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Audio PowerPoint and Moving Graphs Make Presentations Easier

by Rick Hesse, Feature Editor

The problems with forcing teams or groups to present quantitative case results (usually with PowerPoint slides) in the classroom is that everyone has to get dressed up, get nervous, take much longer than expected, while the rest of the class grows bored (except when they are presenting). Presentations that should last 10 minutes stretch to 20 or more, and the natives (rest of the class) get restless. Each team member reads the PowerPoint slide or note card, and attention is diverted from the results and analysis to the trivial idiosyncrasies of the presenter.

For this very reason I have avoided having teams make a case presentation in my MBA classes, but now I think I have found the solution—audio PowerPoint presentations. Bruce Hanson, now at Colorado Technical University, Colorado Springs, started doing this with his Organizational Development MBA classes while at Pepperdine University, and this technique has adapted well to quantitative classes. Now Bruce is employing it in the doctoral programs for computer science and IT management with courses on-line and finds it really enhances the course including rich media. In fact, this concept really should transfer well across all disciplines.

Instructions

The instructions I give my students are as follows, and of course can be adapted to each instructor's particular classroom needs:

1. Make up your Executive Summary as Power Point slides, complete with charts, graphs, clip art and bullets (points).
2. Between 10-20 slides and between 2-5 minutes running time.
3. Use a microphone to record the slide show—don't just read what's on the slide. Check to make sure that each person is audible (this is the biggest prob-

lem initially and requires a few practice slides to get each individual's volume correct).

4. State what the situation is and a quick background of the company and data.
5. What things did you learn as you investigated the problem (not how you did it)? Make sure you show some solution templates, charts, graphs and/or tables with results and explain them verbally. Then explain your recommendations.
6. Each member has to talk on at least two slides. Each person can actually record their own set of slides on their own and then the whole presentation can be pieced together as one complete PP file. Each group can assume the status of a small consulting team brought to investigate this situation.
7. After you have created the slides, you can then overlay a recorded voice track for each slide via the "Record Narration" option on the "Slide Show" menu on the Power Point tool bar at the top of the screen. Please change the sound quality to at least 16-bit mono using the "Change Quality..." button. This is the only button you will need if you record in one try. Make sure that the external microphone is plugged into the proper jack on the computer.
8. After clicking on the Record Narration button, you will see the first slide and you can begin recording the narration. When you are done recording on that slide, press <Return> or <Enter> and the show will advance to the next slide to set its timing. After pressing <Enter> for the last of these slides, you can press <Esc> and return to the display that shows all your slides on the same screen and it will show the timing of each slide. You can then add up the times to see if



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applied math and computer science. Dr. Hesse is the author of *Managerial Spreadsheet Modeling & Analysis and Applied Management Science: A Quick & Dirty Approach* (with Gene Woolsey), articles in numerous journals, and software for personal computers. Rick was the first professor to be awarded the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal by the Department of the Army at West Point in 1982, and was the winner of the Decision Sciences Institute's Innovative Instructional Award in 1981.

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the presentation is within timeline guidelines.

By limiting the length and size of the presentation, groups are able to concentrate on the content of the analysis (it forces them to concentrate the analysis) and not worry about appearance or speaking in public. Each slide can then be shown in class and the content discussed, if time allows. Class members then are looking at content and listening to commentary rather than being distracted by either the idiosyncrasies of the speaker or the other members of the group all crowded up front. This also prevents a following group from changing their verbal presentation (if presenting the same case results) because of what they learned from previous presentations. If there is not enough class time for presentations, they can be reviewed by the professor. A word of warning though—these files can be quite large, even for just 20 slides and a five-minute narration. My groups must have their presentations

downloaded on our class Web site before class time, but a professor could also just require that they be handed in on a CD (files are usually too large for a floppy disk).

Animating Graphs

Even though graphs of numerical data can give a good visual of numbers, they can be even more effective when animated in PowerPoint. This can be done by pasting the picture of the graph (pie chart, column chart, etc.) into a PowerPoint slide. Then select the graph and from the Drawing Tool select Ungroup, and the message in Figure 1 appears. Select “Yes” to ungroup the picture of the graph (you want a picture so that it is not linked live to a spreadsheet).

Do this until all the elements are ungrouped. Then group the large surface of the pie, the curved edge and the two labels (“Tables” and “83.3%”) as a single group by holding down the <Shift> key and clicking on each part and then select

Group from the Drawing menu. The smaller pie section and its two labels are grouped next. They are named Group4 and Group5 for this graph by PowerPoint. By clicking on the star in the PowerPoint menu, we can then choose Custom Animation (the far left symbol at the bottom of the menu) and the menu in Figure 2 will appear.

