recently put together a SlideShare version of a presentation I had created about the e-learning skills gap and it got me thinking about how standalone slideshows have evolved over the last few years as a new form of standalone content.

At first, the idea of a standalone slideshow doesn’t seem to make much sense. After all, what use are visual aids without the presenter they are supposed to be aiding? If you can simply upload your presentation slides to a website and they make perfect sense on their own, then it doesn’t reflect particularly well on your slides; the chances are that they were acting merely as a sort of public teleprompter, or what Nancy Duarte calls in her book *Slideology* a “slideument”.

The key is to approach a standalone slideshow as something quite separate from a live presentation, which usually means significant adaptation. It also means choosing the most appropriate delivery format. Here are some of the options:

**SlideShare**

SlideShare is essentially a text and graphics medium. It converts your slides to a simple sequence of still images, which can be viewed on the SlideShare site or embedded in another blog or web page. It’s a simple, low-bandwidth solution but one with a major implication in how you adapt your slides. Without narration, you need to ensure there is sufficient text on each slide for the presentation to make sense.

For the presentation I was putting together I had to create a special panel along the top of each slide for the narrative. It worked fine, but for more complex presentations with busier slides, providing adequate explanatory text might prove more difficult.

**Camtasia**

The end product here is a video consisting of your slides plus a narration. The tool I use is Camtasia, although there are alternatives.

Camtasia has several advantages as standalone slideshow producer. You get to use an auditory as well as a visual channel; any animations in your slides are retained; you may not have to alter the original slides; and you have plenty of alternative ways of distributing your content.

On the other hand, your slides will be heavily compressed and displayed in a small window, so complex or text-heavy slides won’t work. You also lose that handy self-pacing which comes with the SlideShare option.

**Prezi**

Of course, Microsoft’s PowerPoint slideshow software isn’t the only way to make a presentation. Prezi drops the slideshow metaphor altogether in favour of a giant canvas onto which you can drop all your presentation material. You can then pan around the canvas, zooming in on text, images, videos and other multimedia objects. Prezi outputs to Flash by default and so can be easily designed to stand alone as an online resource.

It’s tempting to turn your Prezi presentation into a video, using Camtasia or some similar screen capture tool, adding a narration and then distributing it to all the places that videos can go (which is just about anywhere). For a great example of this approach, take a look at Patrick Dunn’s excellent piece on creating engaging e-learning, displayed as a series of four videos on www.blip.tv.

**Flash**

This option gives the richest and most interactive results. By using a PowerPoint add-on such as Articulate or Adobe Presenter, you can extend your original presentation to include narration/video, questions, surveys, links and documentation. The result will be high-res and high quality, but may also require considerable bandwidth. You can upload the output to an LMS (with SCORM interoperability if you need it), an intranet or any other website you control, but you won’t get the mass coverage you get on YouTube/SlideShare or through mobile devices.

**Live to video**

This one’s so obvious it often gets forgotten. You simply video a presentation live and that’s it. Of course, it’s not always that simple. For the slides to display legibly, they probably need to be added in as part of the editing process rather than just shown in the background. You’ll also want to make sure you take a direct feed from the presenter’s microphone, rather than relying on the one built into the camera.

More options are appearing all the time. In most cases you should choose the one format that works best for you. However, if your presentation’s a real corker, then, hey, why not go for them all?

The presentation that I put together on SlideShare about the e-learning skills gap (which I’ve also written about on p12 of this issue of *e-learning age*) has so far received 2,500 viewings, so the effort is certainly worthwhile.

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