Microspeak: PowerPoint Karaoke and the eye chart

devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20110524-00

May 24, 2011

Raymond Chen

The game *PowerPoint-Karaoke* was invented in 2006 by Zentrale Ingelligenz Agentur. In this game, contestants are called upon to give a PowerPoint presentation based on a slide deck they have never seen. (The German spelling uses a hyphen between the two words. When "translated" into English, the hyphen is often omitted.) At Microsoft, the term has been extended to refer to giving a presentation from slides prepared by somebody else, usually on short notice and therefore with little preparation.

> Bob is out sick today, so I'll be giving the overview. Sorry for the *PowerPoint Karaoke*.

This is shorthand for "Sorry if this presentation is a bit clumsy, but I'm stepping in on short notice, and I'm not completely familiar with this slide deck." In the context of PowerPoint presentations, an *eye chart* is a slide so dense with text that reading it is a test of visual acuity. The term is usually used as part of an apology for having created such a horrible slide in the first place. More generally, the term *eye chart* refers to any presentation of data in a ridiculously small font. For example, over in the sales/marketing part of Microsoft, there are spreadsheets with titles like *FY05 Sales Forecast Eye Chart*. Here's what one of them might look like:

Region		Jul 2005			Aug 2005			Se
		FY05 Fcst	FY04	Y-Y	FY05 Fcst	FY04	Y-Y	FY
Northeast	Widgets	57	57	0%	74	61	22%	
	Doodads	41	52	−22%	79	81	−3%	
	Gizmos	64	55	16%	95	88	7%	
Northeast Total		159	157	2%	138	168	−18%	
Southeast	Widgets	80	70	15%	75	82	-8%	
	Doodads	59	69	-14%	60	73	-17%	

Gizmos		75	89	-15%	59	61	-3%
Southeast Total		204	239	-15%	220	189	17%

(The abbreviation Y-Y is being used correctly for once. Writing the program to generate all this fake data took far, far longer than writing the rest of this posting! It got a lot easier once I realized that, since this is just fake data, *the totals don't have to add up*.) Giving the spreadsheet the title *Eye Chart* lets people know that this is the spreadsheet crammed with data to the point of information overload. If that's what you're looking for. I wouldn't be surprised if these uses of the terms *PowerPoint Karaoke* and *eye chart* are also popular at other companies.

Bonus chatter: Last year, I was asked to give a repeat of a presentation I hadn't given in several months. I had only a little bit of time to prepare, and there were times where I lost my place and had to refer to my notes (which I thankfully remembered to keep). It's embarrassing to find yourself playing PowerPoint Karaoke *to your own slide deck*.

Raymond Chen

Follow