

COMMUNICATOR BOOK REVIEW

REVIEW OF FIVE STEPS TO CONQUER 'DEATH BY POWERPOINT'

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BY ERIC BERGMAN, APR, ABC, IABC MASTER COMMUNICATOR

Eric Bergman, ABC, APR, MC did not invent the phrase 'Death by PowerPoint.' But his new book identifies several inventive ways to avoid inflicting this awful punishment on your audience, your clients and yourself.

As Eric notes early on, "PowerPoint is not the problem. PowerPoint is not flawed... The problem lies with assumptions underlying its use. Those assumptions are moving us further and further away from conversational exchanges when people get together."

Eric argues we need to re-examine the idea "that slides are actually necessary or desirable in the first place." His list of 10 assumptions about PowerPoint that frustrate communicators' efforts to create conversations with audiences include: "My Slides Are My Notes"; "It Saves Time"; "They Can Share the Presentation With Others"; "Everyone Uses it"; and "It's Expected."

That's the first 30 or so pages. The rest explores more effective techniques one can use when planning and then delivering a presentation.

What Eric stresses is to begin by thinking through your audience's needs. He then shows you how to structure a conversation around those needs that "minimizes visual aids," conveys "your message and personality" and has you "answer questions throughout."

I pressed Eric to share a bit more about the role of questions in engaging with an audience. "The best conversationalists are those who listen more than they talk," he said. "There is no better way to demonstrate effective listening skills than to answer dozens of questions from the audience, whether one-on-one or a group of one hundred or more."

Eric's free workbook www.fivestepstoconquer.com/workbook.html and blog <http://www.fivestepstoconquer.com/blog/blog.html> will help communicators save time developing presentation content.

"If I could flip a switch and get people to change one behaviour," he says, "it would be to never develop

presentation content while sitting at PowerPoint, or any slideware program. If we could change that one behaviour, presentations worldwide would immediately improve."

The book ends with a call to audiences to stop simply enduring run-of-the-mill PowerPoint presentations that inhibit, rather than spark conversations.

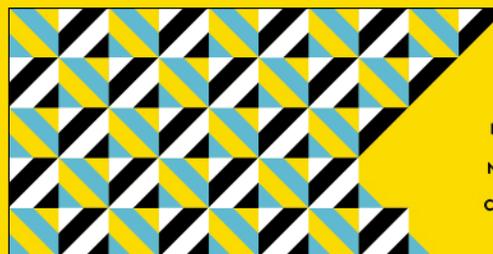
Eric explains his message to audiences as follows: "as audience members, we have to stop enabling the behaviour that leads to 'Death by PowerPoint.' We have to let presenters know up front that walking through a deck—page-by-page or slide-by-slide—is not really good enough. We expect a two-way, interactive conversation that makes best use of our time. Until audiences learn to demand more, presentations will never improve."

For diagnosing the problem with some all-too-common assumptions about PowerPoint, Eric Bergman deserves our thanks. For providing an elegant five-step solution, he deserves our praise.



Neil Hrab has been an IABC Toronto Chapter member since 2008.

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