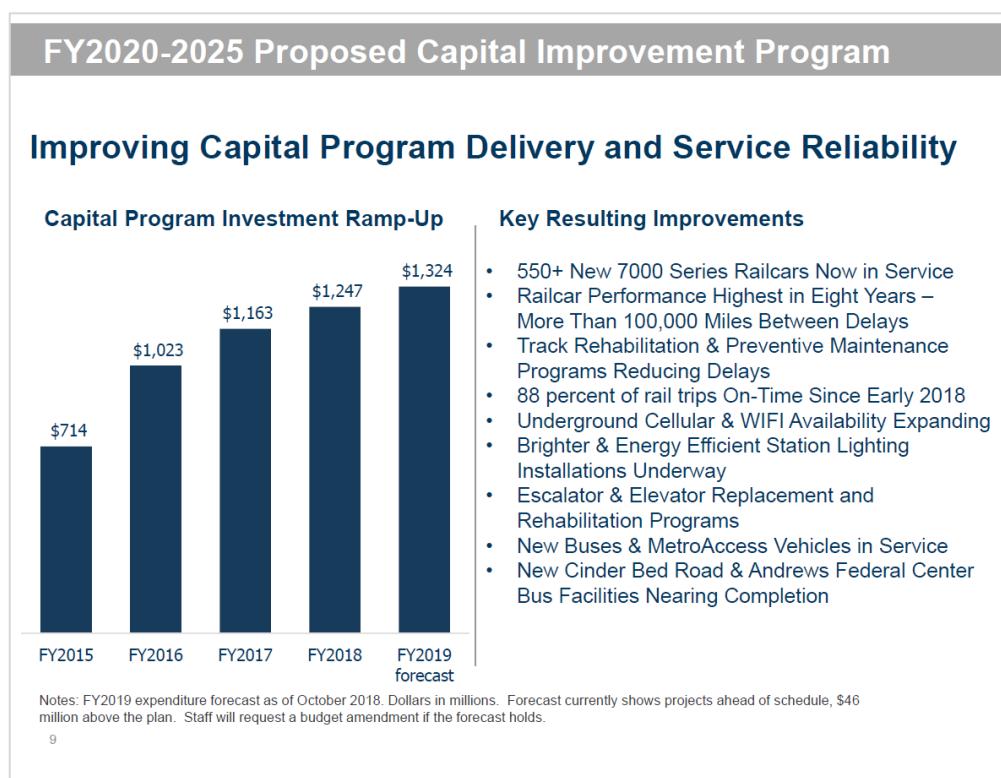
As we're building slides in PowerPoint, Keynote, or another software program, it's easy to expect a *lot* from our slides. Sometimes we want to make slides that can be used *both* for live presentations *and* as standalone handouts.

Here's an example.

This slide doesn't quite work as a slide for a live presentation. There's too much going on. The speaker might be explaining the graph on the left... while the

audience is reading the bullet points on the right. Although both of these topics are related to the Capital Improvement Program, they really need to be on separate slides to focus the audience's attention on one thing at a time. And there's too much text—in too small of a font size—to be legible and captivating for a presentation.

But.. the slide doesn't quite work as a standalone handout, either. There's not enough text. An effective handout would need an introductory paragraph at the top and a couple sentences to explain the graph.



# Differentiate between Slidedocs and Slidedecks

Here are the five key differences between slidedocs (standalone documents) and slidedecks (slides for presentations)



## Slidedocs

Standalone Documents  
(Handouts, Email Attachments,  
Reports, etc.)



## Slidedecks

Slides for Presentations  
(Meetings, Conference Sessions,  
Webinars, etc.)

1	Titles and headings	Takeaway titles	Traditional titles okay
2	Amount of Text	Full sentences	As little text as possible
3	Font Size	Report font (11-12)	Presentation font (18+)
4	Number/Density of Visuals	Several storytelling visuals per page	One storyboarded visual per slide
5	Length	Page limits matter	As many slides as you want



# Slidedocs

First, let's transform that slide into a *slidetoc*.

This is the standalone document that can be distributed:

- **before** the presentation (for example, by emailing the PDF'd version to attendees to review beforehand);
- **during** the presentation (as a printed handout); and/or
- **after** the presentation (as a summary of what was discussed, which can be especially helpful for anyone who couldn't attend the live session).



**FY2020-2025 Proposed Capital Improvement Program**

### Improving Capital Program Delivery and Service Reliability

**Capital Program Investment Ramp-Up**

Year	Investment (in millions)
FY2015	\$714
FY2016	\$1,023
FY2017	\$1,163
FY2018	\$1,247
FY2019 forecast	\$1,324

**Key Resulting Improvements**

- 550+ New 7000 Series Railcars Now in Service
- Railcar Performance Highest in Eight Years – More Than 100,000 Miles Between Delays
- Track Rehabilitation & Preventive Maintenance Programs Reducing Delays
- 88 percent of rail trips On-Time Since Early 2018
- Underground Cellular & WiFi Availability Expanding
- Brighter & Energy Efficient Station Lighting Installations Underway
- Escalator & Elevator Replacement and Rehabilitation Programs
- New Buses & MetroAccess Vehicles in Service
- New Cinder Bed Road & Andrews Federal Center Bus Facilities Nearing Completion

Notes: FY2019 expenditure forecast as of October 2018. Dollars in millions. Forecast currently shows projects ahead of schedule, \$46 million above the plan. Staff will request a budget amendment if the forecast holds.

**FY20-25 Capital Improvement Program**

The Capital Improvement Program is intended to improve program delivery and service reliability.

### Capital Program Investment: Ramped-Up Over 5 Years

This graph displays the FY19 expenditure forecast as of October 2018. Staff will request a budget amendment if the forecast holds.

Year	Investment (in millions)
FY15	\$714
FY16	\$1,023
FY17	\$1,163
FY18	\$1,247
FY19 forecast	\$1,324

**9 Improvements**

As a result of the FY20-25 Capital Improvement Program, we have seen:

- 550+ new 7000 Series railcars are in service.
- Railcar performance highest it's been in eight years—with more than 100,000 miles between delays.
- Track rehabilitation and preventive maintenance programs are reducing delays.
- Since early 2018, 88 percent of rail trips have been on time.
- Underground cellular WiFi availability is expanding.
- We're in the process of installing brighter, energy-efficient station lighting.
- Escalators and elevators are being replaced and rehabilitated.
- There are new buses & MetroAccess vehicles in service.
- The new Cinder Bed Road and Andrews Federal Center Bus Facilities are nearing completion.

*Organization's Name or Logo Here*

Here are the intentional edits we made to the slidedoc.

1	Titles and headings	Takeaway titles	We transformed “Capital Program Investment Ramp-Up” into “Capital Program Investment: Ramped Up Over 5 Years.”
2	Amount of Text	Full sentences	We added more text. For example, we transformed the footnote that was below the chart into a sentence above the chart that explained what was happened. We also turned the choppy bullet points into full sentences.
3	Font Size	Report font (11-12)	No changes needed here, phew!
4	Number/Density of Visuals	Several storytelling visuals per page	We adjusted the chart, applying a dark-light contrast; a horizontal line showing the fundraising goal; and a call-out box with an icon.
5	Length	Page limits matter	No changes needed here, either. We kept the slidedoc to just a page.



# Slidedecks

Next, let's transform that slide into a *slidedeck*. These are the slides that would accompany the presenter during his or her talk.

We'll need:

- as little text as possible;
- presentation font (size 18+); and
- one storyboarded visual per slide.

The slidedeck will have lots more slides—about a dozen slides instead of just one.

The speaker won't be talking faster or rushing through the content. The speaker will simply be spending less time on each slide, which keeps the presentation exciting and fast-paced (rather than making the audience stare at the same slide for too long)



**FY2020-2025 Proposed Capital Improvement Program**

### Improving Capital Program Delivery and Service Reliability

**Capital Program Investment Ramp-Up**

Year	Investment (\$ millions)
FY2015	\$714
FY2016	\$1,023
FY2017	\$1,163
FY2018	\$1,247
FY2019 forecast	\$1,324

**Key Resulting Improvements**

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Notes: FY2019 expenditure forecast as of October 2018. Dollars in millions. Forecast currently shows projects ahead of schedule, \$46 million above the plan. Staff will request a budget amendment if the forecast holds.

**FY2020-25 Proposed Capital Improvement Program**

**Investment Ramp-Up**

**Investments: Ramped-Up Over 5 Years**

Year	Investment (\$ millions)
FY15	\$714
FY16	\$1,023
FY17	\$1,163
FY18	\$1,247
FY19 forecast	\$1,324

\$46 million above

## 1 Columns with Bolding

Pressed for time? Here are the easiest ways to elevate your presentation. You can apply any of all of these 5-Minute Fixes.

Take the bullet points you've already written... Make the text larger; bold a few key words; and use a two-column layout for faster reading. You can also number the bullet points.

## 9 Improvements

1. 550+ **new** railcars
2. Railcar performance **highest in 8 years**
3. Track rehabilitation and preventive maintenance programs are **reducing delays**
4. 88% of rail trips have been **on time**
5. Expanding **WiFi** underground
6. Brighter, energy-efficient **lighting**
7. Replaced & rehabilitated **escalators & elevators**
8. New **buses & access vehicles**
9. Two new **bus facilities**—nearing completion

The screenshot shows a Microsoft PowerPoint slide deck titled "9 Improvements". The deck consists of nine slides, each featuring a title bar and a numbered list of nine items. The items in the lists are identical across all slides, except for the last slide which includes an additional point about bus facilities. The lists include:

- 1. 550+ **new** railcars
- 2. Railcar performance **Highest in 8 years**
- 3. Track rehabilitation and preventive maintenance programs are **reducing delays**
- 4. 88% of rail trips have been **on time**
- 5. Expanding **WiFi** underground
- 6. Brighter, energy-efficient **lighting**
- 7. Replaced & rehabilitated **escalators & elevators**
- 8. New **buses & access vehicles**
- 9. Two new **bus facilities**—nearing completion

## 2 Storyboarding

Give each bullet point its own slide so that it matches your speaking points and speaking pace. Use as many slides as you want!

### 3 Add Icons

Add icons to boost the memorability of your data.

You can use:

- Microsoft's built-in icons,
- The Noun Project, or
- Your organization's custom icons.

### 9 Improvements

- 💡 550+ new railcars
- 📈 Railcar performance highest in 8 years
- 🕒 Track rehabilitation and preventive maintenance programs are reducing delays
- ⌚ 88% of rail trips have been on time
- 📶 Expanding WiFi underground

- 💡 Brighter, energy-efficient lighting
- ⚡ Replaced & rehabilitated escalators & elevators
- 🚌 New buses & access vehicles
- 🏢 Two new bus facilities—nearing completion

depictdata studio

### 4 One Slide Per Visual

Illustrate each bullet point with a visual. You can add photographs, graphs, tables, maps, diagrams, or logos.

### 9 Improvements



Railcar performance  
Highest in 8 years

depictdata studio



# Message

**Message is about crafting the right content to speak about.**

**You'll choose three to five topics, organize them into an outline, and develop a visual framework for explaining those topics to others.**



# Your Message Checklist

Here are the top elements to keep in mind as you fine-tune your presentation's takeaway messages.

## **Brainstorm and Bucketize**

Brainstorm everything you might cover. Then, organize those ideas into three to five buckets.

---

## **Create a Visual Framework**

Diagrams will organize the content for our audience.

---

## **Open with Intention**

Add all five elements to your introduction.

---

## **Plan the Activities and the Call-to-Action Closing**

Aim for interactivity every 5 minutes.

---

## **Write the Takeaway Tweet in Advance**

What's the 280-character takeaway message?

---

## **Decide How You Want Your Audience to Feel**

What should they feel, think, and do afterwards?



## Collect and Use Audience Feedback

I suggest short, open-ended surveys.

---



## Kill Your Darlings

Delete one-off ideas that don't serve the presentation's bigger purpose.

# Brainstorm and Bucketize

Over time, I've realized that my message is even more important than my slide design.

In *Message*, you'll learn how to narrow down your presentation's content so that it's easy to digest—and actionable—for your audience.

