

VISUALS / MATERIALS

Overlays to Focus Attention on Primary Points

Use cardstock and cookie cutters to keep attendees' eyes and minds focused on the most important parts of overhead projections. When creating a transparency, also create an overlay by tracing cookie cutters of various shapes on cardstock and cut holes to match those shapes. The holes are positioned so that when the cardstock is placed over the transparency, key points are visible through the holes.

Once a transparency has been discussed in detail, place the overlay on it, leaving only the most important items visible. Then focus the discussion on those points by saying, for example, "Let me direct your attention to the key point in the star."

What Does That Have to Do with Anything?

Irrelevant material helps break up long, mundane visual presentations. When giving a presentation that involves large numbers of slides or overheads, mark break times by inserting a completely irrelevant image - a map of an historic battle, a football play diagram, a photo of a relative.

Hesitate for a second, then continue as if it were part of the presentation: "It's obvious what's happening here. Patton pushed the opposing forces" Initial confusion soon turns to laughter, starting the break on an upbeat note.

But I'm Not an Artist!

To demonstrate to trainers that they don't need to be artists to have professional-looking visuals, play this simple "trick":

Prepare several flipchart pages for the "trick" before class by faintly tracing an intricate cartoon and putting a blank flipchart page in front of each. The tracing is visible to you and not the audience. When talking about using flip charts in class as an effective teaching tool, proclaim that anyone can be a Picasso. Then quickly trace a cartoon. Then flip to a new sheet of paper (without a tracing underneath) and ask for a volunteer to try drawing the same cartoon. Of course, the group "volunteers" someone.

The volunteer attempts to copy the cartoon you have drawn. Then announce to the group that the volunteer is going to attend a "mini art school."

Pull the volunteer out of class and explain how you did your drawing. With another tracing ready, have the volunteer go back into the room and press the sheet on top of the tracing until the faint pencil markings show through so it can be quickly traced over with a marker.

The other participants are shocked. Of course, they can see the vast improvement in the volunteer's "ability" and know there is a trick, but are unsure how it is done. Then explain and demonstrate the technique, emphasizing that even someone who can't draw can easily produce professional flip charts.

Pocket-Size Pointer

Cut an arrow shape from a business card and turn up about ½ inch of the shaft to make it easier to pick up and position on the focus point. The arrow is instantly identifiable and transports easily.

Coated Stock

Many magazines - *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Life* - are all printed on what is called *coated stock*. With these magazines you can transfer any color picture to a transparency using these four steps:

1. Thinly coat with rubber cement the magazine picture you want to transfer.
2. Glue the picture to a piece of clear transparency film.
3. After the cement dries, soak the picture and transparency in warm, soapy water.
4. After the paper is thoroughly soaked, peel it off, leaving only the ink attached to the plastic.

Like a Bridge

A simple prop to help control overheads once they're placed on the projector:

Take strips of masking tape and build a small "bridge" or "curb" on the sides of the projector surface. Or, you can tape down a pencil. This new border acts as a guide for presenters as they can now place the overhead against the "curb" and ensure it remains straight.

Easy on the Eyes

When creating handouts or reference sheets, use two or three columns per page whenever possible instead of a single column. Many readers find skimming is easier and faster, and people comprehend more when the lines of text are shorter, rather than one imposing block of copy.

Colored Acetates

Colored acetates are a versatile, inexpensive way to highlight transparencies.

Cut the acetate into shapes of various sizes, then lay a rectangle over a section of the transparency you want to emphasize, or use a triangle as a pointer to emphasize a word or line. Because the shapes are loose, they can be easily moved to other sections of an overhead. They also pack and travel easily.

See the Potentials

The purpose of this exercise is to remind trainers to look at everything as a potential resource with multiple uses.

Give each group of 4-5 participants a simple red or blue bandanna and challenge them to come up with 10 ways a trainer could use it.

Examples: as a transparency eraser; a sweat band in a hot classroom; a decorative bow on the overhead projector; tied to a stick as an attention-getting pennant; an order-keeping device (the holder of the cloth has the floor).