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# MMAIP Experience

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Mid-Michigan Association of Insurance Professionals  
Serving Bay, Midland, Saginaw, and Genesee Counties  
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## Message from the President

By Jaime Millikin, AIS, CPIW - Countryside Insurance Agency

Greetings members,

There have been many challenges facing each local associations and MMAIP is no exception. We all have busy careers and family lives however; as members we each have a responsibility to see our local association grow through leadership, membership, and teamwork through communication. Several proposals have been introduced at the Council level to help accomplish these tasks a little easier.

First, the Public Relations committee has proposed an interactive reporting form to be submitted by each association so the committee can compile a yearly list of accomplishments by membership to be released to media sources & industry employers statewide. This will help to solidify the efforts of each local and achieve **Industry Recognition, Business Recognition, Educational Recognition, & Employer Recognition & Support.**

Next, the Membership committee for the 2009-2010 term proposed the "Membership Madness" tournament to have each local association compete for a year worth of comped meetings for the winner of the tournament. This should help to grow membership for all locals; I will keep you advised on the progress of both proposals in the future.

I would like to thank all members for their continuing support and commitment of our association and as the summer progresses please keep in mind our fundraising project in the works. Our casino trip should be a big draw. Thanks to all involved in the planning of the trip and also the planning and participation of the 2010 convention in Traverse City. Have a happy & safe spring & summer.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Jaime Millikin, AIS, CPIW**



*Beginning in 2008, the MMAIP Experience is published quarterly and is delivered by email. If you would like to receive the newsletter, just send an email to [MMAIPinsurance@yahoo.com](mailto:MMAIPinsurance@yahoo.com) and ask to be added to our mailing list.*

### Mid-Michigan Association of Insurance Professionals

is a local association, affiliated with the National Association of Insurance Women (Int'l) Membership is open to men and women who are employed in the insurance industry or students pursuing an education in the field of insurance, risk management, or actuarial studies.

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## How Visual Aids Undermine Presentations

### \*\*\*\*\*Three Ways You May Be Boring Your Audience to Tears\*\*\*\*\*

by Mary Sandro

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How do you know you have a presentation? I posed this question to a sales team I was working with recently. One gentleman said, “If I win the business, I know I have a presentation.” To that excellent response I replied, “That’s how you know you have a good presentation. How do you know, before you even arrive at the prospect’s site, that you have a presentation?” Another gentleman offered, “Well if I have some PowerPoint slides that I can talk from, then I have a presentation.”

The belief that visual aids equal a presentation is a very common misconception. Visual aids are aids. They are not even necessary, usually. A presentation is the information, stories, statistics, quotes, and opinions that the presenter shares. Visual aids, if used, enhance the presenter’s message, not the other way around. Anytime visual aids become the presentation and the presenter becomes the aid, you will probably be boring your audience to tears. Below are three specific examples of how this happens.

#### Words, Words, Words

The visual aids are nothing but the presenter’s notes, which the presenter proceeds to read from the screen to the audience. Imagine you are sitting in an audience waiting for a presentation to begin. The presentation is scheduled for one hour. The presenter walks to the front of the room, clicks their clicker, and a large blue screen fills with a yellow, bulleted, run-on sentence that flies in from the left. For me, this is when dread sets in. Glaze is starting to form over my eyes. Fog is rolling in on my brain. The battle to stay alert and appear interested has begun and it intensifies with every bullet that appears.

When visual aids say as much or more than the presenter does, one of them is not necessary. Reading from wordy slides is not only boring, but also insulting to an intelligent audience. Many presentations I have suffered through would be more economical, less stressful, and better received as memos, special reports, or CDs that the audience could read individually on their own time. Unless the audience is taking notes, as in a training situation, wordy visual aids undermine a presentation. The point of a visual aid is to make the presentation more interesting not boring.

#### Tired Graphics

If your audience is thinking, “This is the 762nd time I’ve seen that piece of clipart.” your visual aids are undermining your presentation. Similarly, if your audience recognizes your visual aid background as one of the popular software templates, your visual aids are undermining your presentation. Graphics are the solution to the wordy visual aid problem discussed previously. However, freshness now becomes the issue. Ideally, all visual aids would consist of simple, powerful, interesting graphics. In reality, time and money may be constraints.

Let the nature of the presentation dictate how far you will go to secure fresh looking graphics. For high profile or high opportunity presentations, more time, money, and effort should be placed on creating visual aid graphics. My recommendation would be to have a graphic artist assist if talent is not available internally. Examples of high profile, high opportunity presentations include the unveiling of a new product or service and sales presentations.

#### Just Like Everybody Else

If your visual aids fall into either of the previous two categories, Wordy or Tired Graphics, present without them unless the audience needs to take notes. Because most presenters use wordy or tired visual aids, audiences are conditioned to become bored at the first sight of a bullet. A bulleted list is like a timepiece on a chain that sways in front of the eyes chanting, “Sleep...sleep...sleep” I have discovered that being contrarian and forgoing visual aids can actually make a presentation a huge success.

I was presenting to 120 salespeople at an annual conference. I was the only non-industry, soft-topic presenter on the multi-day program. I arrived early and attended the presentation before mine. There were two presenters standing on an elevated stage behind podiums with a huge screen centered between

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them. The room was darkened as the PowerPoint slides clicked by. I surveyed the salespeople. No one was jumping out of his or her seat with excitement.

