

Why Flowgram Beats SlideShare Hands Down



Lori MacVittie, 2008-25-09

There are a lot of things you can share on the Web today - you can bookmark pages, share pictures on [Flickr](#) or [twitpic](#), blast a 12 second audio message out, e-mail links, or post nifty tidbits to your [Facebook](#) profile. But rarely do you find an online tool that lets you bring all that disparate content together in one elegant presentation-like format.

[Flowgram](#) aims to change the way you share content, by allowing you to [mashup](#) multiple media formats into a single, audio-backed "flowgram", sharable across a large number of social networking sites as well as via more traditional channels (IM and e-mail). Flowgram take the presentation paradigm and dresses it up; giving it a hip, trendy look and feel that makes it appealing to just about anyone.

A flowgram is essentially a mashup of content: video, audio, text, presentations, photos, and web pages. Much like a traditional presentation, information is presented in linear fashion and timing of each page is user configurable. Audio can be imported or recorded within the web-based editor. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on how you look at it), I'm suffering from a pretty nasty cold and wasn't willing to narrate my flowgram.

A couple of popular Flowgrams that demonstrate the use of more visual media more effectively:

[Google Zeitgeist Europe 2008 by Joi](#)
[Digg Picks of the Week by brick](#)

After talking to the good folks at Flowgram, viewing a few public Flowgrams, and then creating a couple Flowgrams myself, Flowgram beats [SlideShare](#) hands down in ability to mashup different kinds of content and easily sharing presentations along with narration. Bringing in audio, video, and even text to augment or spice up a presentation is a huge advantage that SlideShare can't offer at this time.

Another huge advantage of Flowgram over SlideShare is audio. Unlike SlideShare, Flowgram gives you the ability to keep the audio with the content rather than requiring you to synchronize with a remotely stored audio stream. Flowgram allows you to record audio during the creation process or import and synchronize, which means you won't have to worry that jitter or congestion will throw off that synchronization during playback.

THE GOOD

- Imports a wide variety of content, including PowerPoint, PDF, a Word documents, web pages, photos, RSS/Atom feeds, and video
- Can create custom text-based pages as well, complete with working hyperlinks
- Bookmarklets make the process of inserting live web pages a breeze
- Notes can be added to pages for additional info, good for images needing a bit of context

THE BAD

- Like other web-based solutions, animations in PowerPoint presentations are stripped
- Each page in a flowgram is restricted to one type of content. Mixing and matching of content in a single page is not possible, though images can be included in a custom page.
- SSL encrypted pages can't be inserted and

- Flowgrams can be easily shared to a wide variety of social networking sites
- Rearranging pages is simple - drag and drop
- Highlighting of text simple and editable
- Can share finished Flowgram as a YouTube video
- Can share Flowgrams publicly or privately
- saved
- Notes inserted on pages don't appear in the embedded version of a flowgram
- [OpenID](#) is not currently supported, though it is on the roadmap
- Custom text pages aren't easily readable in embedded versions
- Embedded version less impactful and functional in general than full version

For the curious, I whipped out [HttpFox](#) (my newest favorite analyzer and [FireFox](#) add-on, by the way) and checked out what was going on under the covers. It is, as expected of most [Web 2.0/AJAX-based applications](#), a [very chatty application](#). There's lots of [AJAX](#) calls going on to retrieve content and to record API usage statistics.

Custom text and images are transferred as *text/html* and the appropriate image types, as expected. PowerPoint is apparently converted into SWF, and is served, interestingly enough, by a host named "ppt.flowgram.com".

If you haven't checked it out, head on over and view a few flowgrams or try making one yourself. Whether you are looking for a good way to share images and stories with family and friends, demonstrating how to use an application, or a way to get the message out about your latest widget or gadget, you'll probably find a good way to do it with a flowgram.



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