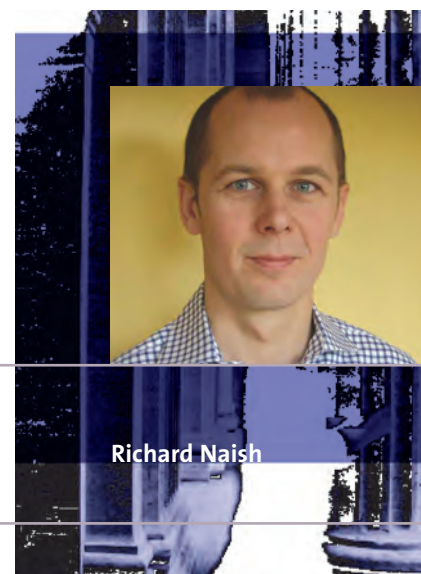


# Make it snappy

The quick-fire, illustrated presentation of Pecha Kucha has proved a popular success with e-learners



Richard Naish

**A** recent eLearning Network (ELN) event found four very brave presenters to have a go at the first Pecha Kucha tournament at a UK e-learning event. Does this dynamic non-profit community group know no bounds? Last month I talked about how the Pecha Kucha format could be used in learning, so let's look at how it worked. Pe-cha-ku-cha is the onomatopoeic Japanese word for 'chit-chat' and is a bit of a tongue-twister, so check out this YouTube link for its pronunciation by a Japanese person to practice it yourself: <http://tinyurl.com/ya9zurk>.

## The format

You have to give your presentation with only 20 slides, with each automatically advancing every 20 seconds. That gives you 400 seconds, or just under seven minutes, to get your points across. There is no pausing and no going back, so the classic error of over-running your presentation is simply not possible.

ELN was keen to see how it played in the learning environment, since it has proved very popular, with Pecha Kucha nights in 230 cities around the world. The four presenters gamely accepted the challenge and the audience loved it. What the presenters didn't know when they agreed to it, was that their presentations were going to be scored (albeit in the typical ELN light-hearted manner) by three judges sitting in the audience. ELN plans to run this format as a small post-lunch energising session in their face-to-face events this year. Then the highest-scoring presenters will be invited back to go "head-to-head" at a grand final at the last ELN event of the

year. Each gave a completely different presentation, from talking about personal and work challenges, to inspiring us all to blog.

## The experience

Clearly, with only 20 slides, you have to be very picky about what goes on each one. And with only 20 seconds for each slide, it is just not possible to cover the typical five bullet points of text. So instead, our presenters picked one or two images with no more than a line or two of text to speak to. These acted as cue cards for the presentation.

If a presenter prefers to be prompted by text flashcards, or is concerned about running out of time before getting the points across, it is tempting to script the presentation and read it out. Although completely understandable given that it must be a nerve-racking experience to 'compete' in front of your peers, this didn't seem as natural as the unscripted presentations that just used the images as cues.

The most popular presentations used humour, had some well-selected unusual images and challenged the audience to think and reflect. One even went so far as to have a few five-second bouts of audience interaction with sweets thrown out as rewards, which added to the frenetic pace of the presentation style.

## Beating the post-lunch dip


Pecha Kucha certainly acted as the ultimate antidote to the famous "post-lunch dip" that affects training events. Cheekily trainers have been known to give the graveyard slot to unsuspecting visiting speakers. Apparently humans have the most need for sleep at two points in the day, 12 hours apart: at 2am and 2pm. So delegates can't help it – biologically they

feel sleepy and less able to concentrate at this time. Maybe Pecha Kucha will be adopted in other face-to-face workshops as a post-lunch dip-beater.

## Make a bigger impact

Pecha Kucha has been called an "emotionally intelligent" presentation style since it taps into our human nature; something standard presentations don't always do. It encourages an over-arching narrative to the presentation; people have always loved storytelling. It also caters to a realistic human attention span and uses images and people's passion to engage the audience. The more passion one has, the easier it is to speak for 20 seconds about just one image. Psychologically, images and storytelling tend to fire up many different areas in the brain and link them, stimulating the audience to stay focussed.

But not only is the audience focussed, the presenter has to be very focussed when preparing the presentation. They will have had to cut out much of their first draft, leaving in the best and most engaging pieces of their presentation. This focus and the brain-stimulating effect have a positive impact on the retention of key messages. Pecha Kucha could be used to add spice to training seminars and annual conferences. It could even be used as an appetiser when pitching for a new piece of work.

The irony is that with a 400 second presentation, one may be able to make a bigger impact than a 30-minute presentation slot. 

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You can see the presentations from this event, 'Proven e-learning Success Stories', on [www.elearningnetwork.org](http://www.elearningnetwork.org)

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