



5 ways to more engaging Flip Charts and Whiteboards

A White Paper by Lynne Cazaly

www.lynnecazaly.com

5 ways to more engaging Flip Charts and Whiteboards

Many meeting rooms, workplaces and conference venues have them – whiteboards and flip charts.

How do you approach them? With confidence and positivity, or do you keep well away from them preferring to stay glued to the chair?

When I walk past any meeting or conference room and see the whiteboard or flip chart, I always see opportunities where the ‘work’ could be enhanced... to make it worth looking at, easier to comprehend, and most of all, give the credence and credit to the important information written on it!

Start using these five tips and you’ll have flip charts and whiteboards worth looking at – and you’ll feel more confident walking up to them and making use of their incredibly influential and persuasive visual power!

1. Low contrast loses – be bold!

Problem: The marker pen and paper or whiteboard aren't working in the greatest possible contrast.

High contrast is vital. People need to be able to see what you've written.

Contrast is black on white. That's as big a contrast as you can get.

Put the red, green and blue markers down. Put them down now, and leave them there for awhile. (Ok, yes, blue offers fairly high contrast but still not as good as black.)

Use the black marker. Black on white is high contrast, easier to see from a distance. Easier for the eye to find the pattern of the letters and visuals and take the information in quickly.

You can move on to using colour later, once you’re excelling at the other four tips in this white paper! So stay with black for now.

2. Stop the Scrawl – slow down.

Problem: Writing and visuals are indecipherable, unreadable on first reading.

“Messy, scrawling writing. Could do better if applied themselves.”

Relax, you don't need to write like your first grade teacher.

But if you were in a rush when you wrote and scrawled across the whiteboard or flip chart, the result will be less than helpful to the people looking at the writing.

With so much time spent tapping on keys these days, the times we have to write require us to re-engage that part of our brain and fire up that skill again.

If you think your writing is messy, slow it down. No need to rush.

S-l-o-w d-o-w-n.

If you're really in a hurry and you're busy and you're important, it's simple, - write less.

If you're rushing to write things down, you're not giving the information the importance it deserves – nor are you giving the credit and respect to the people who are contributing the information, including yourself!

3. Lift off!

Problem : Running writing belongs back in our school days.

A contributor to the scrawl in point 2, is a hangover from many of our lessons of writing using cursive or 'running writing' rather than printing.

The letters mesh and merge into each other and before long, what should be an *s* or an *e* looks like a *k* and a *z*.

This doesn't help our brain take information in quickly. It might be quick for you to write in your own personal notes, but when it comes to flip charts and whiteboards, it's not all about you. It's about them, those people who are looking at the whiteboard or flip chart.

Lift your pen up off the surface after each stroke and letter.

Avoid connecting the letters. Print. Think like the letters you're reading now. There is a space in between each. The letters are close to each other, but they're not blending into each other.

Printing helps with observation and comprehension and the speed of uptake of information.

If you get flustered or you're in a rush, you'll revert back to messy writing and you'll be dragging your pen across the page. Not a good look.

4. What's it all about anyway?

Problem: A chart of words with no focus point.

Walk past a meeting or training room after a flip chart or whiteboard has been used and you'll see words, numbers, a grid perhaps, and a few lines.

But what's it about?

Focus people's attention on what is on the chart or board by giving it a title.

Imagine going to the movies and not knowing what the film was called or who was in it. Or picking up a book in a bookstore and only seeing the author's name and the thousands of words in the book.

The title is dramatic. It's a critical reference to frame and position what comes next.

Your charts and whiteboards need titles. Every one of them.

Keep the brain focused on what is being discussed or presented by giving it a title.

And the title doesn't need to be at the top either. Try the centre or the bottom of the chart or board for a bit of visual variety.



5. All words and no action

Problem: A chart full of words can be such hard work to take in.

If a picture can convey a thousand words, we need to use more of them, in among the words.

I'm not saying 'Let's play chart charades - guess what this means!'

Rather, bring things into balance, enhance the information you've collected on the whiteboard or chart.

Help your meeting participants make meaning of all of this information. Make it even more memorable by giving key concepts and phrases a visual anchor.

Visuals include symbols and icons (\$? @ # % £ € *) and all of those other quirky little squiggles you'll find on a computer's font list under 'Symbol' or 'Wingdings'. These include arrows and lines, dots and dashes, hearts, circles, triangles, squares and other ant-like inkings on the page.

Add a visual anchor to your key words, sentences, concepts and phrases to make the information easier to recall, more interesting to look at and quicker to absorb.

In conclusion

When you're next in a room or meeting and there's a whiteboard or flip chart there, go ahead and **step up**:

- Pick up the black marker
- Take it slow
- Print rather than write
- Give the chart a heading, and
- Use visuals to anchor the information.

Truly acknowledge the importance of the information you're capturing or presenting and respect who provided the information by making it clear, visible, useful, memorable and persuasive.

And at your next meeting, see the whiteboard or a flip chart as an ally in your communication and engagement - not a silent enemy.

To develop your skills to be more persuasive with visual communication and engagement, check out my organisation, public and 1:1 training programs called 'Catch-it' and 'Visual Mojo' at www.lynnecazaly.com



Lynne Cazaly

e: info@lynnecazaly.com

w: www.lynnecazaly.com

m: 0419 560 677

PO Box 414 Albert Park VIC 3206 AUSTRALIA