

03/2026

BRAND SIGNALS

Where brands come to work

“At that point, we might as well just have the slides read aloud.”

AI can create impressive presentations these days. But does that make us better communicators? Stephan Kuhnert, co-founder and co-CEO of empower®, explores the polished veneer of AI-generated content, the frustration of being stuck on hold, and the danger of outsourcing our own thinking.



Impressive at first glance. Surprisingly formulaic on closer inspection.

Question: Stephan, ChatGPT, Claude, and Copilot can now create some seriously impressive presentations. Doesn't that mean we've pretty much solved the problem?

Stephan: The progress over the past six months has been incredible. Some of the slides AI produces today are things I would never have come up with myself. But there's a big difference between testing a sample slide and thinking, "Wow, that looks great!" and actually presenting it to a client. That's when I start asking myself: Is this really the message I want to convey? Is this how I want to tell the story?

And while the slides look polished, they also look remarkably alike. It's the same boxes, circular icons, and soft background colors every time. I ran 12 completely different types of content through AI, from an org chart to a dashboard. It was fascinating to see just how similar the results looked!

Stephan Kuhnert is an entrepreneur at heart and an expert in Microsoft 365, PowerPoint, and intelligent business software.
As co-founder and co-CEO of empower®, he has spent more than 20 years making Office applications easier and more efficient to use.
He is especially passionate about the possibilities AI brings to presentation creation.
His focus is on technology that genuinely makes people's jobs easier and helps them create professional, compelling, and on-brand presentations in less time.

The AI veneer: Why even good AI presentations start to look alike

Question: But if every slide looks great on its own, why does that bother you so much?

Stephan: Imagine the best speaker in the world. If they speak for 30 minutes in the same monotone, at the same pace, without a single pause, everyone will fall asleep. It's exactly the same with these AI-generated slides. A presentation needs rhythm. Sometimes it's a bold statement, sometimes an image that stirs emotion. A presentation is a communication tool, not just a collection of pretty boxes.

That said, generative AI is still a huge step forward! We used to have those depressing bullet-point lists, like a professor droning through 17 bullet points in eight-point font. It was awful! Today, even people with little presentation experience can create something visually appealing.

The real presentation takes shape as you develop the content

Question:AI makes better slides, but not necessarily better presentations. What's missing?

Stephan: Above all, the thinking that happens while you're creating a presentation. When I put one together, I'm actively working through my ideas. As I develop the content, I start to see whether my arguments hold up, whether I need to visualize something differently, or whether I should change the order. I can't just toss a presentation into AI like some throwaway email draft. “Clean it up, copy, paste, done.” That's not how it works.

“If we ever reach a point where everyone just submits a prompt and walks into a meeting with whatever comes back, that would be a nightmare.”

If we ever reach a point where everyone just submits a prompt and walks into a meeting with whatever comes back, that would be a nightmare.

At that point, we might as well just read our slides aloud, because we wouldn't even know exactly what's in them. Or better yet, have an AI agent read them aloud for us.



Waiting and context switching can wipe out AI's time savings

Question: But AI can at least give you a first draft to work from. Doesn't that save time?

Stephan: Sure, at least I'm not staring at a blank page anymore. But a first draft is still a long way from a finished presentation. I go through it slide by slide, rewrite key points, and talk through each slide in my head to see what works and what doesn't.

Am I supposed to write a new prompt for every change and then wait another five minutes? I'd rather grab my mouse and fix the slide right in PowerPoint. I'm already fully immersed in the topic.



Sometimes I wonder afterward: Did AI actually save me time? Or did it just give me a different starting point, only for me to end up redoing everything anyway?

Question: Couldn't you work on something else while the AI is running?

Stephan: That's exactly what I do! If an AI tool takes five or ten minutes, I move on to another task. Sometimes I have ChatGPT and Claude working on three different topics at once.

Even though I'm usually good at handling a heavy workload, that constant context switching wears me out. I have to get back up to speed every time. Sometimes I need to reread a full page just to remember what I asked the AI to do. At some point, it doesn't feel efficient anymore.

Is your AI-generated presentation really ready?

5 questions to ask yourself before your next meeting

1. **Does your presentation tell a compelling story, or is it just a collection of good-looking slides?**
2. **Does the design truly reflect your brand's identity, or is it just close enough to your brand guidelines?**
3. **Is the content accurate and reliable? Have existing, approved slides been considered?**
4. **Can you easily edit the slides without the layout falling apart?**
5. **Do you fully understand the key arguments and feel confident presenting them convincingly?**

Great presentation AI needs to put company knowledge to work

Question: In a business setting, presentations also need to be on-brand and easy to edit. Can't the major AI models handle that by now?

Stephan: With a good brand kit, you can get results that are pretty close to your brand guidelines these days. But is getting the right shade of blue really enough? What about what makes a brand unique?

And there's another problem. If the headline, subheadline, and body text are all separate text boxes stacked on top of each other, I have to readjust everything just because someone on the executive team wants a longer headline. Before you know it, you're playing PowerPoint Tetris.

Question: Shouldn't AI just reuse existing slides instead of generating everything from scratch?

Stephan: Exactly! Our research into how companies use Office shows that the content on nearly half the slides in corporate presentations already exists somewhere. Yet ten employees will have AI generate the same information from scratch and end up with ten different versions. That's absurd! It wastes money and creates unnecessary inconsistencies.