By clicking first on Group 4 and then Group 5 for animation (and order), when the slide is shown, the title and outline of the chart will come up. By selecting Group 5 and clicking the Effects tab, you can choose the type of entry animation desired. Notice the smaller pie piece and labels are group outlined in the preview picture in Figure 3.

This same technique of giving motion to charts works for column charts, stock graphs, and others. It takes some practice and the busier the graph, the more care needs to be taken when grouping parts. If too many special effects are used with the

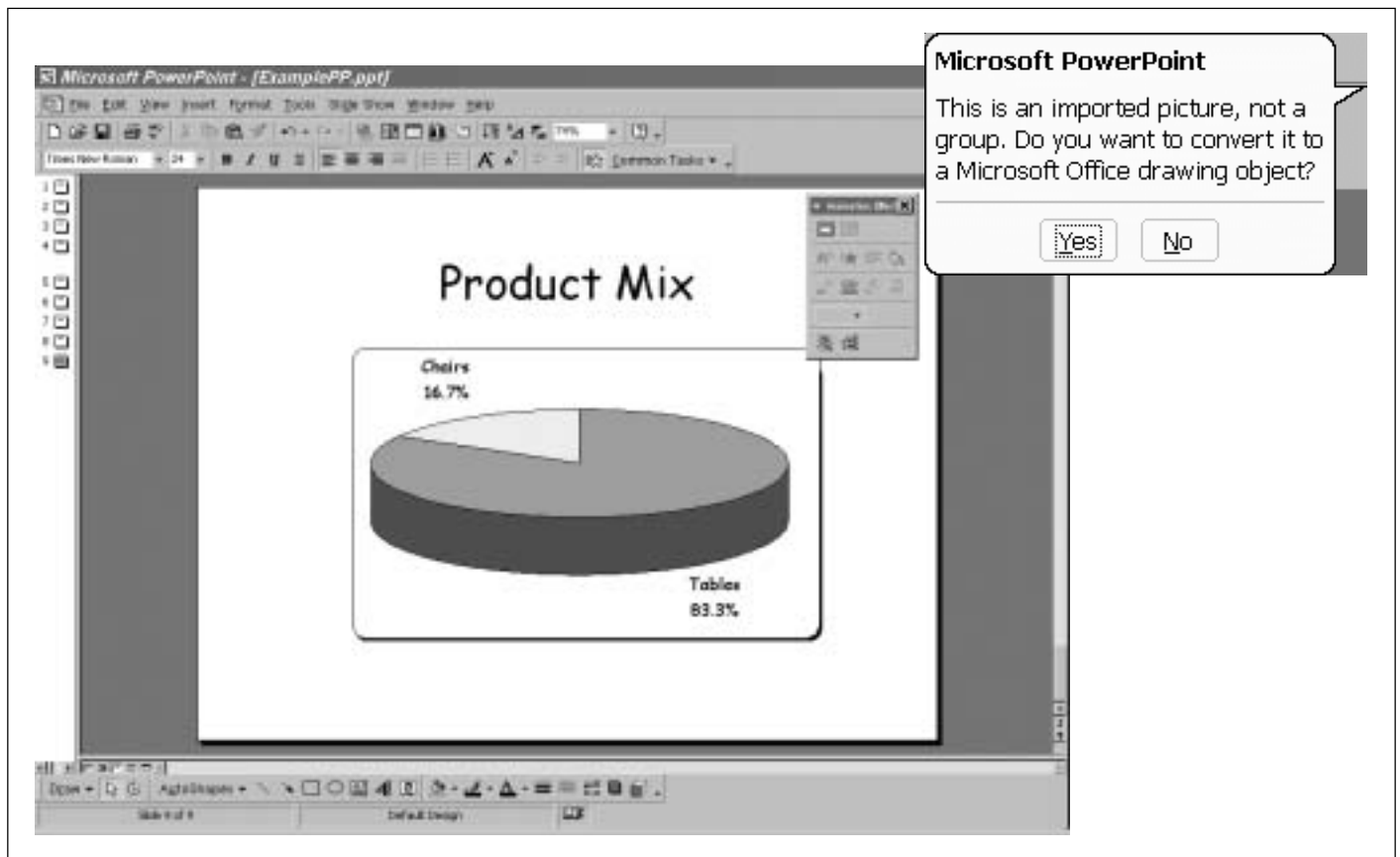


Figure 1: Screen shot of imported graph in PowerPoint.

