



## 10 Steps to Creating a Winning Trial Presentation

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Every trial presentation has its own unique design requirements. Whether you are using trial boards, document pull-outs, PowerPoint\* or 3-D animations, the following tips can help streamline the creative process and ensure that your presentation delivers the desired results.

### 1. Get Organized

The first step in getting organized is to outline your arguments. **The more structured and defined your trial strategy is, the fewer re-iterations and mistakes you will encounter throughout the graphics development process.** While writing an outline may seem simple and straightforward, it is important that your outline be comprehensive and detailed, yet still allows for variation and change. Remember, your visual communication strategy should mirror your trial strategy. Hone your outline to ensure that an effective demonstrative is developed for each point you intend to make.

### 2. Determine Media Format

Once organized, you will need to determine which media format is best to communicate your presentation. Although there are many options to consider, including animated slides, static boards, and handouts, **the best approach is usually a combination of media.** By reviewing your outline, you should be able to identify the content and sequencing of your arguments. This is required when developing a visual story that will be in sync with your oral arguments, and is needed no matter which media formats you eventually decide upon.

### 3. Set Tone

Unlike many other industries that employ "flashy" visuals, the tone of litigation graphics is informative rather than entertaining. Therefore, it is important that your presentation reflects the appropriate tone. **Be conservative – focus on content.** Every element on your slide, including diagram layouts, line treatments, font styles and animation affects the tone of your presentation. In addition to your presentation's conservative tone, it should also reflect your underlying position.

### 4. Choose Colors

Colors should be used to reinforce tone and focus the viewer on key evidence. Colors should be consistent, distinct and visible from all areas of the courtroom (even the far ends). **The use of competing colors or unbalanced graphics could disturb or confuse your jury.** Develop a color palette before beginning your presentation development. This will not only preserve consistency, it will also help in visualizing graphics during the conceptual phase. Be aware that some colors convey subliminal messages. For example,

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red tends to possess a negative attribute, while green tends to be positive (although green can also elicit feelings associated with money). Yellow traditionally signifies importance and attention, and various shades of blue typically exert calming effects which are particularly useful when presenting a large volume of information and/or numbers. Once you are aware of how color may influence your message, choose colors that are complimentary and distinct from one another. Background colors should be selected from either the light or dark ends of the color spectrum. This will allow the jury to easily focus on your information. Projectors and printers do not always display colors in the same way that you may see them on your personal computer monitor. When projected, yellow tends to appear tinted green, and two different shades of a similar color may appear the same shade. Therefore, before finalizing your color palette, conduct a color test with your projector and printer to make sure you are satisfied with the results.

#### 5. **Be Short**

In jury trials, jurors need help in understanding the issues at hand. Understandably, it is difficult to pay attention to complex material for multiple hours, days, or even weeks at a time. Therefore, clean, well designed, focus-driven graphics will ensure that valuable time will not be lost deciphering your information. Animations can be added to expedite understanding. Refrain from using overly complex terms. Keep your phrases short and easy to understand to improve the jury's understanding. **When placing text in charts stick to the 6x6 rule: 6 bullets or less per slide, with 6 words or less per bullet.** Make sure your title is concise, yet supports your message. It's also important that your font style (san-serif fonts are recommended) and imagery reinforces the intent of each slide.

#### 6. **Be Consistent**

The average juror often finds the courtroom experience to be full of distractions. Even seasoned attorneys will admit that it can be hard to maintain the jury's full attention. Elements that change position or are altered from slide to slide will attract the jury's attention. **By keeping your titles, animations, transitions, style, bullets, colors, etc. consistent, the jury's attention will be focused on the "newly introduced" supporting facts.**

#### 7. **Streamline Content**

As you approach completion of the graphic development, it is important to go back through and remove any unnecessary elements. Do bar charts really need bar labels along with the Y axis? Can words be removed from bullets? Can bullets be removed altogether? Look at each graphic with "new eyes" and a fresh perspective. **An easy way to do this is to print each graphic, shuffle the order, then review.** While reviewing, verify that each slide has negative space and is not overly congested. If it is, consider combining elements or breaking up elements onto two or more slides. Streamlining your graphics will not only provide less distraction, it will strengthen your argument.

#### 8. **Add Animation**

Some graphics and slides are too complex to be shown all at once. Animations allow for one piece of content to be revealed at a time, enabling the jury to digest small bits of information. Other slides may benefit from the analogous

relationship between your argument and the animation sequence. For example, it is more powerful and more understandable when talking about a transfer of funds to show a money bag animate from the picture of one company to another rather than simply showing the money bag at its final destination. **Slide transitions should be used when they will further enhance your message and to reclaim your jurors' attention to your graphics.** Another tip is to blackout your presentation display during the points in your presentation when you want the jury's attention on you instead of the graphics.

#### 9. **Proof, Reproof**

You often have only one chance to state your point. Make sure your opportunity is error-free. You do not want the jury to walk away with a negative impression. If your presentation contains errors, or you look awkward when utilizing your graphics, you run the risk of being perceived as unprepared or even unprofessional. **Remember, your presentation is an extension of your argument.** Judgments made about your presentation extend to judgments made about your case. Double-check everything. Do your animations work? Are they in sequence with your script? Is each object aligned? Does each slide clearly show what is important? Has it been spell-checked? Does the technology work? Are there back-ups in place? And, finally, has your overall objective been achieved? Go back to your outline. Are your arguments strengthened by your presentation aids? Does your presentation do justice to your case? If you can answer "yes" to these questions, chances are that your visual presentation will be a success.

#### 10. **Test Equipment**

Once your A/V needs are determined, gather all of the required equipment, including back-up equipment. **Test everything, not only the high-tech components, such as laptops, projectors, microphones, and cords, but also the low-tech components, such as markers, easels, and pointers.** In the end, it doesn't matter how much pre-trial time and energy are spent on developing your graphics if during trial you find that your marker doesn't write well, that an easel cannot support a trial board or that your laptop isn't feeding your electronic display through the projector. If you haven't already, now is the time to learn more about what technology will be available to you in the courtroom. Increase your power to communicate – use technology at trial.

\*PowerPoint is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

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