PRESENTATION TRAINING SESSION

This document is the summary of the presentation training session held and the HELCOM Secretariat on 31st October 2018

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Why this training and what's next

We spend a lot of time making presentations so it is funny how little time we spend talking and discussing about it. We all agree that our presentations have room for improvement so why don't we do anything about it?

That was the main reason we organized this session. ***The main output was that we exchanged ideas about presentations.*** *We discussed mostly about the structure of the presentation and about the visuals.*

The interest about making visuals was so big that ***we agreed to hold another session, probably in December, focused on designing slides in PowerPoint****: how to do animations and transitions, how to choose the right picture, remaking presentations and slides, etc.*

This training was two hours long divided in three parts:

1. *Activity to define a good presentation*
2. *Basic ideas to prepare presentations*
3. *Examples to design better slides*



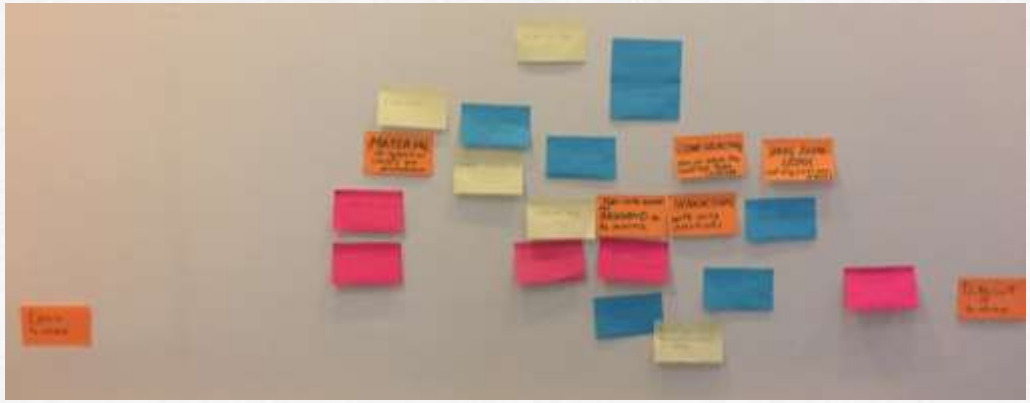
The presentation used in the training is on the intranet

Icon by Deemak Daksina TheNounProject

Part 1
Activity to define a good presentation

People were divided in four groups. The aim was to reflect in 15 minutes what a good presentation is and write it down in post its.

Participants attached their ideas to the wall.



Attaching post-its to the wall started an interesting exchange of points of views. Most of the ideas exposed were about:

- taking into account the audience is very important
- Making a presentation visual helps the audience understand the message
- The message should be simple

We focused some minutes on the delivery aspects of the presentation. We discussed, for example:

- **To read or not to read**: We agreed that, in general, is not a good idea to read the presentation from paper. We agreed that reading text from slides is even worse.
- **How to stand in front of the audience**: We agreed that, in general, it's a good idea to face the audience looking at the eyes of some people to create a sense of contact.
- **Lectern—behind or besides**: It is generally a good idea to step away from the lectern to be closer to the audience but sometimes it's not possible: room too small, microphone is in the lectern⋯
- **Nervousness**: we all get nervous when presenting. That's not necessarily bad unless it makes you feel blocked. A good recipe for that is to practice, practice and practice.
  Another idea is not to think of nervousness but of excitement. Our mouths get dry and our heartbeats rise not because we are nervous but because we are excited to present our work and share our knowledge.
  Try to smile, because science has shown that you can actually fake it till you make it.



About faking till you make it watch this TED talk (some tricks to feel better before a presentation)

- **Be yourself**: it doesn't make sense to pretend you are perfect because you are not. Nobody is. And that's fine. In fact that's very good—the audience connects better if the presenter is honest and not afraid of showing vulnerability.

Another topic was time. We never have time to work in our presentations, but is time a question of priorities?

If we want to improve our presentations skills, we need to make an effort to change the way we usually do it. That's hard because changing a habit is hard.



About vulnerability I recommend watching this TED talk



About changing habits I recommend this book

Part 2
Basic ideas to prepare presentations

Step 1 Think about the audience

We all agreed that this is very important but we sometimes don't pay enough attention. When we prepare our presentations we often think about ourselves—will I do any mistake? Will they like it?

There are three question we could ask ourselves before preparing a presentation

Question	Objective
What does the audience want to learn?	Think about the message
What background do they have?	Adapt the message
How much do they know about the topic?	Adapt the level of detail

Step 2 Make a story

This is one of the most important parts of the presentation. They key is to have a structure in three parts: beginning, middle and end

Beginning	Middle	End
What is the context? What is the problem? Which are the actors? Why is it important? Why should the audience care?	How to solve the problem? What are the steps? What are the challenges	How did we solve the problem or how are we planning to do it? What are the next steps?