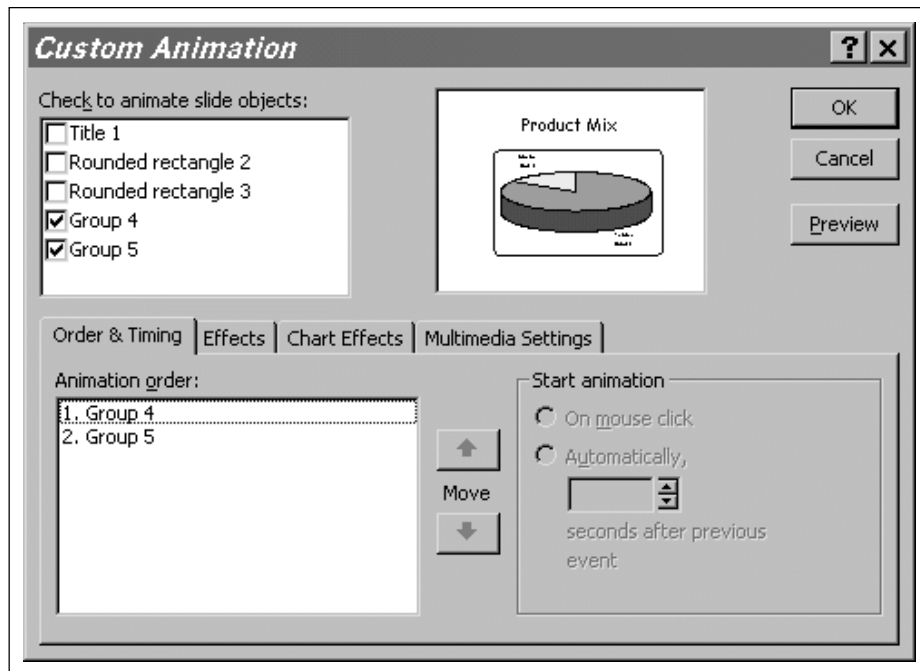


Figure 2: Custom animation for pie chart.

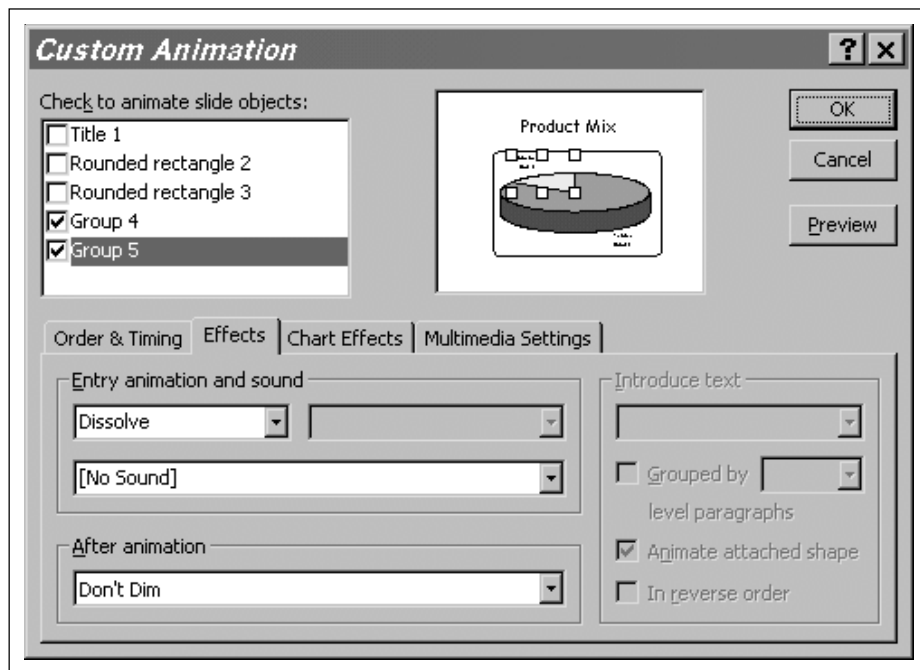


Figure 3: Effects menu.

audio slides, however, these effects can cut out some of the audio.

Conclusion

With a little work, charts, graphs and even parts of spreadsheets come alive in

PowerPoint for special emphasis, along with an audio narration. As my students (working professionals) have discovered, this is a tremendous way to make presentations to another part of the company or different department, or even another geographic location for their company. This

means that presentations can be made without having to travel and can also be sent by email. ZIPping the file may help reduce the size of the file (originally between 2-5MB) so they can be sent more easily. Another possibility is to save the file on a CD and mail the CD using snail mail. ■