

You, Too, Can Use Video in Your PowerPoint Presentation (Apr 07)

A step-by-step guide

By Carl Fink

When you're speaking to an audience, you want them to be thinking about your message. They should be focused on you and what you're saying. You want them swept along, totally locked-in and following your flow. It doesn't help if you have to stop in the middle of a presentation and say, "Now just a minute while I switch to a different system and play this short video." The easiest way to avoid this is to combine all the components of your presentation into a single package.

If the video is actually included in your PowerPoint presentation and stored on your laptop, that's one whole source of delay and fumbling eliminated. You simply press the Enter (or other) key on your keyboard and the video plays.

Tools

Of course, you'll need a computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint to follow these instructions. The details of this article will involve PowerPoint 2003 running on Windows XP Professional. Only slight changes should be needed with other versions of PowerPoint or other operating systems.

In order to use video well with PowerPoint, you will need a video editing program. I use DeskShare's Video Edit Magic. If you use a different editor, you will have to adapt these instructions.

If the video you will be using comes on a DVD, you may need a program to "rip" the DVD video to a computer file. Video Edit Magic can read DVD video directly, so I won't be using a ripping program in my example.

How

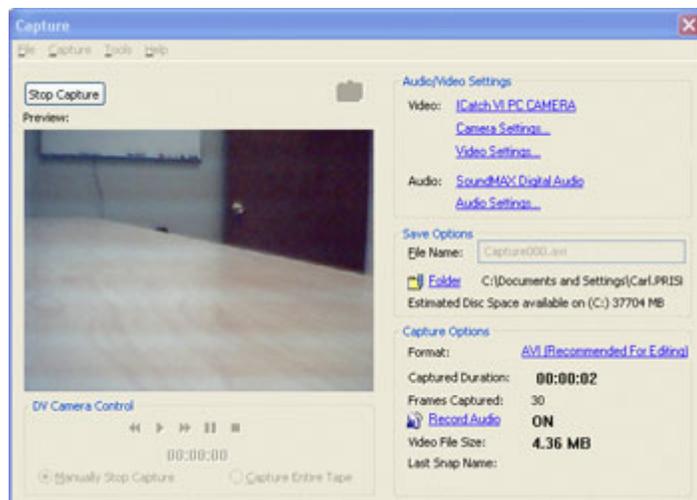
Let's do it. Let's say that I'm going to speak about HyperPackaging at a trade show. HyperPackaging has a great corporate video, about two minutes long. I want to open with two slides, then show the video.

The steps in doing that are very simple:

1. Prepare the video.
2. Embed the video into the presentation.
3. Set a "trigger" to tell PowerPoint when to play the video.
4. Package the presentation and video.

Preparing the Video

The preparation procedure will vary depending on how you get the video. If the corporate video is on videotape, I would have to "capture" the video to turn it into a file. Video Edit Magic has a built-in ability to capture video from digital cameras and players (see Figure 1), so that's easy. If the video is on DVD, you could just copy the video files off of it and edit them. (Some other video editors will not work with DVD files.) Once the video exists as a computer file, you will often need to edit it. During a presentation, you will generally not want to show long video



segments, so you may need to chop out pieces of a longer video. For instance, if you have an instructional video on a company product, you might want to cut out a 45-second long portion to use in a presentation on the product. Long video segments can be a problem in presenting—keep the pace snappy so your audience stays focused.

You can also change other video properties, but for this example I'll assume that everything else stays the same.

Most video editors will save the final movie in several different formats. For incorporation into a PowerPoint presentation, I favor WMV (Windows Media Video). You can create high quality WMV files at very reasonable sizes, and because it's a standard file type, almost any computer (including many non-Windows systems) should be able to play the video. That's especially important if you don't know in advance what computer you will be using.

Once you have created your video segment, it's a good idea to store it in the same directory (folder) that your presentation is stored in. Putting all the components of your presentation in one place makes it easier to find them.



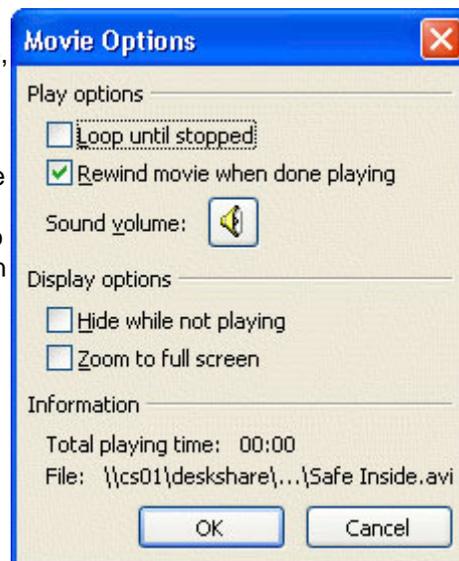
Now we can include the new video segment in the presentation. Figure 2 shows Slide 3 of the presentation. To add a video segment, I just open the Insert menu and choose Movies and Sounds, then select From File. Select the movie you just created and it appears in the PowerPoint file. You are prompted to have it run either Automatically, or When Clicked. If you select Automatically, as soon as you navigate to Slide 3 in your show, the video will play. If you want to introduce the slide, choose When Clicked.

