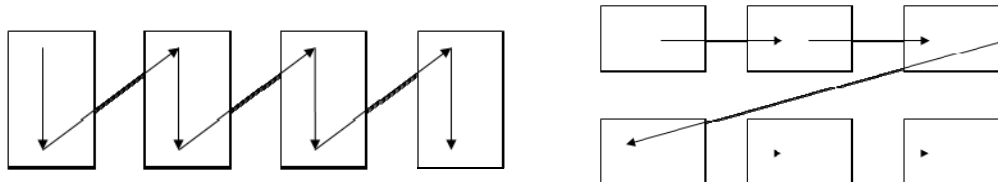# CS 461/462/463
Information on Making a Poster Presentation

- *Analyze your audience!* Put yourself in their place. How are *they* motivated? How technical are *they*? What would *they* like to know? How would *they* like to see it presented? What do *they* care about? What do *they not* care about? What will really *grab* their attention?

- *Analyze your message!* What are you trying to accomplish with this poster? Are you bestowing information? Are you selling a product? Are you selling yourself for a job? Are you selling your project for internal or external funding? Are you selling the idea that OSU CS students are a cut above? (For the Engineering Expo, *yes*, this *is* one of the messages!)

- People don't read posters (at least not at first) -- they quickly scan them. Make that easy to do. You need to grab the viewer's attention – you have (at most) **10 seconds**.

- Poster Presentations are the visual equivalent of the "elevator speech". You don't have to give every single detail. Think of your total project information as existing in three categories:
    1. Must know – include this in the poster
    2. Good to know – sprinkle some in the poster, but not all
    3. Nice to know – keep in reserve to tell people after they ask you for more information

- The poster should read in a natural direction:

- Sections:
    - Project title – be correct, informative, and brief.
    - The second line should be the project "tagline" – short, but can be longer than the title. Why do I care? Why is this important? It can be something catchy and rememberable, but doesn't have to be. It can be a little whimsical, but not silly.
    - Team members' names, clients' name(s), affiliation, company logo, email addresses. Use **.oregonstate.edu**, not **.orst.edu** !!!
    - Project introduction and background: Why did you undertake this project? What generated the idea? What goals and hypotheses did you have?
    - Project description: What did you do? How did you do it? Why did you do it this way?
    - Use blocks and block titles – it makes the poster easier to scan.
    - Display your results – photos, tables, graphs, bar charts, pie charts, bullet lists, images. *Use captions* – these visuals need to be able to stand on their own without someone having to read through the text to see what they are about.
    - Tell viewers what is *important* about what you did in this project. (You might know, but others probably don't.) What about your project makes it important?
    - Results – if you had results (execution times, numerical results, graphs, tables, etc.)
    - Conclusions section – What are the most important conclusions? What is the significance of the conclusions? If you got unexpected results, explain what you think happened.

- Others – Acknowledgements, References if it makes sense

- For the Expo, your poster will end up being about 42" wide by 32" high (± an inch or two). Everything on the poster should be comfortably viewable from ~6 feet away. Obvious section headings should be there to direct the viewer's attention.

- Use good fonts: use sans serif fonts (**Helvetica, Arial**) for titles, headings, and captions. Use serif fonts (**Times New Roman, Palatino**) for text.

- Use good point sizes for a PowerPoint slide being turned into a poster. These are pretty good, but you can experiment: **title** 32, **tag line** 20, **section headings** 12, **section text** 10. You can test this for yourself. An 11" wide poster should be easily readable from about 2'.

- First common mistake – not enough material. Don't let it look like you haven't done enough work to fill a poster. Give yourself credit for work done.

- Second common mistake – too much material, too dense, too esoteric. Make it look clean and readable. Don't use text where bullets will do. Use graphs and charts. Appeal to what the viewer wants to know, not necessarily what you want to tell them. Leave the viewer begging to know more!

- Pay attention to good grammar and spelling. People tend to fixate on flaws like this. Sad, but true…

- Have someone unfamiliar with your project review the poster. Is it interesting and understandable? Does it inform?

- CS 461/462/463 specifics:
    - OSU logo
    - Identify this as a CS Capstone Project
    - Company's logo
    - Team photo (we will take these in the spring)

- Have poster-writer's block? Try this: jot down potential points and potential visuals on separate Post-It notes. Then go to a white-board and cluster them.

- **Be sure to get your Clients' input on the poster. Their names are on it too! They will probably have good feedback on the proper way to explain things. (This goes for all year long, not just this first time.)**

Each team will produce a preliminary poster in the form of a PowerPoint slide. This is due 23:59:59 on Monday, November 29 (the Monday after Thanksgiving). Email one poster .ppt or .pptx file per team to me. Please give it a name of the form **teamxx.yyy**, where 'xx' is your 2-digit team number and yyy is the proper suffix for whatever program you used to generate it. (Yes, you can use other *common* programs to generate your poster.)
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