

2.3.4 Powerpoint - Some General Rules

The Hardware Aspect

Your presentation is going to use **Powerpoint** - there is practically nothing else nowadays (2007).

- That doesn't mean that you can't use the blackboard or the overhead projector, too. It does mean, however, that you have to be very careful to make sure everything works in the place where you give your presentation. Let's see what we need for a Powerpoint presentation:

1. The *presentation*, stored in your Laptop, memory stick or **CD / DVD**.
2. A *Laptop* or **PC**.
3. A working **beamer**.
4. A working *remote control* for the beamer if it is fixed at the ceiling.
5. A *cable* for connecting Laptop and beamer.
6. "Meaningful" contact between laptop and beamer.
7. An *outlet* for plugging in your Laptop.
8. A *cable* for plugging in your laptop.

If something goes wrong at anyone of those points your presentation may not take place. No remember **Murphy's law**:: If something can go wrong, it will! Let see what might happen and how you can protect yourself against it:

- The *presentation*. Any of the media enumerated above may have a defect. You forgot your stick. Your laptop was in your luggage which is now in outer Mongolia and will arrive at the place you are within the next few days - after your presentation.
What you do: Have your presentation stored on two independent media you take along. For added security: Have you presentation as download on your Internet home page.
- A *Laptop* or **PC** isn't there or defective.
This is easy. Take your notebook along. But even without one; if your presentation has an audience > 1, someone else will have a laptop and help you out.
- *Beamer* problems. This is tough.
Make sure beforehand that there is a (modern) working beamer. The emphasize, however, is on "*working*". All you can do is to make sure that it works before you start. The ultimate **GAU** of a Powerpoint presentation is that the beamer lamp blows during your presentation, or shortly before. That's it. By the time a new beamer has been found and installed, your time will be long over. The only protection is to take some key viewgraphs along and switch to the old-fashioned technique. Chances are (still) that an overhead projector will be in the room.
- The *remote control* for the beamer is dead. This is a serious point if the beamer is high up on the ceiling and can't be reached manually.
Sooner or later the battery of a remote is empty. If that happens when you try to turn it on, your audience will enjoy the spectacle but will not hear your presentation. The only thing you can do is to jiggle the batteries. If your lucky they come back to life enough to turn on the beamer.
- No *cable* or defective cable. Bad connections are not uncommon. I have given more than one presentation where somebody had to hold the cable all the time to ensure good contact.
- "Meaningful" contact between laptop and beamer. So you have connected everything. You see your presentation on the screen of your laptop, but the beamer doesn't beam. Probably the most frequent problem coming up. If it happens right a the start of your presentation, go through this check-list:
 - Laptop switched to beamer (there is some function key for this!).
 - Proper input of beamer selected? Switch between possibilities with the remote for the beamer.
- There is no *outlet* (or a long enough cable) for plugging in your laptop. Happened to me once in some castle. There is not much you can do. If you run your laptop on its battery, it will fail in the middle of your presentation (Murphy's law applied to hardware is: Computers patiently wait for the worst possible moment to fail).
- There is an outlet but you plug doesn't fit! Be aware of the fact that your German style plug connector will not fit into most outlets on this planet.
Bring an adapter!

All of that has happened to me and untold others.

- If all of that doesn't help, call for help. For example, ask some guy from the audience to please fiddle with the hardware while you start your introduction (and hope). If you're not very experienced with this, you will be far to nervous by now to get the system running; chances are that somebody form the audience knows better than you what to do. Or ask some guy with a handy to call whoever you can come up with. Don't do it yourself.

There is only one way to make sure that you actually can beam your presentation on a wall: Get there at last **10 min** ahead of time and try it out!

Powerpoint gives you a ridiculous number of possibilities to design a page or foil. The general advice for this is

Ignore most of it most of the time

Do not...

- ... have all kinds of strange ways to get the next inset coming up.
- ... have all kinds of strange fonts.
- ... have too many insets on one foil,
- ... include movies, sound, God knows what - just because it is possible.

Here is an example!