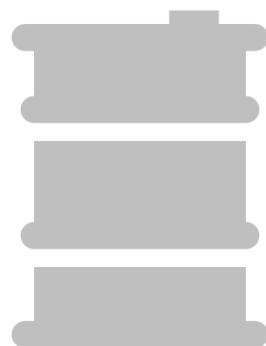
We'll start with the *Bucketizing Method*, which I learned from my public speaking coach, Heather Sager.

This is how *bucketizing* works:

1. First, brainstorm everything you might cover. Your list can be long and broad. You can brainstorm on paper, on the computer, or with a whiteboard. Make sure to seek input from colleagues or supervisors sooner rather than later.
2. Second, organize that list into an outline with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Get clear about the three to five *buckets* of information you'll cover.

## 1 Barrel

The presentation as a whole



## 3-5 Buckets

The topics, categories, or chapters



## Tons of Ladles

Details, examples, stories, quotes



## Infinite Spoons

Individual slides



# Create a Visual Framework

Our presentations will be infinitely more powerful if we package the information into a visual framework.

Rather than a list of facts and figures, give the audience a diagram in which to make sense of all the new information.

Here's the visual framework I use for my data visualization workshops.

I teach participants a step-by-step process for thinking about their audience, choosing the right chart, and so on.

Because this is a step-by-step process—they need to complete the first step before moving on to the second—the diagram is purposefully linear from left to right.

You might design a pyramid, concentric circles, or cycle. There's no right or wrong answer; the framework should simply fit your topic.



# Decide How the Audience Should Feel

Facts and feelings both matter. You should plan in advance what your audience should feel, think and do after your presentation.

You do not want to take the firehose approach to presenting where your audience is literally drowning in all your facts, figures, statistics, etc. Less is more when it comes to presentations

The default feeling in a presentation is boredom. People won't tell you that they're bored. But, if you see them yawning, starting to look at their phones, falling asleep, etc. it's time to try something else. Try an activity that gets them talking, take a break, or skip ahead a few slides. It's not inevitable that people feel bored. It's completely fixable.

When creating your presentation, try this exercise:

- I want my audience to **feel** \_\_\_\_\_
- I want my audience to **think** \_\_\_\_\_
- I want my audience to **do** \_\_\_\_\_

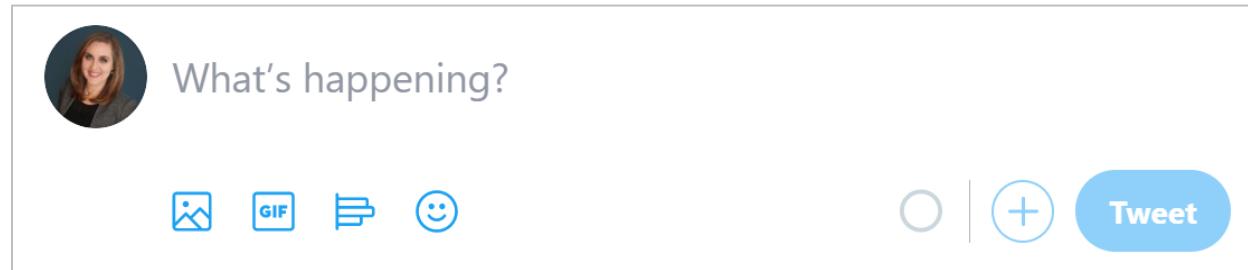
The default feeling does not have to be boredom. The default action does not have to be inaction.

Your presentation has the potential to completely transform how people feel, think and what they do, but only if you plan for it in advance.

# Write the Takeaway Tweet in Advance

What do you want people to say about your presentation? What should your audience be typing on social media? If someone stops an attendee in the hallway afterwards, how should the attendee summarize what he or she learned from your talk?

Plan the takeaway tweets in advance.



Your audience members are smart, hardworking, and dedicated. But they're bombarded with information all the time. The burden falls on the presenter to be clear; not on the audience to dig through all the information and figure out what's going on. Give them the clarity they're seeking.

## Say the Takeaway Message Verbatim

Here are some prompts you can use:

- “Here’s *the most important thing* I’m going to cover today. Write this down.”
- “If you only remember *one thing* from this presentation, I want you to remember *this*.”

## Afterwards, Test Yourself!

After your presentation, look on social media. Read emails from attendees. Listen to their feedback when they stop you in the hallway.

Did your audience get the takeaway message *right*?

# Collect and Use Audience Feedback

If we want to transform from a good presenter into a *powerful* presenter, then we must collect and use audience feedback.

Sometimes, I can design my own feedback surveys.

And sometimes, I can't. For example, when I'm the keynote speaker at a conference, the conference planners have already designed a questionnaire. I have zero input on the questions, how the survey is administered, or when I receive the results.

## The Only Three Questions

When I do have an opportunity to design my own surveys, here's what I ask:

1. What's the most interesting, valuable, or useful skill you learned?
2. If we held another session, I would love to learn more about...
3. Additional feedback for the instructor or workshop organizers.

## Open-Ended vs. Closed-Ended

I've never received useful feedback from closed-ended questions.

### Share Your Feedback

What did you think of today's session? I'm listening.

- ➊ What's the most interesting, valuable, or useful skill you learned?
- ➋ If we held another session, I would love to learn more about...
- ➌ Additional feedback for the instructor or workshop organizers:

## Share the Results

After in-person presentations, I scan the stack of paper surveys. This doesn't take long; I just feed the stack into my all-in-one printer.

Then, I email the PDF to my clients (the people who invited me to speak to their staff).

For virtual presentations, I simply collect feedback through Google Forms, and then email the spreadsheet of responses to my clients.

But it doesn't stop there! Emailing a PDF ≠ data use.

The screenshot shows a scanned document titled "Share Your Feedback" from a Google Form. The document is displayed in Adobe Acrobat Reader DC. The form contains three questions with handwritten answers:

- What's the most interesting, valuable, or useful skill you learned?**  
Everything!  
Color palette  
It statements  
Goal met boxer, i.e. G/C + webding
- If we had more time, I would've loved to learn more about...**  
Add'l types of dashboards.  
I may have to sign-up for your online class.
- Additional feedback for the instructor or workshop organizers:**  
Forwarded your website info to RL Solutions/Datix. I thought this would be a good topic for one of their Webinar's or their annual user group meeting.

At the bottom right of the page, there is a handwritten note: "Thanks!"

## Use the Data

Here's how I use the feedback survey's data to improve my future presentations.

What's the most interesting, valuable, or useful skill you learned?

I look at everything people mention, and then I continue to present on those topics.

Maybe I talked about 50 different techniques... but the same 20 are being mentioned over and over again. Those are the 20 techniques worth teaching next time because they sparked an idea and/or resonated with attendees.

The flipside: Anything that isn't mentioned doesn't get covered in the future.

If we held another session, I would love to learn more about...

I add these topics to future presentations.

For example, during past data visualization sessions, attendees mentioned that they wanted to learn more about maps.

I was map-resistant. I see maps used too often. A year later, I finally got over myself, and added an entire mapping module. In hindsight, I should've done this sooner.

I've also used this feedback to develop entirely new workshops.

Additional feedback for the instructor or workshop organizers.

This is a catch-all section.

People offer a mix of compliments ("Great session!") and complaints ("The room was too cold!").

The purpose of this question is to help your audience feel listened to.

# Kill Your Darlings

One of the final steps to fine tuning your presentation is to kill your darlings.

What does that phrase mean?

You may have heard this phrase before in the context of writing or literature.

The common definition is, “letting go of our most precious or self-indulgent content for the greater good of our work.”

An author might literally kill off a main character for the good of the story, to keep the story moving forward.

Or the author might delete entire chapters that they personally loved, but they don't benefit the reader. They don't benefit the greater good of the story and all of the characters.

Killing our darlings can be very difficult to do for obvious reasons.

In literature, the author might have to let go of his/her favorite character or chapter.

In presentations, the speaker might have to let go of a favorite slide or topic.

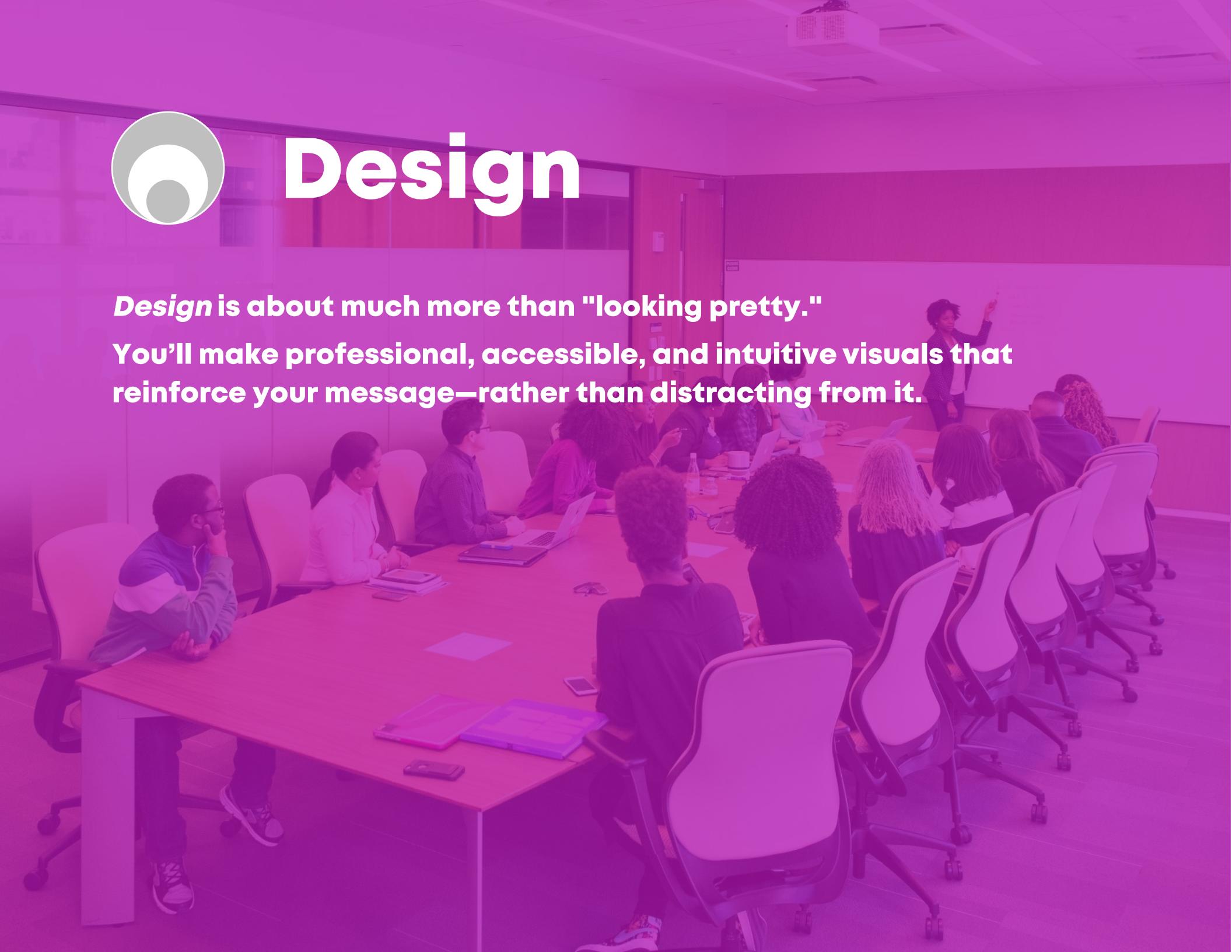
I follow Marie Kondo's approach to letting go: Instead of focusing on removing non-essential items—which can be stressful—focus on the best slides and topics that need to stay. Of course, a moment later, we have to let go of the non-essentials for the good of our presentation as a whole.



# Design

***Design is about much more than "looking pretty."***

**You'll make professional, accessible, and intuitive visuals that reinforce your message—rather than distracting from it.**





# Your Design Checklist

Let's create slides that are professional, accessible, and reinforce our key points.



## **Brand with Custom Colors**

Brand colors will (1) look professional to outside audiences and (2) save us time by removing guesswork.



## **Brand with Custom Fonts**

Avoid Frankensteined slides; Make sure everyone on your team is using brand fonts.



## **Brand with Photos**

Locate existing photos, or find stock photos, with your desired topics, tone, and colors.



## **Brand with Icons and Other Digital Assets**

Best case scenario: Hire a graphic designer to create custom icons. Worst case: A random internet search.



