



Jim Endicott

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When fishing or presenting, it's best to use the right bait

Two activities I enjoy very much are fishing and giving presentations — maybe because they have so much in common. After all, the challenge of coaxing a large rainbow trout to bite isn't that much different from trying to connect with a late afternoon audience: You know they're there, but it can be almost impossible to get them to pay any attention, much less bite.

To both fish and present effectively, you also need to have — and know where to acquire — the proper resources. For instance, when I pass through Dillon, Mont., on my way to the Beaverhead River, I know where and how to get what I need — but it took some time to accumulate this knowledge. At the Sundowner Hotel, for instance, it is possible to negotiate a lower room rate depending on the number of cars in the parking lot. The Hitching Post is a great place to get a variety of sporting goods and equipment, but they're not likely to give an out-of-stater much useful fishing advice. And for nightcrawlers, I stop at the Town Pump on the way out of town.

Likewise, before I give a presentation I like to go fishing on the Internet for those little extras that reel an audience in. The Internet has great stuff for presenters. Some of it will cost you, but much of it is free for the taking if you know where to look — just download the file or print out the tip, and you're ready to roll. The challenge is integrating your finds into your presentation without making it look like you're filling time with a bunch of cheap tricks.

Animated clip art

Take clip art. Regular readers know I'm no great fan of static clip art in presentations, but on occasion I'll use *animated* clip art to illustrate a point in a fun way. For example, if I'm talking about fear of computers, I'll have a seemingly static piece of clip art with a man standing in front of a computer. After I make my point, a mouse click brings the computer to life; it picks up the man and shakes him. The point is made and we all have a good laugh.

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Most PC-based animated art is created in an AVI format and can be easily embedded by using the INSERT — MOVIE command in PowerPoint. Some are created to seamlessly loop every five or six seconds, which keeps the file size surprisingly small. To trigger and loop the animation, simply select the animated art (after inserting it) and go into the SLIDE SHOW — CUSTOM ANIMATION menu. Select a mouse click or automatic start, then select the PLAY SETTINGS tab. The MORE OPTIONS box will show you a LOOP UNTIL STOPPED option

that will keep the animation going until you're ready to move on. When your listeners believe it's static — but it's not — you've created just the level of unpredictability that audiences love.

Double your senses

Memory is triggered by more than just sight. The more senses you connect with during a presentation, the more your audience will remember — and sound clips are an easy way to double your sensory outlets. A good source for sound clips is The Daily .WAV (www.dailywav.com), an extensive gallery of complementary WAV and MIDI files, each of which typically takes only a few seconds to download.

After downloading these files you can use the INSERT — SOUND option, then SOUND FROM FILE to pull in the WAV file. After that, you can orchestrate the sound with your CUSTOM ANIMATIONS menu (under SLIDE SHOW). You can also append sound files to any existing animated element, including slide transitions. Daily .WAV's archives yield a ton of voices, including Barney Fife, Bart Simpson, Clark Gable and Hans Solo. Look for ones that can be leveraged to make your point in a lighthearted way.

A few examples:

Presenter (speaking to the audience): "I'd like to pose a question to you. How often does good information get lost in a poorly crafted presentation?" (Brief pause)

Hal (from "2001: A Space Odyssey"): "I really deserve an answer to that question."

Or:

Presenter: "A relationship with a computer can be a pretty personal thing. It knows all about us."



Scotty (from "Star Trek"): "Hello, computer."

Or:

Presenter: "I've worked in corporate America long enough to know that businesses can be as dysfunctional as families."

Charlton Heston (from "Planet of the Apes"), screaming: "It's a madhouse! A madhouse!"

Of course, these sorts of tricks might not work if you're presenting to the board of directors. But somewhere, sometime, you may want to lighten things up, and you might as well get some help. (I'm

still waiting for scratch-and-sniff presentations, but you can't rush progress.)

Fonts, photos and Web art

Maybe you're tired of plunking down good money for a CD-ROM of "practical multimedia images," only to discover that all they're practical for is your sixth-grader's book report. Check out ArtToday (www.arttoday.com) for what it advertises as a searchable library of 750,000 online images, stock photos, fonts and Web graphics, available for downloading for

\$29.95 per year. After downloading an image, the `INSERT PICTURE FROM FILE` command will bring the artwork into PowerPoint.

These guys offer quantity, but (from the stock photos I've seen) not necessarily quality — out of 750,000, you're bound to have some losers. The price and volume can't be beat, however, and they're adding 30,000 files monthly.

Tell me a story

To put all of this together into an effective presentation, you have to draw on other resources as well. Among them, you need to be able to tell a good story.

Check out the bulletin board at your local library and the next time a professional storyteller is in town, go. Watch the techniques storytellers use to engage an audience: inflection, eye contact, dramatic pauses, volume level. For a good article on the art of the storyteller, browse to www.seanet.com/~eldrbarry/roos/storytel.htm and take some notes. (This storytelling site's main page is at www.seanet.com/~eldrbarry.) One section of the article discusses how to select a good story: "If you aren't comfortable with a story or a set of funny lines, your material won't go over well." Ouch! Think about the last presentation you delivered where you had little or no passion for the topic. Think your audience noticed? Without a doubt.

These are just a few resources to check out. Finding the most useful online locations is an ongoing process, but it is time well spent. If you know where to look, you are much more likely to find that nugget of gold that makes your presentation memorable. My fishing trips to Montana became much more rewarding after I discovered what the little town of Dillon, Mont., had to offer.

Oh yeah: After a 90-degree day on the Beaverhead, stop at the Dairy Queen on the south side of Dillon for a root-beer float — they're the best in town. Once you find something that really meets a need, you never forget where you found it. ■

Fishing for resources

Here are some helpful, presenter-friendly Web sites to add to your favorites.

Dynamic Graphics Inc. (www.dgusa.com)

Looking for pictures to use in your next presentation? Subscribe and choose from over 5,000 royalty-free images.

Tucows (www.tucows.com)

No, this one's not sponsored by the National Dairy Association. Tucows is the world's No. 1 Internet software site. It carries more software choices than you can imagine, including a few that are free.

Modem Testing — 3 Com

(www.3com.com/56k/need4_56k/linetest.html)

Test your modem to determine if you're receiving optimum performance.

Microsoft PowerPoint (www.microsoft.com/powerpoint)

Visit here to download current versions of the PPT97 player file and other PowerPoint-related information.

PowerPoint Central

From inside PowerPoint 97, select tools — powerpoint central and your browser will then launch, download current files and display a PowerPoint-based resource presentation with hot links to free software online.

Midisoft (www.midisoft.com)

For more music, MIDIs and WAVs than you'd ever want to hear, check it out!

Presenters Online (www.presentersonline.com)

Epson sponsors this site, which is chock full of free clip art, templates, articles and other information for presenters. For an extra fee, you get access to even more material.

Presentations.com (www.presentations.com)

Maintained by *Presentations* magazine, this site features the latest creation and delivery techniques as well as product reviews and a fully searchable buyers guide to presentation products.