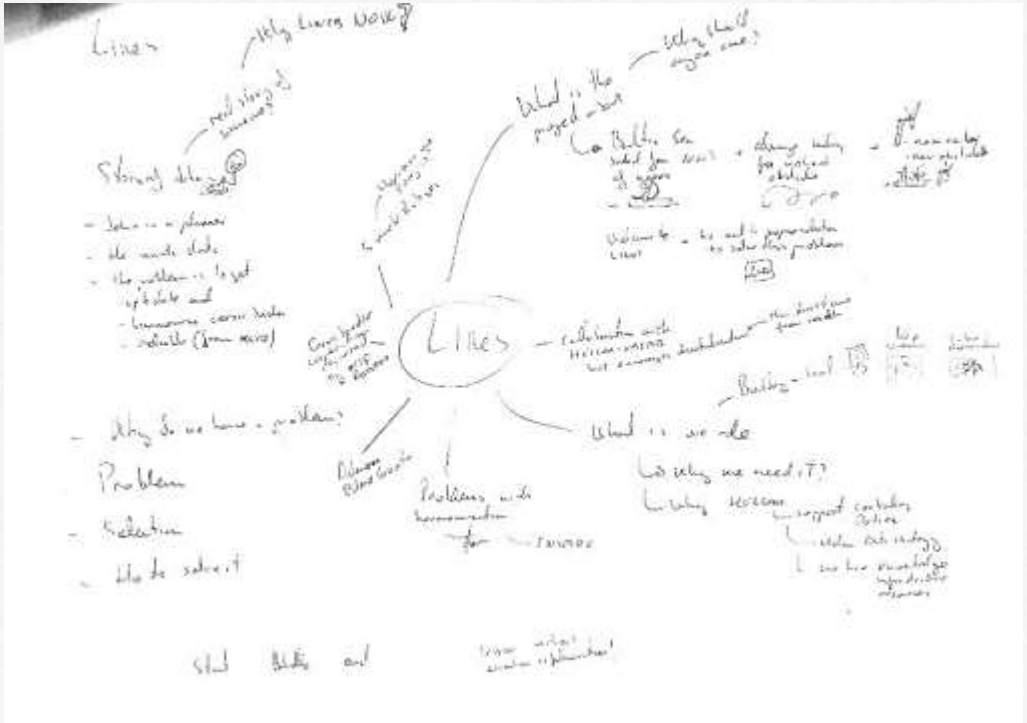
Example: A presentation about HELCOM for an audience that has little or no knowledge would be divided in these three parts:

Beginning	Middle	End
The Baltic Sea was in a bad situation in the 50's and 60's The levels of pollution were increasing dramatically. The Baltic Sea countries depend on the well-being of the Sea (jobs, biodiversity…)	That's why the Baltic Sea countries signed the Convention in 1974. Recommendations are an important tool. BSAP is another important tool	The Baltic Sea is recovering, but slowly. The BSAP update.

About storytelling I recommend this book

How to do a story?

One option is to stay away from Powerpoint and start brainstorming our ideas in paper. The advantage of this is that you don't get distracted by mails and you focus only on your thoughts.



The objective of drafting your thoughts is to find the beginning, middle and end of your story.

You could put your ideas on post-its thinking that each post-it represents one idea. At the same time, You can think the visual of each slide and doodle it.

Once you have the structure you can move to PowerPoint and design your slides



Part 3
Examples to design better slides

For before and after slides see presentation from slide 19

Overcrowded slides

Slides sometimes suffer from having too much information. There are some ways to make them less crowded:

- Divide the information in several slides
- Use animations

We discussed several ways to do it. We saw and commented different examples of slides that can be improved with just a little effort.

The most important is to ask yourself and answer honestly, will the audience understand my slide? What can I do to improve it?

There is a huge interest to improve PowerPoint slides so we decided to organize another session focused only on design.

Main takeaways

A good presentation has a good structure

What does the audience want to hear? When that's clear think about a good story: Who are the actors? What's the problem? How to solve it?

We should share our presentations

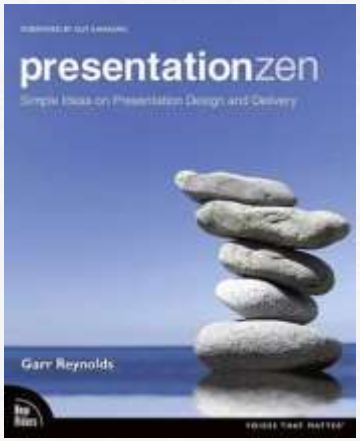
All presentation should be shared in a folder (more info about this later).

Session about designing slides

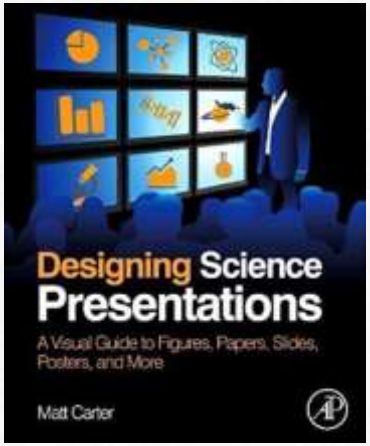
Probably in December, there will be another session focused only on designing slides—visuals, transitions and animations.

Three book recommendations

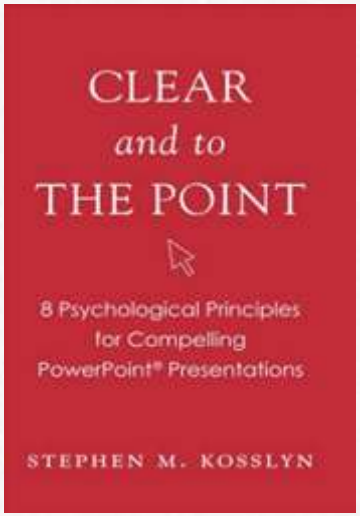
There are endless books about presentations out there. Here there are three that might interest you.



Presentation Zen by Garr Reynolds
A classic



Designing Science presentations by Matt Carter
Good general tips.



Clear and to the point by Stephen Kosslyn
The science of presentations.

Sweet end

The session felt better with a traditional Finnish pulla with Halloween candies. It was eaten by:

