

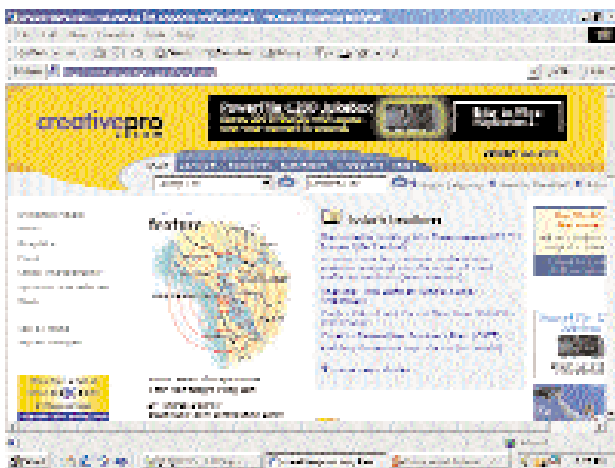
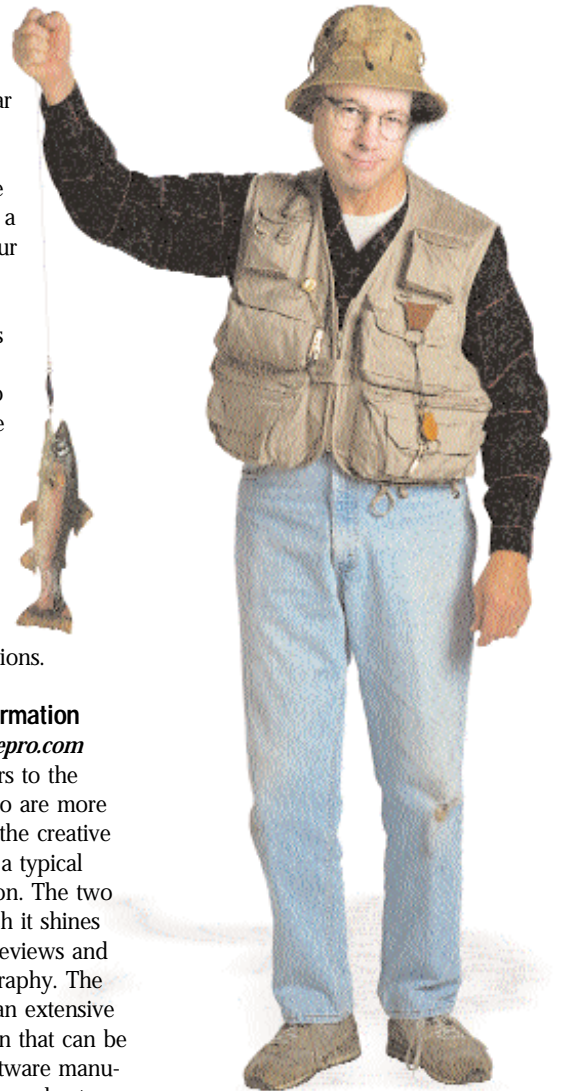


Jim Endicott is owner/manager of Distinction, a business communications company that provides creative and consulting support services for effective presentations. He can be reached at 503.554.1203, jim.endicott@distinction-services.com.

Fish on the Web for a stream of presentation information

Being an avid fisherman, I've always appreciated the advice of someone I pass on the river as I explore the backwaters of a trophy trout stream I haven't fished before. It's not that I wouldn't eventually find a good fishing hole or two, but on a big river it's nearly impossible to be productive on a rushed weekend trip. Some helpful direction is not just a nice thing, but often critical to a successful outing.

For those who are creating presentations on a semi-regular basis, trying to find good Internet-based resources to make the process a bit easier is a little like throwing your line into Lake Erie. Sooner or later you'll get a hit, but who has the time to wait? This month I would like to pass on some advice I've received from those who were kind enough to point me in some helpful directions.



At www.creativepro.com, you can find technology reviews and search seven stock photo agencies at once.



