

UnderstandIT

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MICROSOFT POWERPOINT – ANIMATION

Continuing our series of articles on some of the lesser-known components of Microsoft Office, this month we discuss how to add animation to a Powerpoint presentation.

Powerpoint is designed to produce professional looking presentations that can be used in almost any business situation. It has some powerful features that should impress. Adding animation can add a further dimension to your presentation, although beware – making a presentation too “busy” with animation, colour or using many different fonts can have a negative effect on your audience – try to be subtle when using these features.

However, it is very easy to add a little movement to a presentation, and the following will allow you to do just this. We will look at just two simple features – Slide Transitions and Slide Animations. The screenshots shown here are taken from Powerpoint 2003. Although these features are available in earlier versions of Powerpoint, they may look slightly different.

Slide Transitions

This feature allows you to specify the type of transition from one slide to the next. You will find Slide Transitions under the SLIDESHOW menu item, where you select SLIDE TRANSITION.



This produces a panel (see above) that allows you to select from any one of a large number of transitions – these can be a simple fade or “dissolve” from one slide to the next, or a more complex blind effect – there are many to choose from.

The speed at which the transition takes place can be modified (fast, medium or slow), and a sound can be added to the slide during transition. The sound facility must first have been installed on your computer and Powerpoint will offer to install the feature if it is not.

You can then decide how you want to move from one slide to the next. This can be manual, by clicking on the mouse, or automatically, in which case you need to specify the time delay (in minutes/seconds) before the show advances to the next slide.

Finally, you can apply these settings to all slides in your presentation if you wish, and then play just the one slide or the entire presentation, using the settings you have just applied.

Slide Animation

This feature allows you to animate the various objects on your slide – these objects can be blocks of text (with or without bullet marks or images etc.

There are a number of ways of applying animation to the objects on your slide(s). Using a built-in Animation Scheme is the easiest, since it applies the selected scheme to all textual elements on your slide (the Title and Body text) – it does not however apply them to other objects – images etc. Alternatively, you can apply a set of customised animations to each and every object on your slide. However, this naturally takes some time, since each object has to be selected individually, and the appropriate animation effect applied to it.

To select either of these two alternatives, Select either ANIMATION SCHEMES or CUSTOM ANIMATION from the SLIDESHOW menu item.

Animation Schemes

The panel that appears when you select this option is very similar to all other panels used in Powerpoint 2003 (there will be differences in earlier versions, and not all the options may be available). The built-in Animation Schemes are categorised as “Subtle”, “Moderate” or “Exciting”, depending on the required “mood” for the presentation. The effects that each produces are too numerous to describe here, but you can apply any of the schemes and judge whether it is appropriate for your needs. The effects only apply to the textual elements of the presentation slide. Once you have selected the scheme that you want, you can apply it to all slides at the click of one button. You then have the option to play the presentation to see the overall effect.

Custom Animation

This feature allows you to apply a range of effects to the text, graphic or sound elements of your presentation and vary timings and sequences etc. In the Custom Animation panel, a list of each element on the page is shown in a list form. Clicking once on each element produces a number of options for the effects that can be applied to that element – these include when the element appears, from which direction on the screen and the speed. In the case of sound elements (these can be applied using a number of sound format files that you insert into the page) – you can specify whether the sound plays once, or is “looped”, and whether it plays automatically, or when the mouse is clicked. Again, the permutations are extensive and too numerous to cover in this article. Experimentation can produce some interesting effects though!

If you require assistance in making your presentations more effective, please give Alan Finch a call on (01224) 697457.

WINDOWS XP – “BURNING” CDs

Many computers purchased now include a CD-drive that enables you to copy information from your computer’s hard disk and save it onto a CD. “Burning” describes the process of writing information on to the surface of a blank CD disk, using a small laser.

Before venturing to explain how Windows is used to create a CD disk, the following are just a few comments about the types of CD disks that are available. Blank CD disks come in two different formats – CD-R and CD-RW. The CD-R is a “write-once” format. You can write information to the disk, but then it cannot be deleted or the disk re-formatted. This is perhaps ideal if the information never changes and a permanent copy is what you require. CD-RW disks on the other hand can be written to, but can also be erased and further information written on it. This can be done repeatedly. The latter type of disk is naturally more expensive, but more flexible. Approximately 650 or 700Mb of information can be written to a CD-R or CD-RW disk, depending on which capacity disk you have purchased.

An ordinary CD-R disk drive can only **read** information contained on a CD disk. To **write** to a CD, you will need a CD-RW (CD Read-Write) disk drive (one that is capable of “burning” information onto a CD). CD-RW drives are usually supplied complete with a variety of different proprietary software utilities that enable you to “burn” CDs for different purposes.

Windows XP now also has built-in features to allow you to copy information onto CD in a similar manner to copying information to any conventional disk (computer hard disk, floppy or zip disks).

When copying or moving information from one disk to another in Windows, you would normally use MY COMPUTER or WINDOWS EXPLORER to highlight the information to copy or move and then using the COPY button and highlighting the disk or folder where you wish the information to go and using the PASTE button. Alternatively, you can highlight the information to be copied or moved and then drag and drop it onto the destination disk or folder.

To write information onto a CD-RW disk, you use exactly the same process, with a couple of additional steps. First, place the blank CD-RW disk into the CD-RW drive. In MY COMPUTER or WINDOWS EXPLORER, select (highlight) the information to be placed on the CD-RW disk, hit COPY. Then place the cursor on the CD-RW disk drive and hit PASTE. The information will be placed in a temporary format and Windows will display a small window on the Task Bar, indicating that there are files waiting to be written to your CD-RW drive. If you click on the message, a window will open showing the list of files waiting to be written to the CD. Select “Write these files to the CD”. Windows will prepare the files for writing, and then burn them onto the blank disk.

If the disk is not blank, then you will be prompted to erase the CD-RW disk first. NB: You cannot “add” files to a CD-RW disk that already contains data. To incrementally add files to a CD-RW, it is necessary to copy the files from the CD to a temporary folder on the computer’s hard disk, add the new files to that folder, erase the CD-RW disk and then re-write the files using the process described above.

This might seem a complex process, but once you have done it, it becomes easier to understand. If you require further assistance with this or any similar type of problem with your computer system, then call May Day Consulting on (01224) 697457.

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We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly.

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