

IT'S SHOW TIME!

Are you ready?

**A Guide for Producing and Presenting a High Impact
Audio-Visual Slide Show**

Ken Zapp

PREFACE

You now have a large collection of pictures and you want to create a show to display your images. But HOW!

With all the digital software opportunities now available, the big question is how to manage these tools and retain the essence of the images, and not end up with a hodgepodge of distractions.

Presented here are suggestions that can assist you in crafting a show. The tasks of developing a theme, organizing your images, creating interesting text/ titles and selecting appropriate music/sound effects to enhance your show will be addressed. Suggestions are also made for the presentation of the created show. Emphasis will be directed at entertaining an audience.

Just as an appropriate matting enhances a print, the selection of the many elements that constitute a show can have major impact on the producers success.

The objective is to achieve a combination and placement of images, text and sound that's greater than the sum of the individual parts and that appeals to your audience. All elements must work in harmony with and support the theme.

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ORGANIZING THE IMAGES

1. SHOW LENGTH

The show length, time wise, depends on the end purpose of the show. If, for instance, the show is a portrayal of a group of photographers on a field trip, 10 minutes is a good maximum. If it is a group showing of varied short subjects, 5 minutes is an appropriate maximum. If the show is a family presentation, 15 minutes can usually be tolerated.

Sufficient time should be allowed for a slow reader to read sign posts etc. and captions. Ordinarily an image screen time averages 5-6 seconds.

2. SETTING THE THEME

It is important to decide, before any effort is expended, what the show's message is to be and how you want to communicate it to your audience. You need to CONCEPTUALIZE. In what framework do you want to present the images? Should it be humorous, reverent, educational, historical, a chronology of events etc. This FORWARD THINKING could set the criteria for selection of images. This requires knowing your audience, the venue, and what your audience will expect to see/hear from your show.

3. SELECTING THE IMAGES

Images may be from many sources. In any case they must be digitized (including slides) and viewed on an electronic light box. This will permit the selection of specific images for inclusion in the show. Windows provides an excellent facility for accomplishing this.

RIGHT click. on "Start". Select "Explore" and determine a location where a folder can be created in which the photographic images can be downloaded and managed, (suggestion; "My Documents"). SELECT this location.

4. In "FILE" (top of screen) select "New" to secure a new empty folder in the highlighted location above. Give this an appropriate name ("show title-prep") .
5. Download copies of all images to be considered for display in the show, into the folder described in "4" above. In "VIEW" (top of screen) select "THUMBNAI LS" This will display all files as thumbnail images.
6. Review total folder image content and determine the number of "major subjects" to be emphasized/highlighted in the show's production.
7. Create as many additional new folders (WITHIN the folder created in "4." above), for identified "major subjects". Create a name for each "major subject" identified in 6. above. These folders will be located at the top of the screen.
8. Select, drag, and drop images fitting the definition of a "major subject" folder. "Drag and drop", is accomplished by left clicking a thumbnail image and while continuing to hold the left click down, move the cursor to where it's directly over the folder in which the image is to be deposited. At this point release the left click and proceed to the next move. Continue till all images have been placed into their respective "major subject" folder.

9. Now open the "major subject" usually identified as the "Opening" folder that will be THE FIRST "major subject" to be displayed in the show. Determine which image will be the first image in the folder to be displayed and SELECT same. With the cursor on the selected image.. RIGHT click and SELECT "Rename"_ Add a PREFIX to the existing file name. Example; IA-(original file designation) . The second image chosen to follow is assigned the prefix ~-, the third image to follow 1c-, and so on. Continue for all the images in that "major subject" folder to achieve the desired order of display.
10. Perform the same treatment on all the other "major subject" folders IN THE ORDER OF DESIRED LOCATION IN THE SHOW. The second "major subject" to be displayed will be identified with the prefix number "2a-,2b-,2c- ... "and so on , and the third "major subject" with a "3a-,3b-,3c- ... " and so on. The final result is the assignment of all images in a "major subject" to the desired relative sequence for display (a b,c, ... l and all "major subjects" similarly organized to appear in the desired sequence (1.2,3 ...) .
- 11 . In the folder created in item 4. above open a new folder and name it "CONSOLIDATED FILE"
12. Open any "major subject" folder _ SELECT the first image of the folder and while holding the shift key down, SELECT the last image in that folder. This will select ALL the images in that folder (all highlighted). With the cursor remaining on a selected image, RIGHT click and select "CUT". Move the cursor to the "'CONSOLIDATED FILE" folder and "RIGHT" click and select "PASTE". This will install the images into the "CONSOLIDATED FILE" folder.
13. Repeat item 10. on each of the remaining "major subject" folders. It will not be necessary to take them in order. They will be properly ordered in step 14 ..
14. SELECT and open the "CONSOLIDATED FILE" folder. Go to "VIEW" and select "ARRANGE ICONS" and select "BY NAME". All images should now be arranged in the exact order for insertion into the show software.
15. Copy the contents of the "CONSOLIDATED FILE" folder to a CD for future use.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. **SHOW SOFTWARE**

ProShow Gold, (here-after referred to as PSG), is THE choice software for digital slide shows. It has the highest resolution (1024 X 768) but even more important, it has the most extensive features and PHOTODEX, the author in Austin TX, is very responsive in problem solving. Detailed how-to instruction for using PSG is beyond the scope of this article. Some basic features will be discussed.

