



— WEBINAR —

# Working Faster (and Smarter) in PowerPoint



Nolan Haims





CreativePro



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# Presentation Design Conference



March 12–14, 2025

AN ONLINE EVENT

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*—Jay Newmarch, Owner, CRE8 Design LLC*





# Working Faster (and Smarter) in PowerPoint

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## Why Work Faster?

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It seems like an obvious question, but the real reason to always try to work faster in PowerPoint is not just to leave the office earlier, but to reduce the time spent on repetitive and non-creative tasks, freeing you up to do the real work of design, layout, and content creation.

It is easy to get into the weeds with PowerPoint, and end up spending most of your time moving things around, formatting, and searching for tools. It's also very easy to get into habits and acceptance that it takes 5 clicks to do something, when in reality there is a way to do it in 1 click.

Use what follows here and everything else you have at your disposal to spend less time on the un-fun stuff, and get to the things that matter more when creating presentations.

## A Little Preamble

### Templates

If you have a well-constructed template to work with, make use of it as much as possible. Make use of the color and font themes to allow for global edits and consistency as well as layouts and placeholders. It will also make things easier when moving slides between decks with different masters. There are times when using the “blank” layout is easiest and best, but don’t jump right to that choice. See what you can use from the template to begin with.

If you create templates, consider not only having a **template checklist** of what to do to create a proper template, but also have a **template starter file** with as much already done as possible. This is a better route than using an old template as a starting point as you never know what junk may have crept into another designed file.

And if you do create templates, you absolutely need to have a copy of **Building PowerPoint Templates**. It will save you from making tons of time-consuming mistakes.



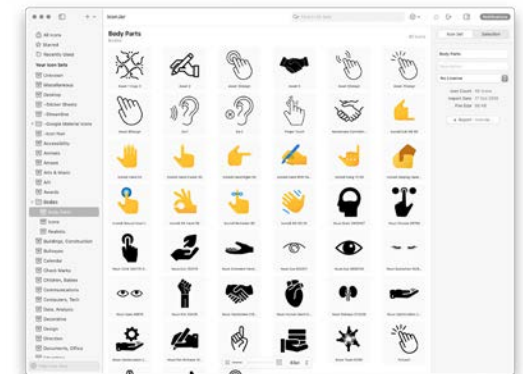
### Assets Libraries

If you find yourself remaking graphics or small graphic elements in PowerPoint more than once, you’re wasting time. **Keep a file with often used elements** you can copy and paste onto your slides.



Also keep a **collection of logos** (preferably in SVG format) as you source them for use in the future.

And if you use as many icons as I do, find a way to organize them for reuse as well. I use a small program called **IconJar** in addition to using the **Noun Project PowerPoint add-in** within PowerPoint (although the latter doesn’t allow you to maintain any type of collection.



IconJar

## Use a Mouse!

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I know you love your trackpad, but you really need to use a mouse to get the most out of PowerPoint. Any mouse with a right-click button will do as it will allow you to work in conjunction with your other hand on the keyboard to work faster. If you have a mouse with a scroll wheel, you can also take advantage of Logitech's **Spotlight for Mouse** to highlight parts of your screen while you present--something that will amp up your remote game.



## Cmd-D For Design

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I rarely use Cmd-Z/Ctrl-Z (Undo) when designing slides, because **I always make a habit of duplicating a slide first with Cmd-D/ Ctrl-D to give me a test slide to try out my edits or design.** If it get to a point where I don't like something, I simply delete the slide and go back to the original. Or, if I do like what I've done, I delete the original. It costs nothing and takes a fraction of a second to do.

You can duplicate slides in Slide Sorter or in the thumbnail pane.



## QAT

The QAT, or Quick Access Toolbar is a **customizable toolbar preference that can be activated in any Office App** (they are distinct to each program), and can contain a set of most-used tools including tools that might not actually even be available in the normal ribbons. Rather than hunting and pecking or drilling down a few levels to get to “align left,” you can place these tools at your fingertips to be always available regardless of which tab you’re in.

