Module 5, Lesson 6

PowerPoint Pro 3.0: Creating the "Potential Strategic Alternatives" Slide with Connector Lines and Drawing Guides

Welcome to our next lesson in this module of practice exercises. You're going to learn how to create a Potential Strategic Alternatives slide here using connector lines and drawing guides and the alignment and distribution commands and shortcuts in PowerPoint.

Now, to illustrate what I'm talking about, these types of slides are commonly used by banks. I have an example here for PJ Solomon. I have one here from Goldman Sachs. And essentially, these slides allow a bank to present a company's options, whether it's to sell or raise capital or grow organically, and they present some of the tradeoffs of these options on these slides.

Now, they can have a lot of text. They can be in table format, like this one from Perella Weinberg Partners. Or like this one from PJ Solomon, they can be in more of a shape structure with these connector lines, and then maybe they don't necessarily have a lot of text, but then the following slides after them explain some of the tradeoffs and the advantages and disadvantages.

If you look at the finished presentation, you can see our version right here. So this is what we will be building up to in this lesson.

[01:00]

The main point of this lesson is that you're going to learn how connector lines work, which is a sort of new concept, but not exactly new because they're just a variation of normal lines in PowerPoint. Now, some courses and books view this topic as very important, and they have entire modules or sets of lessons about connector lines. But I think of it as more of a supplemental topic. It's good to know a little bit about this, but it's not as important as alignment or distribution or duplicating shapes or copying and pasting shape formatting, which is why it's in Module 5, not Modules 1 or 2 of this course.

Connector lines let you create hierarchies in PowerPoint for corporate structures, for deal structures, and for investment recommendations and also client recommendations, if you're advising a company. Unlike normal lines, they "snap" into place and they move as you move shapes around on the slide.

So let's go to the finished presentation and demonstrate how this works. The main advantage of these lines is that if I take a shape, like the Capital Structure one here, and I just move it

down, the line moves with it. If I take the Standalone shape here and move it, the line also moves with it. And in fact, both lines move with it depending on the direction that I put it in and the orientation.

[02:08]

Now, you have to watch out because if the line is not properly connected, so, for example, let's say that I take a line like this, and right now you can see these dots in green, which means that it's connected properly. But if I remove this from the shape, now when I move the shape around, these lines on the right side move with it, but this one no longer does because it is no longer connected to the shape. So that is what connector lines do at a high level.

The outline for this lesson will be as follows. First, I'll spend a few minutes demonstrating the setup for these connector lines. I'll show you how to enter them, how to connect shapes, how to format them, and how to lock the drawing mode if you are creating a bunch of connector lines. Then we'll go through the first part of the exercise, and I'll show you how to create the first grouping here using connector lines, alignment and distribution, and maybe a macro or two for parts of it.

And then, for the second part of the exercise, I'll teach you how to replicate the grouping, tweak it a little bit, and then align and distribute everything properly across the entire slide.

[03:04]

So let's go to the setup and demonstration for connector lines first. The basic shortcuts here are Alt, 08 for a normal or straight line and then Alt, 09 for a line with arrows or elbows or squiggly lines or something else like that. And these both come from our customized Quick Access Toolbar, which I'm assuming you are using if you've made it this far in the course by now.

Let's go to our presentation right here, the finished version, and let's just delete these lines. Let's also delete the straight connector line up here just so I can demonstrate how this works. So if I go to Alt, 08, I can insert a straight connector line. And if you want to connect shapes with it, you usually want to start drawing on the gray dot on whatever edges you want to connect. So if I start drawing it right here, and then I press and hold Shift to draw a straight line, and then I end on the gray dot that pops up here, you can see that these are both in green, which means the shapes are connected. So I'm just testing that a little bit.

[04:00]

Now, when I have a line like this, I can format it in the exact same way I format normal lines. So I can go to Alt, 4, and then I can go to Weight and change this to half point. And then I can go to Alt, 4 again, and I can change this to the black color to match up with everything else here. These are also all in black, and the weight is half a point.

If I want to do something slightly more exotic or different, I can go to Alt, 09, and then here, I can insert an elbow line that sort of bends around corners or has corners that let you put it around different shapes in the presentation. I can also insert one with an arrow at the end. Let's just use the normal one for now. And I'll, once again, start drawing it right here on this gray dot, and then I will just use the mouse and sort of drag it right up here and end it on this gray dot. You can see the green dots right here, which means that this line is now connected here.

And then I can insert another one. So I can go to Alt, 09 and then select this shape again, start drawing on this gray dot and then connect it down here. And you can see that, once again, these are in green, which means they are connected properly.