## **Match the Aspect Ratio to the Screen or Page**

What's the 280-character takeaway message?



## **Match the Slide Background Color to the Room Lighting**

When the lights are on, use dark text against a white background so the slide expands and fill the room.

## **Create Color-Coded Divider Slides**

Begin each new bucket with a visually-striking divider slide. Each bucket gets its own brand color, too.

---

## **Set Up the Slide Master**

Spend a little time upfront creating templates for color-coded divider slides and body slides.

---

## **Aim for 1+ Visual Per Slide**

Bullet points aren't evil, but they're drafts.

---

## **Incorporate Our 15 Ideas for Body Slides**

Try to use as many different types of visuals as possible. Not just graphs.

---

## **Go Beyond the Bar Chart**

Make sure your remaining graphs have variety, too. Add icon arrays, maps, dot plots, and more.

# Brand with Custom Colors

The traditional definition of branding is *what other people say about you when you're not there*: what services you offer, your mission, your corporate culture, etc.

In slide design, branding refers to colors, fonts, photos, icons, and other visual assets.

Branding helps us (1) look professional and streamlined, and (2) saves us time because it removes guesswork.

The easiest design edit is to use your employer's custom branding.

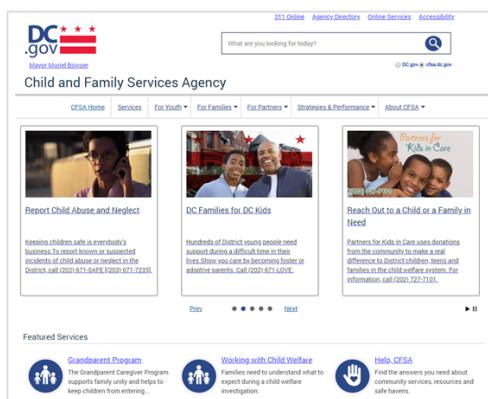
**Look at Your  
Style Guide and/or  
Website**



**Figure Out Your  
Color Codes**

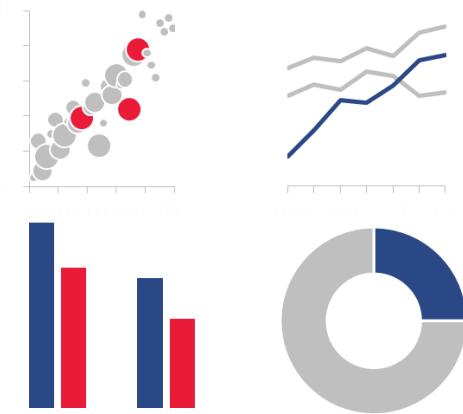


**Use Those Colors  
in Your Visuals**



**Blue**  
RGB 42, 72, 134  
Hex 86482A

**Red**  
RGB 234, 27, 57  
Hex 391BEA



# Brand with Custom Fonts

Gather your style guide and use the branding fonts already chosen by a professional graphic designer.

You may have just one font. You may have separate fonts for the heading text and body text.

Depict Data Studio **LOGO AND USAGE STYLE GUIDE**

kicksdigitalmarketing.com  
(317) 662-2881 **KICKS**

**ABOUT THE LOGO**  
The Depict Data Studio logo uses a font and color combination that is out of the box, friendly, and fun. The bright colors and simple icons express how Depict Data Studio can take complicated data and make it easy to understand.

**FORMATS**  
The logo is available in its main format, a stacked format, and individual logo icons for the different workshops.

**COLORS**  
The logo is available in each of the full colors (purple, fuschia, blue, green, black) and reversed (white with a transparent background). The full color logo should be used except when it would not provide sufficient contrast with the background. In those instances, use the reversed logo. The logo should not be used in any other color. There is no restriction on what color background may be used as long as there is significant contrast between the background and logo.

**FILE FORMATS**  
The logo is available in these formats:  
• JPEG (.jpg): for use on the Web or in Print  
• EPS (.eps): for use in Print  
• PDF (.pdf): for use in Print  
• PNG (.png): for use on the Web or in Print

**FONTS**  
The main font family in the logo is Mont Heavy. We encourage this font to be used in any marketing material where the logo is used. Other sans serif fonts may be substituted on promotional material (Montserrat, Arial, Helvetica, etc.) but should never be substituted within the logo itself.

**SIZE**  
The logo can be resized as needed, but the proportions must remain the same.  
**\*\*\* Please do not alter or stretch the logo in any way.**

PMS 426 C RGB 38, 38, 38	CMYK 71, 65, 64, 69 HEX # 262626	PMS 266 C RGB 100, 50, 198	CMYK 74, 83, 0, 0 HEX # 6432C6
PMS 660 C RGB 63, 122, 216	CMYK 75, 51, 0, 0 HEX # 3F7AD8	PMS 253 C RGB 183, 21, 183	CMYK 40, 91, 0, 0 HEX # B715B7
PMS 3395 C RGB 19, 191, 129	CMYK 73, 0, 68, 0 HEX # 13BF8I	PMS 141 C RGB 247, 203, 82	CMYK 3, 19, 79, 0 HEX # F7CB52

# Brand with Photographs

Your agency may have photos (or not—not all do!). A great example is the [University of Tennessee](#). They have their photos on their website that have been taken and edited by a professional photographer. They have a specific tone, colors, feeling that tie them all together.

Your photos may be on your style guide or in your agency's intranet. And if you don't have any—don't worry! These fall into the 'nice to have' category rather than a must have.

For example, here are some approved headshots that our team uses.



Cloud icon [AnnKEmery\\_Headshot-with-Purple\\_e\\_3](#)



Cloud icon [AnnKEmery\\_Headshot-with-Purple\\_e\\_4](#)



Cloud icon [AnnKEmery\\_Headshot-with-Purple\\_e\\_5](#)



Cloud icon [AnnKEmery\\_Headshot-with-Purple\\_e\\_8](#)



Cloud icon [AnnKEmery\\_Headshot-with-Purple\\_e\\_9](#)



Cloud icon [AnnKEmery\\_Headshot-with-Purple\\_e\\_10](#)

# Brand with Icons

Some agencies may have custom icons that have been created by a professional graphic designer. They will have your colors, fonts, correct tone, content, shape- they look like a cohesive collection.

Similar to custom photographs, your icons may be on your style guide or in your agency's intranet. And if you don't have any- don't worry! These fall into the 'nice to have' category rather than a must have.

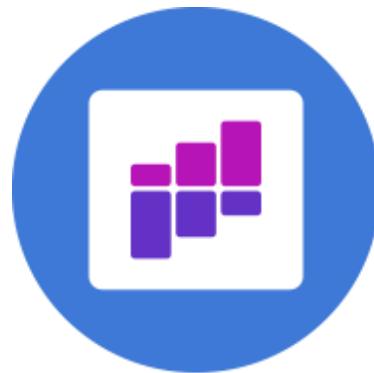
Icons are great to have throughout your entire slide deck as they make it look more consistent, professional and continue your branding the whole way through.

You may also have some other type of imagery or digital asset. For example, I have different logos for the courses I teach as well as images that I can use on my website, in slides, on products, etc. Look for any images that a professional has created for you to use in your branding.

Here are some icons that I hired an agency to make for me.



**simple****spreadsheets**



**great****graphs**



**dashboard****design**

What types of additional digital assets are available?

I've got an assortment of visuals that I can use throughout my presentations. These images were initially created during a website revamp.

Look through your website, your shared folders, and your intranet. What types of images can you find?

You can also ask your communications staff and graphic designers for images like this.

Start locating them now so that you can use them in your slides later.



# Add Color-Coded Divider Slides

*Divider Slides* are visual cues that break up your content into chunks, sections, or categories of information.

I use them because THEY WORK. They take very little time to set up, and they have a huge impact on our audience.

They help us break up your content into manageable chunks so that our audience doesn't get lost.

Our audience can understand both (1) the bigger picture of what we're covering, and (2) all of the details within that bigger picture. Divider Slides are a win-win!

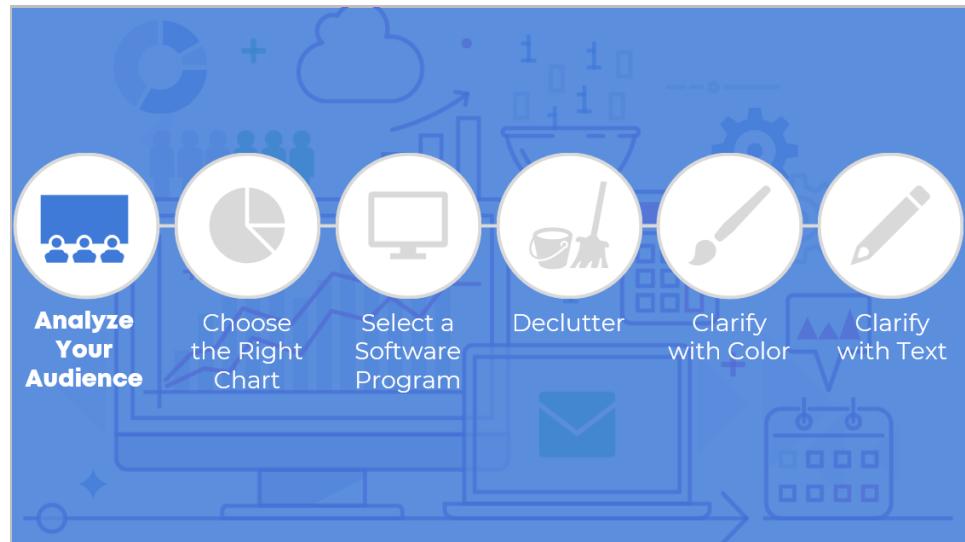
The screenshot shows a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation window with the title "How-to-Visually-Structure-Your-Presentation-Around-Key-Points". The ribbon menu is visible at the top, showing tabs like File, Home, Insert, Draw, Design, etc. The main content area displays a grid of 29 slides numbered 2 through 29. The slides are organized into four sections:

- Intro:** Slides 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Slide 2 is purple and contains three icons: "Analyze Data & Design Placemats", "Facilitate an Interpretation Meeting", and "Produce the Final Report or Slideshow".
- Step 1. Analyze Data & Design Placemats:** Slides 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. Slide 12 is blue and titled "Analyze Data & Design Placemats".
- Step 2. Facilitate an Interpretation Meeting:** Slides 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25. Slide 12 is green and titled "Facilitate an Interpretation Meeting".
- Step 3. Produce the Final Report:** Slides 26, 27, 28, 29. Slide 21 is purple and titled "Produce the Final Report or Slideshow".

## 1 Framework Dividers

Let's look at four types of divider slides.

Framework Dividers are my favorite type because visual frameworks help our audience understand both the big-picture overview and the nitty gritty details.



## 2 Photo Dividers

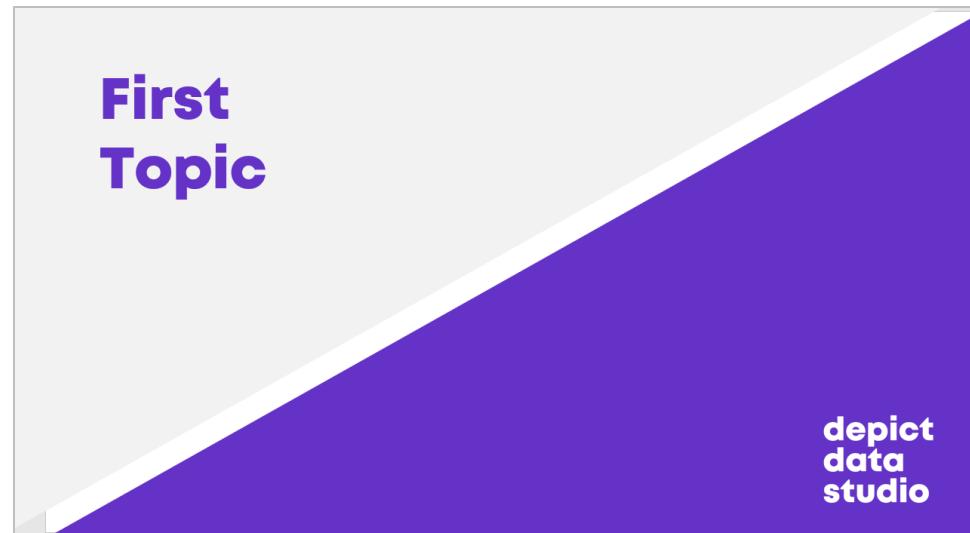
Locate custom photos from your organization's brand guide. Or, use stock photos from websites like pexels.com.

