

Integrating PowerPoint Presentations With Audio and Video Components Into Online or Web-Enhanced Courses

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PowerPoint presentations are a vital educational asset. Many instructors use them in their face-to-face classes as a way to not only add structure to their course, but also as a visual aid to help increase students' application and understanding during the learning process. PowerPoint presentations can also be an effective way to provide concise, yet illustrative segments of content in web-enhanced or online courses. However, a PowerPoint presentation used in an online course is not the same as one given by an instructor in a face-to-face classroom setting. Too often, instructors take their traditional PowerPoint lecture and post them online with no narration or notes, as a stand alone learning tool. Although this can be effective as a supplement to a traditional class, it is incomplete for an online course. There are many options or alternatives that can be utilized for providing the missing components of narration, notes, and/or video that are easy and affordable. This paper will explore the pros and cons of four software applications that require little or no expertise, are user-friendly, cost-effective and are easily accessible. Each of these software applications have special features that are more suitable for a particular purpose, depending on the overall objective and the type of presentation that is to be created for web-delivery.

Quality PowerPoint presentations take time to develop. It is understandable that instructors will want to make use of them as a supplement to a traditional class or in the online courses they develop. However, there are many disadvantages to uploading native PowerPoint presentations to online courses. It's important to keep in mind that many students still use dial-up connections and may have to wait a long time for the presentation to download. It is best to convert the PowerPoint presentation to a format that is easily accessible for students no matter what connection speed they may have. If the overall objective is to provide the students with the PowerPoint Presentation for taking notes or as handouts, then one easy and affordable option is by converting the presentation into a Portable Document Format (PDF). A PDF file is a proprietary Adobe format that works very well across different Operating System Platforms and can be easily viewed by having Adobe's free PDF reader. Adobe Reader is already installed on most users' computers, but if not, it can easily and freely be downloaded by accessing the website, <http://www.adobe.com/>. This is a major advantage of using the PDF format for delivering PowerPoint presentations in online courses. Different PDF versions of the presentations may also be created, from one where a single PowerPoint slide appears on each page to handout versions, where three to six slides appear on each page. To create PDF files, it is necessary to have more than the Acrobat Reader. There are two options. The first option is to purchase the Adobe Acrobat Program for around \$60.00. Once the program is installed, converting the file is as easy as one, two, three. Begin by opening the PowerPoint file, choose print, select "Adobe PDF Writer" as the printer and at the prompt, name and save the file. Finally, create a link from which students can access the file. The second option is to use a free PDF program. The University of West Georgia utilizes the free tool, CutePDF. The following link provides instructions on how to download the free program and how to convert the presentation to a PDF file: http://webpages.charter.net/tuckpress/pdf_tutorial/cutepdf_tutorial.html

Converting a PowerPoint presentation into a PDF format is a great option when all that is needed are handouts or note pages for the students. However, for a completely online course, instructors may want to provide narrated PowerPoint presentations so that the students can listen to the instructor actually give the lecture, as one would in the normal classroom environment. There are many ways to create narrated PowerPoint presentations. The easiest option for creating narration within PowerPoint is to use the

“Record Narration” option through the Slide Show menu inside PowerPoint. The extra equipment required is a microphone and a set of speakers in order to listen to the saved recordings. Based on experience, USB microphones are recommended for Windows XP operating systems while non-USB microphones work better with the older Windows operating systems. Access the following link for a short how-to tutorial on recording narration within PowerPoint:

