



Presentation Guide

How to Create a Great Conference Presentation

Quick Speaker Slide Checklist

Before submitting your presentation, confirm:

- Every slide has a clear purpose
- Font size is readable from the back of the room
- Text is concise
- Visuals support the message
- Charts are simplified
- Slide titles communicate key takeaways
- Content does not violate copyright, antitrust or other law or rule
- Presentation has been spell-checked
- Presentation has been rehearsed. Practice takes time but makes a noticeable difference.

PLMA Session Guide

Science-Backed Strategies for Audience Engagement & Retention

WeThe PLMA community works diligently to put together timely, valued content – we want to make sure that it stays with the audience. This document provides some background and some ideas to help ensure your session is memorable.

Part 1: Neuroscience

Passive Listening Does Not Work – Our brains were not designed to passively receive information. Cognitive neuroscience research consistently finds that uninterrupted lectures lead to rapid attention decline and poor information retention. You have worked to pull together your educational session, and you want the audience to remember it!

Key Finding: The 10-Minute Rule

Audience attention requires something to stimulate it roughly every 10 minutes. Engaging the audience with this in mind improves how receptive and attentive the audience remains.

Part 2: The Playbook

PLMA Slide Presentation Standards and Design Guide

Introduction

Our goal is to create an engaging and accessible learning experience for attendees. Presentations should emphasize visual storytelling, concise messaging, and readability from anywhere in the room. Slides should support your presentation—not serve as a script.

You are likely already an experienced presenter, but you will find some good reminders in this guide. Our goal is to help you create top-notch, memorable, and engaging content.

The Purpose of Presentation Slides

Slides should support the speaker—not serve as a script. Effective slides reinforce key messages, engage the audience visually, and make information easy to absorb from anywhere in the room.

When creating your presentation, focus on **clarity, simplicity, and visual storytelling**.

1. Design for Your Audience

Attendees should be able to understand your slides quickly and easily.

Ask Yourself:

- Can someone in the back row read this?
- Can someone understand the key point in 3 - 5 seconds?
- Does this slide support my message, or distract from it?

2. Keep Text to a Minimum

No one wants to read a book at a conference, and no one wants to hear a book be read to them.

PLMA Recommends:

Short headlines, concise bullet points, and focus on one idea per slide.

Example

The Grid Is Becoming More Flexible

- More distributed resources
- Greater customer participation
- Increased system complexity

3. Use Large, Readable Fonts

Element	Recommended Size
Slide Title	32–44 pt
Body Text	24–32 pt
Labels/Charts	20–24 pt minimum

Pro-Tip: If you need a font <24 pt, there is probably too much information on the slide.

4. Images Beat Text

People remember visuals far more effectively than text. PLMA recommends the use of:

- Photographs and illustrations
- Infographics and diagrams
- Icons and simple visual metaphors

Visual-First Slide Formula = One Image + One Message

5. One Idea Per Slide

Avoid combining multiple concepts into a single slide.

6. Simplify Charts and Graphs

Complex charts can cause the audience to disengage...or engage with their phones.

Ask: "What should the audience notice in five seconds?"

If that answer isn't obvious, simplify further.

7. Use Strong Slide Titles

Every slide title should communicate a takeaway.

Examples:

- Demand Response Participation Doubled in Five Years
- DER Adoption Is Accelerating Across Regions
- Flexibility Is Becoming a Competitive Advantage

The audience should understand the message before the speaker begins talking.

8. Tell a Story

This structure often resonates more than a collection of facts and data. The strongest conference presentations typically follow a simple narrative:

- What's the challenge?
- Why does it matter?
- What did you learn?
- What should attendees do differently?

A common and encouraged session format for PLMA events is to have a utility lay out their challenge or objective, the solution provider or partner shares what they did to overcome the challenge or achieve the objective, and the utility can then share future plans, or lessons learned.

9. Ensure Accessibility

Help your audience engage and understand. Consider that many audience members may have visual impairments or be viewing screens from difficult angles. Use the following:

- High color contrast
- Dark text on light backgrounds or vice versa
- Use captions when appropriate

10. Presentation Length

You need time for Q&A.

If your session is 60 minutes, ~15 to 20 minutes should be dedicated to questions, unless you are giving a Keynote.

It is better to end early than to run over Q&A, or the session end time.

In Summary

Tell your story. For every slide, strive for:

One Message + One Visual + One Takeaway

If attendees can grasp the point within five seconds of seeing the slide, you're on the right track.

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