

## *PowerPoint® Presentations Compatibility Be Prepared for Surprises*

### **Basic Rules for Presenting Yesterday's PowerPoint Presentations With Today's Software**

**BY ROBERT FEATHERLY, ADAM WIRTZFELD & ADAM BLOOMBERG**



*Robert Featherly is a visual communications director based in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has spent 25 years developing research based demonstrative exhibits for trial teams, corporations and municipalities across the country. He has written several articles and conducted multiple CLE presentations on effective visual communications. You can read more about Mr. Featherly at [www.litigationinsights.com](http://www.litigationinsights.com)*

*Adam Wirtzfeld is a legal graphics production manager based in St. Paul Minnesota. Adam has spent 13 years as a graphics consultant, helping trial teams translate their themes into effective visual presentations. He has also authored and provided multiple CLE PowerPoint® workshops for attorneys. You can read more about Mr. Wirtzfeld at [www.litigationinsights.com](http://www.litigationinsights.com)*

*Adam Bloomberg is a trial technology director based in Dallas, Texas. With 17 years of in-court trial support experience, Adam has developed and led trial and war room technology efforts for major litigation coast-to-coast. A frequent speaker at legal professional meetings and seminars he has also provides hands-on PowerPoint® and TrialDirector training seminars for attorneys and legal support staff. You can read more about Mr. Bloomberg at [www.litigationinsights.com](http://www.litigationinsights.com)*

Microsoft's PowerPoint® (PPT) has become the ubiquitous legal presentation software over the years due to its flexibility, reliability and ease of use by nearly everyone in this profession. And, with millions of presentations residing on millions of computers around the world, it will continue to be the top presentation program for the foreseeable future. Over the years this software has been updated and in general, improved. However, in the updating process, some compatibility issues have surfaced that can surprise and disappoint, if we are unaware.

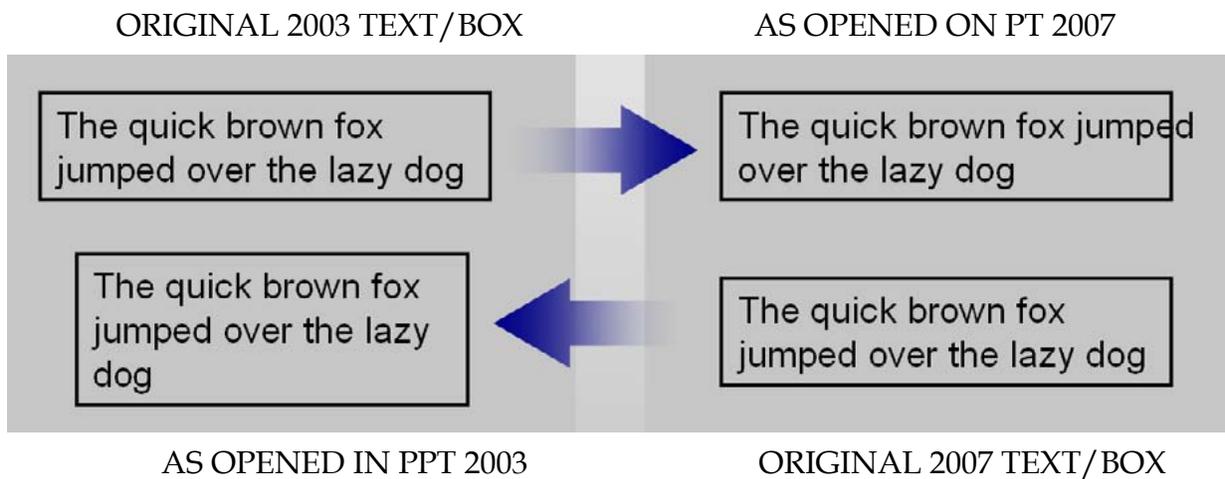
One fine thing about Microsoft software, particularly the MS Office package, has been its backward and forward compatibility between various versions. Files could be reliably updated, saved, and presented from the various versions of the software. Well, that party's over, for PowerPoint presentations at least.

