Slideshow smarts from a PowerPoint wizard

But he advises the gold standard is a commercial program called SnagIt, from TechSmith, which gives you a host of options for editing what you've captured and placing it in your clipboard for pasting. Or you can try a free program, with fewer features, from the same company, available at www.zingproject.com.

That's an overwhelming number of choices for one small part of creating an effective PowerPoint presentation. But it's a sample of the thoroughness with which Dave Paradi attacks the subject in 102 Tips to Communicate More Effectively Using PowerPoint.

He starts with the big picture, and two tips that he warns will make your communication less effective if ignored. The first is an overriding mode of thought: Always ask yourself, in every aspect of the presentation, how you are doing it. How are you doing it because you think it is cool or because it is entertaining? Are you asking yourself questions? Do you have a clear vision of the end state of the room after you are done the presentation?

If you regularly give the same presentation, Mr. Paradi asks you to reconsider. You should never give a canned presentation. Every group is different, and you need to find out where your audience is. That means learning the positions of the people in the organization attending, their level of knowledge and attitude towards the topic, the credibility they award you, and the format or style they prefer for presentations.

Next, set out a map for the presentation, an outline that should be shared with your audience. Mr. Paradi is big on that point. Before you begin the presentation, state the conclusion so the audience can see the material in context. Too often the typical sequence of a presentation is to present every supporting data point before you present the conclusion.

Dave Paradi

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The presentation, state the conclusion so the audience can see the material in context. Too often the typical sequence of a presentation is to present every supporting data point before we present the conclusion. By the time we get to the most important part, our audience is overwhelmed and may miss the conclusion or not recognize the significance of it,