

INCORPORATING LIVE VIDEO INTO POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

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ABSTRACT

WHY INCORPORATE VIDEO INTO POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS?

Anyone who has watched a documentary or news broadcast on television understands that short video clips interspersed with the “talking heads” commentary or interviews greatly enhances both the range and depth of information that can be communicated, and also the appeal of the program to audiences. In similar fashion, classroom instruction can also be substantially enhanced by videos that portray historical or current events, provide demonstrations of expertise or mastery, visually transport the viewer to remote locations, or introduce topical experts or historical eyewitnesses. While few critics of pedagogy would endorse the wholesale replacement of lectures or classroom student-teacher interaction with period-length movies or television programming, short video clips can serve to improve the flow of information and course material, and thus greatly enhance student interest and comprehension. Perhaps in no subject or area is this truer than in marketing.

Effective marketing pedagogy typically requires references to television advertising, product placement in movies and television shows, proper and improper sales techniques, political and social discourse on marketing practices, recent news events, and examples from corporations that are effectively (or ineptly) implementing marketing concepts. In addition, it is often useful in teaching to introduce students to “experts” on specialized subjects. In support of these pedagogical needs, short video clips are generally far superior to other methods, for a variety of reasons. No description of television commercials can equal the actual presentation of these advertisements, and no description of marketing strategy implementation can ever be as effective as the multimedia depiction of this execution. Similarly, guest (expert) lecturers typically necessitate the allocation of an entire class session (for etiquette reasons alone), and their performances are often unpredictable.

Until recently, short video segments were difficult to incorporate into classroom lectures and presentations. More lengthy video material (such as

movies and television programs) could be played by interrupting lectures and then starting (and later stopping) analog projectors or videotape (or more recently DVD) players. Difficulties with finding and cueing video material made the introduction of shorter sections problematic. With the introduction of presentation computer software (such as Microsoft’s PowerPoint) and digital video, the seamless integration of video within live presentations became possible (if not painless). Based upon this rationalization, this discussion concerns the most straightforward techniques for reliably introducing brief video segments into PowerPoint lectures and presentations.

APPROACHES TO VIDEO IN POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In general, there are two basic approaches to invoking video segments during PowerPoint presentations. The first approach is to embed Internet hyper-links in PowerPoint, which a presenter can later select during the course of the presentation in order to open a web page containing video. This approach has several limitations. First, desired video content must be available online, and the presenter must be confident that this link and video content will remain in place throughout the useful or expected “life” of the PowerPoint presentation. Secondly, the presentation must take place within an area where Internet access is reliably available (either through a network cable or through wireless connections). Finally, the hyper-link approach can introduce awkward and time-consuming transitions between the PowerPoint pages and the video segments. In summary, then, the use of hyper-links to play video segments in PowerPoint presentations is problematic and generally unreliable.

The alternative (and generally superior) method for invoking video segments during PowerPoint presentations is to embed the video itself within the presentation.¹ Although this is a highly reliable and

¹ Technically, video files are not actually embedded within the PowerPoint presentation file. Instead, video segments remain in separate files and are merely played within the PowerPoint presentation file via program links.

more aesthetically pleasing approach, it tends to require significantly greater effort on the part of the presentation developer. As a brief synopsis, embedding video segments within PowerPoint requires the following considerations and comprehension:

1. A basic understanding of video file formats
2. An understanding of how PowerPoint accesses video segments
3. An awareness of possible sources of video material and their source file formats, including:
 - a. Analog live (television) and videotaped material
 - b. Digital video material (in DVD, VCD, digital tape, or computer files)
 - c. Corporate and organizational internet websites (with either streaming or downloadable content)
 - d. YouTube and other social networking sites or material
4. Which file formats are most appropriate for embedding within PowerPoint
5. Additional issues and potential concerns, including:
 - a. Pedagogical issues such as appropriate topics and durations

- b. Legal issues, including copyrights and notions of fair use
- c. Further technical issues, including editing and storage of videos, and file paths

FURTHER PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the above considerations, the insertion of video segments in PowerPoint presentations requires a careful analysis of the specific manner by which video can enhance student learning. Effective utilization of video material perhaps also requires some calculated restraint. Once the techniques of incorporating video into PowerPoint are mastered, and the benefits of such efforts are revealed through student appreciation and feedback, there is often a tendency to embrace this approach beyond the point of optimal effectiveness. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that elegant video enhancements and transitions can greatly enrich both student interest and comprehension in computer-aided presentations, yet these are but one device in what must be a diverse pedagogical toolkit.