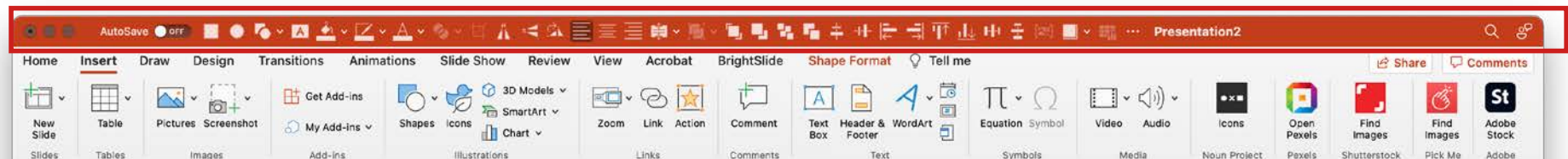
It’s available on the Mac and the PC, although it’s a little less powerful on the Mac as you can only place it above the Ribbon, and there is occasional bugginess and missing functions.

You can customize the QAT on the Mac by going to **Preferences: Ribbon & Toolbar...**

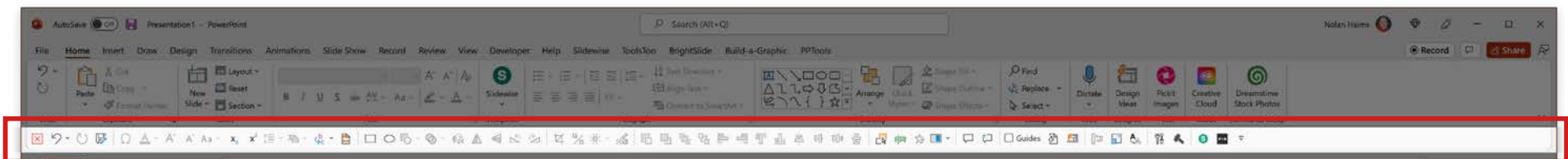
A larger version of my QAT on the PC with notations is on the next page.

On the PC, the QAT is more powerful and more useful. You can right-click any tool at any time in the Ribbon to add it to the QAT, you can set the QAT below the Ribbon for easier access, and you can actually export or import the customization file to share between computers. This last point is important to know as the QAT lives locally on your computer, not in a PPT file or as part of your account. If IT swaps out your computer at some

