

Clinton, Jack the Ripper and PowerPoint

 By [Sid Peimer](#)

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What might have been if Dr Martin Luther King Jr. had faced his audience in the hot summer of 1963, not with the words, "I have a dream," but instead, "I have a ... PowerPoint presentation"? Or Winston Churchill read, "We shall fight them on the beaches, and the rest of the areas on this slide."? The world would probably be a very different place.



Jon Steel, the author of *Truth, Lies and Advertising* (and lately, *Perfect Pitch*), reminds us that - if it's a pitch - being right and being the best are admirable qualities, but that's not what it's about. You're there to get hired. To be chosen.

We seem to have forgotten ourselves as we read off slides, hand over the summary document (a paper printout of the presentation, with disc) and then wait for the client's feedback. Somehow we have forgotten the most important ingredient of a presentation - its spirit. But we often kill it off right from the start - from the first PowerPoint slide followed by a cacophony of headlines and bullet points that scream so loud - that they say nothing.

Many users of PowerPoint are doing to the art of presentation what Jack the Ripper did for the art of dissection.

If there's one thing that represents the bulk of PowerPoint crime, it's just that: The One Thing. How many presentations have you walked (or crawled) out of, and remembered more than one point. Even yesterday's presentation - can you recall more than one or two points? Bill Clinton won his campaign on his understanding that, no matter how much detail you impart, it's always about 'The One Thing'.

That's why, on the front of Clinton's campaign war room was a piece of paper pinned to the wall, which read: "It's the economy, stupid!" Every time Clinton became engaged in public debate, he always reverted back to the economy. The message was simple - with Clinton in the White House, the population would prosper; with Bush, well, things would continue to get worse.

Coco Chanel believed that the hallmark of a great dress was that it didn't draw too much attention to itself. So, if a woman walked into a room and everyone said, "What a fabulous dress!" she had failed. Success came when the woman walked

into the room and people said "You look fabulous!" In the same way a presenter fails if people say, "What a great presentation!" They should rather say, "What a great message".

And you know what they do to the messenger.

Reference: Jon Steel. *Perfect Pitch*. John Wiley & Sons.

ABOUT SID PEIMER

Sid Peimer is the 'strategist at large' for the full service agency www.behp.co.za He always focuses on 'the one thing'; however, what that 'one thing' is varies from minute to minute. He can be found at www.stratplanning.com if he's not busy with the other thing.

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