Transcript for FLO Friday: Elevate Your Online Presentation: Discovering Presentation Zen (July 21, 2023)
BCcampus event hosted July 21, 2023
Host: Gwen Nguyen

GWEN NGUYEN:
Well, good morning, everyone, and I hope that you enjoy the collaborative colouring activity. Just a couple of minutes, but this activity is actually the very first activity that I want to centre our thoughts and tap into our creativity energy for the day. My name is Gwen and I am an advisor with the teaching and learning team at BCcampus. It's a Friday, and I'm very happy and thankful that you join me in this FLO learning event. I would like to go over a few housekeeping items. The first thing is the session will be recorded. You're welcome to keep the camera off. Feel free to rename yourself to "Participant." Live captioning is also being enabled. At the end of the session, you are invited to participate in a short anonymous survey. And this survey will help us to plan better events to support professional development in the future. Usually, I host the FLO Friday session with other facilitators, but mostly our teams are away. It's summer and it's Friday, so only Kelsey and I will be here. I will facilitate this session and Kelsey will support us in the back end. Thank you, Kelsey, as always. Before we delve into the activities of the day, I'd like to start with the territorial acknowledgment. I came to Vancouver Island in 2015 and I fell in love with this beautiful and peaceful place right at first sight. I come from a very busy and big city, Saigon, Vietnam. It's very hard for me to see green trees, blue skies, and the ocean. I deeply appreciate the nature here. I enjoy walking and hiking and being with nature very much. I share this photo, one of my favourite hot spot intel. I took this photo during our walk along the Esquimalt Lagoon in Vancouver Island. The place that I think the sky meets the sea. In one of the articles, which is called "Walking as Embodied Territorial Acknowledgement," Wilson wrote this, "I'm coming into a relationship with the land. You can still feel the sun on your face, see the sky, hear the birds saying the gentle contours of the land in the meadows, in the lakes. You're not alone when you're walking by yourself, you're with the land, and it is with you." Today, I'm joining you from my office in the traditional territories of the Lekwungen speaking people including Songhees, Esquimalt, W̱SÁNEĆ people, whose historical relationship with the land continue to this day. You're invited to share the introductions in the chat if you wish. Thank you.

So before joining BCcampus, I was a learning experience designer and a sessional instructor at the University of Victoria. Before then, I was teaching at a university in Japan. As an educator, I have done tons of presentations in front of my students and my colleagues and other scholars in the field. And yes, I made tons of mistakes in the designing as well as delivering those presentations. And I still remember one of those times I was called into the Dean's office. And she said that the slide I prepare for my workshop wouldn't work. It's actually bad. I was really shocked. Because I think that, I know what bad presentations look like, My presentation is nothing like that. No sparkly or checkerboard transition and not text heavy. But she introduced me to the book that is called Presentation Zen. This is the book by Garr Reynolds at that time.

And that book actually changed my view of presentation work. In this session, I hope to share this story as well as discuss how we can elevate our presentation skills with the design principles and the philosophy of Zen simplicity and naturalness. First thing... Yeah, I saw that. You can buy the book too; this is actually the third edition. But yeah, I love the book and it actually helped me a lot in structures and think about the presentation. First thing I would like us to participate in the first two activities to discuss the culture of online presentation. Have the next slide, please.

Yes, Please use the annotating tools and answer the question here: "What aspects of online presentation that stand out to you and leave a lasting impact in your memory?" In short, what aspect makes an online presentation memorable? You can use the annotating tools the same way that you use for the colouring activities at the beginning. But now maybe use the text. Good design. Easy to understand the flow. Yes, I start to see visual quality, simplicity, and good visuals. We see visuals and simplicity. Personal story. Yes. Humour. Organized. Yeah. Laughter. Something that can bring laughter. Visuals, good info and simple. Great answers, yeah. Thank you. Yeah, I saw your... Any clarity. Text appropriate size. Yeah. Clear flow, permanency. Interesting word. It's pretty Zen. Interaction. Yeah. Outline of take-home message. Yeah. Thanks, Todd, for passing the link to Garr Reynolds' books and also some of his blogs. Multiply six, no more than six lines of text with less than six words per slide. Interesting because in Japan, I remember seven multiply seven rules. But yeah, accessibility principles. I'm happy to see it here. Yes, Yeah. Well-paced, engaging, and relevant. We thank you for sharing your thoughts on this. Yeah. Kelsey will help me like to take a screenshot of all these answers and then this will be shared with all of us at the end of this workshop. Yeah, thanks for sharing your thoughts. Those are all great answers. Yeah.

