



free-range THINKING™

free-range thinking™ is a monthly journal of best practices, resources and generally useful stuff for public interest communicators who want to reach more people with more impact



Serious Help for People Who Are Serious About Presentations

For Echo Swinford, the last straw came when she was filling out a form to renew a subscription with Adobe. "The form asked me what I did for a living," Echo said when we spoke by phone last week, "but none of the listings fit what I do." Echo is the founder of [Echosvoice](#), a PowerPoint consultancy that designs corporate templates, runs custom trainings for in-house designers, and basically helps solve any problems that include the letters PPT. She is also a Microsoft MVP, a recognition bestowed on expert users of Microsoft products who have gone above and beyond in sharing their knowledge with a wider community. In short, Echo lives and breathes PowerPoint, but as far as Adobe was concerned, that's not a thing.

In 2015, Echo started reaching out to other Microsoft MVPs who were also having their Rodney Dangerfield moments: nobody was getting any respect. Echo convened a meeting of MVPs and other community members at the Hard Rock Café in New Orleans and heard similar complaints repeated again and again: individuals and companies seeking skilled presentation designers didn't know where to look. Talented designers didn't have a central place to post their availabilities. And there was no certification course to validate the deep expertise of a growing community who, like Echo, considered themselves professional "presentationists."



Echo Swinford

Thus begins the creation story of [The Presentation Guild](#), a nonprofit launched in 2016 that "promotes the presentation design and production industry as a profession, recognizes the skills and expertise of presentation creation specialists, and provides opportunities for members to expand their knowledge and abilities." (Story continues [here](#).) *Please note: Apple Mail users may need to scroll down manually.*

Hate Meetings? This New Webinar is for You.

Meetings are an essential part of your day-to-day operations as well as an expression of your organization's culture. Not only are bad meetings a waste of time and money, they can send messages to your team that undercut performance, undermine loyalty, and lower morale. Bad meetings are a real problem.

Investing a couple of hours to improve these meetings and heighten overall organizational effectiveness is, in a real sense, a long-term cost-cutting move. "Meetings for People Who Hate Meetings" is a new 2-hour webinar that teaches:

- **Why Bad Meetings Happen to Good Causes:** An analysis of the most commonly experienced problems in meetings.
- **The Agenda: It's Not a List of Topics:** Why meeting leaders should think of the agenda as a mini-strategic plan, and why a well-constructed agenda remains the single most important predictor of a successful meeting.
- **Meeting Leadership:** How effective meeting leaders bring everyone into a discussion, direct its flow, handle conflict, and guide groups through different kinds of decision-making processes.
- **Brainstorming** (and other creative forms of interaction): Many meetings will include brainstorming without following time-tested rules that make them more productive. In this segment, we review the rules and also discuss other techniques to creatively engage participants in idea-generation and similar group activities.
- **Teleconferences, Videoconferences and Webinars:** How to observe different protocols for meetings where everyone isn't in the same room.

Register [now](#) and join us on January 16th and 17th (from 2-3p Eastern each day) for this highly interactive webinar, because bad meetings are so 2019.



Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center

GIVE PRESENTATIONS	PLAN CAMPAIGNS	LEAD WEBINARS
Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes	Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter	The Webinar on Webinars
December 11 & 13 11am - 12pm PT	December 16 & 17 11am - 12pm PT	December 18 11am - 12pm PT

Click on the class title to read more!

About Us

free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit www.thegoodmancenter.com.

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Serious Help For People Who Are Serious About Presentations (Cont'd)

Today, Echo serves as President of the Board of Directors of the guild, which boasts nearly 300 members. The membership includes self-employed PowerPoint designers, in-house creative services professionals who design presentations (often for C-suite executives), representatives of full-service advertising agencies as well as agencies that exclusively design presentations. According to Board Vice President Sandy Johnson - another Microsoft MVP and founder of [Presentation Wiz](#) -- approximately 98% of members work in PowerPoint, although many of these also work with Keynote, Prezi and other slideware.



Members of the guild have access to a job exchange board, discussion forums, live chat, a webinar series entitled "Inspired by Design," discounts for PowerPoint add-ins and other productivity tools, as well as multiple opportunities (both in person and online) to network with similarly-minded professionals. For the last two years, the guild has published a "Salary Survey" with information about "the salaries, demographics, and work habits of presentationists."

"But the biggest benefit we offer," said Echo, "is certification. Our goal is for people to be able to validate their skills, which has been difficult with PowerPoint and Office skills in general." The course to become a "Certified Presentation Specialist" costs \$200 for members and is also available to non-members for \$350. If you're interested in learning more about The Presentation Guild in general and becoming a member (the annual fee is \$149), visit their [site](#).

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But Wait, There's More!

Two more excellent resources for anyone who designs or gives presentations are [The Presentation Podcast](#) which is published twice a month and is co-hosted by Troy Chollar, Nolan Haims and Sandy Johnson; and [The Presentation Summit](#), an annual 4-day gathering exclusively devoted to the presentation experience. The next summit will be August 9-12, 2020 in Seattle, Washington.

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