How To Give Great Presentations

Guy Smith-Ferrier, January 2007 (Updated September 2010, July 2008 and March 2008)
http://www.guysmithferrier.com, guy at guysmithferrier dot com

There are some great speakers out there. They give great presentations providing considerable information content, delivering it in a clear, concise and fluent style and managing to engage and entertain at the same time. The secret of these speakers' success is only partly a special speaking ability that is inherent in the speaker's personality. The rest is a combination of preparedness, specific domain knowledge and an awareness of how to present well. This document is intended to provide the strategy, direction and skills you need to give great presentations. It is aimed at first time speakers and experienced speakers who are looking for tips and tricks to hone their presentations. Although the presentations themselves can be of any nature the intended target of this document is speakers who present to information technology audiences and more specifically Microsoft .NET Framework audiences. The size of audience is expected to be anywhere from small user groups (approximately 15-50 attendees) to medium sized conferences (approximately 30-200 attendees).

Introduction

This document is laid out in the rough order of the steps that you need to take to deliver your presentation. We start with "How To Choose A Subject" which is a brief coverage of the importance of choosing the right subject for a presentation. Next we move on to "How To Prepare A Presentation" in which we will cover the preparation of the presentation materials and your preparation for the presentation itself. There are many essential nuggets in this section as the success of the presentation itself is determined by the quality of the materials and the avoidance of basic presentation traps. Finally, we cover "How To Deliver A Presentation" in which we learn tips and tricks about the approach that you need to take during your presentation and the issues that will arise and how you can deal with them.

How To Choose A Subject

Your choice of presentation subject will have a great impact on the success of your presentation. In this section we will look at what constitutes a good choice and what constitutes a bad choice.

The number one requirement for your choice of subject is that it is something that you are excited about; if you're not interested in it then no one else will be either. Choose something that excites you and you feel passionate about. It should be something that you feel people really ought to know about, something that you feel compelled to tell people because you are sure that their lives will be better by knowing about it. Enthusiasm is infectious; your enthusiasm will inspire people and this will have a significant effect on the success of your presentation. It should also be something that you know very well or you can learn in depth before your presentation date; standing

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up in front of a hundred people is a great way of focussing your mind and forcing you to ask yourself if you really know your subject as well as you had hoped.

The nature of the subject also has a large bearing on your presentation. There are easier subjects and harder subjects. It is true that a good presenter can explain any subject and make it interesting and understandable but if this is one of your first times presenting then do yourself a favour and choose a subject that is easier to present. In general visual subjects are easier to present because they are immediately recognizable and results are immediately obvious. Think about how many demos are given to customers where the customer chose the prettiest product instead of the most technically sophisticated product and you should appreciate how much easier it is to keep an audience's attention. Subjects such as ASP.NET, Windows Presentation Foundation, Silverlight and Windows Phone all have high visual content. Another easier subject is a "top 10" presentation (although I'll explain in a moment why this can also be placed in the section on harder subjects). The "top 10" presentation is a presentation explaining 10 things about a subject. There are several benefits to this approach:

> Attendees are motivated to attend these sessions because they are likely to cover at least 10 points

> The presentation moves along quite briskly and necessarily avoids getting bogged down into esoterics

> The audience is very forgiving if a couple of your points are not interesting to them because there is bound to be another subject that might be interesting in a moment

> They are useful for presenters who feel like they are an expert in a subject but don't feel like an entire presentation on one part of their domain will be interesting in itself

Other easier subjects could be put under the heading "fun subjects". Fun subjects are things like games programming, interactive sessions like quizzes or lively debates. These aren't easier because there is less work involved (there isn't) but rather that your audience is already motivated and receptive to hear what you have to say.

So if these are the easier subjects what are the subjects that you should avoid ? In general try to avoid non-visual subjects. Examples of these are Generics, Parallel Extensions and Design Patterns. Remember this is not to say that these subjects cannot be presented well (they can) but more that they are harder if they are your first presentation. The problem with these subjects is that the subject matter itself forces you into either showing many slides and few demos or else writing reams of code in Visual Studio. Audiences have trouble concentrating or even caring when they have read over a hundred lines of code and have no belief that it will ever end. Of course, you can and should spice up these subjects with interesting and/or humorous demos but you don't need to make your life any harder than it is.

You could also add the "top 10" presentations into this category of harder presentations. The problem here is that despite all of the reasons why these

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presentations can be easy you have the additional problem of pacing your presentation. If your presentation is 60 minutes and you present 10 tips then assuming 5 minutes for an intro and 5 minutes for a summary then you have 5 minutes per tip. Can you do 10 tips that are each 5 minutes long without the tips being trivial ?

Finally on the subject of choosing a topic don't feel that you have to choose a subject that hasn't been done before. This is a mistake. It is highly likely that someone, somewhere has already covered your subject either in a presentation, an article, a podcast or a blog. Let it go. People will still come to see your presentation if the subject is interesting enough.

How To Prepare A Presentation

A very large part of the success of your presentation lies in the preparation of your materials and the preparation of your presentation. In the development world I have a rather annoying maxim:-

the best way to solve any problem is to not get the problem in the first place

Although this sounds somewhat facetious and unhelpful what it really means is that the best solution to the problem lies in all of the work that has gone beforehand that leads us into a situation where the problem cannot occur. And this is why it is important to prepare carefully and with forethought.

Standard Slides

We will start with the preparation of a slide presentation. Start by checking if the event you are planning for has a standard template. If it has then download it and start using it straight away. It will dictate the layout of each slide and importantly how much information you can fit on each slide.

Regardless of how many or how few slides you want to use in your presentation you will need a set of slides to introduce yourself, give the presentation structure and close the presentation in a clean manner. Here is a standard set of slides that make up many presentations:-

Opening Slide
About You
Agenda
(Presentation Slides)
Summary / Conclusion
Resources
Questions
Closing Slide

The opening slide shows the name of your presentation, your name, email address, Twitter name, blog, website and any graphics or logos that are relevant. This is the

slide that will be shown before the presentation begins and you are waiting for people to get into their seats and get settled.

The next slide is all about you. This is largely a matter of taste as to how much you want to talk about how great you are but bear in mind the culture of your target audience. In the US it is accepted that you will give your background and you will be considered less of a person if you don't have any great reasons why people should be excited to see you. In some other cultures such a display of self-worth is likely to alienate you. You need to find the right balance. You should also consider the policy of the conference itself. TechEd, for example, generally frowns on this slide unless it contains any information that benefits the audience.

The agenda is a very important slide. It tells people what you are going to tell them. You need to tell people this because it sets expectations and gives your presentation structure. Attendees will mark you down if they believe you will be covering a subject and they spend the entire presentation waiting for that subject only to discover that you didn't cover it. They will surely make your score suffer. At an event with multiple simultaneous presentations the agenda slide gives attendees a quick opportunity to revise their decision as to whether to attend your session. The agenda slide gives attendees a chance to use that time slot for something else if their expectations are not going to be met. If people leave don't be concerned; it is better that they leave now rather than mark you down later. Next time you present, however, you should investigate the abstract that you submitted to understand why people thought your presentation would offer something that your agenda implied you wouldn't.

The agenda slide also introduces a basic presentation concept summed up as "tell'em, tell'em and tell'em again". The idea is that one simple organisation of your presentation is to tell your audience your message three times. The first time is in the agenda and provides an overview of what people will learn in your presentation. This will take a few minutes. The second time is the actual delivery of that information and this constitutes the bulk of the presentation and the reason why people are attending. The third time is the summary or conclusion at the end of the presentation where you sum up and revise the points that you have made identifying the important points in your presentation. This summary is important because people need to be reminded of how much they have learnt from your presentation (and this in turn affects your score).

After or before the summary slide you can include a Resources slide which contains references of websites, articles, books, events or other information of general interest. Personally I prefer to include many of these references in the presentation itself so that the reference is in context but this slide has merit even in this approach because it provides a placeholder for information that doesn't fit anywhere else.

The final or penultimate slide is the Questions slide. This gives the audience a clear signal that it is now their turn to ask their burning question. The need for this slide is dependant upon your approach to questions and we will return to this subject later.

The final and optional slide is the closing slide where you remind the audience of your email, Twitter name, website, blog or other critical information. This slide should give the audience a clear indication that the presentation is over.

The outline provided here is simple to follow and can be seen as "presentation by numbers". It represents a basic structure for your presentation and can easily be gleaned from most good presentations. The remainder of this document covers subjects that are not so easily acquired.

How To Explain Anything

The purpose of the majority of presentations is to convey information. It seems ironic therefore that explaining the essential points in a concept or how something works appears to be such a difficult subject that is so often implemented poorly. The truth is, however, that it is possible to explain absolutely anything to the kind of audience that attends technical seminars and this section aims to show you how to achieve this and what pitfalls to avoid.

