Why you should
STOP MAKING SLIDES
## and focus on delivering your message

Are you a designer?

Probably not, but even if you have some mad design skills or maybe you're lucky enough to have a team working on your keynote, **designing slides should never be your goal**.

Designing 20-30 slides is a lot of work and your template may lead you astray.

Templates offer consistency and ease of use, but if you simply follow the standard template without a plan, you can lose your way. Let's do the math with a core component of most templates:

Title of Slide

- Bullet 1
- Bullet 2
- Bullet 3
- Bullet 4
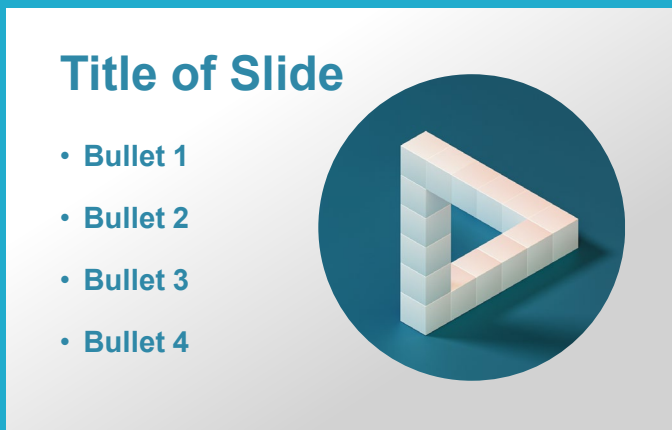
Standard text and picture layout repeated 10 to 20 times

= 10 to 20 images

Sourcing that many images requires a lot of time and resources. Following this path typically results in a deck full of cliché, sometimes inappropriate images or, worse yet, a copyright violation pasted from a Web search. But more importantly, **you've lost your way**. You're focused on finding the right image and trying to make beautiful slides.

Designing beautiful slides and building an engaging and impactful presentation are two incredibly different goals.

What are you trying to achieve? Trying to do both with the slides as your starting point and design as your North Star results in so many wasted iterations and so much wasted effort.

So, what's the answer?

The alternative is surprisingly simple. **Focus on your message, develop a few key moments of visual engagement and employ design towards a goal of clear communication**. The result will be a blend of words and images that is both fluid and conversational.

Message **+** **Visual Moments**
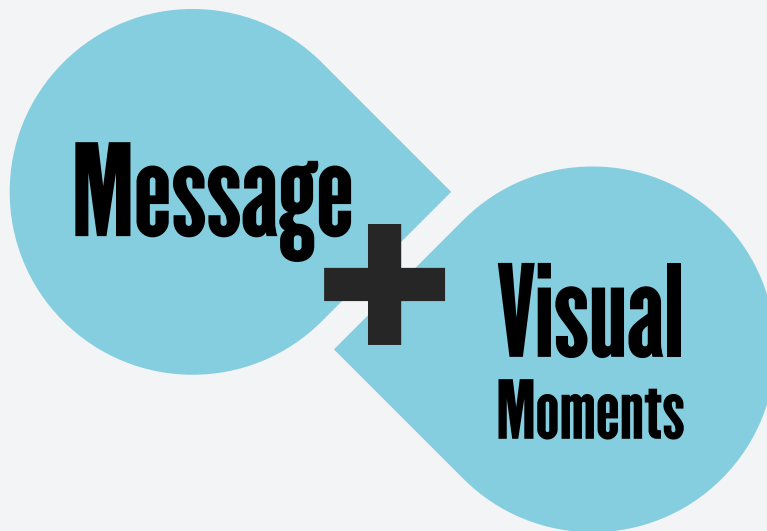
You can build a deck in as little as 30 minutes.

You'll be surprised by the efficiency of this approach. Maybe you're not up for the 30-minute challenge just yet, but if it normally takes you **two weeks**, I bet you can do it in **two days** using this mindset.

Start by figuring out the promise of your pitch and three things you'd say about it.

For example, in one of my training exercises, we build a deck about tacos. The key points are that they are **quick and easy, delicious even gourmet, cheap, and infinitely customizable,** and although fresh is best, you can also make great tacos from frozen and shelf-stable ingredients in a pinch. We then break down those the main points into the **What/Why/How** to further develop our message.

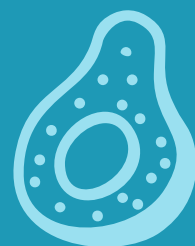**Pro Tip:** If you're doing a TED style talk, break down a single point.

What

Often easiest to define and your starting point.

Why

Critical motivation to act. What's at stake?

How

What many come to learn, especially if insightful.

Hungry now? I can send you some recipes ☺

Brainstorming is beautiful and chaotic; applying a little order can help sort things.

Use Post-it notes or the one-page framework below to lay out your ideas. Look at the connections between points, opportunities to challenge or connect with the audience, where evidence could open minds, and rearrange/play with the flow of elements. Define key moments of engagement and **simple visuals** that would have the most impact. **Engineer the story** and be sure to pitch your approach with colleagues and friends for feedback.

| The Promise				
	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3	
Open	What			Close
	Why			
	How			
	Evidence			

Consider your delivery, position on stage or onscreen and your body language.

While laying out your framework you can also map out your delivery across the key points to test the delivery of a dramatic approach, a pitch, a report or an explanation and imagine how your voice, gestures and position will change.

