That presentation you worked so hard on doesn't have to die. It can be reused in any number of other ways — as an autorun CD, QuickTime movie, e-mail presentation and much more.

Editor's Note: Techniques mentioned in this article work with most Windows and Macintosh versions of PowerPoint, although none of the third-party products discussed are available on the Mac platform. For a list of the products discussed, and links to their Web sites, visit www.presentations.com/ repurpose.)

Today, billions of electronic presentations inhabit millions of hard disks in every corner of the world, and more than 90 percent of these presentations were created with Microsoft PowerPoint. Unfortunately,

most have a short life span. Typically these presentations are used only once or twice, then filed and forgotten — an enormous waste of time and valuable information. Yet this content can be repurposed, redistributed and reused in a number of different ways.

Sure, some content is confidential and time-bound. But the majority of presentations contain information that isn't confidential at all — information that is relevant and consistent with an organization's goals over time, worth having more people inside and outside the organization know about, and capable of being reused or repurposed in other

ways, via e-mail or CD-ROM, in other presentations or software formats, as autorun presentations, even as screen savers.

Precisely how do you redistribute this content efficiently and easily? In typical Microsoft fashion, the answers aren't obvious — but they aren't tremendously complicated, either.

PowerPoint viewing for everyone

Making sure everyone can access the PowerPoint files you create is the first and most basic

requirement for redistributing them. As ubiquitous as PowerPoint is, not everyone has the program installed on their computer, and therein lies the problem.

Until the release of PowerPoint 97 for Windows, Microsoft included a free Viewer application that enabled anyone to see a PowerPoint slideshow. Microsoft has since neglected to update the Viewer, despite a reported flood of requests from users on Microsoft's wish-mail service (mswish@microsoft.com) begging it to do so. In practice, this means that anyone using the downloadable 97 Viewer to read PowerPoint files created in versions 2000 or above will have varying degrees of success, and sometimes none at all.

get the
most
out of your
PowerPoint

The Viewer

Despite these problems, the 97 Viewer is still the best option when e-mailing a basic PowerPoint presentation to a colleague who does not have PowerPoint installed. Just be sure to mention the link to the PowerPoint Viewer download. (At press time, the link is http://office.microsoft.com/downloads/2002/ppView97.aspx. A Viewer for the Macintosh is available at www.microsoft.com/mac/download/office98/powerpoint98viewer.asp.)

Specifically, the principal flaw of the Viewer is that it does not support new technologies introduced in the last few PowerPoint versions. These include new transitions and animations as well as support for animated GIFs and picture bullets.

Other than the Viewer, Microsoft also has the Pack and Go feature built within PowerPoint, which in essence archives the active presentation into a self-extracting executable file.

But even if the vintage 97 Viewer were updated, it might not provide a solution to everyone's problems. Nowadays it is common to hear requests to convert entire PowerPoint presentations into Flash, HTML, Java, PDFs, QuickTime movies, autorun CDs or other formats. Such demands have given birth to a whole industry of ancillary, third-party solutions,

a sampling of which we'll examine here.

Autorun CDs

An easy way to distribute a PowerPoint file as a handout or giveaway is to create an autorun-CD file. Even with the latest Windows XP version, this isn't possible using PowerPoint alone.

But there are a number of software programs that create autorun CDs from PowerPoint presentations. These programs typically place a copy of the PowerPoint Viewer on the CD. The principal limitation of CDs created by such programs is posed by the Viewer itself, which does not support some of the latest features found in PowerPoint 2000 and 2002.

The most popular of these autorun-creation programs is Sonia Coleman's Autorun CD Project Creator (www.aladat.com, $50). "A CD is ideal for distributing presentations large and small that target an audience with systems that do or do not have PowerPoint installed," says Coleman. "CD presentations can make heavy use of graphics, video and audio, as well as link to other document types, including Word, Excel, PDF and Web pages, and can seamlessly link to an unlimited number of other presentations."

Another such product is RunIt! (www.creativemindsinc.com/runit.htm, $29), created by *Presentations* columnists

Jennifer Rotondo and Claudyne Wilder. RunIt! is an easy way make an autorun CD out of a PowerPoint file.

HTML export

Another option for distributing a presentation widely is to post it on the Web via HTML code. Starting with PowerPoint 97, Microsoft has provided an option to create an HTML version of a PowerPoint presentation (FILE → SAVE AS A WEB PAGE). PowerPoint 2002 takes this a step further to create DHTML (dynamic HTML) output, which can better cope with such presentation niceties as animations and transitions. The conversion feature isn't perfect, though; the resulting code is rather rough, the files are relatively large, and some animations get lost anyway. And you'll need Microsoft Internet Explorer 5 or above to view the resulting presentations.

