How to Give a Bad Talk

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Ten commandments (with annotations gleaned from Patterson's talk by Mark D. Hill):

I. Thou shalt not be neat

Why waste research time preparing slides? Ignore spelling, grammar and legibility. Who cares what 50 people think?

II. Thou shalt not waste space

Transparencies are expensive. If you can save five slides in each of four talks per year, you save $7.00/year!

III. Thou shalt not covet brevity

Do you want to continue the stereotype that engineers can't write? Always use complete sentences, never just key words. If possible, use whole paragraphs and read every word.

IV. Thou shalt cover thy naked slides

You need the suspense! Overlays are too flashy.

V. Thou shalt not write large

Be humble -- use a small font. Important people sit in front. Who cares about the riff-raff?

VI. Thou shalt not use color

Flagrant use of color indicates uncareful research. It's also unfair to emphasize some words over others.

VII. **Thou shalt not illustrate**

Confucius says ``*A picture = 10K words*,'' but Dijkstra says ``*Pictures are for weak minds.*'' Who are you going to believe? Wisdom from the ages or the person who first counted goto's?

VIII. **Thou shalt not make eye contact**

You should avert eyes to show respect. Blocking screen can also add mystery.

IX. **Thou shalt not skip slides in a long talk**

You prepared the slides; people came for your whole talk; so just talk faster. Skip your summary and conclusions if necessary.

X. **Thou shalt not practice**

Why waste research time practicing a talk? It could take several hours out of your two years of research. How can you appear spontaneous if you practice? If you do practice, argue with any suggestions you get and make sure your talk is longer than the time you have to present it.

Commandment X is most important. *Even if you break the other nine, this one can save you.*