[05:09]

If I select both these and I go to Alt, 4, and I change the color to black, and I change the weight to half a point, now these match up. And you can test it a little bit. You can see what we've done right there.

Now, one thing that's useful with this is when you are inserting something more unusual, like one of these elbow connectors, if you go to Alt, 09 and then you right-click on this elbow connector and you go to Lock Drawing Mode, now, whenever I click on this slide, I draw an elbow connector line, which can be very helpful if you have to draw say 5 or 10 or 15 of these on the slide. If you want to exit this mode, you can go to Alt, 09 again and then just right-click on this and click on Lock Drawing Mode again, or you can just go here and press Shift and left-click and that will also get you out of this mode, and now you go back to the normal selection and editing options on the slide.

[06:00]

I don't find this to be super helpful, but it can be useful in some situations. It's more useful for something like a corporate hierarchy slide when you have a very irregular layout. For something like this, that is in sort of a grid layout or something close to it with very regular lines, it's not super useful, because we can just copy and paste the lines and the elbow lines in this case.

The Ctrl + A shortcut to select everything on the slide is also useful because it lets you see very quickly where you have the green dots here and then where you have dots that are not green, meaning that the lines are not properly connected to the shapes. Sometimes this can be hard to see, especially if there's a lot going on, on the slide. So Ctrl + A is a very useful shortcut whenever you're working with these types of connector lines and shapes.

So that's a little bit about how these work. I have some notes here on the slide about it. As I said, I don't think this is a super important topic. It's worth spending a few minutes on as we just did, but I don't think there is really all that much to it.

[06:56]

Instead, what I want to do now is go into your exercise. And what I want you to do is go to the reference slide here, slide number 28 in the finished presentation, and I want you to recreate everything here on our blank slide right here. So this is completely blank. We don't have anything filled in. There's no text. But the text here is very short, so it shouldn't be bad to copy and paste over.

I will leave this to you. If you want to complete this as an exercise, you can pause the video right now and try it yourself. If you don't care, you don't want to do it, you just want to see me go through it and see all the tips and tricks, then you can just wait a few seconds and we'll come back and then go through this together.

As I said in the notes, I would start with the structure on the top, try to create this first using all the alignment, distribution, and other commands that you learned, then replicate it and just change around the colors and the text and create the structure down here. So either pause this video right now, or just wait and come back in a few seconds, and then we will go through all this together.

[07:57]

Okay, good. The first thing I would probably do here is just insert a standard rectangle box. So Alt, 8, and then we can draw it on the slide. I'm not going to use the Shift key because we want this to be a rectangle, not a square. Before doing anything else, we want to do a size check and also a color check here. We also want to check things like the internal margins.

So let's check the size first. Alt, JD, 0.67 and 2 inches, and we're going to use the same size for everything. So Alt JD, and then let's go here and I'll say 0.67 and then 2 inches.

Let's check some of the other variables here. So let's press Alt, 5 here. The internal margins are 0.1, 0.1, and 0.05, 0.05. Ours are probably set to those by default. It's vertical alignment in the middle. Text direction is horizontal, and it is clearly centered right here.

In terms of the fonts, it is clearly a white font color. If you look at the borders, there is a black border color, and it appears to be half a point for the weight. And then if you look at the fill color, Alt, 3, and you go to More Fill Colors, it's 16, 37, 63.

[09:02]

So let's go back here and fill in some of these, starting with the fill color. Alt, 3, More Fill Colors, and we want the 16, 37, 63 here. I'm not using the formatting guides because this color is actually slightly different from the ones in our guides over here on the left-hand side.

And then for the other checks. So let's check the internal margins. They seem to be the same, so that's fine. Let's check the borders, Alt, 4. We want a black border, and then the weight should be half a point. If we start typing some text, we can see that it's pretty clearly too big. We're actually using size 14 text in the other shape. So if we go to Alt, 7 and change this to 14, that should be fine. And then the text direction and the centering, all that looks fine as is.

So we have this in pretty good shape now. I'll call this Standalone. And then let's duplicate this shape with Shift + Ctrl and then left-click and drag it over. Shift + Ctrl and left-click and drag this over, so we have both these.

And then, for the text here, I can say Organic and then Capital Structure.

[10:01]

And then we need another few shapes over here. So Shift + Ctrl and drag it over to create this, and then do it down here and then do it for this one as well. And then, for the text, we can just copy and paste from here to save a bit of time. I'm just doing this as unformatted text, and then Issue Equity, Issue Debt. It also looks like the font sizes here are slightly different. If we look at our reference presentation, these appear to be font size 12, so we should probably go back and change this. I'll select all these and then go to Alt, 7 and Font Size 12. I'm not going to change the colors yet, we'll get to that in a little bit.

