9 Principles of Design You Must Master for Perfect Slide Compositions

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INTRODUCTION

Design are an art and craft.

Got flustered on noticing our grammatical mistake? It was intentional. The only intention was to underscore the importance of following the rules of grammar. Without rules, there will be chaos. Everyone would be marching to the beat of their own drum and no one will get anywhere.

The same applies to the field of design as well. There are certain rules or principles that need to be followed to make sense to others and communicate a message effectively. Therefore, the principles of design are the rules that a designer must follow to make a good composition. Can these rules be broken? Only when the situation demands so.

So, what are these principles of design? They are 9 in number:

1. Balance
2. Contrast
3. Emphasis
4. Movement
5. Repetition
6. White Space
7. Proximity
8. Proportion
9. Unity

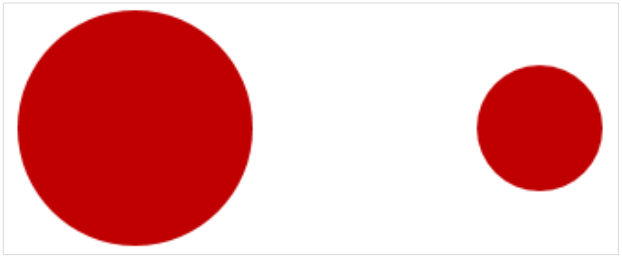
Understanding Visual Weight

Before understanding each design principle, understand the term visual weight. Every design element, be it a font, color, icon, image, or diagram carries weight. The ones bigger in size are perceived to be heavier in weight as compared to elements smaller in size. A bold 72-point Arial will carry more visual weight as compared to 12-point Arial. A bold **Arial 12 point** will be heavier than a regular Arial 12 point.

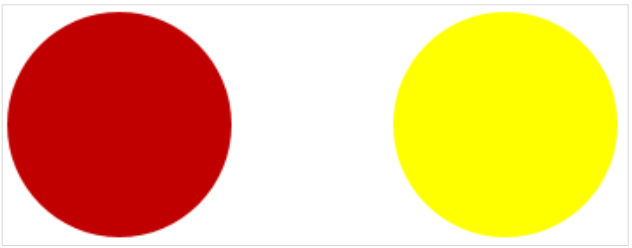
Visual weight is also a measure of how much attention it grabs of the viewer. If any element is noticed first by the viewer, it has more visual weight as compared to the element that is noticed later. Why is it important to understand visual weight? Because while designing, we play with elements of varying visual weights to create a visual hierarchy.

Here are some factors that create differences in weight:

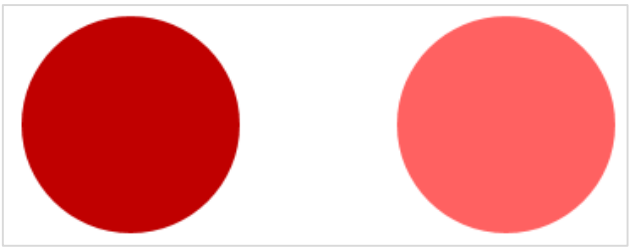
Size - Larger elements are heavier as compared to smaller ones.



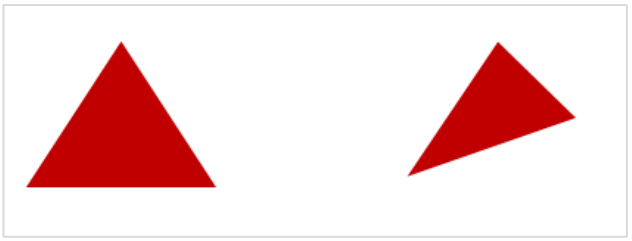
Color - Red is considered the heaviest color. The tint and shade of the color also influences the weight.



Lightness/Darkness - Darker elements are heavier as compared to lighter ones.



Shape - Regular shapes are perceived heavier as compared to irregular shapes.

