



Claudyne Wilder

Improve your existing visuals without spending a fortune

Claudyne Wilder is a trainer, professional speaker and author of several books, including Point, Click and Wow! A Quick Guide to Brilliant Laptop Presentations and The Presentations Kit: 10 Steps to Selling Your Ideas. Contact her at Wilder Presentations, 617.524.7172, claudyne@quik.com.

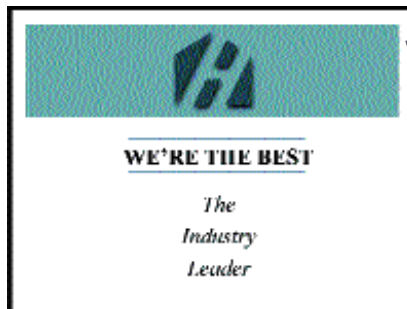
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Editor's Note: Welcome to *Before & After*, a new column that will help you design more powerful presentation visuals. Each month presentation consultants Claudyne Wilder and David Fine will critique and redesign a reader-submitted presentation and showcase their work in a before-and-after format. This month, Wilder used three different slides from some of their past clients to emphasize common design errors. If you'd like to have your presentation critiqued in a future column, see the box at the bottom of the next page.

John Burt wasn't happy with his laptop presentation created in-house. Yes, he could modify and update it himself, but it looked so plain — like every other PowerPoint presentation. He urged his assistant to investigate options for creating a better quality presentation.

Burt is part of a growing trend — CEOs and other senior executives who carry their companies' stories in high-impact electronic presentations on their laptop computers. Once such a strong core presentation has been developed, it can easily be modified for different audiences. At a moment's notice, the executives can change, customize or fine-tune elements of their presentations to fit a new audience — shareholders, bankers, customers, suppliers and employees.

CEOs want classy-looking presentations and the ability to change them (or to have their assistants change them) on the fly. New software developments combined with advances in laptop capabilities now make it possible to have the best of both worlds — an expensive-looking presentation that is also user-modifiable. This can be achieved by creating hybrid presentations using a range of software programs all linked into one cohesive format. The screens most likely to be changed by the user (text, certain charts or other information) are created in PowerPoint. Other elements are created in a variety of more advanced programs. Here are three specific ideas for enhancing your presentations.



BEFORE



AFTER

The Animated Opening Module:

We're the Best

Before: This simple screen showing the company's logo is plain. It is focused on the company, but not on the customer. It could easily have a picture to add visual interest and excitement — pictures are easy to find and add to a title screen.

After: First, we reduced the size of the company logo. The audience usually isn't very interested in the logo. We added customer pictures and images that reflect the audience mix. (Hint: If your audience mix changes frequently, you should make several title screens, each reflecting a different audience. The presenter can then choose which title screen to show). We wanted a strong opening to grab the audience's attention. We know that agendas are useful to share right at the beginning of a talk. The agenda lets your audience know the key areas you plan to cover. In this case, four key phrases — investor messages repeated throughout the presentation — appear on the slide during the opening 30-second module. Pictures and words are choreographed on the screen to provide an upbeat feeling and image for the company.

Process: The visual is the first screen of an animated opening that has been inserted into a PowerPoint presentation. It is a 30-second, self-running sound-and-action module created in Macromedia Director (as an .EXE file). Clicking on the screen title initiates it.

The Upscale Chart:

"%" of Work Force Self-employed

Before: This chart has some problems. First, the title is not very descriptive. Second, the 3D effect makes it almost impossible to see the exact percentages. Many people think 3D charts are always the best, but that is not true, because they often make seeing exact numbers difficult. Third, the phrase, "As a percentage of all workers," isn't interesting to view.

After: This revision of the title more clearly explains the content. By putting "%" in the title, the audience knows the numbers are percentages. The trend line makes it easier to see the growth. And when you include the 1975 and the 1995 percentages, the audience can see the increase in the number of self-employed people has almost doubled. You no longer need the phrase "As a percentage of all workers." And notice the addition of the word "Market" at the top of the

screen. This presentation has many sections, so to keep the audience aware of which section the presenter is discussing, the section name will always appear at the top. Section titles are especially useful when discussing different products. You can put one on a sidebar or at the bottom of the page.

The Build: As a background, the blank chart and title come up. Second, the number "9" comes up on the screen. Third, the trend line appears, showing the percentage of the work force that is self-employed. Fourth, the number "17" appears. In this order the presenter can tell a story about how the increase occurred. Finally, the presenter brings up the trend line for the future and discusses key points about the future.

Process: The chart is an example of a simple, bright chart. It was created in Photoshop, since it is not likely to be updated frequently. The animation was done in PowerPoint.



The Custom-Designed Background: MDS

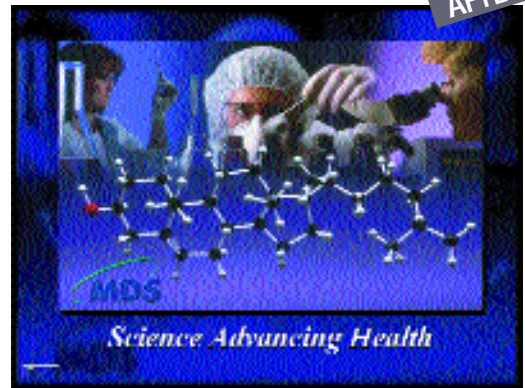
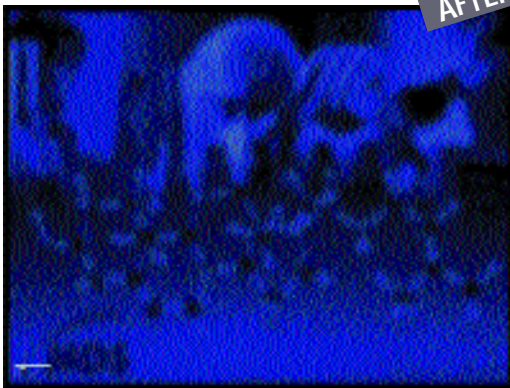
After: In this case, no "before" example exists, because executives at MDS Inc., a major life science and health care company, didn't want a simple colored background, nor did they want to use one of the software programs' numerous templates. Many companies want a custom design that gives the presentation a unique feel. This is becoming more important as audiences now recognize some of the backgrounds taken from the major presentation software programs. A company does not want to show up and see that its competitor's presentation uses the same background.

MDS Inc. wanted a new custom look created. After going through the checklist I use at the launch of every new project to determine a client's

preferences, this image emerged. The look was carefully crafted to reflect images in the company's annual report, supplemented by stock photos. A dark blue, slightly blurred ver-

sion of the image provides the background for the body of the presentation.

Process: Photos were scanned in. The image was then manipulated in Photoshop and inserted into PowerPoint. ■



Get your presentation critiqued for free!

Do you have a presentation that falls flat or blends into the crowd? It may simply need an injection of energy, organization or individuality. To have your

material considered for a Before & After redesign, send your presentation on a Windows-compatible floppy disk to Claudyne Wilder, Wilder Presentations,

57A Robinwood Ave., Boston, MA, 02130; 617.524.7172; claudyne@quik.com. Only presentations selected for redesign will be returned to the sender.