As the newer versions of MS Office (2007 & 2010) have been released with their expanded and updated features, incompatibility issues with archived files produced on different Office versions have arisen. PowerPoint has been particularly afflicted. Today, it is very important to become aware of your presentation's native PPT production version.

The vast majority of today's presentations have been created in PowerPoint version 2003, 2007 or 2010. If your presentation will be edited on or transferred to another computer, it is most important to learn in advance, what PPT version is resident on that machine. If that PPT version is different from the native version of your presentation... you may be in for some surprises.

More and more these days we hear from clients who when reviewing an old PPT presentation on a new computer, are surprised to suddenly discover...

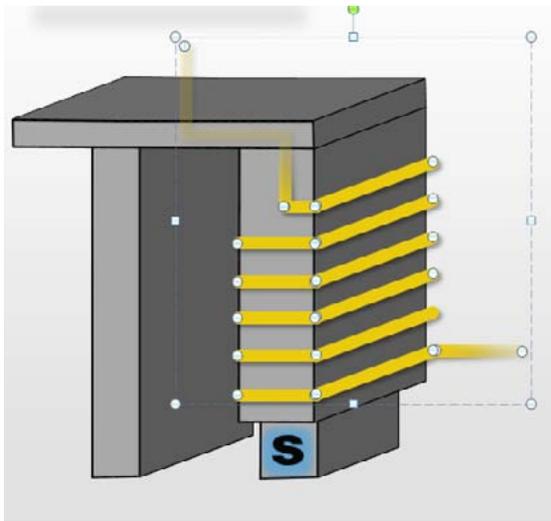
**Text inside text boxes wrapping differently in different versions**



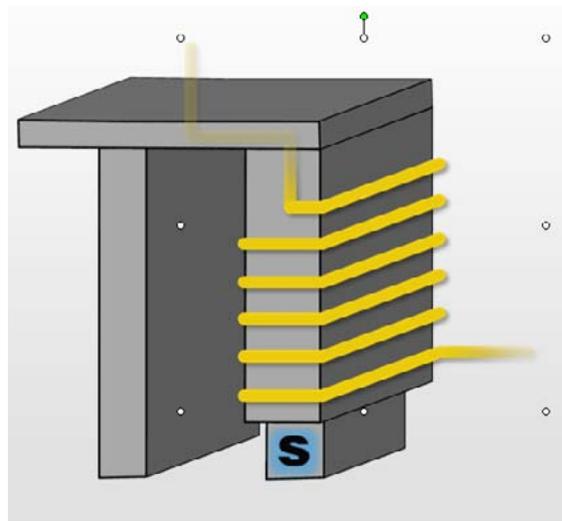
Text shadows appearing on a slide long before that bullet point copy is revealed...



- That certain objects have suddenly become un-editable...



Editable image (note blue dots)



Un-editable image

...along with several other presentation surprises you have probably never before encountered. Also, newer media file formats, image effects, Smart Art and some formatting capabilities may not translate when launched in earlier PPT versions.

These problems were relatively rare until this past year, when people began their 3-5 year cycles of purchasing new computers with, of course, updated software. Suddenly 2003/2007 PPT incompatibilities began piling up. Now, MS Office 2010 is providing more surprises.

Employing the Microsoft Compatibility Mode does a decent job of trying to smooth over these issues between program versions. There are, however, limitations to what it can accomplish.

*Here are some Basic Rules to avoid these presentation problems:*

1 - **Know What PPT Version Produced your Presentation... 2003, 2007 or 2010?** If you don't know, ask. Or check your file name, looking for one of these icons:



PowerPoint 2003



PowerPoint 2007



PowerPoint 2010

Remember: The file creation date only indicates the date the file was saved, not the PPT version it was created in.

2 - **Don't Switch Horses. Attempt to show the presentation from a computer loaded with the presentation's native PPT software version.** Again, know whether your presentation was produced on PPT '03, 07, or '10.

- **Apple Computers and iPads for Presentations.** More compatibility problems can surface when Apple computers are involved. Fortunately, 95+% of our clients are using PC based computers.