2. **LOADING PSG**

The ordered collection of image's, previously prepared, should be loaded into PSG. The images will then be displayed in thumbnail size in the order as desired in the final show. Selecting the "SELECT All" function in "EDIT", at the top of the screen, will permit global settings of the image display time and transition type/time to occur between successive images. Though these settings apply to all images / changes can be made at any specific location by selecting the specific image (s) and modifying the desired characteristic to achieve a desired effect. Also image (s) can be relocated (moved) to secure a better position relationship. This can be accomplished by selecting the image(s) to be relocated, then using the "etJ1!" command followed. By then selecting the new location and using the "PASTE" command.

Create a black slide of several seconds duration prior to the first image and also after the last image. This *is* a better transition from and back to the computer screen. This in effect isolates the show from the computer screen clutter. A fade up and down from a black screen works very nicely for the start and conclusion of the show.

3. **TRANSITIONS**

The choice of transitions (the manner of changing from one image to the next) is very important and often overlooked. THE SUBSTANCE OF A SHOW IS THE IMAGES! A unique transition may enhance the way an image is introduced. A swirling may introduce a juggler. A star burst may introduce important people. HOWEVER, keep such transitions to a limited number and be consistent. If you are going to introduce people with a star transition then be consistent.

PSG provides many choices and also includes a "random" choice in which case each transition is different from the preceding one. This is most distracting and it has generated very negative reactions with viewing audiences.

Generally a simple dissolve of a second or so works well. There are occasions where a longer or a different type of transition can be very effective if not routinely used. Remember THE IMAGES, TELL THE STORY!

4. **FONT SELECTION**

Type fonts can influence the feeling the show imparts to a viewer. For instance, a script font would obviously be out of the question for a show of a West Texas town. The body of the font character, very light or heavy, can be harder to read if there is much text such as a listing of many names.

Also the text must be of sufficient size for the :People in the last row of seats to read! Do not try to pack everything on to one image- use a second image of the same image, for continuity, with a fresh continuation of the text message. This *is*

especially true where a large number of names may be required. In some limited specific instances a font change can add emphasis. Do not randomize font selection. Continuity is important.

5. **TITLES/CAPTIONS**

A title can add zest to a show if a little imagination is exercised. Try brain storming the subject. This is most true of opening and closing text statements. Always, Always use horizontal images for text backgrounds. Vertical images severely limit composition- and the text gets broken up too much especially if you are using a proper font size.

Text should never extend beyond the boundaries of the image and should begin or end a short distance inside the outer edges of the image.

SELECTING TITLE BACKGROUNDS

While in the organize mode, look for the very good dramatic shots that can whet the expectations of the viewing audience. These are best used as opening and closing images and serve as excellent background images for titles. The main point here is to" select openers that will have high audience impact at the show starts. It also helps if the opening background for a title supports the theme. The usual approach is to bring up the background image - hold for about 3-4 seconds and then have the title appear superimposed. This is accomplish by making a copy (in PSG) of the background image on which the text is placed. The transition from the original to the following copy in this instance should be very short- about 0.2-0.3 seconds so there will be no distraction during the changeover. This can be used wherever a text over is desired.

CAPTIONS

Captions placed on an image can quickly appear & disappear. Other methods of guiding the audience are to use images of signs, scanned programs or maps from the field or subject location. These can remain on the image for the complete presentation if desired.

Another method of retaining the caption is to burn the caption into the image using Photoshop.

6. **PARTICIPANT REPRESENTATION**

If the show is of a collection of images from a group of people, as might be the case of a camera club field trip, an important rule to remember is that every participating individual, submitting images for the show, should have some images in the finished production! This type audio visual production is not a "competition" event, but a display of an activity that will. enhance participation in future events. Additionally there is no obligation to use all the images submitted by anyone. Generally, a request should be made for a sufficient quantity of images, based on the attendance at the event, to permit a good selection of images from each participant. Under no circumstances should a show producer make any changes to the images supplied by a participant!

7. **PARTICIPATING PEOPLE SHOTS**

If the show contains images of people in the group function (field trip etc.)organize the shots taken of groups participants to proceed the shows closing image. This eliminates the likelihood that might occur with a people shot breaking the continuity of a sequence. Besides, grouping the people images can possibly offer an opportunity

for creative opportunities (music etc.).

