



7 Deadly Sins of Presentation Technology

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Presenters today tend to rely heavily on the latest technology to deliver their message. Overhead projectors have joined the Jurassic age, replaced by slick notebook computers and multimedia projectors. While this new technology has the potential to enhance your presentations, it also carries its own risks. Remember Murphy's Law? "*Things will go wrong in any given situation if you give them a chance*" holds especially true for gadgets and gizmos during a presentation. You can keep an already stressful situation from worsening if you'll avoid these 7 Deadly Sins of Presentation Technology.

1. Missing connections. Make certain you have all the connections you'll need for two devices to communicate. For example, to connect an Apple notebook to a multimedia projector requires a mini-DVI adaptor. If you're connecting a video camera to a television monitor or projector, you'll need to determine whether you'll be using S-video, component or composite interfaces.
2. Cords that are too short. The optimal room set-up should determine the placement of your notebook, not the length of any projection cords or power cords. Bring, or arrange for, extension cords so you aren't limited by an arbitrary standard. Also, be sure to bring any adapters needed for power cords.
3. Incompatible formats. Video formats vary around the world. The U.S. uses NTSC, much of Asia uses PAL and several countries in Europe use SECAM. This means a video tape from the U.S. wouldn't play in standard equipment in Asia. If you're giving international presentations, or hosting them, resolve any format issues and arrange for multi-system equipment to be available. If you're using a DVD, make sure the necessary hardware and software is available and installed.
4. Unfamiliarity with software programs or remote devices. Most people have a basic knowledge of slide presentation software, but to use advanced features, you'll need practice and an awareness of any cross-platform issues. I prefer to bring my own wireless presentation remote because I know its features. I've seen presenters press too hard on the advance button of an unfamiliar remote and burn through thirty slides before they even knew what was happening. Older remotes use IR technology that requires more precise line of sight positioning. Presenters who move around the room sometimes exhibit contortionist behavior to get their remotes lined up with the USB receiver.

5. No backup. If you present enough times, eventually you'll find yourself in the position of not having your presentation loaded on the computer you'll be presenting from. Without backup, you're doomed. Have a copy of your presentation slide show on both a USB flash drive and available online. The advantages of these two media over a CD is that you can edit the slide show.
6. No spares. Always carry spare batteries with you for any peripherals such as your remote, external speakers, timers, recorders, laser pointers and wireless microphones. Replacement bulbs for projectors are expensive, but if you're bringing your own equipment, having a spare could save the presentation.
7. Not practicing. Never wait until the start of your presentation to begin interacting with the technology. If you're giving your presentation offsite, arrive early to test equipment and review placement of the projector. The image should fill the screen and be in sharp focus. Avoid "keystoning" (an image that is smaller at the top or bottom) by adjusting the height of the projector. Avoid lateral distortion by making sure the projector is perpendicular to the screen.

You can prevent most of these technology mishaps if you supply your own equipment. Offsite presentations sometimes make it impractical, so when that's the case, remember the three "P's." Plan for the best. Prepare for the worst. Practice with what's available.

A final word of warning for presentation road warriors: Despite your best efforts, technology will still sometimes fail. When it happens, keep in mind that slide shows are support for presentations, not replacements. Cicero didn't have PowerPoint. Nor did Lincoln, Churchill or Martin Luther King Jr. They all delivered some of the most powerful messages in history.



Joe Sommerville shows professional services firms how to increase visibility, enhance credibility and close more business. Download the first chapter of RainMaking Presentations: How to Grow Your Business by Leveraging Your Expertise at www.RainMakingPresentations.com.