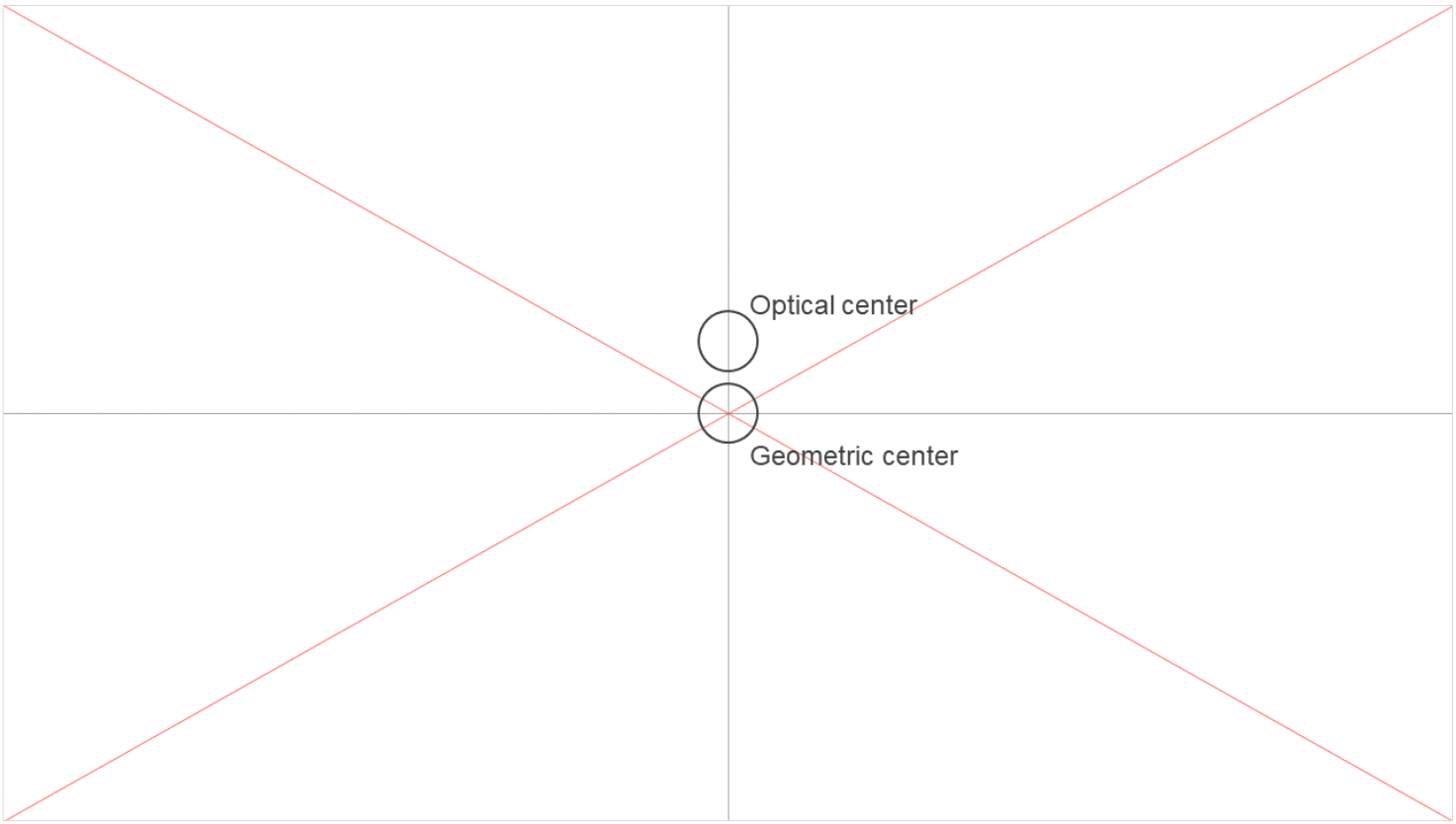


Texture - Complex textures will be perceived heavier as compared to simpler ones.

