

DEVELOPING PRESENTATION AIDS

PART 3

WHAT'S THE POINT?



This part of the handout:

- ✓ Provides insights into presentation aids that are not as commonly used nowadays; and
- ✓ explains the pros and cons related to their application; so
- ✓ you can think about other options that may be appropriate in some circumstances.



Types of Presentation Aid covered here

In the preceding part of this paper, we looked at the use of handouts, audio aids and white/blackboards. In this part, we will look at some of the less commonly used presentation aids. These include stick-on boards, flip charts and overhead projectors. You are probably wondering why these types have been included. The reason is simple. They can still be used very effectively to meet some important needs, so you may find these insights helpful.

For each of these aids, I have provided information on the advantages and disadvantages related to their use. I have also included insights that may give you some ideas on making best use of these, to suit your own purposes.

Aid Type 4 - Stick-On Boards

In this context stick-on boards include felt boards (*so you can stick things on with Velcro*), magnetic boards (*so you can attach aids magnetically*), and hook boards (*which allow you to hook items onto the board*). Each type of stick-on board therefore allows you to mount presentation aids to help you clarify your message.

You may remember some of these from your school days, and very occasionally, they are used for modern teaching and business presentations. For instance, I recently saw a very entertaining product demonstration that used stick-on boards very effectively. In this case, the presenter used actual equipment hung from hooks on the board, so the audience could see exactly what was going on. This had the added benefit of allowing the participants to then touch and feel each item during the hands on part of the presentation.

I am therefore not proposing that these types of board are useful for all circumstances, but they still have a very real place in your presentation aid arsenal, and may be appropriate in some circumstances.

Advantages of Stick-On Boards

The key advantages of stick on boards are:

- ✓ ***They don't require power.*** The first key advantage with this type of aid is that it does not require power. They are therefore very useful for doing presentations on site, or in locations where power is not readily available.
- ✓ ***They can be quite powerful.*** You can use a stick-on-board to build up a powerful visual aid that supports your point. For instance, you can place equipment, diagrams, and text tags onto the board in the appropriate location, so you can demonstrate the relationship between different issues and items.
- ✓ ***They can look very professional.*** These boards can look very professional if you use neat printed items, or mount real equipment or artefacts onto them. In particular, they can look far more professional than writing or drawing on a whiteboard.
- ✓ ***They are different.*** In a world where PowerPoint presentations are the norm, this approach is so different that it can be striking and highly memorable, if done properly. Therefore, if you want to do something really different and attention grabbing, this may be an option for you.

Disadvantages of Stick-On Boards

Although stick-on boards are useful in some situations, they suffer from a number of key disadvantages, which include:

- ✓ ***Time consuming preparation.*** It is often very time consuming to prepare these types of presentation aid, and many of the modern aids (*like PowerPoint*) are much quicker to develop.
- ✓ ***They tend to be applicable only for specialised use.*** In general, these types of board are only suitable for specialised uses, and they can be quite inflexible.
- ✓ ***They are useful for smaller audiences only.*** This type of presentation aid is really only suitable for relatively small audiences (*e.g. less than 30 people*).
- ✓ ***You can mount light items only.*** In general, you can only mount light items on felt and magnetic boards, which limits their use.
- ✓ ***They are difficult to move around.*** As many boards have to be relatively large, it can be difficult to move them around.
- ✓ ***They can be seen as archaic.*** Some people will now see this style of presentation aid as outdated and archaic. This can have a negative effect on the impression left with your audience. For example, you are probably not going to leave the right impression with an audience of technocrats if you are selling computer software and you are using this type of aid.

