Presentations: Should I use visual aids?

Visual aids have the potential to enhance your message, but they can also ruin your presentation if used inappropriately.

"The most important thing for you to know with any presentation is your material," says technical writing specialist Phillip Verwey.

The primary function of any visual aid is to assist you as the presenter. If you are preparing a presentation here are some things you should consider:

Use key phrases

Don't overload your slides. "If we wanted our audience to read the slides we might as well give them the book."

Extract key points, words or phrases from your talk and place them on your slides in a clear and simple way. "Remember the slide show is meant to be a visual aid, not the focus of the presentation."

Consider slide layout

"Make it easy for the reader." Make sure your slides correspond with your talk so that your audience won't have any difficulty following your presentation.

"Avoid excessive use of slide transitions and animations."

Limit punctuation

Avoid words that are written solely in capital letters as too much punctuation can be distracting. Use punctuation only to emphasise key points.

Avoid fancy fonts

You might be tempted to make the presentation look "pretty". But your primary goal is to create a presentation that is legible and easy to understand.

Add quality, not quantity

Before you include any visual aid to your presentation ask yourself if it adds value. If it does not, remove it.

"Present to address not to impress."

For more information on technical, presentation and writing courses, please contact Alusani Skills & Training Network® visit www.alusani.co.za, call 0114477470 or email faith@alusani.co.za.