The next activity also, five minute activities, is the waterfall. The chat waterfall I would like us to focus on. We want to see, and we think that visual info, accessibility principles are something that make the presentation memorable. But what are some common issues with the slides? Kelsey will help me pop up the link to the slide deck of some sample slides. And those sample slides, not very strange or not familiar. Those are the slides that I collect from some of the events at BCcampus. Some are from the slide deck that Garr Reynolds shared in the book as well, but mostly from us, some of the events from facilitators. Perhaps it's just an individual activity. I would like you to look at those slides holistically and type your answer in the chat. What are some issues that you think with those slides? But don't hit Enter yet. After four minutes, I will say go. And then you can hit Enter for your answer to show for everyone. In that way, we will see a waterfall of all of our answers for common issues with the presentation online. Your answers can be specific. For example, if you want to talk about slide two, then slide two, blah, blah, blah, and then, or it can be general, something like all the slides you think are not working because there are no visuals, because the visual doesn't work, it's not very accessible. Or yeah, those are some ideas. But yeah, we welcome all the answers. Go, if you are ready with the answers, we look forward to seeing your insights on those slides. Thank you very much. Yeah, I see a lot of like Too much text. No balance between imagery and text. List of bullet points. Low contrast. More fonts in visual colour contrasts on the graph. Yes, slide

number three. Lack of typing around the text. Slide number three. Really interesting. That is one of the slides we use like in our previous FLO Friday. Some no visuals. Yeah. Too much information. Repetitions. Yeah. Thank you very much for sharing all your thoughts. Wow, those are all great answers. Yeah. Again, those going to be... Those are going to be shared with all of you. The chat is going to be saved, and then I will share those answers with you after the workshop today. But mostly, again, some problems with those presentations as you share tiny endnotes, references as well, and very heavy text slides and overload of facts and information. Also the table or the graph does not always work. There's no contrast between the pictures. Yeah, thank you very much for sharing all of those answers. Now let's get back to the next thing.

Let's talk about the PowerPoint culture. The first thing that we try to do is we understand more about the online presentation discourse. Mostly like we use PowerPoints or we use some other platform, for example, Keynotes or Canvas. But we know that presentation technology has evolved a lot over the years. And we do it as our daily activity. But mostly those are not evolved, our skills are not evolved. Lots of presentations are given with Keynotes, Google slides. But research shows that the majority of the presentations in education are still very boring, and not engaging the audience enough. Though sometimes the content might be very important and useful. I would like to share the book. The book is the presentation, and we will follow this one. In the forward of this book by Guy Kawasaki. He's one of the famous presenters and then he shared the fact about the online presentation culture is that 99% of presentations don't really work. Can I have the next slide, please?

We think that 95% of presentations don't work, but actually 99% of presentations don't really work. It might sound a little bit exaggerating, but the point is that we actually have become very accustomed to the PowerPoint culture in which there's much disconnection between the audience, the presenter, and also the talk. In a way that we get used to with a culture of very long and boring and bad slide content-free presentations, we seem to forget that all of us love the short, simple, legible, and engaging presentation. Can I have the next two slides, Kelsey?

This is the foreword of this book that you can see. And I want to borrow this to start the talk about the presentation. Should we blame PowerPoint? Should we blame this one? Yes, you will see the citation of the book. Yeah, at the end of this reference, I will share. Thank you. But it's actually just a tool and it is shared that no matter how impressive technology becomes. "No matter how many features and effects are added, the technology of the soul hasn't changed. And technologies are not only useful to the degree that making things clear and more memorable and strengthen the human-to-human connection that is the basis of the communication we need to use well, and multimedia has the power to do it." And that is in this workshop, I would like to introduce how we could change the PowerPoint discourse or the presentation culture through the same philosophy and design principle. Next one. Next slide, please.