http://www.westga.edu/%7Edistance/ppt/ImpaticaforPowerPoint_3_3_3.pdf

Adding narration to a PowerPoint presentation substantially increases the file size. Before publishing the narrated file to an online course, it will be necessary to convert the file to a format that is suitable for viewing over the web. Impatica for PowerPoint is an excellent software program that simply converts the PowerPoint file into a compressed format that is optimized for streaming over the internet. The major advantage to using this program over other programs is its ease of use and hassle free accessibility. Once the presentation has been converted to an Impatica presentation, it may be delivered to a website, learning management system or by e-mail. The program also supports most of the features of PowerPoint, including text, graphics, transitions, animation effects, and narration. The converted presentation will play well over all types of internet connections, from fast DSL/cable broadband connections to dial-up connections, and the resulting files require no plug-in to be viewed—it plays directly in the web browser. When the presentation is accessed from a webpage, a small java applet automatically streams the content and dynamically shows the narrated, animated presentation. Converting narrated PowerPoint presentations is simple. After the PowerPoint presentation has been created and narrated within the PowerPoint program itself, simply run it through the Impatica application. Impatica will create three files that will need to be uploaded to the website or course. The program also has an exported notes option. If the PowerPoint presentation has notes typed in the notes section of the PowerPoint file, when converting the file an option may be selected that will allow Impatica for PowerPoint to extract text from the notes section of the PowerPoint presentation and present this text formatted in an HTML page. The HTML file will be saved in the same folder as the corresponding Impatica File and can be uploaded to the online course along with the Impatica presentation so that the students can print out the notes to go along with the narrated presentation. A small disadvantage of Impatica for PowerPoint is that the students can only print one slide at a time. However, the advantages far out weigh the disadvantage. Impatica also provides excellent technical support by e-mail or telephone. Access this link for a short how-to tutorial on using the Impatica for Power Point program:

http://www.westga.edu/%7Edistance/ppt/ImpaticaforPowerPoint_3_3_3.pdf

The price structure for Impatica for PowerPoint depends on the number of licenses that will be purchased. Individual licenses are \$299 each while a 10 pack may be purchased for \$995. Annual and perpetual site licenses are also available. For more information about Impatica for PowerPoint, visit the Impatica website at <http://www.impatica.com>. This site also allows one to request an evaluation copy of the software application, and tutorials are available for download.

Impatica for PowerPoint is highly recommended for converting narrated or un-narrated PowerPoint presentations for optimized viewing on the internet. There is another program offered by Impatica called Impatica OnCue. OnCue allows the user to synchronize audio and video with Impaticized PowerPoint presentations, and offers full VCR like controls, scrolling text, key word search, and a two tiered table of contents. This particular software application is great when utilized as a training module, an ice breaker, or as a professor’s introduction at the beginning of an online course. A major advantage to using this program is that the final presentation can reach an entire audience. It is very ADA compliant. Since the program offers synchronized video, audio and scrolling text, students with disabilities such as those who cannot see or hear are able to successfully access the presentation. The presentation is easily accessible because it allows the student to select the playback speed based on the type of internet connection they may have. The developer can produce a presentation using a still image with audio, instead of a video, depending on the intended audience and band-width limitations. As with Impatica for PowerPoint,

Impatica OnCue allows for hassle free delivery with no plug-ins needed. The entire presentation streams and plays in any java-enabled web browser without the use of streaming servers or special software.

Access the following link to see an example of an Impatica presentation:

<http://www.impatica.com/movies/impatica/333/Intro-to-OnCue/Intro-to-OnCue-high.html>

One disadvantage of Impatica OnCue is that it requires a substantial amount of time to develop a product for delivery. Although the program is somewhat intuitive, based on experience, if one isn't familiar with video editing, one may find the OnCue interface to be challenging for the first project. However, Impatica Technical support is very helpful and will readily answer any questions that a user may have and will help to make the final presentation a success—this is a major advantage to using Impatica OnCue. The downloadable step-by-step tutorial found on the Impatica website is very helpful and necessary in producing an OnCue Presentation. The extra hardware needed in order to develop an OnCue presentation is a microphone for recording audio, computer speakers, and a camcorder. The extra software needed is QuickTime Standalone Player, a free download easily obtained by accessing <http://www.apple.com>, and a video editing program. Impatica recommends using video that is in uncompressed AVI format, therefore, it is highly recommended to purchase Adobe Premier as the video editing program. If compressed video is used, another level of compression is added to the file in the OnCue interface, degrading the quality of the video, thus for better quality, it is best to use an uncompressed format. There are four components needed to create an OnCue presentation. An Impaticized PowerPoint file, a script file which will be automatically generated from the notes section of the PowerPoint presentation, a video or audio file, depending on which one that will be used, and a user interface template that Impatica customizes and provides to the user based on one's institutional logo. Once each of these files are created, the developer will use the OnCue program to synchronize each of the components, much like a video editing program, and then translate it into the final presentation. The files will need to be uploaded to a web server or learning management system for delivery over the internet.