A smart AI tool should say, "Hey, this slide already exists. Want me to pull up the original?"

That's exactly the approach we take at empower®. Reuse what already exists and only generate something new when you actually need to. It's also what makes our AI so much faster.

General-purpose AI models and specialized applications serve different purposes

Question: But the major AI models keep getting better. Isn't it just a matter of time before they solve these problems too and make specialized tools obsolete?

Stephan: It's hard to predict the future, of course. But I don't think the big AI providers are aiming to perfect every little detail of every specific use case. They're focused on the bigger picture.

For them, creating presentations is just one of countless things their models can do. But for someone who spends half their workday building presentations, those seemingly minor details make all the difference.

Think of the iPhone. You have iOS as the platform, with specialized apps built on top of it to solve specific problems. I think specialized AI applications will work the same way, building on the major AI models. And as those models get better, everyone benefits.

I just wouldn't count on ChatGPT magically turning into the perfect solution for every business workflow someday.



Human experience is still essential to judging AI-generated work

Question: You can tell whether an AI-generated result is any good. But how will people develop that kind of experience in the future if AI keeps taking more and more work off their hands?

Stephan: That's exactly what worries me. It's a huge risk. If I understand what makes a good presentation, AI can be incredibly helpful. But how is someone supposed to learn that if AI spoon-feeds them everything from day one?

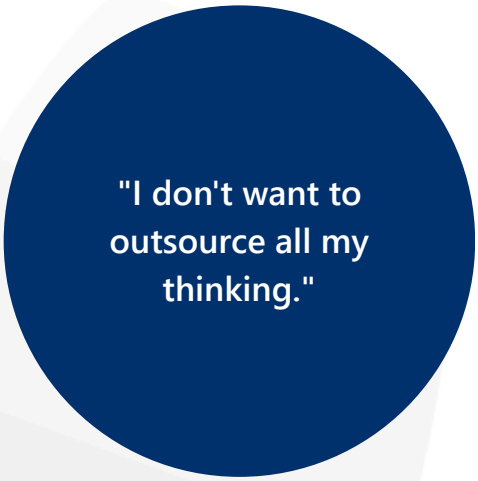
You develop that critical eye over years of experience, including making mistakes along the way. Just because a slide looks professional doesn't mean it's any good.

If I get a boring AI-generated email, I can just close it. But when I'm sitting in a meeting and someone announces they're about to give a presentation, I'm usually too polite to say after three seconds, "Sorry, I'm not sitting through this crap."

Question: What would your ideal role for AI look like?

Stephan: I want AI to make suggestions and handle the routine work. But I'm the one who decides what story to tell. I don't want to outsource all my thinking.

Because if we eventually reach a point where AI agents create presentations and other AI agents consume them, we won't need presentations anymore. The machines might as well just send text files back and forth.



Four key takeaways from this issue

AT A GLANCE

01 Good slides need dramaturgy.

AI can now create impressive individual slides. But repetitive layouts can quickly give a presentation that generic AI look. Visual variety and thoughtful storytelling are what turn good-looking slides into a compelling presentation.

02 Time savings are realized throughout the work process.

A quick first draft doesn't always mean greater productivity. Long generation times, constant context switching, and extensive revisions can wipe out those time savings.

03 Intelligent AI leverages existing resources.

Companies don't need endless new versions of the same content. Good presentation AI should find and reuse existing, approved slides, generating something new only when it's truly needed.

04 Experience remains essential to effective communication.

AI can make presentation design easier, but people remain responsible for the message. Evaluating results, questioning assumptions, and presenting ideas convincingly still require human knowledge and experience.

Beyond the slides

Three surprising discoveries about AI, creativity, and collaboration



Same Image. Different Label. Different Verdict.

How much does knowing where a work of art comes from shape how we see it? In one study, people rated paintings more highly when told they were created by a human rather than AI. The difference was especially clear when it came to beauty, meaning, and value.

Here's the twist. Every single piece was AI-generated.



Five Weeks of Work. Then the Ad Was Pulled.

McDonald's in the Netherlands pulled an AI-generated Christmas ad in 2025 after a wave of criticism. Many viewers found the visuals unsettling, the cuts jarring, and the message cynical. According to the production company, ten people worked on the ad full-time for five weeks.

The lesson? Plenty of AI behind the scenes doesn't guarantee applause from the audience.



More AI. More Human Connection?

Surprisingly, people who use AI frequently report stronger relationships with their teams. An international Gensler study of more than 16,400 office workers found that frequent AI users spend less time alone and more time learning and socializing than those who use AI less often.

In short, maybe AI doesn't automatically make us lonelier. Sometimes, it might even make us more social.

Markenwissen zum Mitnehmen

Beyond Copilot: Smarter PowerPoint Slides with empower® AI
A webinar offering a practical look at AI-powered presentation creation.
empowersuite.com/en/webinar-beyond-copilot-video

10 Presentation Hacks for Greater Impact
Practical tips for more compelling presentations and clearer messaging.
empowersuite.com/en/blog/10-hacks-for-presentations

Corporate Design Report: Facts, Figures, and Practical Tips
Research findings and insights on brand consistency across company documents.
empowersuite.com/en/knowledge/e-books/pp-corporate-design-report-25-025

empower GmbH
KölnTurm
Im Mediapark 8
50670 Cologne
+49 221 99378577

➡️ empowersuite.com

request@empowersuite.com