Yes, that is like one of the beginning words that we can see in the book about the power of multimedia. If we can use, well, the core is the human and human interaction. Is it about Zen? And although this presentation is not about Zen, I think it is important to discuss why Zen and why it matters here for the presentation. Zen itself is actually an approach to life and a way of being. A Zen mind is actually a mind open and available for fully acting in the present moment of the situation. It is the mind that is ready and willing to explore anything without prejudice, so Zen can be integrated in lots of aspects of life. When we wash the dishes, it can be Zen. When we do poetry, it can be Zen. And when we do the tea, it also can be Zen. When we do flower arrangement or also gardening, it can be Zen. Actually I see all aspects of Zen in the aspects of life in Japan. You might know one very famous saying that illustrates the same mind. "When you eat, eat. When you sleep, sleep." Overall don't wobble. It sounds pretty simple, but as soon as we act, we often combine many things together. And our mind then is fully occupied and not available for only eating and sleeping in the here and now, so I want to share one of the famous sayings in *Zen Mind, Beginner Mind* by Shunryū Suzuki. "When you do something, you should burn yourself up completely, like the good bonfire, leaving no trace for yourself." Then it's usually called for the basis of simplicity, naturalness, openness, or creativity. Can I share the next slide, please? Yes.

In this short presentation, I would like to highlight the idea that presentation is actually a creative act. And that you can find in this book as well. There's a lot of tips, there's a lot of things. But actually I will explain that presentation is a creative act through focusing on some of the principles following. Can I please go through the next slide?

Yeah, this is the quote that I just shared about the *Zen Mind*, and I would like to share it through the presentation Zen in those principles. The first one is the... next slide, please.

Creativity in preparation. Simplicity in design. And naturalness in delivery. Actually, we are talking about this presentation Zen and presentation is a creative act. But it's actually not the linear, step-by-step process, more is actually about how we look about the online presentation through another viewpoint. So the first thing is, my question could be when we're thinking about creativity in preparation, you could maybe use some signals to share? Maybe raise your hands or maybe share a reaction to share. Do you think that preparing a workshop or presentation is a creative process? Next slide, please.

The next one is creativity in preparation. Yes. With that question and I help you to share that if you are creative, I should put a poll. But I would like to check to see if... Yes, I see that. In this book, it is shared that we need to realize that preparing a presentation is an act that requires creativity to work under restraint. We think of time, the topic, specific audience or platform, not just the collection of facts and materials. Presentation is actually a whole-minded activity. It's not just like doing some research that follows the logical analysis or collection calculation of the time gathering the data. But it's more the transformation of our content into something that is called presentation requires the thinking in pictures as well as text. It's actually a creative process and it should start from the very beginning. We should start with the beginner's mind,

that is the Zen mind. Because only with a beginner's mind that it is open, receptive, and more inclined to say, "Why not, why not?" "In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few." That is one of the quotes from the book *Zen Mind, Beginner Mind* by Suzuki. You may say that there are a lot of structure. The subject might be science, no place for imagination. Yes, but think of some practice. For example, like mindfulness. For example, haiku practice. Everything comes down to the basic of breathing, of walking. The structure of 5-7-5, 17 syllables. But in that structure, everything shines. There's also the quote that the imagination is taxed to its utmost and it will produce the richest ideas. So with the Zen mind, actually, I want you to ask yourself two questions. The first one is, what is the point and why does it matter? The modern business of conference presentation and preparing presentations is a chance for us to tell our story and to differentiate ourselves and to make a change. During the preparing, we need to exercise restraint and creativity, and we keep the three words in our mind. The first thing is simplicity, clarity, and brevity. In that one, please ask yourself again, what is the point and why does it matter? That is about the preparation.

The second thing is the simplicity in the design. The simplicity is something very Zen, and it is possible to express the great beauty and convey a very powerful message through the simplicity. As we can see, the Zen implied in the tea ceremony, in the haiku form and in many aspects of life, the word in Japanese is the word wabi and sabi. And that is illustrated in the painting and also in poetry that go back to 800 years ago. Normally we think of Zen as an empty space. And in that empty space we see the power would lead to the greater clarity. However, it's not easy or simple to achieve. It is not about making things easy for us; it's more about making things easy for others, the ones who are with us. The very first step of simplicity is actually careful reducing the non-essential, or it is called clearing the space for the essential to shine, that is the simplicity. How can we actually enact the simplicity in our design? How do we normally start our design? Can we go to the next slide, please?

