



Jim Endicott

# Hyperlinks are the key to more flexibility and flair

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Those of you who read Tom Clancy's books have probably grown accustomed to his unique writing style. All of Clancy's novels juggle multiple plot lines, with characters and situations zinging around like sniper fire. Often you have to take it on faith that it's all somehow connected. But if you can make it through 700 pages, the story elements always elegantly converge.

If you've sat through many business presentations in your lifetime, you've most likely been subjected to a similar experience. But, while a bit of confusion can be interesting in a novel, it can be the kiss of death in a presentation. Sorting through multiple themes and plots in a presentation requires work on the audience's part. But the level of detail required to sufficiently educate some in the audience bores others to silent desperation.

How do you tread that middle ground? The answer: flexibility and interaction.

Traditional linear presentations consisting of 35mm slides or overhead transparencies aren't exactly ideal for spontaneity or elaboration. But today's electronic presentations have opened up a new range of presenting possibilities, particularly in the arenas of flexibility and audience interaction. CDs, video, sound and hyperlinks are just a few of the interactive tools at your disposal.

But before we can talk much about how to create interactivity in your presentation, we need to ask an even more fundamental question: Why?

If you are considering making the leap to interactivity, here are some important questions you should ask yourself:

■ **Who is the audience and in what areas are they inclined to**

**want additional detail or demonstration?**

■ **Am I prepared to create a level of audience interaction that would allow them to redirect and perhaps dictate the flow of the presentation?**

■ **How will I represent my navigation options? Do I want the audience to see them?**

■ **Do I have a good enough grasp of the content to feel comfortable making interactive jumps?**

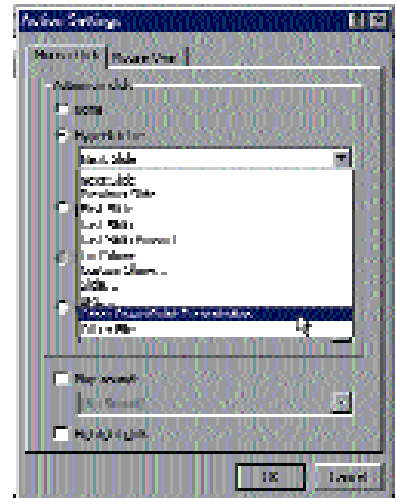
■ **What kinds of examples could I incorporate into the presentation (at my discretion) that would underscore my point?**

Like a master magician, a well-rehearsed orchestration of interactive elements can leave audiences spellbound. But as soon as a link doesn't do what it's supposed to, the cloak of seamlessness disappears, exposing our technology and methods. It's part of the risk we take to hone our presenting skills. I prepare for these types of presentations by knowing where such calamities can occur and being ready to take my audience "behind the presentation curtain," if necessary, to turn the unfortunate moment into an educational opportunity.

Now that we've discussed *why*, it's time to take a look at *how*.

## Linking to deeper levels of content

Often there is value in anticipating when and where audiences will want deeper insight into our conclusions. For example, in a senior staff meeting we may want to deliver a summary presentation but create hyperlinks to several minipresentations that explain certain details in greater depth.



Using the ACTION SETTINGS option in PowerPoint, you can easily create a hyperlink to other PowerPoint presentations or other individual slides.

## IN POWERPOINT 97:

### Using text to trigger a link

Highlight some key words in a bullet slide that you want to link to additional information. Your audience will only see the emphasis, but you know it's a link.

**Step 1:** Highlight the text that will create the link to another minipresentation. Once highlighted, right-mouse-click on the highlighted text and select the ACTION SETTINGS option. Next, select the radio button HYPERLINK TO and select the "other PowerPoint Presentation" choice.

**Step 2:** Navigate to the presentation you want to make available. You don't have to go to Slide No. 1. You can jump in anywhere. Remember, however, that this is a link, not an embedded presentation. If you move your primary presentation to another computer, make sure this presentation goes with it in the same folder. (See PowerPoint's Pack & Go feature.)



**Step 3:** In Slide Show mode your audience will see an underlined piece of text. If you roll your cursor over it, it will show a hand that's your clue to a link. Don't feel compelled to go there unless you need to.