The secret to explaining anything is to break it down into its individual parts. Mind mapping software can help with this but a pen and paper often works just as well. Write down each piece of information that needs to be conveyed. Draw dependency lines between each piece of information. This will leave you with one or more items that are root nodes i.e. they require no new knowledge to explain them. The trick is to explain one thing at a time. Create explanations and demonstrations that are atomic; that is, they explain a single piece of information. Audiences appreciate clarity and focus and become frustrated when it is unclear what piece of information is being conveyed at any one moment. Of course, this approach may sound somewhat simplistic. It is true some subjects cannot be broken down into single elements or have dependencies on other nuggets of information. The solution to this problem is to put the additional piece of information to one side and not to let it interfere with the one new piece of information being acquired. You can do this by pointing out the additional piece of information and stating that it is important and that you will be returning to it shortly. Audiences are comfortable with this approach and can accept being put in promise land for short periods of time for small amounts of information. When you do this the audience has to trust you that you will return to this important nugget of information and you are now honour bound to do just that.

You should also be aware that there is a very clear difference between demonstration code and production code. This distinction is often forgotten in presenters who are primarily developers or technicians. The need to write production quality code and to do the right thing gets in the way of the need to explain a concept clearly. Your code examples should represent the "happy path" to the solution. That is, it should assume that no exceptions occur and all paths succeed. Once the explanation has been made you can then revise the example either verbally or with new code showing that the first attempt was clearly just for demonstration purposes and did not represent production code. The point is that the first attempt should represent **the fewest number of lines of code to solve the problem** while still explaining the point and without being obscure. Add the dressing on subsequent revisions of your demonstration.

Another approach that goes down well is to show the end result first. If you are trying to explain a new feature to your audience then start by showing the end result.

Attendees need to know where you are going with your explanation and it is still very true that people understand things much better when they can see the end result; telling them isn't the same. People might nod their heads in consent but often all that this gesture really means is that they have accepted what you have said as true. This is not the same as really believing it or understanding it.

8 Item Stack and the 10 Minute Rule

On average the human adult brain has an 8 item stack. This means that people can store in memory 8 new pieces of information without forgetting any of those pieces of information. COBOL programmers can view this as a person's working storage; the scratch area where they juggle temporary information. The problem with the 8 item stack is that in order to learn a ninth item one of the existing items must be dropped. In learning situations this item is typically chosen at random. You need to design your presentation so that you never force people into this situation. The solution to this problem is to consolidate information at regular intervals. This is often achieved using demonstrations and this is the reason why the "lots of slides followed by lots of demonstrations" approach is doomed to failure. The idea behind this doomed strategy is that you explain everything that the audience needs to know up front and then you show the audience everything you've explained. This strategy never works. The slides put the audience into promise land. The audience will accept this initially as an act of faith. Unfortunately the audience has to trust what you are saying more and more and you will eventually fill their stack and exceed it. They will become frustrated that you are telling them new and important information but the new and important information is based on concepts that have started to become hazy. You must consolidate. The solution is to explain a little and then demo a little and repeat this process iteratively.

It is also worth noting that the human brain can pay attention to a single subject for approximately 10 minutes. After this time it wanders and is increasingly less interested in the subject. This is another reason why the "lots of slides followed by lots of demonstrations" approach is doomed to failure because subjects stretch considerably over the 10 minute barrier. To counter this problem you should try to structure your presentation such that you move on to a new part of your presentation every 10 minutes. So for example in a 60 minute presentation with a 5 minute introduction and 5 minutes for summarising and closing the presentation you would have 50 minutes for the bulk of the presentation. Thus you should have no less than 5 separate points that can be made in that time (possibly more if each point is less than 10 minutes).

Demonstrations

In most technical presentations there will need to be some demonstrations of some kind. When these demonstrations involve code you need to consider the best way of delivering this code. For short snippets of code the best approach is to type the code by hand. This establishes trust between the audience and the presenter and makes them feel that you are in command of your technology. But for larger amounts of code

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you might want to consider other approaches. The first point to consider in this scenario is whether a large amount of code is appropriate (see the earlier comments about atomic examples and "happy path" code). Whereas typing in the code works with small snippets it has a law of diminishing returns and rapidly becomes boring when the amount of typing increases. You should keep focus on the fact that people have come to learn something new and not to watch you type code. If you really must show a large amount of code try either offering a "canned" demo (a pre-prepared solution) or putting code in a Code Snippet that can easily be retrieved at the right moment. Finally if you haven't been put off showing reams of code then consider how the audience will react when faced with such a large block of code. Most people won't read it and will just accept that it does what you tell them it does even if you explain it line by line.

Understanding vs. Remembering

When you have prepared and practiced your presentation consider that when you are showing the demonstration on screen people will see it and understand it but it is very unlikely that they will be able to reproduce it after the presentation. Understanding is not the same as remembering. So you need to provide some way in which they can take away not only the completed solution but the steps that you took to arrive at the solution. Obviously you can provide a source code download containing the completed solution but this doesn't show the steps. So you should include the steps either with the PowerPoint slides or in a separate document that accompanies the presentation. If you include the steps in the PowerPoint presentation you can write the steps as bullet points in slides. This has pros and cons. The pros are that the steps are recorded in something that the attendees can download (make sure your attendees have access to your slides either electronically or in paper form). The cons are that there is often little value in showing a slide illustrating the steps and then performing those same steps. The audience will almost certainly want to just see the demonstration and not the slide. An alternative is to provide the steps as hidden slides or as presenter's notes.

Lengthy Demos

You should also consider the time it takes for your machine to complete the example. If this is a lengthy process because it connects to the internet, a database or starts up some dormant software then you should consider what you will be doing while this happens. Possibly you can use this time to ask for questions but if there aren't any you need to have a fallback plan. One approach is to start the demo going before the explanation is complete and while the demo is starting up you can finish the explanation.

Demos That Cannot Be Performed Live

Some demonstrations either cannot be performed live or might have problems being performed live. For example, it is not always possible to get an internet connection in

all locations, you may not have access to the same hardware and connected systems at the location of the presentation and of course your equipment may not work with the presentation equipment (Windows Vista had many problems with projection equipment during its beta cycle). If you feel that your demonstrations might not work when you come to give your presentation you need a backup plan. The best solution is to record your demonstration using a screen recorder. Here is a selection of screen recorders:-

> Camtasia Studio, TurboDemo, IQuick, AutoScreenRecorder, Bulent's Screen Recorder, My Screen Recorder, RiverPast, ACA etc.

Then during the presentation you explain why you can't give the demonstration live, show the recorded demonstration and talk everyone through it. It is better than not giving the demo but this approach should be used sparingly if only because you cannot deviate from the recorded demo.

A lesser solution is to take screen shots instead of recording the demo but whereas this is better than nothing it isn't a very satisfactory solution.

Pictures vs. Text

Another area that will have a significant impact on your presentation is how visual your presentation is compared to how much text it uses. People use vision more than any other sense. We process pictorial information more efficiently than textual information. Not only is pictorial information processed faster, it is also retained longer than pure textual information. When you are constructing your slides you should consider whether to make your points using textual bullet points or using pictures. Here's an example. Consider that you have a single slide with 5 textual bullet points on it. You could present this same information using pictures. In the pictorial approach you would have 5 slides where the slide heading (if any) was whatever you had previous put in the equivalent bullet point. This approach has the benefit that it is visually more appealing (and therefore avoids one of the causes of Death By PowerPoint) but your audience will process the information faster and will retain the information longer. The disadvantage of this approach is that it is difficult to show a hierarchy of information (something that bullet points intrinsically do well), you cannot show tabular information and most importantly for technical presentations you cannot show code. The best solution would appear to be a compromise of using pictures where possible and text (or code) elsewhere.

If you choose to use pictures in your presentations please be sure that either the pictures are royalty free or you own the copyright. You cannot simply search the internet and use any picture you find (in particular at larger conferences you may be asked to sign an agreement stating that you have acquired appropriate rights to all media used in your presentation). There are many websites that specialise in "royalty free images". Here are a few to get you started:-

> http://commons.wikimedia.org
> http://www.istockphoto.com
> http://www.dreamstime.com

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http://www.shutterstock.com
http://www.freedigitalphotos.net
http://www.thinkstockphotos.com

Using PowerPoint

It goes without saying that if you are using PowerPoint to deliver a slide presentation then you should become a master of it. Learn how to create stunning graphics and to use templates to change the complete style of your presentation. One point worth mentioning is on the subject of animations. You need to exercise restraint. This doesn't necessarily mean that you shouldn't use animations but simply that you should use the right amount of animations for your audience and subject matter. If you over use them your presentation will look cheap. By the same token a complete absence of animation can make a slide presentation dull. Above all consider whether your audience is likely to print out your presentation and remember that you cannot see animations on a piece of paper so any information conveyed by an animation will be lost when the presentation is printed. Worse still, if you build up a slide by adding elements remember that the printed version contains the completely built up slide and this may result in a complete mess if animations overlap.