If you need clean or editable HTML output with more options than you can imagine, you might want to try a product called PPT2HTML, developed by Steve Rindsberg (www.rdpslides.com/pptools, $49). Rindsberg says his motivation for creating PPT2HTML was "to give the user total control over what appeared in the HTML, to make it

possible for the user to produce HTML that's compatible with any browser out there, or, if it's more appropriate for their needs, to produce HTML that fully exercises the abilities of a particular browser." PPT2HTML does just that, but to appreciate its full capabilities, of course, you also need to know a little about writing HTML.

As you can see, it is possible to repurpose PowerPoint files in a variety of ways.

Autorun CD Project Creator Pro lets you create autorun CDs from PowerPoint, Word, Excel and Adobe Acrobat files.

Creative Minds' RunIt! does one thing well — lets you create autorun PowerPoint CDs.

files BY GEETESH BAJAJ

Flash, Director, Java and SVG

In the past couple of years there has been a deluge of applications that convert PowerPoint content into the Flash SWF format. These include Presedia Express Communicator (www.presedia.com), PresentationPro PowerCONVERTER (www.presentationpro.com) and Wanadu iCreate (www.wanadu.com). These programs provide server-based or desktop-based solutions, or a combination of both technologies. Of all the solutions, Presedia creates the most faithful translations. Predictably, it also costs more than the others (starting at $15,000 for an ASP enterprise package), and is almost entirely server-based for subscribers only.

PowerCONVERTER, at $299, is the simplest of the lot and is supplemented by additional tools that allow distribution of such Web presentations through e-mail and the Web, and as autorun CDs. iCreate, the newest kid on the block, uses both desktop- and server-based tools to convert PowerPoint presentations to the Flash SWF format. An individual version is available for $995, and additional stations or enterprisewide capabilities are priced upward from there.

Macromedia Director (www.macromedia.com/software/director) users have a handy option available to them. PowerPoint presentations can be imported into Director for further edits and enhancements, but you must save your PowerPoint presentations to the version 4.0 format before Director can accept them. (This is only available in PowerPoint version 2000 and earlier; it's not available in PowerPoint 2002.) Thereafter, these Director movies can also be exported in Shockwave DCR format for online delivery.

Among the best distribution options available anywhere for PowerPoint presentations is Impatica for PowerPoint (www.impatica.com). The software converts PowerPoint slideshows into Java presentations that retain almost all transitions and animations — even background music and narration. Impatica's biggest drawback is that newer versions of Internet Explorer and Windows are not Java-equipped, but that limitation can be overcome by downloading Sun Microsystem's Java Virtual Machine (http://java.sun.comgetjava/download.html).

Streaming media and video

Another option is the ability to convert a PowerPoint presentation to a Web movie to stream over the Internet.

If you own the Mac version of PowerPoint 2001 (www.microsoft.com/mac/powerpointx), you can output your entire presentation as a QuickTime movie. This also works with a PowerPoint presentation created on Windows — just open it on a Mac and export it as QuickTime.

On the Windows side, Microsoft provides its free Producer add-in for PowerPoint 2002 (www.microsoft.com/office/powerpoint/producer/default.asp), which converts entire presentations — along with any other content such as images, audio and video — to rich-media Web presentations. Producer works only on
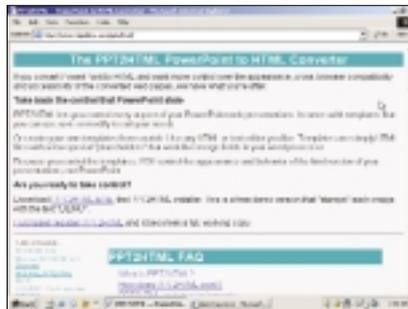
PPT2HTML lets you convert PowerPoint files for the Web and features editable HTML code.

Presedia can convert PowerPoint files into the Flash SWF format (trainers love it), but it's part of an enterprise package that starts at $15,000.

security options

Redistributing PowerPoint content is really only one side of the coin. The other side involves distributing content securely so that no one can steal or edit it. Many of us also want our presentations to be viewed in a specific sequence, without giving the viewer the option to jump around.

Although some distribution methods include features such as password protection, you might want to look at specialized security options for PowerPoint — both native and third-party.

Password protection has long been available for Microsoft Word and Excel documents. Since PowerPoint 2002, Microsoft has included a password-protection feature for PowerPoint presentations as well. Unfortunately, such protected presentations won't open in earlier versions of PowerPoint, even if you use the password.

A simple way to overcome this limitation is to archive an entire presentation using the file-compression program WinZip or a similar application that supports password-protected archives.

Other options

SecurePack (www.mvps.org/skp/securepack, $50) from Shyam Pillai is an add-in for PowerPoint that creates password-protected executables from presentations. SecurePack can create packages of one or multiple presentations into a single executable show that includes files linked from within the presentation.