Make sure to expand your photos so that they're full-bleed (so that they fill the entire slide). It's okay if the photo hangs off the edges of the slide; it looks funny for slide designers behind the scenes, but it looks perfectly polished for our audience.



### ③ Geometric Dividers

Add rectangles, triangles, or circles. You can even add your organization's logo... if you must.



### ④ Table of Contents / Agenda Dividers

Simply repeat your presentation's agenda on the divider slide. This is a simplified version of a visual framework.

Agenda	
1	First Topic
2	Second Topic
3	Third Topic
4	Fourth Topic
5	Fifth Topic

# Aim for 1+ Visual Per Slide

Bullet points aren't evil... but think of bullet points as *drafts*.

There are so many visuals we can use beyond bullet points.

My wish for you is that every *single slide* in your presentation has a visual.

Here's what my presentations used to look like: about half text and half visuals.

Open a recent presentation. How many slides have visuals? Try to double that number in your next presentation. This takes time; Go easy on yourself during this transition.

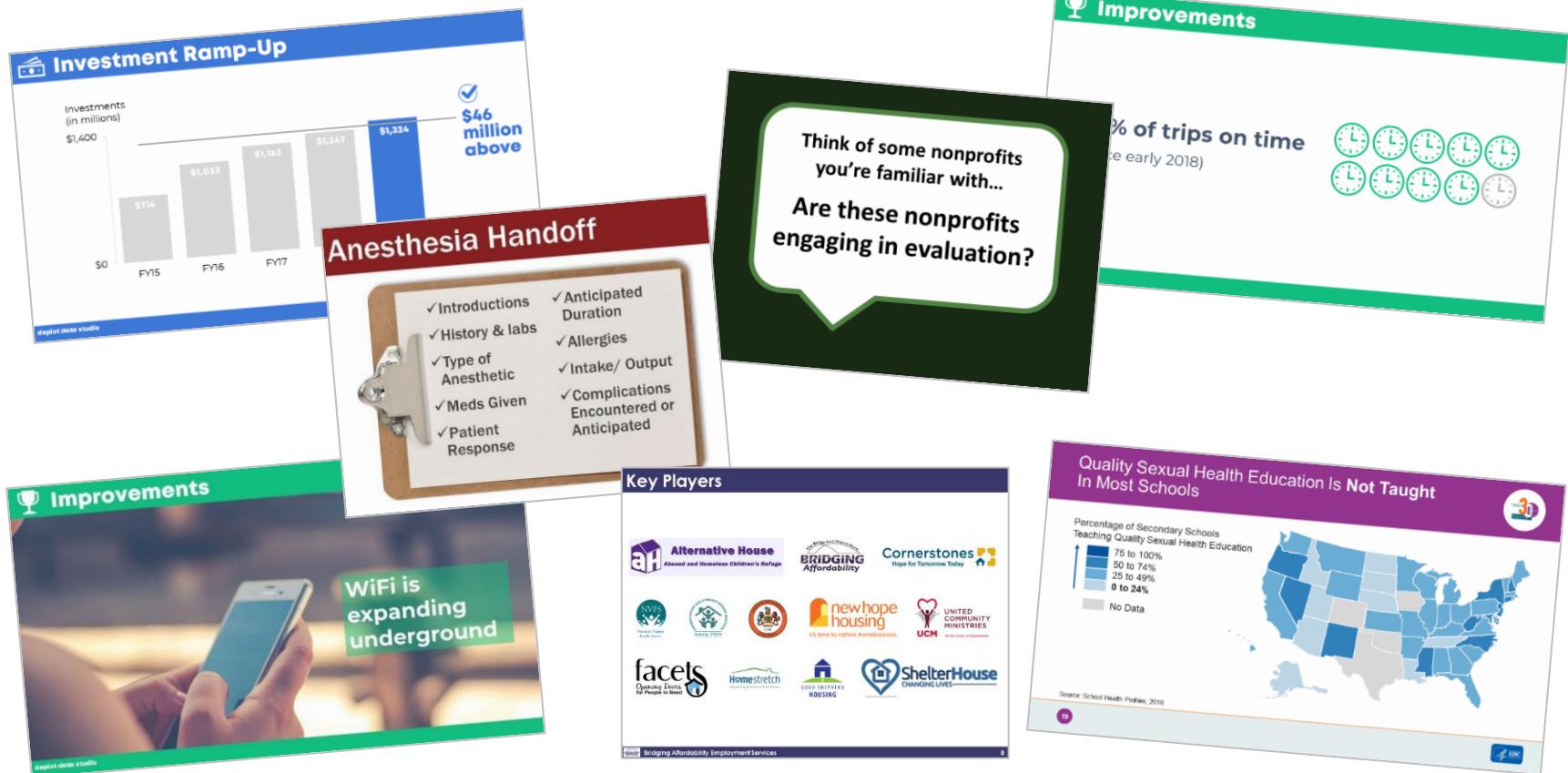
The image shows a grid of 8 slides from a presentation, numbered 17 to 24, illustrating different visual styles:

- Slide 17:** A slide with a red 'X' inside a red-bordered box. The title is "Size" and the content is a bulleted list: "► \$15 million", "► 200 staff", and "► 4,000+ youth".
- Slide 18:** A slide titled "Non-profits" featuring a photograph of four people in graduation gowns with a blue checkmark box overlaid.
- Slide 19:** A slide titled "Why productivity?" containing a red 'X' inside a red-bordered box. The content includes "► Big goals", "► Big need", "► \$15 million → \$14 million", and "► Taxpayer money".
- Slide 20:** A slide titled "Learning and Evaluation Department" with a red 'X' inside a red-bordered box. The content is "► Result of strategic planning process" and "► 7 years".
- Slide 21:** A slide titled "Learning" and "Evaluation" showing two columns of bullet points. The "Learning" column includes "► 'Improvement'" and "► Reporting internally". The "Evaluation" column includes "► 'Review'" and "► Reporting externally". A blue checkmark box is overlaid on the "Evaluation" side.
- Slide 22:** A slide titled "Cycle of Learning and Evaluation" showing a flowchart with a blue checkmark box overlaid. The cycle steps include: Logic model, Identify, modify, or align data collection methods, Share outcomes and reports with staff, Train staff on data collection methods, Begin program and data collection, Clean and analyze data, Provide interim reports to staff, and Ongoing quality assurance checks.
- Slide 23:** A slide titled "External" and "Internal" showing two columns of bullet points. The "External" column includes "► External stakeholders" and "► External environment". The "Internal" column includes "► Internal stakeholders" and "► Internal environment". A large red 'X' is centered on the slide.
- Slide 24:** A slide titled "Logic Model" showing a flowchart with a blue checkmark box overlaid. The model shows "Activities" leading to "Output", which leads to "Outcome", which leads to "Impact". Impact includes "► Better programs" and "► Improved outcomes".

# Incorporate Our 15 Ideas for Body Slides

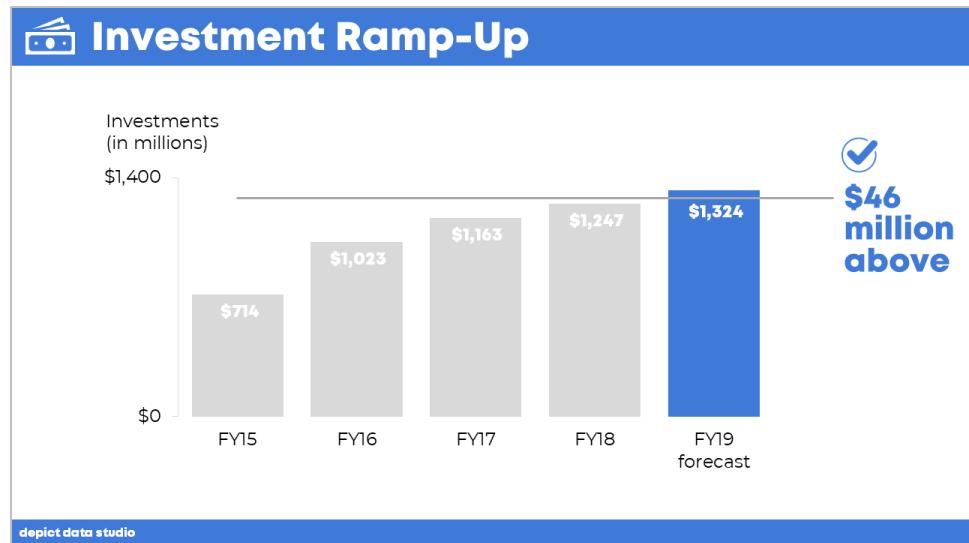
How many different styles of visuals are you currently using? Two, three, or four different types?

Use our checklist to increase the variety in your next presentation.



## 1 Graphs

If you're giving a data presentation, of course you're going to have graphs that back up what you're saying. This is the most obvious visual to include on your slides.



## 2 Photographs

Photographs help your audience connect visually with the point you're trying to make.

In this slide about how wifi was expanded underground, the photo of someone using their phone supports the text.



### 3 Icons

When you're making a point with numerical data such as in this slide, it's a great time to use icons. You can use icons to talk about states, countries, etc. In this slide I wanted to visually show the 88% of trips on time so I chose to use clocks with one grayed out.

### Improvements

**88% of trips on time**

(since early 2018)



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### 4 Lists

Lists can be helpful to cover a lot of data, especially when it's data that some attendees may already know.

In this slide, the list spells out everything that attendees would need to know.

Quality Sexual Health Education =  
These 11 Topics



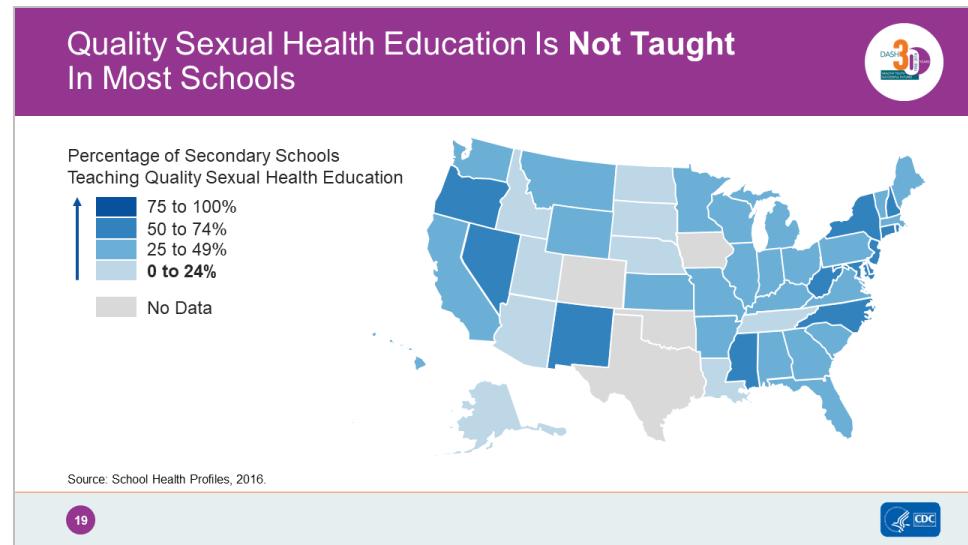
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Topic A</li><li>2 Topic B</li><li>3 Topic C</li><li>4 Topic D</li><li>5 Topic E</li><li>6 Topic F</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 Topic G</li><li>8 Topic H</li><li>9 Topic I</li><li>10 Topic J</li><li>11 Topic K</li></ul> |
|---|---|

14



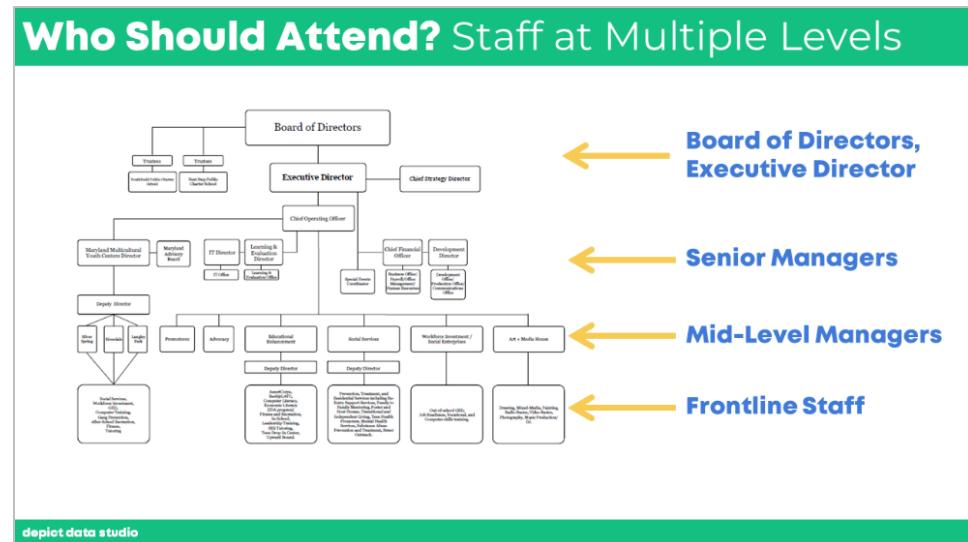
## 5 Maps

If you're talking about anything related to geography or location, add a map! It can be something as simple as an outline of a country with the fact written inside or more detailed like this slide that shows percentages.