*QAT on the Mac*

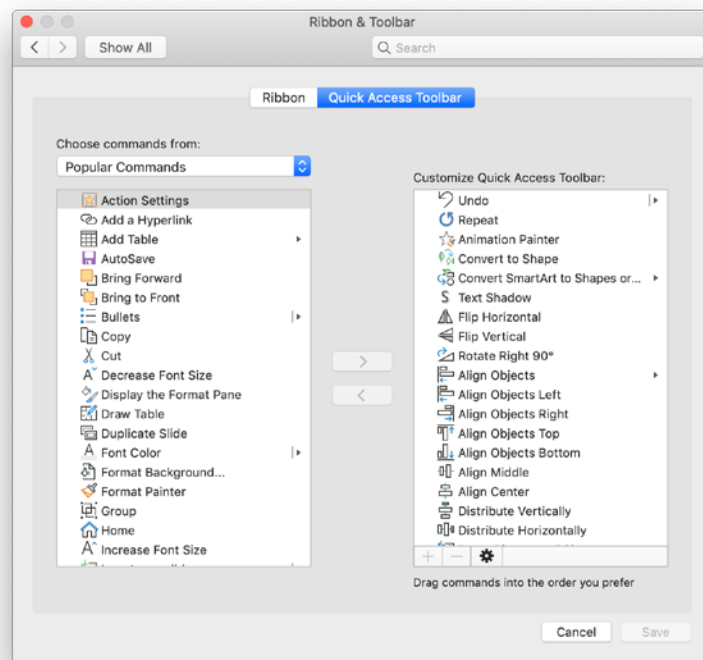


*QAT on the PC*

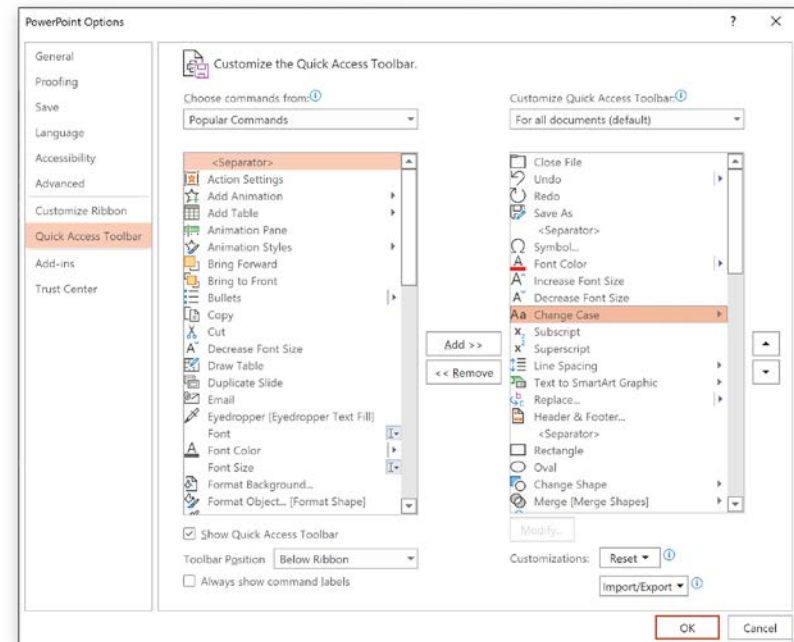


point or has to reinstall Office, you will lose your QAT unless you have saved out a backup of it. Customize your QAT under PowerPoint Options, or click the arrow at the end of it and go to “More Commands.” Power User tip: Put your most used tools in the center of the QAT where your mouse can access them with as little travel as possible.

More on the QAT from Microsoft [here](#), and you can download my own starter set for the PC from [NolanHaimsCreative.com/goodies](#).



Mac QAT customization interface



PC QAT customization interface

1. Close 13. Convert to SmartArt 25. Crop 37. Align Center 49. Design Ideas

2. Undo 14. Replace 26. Shadow On/Off 38. Align Middle 50. Swap Objects\*

3. Redo 15. Header/Footer 27. Picture Corrections 39. Distribute Horizontally 51. Match Size\*

4. Save As 16. Rectangle 28. Set Transparent Color 40. Distribute Vertically 52. Text to Outlines\*

5. Symbol 17. Oval 29. Send Backward 41. Selection Pane 53. Thor Memorize\*

6. Font Color 18. Change Shape 30. Bring Forward 42. Animation Pane 54. Thor Hammer\*

7. Increase Font Size 19. Merge Shapes 31. Send to Back 43. Animation Painter 55. Slidewise\*

8. Decrease Font Size 20. Convert to Shape 32. Bring to Front 44. Transitions 56. Noun Project\*

9. Change Case 21. Flip Horizontal 33. Align Left 45. Comments 57. More Commands/

10. Subscript 22. Flip Vertical 34. Align Right 46. Insert Comment Customize...

11. Superscript 23. Rotate Left 90° 35. Align Top 47. Guides

12. Line Spacing 24. Rotate Right 90° 36. Align Bottom 48. Format Background

\*3rd party add-in

## Brightslide

There are many 3rd party add-ins for PowerPoint, but if you use only one, then it has to be **Brightslide** from the presentation design firm BrightCarbon. Not only has it been designed by and for designers, but it is absolutely free and is one of the only add-ins available for the Mac and the PC. It can be downloaded [here](#).