One strategy for you to consider is whether to reveal bullet points on your slides all at the same time when the slide first appears or one by one (using some kind of animation effect that could be as sedate as "Appear"). The benefit of the former is that you never have a blank screen. The benefits of the latter are that you get to focus the audience's attention on the point that you are trying to make and also that you don't reveal any surprises before you are ready. If you take the latter strategy then you also need to decide whether the first bullet point is automatically revealed when you arrive at the slide – this avoids the problem of having an almost wholly blank screen.

Another point to consider is PowerPoint's automatic hyper-linking facility. If you do not intend to use a hyperlink in your presentation to jump to a URL then you should turn this facility off (Tools | AutoCorrect Options…) and then format the hyperlink yourself using a different scheme.

Copy Edit Your Slides

Before you release your slides or use them for the presentation proper you need to copy edit your slides. The most basic fault that you are looking for is typos; Easy to do and easy to spot by everyone else except the original author. The problem is that you instinctively read what you thought you wrote and not what you actually wrote. Try reading your presentation one word at a time and you should catch them. This is not an optional process; Typos reduce your credibility.

As the misuse of apostrophes has now become rampant here's a quick request to check your use of apostrophes. Use an apostrophe either (1) to indicate possession (e.g. Bob's book) or (2) to indicate a missing letter (e.g. Bob couldn't open the book). **Do not** use apostrophes to indicate pluralisation (e.g. DVD's).

You also need to ensure that you have continuity throughout your presentation. It doesn't particularly matter what rules you adhere to as long as you do adhere to them. The most common continuity mistake made in presentations is the presence or absence of full stops in bullet points. You need to decide what rules you are using and stick to them. For the sake of interest the rule that I use is: never use full stops unless it is to delimit sentences (and as using complete sentences in a presentation is not good design I rarely use full stops at all).

Finally you might like to consider spelling in your target language. Typically this affects the use of English spelling and speakers crossing the Atlantic where words like colour, honour, cheque, dialogue and programme will appear to be spelled incorrectly to everyone else except the presenter.

Cheat Sheets

As part of your preparation process you might like to consider creating "cheat sheets" for your presentation. Certainly the bullet points themselves should be providing you with the majority of reminders as to what you should be talking about but you might also benefit from printing out your slides and annotating them or else writing simple notes on one or more cards. I tend to use cheat sheets when I am preparing a new presentation as I find that there are occasionally points that I want to make or things that I should be doing that are not apparent from the slides. Typically these are points that are leaders into slides that are coming up or else steps that refer to demos (e.g. which Virtual Machine should I start up to illustrate the next problem). I also find this a useful place to write down all of the software that I should start up before the presentation begins in order to keep the presentation running smoothly.

Practising Your Presentation

The final part of your preparation process is to practice your presentation. This is an essential step but it can be an unnerving one. The problem with developing a presentation is that you make assumptions and skip the details. You believe that the simple details are so simple that they do not need your attention. This is probably true for the majority of simple details but it isn't until you do a complete run through that you discover which simple details aren't as simple as you thought they would be. If you do not practice your presentation then your first complete run through will be when you present it and this is a very bad time to discover something that you should have known before you started.

The complete run through can be to yourself, your partner or your work colleagues. What is important to remember here is that it is much harder to present to 1 or 2 people than it is to present to 100. The dynamics are completely different. It is much harder to incorporate humour, and people in tiny groups behave quite differently from the same people in larger groups. Don't let the dynamics of a small audience put you off.

Another good reason to practice your presentation is to time it. There is a big difference between imagining a demonstration or going over an explanation in your mind and doing it for real. The goal here is to work out whether you have allocated the right amount of time for your demonstrations and the presentation as a whole. The time itself won't be an exact time for your presentation proper because there will always be additional variables (e.g. people's questions take time in themselves but they might also modify the way you explain things and how much emphasis you place on different subjects) but it will give you a broad indication as to whether you have the right amount of material.

If you run over time during a practice then you need to modify your presentation. This might mean reducing the number of subjects that you are covering or it might mean changing the way you do demos. For each demo you need to ask yourself whether it is the building of the demo that is the purpose of the demo or whether it is the end result that is the purpose of the demo. If it is the former then there is probably very little you can do to shorten the demo. If it is the latter than the demo can be shortened by showing one you created previously.

Finally you might want to consider recording your dry run using a camcorder. There are pros and cons with this approach. The pros are that it holds a mirror up to you and shows you exactly what you are doing. You will become aware of mannerisms, gestures and vocabulary that you may not have been previously aware of. It should reveal to you words that you repeat that have no real value (e.g. basically, obviously, essentially, ok). The cons are that you need to be prepared to watch yourself present. This can be a really unnerving experience and you might find the dent to your ego more damaging than useful.

How To Deliver A Presentation

And so we come to the third and final section of this paper: How To Deliver A Presentation. At this point you should have a slide deck and set of demos prepared and be aware of the subjects that you are going to cover and the flow of your presentation. In this section we focus on the delivery of your presentation.

2 Weeks Before The Presentation

One of the goals of your presentation should be to deliver as fluent a presentation as possible. This means that you want it to run smoothly with as few interruptions or unexpected issues arising as possible. It isn't always possible to eliminate every single wrinkle or issue and some problems are difficult to anticipate but you should strive to reduce them to as few as possible.

The first step is to setup your machine so that it is ready for the presentation. You may be thinking that you should do this 15 minutes before the presentation. Certainly this will be adequate for preparing your machine but it is not adequate for preparing you. Think about the way you use your machine. After a short while you are familiar with it and your eyes automatically look in certain places and expect to find something

familiar. Menu items can be found in the same place they were in the last time you found them. These issues remain true until you reconfigure your machine for a presentation. And this is absolutely the worst time to have everything you instinctively rely on change suddenly. That fluency that you achieved during your practice session will be gone as you hunt around trying to find things that have moved to a different place thanks to changing the screen size (or only having one monitor). Your goal here is to become familiar with your presentation environment **before** the presentation not during it. To do this you need to configure your machine about 2 weeks before the event.

Top of the list of settings that you will need to change is the screen resolution. It is entirely possible that the organisers of the event will dictate a screen resolution to you (possibly because of the nature of their projection equipment or possibly because the attendees have previously complained about microscopic screen resolutions). At the time of writing a common screen resolution for presentations is 1024 * 768. If your presentation machine is a laptop then this is probably a resolution that you never run in. Change it and see just how tiny it is compared with your previous resolution. Notice how little space you have available now. In addition if you use virtual machines then you should also start them up and change their screen resolution.

You should also consider changing the DPI on your machine (on Windows 7 right click your desktop, select Personalize, click on Display and then "Set custom text size (DPI)"). Here's an example of Visual Studio 2010 using 96 DPI (i.e. the default):-
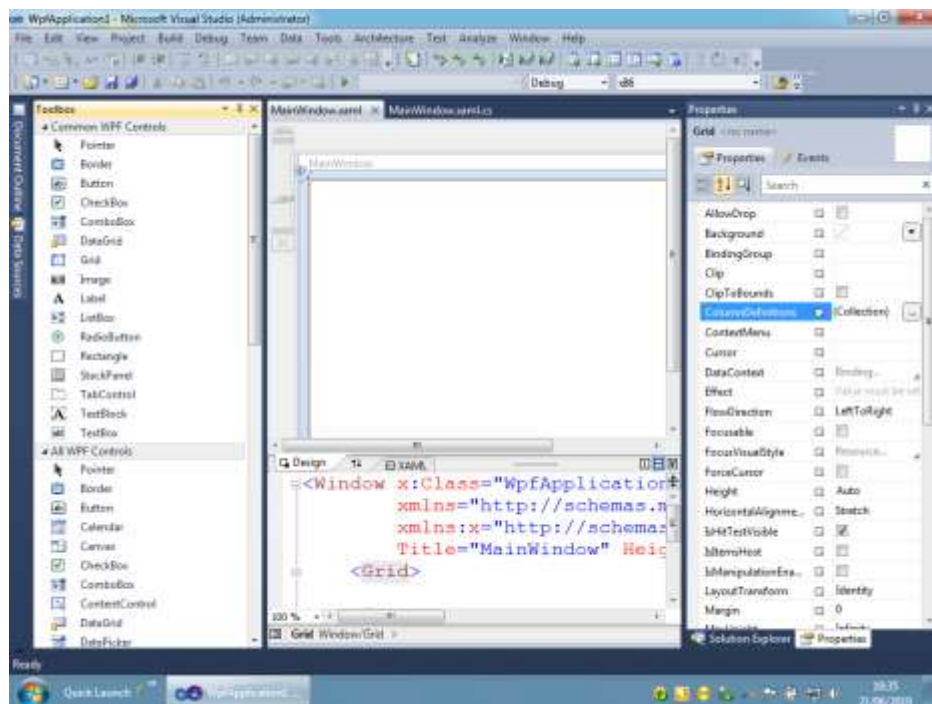
Here's the same screen again using 120 DPI:-