## 6 Diagrams

Diagrams are a great way to break things down for your audience. In this slide a simple screenshot of an org chart paired with clearly labeled text easily tells employees which staff attends which meetings.



## 7 Timelines

Anytime you're talking about a project's background, use a timeline! Timelines don't need to be complicated; two or three points/milestones are sufficient.

### Timeframe



## 8 Logos

If you are referencing an organization, agency or employer, add their logo as the visual. You can also use logos when talking about partnerships by using each group's logo on your slide.

### Key Players



## 9 Screenshots

When talking about reports or documents, take a screenshot of it and use that as the visual on your slide. Your audience won't be able to read the actual text, but they may recognize it and it will become a reference point for them. You can also use website screenshots.

## Full Article

The screenshot shows a page from the journal 'Evaluation and Program Planning'. The title of the article is 'Data Placemats: A Facilitative Technique Designed to Enhance Stakeholder Understanding of Data' by Parikh and Emery. The page includes a figure titled 'Figure 6.1: General Design of Data Placemats' showing a grid of data placemats, a table titled 'Table 6.1: Technical and Adaptive Capacities' listing various skills, and several paragraphs of text discussing the facilitative process and data interpretation meetings.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/ev.20181>

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## 10 Text Overlaid on Images

I like to use this idea with photos. I will find a photo that represents the concept and then put the text on top of it.



## 11 Two- or Three-Column Layouts

If all else fails, and you don't know what to do, you can use two-or-three column layouts. Instead of listing out your bullet points going down, you instead go across the slide horizontally.

## Communication Failure

### Gawande

43% of adverse events due to communication failures between two or more clinicians

### Risser

54 tort claims from ED due to "teamwork failure" \*

### Sutcliffe

Interviewed 26 med residents  
Communication failure cited in 70 adverse events

## 12 Shapes

These are quite simply inserting the shapes provided in PowerPoint onto your slide (Insert – Shapes). You can use a speech bubble, thought bubble, arrows, X, circles, etc.

Think of some nonprofits  
you're familiar with...

Are these nonprofits  
engaging in evaluation?

## 13 Handwriting

You can also add handwriting or drawings to your slides. For example, if I'm telling people to make sure text is horizontal and not vertical or diagonal, I will literally X through what not to do on my slide.

### Make Sure Text is Horizontal



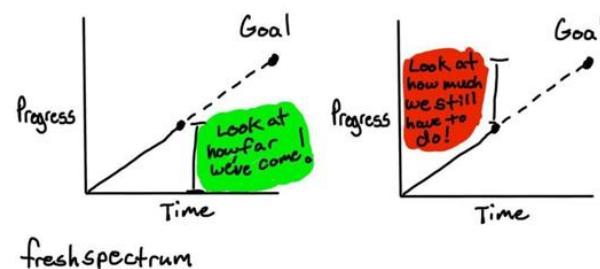
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## 14 Cartoons

Cartoons can be a great option to add more personality to your slide. For example when I teach that colors have a tone and personality, I like to use a cartoon drawn by my friend Chris Lysy from [freshspectrum.com](http://freshspectrum.com).

### Colors Have a Tone & Personality

The Optimist Chart  
The Pessimist Chart



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## 15 GIFs

GIFs are looping images that allow you to pack in a lot of data into a small amount of space. GIFs can be data-focused. Or, GIFs can provide comic relief.



*When someone  
FINALLY reads  
your report!!!!*



# Delivery

***Delivery is about your public speaking skills, of course.***

***But it's also about body language, storyboarding, and arranging your physical presentation space for success.***





# Your Delivery Checklist

Here are the easiest ways to improve your public speaking skills.

## **Storyboard Your Graphs**

Storyboarding is a great way to (1) start with a bang or (2) explain a technical graph one piece at a time.

---

## **Use a Microphone**

In-person: Use the mic provided to help people with hearing loss. Virtual: Buy a microphone!!!

---

## **Make Eye Contact**

Aim for 70% eye contact for both in-person and virtual settings.

---

## **Adjust the Lighting**

Avoid being backlit, and then add extra lamps or LED lights to virtual settings.

---

## **Decorate the Background**

Dazzle the senses with clean, intentional backgrounds.

---

## **Use Your Hands**

Show your hands—with intention—to increase trust.



## Bring the Energy

Experiment with both seated and standing presentations. Which one brings out your energy?

---



## Focus on the Audience

Push your insecurities aside; we're presenting data as a service for our audience, not for ourselves.

---



## Reduce Filler Words

Videotape yourself, and then manually transcribe your own speech. With time, filler words will disappear.

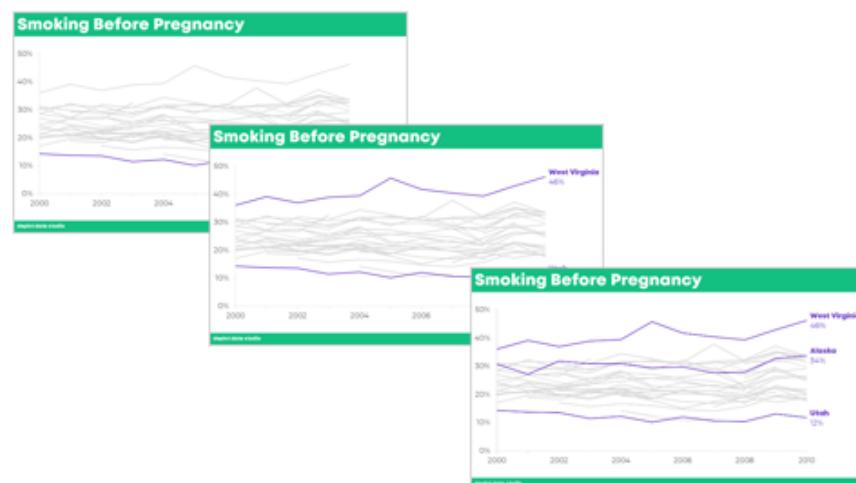
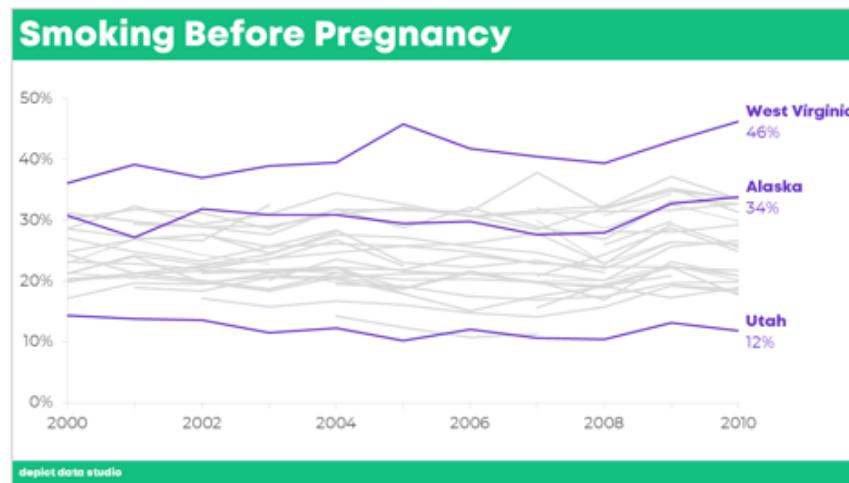
# Storyboard Your Graphs

Storyboarding is one of my favorite dataviz-specific presentation techniques!

It's a great way to start your presentation with a bang or to explain technical topics to non-technical audiences.

This technique allows us to break up a complicated graph into separate slides.

We then click through the slides and explain one piece of the graph at a time.



## Example: Bullet Points into Icons

Let's walk through a couple storyboarding examples.

In this draft (left), I began with four bullet points. I wanted to share four techniques for building an internal culture of learning and evaluation.

In the final version (right), I transformed each bullet point into an icon.

Then, I used multiple slides so that one icon appeared at a time.



### Building a Learning Culture

- ① Share data early and often
- ② Use placemats *instead of* other formats
- ③ Get staff of *all levels* on board
- ④ Collect less data

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### Building a Learning Culture



Share data early  
and often



Use placemats  
instead of other formats



Get staff of all levels  
on board



Collect less data

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## Example: Table

Even though I love graphs, photos and icons, sometimes a table is the best choice.

In this example, an epidemiologist wanted to share mortality rates for people with lupus compared to those without lupus.

I asked him whether there was one section of the table that was more important than the others.

He knew the focal point instantly: that mortality rates are highest for Black females.

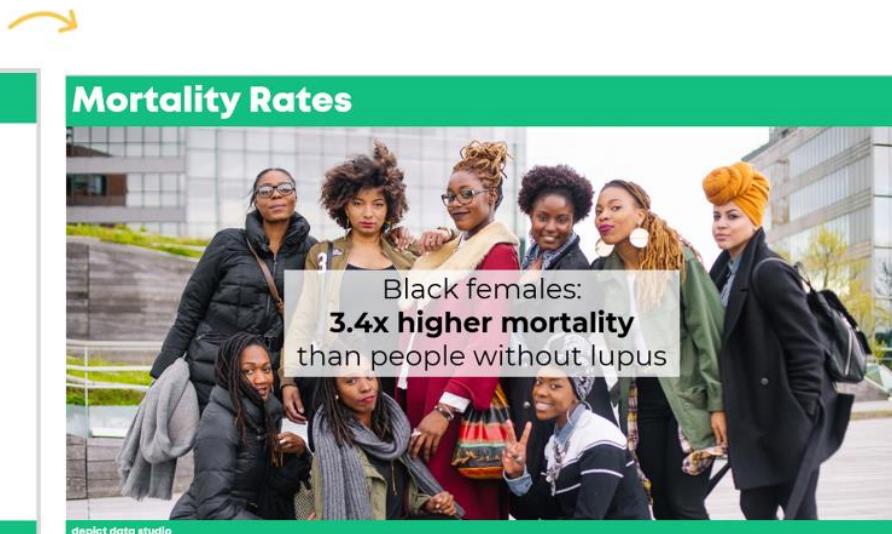
We came up with two ideas: (1) Storyboarding the table so that the row for Black Females appeared in dark, bold text as he spoke, and (2) Transforming the table into a photo of Black females, in which the text box appeared as he spoke to emphasize his speaking points.

**Mortality Rates**

Compared to people without lupus:

Males	2.9
Females	3.1
Black	3.3
White	2.4
Black Females	3.4
White Females	2.4

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# Use a Microphone

From virtual staff meetings to virtual conferences, we're all being asked to speak on camera these days.

But speaking on camera is a completely different skill from speaking in person, which can feel awkward.

I'll cover some tips that help you look and feel your best (and not like a robot).

Professional microphones are a must-have. Our audiences won't take us seriously if we don't sound professional.

I've had several different microphones over the past decade. I currently use a Blue Yeti Nano.

## Blue Yeti Nano Multi-Pattern USB Condenser Microphone (Shadow Gray)

BH #BLYNPUSBMSG • MFR #988-000088 | ★★★★★ 14 reviews



Key Features

Back-Ordered

[Request Stock Alert](#)

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# Make Eye Contact

During in-person presentations, we all know that we should make eye contact with our audience.