Understanding Optical Center

Another design term that you need to be familiar with is the optical center. That is because in design all elements are arranged keeping the optical center in mind, not the geometric center.

The optical center is the point where the human eye enters a page or a design. Research has found this spot to be slightly above the geometric or mathematical center. While mathematical center is 50% down from the top of a page, optical center is 46% down from the top of a page.



Principle #1- **Balance**

What is Balance?

Imagine a slide having all information on the left and having nothing on right! It will be visually uncomfortable because it is imbalanced.

Balance is about maintaining visual equilibrium. It is the distribution of weight of different design elements around the optical center. The end result should be a well-balanced composition.

Ways to Achieve Balance -

Most successful compositions achieve balance in one of these 3 ways:

1. Symmetry
2. Asymmetry
3. Radial

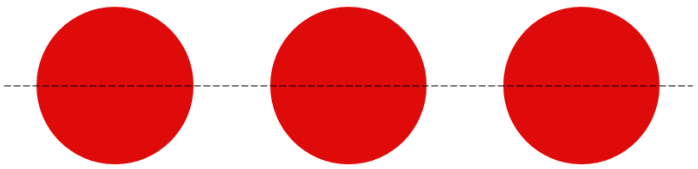
Symmetrical Balance:

Also known as formal balance, symmetrical balance is basically mirror image balance. If you draw a line between the center of the page, all the objects on one side of the screen are mirrored on the other side.

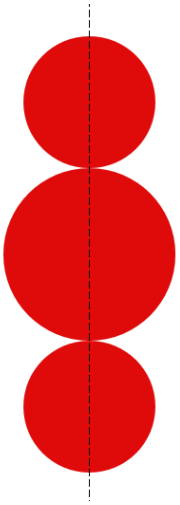
The two halves of the design can either look completely identical (this is usually in architecture) or they can be similar in terms of number of objects, colors and other elements (this is common in graphic design).

So, whether you divide the slide horizontally or vertically, the two will be perfectly balanced.