It's that easy. Most of the work in using video in presentations is in the preparation of the video. Actually adding and using the video is simple.

Additional Options

There are some fancy things you can do. For instance, you can control whether the movie loops, or have it rewind back to the beginning after playing. These Movie Options can be set by right clicking on the movie and choosing Edit Movie Object (Figure 3). One especially useful thing you can do here is mute the video's sound. If you're going to be narrating the video yourself, you don't want to have to talk over the built-in sound track, and muting it in advance means one less thing to remember just before your talk—muting the computer volume.

The Movie Options window is also where you can tell PowerPoint to play the movie in full screen. The full screen option is especially good if you're going to



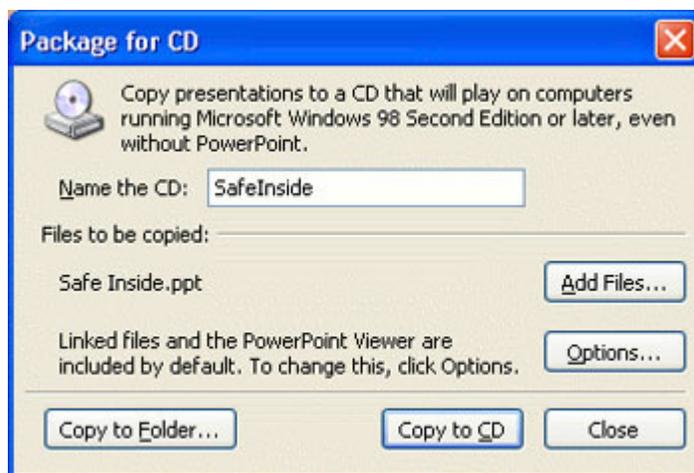
show a longer piece of video, where the PowerPoint framing it would be distracting. For shorter pieces of video, I recommend leaving the video in a window, to maintain continuity with the rest of the presentation.

One subtle point: If you distribute handouts printed from your presentation, they will show the first frame of the movie on that slide. If that isn't the best illustration for your handouts, you may want to put a different image there, maybe from later in the video, while printing handouts. Video Edit Magic has the ability to convert individual frames into JPEG snaps, which can easily be included in a presentation.

Distribution

After you put a lot of effort into a really good presentation, you probably don't like to just use it once and put it in a folder forever. If it goes over well at one trade show, it'll probably be used at others. And maybe versions will be sent to everyone in sales to use with customers. You'd hate to have each of them have to individually hunt for the video files.

The first time I used this technique (years and several versions of PowerPoint ago), I confidently put my presentation on a disk, carried it to the remote location, started the slide show, and discovered that I didn't have the video. Insert Movie does not actually copy the video information into the PowerPoint file. What's stored in your presentation is a pointer to the location of the video file. That's great if everything is on your laptop, not so good if you're in another city with only some of the materials for your presentation.



PowerPoint has a built-in answer. The Package for CD feature lets you combine the PowerPoint presentation itself, along with all associated sounds and movies, into a single package. Just click File, then Package for CD. (See Figure 4.) You can name the presentation, and save all the files, either directly to a CD, or to a folder. (If you like to carry presentations on your USB drive, the folder can be there.)

Now click the Options button. (See Figure 5.) You can choose to include the PowerPoint Viewer. That's a small

program that lets you display your presentation on Windows computers that don't have PowerPoint installed—very useful if you'll be presenting on a borrowed system. If the presentation contains trade secrets or time-sensitive information, you can password-protect your presentation, but be aware that the encryption in PowerPoint is not especially strong. Password protecting these files is more of a way to prevent accidental viewing than industrial espionage.

For CDs, the default setting has the presentation (or presentations) play automatically. If you prefer, you can



turn that off here. (Auto-play is very annoying if you're just going to be copying the files onto the computer's hard disk. There can be a delay of up to a minute or so while the presentation loads and starts to play before you can close it and start copying.)

Once you're selected the options, click either Copy to CD or Copy to Folder, and the presentation package is created. If you Copy to CD you'll be prompted to put a CD in the CD drive.

Finally

Every experienced presenter knows this, but you should run through your presentation at least once with the final setup before doing it for an audience. If you're using sound from your computer, be sure the computer is plugged into the room's sound system as well as the projector—you really don't want to depend on the built-in speakers in a laptop to fill an auditorium.

And don't obsess about the technical details. One reason for using this technique is to let you relax more when you're actually speaking, and not have to worry about flipping switches and changing software. Have fun!

Using the techniques in this article, you can simplify your job by including all your presentation materials, including video, in a single package that can be carried on a single disc. The key step is editing the video in advance. By doing that, and combining everything into one presentation, you free yourself from the need to change connections and software and load DVDs or tapes while you're in front of the audience, and to give your full attention to the most important part of your job: communicating with the audience.

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