© Guy Smith-Ferrier, 2006-2010
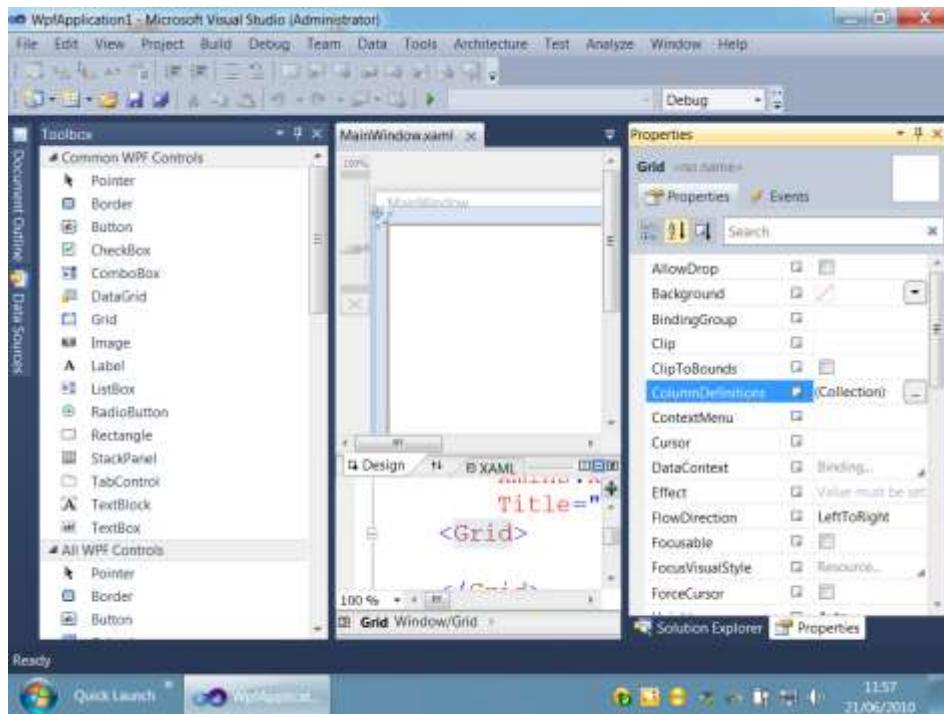
Clearly the text at 120 DPI is larger and therefore easier to read. It also means that there is less space available (notice the XAML window in the bottom centre of the screen). Later we will talk about using zooming tools to magnify part of the screen; if you find you are using a tool like this to continually show menu items or the text in dialog boxes you should consider changing to 120 DPI to avoid unnecessary zooming in and out (which is irritating if overused). Unfortunately changing this value requires a reboot so it is definitely something that you should do in advance

Next you should set your font sizes. Don't fall into the trap of asking your audience if the font you are using is big enough. It isn't. Unfortunately this question is often asked in a way that gets few responses and leads to an incorrect conclusion that it is ok. The standard font size is never big enough for the people at the back of the room – change it before the presentation. You need to increase it from say 10 point to typically 16 point. You should do this at least in the following programs if you use them:-
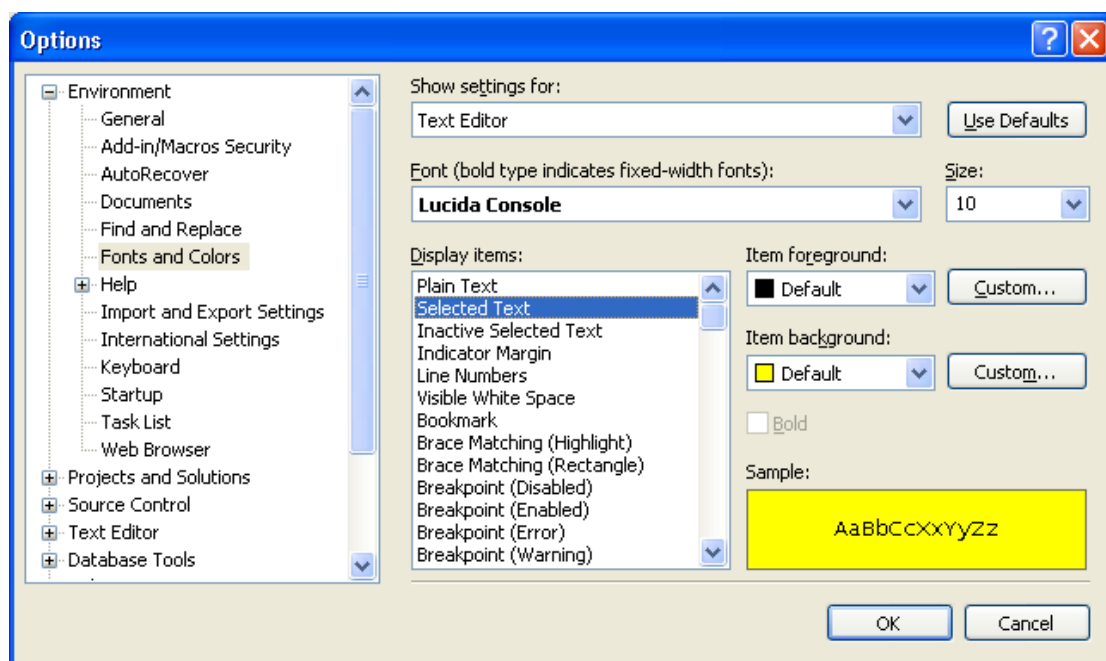
> Visual Studio
> NotePad
> ILDasm
> Reflector
> Command Window
> PowerShell ISE

While we are on the subject of Reflector you should start it up and let it update itself so that it doesn't do this when you are delivering your presentation. Also on the subject of the Command Window if you are going to be showing Console Applications remember that Visual Studio creates a Command Window using the default settings so to change the font size of a Command Window as shown from the Visual Studio IDE you must change the "Defaults" settings.

You should also consider changing your font family. The default font family for

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Visual Studio is Courier New and this is not ideal for presentations. Change it to Lucida Console and you will see that it is much thicker and therefore easier for an audience to read. Changing the font to Lucida Console is a good general rule but it is not suitable for all software.

The next change that you should make is only applicable if you are using Visual Studio 2008 or earlier (the default has changed in Visual Studio 2010). Assuming that you are using the standard colour scheme try highlighting some text in the editor and you will see that the highlighted text is still quite readable when it is highlighted. What you don't know is that when your monitor is projected and shown to an audience the same highlighted text is very difficult to read. You need to change the Selected Text colour (select Tools | Options | Environment | Fonts and Colors | Text Editor | Selected Text):-

I have found that setting the foreground to black and the background to yellow (i.e. a colour frequently used for highlighting) works well for me and it is the default used by Visual Studio 2010 and above.

You should also consider making similar changes to the highlight colour used in other applications. Some applications, however, such as NotePad, don't have their own highlight colour and rely on the Windows colour scheme. This means that if you change the highlight colour (it is called the "Selected Items" colour in Windows) then you have changed it for every program that uses the default on the machine. This is quite far reaching and it may be exactly what you want but you should be aware that it will affect more than just NotePad.

15 Minutes Before The Presentation

15 minutes before the presentation starts you need to perform the final setup on your environment and your machine. Get a bottle of still water. Don't use carbonated

drinks as these are not helpful when you are trying to present. Turn off your mobile phone. This is rather important because you look like a complete idiot if you tell people to switch of mobile phones and then yours starts ringing.

Turn off software that might interfere with your presentation. Start with the screen saver. You don't want to be in a long explanation and have the screen saver cut in. Certainly it is unlikely that this will happen because you don't want any part of your presentation to be so visually static for such a long period of time that your screen saver cuts in but then you don't really want this interruption if it does. Turn off Twitter, Messenger or whatever IM software you use. There is absolutely no benefit to having this running whilst you present and there are many downsides to it. You might also consider anything that interferes with the smooth running of your demos. Under extreme caution consider disabling Norton's Internet Security if it interferes with your demos (such as ClickOnce demos). You might also like to switch off other programs that you don't use for your presentation such as SQL Server.

If you are using a laptop and it has a Power Management option then set it to maximum power and to never power down anything.

If you are using Windows Vista or higher open the Windows Mobility Center (mblctr.exe, if you are using Windows 7 or higher you can access this with the Windows key plus "X"):-

If you turn on Presentation Settings then your laptop will stay awake, and system notifications will be turned off.

If you are using virtual machines then you should consider starting one or more of them up before you need them to prevent a lengthy delay in your presentation. Of course, this will depend on the available memory on your machine and how many virtual machines you want to start up. In fact you should try to start up anything that has a slow start time. Although it is generally not necessary I usually start up Visual Studio in order to get into the first demo as quickly as possible.

If some of your demos result in activating some dormant software you might like to

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consider running the demo now so that the software that it needs to start up is already running by the time you do the demo for real.

You also need to ensure that your old demos have been undone. For example if your slides refer to a WPF Application that you are going to create and the application is called WpfApplication1 then you should delete the old WpfApplication1 so that when you do the demo again you don't get WpfApplication2.

Finally, you should put up your opening slide and start to focus.

