

Best Practices for Creating Content

If you are creating content for use in Brainshark here are our best practice suggestions will help you increase the effectiveness of your Brainshark communication. Brainshark is flexible: you can upload any file, add audio from any telephone, microphone, or other source. But, if you want the best result, take note of our years of communication experience and incorporate as many of the following best practices as you can when you build or reformat existing content that you will distribute using Brainshark.

1. Analyze your audience so you know what they will want from a communication

- If your audience has likes, dislikes, expectations, or preconceived ideas about your topic, address them so that they don't become barriers.

TIP: It's all about them. Tailor your message to your audience and everything you know about them. Use stories, examples and terms that will resonate with them.

2. Remember your objective so you know the point of your communication

- Your objective is your purpose. It is the reason you are creating your presentation in the first place and is the one thing that you want to get across to your viewers.

TIP: Keep your eye on your objective as you outline, script, and add visuals, audio and supporting content to your presentation. Everything you do should point back to this main idea.

3. Create an outline to organize your message

- Whether you are redesigning or starting from scratch, organize your communication into no more than 3 to 4 main points that support your objective and audience needs, with an opener or grabber, summary and call to action.

TIP: Detailed graphs and charts, reference materials, process information, and policies are best added as attachments rather than recreated in the slides; viewers will be able to refer back to the information after watching the Brainshark.

4. Write a script so you know exactly what to say when you add audio (or your Guest Author does)

- Be sure your script is: clear, concise, consistent, and compelling.
- Keep each slide to 1 idea or 1 message, and about 30 seconds in duration.
- Have someone else listen: get feedback on your script, and then revise it if necessary.

TIP: If you adjust your Slide Notes area to display 6-8 lines of text, this will approximate 30 seconds of audio. And, if you have a slide that is more than 30 seconds in duration, consider splitting it into more than one slide, or plan to add animation to your images and text to keep your slides moving.

5. Add visuals to your communication to increase the retention of your message

Your slides are intended to be a visual accompaniment to your script, and are not intended to stand alone. If you put too much text on your slide, your audience is more likely to read than listen to what you are saying, so highlight key points using more images and animations than text.

- Consider the harmony of the slide and make sure all images work together. To make it easier, try choosing one type of image: photographs or illustrations, and stick with it throughout the presentation.
- Avoid unprofessional clip-art and generic stock photos since they take away from the authenticity of your message.
- When you use text, avoid long bulleted items. Use the 5-5 Rule: limit the number of bullets on the slide to 5 and the number of words per bullet to 5 at a maximum.
- Use a font size of 20pt or greater (32 points or more for a mobile-friendly presentation).
- Use Sans Serif, web-friendly fonts like Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana. Avoid italics, when emphasizing text in favor of edging or outlining text or adding a drop shadow.
- Incorporate charts, graphs and images which are legible and relevant. If you capture an image, capture (or crop to) what really matters; and if you are resizing an image, take care not to distort it.
- Use highly contrasting colors, like white text on a black background, to increase readability and help your images stand out when your presentation is being viewed on a mobile device.

TIP: Use your judgment: how does the slide look? Is there too much text? Do the images, text, and narration work together to convey the right message?

6. Add engaging audio to keep the attention of your viewer

Much of the impact of your message is made through the recorded audio.

- Select individuals with clear, resonant, and engaging voices to record audio.
- Before recording, practice reading the script several times. Add personality to what you are saying and articulate each word in the script, pausing appropriately. The goal is to sound genuine and interested in the message.
- If you have multiple people recording audio for the same presentation, try to use the same method, location, and equipment to record to get a more consistent result.
- Choose a quiet location to record and use that location for the entire recording.
- When adding audio by telephone, use a corded landline with a handset for the best result.
- When adding audio by microphone, you can use the microphone built into your computer, but for the best result, use a USB microphone headset.

TIP: Listen to your audio once it's recorded. If you received this Brainshark, would you keep listening? Brainshark makes it easy to re-record slides one at a time without affecting the audio on any other recorded slides, so take the time to get your recorded audio perfect before sharing the presentation.

7. Always test your presentation prior to distribution so you can catch mistakes before your audience does

As a final step before you share, view your presentation again with a critical eye and ask yourself the following:

- Is the audio clear?
- Did the speaker follow the script?
- Do the visuals display well on a PC, a laptop or a mobile device?

TIP: Consider testing your presentation with a small segment of your distribution audience, and play it on a PC and a variety of mobile devices so you know the experience your viewers will have.