“Eye contact” is trickier in virtual settings.

Practice looking directly into your webcam about 70% of the time (to mimic real-world conversations).

This feels awkward at first, especially if your webcam is much higher than your laptop, like mine was in this photo.

The payoff for our audience is worth it; they’ll connect with us through our perceived eye contact.

A screenshot of a video lecture interface. At the top, there are browser-style navigation icons (back, forward, search, etc.) and a URL: [depictdatastudio.teachable.com/courses/810049/lectures/14744163](https://depictdatastudio.teachable.com/courses/810049/lectures/14744163). To the right of the URL is a purple bar with a star icon, a share icon, and a "Complete and continue" button. Below the URL is a progress bar showing "20% COMPLETE". The main content area has a dark header with a play button icon and the text "Previous Lecture". The title of the video is "My Video Interview Tech Set-Up". The video frame shows a woman with long brown hair, smiling and pointing her index finger towards the screen of a silver laptop. The laptop is on a tripod stand. In the background, there's a window with blinds and some office equipment. The video player has a yellow progress bar at the bottom with a play button icon and the time "0:50". Below the video frame are several control icons: a double arrow, a gear, and a square. On the left side of the interface, there's a sidebar with a list of other video lectures:

- My Podcast Process (5:34)
- What It's Really Like to Record Online Courses... (3:22) (checkmark)
- My Online Course Tech Set-Up (3:26)
- My Video Interview Tech Set-Up (0:58) (circle) (highlighted)
- My In-Person Interview Tech Set-Up (5:27)
- My "Talking Head" Tech Set-Up (4:35)
- How to Look Professional on Camera -- Even in a Makeshift Home Office (6:57)

Below the sidebar is a section titled "Next Steps" with a single item:

- Comment and Share Your Tips! (circle)

# Adjust the Lighting

During virtual presentations, we've got to adjust the lighting in our office.

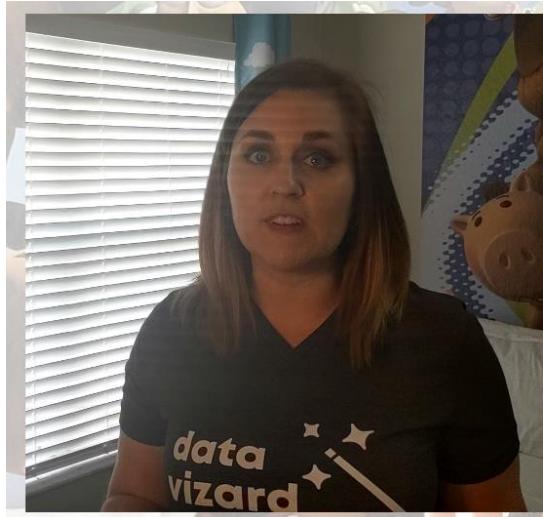
If our faces are too light or too dark, then our audiences will have trouble seeing our expressions, so we won't build those *know, like, and trust* factors as quickly.

First, make sure you're not backlit. Move your desk if needed so that the window isn't behind you.

Then, see how you look on camera with the overhead light. You probably have a ceiling-mounted light that's providing some—but not enough—lighting.

Finally, add more lamps to your office! Make sure your face is lit up enough so that people can see your expressions.

Backlit, yikes!



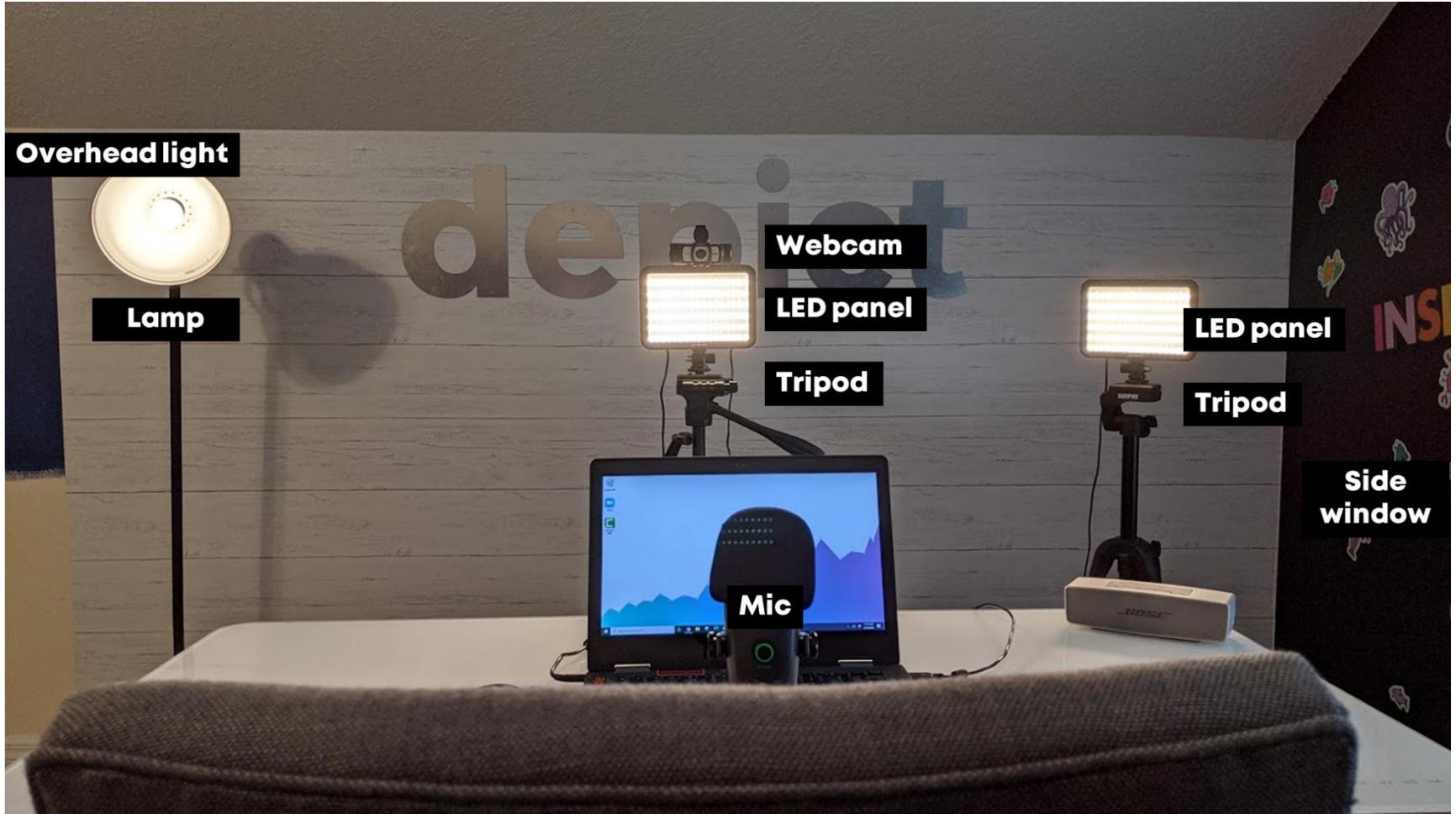
Overhead light only



3 LED lights



This is what my latest set-up looks like.



# Decorate the Background

Years ago, I complimented my hairdresser on her salon's ambiance: a clean shop, nice-smelling candles, and the perfect background music.

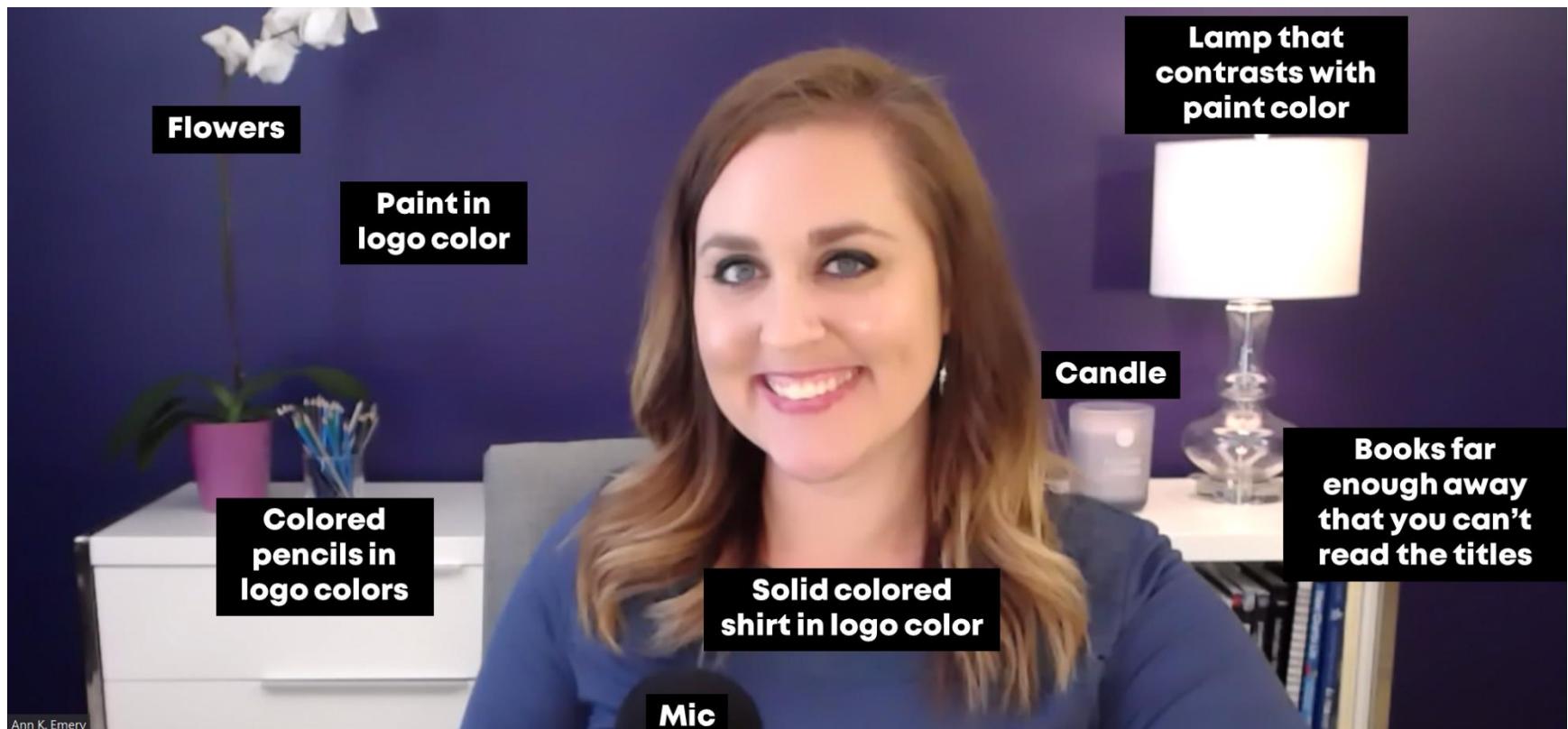
She told me she tried to "dazzle the senses" of her customers.

Good service isn't just about providing a haircut, she explained.

Good service is about creating an entire experience, which involves sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste.

How many of the "five senses" can you incorporate into your presentation?

Your virtual attendees won't smell a candle, but seeing a candle on-screen can still boost the ambiance.



