

11 Tips for Using Flip Charts More Effectively

based on the work of Lenny Laskowski,
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While everyone seems to be interested in creating high-tech computer generated presentations, the flip chart still continues to be the most effective presentation media of all and is one that should not be overlooked. Too often the false assumption is made that investing a lot of money in high tech visual aids & equipment will "make" the presentation. The best visuals have been and still are the simplest. Give thought to the purpose for using visuals. The purpose of using visual aids should be to enhance the presentation, not upstage it. Since most presentations are delivered before small groups of less than 50 participants, the flip chart is the perfect size.

ADVANTAGES OF USING FLIP CHARTS

1. Flip charts do not need electricity - You don't need to worry if the bulb will burn out or worry that you forgot the extension chord.
2. Flip charts are economical - They do not require you to use any special films or printers to produce them.
3. Color can be added very easily - An inexpensive box of flip chart markers allows you all the creativity you want.
4. Flip charts support spontaneity - Any last minute changes can be easily made.

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In today's world of high tech computers, fancy software and sophisticated infomercials, many presenters today feel they have to create a presentation which shows off their ability to use computers and their latest clip art library. Although the software available today does allow everyone the ability to create colorful slides and overheads, too often we find that the visuals become the presentation and the focus is taken away from the speaker. The visual aids should not be the presentation.

TIPS FOR USING FLIP CHARTS

1. The best flip chart stands have clamps at the top and will hold most types of flip chart pads. Most allow you to hang your flip charts while some stands will only allow you to prop them up. Don't wait until the last minute to find this out.
2. Make sure the flip charts you use will fit the flip chart stand you will be using. Some have different spaced holes at the top.
3. Flip chart pads are usually sold in packages of two and come either plain or come with grid lines on them. Using the pad with grid lines makes your job easier for drawing straight lines and keeps your text aligned. Also, make sure the pad has perforations at the top to allow easier removal of sheets.
4. When preparing your charts, it is best to first design your charts on scrap paper before drawing them on the actual flip chart pad.
5. Lightly write your text in pencil first then trace using the actual flip chart markers. This will allow you to make any adjustments with text spacing and any figures you will be drawing. DO NOT use all block letters (UPPER CASE). Using upper and lower case letters eases readability. Follow the 7 x 7 rule. Have no more than 7 words on each line and no more than 7 lines to a sheet. The 6 x 6 rule is even better!
6. Use flip chart markers and not regular magic markers. Flip chart markers will not "bleed" through the paper. Also, they do not have as strong a smell as regular markers.
7. Avoid using the colors yellow, pink, or orange. These are extremely difficult for the audience to see. Avoid using too many colors. Ideally, use one dark color and one accent color.
8. You can write "lightly in pencil" any notes you need next to key points. The audience won't be able to see them. You may also make note of what is on the next sheet. Knowing this will allow you to properly introduce your next sheet.
9. If you make any mistakes, use "white out" to correct small errors. For larger areas, cover the mistake with a double layer of flip chart paper and correct the error.
10. Have a blank sheet of paper between each of your text sheets. This will prevent "peek through" of the written material from the next page.
11. Properly store and transport your flip charts in a case or the cardboard box that they come in. This will protect your flip charts and keep them fresh and ready to use each time. Take great care of your flip charts and you will be able to use them repeatedly. You may even wish to have some charts covered with clear, non-glare contact paper.

Making "prepared" flip charts can take a considerable amount of time. Make sure you start preparing your charts early enough so you can review them and make any changes or corrections before hand. It takes practice to learn how to print neatly. If you do not have neat, legible printing, consider using stencils or having someone write for you. A poorly prepared flip chart can be very distracting. *NOTE: Technology is available to increase 8 x10 documents to poster size. Consider creating your charts as WORD documents using your computer, printing, and enlarging to poster size.*