So what should we do first here in order to get these aligned and put the connector lines in place? I would probably do the connector lines last because, generally speaking, you want to have all the shapes in the right place first before you start putting in connector lines.

[10:58]

So let's take Standalone right here, and then we can left align it to Potential Strategic Alternatives up at the top, Alt, 1, L. And then all these others, we can do a right alignment to the same shape, Alt, 1, R, and we have that.

Now, for the horizontal alignment here, I would probably take the three in the top row and do Alt, 1, H for Distribute Horizontally, and then Alt, 1, L for Organic and Capital Structure.

Then for the vertical distribution here, so if you look at the reference slide very closely, you can see that this empty area is almost exactly the same height as this Standalone box right here, which means that we can probably use the Stack Shapes macro to do this quickly and efficiently. So let's select all these, go to our macros and then go to Stack Shapes Vertically. And so we have that.

And then looking at the rest of this reference slide now, so this box at the top is exactly at the same level as Organic. And then these other ones below are in this sort of branch that comes from the connector lines. So let's go here and let's just move all these down a little bit. I'll move this one up, Alt, 1, T to top align it.

[12:07]

And then for these others, we could do this in a couple different ways. But I think probably the easiest approach here is just to take all these and do a vertical distribution, Alt, 1, V, and now we have that.

So this should be roughly correct. You could, of course, quibble with this, and you could argue that maybe this part goes up a little bit too far into this shape, and this one doesn't go down by exactly the same distance into this shape. But I think these are all pretty minor points, and they're not going to detract from this overall.

So let's now add some of these connector lines. Alt, 09 and then we'll go to this one right here. And just to illustrate how Lock Drawing Mode works, I will right-click this and go to Lock Drawing Mode. And then let's go down here and connect it right there. And then let's take this one and connect it right up here. And then let's do the same thing over here. Just using the mouse for all of this.

[13:06]

And so, looking at this, it seems like these are all in place. Now, this one here is going to use a straight connector line, so let's go back to this and right-click and then go to Lock Drawing Mode to go out of this mode now. Let's press Ctrl + A just to check ourselves. And it looks like these all have green dots, meaning that they should be lined up properly. And now let's go to Alt, 08 and insert a straight line in between these two at the top.

So all of this is in place now. We can now select all these lines. And I'll go to Alt, 4 and then change these to black, and then Alt, 4 Weight, and I'll change this to half point. And we have that.

So this is looking to be in pretty good shape. If we look at the reference slide, there are still a few issues. We need these numbers somehow, and we also need to change the colors a little bit to make them match up.

Let's go back. The color part is easy. Let's go to Alt, 3, More Fill Colors. I'm just taking these RGB codes from the other slide.

[14:00]

I'm not showing me manually copying and pasting them because I don't think it's particularly interesting. I have these saved off screen, so it's just faster and easier to enter them like this, 85, 142, and 213. And so we have that.

Now, for the numbers, we could try to replicate them here ourselves. But if you remember back earlier in the presentation, we had shapes like these on this Overview of Selected Valuation Methodologies slide, slide number 16. So if we zoom in and get the one for D, next to Sum-of-the-Parts DCF Analysis, Ctrl + C, and then page down a bunch of times. And then let's take this here and let's go up. We want to put this so that the center of the line is intersected by the top of the shape. So we have it right there. I'll change this to 1. And then we just duplicate this a few times. So Shift + Ctrl down to drag this down right here. And that seems to be in about the same spot, judging from the Smart Guides. And then let's do the same thing for this one right here. And I'll call this 3.

[15:03]

So that looks pretty good so far. If we go and compare it to our reference shape, it looks like maybe the overall position here is a little bit different, but it's still pretty close to what we have there.

So now for the second part of this exercise, we need to duplicate this, but we need to change it slightly, because the colors are different, the text is different. And also down here, if you look at it, we have the branching path, these connector lines that create these two shapes in the top one next to Acquisition, whereas here, we had it in the bottom next to Capital Structure.

So let's go in and do this. I'm going to start by grouping everything here, Ctrl + G. One other small thing to fix before doing that is it looks like we are using bold font for all these, which we probably don't want to do here. So I'm just going to select all of them and press Ctrl + B to get rid of that. And it looks like the same thing applies to these circles, so I'll just press Ctrl + B to get rid of that.