Starting The Presentation

If this is your first presentation then the start of the presentation is probably the hardest part. You need to introduce yourself, introduce your session and tell the audience whether you will take questions during the presentation or at the end. If you are at a conference then often the organisers will have a message or two to give to the audience (such as where the lunch is or remind attendees to fill out evaluation forms). You might also like to inject some humour (see the section on humour) into the opening minute or two depending on how confident you are feeling. However, if you are not certain as to whether the audience will find your comment funny or not then you shouldn't risk it as this is a really bad time to put a dent in your confidence.

All of these items are simple enough but I have found that at the beginning of a presentation it is easy to forget one or two of them in my enthusiasm to get started. For this reason I sometimes write a cue card for myself listing the 4, 5 or 6 points that I really must make during the opening minute or so.

Nervousness And How To Overcome It

One of the most difficult problems for first time presenters is that of being nervous. It is highly likely that you will be nervous during your first presentation. You can thank your ancient cavemen ancestors for this particular reaction and there is very little, short of strong medication (not recommended), that you can do to stop this from happening. However, it is possible to rise above it and not let it interfere with your presentation. Let's start by considering what being nervous will do to you. Obviously it will increase your heart rate, make your palms sweat, and it may make your breath short and your mouth dry (this is why you got the water ready first). But most importantly it will put you off balance mentally. It will make it more difficult to focus on the points that were easy to remember during your practice session when you weren't as nervous. In extreme cases it will cause you to freeze and forget the points you are trying to make. You can beat nervousness in several ways. Firstly the presentation that you have prepared should help you. The slides and bullet points should flow logically so that when you are trying to think of what to say next you need only look at the slide to get a memory jogger and you're away again. Secondly you can reduce the chances of being flustered by practising your presentation. I learnt an important lesson a long time ago. I did a parachute jump when I was in my teens. It was the most frightening thing I have ever done. The organisers needed to know that

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when I was busy falling through the air terrified out of my mind I could still focus on what I was supposed to be doing and be able to save my own life should things get that desperate. They used a simple technique to ensure that I could still concentrate in this scenario: they turned me into a robot. Effectively they conditioned me so heavily that I had little choice but to go through the sequences that I had been taught. They did this by going over and over and over each sequence and making the steps instinctive. It worked; 25 years later I can still remember how to fall out of a plane correctly. This is the solution to becoming flustered as a result of being nervous. You practice. You do need a formal practice but you can also practice at any other time. I tend to get my explanations straight as I am walking down the street or when I am driving. I'm not trying to remember the exact words that I am going to say, only how the explanation fits together, what points I want to make and how they flow into each other.

The last point that you need to know is something you should remember at the beginning of your presentation. If the effect of being nervous is making you even more nervous because you weren't quite aware of how much it would affect you then you should know that it will get better. The nervousness may not go away completely but it will reduce to a manageable level. It is the first 5 or 10 minutes that are the hardest and this sudden loss of mental faculty can be disarming in its own right as you consider "how on Earth am I going to get through this presentation when I can't even think straight ?". The solution to remaining calm is to know that it takes only 5 or 10 minutes for it to get better. After the opening part of the presentation you will get into the meat of your presentation and this is where you are telling people the important things that make your presentation worthwhile and this is where you will change. At the point at which you are delivering your message and conveying a sense of passion about why you are there in the first place you will stop being nervous and start focussing on the message and the delivery of the message. Unfortunately for me I can prove this to you. I have presented at user groups, seminars, conferences and given training courses for more than 2 decades so you would think that I wouldn't be nervous anymore. In general I am not but you can make most people nervous by putting them in a situation that they are not familiar with. In 2006 I gave my first webcast for MSDN. This was a new presentation medium for me and the dynamics are quite different. One of the main differences is that you cannot see or hear the audience and there is virtually no audience feedback. I knew I would find this difficult as I had spent more than 20 years playing to an audience and I think about presentations in terms of delivering a message to people that I can see. Consequently I was nervous. The webcast is no longer available but I can tell you that you could hear in my voice that I am nervous. However, the webcast proves my point. After a while you could hear the nervousness decrease. As I start to get into the points that are important to me and I really want to tell people about you could hear that I'm not interested in being nervous any more, I'm just interested in telling people about the subject. If you are interested in your own presentation then this will happen to you too. The trick is to remember during the first 5 or 10 minutes when it is all looking very difficult that the nervousness will return to a manageable level.

Demos

Giving a demonstration may at first appear to be quite obvious: you show the

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audience the feature or process or result that is the point of the demo. But there are a few points to bear in mind. The first is that until you get to the end of the demo it is not always so easy for the audience to understand where you are going. Certainly you will often start by telling the audience the point of the demo but they are in promise land until you actually deliver the end result. Until this point everything that you do is out of context. A common trick to getting people to understand what you are doing and why is to get to the end result first. In other words start the demo by showing them the end of the demo. Then you go back and show how you got there. By using this strategy no one gets left behind and everyone has a clear idea of the goal behind the demo. Often I see presenters build up a demo piece by piece where the presenter knows why they are doing what they are doing but everyone else has to trust them and it only comes into focus when the demo is complete.

The next tip to bear in mind is that demo speed is not developer speed. If you are showing a technique or using a tool that you use frequently as a developer you need to remember that the speed that you use it at for development purposes is very unhelpful when you are demonstrating it to an audience. You should really avoid any situation where you are just clicking around without telling people what you are doing. You need to hold the audience's hand and tell them what you are doing at every stage. It doesn't have to be pedestrian and dull but it does have to be clear.

Finally if you need to type code as part of your demo then you need to learn a new skill. You need to learn how to talk whilst you are typing. As you are typing in the code you need to be explaining what it is that you are typing and what it does. You are trying to avoid long periods of silence. Silence isn't a sin per se but you do want to reduce it as much as possible and use it strategically (for example, for making a break before a new section). Talking whilst typing is one of those riding-a-bicycle, playing-a-piano-with-two-hands, patting-your-head-and-rubbing-your-stomach things that you can learn simply by repetition and, again, this is one of the benefits of practising your presentation.

Humour

Humour is one of those tricky, personal subjects that can make a big difference both positively and negatively to your presentation so we will consider some aspects of it here. Firstly you need to be clear why you might want to use humour. There are several very good reasons why you might want to make use of it. The main one for me is that it keeps people interested. When people are listening to you you can teach them new things. If they are not interested then it doesn't matter how important your message is it won't go in. If you make people laugh and they have a good time then they will be very receptive to the information that you are providing. If you look at the great speakers in this environment you will find that they all have something in common: people come away from their sessions saying how much they learnt and how funny the presenter was. The two go hand in hand. If you want to convey large amounts of information to your audience you will have to use humour to keep them interested. Another good reason is that in a conference people will be very grateful for you lightening the mood as they move from presenter to presenter and get more tired and they begin to pray that the next person is at least interesting. Yet another reason is that it will make a very real difference to your rating and how much the organisers

and the attendees want you back again.

Of course you need to find the right balance. Humour is not a substitute for content. Your primary role is not that of a stand up comedian. You are there to convey information. Humour is the tool, not the objective. It is entirely possible to present a session in which you are very funny and make the audience regularly laugh but the audience is smart enough to mark you down for content when it comes to filling out their evaluation forms. The level of humour that you want to aim for is the level that feels right to you. This is very important. One of my golden rules of presenting is that you are giving your best presentation when you are being yourself. You can see this in other presenters. Look at someone who is in full flow, delivering their message and enjoying what they are doing. They are in this state only when they are being themselves. If you try to emulate someone else's style it will not come off naturally.

So, given that you have decided on a level of humour that is appropriate for you let's look at audience dynamics. Before you start your presentation you need to assess the size of the audience compared with the size of the room. For humour to work well your room needs to be nearly full. It doesn't really matter how many people that equates to, only that there are enough people in the room that there are few gaps. So in a training room built for 10 people it is relatively easy to make 8 people laugh. However, if you put the same 8 people in a room built for 30-50 people and give the same presentation with the same jokes they are unlikely to laugh. People just don't feel like it. This generalisation appears to be true as you increase the numbers so an audience of 80 people in a room built for 100 will laugh easily but the same 80 people in a room built for 600 will barely laugh at all. This dynamic is important because you need to adjust to the situation. If you have a room that is half empty you will struggle to make everyone laugh and you need to be aware that it isn't you; it is the dynamics of the audience. The conclusion is that after you have assessed the mood of your audience you may want to change tack according to what works in that situation.