When you have the whole story defined, COPY and PASTE the message onto slides.

This is where the efficiency of this approach bears fruit. You've done the work of focusing the message and engineering the story with your framework which now translates directly into your core slides.

Framework

What

Slides

What

Text

Text
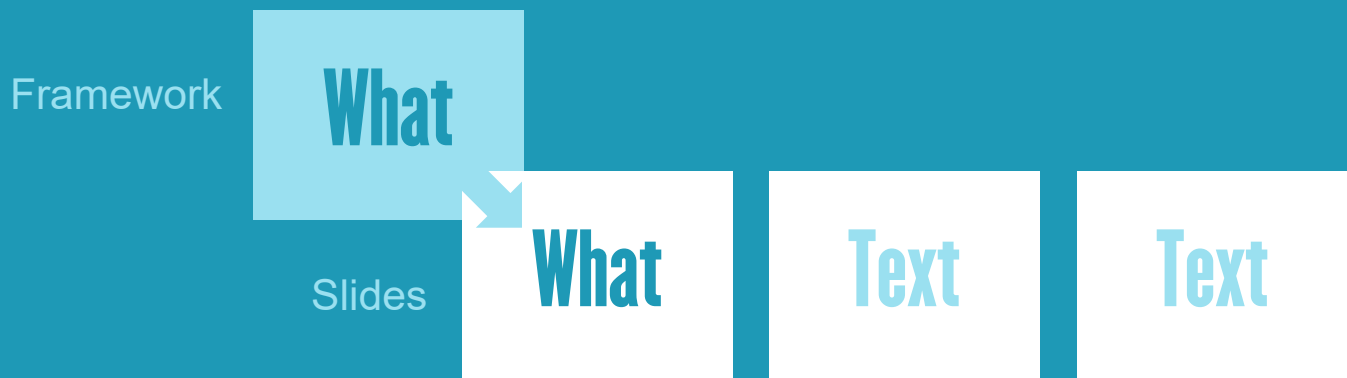
Pro Tip: The slide version of the message framework allows for direct copy and paste. Download from **PKdigital.net/guides**

You could present your message with these core slides alone, but we are going to take it to the next level by employing design to better communicate and create moments of engagement.

Next convert your core slides into the basic building blocks of presentations.

Text

Picture

Chart

List

Leverage your template's various layouts to differentiate the content. Don't go further than converting the pasted text into the basic building blocks above. In the next step you will decide, if for example, your data point carries enough weight to warrant a quantitative approach or if you need to switch it to take a qualitative approach to provide nuance.

The goal is to simply differentiate so that we can see the flow and variety of elements. Keep things simple for now — save your effort for highlights. I'll say it again, "No one wants to design 30 slides." **Basic building blocks get the job done for the majority of slides.**

# Now pick three to five critical moments of engagement to really develop.

Pay attention to the visual cadence of your slides. Is there good variety? Put your effort into a few critical moments of engagement. You may need to enlist help here if you're better at delivering than design, but you've done most of the work. Like a song, your deck should have highs, lows, crescendos and repeated choruses.
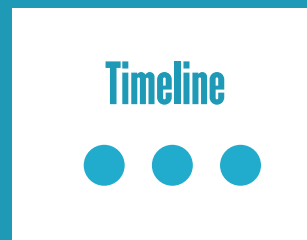
Break key moments into bite-sized bits that are easy to consume, comprehend and retain.

Infinite Loops in Java

- Overview
- Using *while*
- Using *for*
- Using do-while
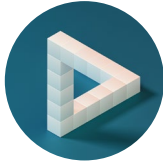
<< Let's look at that standard layout again.
If this is a key point in your message, then break it out so that you can walk your audience through each point. You can't do this for the whole deck or you'll end up with over a hundred slides. **In the example below, we break this one slide into six teachable moments**.

What are Infinite Loops?

Pause and let them picture it

Infinite Loop

An instruction sequence that loops endlessly when a terminating condition isn't met.

Caused by a programming error or intentional based on the application behavior.

Provide consensus to thinking

Three Java examples

Build suspense with the promise

while
```
public void
infiniteLoopUsingWhile()
    { while (true) {
        // do something
    }
}
```

for
```
public void
infiniteLoopUsingFor()
    { for (;;) {
        // do something
    }
}
```

```
public void
infiniteLoopUsingDoWhile()
    { do {
        // do something
    } while (true);
}
```
do-while

Show how it works and how powerful it can be

Time saved provides time to practice.

Focusing on your message and the key visuals creates a stronger message and saves considerable effort and time. Use that time to practice and hone your delivery, so it becomes fluid and natural.

I hope this quick guide provided some practical tips and inspiration!

I love to share ideas. With over three thousand presentations and hundreds of keynotes completed and having led training for a global company with thousands of analysts, I've learned a few things about how to create efficiency and impact at scale.

If you'd like to learn more, training sessions and practicums tailored to your needs are available as one-on-one or team sessions. Results are guaranteed with as little as an hour of your time.

All the best,
PK
PKdigital.net

Unsplash photo credits:
unsplash.com/collections/3XGxEZ3Pclc/linked

Noun Project Icons:
thenounproject.com/littledecos … /lovely cacti … /emilegraphics

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The Promise

Point 1   Point 2   Point 3

Open	What			Close
	Why			
	How			
	Evidence			

Message Framework