Brightslide extends PowerPoint's functionality by adding a new ribbon containing scores of tools such as sizing and placement

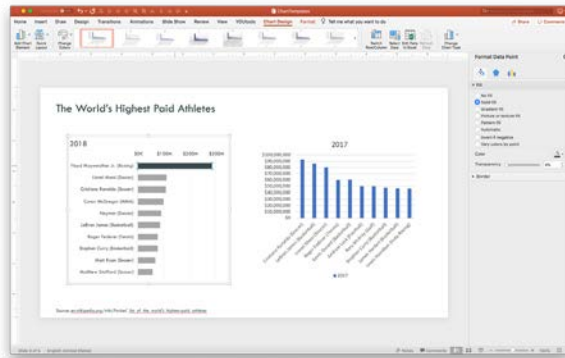
tools (also available through a right-click), real-time typography adjustment, merge/split text boxes, an animation library, a much easier dialogue for editing theme colors, batch export tools and more. Install it, and take some time to go through all the tools and you'll quickly wonder how you used PowerPoint without it. Notated below are just a few of the many valuable tools

The image shows the PowerPoint ribbon with the **BrightSlide** tab selected. Below the ribbon, red arrows point from specific tools to descriptive text boxes:

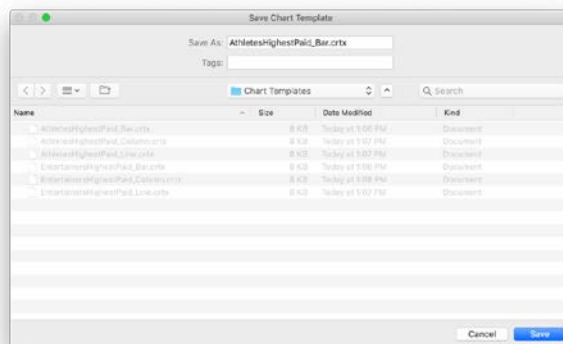
- Align to Slide**: Easily align and distribute a series of objects like a page full of logos
- Repeat & Distribute**: Create an instant grid of shapes or objects
- Match Size**: Click once to autocrop and set an image to fill the slide
- Match to Slide**: Copy and paste the formatting, size, position, and more of almost anything on your slide including charts and tables!
- Multi-painter**: Adjust paragraph, line, and character spacing with a live preview!
- Typography**: Adjust paragraph, line, and character spacing with a live preview!
- Select Objects**: Temporarily hide or lock an item on a slide
- Merge Text**: Combine multiple text boxes into one or split a single text box into multiple ones
- Split Text**: Combine multiple text boxes into one or split a single text box into multiple ones
- Text Margins**: Swap the positions of two objects with a click
- Add to Group**: Swap the positions of two objects with a click
- My Animations**: Save programmed animations into a library and apply them at any time
- Animate to Last**: Control motion paths and pacing of animations
- Animation Painter**: Save programmed animations into a library and apply them at any time
- Animation Painter+**: Control motion paths and pacing of animations
- Utilities**: Control motion paths and pacing of animations
- Guides**: Create and edit color palettes with a far better interface; create a grid using PowerPoint guides instantly
- Theme Colors**: Create and edit color palettes with a far better interface; create a grid using PowerPoint guides instantly
- Batch**: Save selected slides as a new file and take more control over exporting slides as images
- Review**: Save selected slides as a new file and take more control over exporting slides as images
- Export**: Save selected slides as a new file and take more control over exporting slides as images
- Legacy Tools**: A ton of additional tools including turning text into outlines
- Settings**: A ton of additional tools including turning text into outlines
- Help**: A ton of additional tools including turning text into outlines
- About**: A ton of additional tools including turning text into outlines

## Chart Templates

Designing effective charts can be time-consuming, and PowerPoint's formatting features are not always as intuitive as they should be. When you need to apply similar formatting to multiple charts, consider using PowerPoint Chart Templates.