Horizontal Split

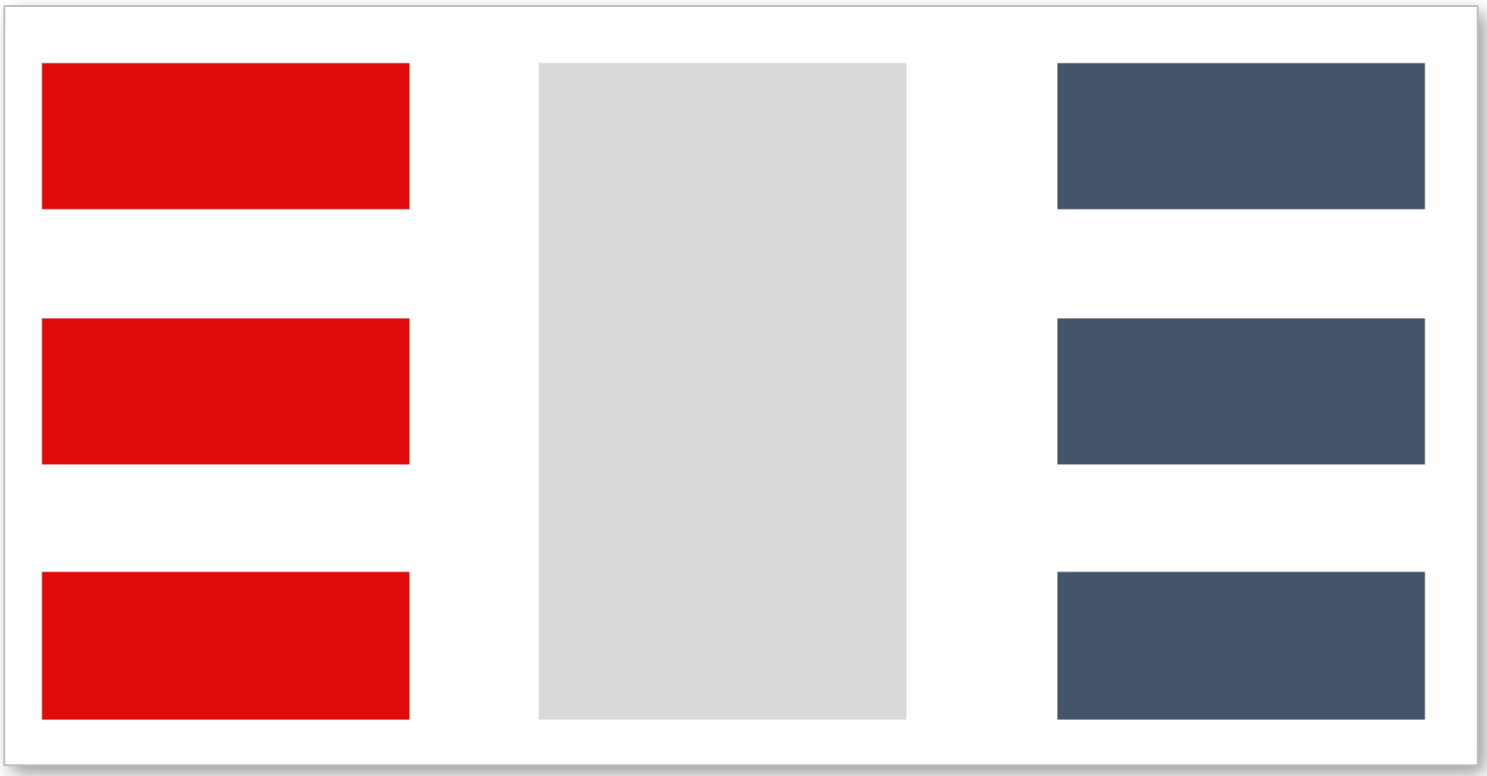


Vertical Split

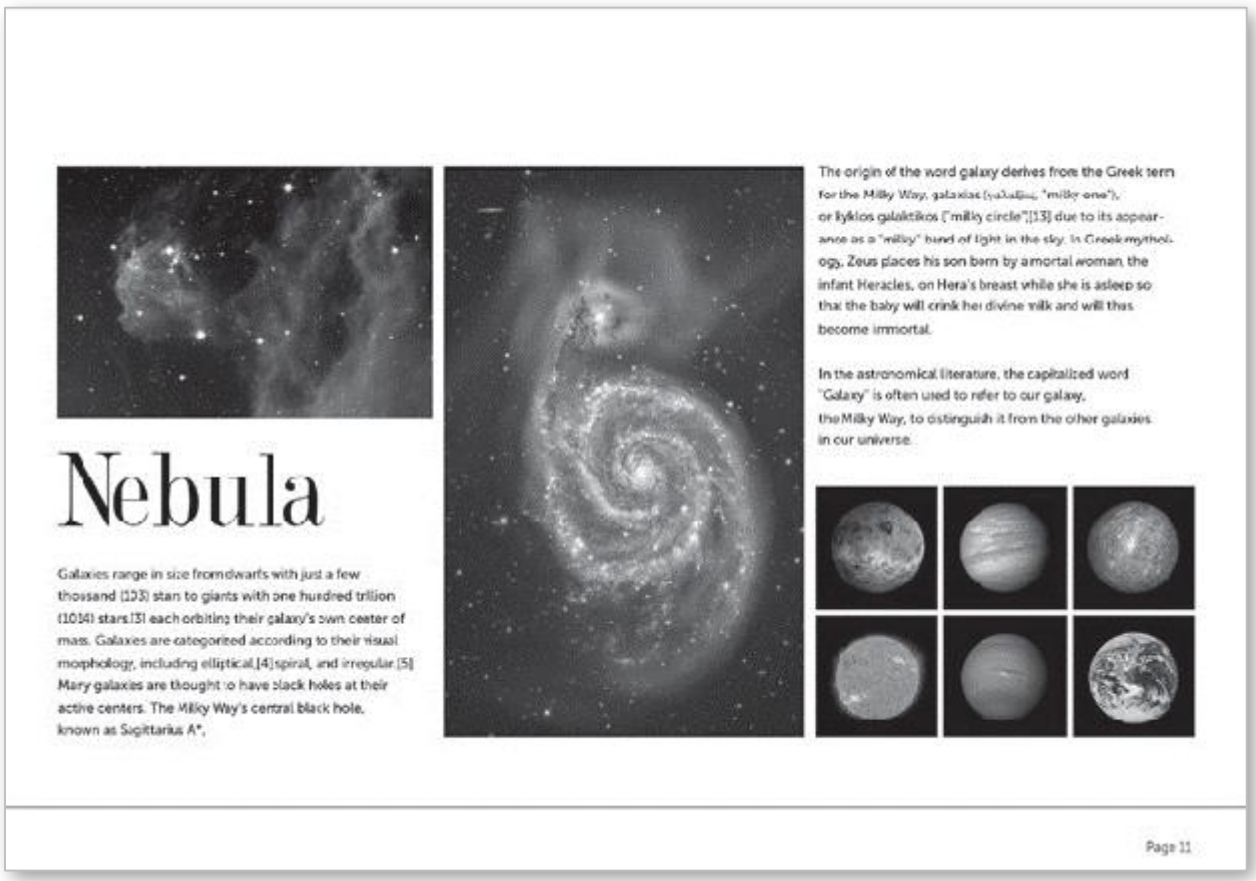


How to Achieve Symmetry in Slide Design:

Basically, one has to place equal