Jerry Weissman

THE PROPER ROLE OF GRAPHICS IN A PRESENTATION

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Think about a time when you were in the audience at a presentation and the graphics didn't work. What was the problem? These are the most common answers my business clients give:

- "The graphics were cluttered."
- "There was too much on the slide."
- "The slide looked like an eye chart."
- "The slide was a Data Dump."

Now flip the lens and take the point of view of an Audience Advocate. What's the effect on you? Odds are that it's another case of the dreaded MEGO (Mine Eyes Glaze Over) syndrome: the same cause and effect as when a story is unloaded on you as a Data Dump.

The main reason this happens is that presenters fail to distinguish between a document and a presentation. They treat a presentation as a document. This is the *Presentation-as-Document Syndrome*, in which the presenter uses the graphics as both a display and as a record, as both show and tell. This is the vestigial legacy of the ancient origins of presentations, the flip chart.

Business documents include:

- *Annual reports*, filled with dense text and highly detailed tables, charts, and graphs

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