

Best Practices for Creating myBrainshark Presentations

Creating great content in myBrainshark is easy. Apply the best practices we suggest here, and you'll be well on your way to creating a message that engages your audience and gets the results you are looking for. This document will help you take your ideas and mold them into great content.

Analyze Your Audience

Audience analysis is a critical step in the presentation development process and needs to happen before you begin creating any content. You need to know who your audience is and what THEY want to see and hear, so you can deliver a message that they will watch and will drive them toward your objective.

Think about the audience as a whole to determine what information you need to uncover to effectively analyze them.

- What is the age range of the group? Are there any cultural issues you should be concerned with?
- Will the audience be receptive to your message? What makes them happy or gets them excited about a product or service?
- What kind of information do they want? How do they want to receive the information?

Then consider any concerns your audience might have. Understanding audience concerns puts you ahead because you can address them before they have a chance to stick in the minds of the viewer.

- How about previous experience with your product or message? Have they received any previous data from myBrainshark or similar type of media? What was the reaction?
- Is your product or service cost very high? Be sure your message addresses why and why the benefit justifies the cost.
- Are you looking for buy-in for something? Do you want your viewers to take action or react to your message? What will it take to get the viewers to do what you want them to do?
- What barriers exist? What preconceptions, perceptions, or misconceptions exist?

Finding this information out may be easy, or it may be challenging. Depending on who your audience is, you may be able to get information from:

- Previous clients
- Members of a focus group
- Other colleagues or individuals in your industry
- A survey conducted of your audience members
- Information already available on the internet

For each anticipated audience concern, you need to formulate a response; then use this to build the outline for your presentation. As you build your outline, keep all of the information you have discovered about your audience top of your mind so you are sure that the overall presentation, colors, and format will be appealing to the viewer.

Depending on how the audience wants to receive the information, you may determine that it's more than just PowerPoint you need to use to build your myBrainshark presentation. You can tailor your communication to meet their wants and needs so you ensure you get the most people to watch and act on your message!

Pinpoint Your Objective

Determine the objective for your presentation by looking at your ultimate goal. Is your goal to sell a product? Increase the amount of new customers you have? Reduce the amount of toxins in the environment? After you have set your objective, go back to the audience analysis work you already completed.

And ask yourself:

- Does this objective fit in with the needs of the audience?
- Does this objective align with the objectives of the company or organization?
- Does my communication hit the mark?

Craft Your Presentation Outline

Creating a presentation outline helps you stay focused and on target with your presentation. Since you have already formulated an objective and analyzed the target audience, use that information to write an agenda of what you plan to cover in your communication. These are the basics of any agenda which you can tailor to meet your own objective, from sales to training to communication.

Introduction and attention grabber

You need to get the attention of the viewer and make that person want to take the time to view your communication.

Summary of what you are going to cover in the presentation

Tell the viewers what they are going to be watching in this communication.

1-4 topics related to your objective

Including too much information and too many topics will result in overload for the viewer, so keep it to no more than 4 main points. For example, if you were selling a product, give the basics of your product or service but reserve the specifics for when you make direct contact with your prospect.

Case Studies to support your topics

To make the point about your product, service, or communication, incorporate case studies when you can to help your audience identify with the points you are making. When they can “see” themselves using your product or service, or in the situation you are describing, they are emotionally connected to your communication. Use your audience analysis work to be sure the case studies are relevant to that audience.

Overview of pricing or package options (optional, sales communications)

If your objective is to sell your product or service, you may wonder whether to include pricing information. There are two schools of thought on this. On one side, you could be up front about your prices and put all the information on the table. This is good for a company providing a set product or service where there is no room for customization. On the other side, if you provide your pricing information up front, you won't be able to assess each customer situation exactly, and may not be seen as a trusted advisor. This is for you to decide. Perhaps you take the middle position and offer *some* pricing information but not give it all away, in hopes that you will get more customer contact.

