



Getting to the PowerPoint at BBDO

An interview with Bridgette Bardger, Presentation Specialist, BBDO Detroit

Very few creative agencies have full-time PowerPoint designers on staff, but the forward-thinking agencies that do are learning powerful lessons about the role the tool can play in the strategic and creative process within an organization:

Cliff Atkinson: *How do creative agencies feel about PowerPoint?*

Bridgette Bardger: Here at BBDO Detroit, PPT is a very widely used program for many different types of presentations. The agency established a special department to handle presentations to ensure consistency and a standard of professionalism in every piece of communication that is seen by or prepared for the client. Unfortunately, in many cases, the department isn't being used to its fullest potential because people aren't aware of the services available or believe they have the skill to handle the project themselves.

It is amazing to me that most agencies do not have departments dedicated to working with PPT files. At BBDO, all of the large and high-profile presentations go through us. Many hours are spent working on these files so they are graphically pleasing and communicate the desired message.

CA: *If an agency were to hire a PowerPoint expert full-time, who would they report to? Who do you think they should report to?*

BB: As referenced above, BBDO Detroit has a Presentations Department, which is combined with the Shows Department. Because many of the shows produced for our client, DaimlerChrysler, contain a presentation element, it makes sense that the two organizations are integrated. Additionally, because of how the agency's contract has been negotiated, there is no additional cost to any of the departments for the expertise (unless travel is required). Also by being aligned with the Shows group, we are raising the awareness for our discipline. There are currently five Presentations Specialists on staff.

CA: *If an agency were to set up a training program to develop PowerPoint skills, what would that program need to cover?*

BB: First and foremost, it would be the use of Masters. We always get files where nothing is in a placeholder or a master layout. Then, we need to show creative people how to translate their ideas onto a screen. While a design may work well in print, it may not be as impactful or compelling when converted into a presentation. Plus the design may need to be changed to make the best use of the PPT technology and tools.

Another issue that we run into is the use of fonts. Most of the agency uses Mac computers. Again, we need to educate people that there is a difference between fonts for the Mac and PC and that we cannot always get exactly the font they want. In addition, just because we have the font, doesn't mean that everyone will have it.

CA: *What would need to change in order for agencies to embrace the creative potential of PowerPoint?*

BB: The first thing would be for everyone to realize that the company image is represented in everything that leaves the building -- whether it's a storyboard, a traveling show or a brochure. A presentation represents us, too. Management would have to mandate that the presentations group be involved in the process to ensure that the image of the agency is properly reflected in everything

being seen by the client.

CA: *Do you think agencies are missing any business opportunities because they don't embrace PowerPoint fully? If so, what are they missing?*

BB: I do feel that many businesses miss opportunities due to the poor quality of their presentations, especially agencies. Since a new business pitch is a reflection of an agency, I can't imagine that the look of a presentation wouldn't factor into a client's final decision. There are specific rules for creating PPT presentations that make the message jump off the page and have an impact on an audience.

Cliff Atkinson is an independent management consultant specializing in organizational issues related to PowerPoint. Visit his website at www.sociablemedia.com or contact him at cliff.atkinson@sociablemedia.com.

© 2003 Cliff Atkinson

sociable media®