

Animated Loops – A Pre- and Postpresentation Opportunity

Establishing and managing audience expectations. Setting and maintaining tone. Reinforcing takeaway thought(s). These worthy objectives should always be among the underpinnings of any presentation-development effort. Presenters often miss opportunities to help meet these objectives by failing to consider the use of pre- and postpresentation animated loops.

WHAT IS AN ANIMATED LOOP?

An animated loop is a set of slides that is formatted to transition without prompting, automatically restart at the first slide, and cycle continuously until manually stopped. When thoughtfully developed to complement a presentation, these loops can provide an opportunity for presenters begin communicating before the actual presentation and continue communicating after the presentation. Animated loops can be easily hyperlinked so the audience does not experience any visual disruptions from prepresentation loop to presentation to postpresentation loop –very elegant transitions from one to the next.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD I PUT INTO A LOOP?

The slide contents for loops depend on when the loop is played: before a presentation or after. The loops should complement the presentation: visually consistent, harmonizing tones, cohesive message. The following ideas are thought starters, but you can add your own content messages as appropriate.

Prepresentation Loops

Loops can help establish and manage audience expectations, establish the presenter's or company's credibility, set a light tone by supplying a cartoon or quip, set a serious tone by providing alarming statistical facts, inform the audience that there will be a Q&A period following the presentation, premier the talking points in the presentation, and so on. These slides should be developed so that no matter when a member of the audience looks at them, they understand the message. Messages should not be developed over several slides. Each message should be on its own slide.



Postpresentation Loops

These loops can reiterate the main point of the presentation, provide contact information, provide additional resources for further information, inform the audience about an informal discussion opportunity, promote a product associated with the presentation, and so on. Like the prepresentation loops, these slides should be developed so that no matter when a member of the audience looks at them, they understand the message. Messages should not be developed over several slides. Each message should be on its own slide.



WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES LEND THEMSELVES BEST TO LOOPS?

Presenters that do not follow or precede other presenters are most able to incorporate loops into their presentations. The loops can easily be set in motion in advance of the presentation and after the presentation, playing while audiences are assembling and disbanding.

Loops can also be played as a background during a questions and answers period.

HOW CAN I CREATE A LOOP?

Loops are created as separate documents that are hyperlinked to the main presentation. The hyperlinks prevent the audience from seeing a working screen when the prepresentation loop has ended and the presentation started or when the presentation has ended and the postpresentation loop is started. This is an important functionality and does much to promote a presenter's professionalism.

Create a Loop

1. Create the slides to be used as a loop just as you would any presentation. You can even add animated reveals on the slides if you format them to begin automatically.
2. In slide sorter mode, choose a slide transition design. There are many ways you can format the slides to advance. But just because there are many choices doesn't mean you should use many. Choose one style you like – one that is not jolting or jarring when viewed – and apply it to all of the slides in the loop.
3. Select a transition speed. This is the speed that slides transition from one to the next, not the amount of time they appear on the screen. The choices are slow, medium, or fast (no need to get fancy here by formatting customized transition speeds). Usually medium speed is a good choice: it's easy to view and doesn't waste a lot of time.
4. Format to advance the slide "Automatically after" **xx** seconds. The number of seconds you choose needs to allow the content to be read unhurriedly. Each slide should receive its own number of seconds based on the amount of content on the slide.
5. In the Slide Show drop-down menu, choose "Set Up Show" and click on "Loop continuously until 'Esc'."

Create Hyperlinks

6. On the first slide of the prepresentation loop, place an unobtrusive object: a semitransparent arrow in the bottom-right corner of the slide is a good choice. Make sure that the arrow is not terribly visible to the audience so they do not look for its significance or wonder what it is. Format the arrow so that it is hyperlinked to the presentation. This is done easily by right clicking on the arrow and selecting “Hyperlink” and selecting the presentation from the menu. If the loop you are working on is in the same folder as the presentation, the presentation choice will come up in the window automatically as a choice. Otherwise you will need to navigate to where the presentation resides in order to link it.
7. Copy this newly hyperlink-formatted semitransparent arrow to each page within the prepresentation loop. You need to be able to start the presentation from any page in this loop. When one of these arrows is clicked, the presentation comes up immediately onto the screen in slide show mode and the presentation begins.
8. Save the changes to the prepresentation loop and then save it again as a PowerPoint Show (either a pps or ppsx document). As a PowerPoint Show it will launch in slide show mode.
9. When the presentation has concluded, you’ll want to begin the postpresentation loop. On the last page of the presentation, place another unobtrusive object on the slide (another semitransparent arrow perhaps) and hyperlink it to the postpresentation loop, which has also been saved as a PowerPoint Show (a pps or ppsx document). This is important: be sure you hyperlink the presentation to the PowerPoint Show postpresentation loop, or it will have to be manually clicked into slide show mode.
10. You’ll also want to remember to format it to “Loop continuously until ‘Esc’.” The postpresentation loop will play until you stop it. The postpresentation loop does not need to have the hyperlinks in the lower-right corner of each page. When you want to end the show, just right click anywhere on the slide and select “End Show.”

TRAVELING WITH YOUR LOOPS

If you are going to be presenting on a computer that is not your own, you will need to format your hyperlinks so that they travel easily. Make sure all of your documents are in the same folder. Then before you begin to format each hyperlink, click on the **File** tab, select **Properties**, and click on **Summary** tab. Make sure that the **Hyperlink base** is empty. If it is not empty, remove what is there. Click **OK**.

Create your hyperlinks as usual, but be sure that there is no address string in the **Address** window on the **Insert Hyperlink** menu, just the name of the document you wish to hyperlink. Now the hyperlink will look for the document within the existing folder, and you will be able to run your loops easily anywhere you place them. ***This is important.*** be sure to test the hyperlinks by moving the file containing the hyperlinked documents into different areas on your computer and running the loops. If they work in every location, you've been successful at creating hyperlinks that will travel well.



The next time you have an opportunity to present in a situation that would allow for prepresentation and postpresentation loops, make some room in your presentation-production schedule to develop a thoughtful prequel and sequel to your presentation. They are easy to develop, format, and use in front of audiences.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

Each month we provide presentation-development best practices and guidelines in the feature article. You can also check out the tutorials for each PowerFramework. There are tips and tricks and usage recommendations in each one. If you do not find what you need, check Best Practices or FAQs. If you still don't see what you need, contact us with your non-time-sensitive questions, and we'll respond as quickly as we can.

This is the downloadable version of PowerFrameworks Feature Article for January 2007. Visit us at <http://www.powerframeworks.com> to learn more.