This is the format that we normally see in all of the slide shows. Do you start right with the slide show? Actually, it is in the book that Garr Reynolds shares that we should just start with a blank slide or we actually start with a piece of paper and pencil. Because in this piece of paper and pencil, we make a list of what to include, what not. We map out what is the bare essential for the audience to know. We come down to the question, what is the one thing that we really want to share with our students or our audience? What is the one thing that we want our students to remember? About the design, there's a lot to talk about. There's some principles, for example, like signal to noise ratio or something. But the signal to noise, for example, the signal to noise principle is modelled from the communication tech would help us to handle overwhelming information that we see in a lot of slides and in the samples that you can see as well. And it is advised that we need to communicate clearly. We need to avoid, for example, visual images with inappropriate charts and biggest labels, unnecessary emphasis, we need to skip 2D and 3D charts. For simplicity, we limit the local use to avoid the glitter. We need to minimize the text and don't use the default templates at all. Actually say no to default template and also remember not to "slideument." Have you heard the word slideument? It means the combination between the slide and the documents. Slide is slide, and document is document. If

5

we want to provide detailed information, it can be provided like the worksheet at the very end of the session. One thing we should remember, can we go to the next one please?

As I said, there's a 1-7-7 rule in Japan. But actually, does it actually work the bullet point? It's also advised that we stay away from the bullet point slides. Use it with caution. Instead, we want to use a lot of visuals and we apply the universal principles of design. Because when we use the pictures and words together, we ensure that we reinforce the same information for optimal effect. The effect is actually strongest when the picture represents the common and concrete things. The visual imagery is also very powerful tools that help learning and increase the retention compared to, compared to someone with the words from the screen. Can we go to the next slide, please?

Again, it's not the fault that we focus on. It's actually not the PowerPoint's fault. It is actually our fault. We should look from scratch. We need to be bold and we need to use a lot of visuals because that is the way that we highlight the stories that we want to share. Can we go to the next slide?

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." That is shared by Leonardo da Vinci. When we use the picture or when we share a code, again, be bold and make everything big and large. Fill the screen. Designing the cinematic slide, containing large and easy-to-read elements. Your presentation is actually like the window into another space. If we keep elements small and stay within the frame, usually the window will be very small and less compelling. Again, make it big and fill the screen. Let's check out, again, the simplicity of the design through some of those principles. Can we go to the next slide, please? There are four main design fundamentals in the slide design that we need to know: the contrast, the repetition, the alignment, and proximity. The contrast is about the difference. Our minds love noticing them. And we can manipulate all the background colour, the image, size, the fonts, and to grab the attention of our audience. The repetition is we need to give our slide the unity. And the smooth flow alignment is about connecting all the elements. Visually align the image and the text so that we can give it a clean look and better understanding for our audience. Proximity is also... our mind is we like to group things together. This principle of grouping actually makes the content more powerful for our learners. Again, use visuals and be bold with our use. So for all those principles, I want to stop right there. I would like to invite us into one activity that you can do in pairs. Kelsey will help me to group all of us into pairs. And then in the pairs, I would like us to do a small activity that redesign the slide number eight in the Google slide deck that you just revisit, which is the outline of our presentation. Maybe try this one and redesign it in a way that we can use some Zen principles. Yeah, thanks Kelsey for popping the instructions in the chat. Yeah, this breakout room activity can be five minutes and then you can share with your partners in three minutes. And then come back here for us to talk about the last principle of Zen presentation.

Hi, everyone. Welcome back. Hope you enjoy the activity in the breakout rooms. It is just a little bit playing with the design and sharing with others. Thank you for participating in the activities. As the time restrictions, I wouldn't ask everybody to share what you created, but I want to invite you with that playfulness to the last principle, that is the naturalness in delivery. Let us come back and think of the Zen naturalness principles. Zen mind is know my state. And we often think of totally relaxed and totally empty. But it's actually not empty. It means that you are fully open and present in the moment. Like any conversation, presentation actually requires our full presence at that time and that place. How can we actually enact the Zen naturalness in our delivery? I shared with Kelsey yesterday, this work on the presentation Zen, actually, I burned out through the work the whole week. But in a way I practice Zen, because I focus on this more than 100% of my energy. It takes a lot of work. How can we actually enact this? First thing is storytelling. We should find the stories of our presentation because we are all human, we are storytelling animals, and we are the stories as well. Our overall message will stick much better when it is told as a story. It might be hard at first, but you will be surprised by its impact at the very end, as most of us probably already know about that. The second thing is you and your connection with the audience or the students are the presentation, not the slide at all. Dr. Ross Fisher actually shares one quote that I really like. "The presenter that actively engages with the audience and displays the enthusiasm for the message is an essential factor in the improvement of the presentation." Can you go to the next slide, please?

