

Dear Client:

The use of graphics to solve problems will grow. Companies, organizations, cities, community groups will increasingly take a visual approach for strategic visioning, program planning, formulating core ideology, other issues. A relatively recent trend.

What do we mean by graphics? We mean pictographs, quick sketches, drawings...often done by a graphic recorder who uses big sheets of paper affixed to a wall to get down key thoughts, themes of meeting participants.

Why the trend? It's a powerful way to make sense of information...perhaps more powerful than any other method. It's estimated the amount of information will increase by 3,000% between the years 1900 and 2100.

Visuals, graphics, drawings help organize information, give it structure, show relationships, sift out the knowledge so businesses, non-profits, governments can DO something with it...according to Kurt Hanks, who writes about visual communication, and The Grove Consultants International, a pioneer in the use of graphics at meetings, with teams, in strategic visioning.

Eye-catching visuals help communicate ideas, direction throughout an organization. Visuals posted on walls or distributed to stakeholders after a meeting are easier, more effective for explaining what happened.

Graphic language enhances group memory...and allows participants to work faster and be more effective. It also encourages participation, makes listening easier, connects with those who learn visually, reduces group hierarchy. All pluses in any meeting.

When people SEE what they are saying they feel acknowledged.

Mapping information on big displays facilitates understanding complex systems. Powerful images are key to mindshare and memory.

A long list of stats supports the strength of graphics...

People retain 60% more of what they see vs. 15% of what they hear. The use of graphic language promotes lasting images and retention of concepts. This and other stats here according to Robert E. Horn in his book titled Visual Language: Global Communication for the 21st Century.

Solution rate for problems goes up to 64% vs. 45% without visual language. Visual language shortens meetings by as much as 24%, saving valuable time, human resources and dollars. Busy people like shorter meetings where things get done.

79% of groups reach consensus with visual language vs. 58% of groups who don't. It helps for groups to see the gaps, common themes on one page at once.

People are persuaded 17% more often in presentations using visuals/graphics vs. presentations without. Means presenters who use meaningful visuals are perceived as being more effective, get their points across much more successfully.

Students offered visuals in testing improved scores by 22% in 13% less time.

Key corporate, community leaders like graphics...

One example: Bo Gyllenpalm, former CEO at Phillips, the European electronics manufacturer. Gyllenpalm is now a consultant and leader in the World Café movement, an approach to problem-solving where participants shift from small group to small group in a single setting to talk through issues. Graphic recording is a key part. "People are sick and tired of those bullet point things," Gyllenpalm said.

Even when bullet points are listed on flip charts, "they don't say very much," Gyllenpalm contends. "No one can see how the group came to a conclusion."

By contrast, with graphics, participants see and remember much more of what was said, Gyllenpalm said.

"They remember the experience, feelings and emotions, so when they show someone else who hasn't been there, they make a personal story of what happened, they remember much more of what the discussions mean."

CEOs want to hear the story "with all its richness," says Gyllenpalm, who has been on the receiving end of countless, boring briefings from mid-level managers.

Another example: A Texas automotive consumer products company...

The company was integrating seven newly acquired companies it bought at auction. There were hard feelings among some of the former leaders of the acquired companies.

The acquiring company is building a new core ideology...values and purpose.

Grouped by former companies, executives mapped histories...VISUALLY.

Each group drew the good and the bad times. They sketched pictures of sunshine, thunderstorms, people and products. They showed huge run-ups in revenue, problems with suppliers, trips to the courthouse, expansion into new markets.

They listed values and how the values came to be...integrity, honesty, quality.

Then each group explained their history to the rest of the participants, using the full-color histories they had created.

A moving experience...as each discovered others in the room had common experiences, overcame immense hurdles, and as a result, forged similar values.

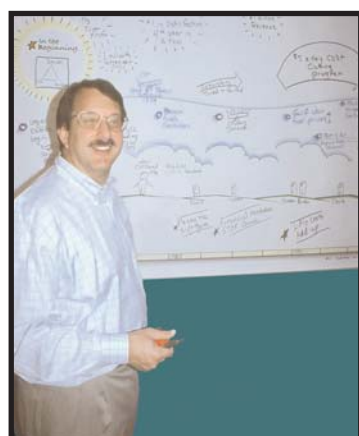
The discovery made it easier to brainstorm values and purpose for the newly integrated company.

Brainstorming occurred in a morning-long, facilitated discussion the next day and was graphically recorded.

The group easily reached consensus.

Is there a limit to the use of graphics? We don't see any. We've seen graphics used effectively in market research, in personal goal setting exercises, in brainstorming sessions on marketing initiatives, in public hearings. They bring these activities to life. They have been used at companies of all sizes...from Fortune 500s to start-ups. They have even been used in rural, impoverished communities in third world countries.

But some situations will cry out for the use of graphics more than others.



Yours very truly,

Bill Bancroft

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