Caution: On "ESC"ing from the second presentation or simply exiting after the last slide, PowerPoint 97 will return you to your primary presentation. Practice this. From time to time I find I've returned outside of the Slide Show mode and sometimes not to the frame I jumped from. Anticipate by rehearsing.

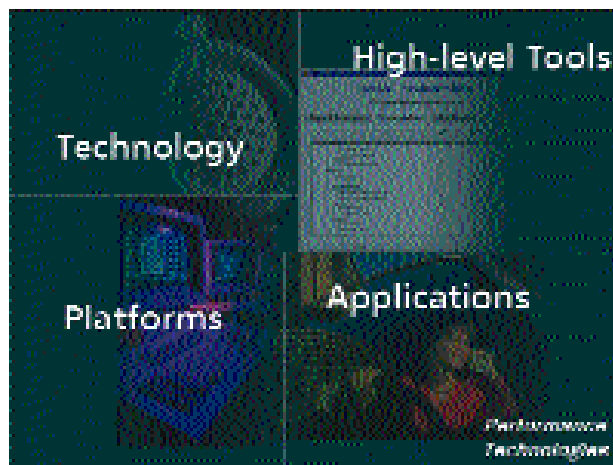
### Using objects to trigger a link

If you're providing examples to your audience from specific documents, here are some tips. For example, if you want to show the new sales presentation your team is working on or to jump to an Excel or Word document your audience may be interested in, try this:

**Step 1:** Go to the INSERT menu option and select the OBJECT option. You will be provided a list of OLE-supported (object linking and embedding) object types. Select the CREATE FROM FILE option and navigate to the specific document. (Avoid selecting DISPLAY AS ICON OR LINK.)

If you select a PowerPoint presentation, a thumbnail of the first slide will be placed in the original presentation, giving you a graphical representation of what you will be jumping to. This is also true of the Excel or Word objects. You will see a small version of the actual image and PowerPoint will know to launch the appropriate application. Understand, however, that you're actually embedding these files into PowerPoint and your file size will increase accordingly.

**Step 2:** To tell PowerPoint how to trigger the interactivity, right-mouse-click on the imported object and, once again, select the ACTION SETTING option. Choose the OBJECT ACTION option and choose OPEN or SHOW. EXIT the document to return to your original PowerPoint slide.



On this title screen, each section is linked to a separate slide or full PowerPoint slideshow. In the presentation, click on the subject you want to talk about, run through the linked slideshow, then hit ESC to return to the title screen.

### Leveraging external content resources

During some of my seminars, I like to contrast different presentation types without leaving the comfort of my PowerPoint presentation, so I create a jump to an existing interactive CD ROM-based interactive tool. Here's how:

**Step 1:** Run through the CD installation routine to create the program icon in Windows 95. Take note where the CD is installing the components that will reside on your hard disk. There will be an .exe file in that directory that will be the application that will send you to the CD-ROM-based content.

**Step 2:** Using any object in PowerPoint to act as the catalyst for the jump, right-mouse-click on the object and reveal the ACTION SETTINGS option and select the RUN PROGRAM option. It will prompt you to navigate to an .exe file. Select the .exe file discussed in Step 1.

**Step 3:** Make sure the CD is in your computer's CD drive. In PowerPoint's SLIDE SHOW mode you'll see the hand sign that indicates an interactive option. Clicking on the object will launch the program and send you to the CD content. Be aware that there are no back doors. It will send you to the very beginning of the CD content. Exiting the CD will bring you back to the slide from which you jumped.

### Jumping within the presentation

It's possible to set up jumps within the same PowerPoint presentation, but it becomes a less elegant form of interactivity. To prevent yourself from running into those same images later on, you'll need to create a PowerPoint Custom Show that omits those images.

**Step 1:** Create a Custom Show that omits the optional interactive slide content you may jump to during the presentation.

**Step 2:** Use the ACTION BUTTONS option in the SLIDE SHOW menu and create a jump to the first of those omitted slides. Be aware that you will need to place a hyperlink button on each of those slides or PowerPoint will bring you abruptly back after the next slide encountered that does not exist in the Custom Show path.

To be honest, I hope Tom Clancy doesn't change the way he writes. As much as it drives me crazy, it always creates an element of uniqueness and unpredictability that keep me engaged until the very end. I wonder if there's a message in there somewhere for us? ■