Finally on the subject of humour you might like to be aware of the different ways that you can kill a joke. Obviously it shouldn't be your goal to kill your own jokes unless you enjoy dying horribly in front of an audience (in which case you should take up being an amateur stand up comedian) but you may find it helpful to understand what kind of delivery is doomed to failure before you begin. The first approach to avoid is the pause for laughter. The scenario goes like this: you tell a joke and after the punchline you pause for people to laugh. Typically there are two common results: people groan or there is silence. Both are bad but silence is worse because it accentuates to you and everyone else in the room that the joke wasn't funny. If you are already nervous this may raise your anxiety to panic levels. The solution to this problem is generally not to pause after a joke as if you don't care whether it is funny or not (which is as it should be). Another way to kill a joke is to deliver it in a way that reveals it has been rehearsed. Any joke that appears to have been rehearsed makes the audience much less likely to laugh. To solve this problem you need to learn tricks from stand up comedians. Stand up comedians do virtually the same set over and over. The jokes are funny because they have determined what works and have worked on their delivery so that the emphasis and mannerisms get maximum impact. The point is that they manage to make this look spontaneous even when they do the same set over and over and it clearly isn't spontaneous. This is a difficult skill to master and if you can't deliver your jokes in a way that does not appear rehearsed

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then you should avoid preparing them altogether. In this case you should not conclude that you should avoid humour altogether. Instead you can make use of humour that is genuinely spontaneous. This has the benefit that it should appear genuinely spontaneous (on the grounds that it is) but it has the disadvantage that it cannot be rehearsed.

Fluency

One of the goals that you should be aiming for in your presentation style is to be fluent. Certainly this means being fluent in terms of the flow of your presentation by moving from point to point and subject to subject but it also means being fluent in your speech. This is easily said but not necessarily so easily achieved. One nugget of help that I can offer here is the reason why presenters are not fluent. Presenters are often not fluent because they are busy thinking. Obviously they are thinking about the presentation in progress and this is essential but fluency is lost when presenters are thinking about how to explain things and what minor detail comes next. You can avoid this problem and improve your fluency by doing your thinking before the presentation. Typically this means practising your presentation and making sure you are comfortable with your explanations before you go live. You can see this effect in the training room. Most trainers are fluent because they teach the same courses on a regular basis. By the time you turn up on their course it is likely that they will have taught the same material many times and you will benefit from the fluidity of their presentation and their delivery. You can also see this in presenters who have presented the same subject many times at conferences and user groups. Your goal is to have practiced so much that you do not need to be thinking about the minutia whilst you are giving your explanations.

Pointing Tools

Moving on to a very practical subject we will examine the use of pointing tools. At some point in your presentation you will need to draw attention to something on your screen. There are several options here with pros and cons.

Some time ago laser pointers were very popular. You can use a simple inexpensive pen-like device to point to something on a projected screen. These devices are not so popular any more and I would discourage you from using these devices for several reasons. The first is that they obviously assume some kind of projection screen for you to be able to point at. Whereas this is highly likely in a presentation where you can see the audience there are an increasing number of situations where you cannot see the audience (e.g. webcasts). The second is that it doesn't scale. In a medium to large sized room the attendees at the back of the room will be unlikely to be able to see the pointer. Perhaps the most important reason is that it cannot be recorded on a feed from the computer. More and more presentations are recorded for subsequent download after the event. Typically these are recorded from the computer's output. If you have used a laser pointer then the audio will include statements like "you can see this block of code only has two statements" but the video will not have a record of what you were pointing at. As it makes sense to choose a pointing device that works

for all scenarios it would be wise to avoid creating a dependence on a tool that is applicable only for certain situations. However if you must use a pointing device then there are typically three choices:-

> A regular laser pen. You can pick these up anywhere and this is the option with the least functionality.

> A dedicated presentation device such as the Kensington Wireless Presentation Remote. A device like this has additional functionality such as allowing you to move slides backwards and forwards from the pointing device without having to return to the machine to touch the keyboard.

> A presentation mouse such as the Wireless Presenter Mouse 8000. This programmable device has a whole heap of features built into it including a laser pen, the ability to move slides backwards and forwards remotely and the ability to magnify an area of the screen. And it is also a mouse.

A simplistic solution to the pointing problem is to change the mouse settings. In the Control Panel open the Mouse applet, select the Pointer Options tab and check the "Show location of pointer when I press CTRL key" checkbox:-
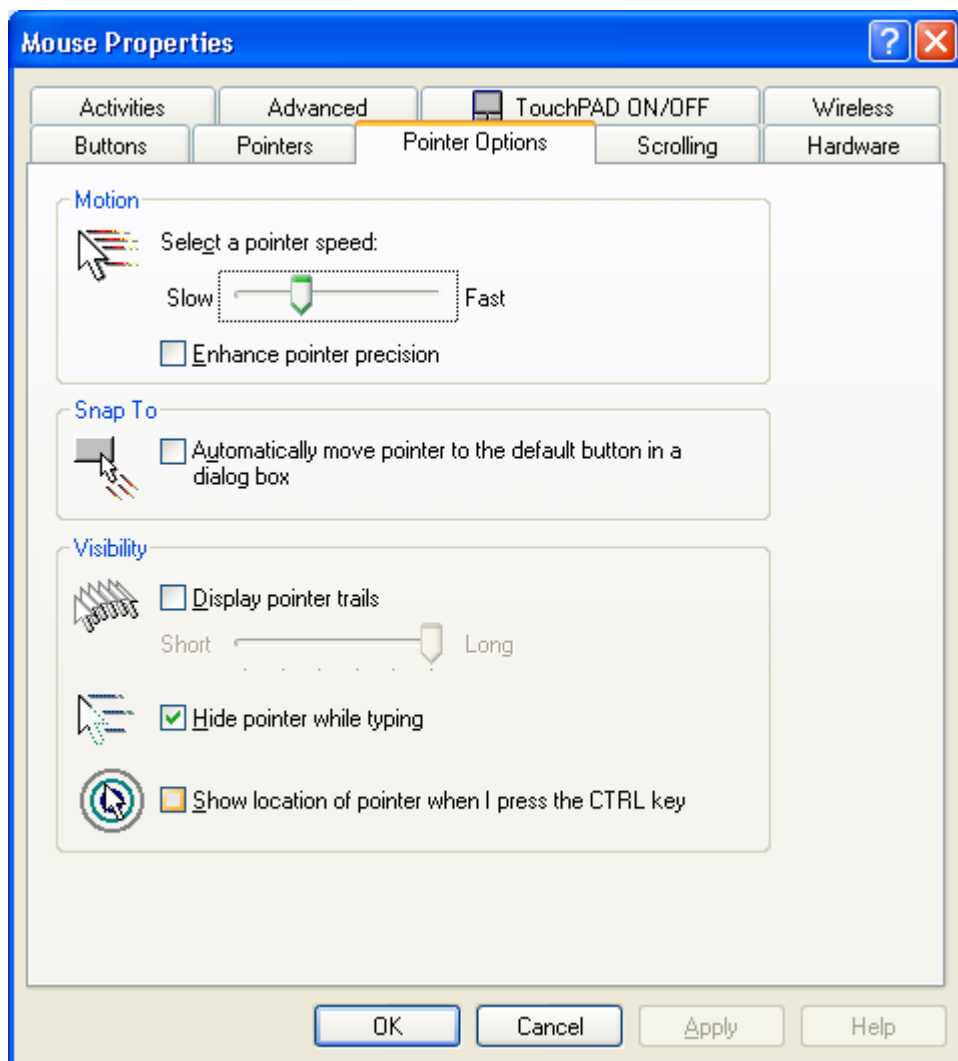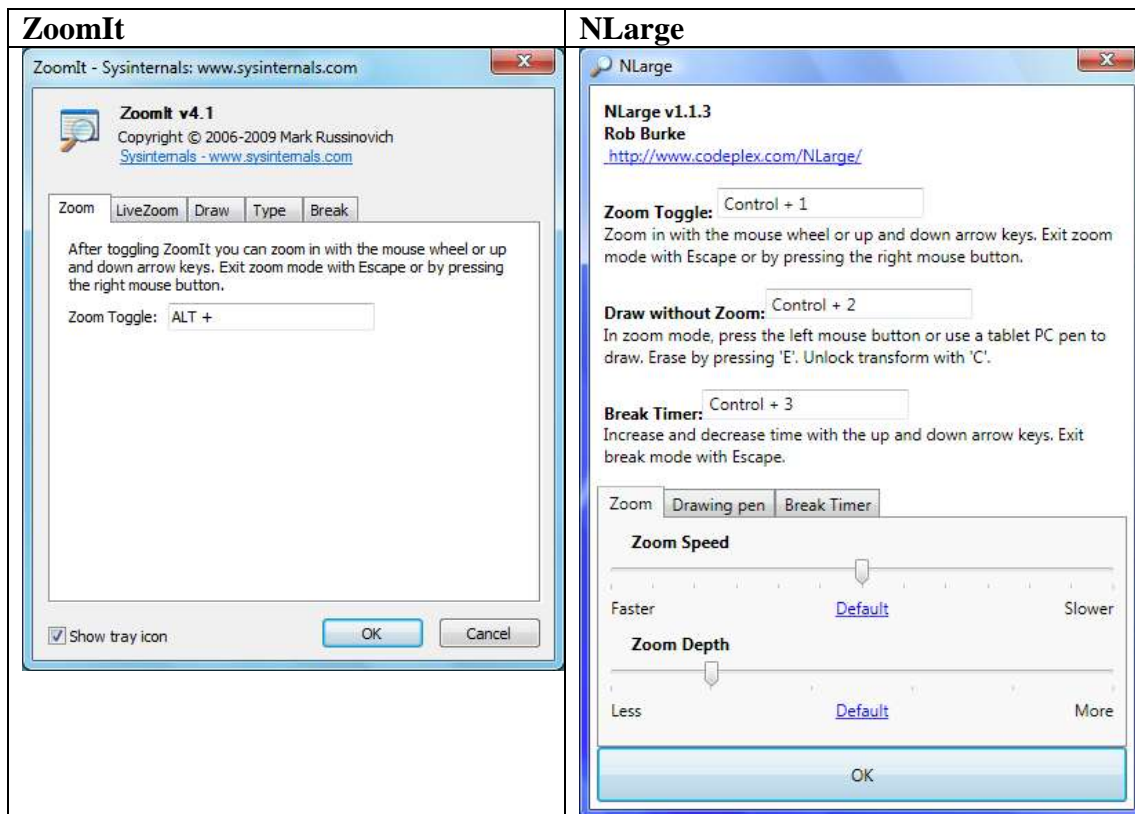
From here you can draw attention to something by moving the mouse over it and pressing the CTRL key repeatedly. Whereas this solution works I think there are much better solutions that we will see in the next section.
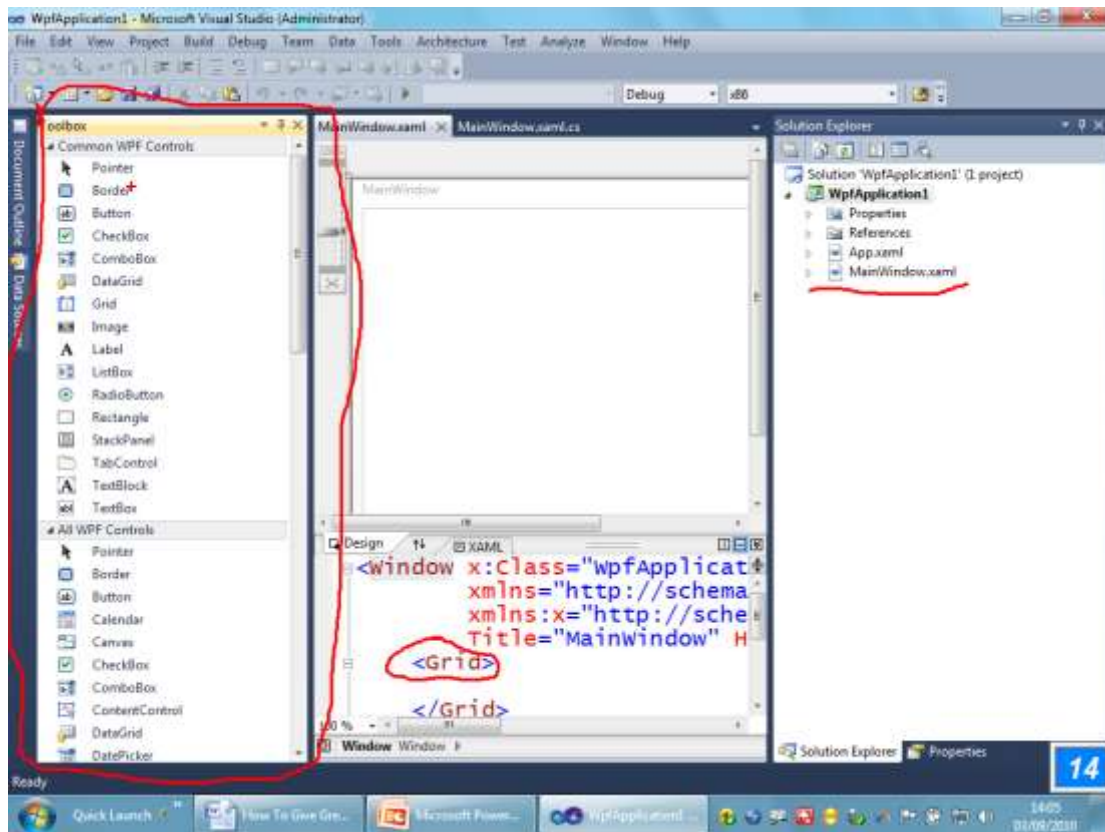
Drawing Tools

