Graphic Facilitation Techniques for Non-Artists

Why, When & How to Use Them

North Star Facilitators
Barbara J. MacKay, M.S., CPF
(503) 579-5708
www.northstarfacilitators.com

Permission is given to copy this handout for personal use. Permission is not given to copy the handout for training others without prior written authorization.
Introduction
What is graphic facilitation?

This handout discusses a variety of ways to think about using visual images when working with groups. Most people think this is only an option for the talented artist. This is not the case. You may have heard the term “graphic facilitation” applied to the process of drawing and writing the content of a group’s thinking on large size pieces of paper. These graphic facilitators, also known as visual practitioners are specializing in how the brain processes information visually. Graphic Facilitation is also been called metaphor mapping, memory mapping, visual process consulting and a host of other names. In this handout, we focus mainly on starting to think graphically by using images in agendas and flipchart notes for WOW effects. It also points you to resources and insights about why graphics are a fundamentally important part of every facilitator’s and trainer’s (both those who are artistically inclined and thus who are less so) toolkit.

Why use graphic images or techniques?

According to Neuroscientist Wen Wenger, 80% of the brain’s processing is handled visually. The limbic brain is the site of long term memory transformation so people tend to retain visual information longer than information presented most other ways. Also, the process of graphic facilitation tends to take people into their right brain and help them to think bigger, metaphorically, creatively and non-linearly. The images, colors and use of space on large long sheets of paper captivate the audience and engage all learners – visual, kinesthetic, and auditory. I have found that a group can be powerfully motivated by “seeing” their story depicted and captured by an external person to their agency on a long piece of paper. The story unravels, so to speak, before their eyes.

What supplies are needed?

- At least 12 different colors of chisel tipped pens (i.e., flat and fat edged)
- Large long sheet of paper or flipchart pages
- Painters tape to attach paper to wall
- Chalk
- Highlighters
- Baskets to hold pens
- Ready made templates are handy (available from Grove Consultants)
Ten simple ways to use graphic techniques

First, it is best to take a course, or read a book and practice a number of different images. I recommend practicing on regular flipcharts by adding features or applying the following ten tips:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong></td>
<td>Draw borders around the edge of the flip chart paper – especially agendas and important words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong></td>
<td>Add in a few simple graphics on your flipchart - happy faces or balloons on the side for celebratory activities, cups of tea for coffee breaks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong></td>
<td>Underline the titles of headers with bright markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong></td>
<td>Use bright, bold colors to capture attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong></td>
<td>Divide space unequally to create intrigue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong></td>
<td>Achieve balance by placing <strong>BIG, bold and colorful elements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong></td>
<td>Avoid lines that cross or touch when they are not meant to – this is distracting to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong></td>
<td>Use simple images. Limit also, the number of styles of lettering on a single page. Leave lots of white space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong></td>
<td>Group common themes by circling several images or phrases with highlighters or lines that divide them into like categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong></td>
<td>Use shading with chalk for some WOW effects.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all images are lines, squiggles or circles put together! Try practicing common figures such as suns, moons, clouds, trees, airplanes, computers, balloons, people, stars, arrows, paths, light bulbs, tea cups, smiling faces, globes, hands, hearts, toolbox, sailboats, puzzle pieces, roads, dandelions, plant with roots in soil, etc. See last few pages for some ways to draw some of these images.
When to use this technique?

You might consider using more imagery in all your meetings and group sessions. You can begin with the flipcharts and move up to larger pieces of paper for certain exercises. I would consider using mainly graphic facilitation when you are doing a visioning, goal-setting session, problem-solving, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, history of an organization, start-up of a team, mission creation, context setting and more.

My Favorite Resources

- Gove Consultants [www.grove.com](http://www.grove.com)
- Planning alternative Tomorrows with Hope (Path). Jack Pierpoint et al. Toronto Canada. 1993
- Attend the International Association of Facilitators conference for graphic facilitation sessions
Insert Scanned Hand Drawings Here