My host asked if I had any visual aids. I had PowerPoint slides but claimed that I had none and that I would work from my handout. I asked them to turn all of the lights up and requested a wireless microphone. Just turning the lights on had a huge impact on the audience. I moved around freely and referred to the handout periodically so the salespeople would feel anchored and take notes. When the conference was finished, I was the highest rated presenter. They invited me to come back immediately for the next year.

### **Summing Up**

Visual aids are powerful. They can be the icing on your cake or the rain on your parade. To ensure visual aids are not undermining your presentation, use words sparingly and find fresh graphics. Even have the courage to present without, if your visual aids are not truly aiding you.

## **Seven Deadly Sins of Leadership**

By Peter Lucash  
Wednesday, March 28 2007

Much is written about leadership, as though it is purely a skill to be taught and a task to implement. The reality is much more complex. As a leader of your business, this excellent short article from Profiles International is a good lesson and reminder for us all.

The seven deadly sins:

1. Assuming that your employees know the company's objectives and purpose
2. Approaching selection and hiring in haphazard manner
3. Assuming that your people are trained
4. Failing to evaluate and measure
5. Failing to provide appropriate feedback
6. Assuming that you are doing a good job and that your customers are happy
7. Not marketing (failure to understand the relationship between marketing and sales).

And, as if seven deadly leadership sins were not enough, we will leave you with a "bonus."

8. Treating employees as a commodity.

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I'll add a twist to this: treat employees appropriately and in a businesslike manner. I've witnessed physicians who viewed their staff with near disdain - an annoyance and an expense item. I've seen others who live in fear that one will leave, and shower them with cash bonuses and gifts in excess of what is reasonable and the practice can afford. Pay is only a part of what keeps an employee happy and motivated. Your time and money would be better spent on training, on involving employees in the overall strategy and goals of the practice, and in the care of patients. (We've blogged on this recently in "Physician as hero.") By taking on pre-visit tasks, you will have more time to interview your patients, review the plan of care, and to examine and teach your patients. A well-trained staff, engaged with your patients and you, are your best way to leverage your time and skills.

Turn to your practice administrator or office manager to assess the staff and plan the training. Have them start with a six month training plan. For referral dependent practices, you may want to consider joint training with the staffs from your referring physicians, so that they, too, can identify and make better referrals.

A leader can never assume that the desired behaviors and knowledge are in place in their organization. Part of the role is to ask questions, follow up, inspect and assess how the individuals and the organization are achieving their mission and overall goals. Turning the sins into good deeds - good management - is the task of a good leader.

## **The Impact Newsletter**

### **The Contact Center Manager's Guide to Listening**

One of the best things you can do for your agents, your customers, your colleagues, and yourself is to learn to be a good listener. It's a rare and valuable skill in any situation but the ability and willingness to be a good listener are particularly helpful for anyone in a management position. Learning to actively and carefully listen can radically transform your relationships, your productivity, and your effectiveness as a leader.

Following are some tips for helping you to become a good listener.

**Focus.** When someone is speaking to you, either in person or on the phone, focus your attention on the conversation. Don't do other things at the same time, don't look away, and don't take another phone call. If you're communicating face to face, look the person the eye, turn your body forward, and maintain a relaxed but attentive countenance. By focusing your attention, you'll not only absorb the message more fully, but you'll also increase the other person's confidence that you really are listening attentively.

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**Listen for key information and key feelings.** Good listening is a function of the ears, the mind, and the heart. Of course you should listen for the important details of what the person is saying, but it's also essential to listen to how it's being said. Every time agents speak to you, they're giving you clues about their state of mind, degree of urgency, communication style, and attitude. This can provide you with valuable insights about how to respond for the best results.

**Let the other person finish speaking.** When having a discussion with someone, always let the other person finish speaking before you respond. Don't interrupt, don't rush the person, and don't start thinking of what you're going to say until the other person is finished speaking.

**Pause before you respond.** Once the other person has finished speaking, pause for a few seconds before you respond. This allows the message to sink in, gives you time to formulate your response, and shows the other person that you're actively listening to what he or she has to say. You might be surprised at what happens when you do this—most people are shocked to discover someone listening with such patience and attentiveness.

**Show your support.** Whenever it's called for, empathize with your agents and show your support for them. Even if you don't fully agree with what they say, it's important to make sure that they feel they've been heard. Showing that you care and understand will help you to maintain a good relationship with the people you manage. Here are a few lead-ins to empathy statements:

“I can appreciate . . .”

“I understand . . .”

“I know what you mean . . . “

“I don't blame you for being upset about that . . . “

**Confirm your understanding.** If what the other person is saying to you is at all complex or lengthy, confirm your understanding of what he or she has said. To do this, you can verbally summarize the main points of what you've heard and then ask if your understanding is correct. Confirming is important not only because it shows you're paying attention, but also because it gives the person an opportunity to hear his or her statement echoed. This gives the person an opportunity to correct you if the information is not accurate.

## MMAIP Leaders

<b>President</b>	Jaime Millikin Countryside Insurance Agency
<b>Vice President</b>	Dorita Beal Meadowbrook Insurance
<b>Secretary</b>	Dorita Beal Meadowbrook Insurance
<b>Treasurer &amp; Membership Chair</b>	Sandy Pope AAA of Michigan
<b>Fund-Raising &amp; Legislative Chair</b>	Tara Weber Mid-Valley Insurance

**\*\*\*\*all association activities and forms are  
posted on our webpage\*\*\*\***

**MMAIP.org**