Overview of competitors and why your product or service is the best (optional, sales communications)

If your prospects don't know why you are the best, then cost becomes the driving factor in purchase decisions. You can take it a step further and contrast your prospect's world without your solution and your prospect's world with your solution. But whatever you do, make sure you show why the difference is relevant to the prospect.

Summary and wrap up of what you covered in your communication

You've just presented the viewer with a bunch of information, now you need to summarize it and tie it all together. If you used a case study, make sure you pepper your summary with references to the story so that the viewer keeps that information top of mind.

Call to action for viewer including how to get in touch with you for more information

No matter what your communication is, you want your viewers to take some sort of action. Don't leave it up to them to figure out: tell them what you want them to do. Also, depending on your objective you may want your viewers to be able to contact you for more information, so include your contact information if that is the case.

Write a Compelling Script

Now that you have written the outline of your presentation and know the direction you want to go, it's time to take those ideas and write a detailed script of what you want to say. You might be thinking: I have a slide deck I can use, can't I just wing it when I record audio? Your script is the meat of your presentation. It ensures that your audio will deliver a consistent message. Also, you will rely on the script to build your visuals, not the other way around. Skip scripting and dive straight into audio and you'll find yourself tinkering with what you want to say and likely missing the mark.

If you are using PowerPoint, copy the sections of your outline into the slide notes area for each slide. This process reduces the amount of time you spend swapping back and forth between your outline and your script. Make sure that each main point covers at least 1 slide, and be aware that you may need to break key points into multiple slides.

Expand on the outline you copied into the slide notes and create a detailed script for each slide. Use terminology and phraseology that fits with the industry and culture, as well as with your audience's knowledge. Be conversational and don't leave out words since this will be a stumbling block during the audio recording process. Ensure you have proper transitional phrases at the end of each slide so your audience is led into the next slide. Then, compare it all to your objective for consistency in your message

When you are finished scripting, go back and review your objective as you are reading the script.

- Why are you communicating this information? What is the ultimate goal?
- Does the script fit with the goal? If not, you need to go back and rework your script.
- Did you include a call to action for your viewer?

Create a Winning Slide Deck

If you are using PowerPoint as the base of your communication, adding visuals that reinforce your message increases the retention of information from 20% to 65%. So creating a compelling visual for your presentation is critical to ensure the effective delivery of your message.

There are three things to consider as you pull all of the important points from your script:

- Slide design
- Text and images
- Animation

Slide Design

If your slide design or template is visually unappealing, your audience might not stick around to see and hear your message. Setting an overall look for your presentation that is professional, appropriate, and appealing is the first step in engaging your audience.

You may already have a slide template to use, which is great. If you don't, you need to consider your business or organization's color scheme or logo colors, images you might add, and the tone of the presentation so your slide design is consistent with your message. Additionally, consider how the colors, text, and images will look on a mobile device if you intend to enable mobile sharing.

Text and Images

Put your script in the slide notes in PowerPoint, so it will be easy to view what you are intending to say on each slide. Once you have reviewed your script for a slide and determined the important points, your first thought may be to create bullets. But, remember the old adage of "a picture is worth a thousand words". Most people prefer to get their information visually, so you should look for alternatives to bullets. If you can replace words with a picture, graph, or flowchart - DO IT! And, when you do select your images, make sure they are high quality.

When you are designing the look of your slides, add the consistent themes to the PowerPoint Slide Master so you can apply it to all of your slides, and then save the design as a template so you can easily use it the next time.

When you upload your presentation to myBrainshark, your slide titles will be listed in "Contents". If you want certain slides not to have visible titles, add them in PowerPoint and hide them either by moving them to the back of an overlying image or changing the text color to match the background color. If it is not possible to do this, you can easily change them in Brainshark, but just be aware that anytime you change the slide and re-upload it, you will need to go back and change the slide title in myBrainshark again.

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?

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.

Animations

After you have built the content for your slides, add animations to help focus the viewer's attention on what you are speaking about, and keep the slides moving. Think of presentations you have viewed in the past. Nothing is more boring than staring at the same screen while someone drones on in the background. Keep the interest of your viewers by keeping them on their toes!