# Use Your Hands

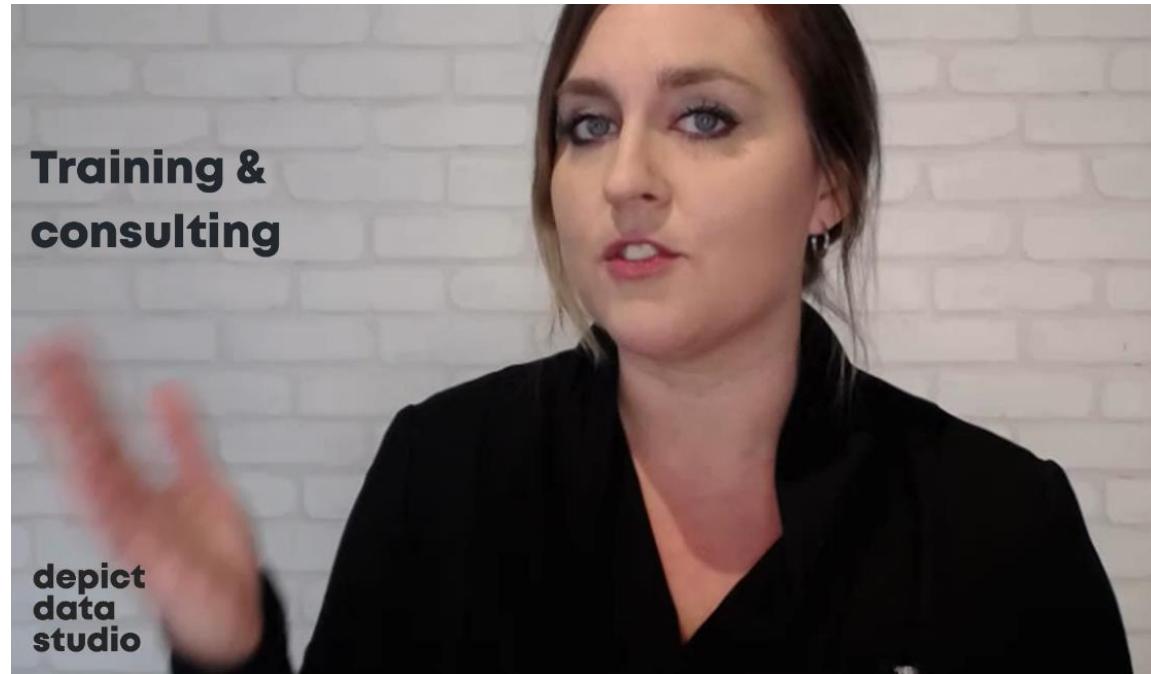
Showing our hands makes us more trustworthy: more hands = more trust.

Show your hands in both in-person and virtual settings.

Practice using your hands to:

- Wave hello;
- Place a hand over your heart to express empathy;
- Count off items;
- Point from the left to right; or to
- Indicate size or chronology.

Below, I'm using my hands to explain how I offer two types of services: training (right hand) and consulting (left).



# Bring the Energy

Experiment with both seated and standing presentations.

Will you stand in front of a podium? Sit at the conference room table with all the other meeting attendees? What about your desk during virtual settings? Will you sit or stand?

At first, I felt more energetic while standing during virtual presentations. I found that I naturally moved around more, stood with better posture, and showed my hands. With time, I was able to bring that same energy while seated.

In this picture, I created a standing desk for myself from a kitchen cart so that I could record video tutorials while traveling for work and staying in a rented Airbnb.



# Focus on the Audience

Thinking about your bad hair day?

That pregnancy weight you haven't lost?

I can't stand my cross-bite, as shown below. My teeth don't line up, which means my face isn't symmetrical—

and I've had tons of dental problems that have been made worse by this cross-bite.

But who cares.

Presenting isn't about the presenter. It's about the audience.



# Reduce Filler Words

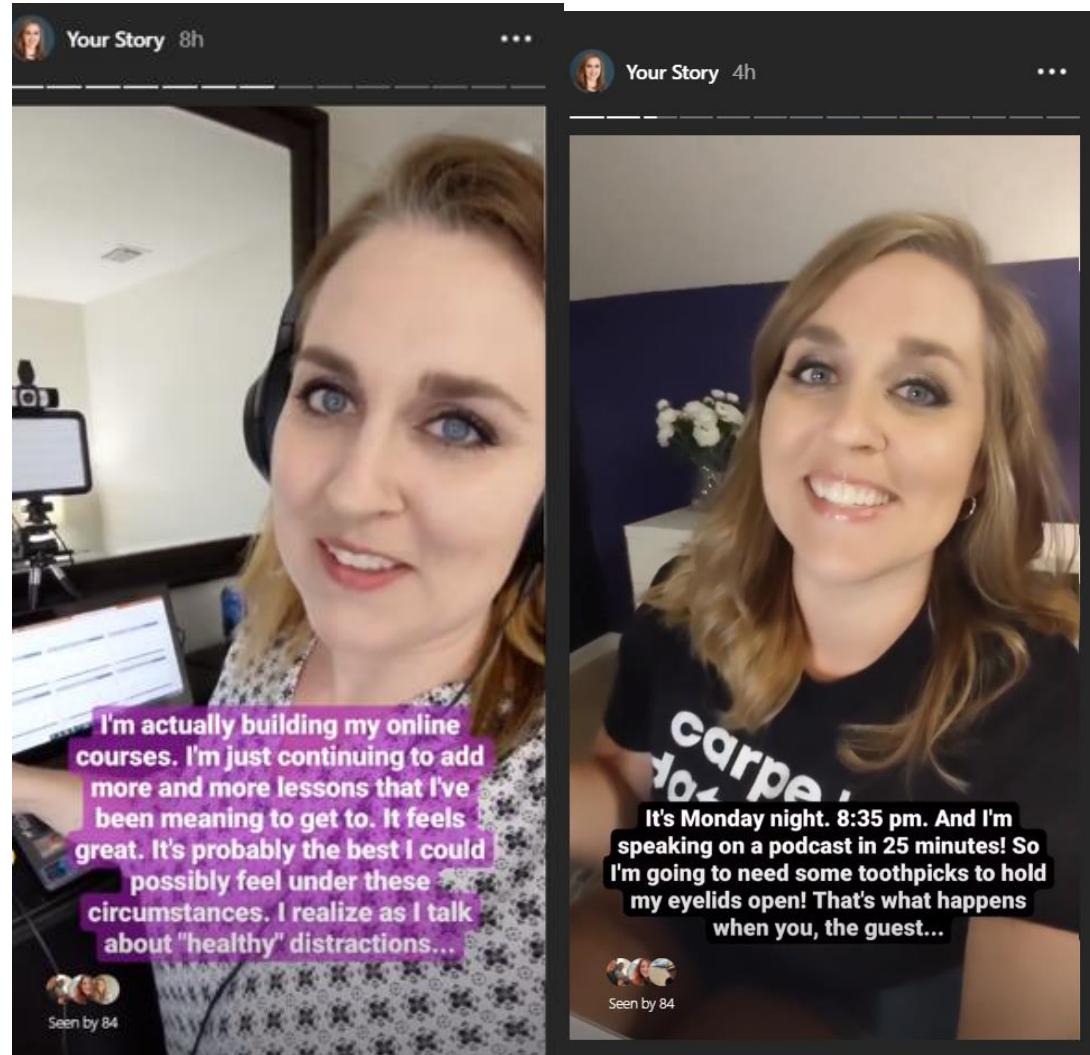
Most of us use “um,” “like,” or other filler words in everyday conversations.

You could try to banish filler words altogether from formal presentations—if you don’t mind sounding like a robot.

Instead of trying to get rid of fillers altogether, just try to reduce them a bit.

Here’s the strategy that’s worked for me:

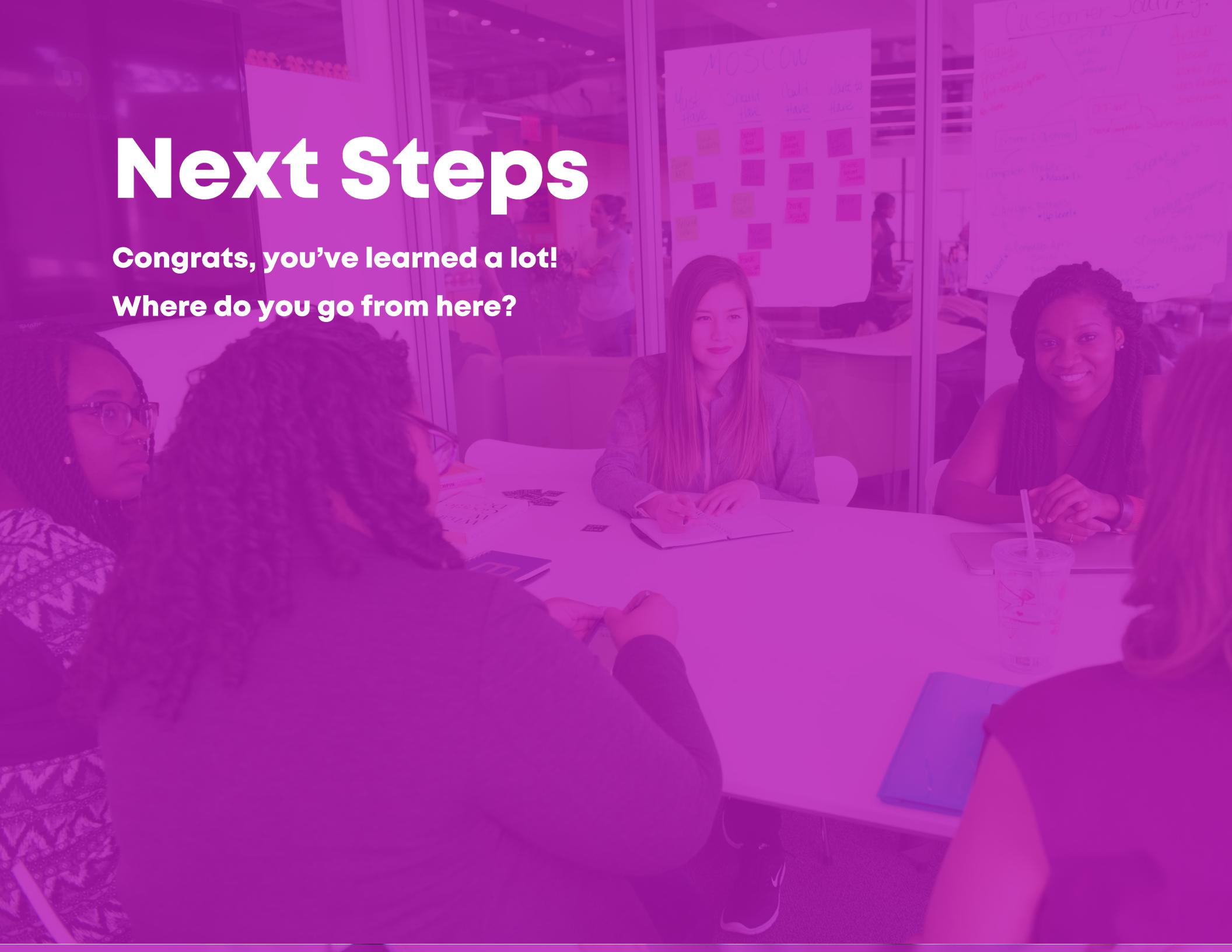
- I practice speaking into the camera on low-stakes social media posts (like Instagram stories, which disappear after 24 hours).
- I transcribe what I said by hand.
- I notice all the “ums” and “likes” as I’m transcribing, and naturally use fewer of them next time.
- Over several months, my filter words disappeared!



# Next Steps

Congrats, you've learned a lot!

Where do you go from here?



Farewell, Death by PowerPoint! You've learned about the *Message-Design-Delivery* framework for designing and delivering powerful presentations. What's next? Here are our suggested next steps.

## ① Apply Your Favorite Technique to Your Next Project

Earlier, I asked you to take notes on everything you learned. Now it's time to star, circle, or underline your favorite technique.

Which technique(s) will you apply to your next presentation?

## ② Revisit Your Organization's Slide Templates

Does your organization have slide templates that staff are expected to follow? This is a great time to revisit those templates in light of what you've learned.

You might tweak existing settings to make the slides more accessible. For example, you can transform any ALL CAPS slide titles into Sentence case or Title Case titles, which are faster to read.

Or, you might add color-coded Divider Slides.

## ③ Say “Yes” to Upcoming Speaking Invitations

I used to decline invitations to speak at conferences or on podcasts. It felt daunting to prepare for and deliver presentations. Have you ever declined a presentation?

