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Frank M. Lin

California State University, San Bernardino

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Microsoft PowerPoint for Windows 4.0

Frank M. Lin
California State University, San Bernardino

Starting in 1994, professional presentation using presentation graphic programs has become a norm. Everyone began using presentation graphics: Professors give presentations to students on their lectures. Students are also required to give presentations in class. Professional business consultants prepare detailed presentations on business issues for their clients. Managers give presentations to get new projects funded. Field sales give presentations to clients using notebook. Presentation software tools facilitate the development of high-quality slides, overheads, screen shows, and handouts without resorting to professional consultants or art departments. Common features of the presentation software includes an outliner, slide editor, editable template collections, clip-art collections, support for multiple import/export formats, a variety of file-management capabilities, several output choices (e.g., presentations, slides, handouts, speaker's notes, and outlines), and run-time capability.

Currently the market leader of general business-use presentation graphic software program is Microsoft's PowerPoint for Windows 4.0 which was released in 1994 as an upgrade of its earlier version 3.0. The new PowerPoint for Windows 4.0 is characterized by its speed, easy to learn and use, its cross-platform compatibility, and its integration with Microsoft Office Suite. It has roughly about 70 percent of the market.

PowerPoint has a good tutorial (call Quick Preview) that covers the basics of creating a presentation and provides a quick overview. The manual that comes with PowerPoint is also very easy to read.

There are five choices for creating a presentation when PowerPoint is launched: use the AutoContent or Pick a Look Wizard for guidance, use a template or an existing presentation format, or open a blank page. The beginner-friendly built-in interactive Wizards assist users not only in achieving a professional looking presentation but also in creating effective content. AutoContent Wizard steps you through a series of simple questions and then prepares your entire presentation for you in structural form. Based on your answers, the Wizard builds a basic presentation structure, with suggested content. All you do is replace the sample text with your own information and you are finished. The Pick a Look Wizard provides assistance for creating the right design for your presentation. It starts by asking what kind of look you are after. It displays several effective templates from which you pick your choice. You may also change it from the entire list, with previews. You then fill in your own content in regard to adding page numbers to handouts, pages, etc. These two key Wizards really work well, especially for beginners at creating presentations from scratch.

PowerPoint features an outline view for quickly creating and revising presentations. It also allows users to format presentations in the outline view mode, which is not available in many other presentation graphic programs. Users could apply styles such as color, bold, italic, and point sizes to text in the outline. Users can easily change template backgrounds simply by choosing a new one from the preview dialog box, reorder slides just by dragging them from the slide sorter, and build a series of transitional effects between slides easily. When you need help on a particular task, you always can use the Cue Cards from the Help menu to lead you through step by step to accomplish the task. Cue Cards are procedures that stay on your screen while you work. Cue Cards cover common but sophisticated procedures such as adding a logo to every slide, creating "drill down" document, or adding video to your slides. I found this feature is extremely useful for beginners or novices of presentations.

Although most presentation softwares only support OLE 1.0 (Object Linking and Embedding), PowerPoint supports both OLE 1.0 and 2.0. It allows users to easily insert objects into slide presentations. One of the biggest strengths of PowerPoint (compared to other presentation software programs) is its cross-platform compatibility (i.e., Windows and Macintosh versions). Users trained on one platform (say Windows) will very quickly come to speed on the other platform thanks to the consistency of interface with its cross-platform compatibility. Thus for corporations whose presentations will be created or shown on both Windows and Macintosh systems, PowerPoint is an excellent choice.

PowerPoint is powerful and easy to use; nevertheless, it does have some limitations. PowerPoint does not work well in either 16- or 24-bit mode although it works well in 8-bit mode. It could create screen-redraw problems and General Protection Fault errors when it is run in 16- or 24-bit mode. PowerPoint does not have table tool at all. Users must create their tables in either Microsoft Word or Excel. The manual that comes with the PowerPoint has no up front discussion on the design and creation of a presentation which is a must for beginners or novices of presentations. There is no uninstaller program with PowerPoint which can be very handy when users need to remove the program from the system occasionally. Furthermore, PowerPoint's animation capability is extremely weak and videofeatures are limited. Animation capabilities are limited to flying text items. There is no facility for animating graphics at all. For those who require extensive use of animation and video features in presentations, Gold Disk's Astound 2.0 for Windows 2.0 is a much more viable alternative.

In summary, PowerPoint has made it easy to put on a show. It is extremely easy to use and to learn. Its powerful cross-platform compatibility has made it the number one choice for many corporations. With the upcoming Windows 95, it is expected that Microsoft will provide a tightened integration of its office suite, Microsoft Office 95, which includes PowerPoint for Windows 95, and offers robust new tools and consistent interface. Last, but not least, it is easy to install PowerPoint but you do need plenty of disk space. The following describes the minimum and/or recommended requirements for installing Microsoft PowerPoint for Windows 4.0 on IBM or IBM compatibles.

Requires: 386 or higher (486 recommended); 4MbRAM (8Mb recommended in general, 16 Mb is recommended if you plan to run miniapplications); VGA or higher graphics (256 colors recommended); mouse; DOS 3.1 or higher (5.0 or higher recommended); Windows 3.1 or higher; 11 Mb hard disk space for minimum installation; 32 Mb hard disk space for complete installation.

