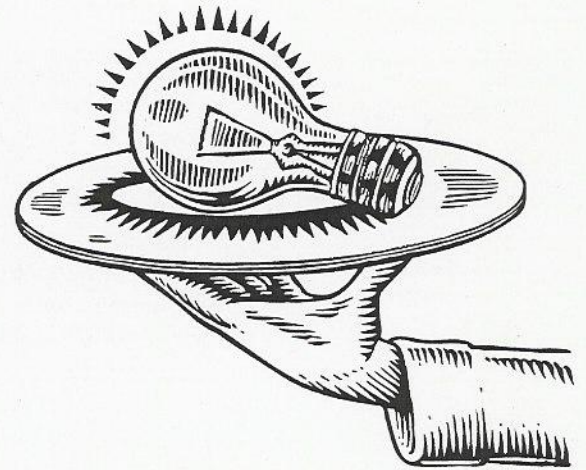


Adding S.P.A.R.K. to Your Presentation with Technology

by David Saxby, Alberta



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CAPS member, Jim Clemmer took the spotlight in November as his organization was presented with an Award of Excellence for its use of technology and information systems to leverage their virtual company based in Kitchener, Ontario. The Canadian Information Productivity Awards champion information technology as the management enabling tool of the future and the CLEMMER Group was recognized in the first ever awards to Small Business.

The CLEMMER Group has turned its limited resources to its advantage by finding innovative strategies for communicating electronically with their growing database of clients and contacts. "With this approach we began to generate a high volume of interest with a much higher frequency of contact," Jim recounts. "In February 1997, we were preparing for a seminar in Toronto and hoping

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Dr. Terry Paulsen CSP CPAE stated at our national convention, "The computer is a great advantage...unless you're not using one!" Multimedia is a key computer tool to consider for connecting with your audience and capitalizing on that advantage.

There are two distinct advantages of multimedia. You can develop a computer based presentation incorporating video, audio, animation and graphics quicker (at a fraction of the cost of just a few years ago), and you can customize your presentation quickly and easily.

To determine whether multimedia is for you, consider the following points.

1) Selecting your visual aids

What is the audience's size and background? The number of people will determine the projection equipment requirements. Their background determines the style of presentation. If the audience is a not-for-profit group, multimedia may be too expensive; however, a business may think it's a necessity.

2) Planning Your Presentation

What is the room size and set up? Check for visual impairments, such as pillars, that interfere with your presentation. Are you presenting in a fully lit room? Then you need lots of contrast between background and text and stronger light power from the projector. Will you have adequate time to set up, rehearse and break down the equipment?

If multimedia seems appropriate for the setting, storyboarding is perhaps the easiest method of planning. You can combine pictures, words, sound and effects notes in your draft. Use the Software capability (e.g. Powerpoint) to sort frames.

3) Applications

Producing a program yourself is relatively easy. Microsoft Powerpoint (bundled with Microsoft Office) and Corel Presentation

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(bundled with Corel 8) each costs about \$600. Both allow you to edit frame by frame, print slides, notes, an outline and handouts from the same file. You can also pre-set formats as well as customize backgrounds and add clip art. More sophisticated programs (such as Director) are available; but be prepared for a steep learning curve.

4) Resources

Your computer's resolution must match the projector's resolution. Most computers and projectors today are SVGA resolution (800X600 pixels) or higher.

Projector light quality is also critical. Most portable projectors range between 400 to 750 lumens (which means you can project an image on a 10x12 screen in an almost fully lit room with up to 300 people). Larger audiences require higher lumen levels.

5) Keeping High Touch

Does the audience expect a high content, technically sophisticated presentation—or entertainment and motivation? Motivational

speakers may want someone to operate the computer to allow them to be more high touch. A mouse attached to the computer, or a remote control device to change frames allows you to interact with the audience. But the real key is rehearsal; winging it with multimedia is not recommended.

Lastly, match your content and tempo with your speaking style. Don't produce an MTV video if you are a laid back presenter. The audience will watch it before listening to you.

Using multimedia will not make you a better presenter but it help to enhance the audience's connection to you.

As an official CAPS supplier, Tel/AV has a discount arrangement for professional members. I'm sure they would be happy to answer any questions about equipment.

David Saxby is president of Spark Communications Inc. a company that provides marketing communication solutions, multimedia production and web page development to the speaking, training and education industries. David is currently the President of the Calgary chapter of CAPS and can be contacted at: saxbyd@home.com or phone(403) 244-7450.