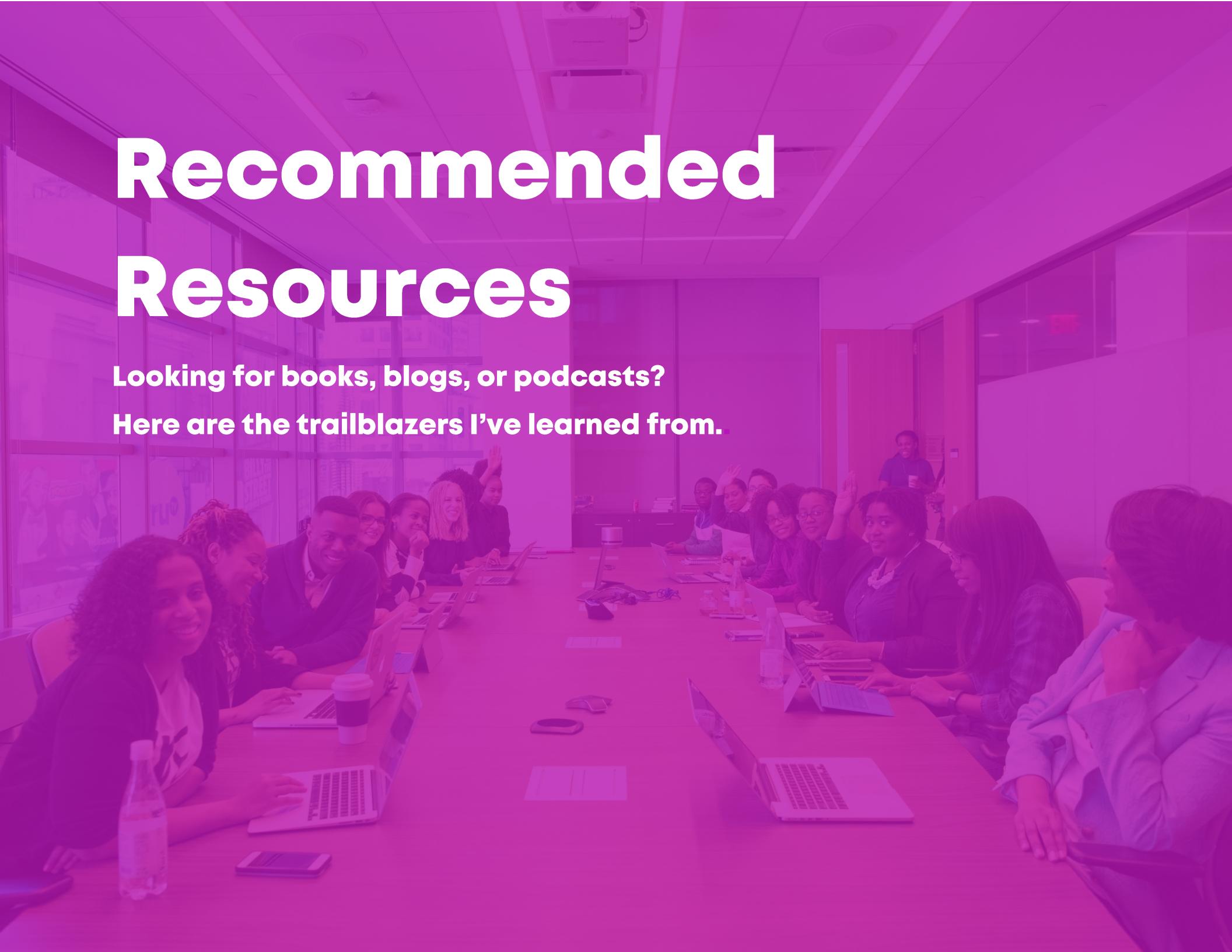
Start saying “yes” to as many speaking engagements as possible. Now, you can better plan your outline, design effective slides, and deliver your message with more clarity. You've got this! I'm cheering for you.

In time, you'll master everything I've shown you. Focus on continuous improvement, not perfection. Give yourself room for hiccups along the way.

# Recommended Resources

**Looking for books, blogs, or podcasts?**

**Here are the trailblazers I've learned from.**



## Hans Rosling

[gapminder.org](http://gapminder.org) | [@gapminder](https://twitter.com/gapminder)

Hans Rosling was my earliest data visualization influence. I distinctly remember sitting at my cubicle in 2009, churning out dusty shelf reports, when a coworker leapt into my office. “Ann! I have to show you this YouTube video!” The coworker’s enthusiasm for Hans’ viral video was contagious, so I paused my report-writing, we crowded around my tiny monitor, and were dazzled by Hans’ *200 Years, 200 Countries, 4 Minutes* storytelling phenomenon. Hans has since passed away but his children and colleagues continue his legendary work at [www.gapminder.org](http://www.gapminder.org).

## Edward Tufte

[edwardtufte.com](http://edwardtufte.com) | [@edwardtufte](https://twitter.com/edwardtufte)

Tufte’s *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* was the first data visualization book I read, back in 2010 or so. I gobbled it up during a few Metro train commutes. I consider this book a must-read. The book includes dozens of historical graphs and it’s fascinating to see how much visualization has evolved over the past few decades. I love Tufte’s approach because he’s software-agnostic. Rather than focusing on *tools*, he focuses on *techniques*, like decluttering your graphic to enhance the *data:ink ratio*.

## Cole Knaflic

[storytellingwithdata.com](http://storytellingwithdata.com) | [@storywithdata](https://twitter.com/storywithdata)

Around this same timeframe, 2010 or so, my boss saw a flier for an upcoming data storytelling workshop. A coworker and I attended together and were floored by the speaker, Cole, as she taught us to tell stories with preattentive attributes. Cole’s book, *Storytelling with Data*, and her blog, [www.storytellingwithdata.com](http://www.storytellingwithdata.com), are must-reads. If you only have the time or budget to read one book, I recommend hers.

## **Andy Kirk**

[visualisingdata.org](http://visualisingdata.org) | [@visualisingdata](https://twitter.com/visualisingdata)

I jumped at the chance to attend Andy's workshop when he came to D.C. in 2010. I had been consulting to foundations and my role was to evaluate whether their grantmaking initiatives were effective. Andy's workshop opened up a brand new world. I had never heard of *data journalism* prior to this training. The concept of producing graphs for the general public was completely foreign and gave me a lot to think about. My favorite feature of Andy's blog is his *Best Of* series that showcase exemplar visualizations.

## **Stephanie Evergreen**

[stephanieevergreen.com](http://stephanieevergreen.com) | [@evergreendata](https://twitter.com/evergreendata)

I met Stephanie around 2012 through a professional society. Over the years, Stephanie and I have teamed up on conference presentations, webinars, and workshops. We also published the *Data Visualization Checklist* together in 2014 and released an updated version in 2016.

## **Jonathan Schwabish**

[policyviz.com](http://policyviz.com) | [@policyviz](https://twitter.com/policyviz)

I met Jon in Andy Kirk's workshop. Kind of. We were both in the training but didn't realize it until a couple years later, when we'd been talking on Twitter, discovered that our offices were located within a mile of each other, and met for lunch. Jon is currently an economist-plus-data-visualization-consultant with the Urban Institute and runs the PolicyViz, LLC consultancy in his "spare" time. Jon's book, *Better Presentations*, is a must-read because he applies data visualization principles to slideshows (among other dissemination formats).

## **Alberto Cairo**

[thefunctionalart.com](http://thefunctionalart.com) | [@albertocairo](https://twitter.com/albertocairo)

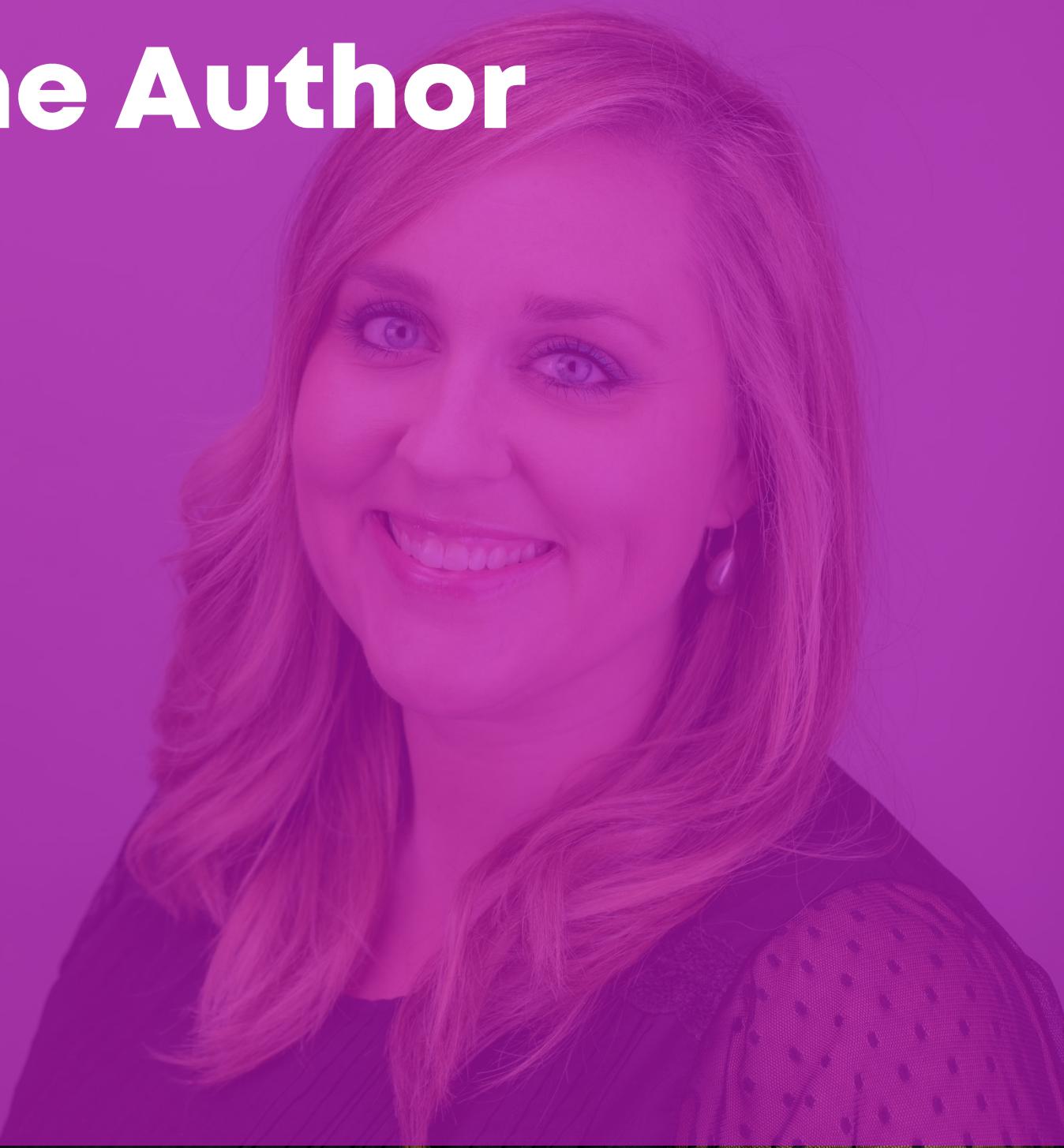
I discovered Alberto's work in 2013 when he led a MOOC (massive open online course) that attracted thousands of attendees. Like Andy, Alberto comes from a journalism background. He is also a professor (and doctoral student, consultant, speaker, and author) and his devotion to teaching the next generation of visualizers comes through in everything he writes. I finally met Alberto in-person in 2017 when he gave me personalized lessons about designing infographics with Adobe software over dinner. I still haven't figured out whether he sleeps.

## **Dave Bruns**

[exceljet.net](http://exceljet.net) | [@exceljet](https://twitter.com/@exceljet)

I discovered Dave's site eons ago when I ran into problems with my spreadsheet. I officially "met" Dave through Skype around 2014. I had just quit my salaried job and was blissfully unaware of all the blood, sweat, and tears that come with running a business. Dave reached out and offered to guide me through the transition into self-employment. We finally met face-to-face in 2016 while I was in Salt Lake City for a client project. Years later, Dave's site is *still* the first one I visit when I need help with a formula. In addition to hundreds of shorter videos, Dave offers in-depth courses on everything from basic Excel formulas to conditional formatting.

# Meet the Author



# Ann K. Emery

Ann K. Emery is an internationally-acclaimed speaker who equips organizations to get their data out of dusty spreadsheets and into real-world conversations.

Each year, she delivers over 100 keynotes, workshops, and webinars with the aim of equipping organizations to visualize data more effectively.

She has been invited to speak in more than 30 states and 10 countries; more than 3,700 people have enrolled in her online training academy; and she has consulted to more than 150 organizations, including the United Nations, Centers for Disease Control, and Harvard University.

She earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and a Master's degree from George Mason University.

Ann resides in Florida along with her husband and two daughters.

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