Use of Stick on Boards

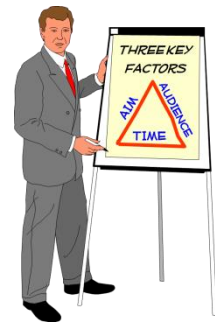
Stick-on boards can be relatively simple to use. However, like every type of presentation aid, you need to practice with them to gain the best advantage. Some simple tips for the use of these types of board are:

- ✓ **Test your aids very carefully.** Make sure that your aids stay in place. There is nothing more embarrassing than your aids falling off, or sliding out of position during the presentation.
- ✓ **Make it concrete.** You can gain the greatest advantage from these types of board if you are demonstrating tangible items. For example, if you were describing the production stages for a widget, you could hang the different outputs from each stage of the manufacturing process on the board, to make the audience understand the production steps more clearly.
- ✓ **Match usage to your subject/audience.** If you decide to use this type of presentation aid, make sure that your audience will see it as acceptable, and ensure that it matches the tone of the message you are trying to convey.

Aid Type 5 - Flip Charts

There are effectively two categories of flip charts in general use. These types of flip chart are:

- ✓ **Self-Prepared Flip Charts.** Self-prepared flip charts are blank pieces of paper or cardboard, on which a person draws and writes. These sheets can be mounted on a wall or a variety of different stands. For example, the trestle configuration shown in the diagram to the right is quite common.



- ✓ **Printed Flip Charts.** The other type is the printed chart. These are also paper or cardboard sheets. However, in this case, text and graphics are already printed on them, so you do not have to write or draw on them yourself. These can look very professional, but generally, they tend to be smaller than the self-prepared flip charts, because of the limitations imposed by printing the aids.

Each of these different types of flip chart is very different, so the following subsections address key differences separately.

Advantages of Flip Charts

There are some key advantages applicable to the use of all types of flip charts. These advantages include:

- ✓ **They do not need power.** Recently, as a part of an aboriginal education program, I needed to develop training aids that did not rely on the presence of power, because they had to be used out in the open in the communities. Pre-printed flip charts were an ideal solution, because they could be used effectively to explain points while sitting under a tree. Sometimes the old methods can still be useful.
- ✓ **They are reusable.** Unlike white/black boards, you can often reuse flip charts, whether they are self-prepared or printed versions.

- ✓ ***They are Portable.*** Because they tend to be relatively compact, it is normally easy to transport flip charts between venues. For example, the printed flip chart shown to the right would easily fit into a briefcase, or you can carry it under your arm.



- ✓ ***They are cheap.*** As a form of portable presentation aid, they are generally relatively cheap to create, maintain, and use.
- ✓ ***Information is hidden until you need it.*** Because you need to flip over sheets to expose new information, you can hide prepared text and diagrams from the audience until you need it. This allows you to provide visual surprises for your audience. Additionally, this approach helps to support effective and congruent* multi-channel† communication (e.g. *what you show is the same as what you are talking about*).
- ✓ ***Fairly flexible.*** The format of flip charts makes their use fairly flexible. For instance, you can miss out prepared charts if you do not want to use them. Alternatively, you can flick backwards and forwards through the presentation material, to clarify or investigate issues where required. Additionally, you can use self-prepared flip charts for spontaneous activities, such as workshops or discussions. As such, they lend themselves to use in many group activities in educational and business pursuits, where you need to collate ideas in a flexible way.
- ✓ ***They provide a verbal script.*** Self prepared and printed flip charts developed before the presentation can give you an effective verbal script‡.
- ✓ ***Professional looking and Easy to use.*** Printed flip charts (such as the one shown to the right) require little preparation once they have been developed, and they can look very professional. This format is therefore very useful for things like simple presentations, because the presenter does not need to spend a lot of time preparing their presentation aids, or a verbal script.



Disadvantages of Flip Charts

The primary disadvantage of flip charts is that they are generally relatively small (*typically A3 size or smaller, due to business printer limitations*). For example, you can only use most printed flip charts successfully with an audience of ten people or less. Even self-prepared flip charts are only suitable when working with groups of less than 20-25 people. Over that size, some members of your audience are unlikely to be able to read the presentation aid.

* Congruence is critical, as specified in the section beginning on Page 47 of Persuasion and Influence.

† Multi-channel communication provides greatly improved comprehension of the message as explained in the section beginning on Page 44 of Persuasion and Influence.