In what way? Actually, I could be the one because I'm sharing the screen. I'm sorry. So that is the quote that I just shared. Normally, this is what we see in the presentation set. You will see the presenter image at the very beginning, at the top of the corner, or at the end of the corner. But when we do presentations, what we want to do is we look directly at the camera. We declutter some background and for that, we need to practise, practise, practise to get comfortable with the presentation tools that we are using. Some of the other advice can be to upgrade the camera, the style, and the lighting. But to me, but to me, it's more about you playing with the tools and getting comfortable with that in sharing the story. In this one, because I asked Kelsey if I could share the screen so that I can, we can resize our image. And when we talk directly with our audience like this one, this is called the broadcast news approach. We are usually familiar with the presenter's note like this, but there's a way that we can use it by sharing the presentation as the background. That is called the broadcast news approach. In that way, we look closer to our audience in a way directly. And we want to empower something. Remember something that we need to keep it short and engaging. The rules, we might know the rule like 10-minute rule by Dr. John Medina in *Brain Rules*, but I think in online it's actually the attention spans are much shorter. It can be three or four minutes as mentioned in the book. We need to mix things up in about five minutes. We need to mix things up with video clips, with maybe a short poll, a quiz, engaging some questions. Don't just go on and on because we never know that the audience lost attention on that and then end up watching cute cat videos on YouTube instead of the presentation. The goal for the naturalness in delivery is not to be perfect, but rather it is a sincere contribution to the moment. And for those who come to be with us and learn with us. The last activity, we might not have enough time. But the last activity is a ten-minute activity, which is called the Pechakucha activity. In 10-

minute activities, I would like you to be in the room with your partner and practise the Pechakucha. Pechakucha in Japanese means "chit chat." It's actually a platform to practice storage sharing. It's like 20 images, 20 slides and 20 seconds per slide. But in this one, we don't have like 20 images. What I want to invite you to do is to go back to the first answer that you share at the beginning. What makes a presentation memorable? Share one tip that makes a presentation memorable. One slide in your Google slide deck. And then practice it, deliver it in only 20 seconds with your partners. Yeah, Kelsey will help me open the room again. And then you can go to your Google room. Google slide deck for room activity and then practise it.

Well, welcome back. Thank you, everyone. Welcome back. How do you like that activity? Is it too quick? Well, yeah, I saw a good job. Group 2. Yes, Yeah, we only have a couple of more minutes but I mean the Pechakucha, I can pop the link to that practice in the chat and you can check it out. Join the group if you are interested in that practice. I love this activity with my students when they have to finish their talk in like 20 seconds and focus on the things that they want to share. It is really a big thing to do something like that over the 20 seconds. But again, like Garr Reynolds said, "It might look easy and natural, but actually it took tons of work, and we can make it look natural by preparing and practicing like mad. And this is one of the ways. Again, the problem with bad online presentation is not because of the tools or techniques, but it is the problem of bad habits. Today, what I would like us all to remember is about presentation is actually a creative act. It is an opportunity for us all to share the story of why our content is important, why it matters. It's not about meeting some expectation, but it's more about surpassing that expectation. Make a big difference through the process empowered by Zen approach. *Creativity in preparation*: starting with beginner's mind, *simplicity in the design*: clear all the unnecessary for the core to shine, and *naturalness in delivery*: connecting with our audience through the story. Thank you very much for being with me here and now. Kelsey will help me pop the link in the chat. Please help us, share some feedback. so that we can plan the activities in the future. In the chat, you will also find the link to some upcoming FLO activities. There's a FLO Friday, next month on August 18 on Open Pedagogy as Critical Pedagogy. And one in September about Embracing Teaching in the Digital Age. It's all about relationship and one AI microCourse. Thank you very much for being with me here and now. I will remain in the room in the next couple of minutes in case you have any questions. But other than that, have a fabulous Friday.