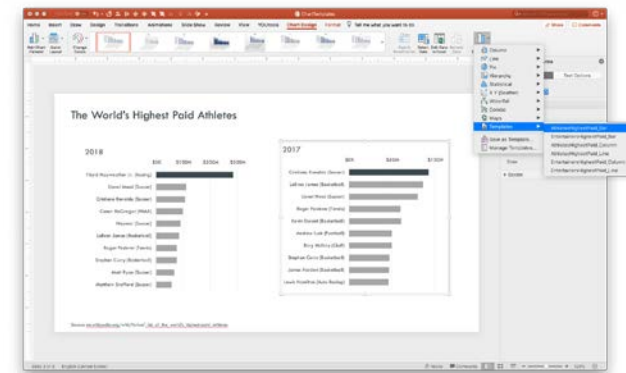


Once you have a chart designed the way you want it to look, right-click and save it as a "Template" which will save it as a .CRTX file. Give it an identifying name.



Note that you must save it in the default location that Microsoft prompts. (It won't work if it lives anywhere else.)

To apply this saved style to the any other chart in a presentation, all you need to do is select the target chart, select from the Chart Design tab, Change Chart Type: Templates... and select the appropriate saved template.



If you have a deck with dozens of similar charts, you can easily see the time savings Chart Templates can provide. The screenshots above are from the Mac, but functionality on the PC is essentially the same except that the Change Chart Type dialog includes thumbnail images of your saved templates. But be forewarned: These thumbnails are not the most detailed or accurate, so be detailed when naming them.

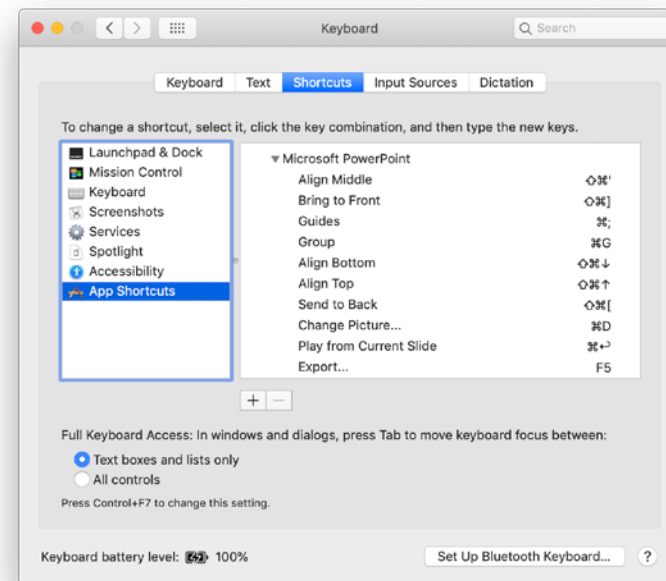
# Keyboard Shortcuts

## Mac Shortcuts

While the QAT is a huge productivity tool, nothing beats keyboard shortcuts. On the PC, you're limited to what Microsoft gives you for shortcuts, but on the Mac you can create your own—not through PowerPoint, but through the **Mac OS Keyboard Shortcuts preferences under App Shortcuts**. You can actually use this Mac OS feature to create shortcuts or change shortcuts for any program. These are my custom Mac OS-level shortcuts I have created for PowerPoint. You might notice that some of these like the align tools and guides are the same as in Adobe—it's always a good thing to have the same shortcuts across all programs when possible.