The www.dailywav.com site offers some MIDI musical gems.

General information www.creativepro.com

This site caters to the designers who are more immersed in the creative process than a typical businessperson. The two areas in which it shines are product reviews and stock photography. The site features an extensive review section that can be sorted by software manufacturer or general category. You'll also find great insights on a broad range of technology topics including digital cameras, professional MPEG resources and Adobe Photoshop techniques. With CreativePro's stock photography search engine you can scour the top seven online stock libraries with fast results. A general site search under "PowerPoint" will

reveal a surprising amount of content about how to integrate higher quality artwork into your PowerPoint presentations.

Other sites to check out for general information include www.1stopstock.com (an image site), www.zmax-dgs.com (for company logos), www.arttoday.com (fonts and images), www.presentationmaster.com (presenting resources and news) and www.powerpointers.com (presenting tips and articles.)



The Microsoft PowerPoint site holds how-to articles and troubleshooting tips, among other information.



Learn about the history and psychology of color usage at the www.colormatters.com site.

Sound libraries

www.dailywav.com

Looking for the voice of Captain Kirk or a vintage movie one-liner? It's here. Although these sound files aren't for every presentation, on some occasions, when you are developing a theme presentation, having Curly from the Three Stooges say, "I refuse to act that dopey" might be a fun transition. Granted, I certainly wouldn't use these in an executive staff meeting. And if you're looking for some MIDI music files, this site's library has some real gems.

Other sound sites include www.thefreesite.com (a search engine for other WAV file sites), www.wavcentral.com (sounds and effects from movies and commercials) and www.soundamerica.com (more sound files).

Software

www.download.com

Designed to let users purchase software online, this site also holds a vast library of free utilities and shareware. Among these free downloads, you can find some interesting ways to make presenting easier. Among them are programs to create a 360-degree interactive scene with photographs, clean JPEG files and remove unnecessary data, capture images, create diagrams quickly and easily, convert WAV files into MP3 files and vice versa. You'll also find current product reviews and newsletters with the latest demos, shareware and freebies.

www.microsoft.com/office/powerpoint

If you regularly use PowerPoint to create your presentations, this is a good site to have on hand. It holds a number of how-to articles that can answer a lot of questions. Want to save a PowerPoint 2000 file as a Web page? Or are you looking for instructions to run PowerPoint 2000 on two monitors? You can find out here. There are also troubleshooting tips and phone numbers to call, but be prepared to cough up a credit card number for the information. This site could have more depth, but it's still a useful resource.

Microsoft PowerPoint user newsgroup

If you've had your fill of corporate help lines, PowerPoint's online user newsgroup is a forum for asking those questions to

your peers all around the world. Here you'll discover a vast wealth of experience online and people very willing to help you with your tough problems. In Outlook or Outlook Express, search your Help file for "Newsgroups - adding an account" (microsoft.public.powerpoint).

Other helpful sites

www.colormatters.com

Find a history of color usage here, with a comprehensive treatment on the psychology of color usage, color and the brain, color in design and color and computers.

www.effectivemeetings.com

The site offers insight into the dynamics of creating a meeting, relational issues and planning. A backlog of retrievable archives provides dozens of relevant articles to help keep your next meeting on track.

www.seanet.com/~eldrbarry/roos/storytel.htm

Despite its lack of graphics, this site provides a striking correlation between the art of storytelling and the art of presenting.

www.designsense-cd.com

This site promotes a CD-ROM but is worth a visit, because it provides the basics of good design. Learn the rule of thirds for layout, the psychology of font selection and how to choose good colors.

This may seem like a long list, but I've only skimmed the surface of what's out there. Maybe you have a site or two that you always find helpful in a pinch. If so, drop me an e-mail at greatsites@distinction-services.com. I will be sure to share them with the regular readers of this column. After all, the Web is a pretty big place to explore. But with the help of those who've found a few trustworthy holes of inspiration "on the river," we can all become better presenters. Cast away!