number of design elements equal in visual weight on each side of the presentation slide.



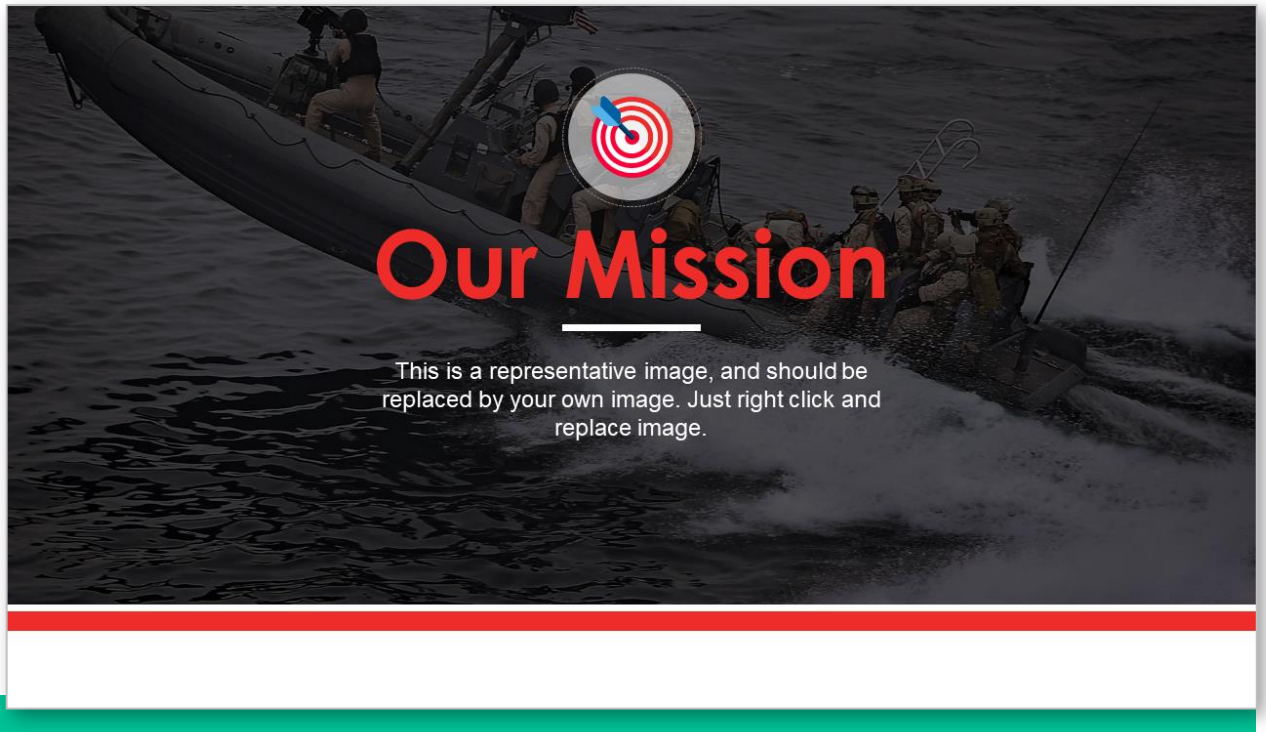
Here's an example of symmetrical layout taken from the web:



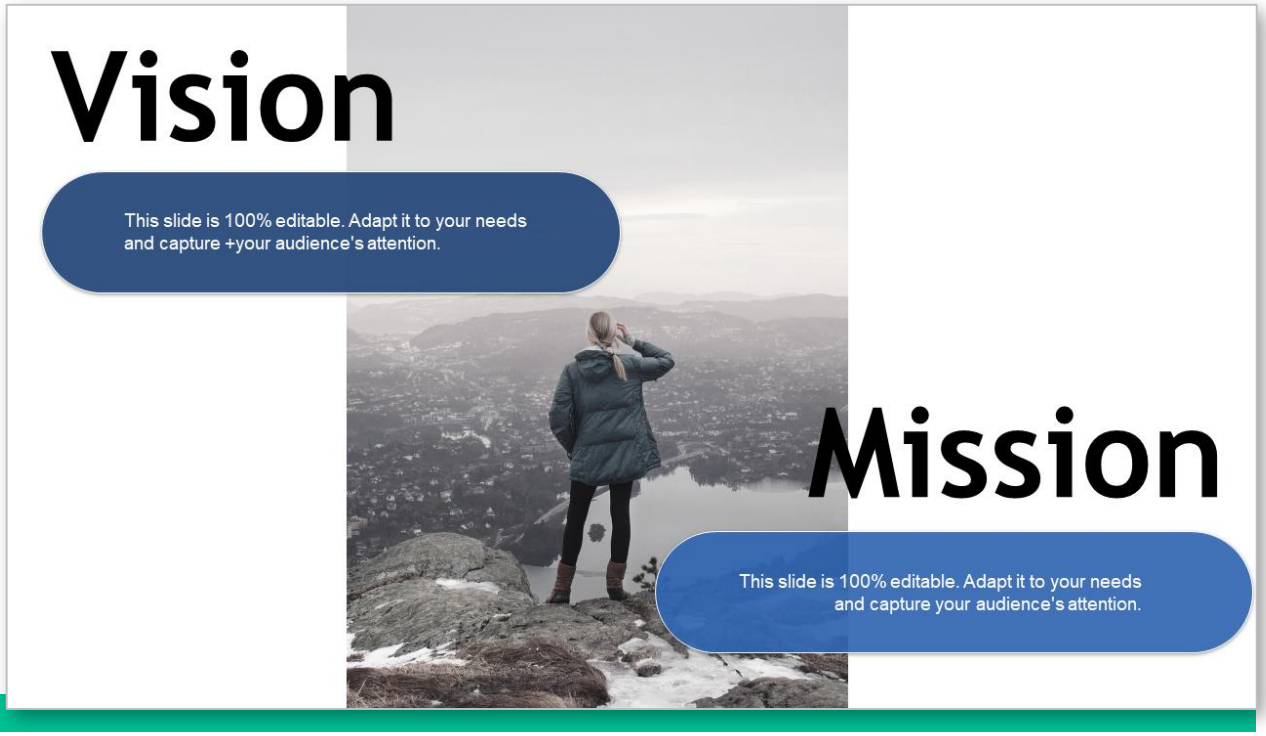
Using PowerPoint Templates to Achieve Symmetry:

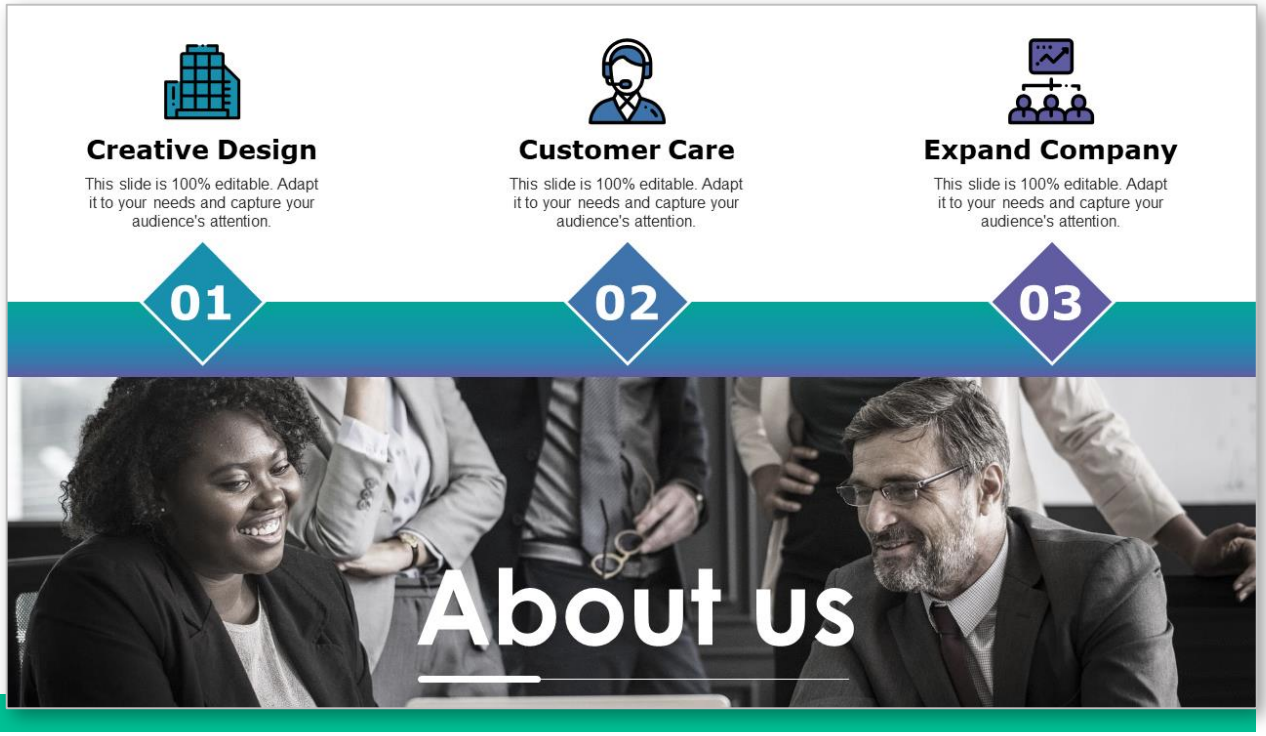
Most PowerPoint templates are designed with mathematical precision. All design elements are arranged in such a way to distribute white space evenly, make for easy eye movement and readability, and establish an overall professional, balanced look. Here are some examples to show formal balance created with PowerPoint templates:

Example 1



Example 2



Example 3

Example 4