Align Middle	⇧⌘'
Bring to Front	⇧⌘]
Guides	⌘;
Group	⌘G
Align Bottom	⇧⌘↓
Align Top	⇧⌘↑
Send to Back	⇧⌘[
Change Picture...	⌘D
Play from Current Slide	⌘↵
Export...	F5
Align Center	⇧⌘\
Play from Start	⇧⌘↶
Align Left	⇧⌘←
Align Right	⇧⌘→
Ungroup	⇧⌘G
Send to Front	⇧⌘]

My Mac OS PowerPoint shortcuts



The Mac OS keyboard shortcut settings interface



How I align items on a slide



## Native PowerPoint Shortcuts

There are still many built-in shortcuts for both PC and the Mac that you should be using if you aren't. These are the ones I can't live without:

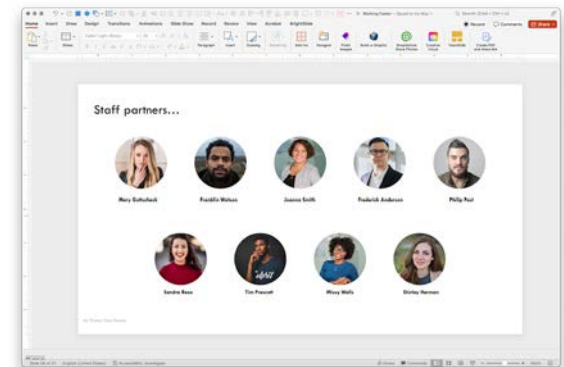
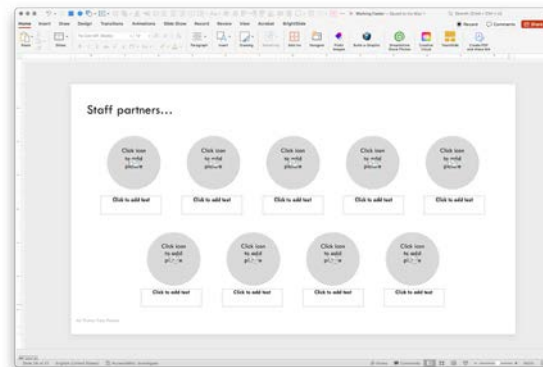
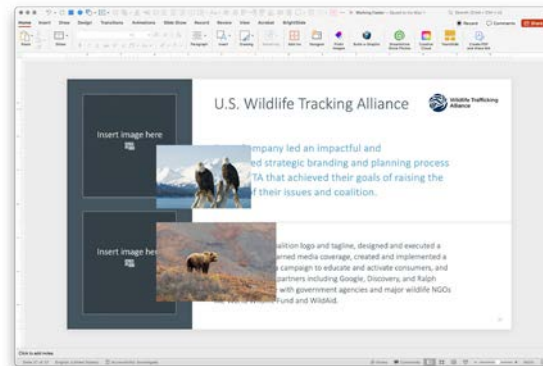
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+C** = Copy object style
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+V** = Paste object style
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+D** = Duplicate object or slide
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+Y** = Repeat last action
- ▶ **Ctrl+Mouse Drag** = Duplicate object (add Shift to constrain direction)
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+> or <** = Increase or Decrease font size
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+Down Arrow** ↑ **or** ↓ = Send slide to first/last from sidebar thumbnails
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+G** = Group
- ▶ **Ctrl/Cmd+Shift+G** = Ungroup

And for so much more on shortcuts and Office efficiency, check out [NutsAndBoltsSpeedTraining.com](https://NutsAndBoltsSpeedTraining.com).

## Picture Placeholders

Picture Placeholders in a Master Layout are unique in that, unlike a typical content placeholder, they will auto-crop placed images making it much easier to maintain consistency of layout across multiple slides of images and making it easier to create a quick grid of matching cropped images on a single slide.