However, with the current popularity of the iPhones and iPads, these cross-platform presentation problems are becoming more common. If your presentation includes Adobe Flash® graphics and animations, they will not run at all on some Apple devices, including iPads. Solution: Test well in advance of your presentation.

**3 – Don’t Switch Horses II. Avoid editing a presentation with different versions of PPT software.** Although patches in the last 6 months have improved this a bit, editing a presentation in multiple versions of PowerPoint is a gamble. This is probably the riskiest road to a reliable presentation and one that can keep you up into the late hours, waking your IT people and inventing new names for Microsoft, Bill Gates and anything produced in Seattle.

**4 – Load PPT 2003, 2007 and 2010 on Your Laptop.** This may sound silly, but your IT department probably has these software disks and can easily install them on your laptop. If you frequently use old presentations or import them from other sources, THIS IS THE BEST INSURANCE AGAINST SURPRISES. And remember, to saddle the correct presentation horse before each presentation.

**5 – ALWAYS PROOF A PRESENTATION on the presentation computer.** Simply handing that jump drive or disk of your presentation to the program chairman can produce big surprises during your show... along with more appropriate gestures to Microsoft.

*So, what can you do when cornered?*

If you must edit and/or present a PPT with different software, here are some things to look for and solutions to get you by:

- On text shadows, make sure and use “text effects” rather than “shape effects”. This may sound obvious, but especially in earlier version of PowerPoint, the distinction between the two was unclear and there were no real problems with using them interchangeably.
- Avoid using gradients (blends from one color to another) – if you need to use them, be aware you may have to rebuild them if the presentation finds its way into another version of PowerPoint.
- Be wary of text boxes where word flow is really important. If you can, keep text shapes as transparent shapes with no fill or outline, just text. If you want to put text within a shape or on a callout box or something, make that a separate object and group them. It’s not guaranteed to work, but will lessen the likelihood of surprises.

*SOME GOOD PRESENTATION TIPS (for all PPT Versions ☺)*

**1 - Windows Key + P = Shortcut to Projector Linking:** Pushing the **Windows** key along with the **P** key will open the options (below) for linking to a projector or external monitor.



2 - **F5 Shortcut to Presentation Mode:** Simply hitting



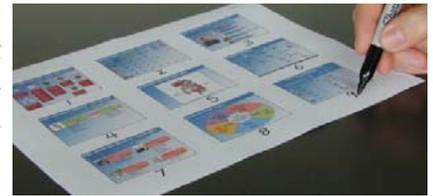
while in the PPT Edit Mode will

instantly launch the Slide Show mode from Slide #1.

3 - **Shift + F5 Shortcut to Presentation Mode:** From any slide within the presentation... holding down the Shift key and pressing F5 will launch the Show Mode from any slide you have highlighted in the Edit Mode.



4 - **Instantly Select any Slide While in Slide Show Mode:** First, create and print a set of thumbnail images of your slides. To do so, select Handouts in your print menu. Then select 9 Slides per Page. Print the images out and then with a wide felt tip pen, mark the correct slide number under each image.

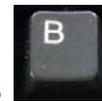


When someone asks about a previous slide... first note your current slide number (circle it?) Then locate the desired slide, select that number on your keyboard and hit ENTER.

*EXAMPLE: To recall slide #24:*



5 - **To Temporarily Turn Off the Projected Image:** Simply hit the B



key and the screen will go black. This is a great tool to move the attention from the slide back to you. Hit B again and the same slide will instantly reappear. This tip can be used any time while in the Slide Show mode.

### *Conclusions and Thinking Ahead*

We will continue to use PowerPoint in support of our litigation, business development and internal communications for many years to come. But we can no longer assume these presentations will be successfully showcased on other computers. To be safe, **always proof your presentation** on the presenting computer. Try to learn in advance what PPT version might be used to offer your presentation. And when sending a presentation off to a client or colleague, state the native PPT version clearly in cover memos...or on that jump drive or CD.

*Happy Presenting!*