‡ As explained in the section commencing on Page 225 of Persuasion and Influence, the Verbal Script can provide milestone information that will help the presenter deliver the message more effectively.

The size of the flip charts also limits the amount of information that you can place on each sheet. For longer presentations, you therefore need many sheets, which can become quite bulky and more difficult to manage.


Self-prepared flip charts also suffer from the same problems that affect white/black boards. In particular, they can be messy, and time consuming to prepare in advance (*particularly if you are not a gifted artist*). Additionally, they can be difficult to change or erase, because you are using pen on paper. However, the most important limitation of this format is the need to look at the flip chart to add information, which means that you can lose eye contact with your audience.

The printed flip charts are also not without limitations. In particular, they can sometimes be difficult to change away from the office. For instance, pen correcting the flip chart can look tacky and unprofessional, which generally rules out this type of correction. In particular, if you have had the flip chart developed and printed professionally (*e.g. for very large charts*), it can be quite difficult (*not to mention expensive*) to make even minor changes.

Use of Flip Charts

Self-prepared and printed flip charts should apply the general principles described in the section on Boards within Part 2 of this handout. In particular, keep them simple and neat. To optimise this approach, you can use the procedure in the focus box to the right to draw better graphics. You can even make yourself look like an artist, by lightly drawing the outlines in pencil on the flip charts beforehand, and then using the pen to draw over the lines during the presentation.

Alternatively, if you are doing text or diagrams freehand, then try to keep them as simple as possible. This rule applies even if you are a veritable Michelangelo, and can draw wonderful diagrams. Remember, when you are looking at the flip chart, you are not looking at your audience, so quick and simple is always best.



HINT

If you want to draw neat graphics on a self-prepared flip chart, you can use the following technique:

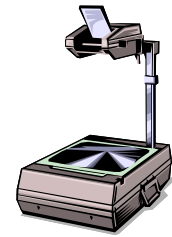
- (1) Draw/print out your diagram on an Overhead Projector (OHP) slide, or import/develop it in a computer.
- (2) Project the graphic onto the flip chart, and size it as necessary (*by using an OHP or data projector*).
- (3) Outline the diagram by tracing over the projected outline.
- (4) Tidy up and colour the drawing.

You can also use more than one flip chart at a time. This allows you to keep important information continuously visible. However, if you only have one easel to hold your flip charts, not all is lost. Once you finish working with the important sheet that you want to keep visible, remove it from its holder and hang it on the wall somewhere (*e.g. stick it up with Blotack*). You can then refer back to it at any time during the presentation.

Therefore, as a general assessment, flip charts have their place in the presenter's toolbox. In particular, they are useful for presenting to small groups, or conducting workshops.

Aid Type 6 - Overhead Projector

Unless you have been living on another planet for the last 20 years you have undoubtedly seen, or worked with, overhead projectors (OHP). They became virtually ubiquitous in the 80s and 90s. Even now, some businesses still use them extensively. However, nowadays they are much less common, as data projectors have become cheaper and more readily available.



Advantages of OHPs

We'll begin by looking at the traditional use of OHPs, and then later, we will show you a useful way to use them in modern presenting and workshopping.

OHPs became widely used because they were relatively inexpensive and the slides were cheap. More importantly, they provide a large projected image (*so you can present to larger audiences*), without having to darken the room unduly. This means that the presenter can see the audience to keep two-way communications open* (*e.g. looking at the audience body language*). In this respect, OHPs have another key advantage. The presenter can continue to look at the audience while using some OHPs, as shown in the example diagram to the right.



They are also quite flexible. For example, you can use them to project prepared slides, in any order you want. You can therefore quickly tailor the message to the audience (*which is sometimes much more difficult with tools like PowerPoint*). Alternatively, you can actually write or draw on the slide during the presentation. This provides the same flexibility as white/black boards and flip charts, but you can present to larger audiences, and avoid turning your back on them.