There are several solutions that allow you to draw on your computer's screen for the purposes of underlining, circling or drawing arrows for pointing.

The simplest is to use the PowerPoint Pointer Options. In slide show mode right click the slide, select Pointer Options and then select a suitable pen. The mouse becomes a drawing device. The significant downside to this approach is that it is limited to drawing on PowerPoint slides and this rules it out for me.

The two solutions that I prefer are ZoomIt (http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb897434.aspx) and NLarge (http://www.codeplex.com/NLarge).

ZoomIt	NLarge

Both ZoomIt and NLarge offer drawing and zooming functionality. ZoomIt has no pre-requisites and NLarge requires the .NET Framework 3.0. You should take a look at both as they are both evolving and their feature sets can leap frog each other over time. Both support a basic drawing functionality - press Alt+2 and use the mouse to scribble:-

Both tools have facilities for drawing ellipses, rectangles, straight lines, arrows and using different colours at the press of a button:-
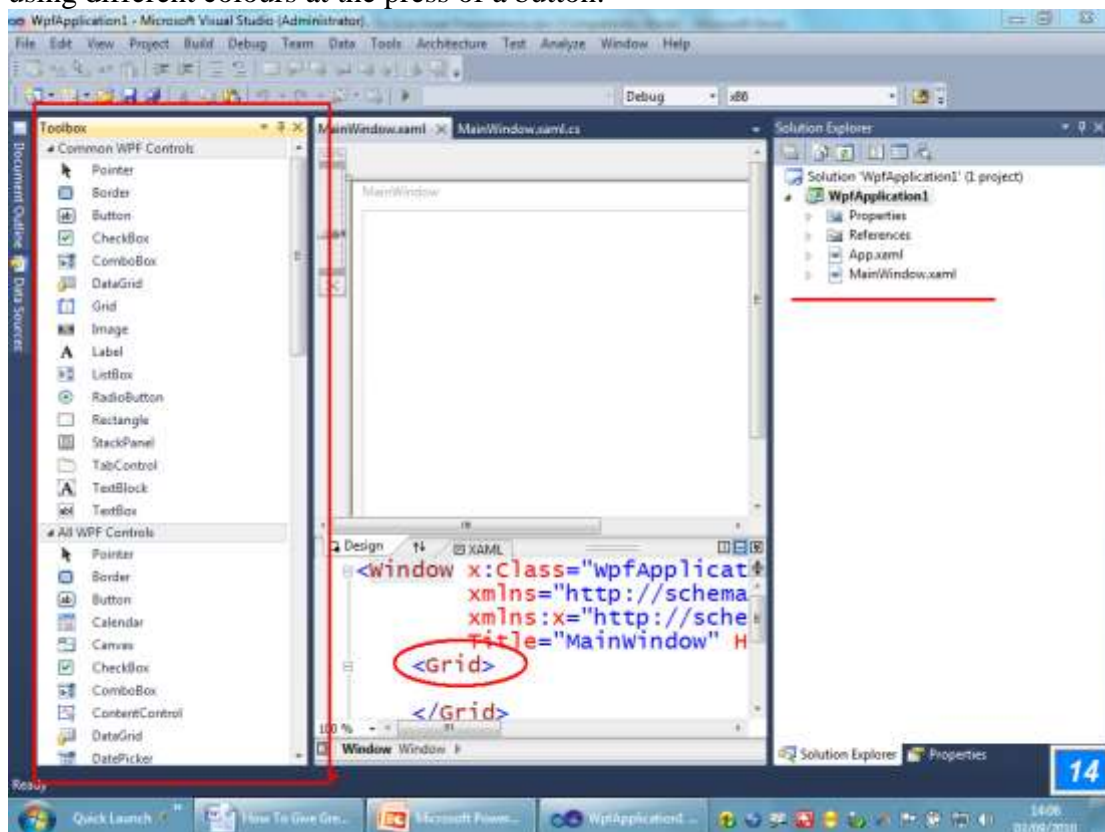
The ability to draw 'cleanly' on the screen is important because after a short while repeated use of free form drawing can look like scribbling and your professionalism will take a hit.

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Before you become too dependent upon a third party tool such as ZoomIt or NLarge bear in mind that at some conferences (e.g. TechEd) the slides will be shown on a separate machine and you may not be allowed to install either of these utilities on that machine. In this situation it helps to be able to fallback (albeit quite a way) to PowerPoint's built in drawing features.

Zooming Tools

Another way of drawing attention to something is to zoom in on it. This process also allows you to show parts of your screen that are difficult to see. Often this might be because the font is too small. However if you are going to use a zooming tool for this on a regular basis you should change the DPI (menu items et al) or the size of the font (source code et al) instead.