[15:56]

Now let's take all these and let's do Shift + Ctrl and down arrow key to move these down right here. Now, for this issue with the connector lines. So let's start by typing in the appropriate text here. I'll say Strategic, and then, here, Acquisition. And then down here, Sale/Merger. And then for these on the right, for the first one, we can say Merger/Combination with Strategic. And then down here, we can say Tuck-in Acquisition. And then for this one, we can say Transformational Acquisition. And so we have that.

Now, to fix this issue with these being in the wrong spot, the easiest way to do it is to take all of these here, including the numbers and the connector lines, and just drag them over here. For the Merger/Combination with Strategic one, let's take this one and then just drag this down.

We have to reconnect the lines now. So let's do a top alignment, Alt, 1,T. And then here, we need to reconnect it to the shape right there. Those are both green now, so that seems to be fine.

[17:04]

Let's take these and then move them over right here. Let's take this one and move it up here, so it's connected. And then let's take this one and move it in the same spot so that's also connected right there. And then we'll do an Alt, 1, L for Align Left for both of these.

Individually, these are correct, but clearly something is still off, because if you look at this, I'm just doing a left alignment for these circles, we have too much space at the top and too much space at the bottom right here. So let's take everything that we have and then just move this down a little bit. Let's also rename these, and I'll call this one 4, 5, and then 6, so it matches up with what we have in the reference slide.

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Now, to properly distribute these on the slide itself, let's just select everything at the bottom and group everything here together, so Ctrl + G. And then let's select everything at the top and group these together with Ctrl + G.

[18:02]

Let's press Alt, W, S to get our drawing guides up here. And I think the easiest thing to do in this case is to distribute them between the drawing guide, the one right under this text, "Both Standalone and Strategic Options Should Be Considered," and then the one here at the very bottom, right above the Goldman Stanley logo.

Now, here, this other drawing guide is unnecessary, and I don't really know why it's here. But let's just select it and move it off the slide to delete it.

And then let's select both these, and we'll move this one up a little bit so our macro works. We'll select this one, go to our macros and then go to Drawing Guides, and then Distribute Vertically Between Guides. And now we have that.

I will now ungroup this one. I'll ungroup this one. We don't need to distribute these horizontally between the drawing guides because the left edges already match the drawing guides. The left edge and the right edge both match the drawing guides exactly.

And then for this text, this is one final thing to look at. Here, we probably want this to be aligned with the circle because this is the topmost part of this entire structure. So Alt, 1, T for that, and now that's in place. And I can also delete the footnote here at the bottom.

[19:05]

We have this continued problem with the bold text, so I'll select everything, Ctrl + B to get rid of that. And so that looks better now.

If we compare this to the reference shape, the colors are still off. So, sure, we could go in and fix the colors, now that we have everything else here done. Once again, I've just saved these off screen, so you have to take my word for it that these are correct, 149, 179, and 215.

And then let's get these. So these are all going to be lighter shades of blue, 185, 205, and 229. And then over here, these are also going to be lighter shades of blue, so 220, 230, and 242. And then we also want to change the font colors on all of these, or at least on the boxes. Alt, 2 and I'll change these to black so the text is now visible.

And then, looking at it and comparing it to our reference slide, I would say that it's pretty good. Maybe it is not 100% perfect, but it is clearly much better than what we started with here, which was effectively nothing.

[20:07]

So that is it for this lesson. Hopefully now you know a little bit more about how these connector lines work and how to create a slide like this starting from scratch.

To summarize what we did here, we started by inserting this single shape for the Standalone options. Then we duplicated it a few times to create these other shapes. And then we went in and fixed the alignment and distribution here. We used the Stack Shapes macro. We also distributed these horizontally and vertically as required.

Then we changed around the text. We made sure the borders were all okay, everything like that. And then we inserted the connector lines right here and made sure they were properly connected to the shapes. You can also check this with the Ctrl + A shortcut and look at the green dots. Once we had all that, then we inserted the circles here and did a bit of manual alignment just using the Smart Guides.

Then we selected everything here and copied and pasted it down with Ctrl + Shift and the drag shortcut to create this other structure down here. And then we went in and changed around the connector lines up here so that the one with multiple shapes is at the top instead, and that was just a simple matter of selecting some of these and moving them around a little bit.

[21:09]

And then we made sure the distribution between this group at the bottom and this one at the top was correct with the drawing guides and our Distribute Between Drawing Guides macro. And then, finally, we fixed some of the colors here and the bold text and other things like that.

So that's it for this lesson. Coming up next, we will continue moving through this presentation. And we're not necessarily going to go through all these slides, but we will spend some time on this one, Overview of Tier 1 Potential Partners, and you'll see how some of the table macros and also the Harvey Ball macro work when we go through and create or fix this slide.