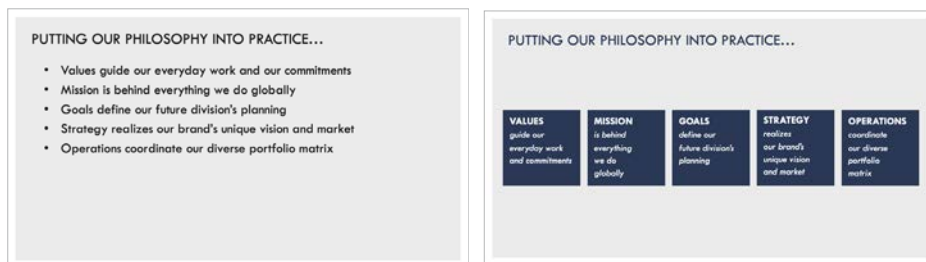
I often create a custom Master Layout of aligned picture placeholders on a one-off basis in a deck just for a single slide. For example, if I need to create a “Teams” slide like the one to the right, I’ll make a layout of picture placeholders and then just drag in my images all at once or Command-C and Command-V from the finder and watch as my images magically drop into the placeholders already cropped. If any of the croppings are not exactly what I wanted, I can still manually adjust them.





# Chunking

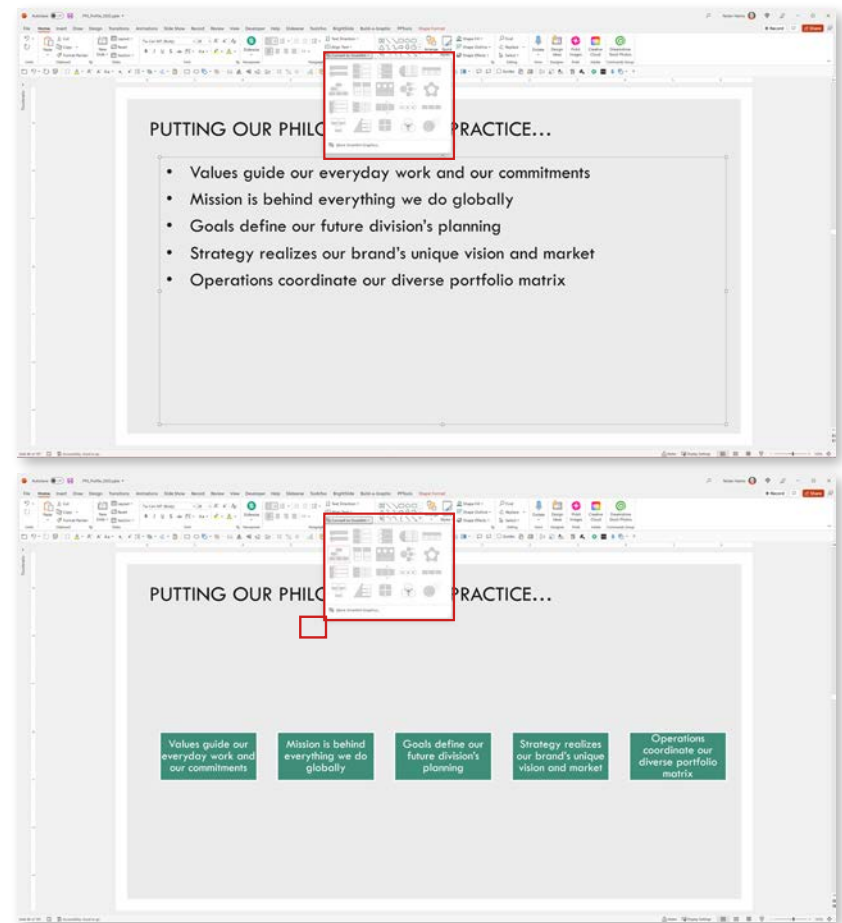
Whenever you are faced with a slide of bullet points, take each one and lay them out in horizontally (and graphically) on the page in small “chunks.” This will make them far easier to read and digest by your audience.



Once you understand the principle, you can chunk information in many different ways including adding icons, images, placing chunks in circle or a grid, etc.

## The SmartArt shortcut

You can quickly chunk a text box of bullets by using Convert to SmartArt under the Home Tab and then ungrouping the SmartArt into its series of individual text boxes so you can continue to design them. I generally use Organization Chart or Hierarchy List. Below are screenshots from the PC where you actually get a preview of the SmartArt before applying it.



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