PrezGuard Pro (www.aladat.com, $80) from Aladat is a similar product that provides a password-protection procedure for viewing and editing PowerPoint presentations.

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Windows 2000 and XP, but movies created with the program can be viewed on other Windows operating systems.

Another option is to "capture" a running presentation onscreen and save it in a movie format. Entire PowerPoint slideshows can be screen-captured using tools such as TechSmith's Camtasia Studio (www.camtasia.com, $349) and Hyperionics Technologies HyperCam (www.hyperionics.com/hc, $30) and saved in different movie formats or converted into streaming RealMedia or Windows Media content. They can also be converted to video CDs and DVDs that can be played on television screens.

Dataviz's Documents to Go for hand-held PDAs.

Impatica converts PowerPoint slideshows into animation-preserving Java.

Camtasia Studio lets you capture a running PowerPoint presentation to save it in different movie and streaming formats.

ScreenTime converts PowerPoint files into screen savers.

Portable Document Format files

Another way to get around the afore-mentioned PowerPoint Viewer problem is to convert your PowerPoint presentation to a PDF document, which can be read by anyone using Adobe's free Acrobat Reader, the closest thing the computing world has to a universal reader.

If you have Adobe's full Acrobat application installed on your computer, you'll find a convenient PDF icon within your PowerPoint interface that converts the active presentation into a PDF. The only problem is that the resulting PDFs are completely static

and devoid of any slide transitions, action buttons or interactivity. You'll even lose your hyperlinks. However, the newest version of Acrobat 5.0 does offer some improvements — hyperlinks and some transitions are now translated, but action settings still don't make it through the conversion.

If you want to use the PDF format but absolutely must retain those animations, a program called Prep4PDF (www.rdpslides.com/pptools, $89) from Reilly and Inc. might be just the ticket. Prep4PDF is not a PDF-creation tool in itself, but when you "print" to PDF via Prep4PDF, all your slide transitions, hyperlinks and action settings translate into the resulting PDF file. In addition, Prep4PDF provides extended control over cropping, document information and a host of other features.

Hand-helds and PDAs

Have you ever wished you could edit your PowerPoint presentation on your hand-held PC or PDA? Dataviz's Documents To Go (www.datavizonline.com/palm_powerpoint.htm, $69) includes a Slideshow To Go component, which allows you to synchronize, edit and rehearse your PowerPoint files and make last-minute changes to your presentation.

Also, if you have an older hand-held that runs Windows CE, you may be able to find a copy of Pocket PowerPoint included with the product. For some reason, Microsoft seems to have abandoned the development of Pocket PowerPoint for the PocketPC platform, so on the new PocketPC 2002 platform, you'll have to look to third-party software solutions such as CNetX's Pocket Slideshow (www.cnetx.com/slideshow, $20) and Conduits

Technologies' Pocket Slides (www.conduits.com/products/slides, $40).
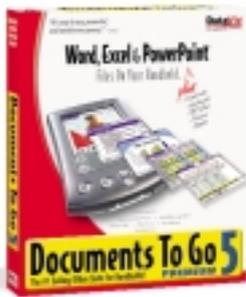
Finally, if you want to use your PDA to actually deliver your presentation through a projector, Margi's Presenter-To-Go (www.margi.com) is a great hardware solution for the Palm OS, PocketPC handhelds and Sony's Clié.
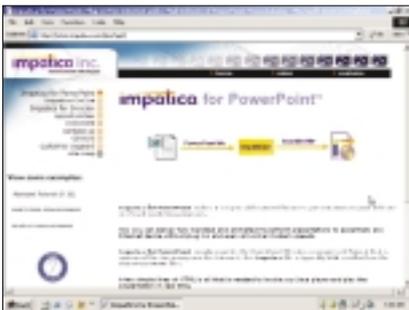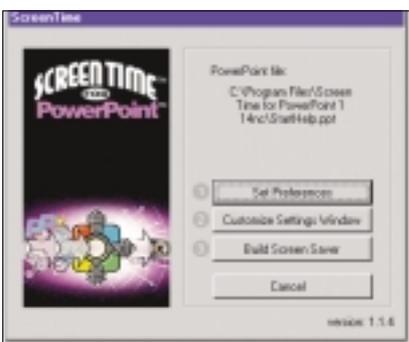
Slideshows and screen savers

Finally, what about that screen-saver idea? Well believe it or not, a clever way to repurpose PowerPoint presentations is as a screen saver — and you'd be surprised how many people use them. ScreenTime (www.screentime.com, $20) and ShowTime (www.alienzone.com, $49) are two popular programs for converting PowerPoint presentations into screen savers that can be distributed commercially. A screen saver could be a great marketing tool.

In truth, PowerPoint presentations can be repurposed in more ways than we can possibly cover in one article. A few of these ideas should help you get much more out of all the time and energy that went into creating those presentations in the first place. ⊡

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