OHPs can even be used to provide some animation capability, so you can achieve better congruence between your words and visual aids. As an example, you can uncover each point on the slide by moving a piece of paper over it (*to disclose each point in turn*), or you can use additional overlays onto the slide (*flipping other slide elements over the main slide to add more information onto a diagram*).

Finally, the slides are reusable and easy to transport, so it becomes relatively simple to move to different venues with a prepared presentation.

Up to this point in the discussion, we have just talked about the more traditional use of OHPs for presenting. However, with the availability of cheap, high-quality data projectors OHPs are much less useful for normal presenting. That being said, they do have a very useful role to play in workshops. If you provide the groups in a workshop with OHP slides and marker pens, they can then use OHPs to show their findings to the other groups. Because OHPs provide better visual information than flip charts when working with larger groups, this can be a great way to support effective communication during workshopping.

* See the section commencing on Page 54 of Persuasion and Influence for a discussion on the importance of two-way communication.

Disadvantages of OHPs

You need to consider the following key issues if you decide to use OHPs as a presentation aid:

- ✓ ***They can be messy.*** If you are using hand written OHPs for presenting or workshopping, then try to make sure that they are written as neatly as possible. Otherwise, they can be more of a hindrance than a help.
- ✓ ***Slides stick together.*** You may find that transparencies stick together and they become hard to separate. You can overcome this problem by putting the slides into cardboard frames, or discharging the static electricity from the slides (*by rubbing the slides together gently*).
- ✓ ***Equipment Vulnerability.*** Data projectors have replaced OHPs in many organisations. It is therefore becoming quite rare to find them in many venues. Even worse if one is available it is less likely to have been maintained, and spares (*e.g. spare bulbs*) will simply not be available. You therefore need to be careful if you are planning to use OHPs, as they can break down and leave you without the ability to show the visual aids.

Use of OHPs

If you decide that you want to use OHPs, I recommend that you apply the following simple guidelines:

- ✓ ***Use prepared slides for presenting.*** Unless you have excellent drawing and writing abilities, you should really err toward using prepared slides. Otherwise, you may jeopardise the good impression you want to leave with your audience. Preparation of these slides is relatively simple, because you can use a computer to prepare the slide content, and print it out directly on the slide using most modern office printers. In this situation, you then have to wonder why you would not just use PowerPoint or some other computerised presentation tool to deliver the presentation.
- ✓ ***Use them for workshopping.*** If you are working with larger groups to workshop issues, think about using an OHP slide to collate the data. Each group can then show it to the other participants. This can be a powerful approach, and I still use this method regularly, so you may find this of use.
- ✓ ***Check Your Equipment.*** Make sure that the OHP equipment is fully functional and that you have at least one spare bulb available. This is particularly important if you are using someone else's OHP.

Summary

In this newsletter, we have covered some of the older types of training aids. These have been included, because they can still have a place in your arsenal of presentation techniques. I therefore hope that this information might be of use to you.

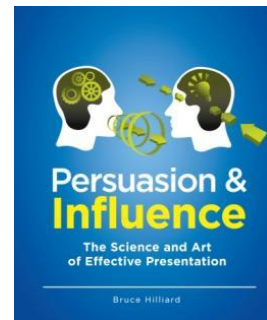
The next newsletter will cover more advanced presentation aids, so we can continue to build a foundation, which will assist you to understand the research findings that will be forthcoming as I complete the analysis later this year. I hope that this, and the following newsletters, will be of assistance.

A General Note

In each of the newsletters I provide linkage back to the general principles in the book '*Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation*'. I am doing this, so you will be able to assess the overarching context.

If you do not already have a copy of this book, you can order a copy online at the following web site:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00GWC00AA>.



You can also download other free (*and very useful*) documents from this web site:
http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion_influence.html

Alternatively, if you have a query and you would like to contact the author, you can send an email to info@seahorses-consulting.com.

You can also find related handouts in this series at the following web addresses:

http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/DownloadableFiles/PresentationAids_Pt1.pdf

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