Another disadvantage of Impatica OnCue is that it is relatively expensive. Higher Education prices range from \$ 795 for an individual license to \$ 3,995 for a 10 pack. There are also annual and perpetual site licenses available. For more information about Impatica OnCue, please visit the Impatica Website at <http://www.impatica.com>. This site also allows one to request an evaluation copy of the software application, and tutorials are available for download.

Another software application that is ideal for integrating PowerPoint presentations with audio and video components is Tech Smith's Camtasia Studio. Although Camtasia Studio has many capabilities and is great for recording narrated PowerPoint presentations, if this is the only objective, then Impatica for PowerPoint is the way to go because of its ease of use. However, if one's objective is to produce high quality PowerPoint presentations along with video to use for impact, then Camtasia Studio is recommended. Camtasia Studio's PowerPoint add-in allows the developer to record and deliver lecture presentations, including slides, transitions, video and audio of the presenter. Camtasia Studio also allows the developer to record Web pages, applications, or anything else on the screen or desktop, and different types of content can easily be blended into the presentation, without using multiple tools. However, when using Camtasia Studio for PowerPoint with video integration, the intended audience should have higher bandwidth capabilities in order to avoid long download times and degradation in the quality of the video. As stated previously, Impatica OnCue synchronizes audio and video with PowerPoint, and compresses it into a presentation that can be viewed by any audience. Camtasia Studio is better suited for higher bandwidth accessibility. Low bandwidth users will have issues accessing the presentation, unless the developer has a streaming server where the presentation will be uploaded for viewing over the internet. While each program has its advantages, the advantages of using Camtasia Studio over Impatica OnCue for integrating video with PowerPoint are its very intuitive interface, and cost. Even novice users will find the program to be quite amenable. There are also "Show Me" buttons with demonstration videos for step by step instructions on how to do particular applications. No special video editing software is

required for this program because Camtasia Studio allows the user to edit the video and audio within its interface. The program does require the latest version of Macromedia Flash Player. Flash Player is already installed on most users' computers, but if not, it can easily and freely be downloaded by accessing the website, <http://www.adobe.com>. The extra hardware needed to produce the presentation is a microphone, set of speakers, and a web camera. A web camera may be purchased anywhere from \$ 40.00 on up, depending on the desired quality. Access this link to see an overview of Camtasia Studio: http://video.techsmith.com/camtasia/latest/demo/summary/enu/cs_summary.html

Camtasia Studio may be purchased from \$140.00 per license to \$99.00 per license for a 5-9 pack, and the price lowers according to the number of licenses that will be purchased. For more information about Camtasia Studio, visit <http://www.techsmith.com>.

Depending on the overall objective, each of the above mentioned software applications are better suited for a particular purpose with each having advantages and disadvantages over the other. It is important however, to keep the end user or students in mind. Audio and/or video components aren't always necessary in delivering the intended message, sometimes text is enough. However, teaching and demonstrating visually can be much more powerful than using words alone. A powerful and edifying message is the essence of PowerPoint presentations with audio and video components.

Biographical Sketch

Ms. Stacey Rowland is a Distance Education Specialist and eCore Advisor for the Distance and Distributed Education Center at University of West Georgia. For the past seven years she has provided faculty and student support for online courses and conducted numerous individual training sessions and group workshops for on-line course development. Ms. Rowland is responsible for the advisement of over 300 students per term who are enrolled in eCore, a University System of Georgia collaborative program. Ms. Rowland serves as Managing Editor of the Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration and Conference Manager for the annual conference on Distance Learning Administration, sponsored by the University of West Georgia and Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration.

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