8. **SOUND TRACK**

A good sound background can greatly enhance a show and by the same token can be a distraction if not in concert with the show theme. In general vocals are undesirable, for the words can conjure up different memories with the audience. The music may be fine but the words can be a distraction. Again, the music can be the frosting on the cake but it's not the main substance of the show. Again, IT'S THE IMAGES! If it's not possible to find the "perfect" music try to find something that is neutral. Very often a show producer will select a type of music he or she is very attached to. The producer may think it's the greatest music there is, but the relationship to the theme may be negative. Generally "New Age" music is too monotonous and can be wearing on the ears. Getting the "right" music can take time. In some cases it may be desirable to have several different types" of music to accommodate subject changes. In the actual presentation the sound level should be in the "background" and not dominate the showing. The sound level should be set prior to the audience arrival.

9. **SPECIAL EFFECTS**

Various special sounds can be introduced into the sound track. to add an exciting element to the show. PSG has this capability but it will require some learning and practice to properly implement such.

10. **SUMMARY**

Putting a show together is a task of manipulating a number of elements so as to secure an end result that embodies continuity and is greater than the sum of the separate parts. The topics of this section are especially important in this respect.

SHOW PRESENTATION

1. **METHOD of PRESENTATION**

Now that you have created a masterpiece, it's time for a critical review by an audience. Like all that has proceeded this point, there are some pointers that can improve your chances for a rousing applause. The show has to be PACKAGED for a specific medium of display. Choices are:

- a. Computer monitor - Very personal, very limited audience size .
- b. Create DVD - Easily shown on home TV, less sharp than on computer or projector.
- c. Digital Projection - Presents sharp Images for large range of audience sizes. May requires transport of projector, laptop, and possibly a screen.

2. **COMPUTER MONITOR**

This is easy. Adjust your monitor for best viewing and press run, play or go!

3. **CREATE A DVD**

Positives are; Every one has a DVD, no equipment to transport and audience gathers around the TV. The DVD approach reduces the image resolution to that of a TV broadcast which is considerably poorer than the typical quality of a photograph. There will also be an aspect ratio difference in that the TV screen is a 4 x 3 ratio (4 units of screen width to 3 units of screen height). A digital photograph is normally a 3 x 2 ratio and this can also be a viewing problem. A consequence of this is the need to recognize the "SAFE AREAS" for title caption placement. Bottom line, significantly lower image quality, but none-the-less practical.

4. **DIGITAL PROJECTION**

This is by far the most desirable with respect to quality as well as accommodating practically any size audience.

Unfortunately, a digital projector must be transported along with a laptop computer to the presentation location. Though a digital projector might be available at a remote location or even leased for the occasion, the expectation that such a projector will be of the desired type and properly adjusted etc. can be unrealistic. All the care expended in the creation of your show will be at risk.

Unfortunately, a digital projector is not as simple as a Kodak Ektagraphic projector. Too few people are familiar with the proper settings necessary for projecting high quality photographic images. A digital projector purchase presents a considerable added expenditure. And of course like so much preceding this point, there are decisions that must be made in the choice of what to buy. Currently there are two digital projector technologies with significant differences relative to the projection of high quality photographic images.

5. **"LCD" PROJECTORS**

Liquid Crystal Display, or LCD, projectors will display a more saturated color than exists in the actual image. Additionally there is a degradation of color or shift with time that is not evident when used for non- photographic imagery. This becomes evident in as little as 100 hours. Even more important in photographic images is

contrast ratio. LCD is limited to a 500 to 1 ratio at the best and that too represents a very significant shortcoming. This means that anything meant to be full black will in effect be a dark shade of gray and white objects will be a light shade of gray. This represents a level of compression of light values that's contrary to the very nature of photography. This technology can be very appropriate for business purposes and similar non critical applications.

6. **"DLP" PROJECTORS**

Digital Light Processing, or, DLP projectors are considered superior in color rendition and most importantly have contrast ratios of 2000-2500 to 1. This means that blacks or whites will be more properly rendered and all light values in between will be shown as dictated by the image. This is unquestionably the proper choice for high quality photographic image projection. A lesser quality represents a compression of the range of light values.

7. **SCREEN ILLUMINATION**

Screen illumination is measured in "LUMEN" units. A lumen is a measure of the brightness of light impinging on a specific area. The larger the screen area the greater the need for more lumens. A high lumen output applied to a small screen can be too bright and uncomfortable. A good size for home and medium size audience groups is 2000-2300 lumens.

8. **PROJECTOR BRIGHTNESS LEVEL**

All digital projectors provide a number of controls that can be adjusted. The brightness is by far the most critical. The brightness control in effect sets the black level in a scene. This adjustment in the case of photographic imagery is hyper-critical. The default value is probably the best setting. Most likely the manufacturer has adjusted the default setting for optimum performance. To attempt to properly adjust this parameter otherwise requires software etc. not readily available. EXPERIENCE SAYS LEAVE THIS CONTROL AT THE MANUFACTURERS DEFAULT SETTING unless YOU have the means to properly readjust. In any case it should not be adjusted based on a single photographic image! Conversely, the brightness can be adjusted for business type presentations with no deleterious effect. In this case the absolute level of black is unimportant. Shadows and high lights do not exist in business presentations!

9. **SOUND LEVEL**

Adjust sound level adequate for the audience seating area but it should not dominate over the image presentation. This should be established prior to the arrival of the audience.

May all your Shows be winners!