The simplest way to zoom in on something is to use the Magnifier built in to Microsoft Windows. Select Start | All Programs | Accessories | Ease of Access (called "Accessibility" prior to Windows Vista) | Magnifier. Starting with Windows 7 you can zoom in and out using Windows Key and "+" and Windows Key and "-" without having to start the Magnifier directly. The Magnifier works well in Windows 7 but prior to Windows 7 it provides limited functionality compared with the other options and is not the best option.

Another choice is to use the Wireless Laser Mouse 8000. This is a completely programmable mouse with an additional button on the side that activates a program. By default this program is a magnifier so to zoom in on part of a screen you need only press the small button on the side of the mouse. In addition you can drag the mouse to increase the size of the magnified window.

Two more choices are ZoomIt and NLarge shown in the previous section. If you have already committed to using one of these tools then this is the best option (especially the "LiveZoom" feature in ZoomIt which allows the computer to remain usable whilst zoomed).

Visual Studio

Here's a quick tip if you are using Visual Studio and you intend to show code in the source code window. Often the source code window and the XAML window is left with all too little a space to see a reasonable amount of code especially when you have dropped your resolution and increased your font size. One simple way to get the best from these windows is to show them full screen (this is not the same as maximizing them). You can do this from the menu by selecting View and then Full Screen but it is more efficient to use the keyboard shortcut Shift+Alt+Enter. Follow the same steps to restore the screen to its original size.

Your body, your hands and you

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One of the goals that you need to strive towards is to allow your natural passion and enthusiasm for your subject to come through. Enthusiasm is infectious and it is a great tool for keeping people interested in what you are saying. People use sight above all other senses and watching an animated, compelling speaker is much easier than watching an inert one. The goal here is to allow you to use your body and hands as part of your presentation. The first step towards this is to never put your hands in your pockets. Putting your hands in your pockets stops you from using them to make your points to the audience. You naturally use your hands as part of an explanation – don't deny yourself this opportunity. The next step is to ensure that you do not use the desk or lectern as a barrier between you and the audience. You should step away from the lectern or desk and come to the front of the stage or presentation area. The audience will respond better and you will present more effectively if you are standing up and your whole body is part of your explanation. Next you should invest in a remote presentation device like the ones mentioned earlier. This device will release you from the chains of your laptop and will allow you to move from point to point and slide to slide without interrupting your presentation to return to your laptop.

Another point to remember is that you must not turn your back on the audience. This sounds simple enough but it is a common mistake of new presenters to face the projection screen to talk about a point or more usually to point to something. Often you do need to refer to the screen but using a presentation tool such as ZoomIt or NLarge should help you to avoid pointing with your hands and risking turning your back. A good rule of thumb to employ is to ensure that neither of your shoulders turns more than 90 degrees away from the projection screen. By this means you are always facing the audience and will never partially or wholly turn your back on them.

Questions

It surprises me that it is necessary to have a section on handling questions but experience shows that this basic subject does require a few prompts. We will start with the questions that you ask of the audience. The first rule is that you should make sure that there is a point to each question. It sounds obvious but often presenters use questions as a way of communicating with the audience as opposed to the more obvious use of gathering information. If you don't actually need the answer in order to give your presentation then don't ask the question. The audience is prepared to answer a number of questions on faith but remember that there is no real benefit to the audience for most of the questions asked by presenters so the benefit is mostly for the presenter. I tend to ask questions at the beginning of a presentation to find out what the audience already knows about a subject or what kind of development they are interested in. A classic divide is how many web developers are in the audience compared to the number of Windows developers. The answers to these questions change the amount of depth I go into when explaining the basics of the subject and how much time is reserved for more advanced subjects. In addition they tell me what kind of focus to put on subjects e.g. web or winforms. The answers to these questions help me to tailor the presentation so these are useful questions.

There are also some simple rules for handling questions that the audience will ask of you. The first is that you need to tell the audience what to expect: will you take

questions as you go along or will you hold questions until the end ? Personally I always like to take questions as I go along but there are some cases where this is difficult e.g. in a webcast, if your session is being recorded for later use. I also find that questions help me enormously; they tell me what people are thinking about and if I explained something properly. They also do something very subtle: they encourage other people to ask questions too. The second rule is equally simple: you need to repeat the question to the audience. The fact that you can hear the question does not mean that everyone can hear the question. This is especially important if your presentation is being recorded. Something else to bear in mind is that you must ensure that there are not too many questions or that one person is taking control of your presentation. If there are too many questions people will become bored and you will not have enough time to complete your presentation. If someone is taking control of your presentation you can be sure that it is irritating the audience probably as much as it is irritating you. And this leads to a very important point in audience control: you must behave as though you are the host of a party. Everyone in the room is looking to you to set the scene, set the mood, control proceedings and give direction. It is essential that you remain a good natured host regardless of how anyone in the audience may behave. Certainly you must ensure that you remain in control and that an attendee is not allowed to dominate the presentation but at no point can you reveal any sign that you are annoyed or impatient or put out in anyway.

Finally you should consider what you are going to do if you don't know the answer. Personally I can only handle this situation in one way: tell them I don't know. What you do about it thereafter is another matter. Preferably you can tell the audience what you think the answer is and even better ask them to email you the question or write it down on a piece of paper with their email address, or just remember the question and find the answer and blog about it afterwards. Personally I think that bluffing is not an option – I don't recommend you choose this strategy.

Mobile Phones

You also need to consider in advance what you will do when mobile phones go off during the session. There are several options. The simplest is that you can just ignore it. Another is to handle it with a joke. I used to take this approach when mobile phones were relatively new and people used to get quite upset when they went off during a presentation. So I set up a "true story" where the best developers would leave their phones switched off, the good developers would set them to vibrate and the code monkeys would leave them switched on. When the phone rings it was a simple set up to identify the code monkey. Afterwards you could see people checking that they had switched off their phones. There is an important lesson to be learnt here and it was made in the previous section when referring to difficult audience members: you are the host of a party. You can make a joke providing it is in good humour and any individual finds the joke funny too. It is not funny if you make someone the butt of a joke. This is not something that a good host would do.

Ending The Presentation

In most cases you need to ensure that you end your presentation on time. This is absolutely essential if you are the session immediately before lunch or the last session of the day. People will mark you down on your evaluation forms if you have kept them from their food or if you have made them late for a train. You also need to be aware that another speaker may be following on from you and they have to get setup and you should not eat into their setup time because their presentation is very important to them.

When the presentation is over attendees will come up to you and want to ask questions. I enjoy this part because people ask really interesting questions about scenarios that I have not always thought of. You should bear in mind though that you need to be packing up and moving away so that the next speaker can get started.

When the session is finally over you need to get your feedback forms and read them. If they are written on paper then stop the person who is collecting them before they are handed into the admin team. If they are online then you can read them any time. Either way, read them, learn and adapt your presentation or style so that the next time is even better.

Resources

Here are a few resources that you mind find helpful:-

> 8 videos on "How To Give Great Presentations" – The information in this document is available in separate videos that I have recorded for User Group Support Services (https://www.technicalcommunity.com). At the time of writing these have not been published but you can expect these to be available in the latter half of 2010.

> Brain Rules by John Medina (http://www.brainrulesbook.com/) – This is probably the best book you will ever read on any subject regardless of how relevant it is to giving presentations. John Medina describes 10 brain rules backed by significant research and his lifetime's work as a developmental molecular biologist.

> The Ten Worst Presentation Moments (http://www.microsoft.com/uk/atwork/work/presentationdisasters.mspx) – Microsoft compiled a list of presentation disasters (there's even one from me in there). If your presentation is a complete disaster then read this and be reassured that someone else has had worse.

> Beyond Bullet Points, Cliff Atkinson, Microsoft Press – This book will help you with your mastery of PowerPoint and in building presentations.

> Guy Kawasaki, How to be a Demo God (http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2006/01/how_to_be_a_dem.html) – Guy Kawasaki gives some excellent advice on giving demos. In case you are not aware Guy Kawasaki **is** a demo god. He is an absolutely fantastic presenter. I saw him give his "Rules For Revolutionaries" talk in the Nineties and it was

an absolutely perfect presentation. I have witnessed just 3 people give absolutely flawless presentations and he was one of them.

Finally

Armed with the tips, tricks and strategies in this document you should be able to make your first attempt at a presentation. The secret of a successful presentation is to know your subject, know your materials and know how to present. You need to be yourself. By all means learn from other speakers and steal their tricks but the presentation has to come from you. Above all remember that you are giving your best presentation when you are being yourself and telling people things that are important to you.

About The Author

Guy is an MVP in ASP.NET. He is the author of ".NET Internationalization" published by Addison-Wesley (http://www.dotneti18n.com). He is a Microsoft Certified Professional developer, author, trainer and speaker, has spoken at many European and US conferences and is an INETA Speaker. He runs The .NET Developer Network (http://www.dotnetdevnet.com), a free .NET user group in the South West of England. He co-organises DDD South West (http://www.dddsouthwest.com), a free one day technical event in the South West of England. He has written over 50 articles for numerous magazines and has co-authored an application development book. You can read his blog at http://www.guysmithferrier.com and catch him on Twitter at @GuySmithFerrier.