

VISUAL AID IDEAS FOR PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

The use of good visual aids - especially physical 'props' which people can hold and touch - is one of the best techniques for adding interest, humour and variety to presentations, training, and public speaking.

People remember more of what they are told if the experience is multi-sensory, rather than just listening to spoken words or reading printed words on a screen. Visual aids, particularly 'props', have a physical presence, texture, feel, perhaps smell also, which can create powerful and memorable metaphors.

Here are some simple examples of visual aids to use for various themes and metaphors. The hats and clothing props can be worn by the presenter while making a certain point, or better still given to a training delegate or member of the audience to wear.

You don't need to buy the real thing - usually children's toy versions or party shop novelties will achieve the same result, and in many cases a better one.

Over-sized props (joke-shop inflatables for example) that you keep with you at the front or on stage can be particularly effective, especially for a big audience for whom a small prop might have less impact. Smaller props - like fruit and vegetables or chocolate snack bars - are fun to pass around the audience, or throw (with due care), more so if the items have interesting shapes, textures, smells, etc.

Using good and imaginative visual aids brings a talk or presentation to life, and injects a lot of humour.

In fact usually the humour will come from the audience, when they see the prop on you, or better still when they see one of their colleagues wearing or holding or otherwise showing off an imaginative prop.

VISUAL AIDS IDEAS - PROPS TO MAKE A POINT AND REINFORCE A THEME

- **WD40 or Oil-can** - the role of a facilitator and the process of facilitation and enablement. The concept of lubricating and liberating, without actually becoming part of the machinery or structure, enabling people and teams to work better - enabling them to do it, not doing it for them. You can also read out the qualities and purposes listed on the oil can, some of which are apt metaphors for the facilitator's role, for example 'frees sticking mechanisms' and 'loosens parts'. (Thanks Paul Carter Organisational Consulting)

- **Lemon** - a great visual and tactile prop - better still give everyone a lemon to take home. A lemon can be used to reinforce very many points and themes, including: stimulate as many senses as possible when presenting - a lemon does this - touch, colour, smell, humour, sharpness, simplicity, etc., lemons are great props for train-the-trainer and presentations training, also good for making any point about impact and making things memorable.
- **Builder's Hard Hat** - building (compiling information, assembling facts, evidence, etc.), also obviously safety, being properly prepared and equipped for the job.
- **Chef's Hat** - preparation (of anything), mixing, blending (teams, etc.), selecting ingredients (identifying and choosing quality components, people, suppliers, methods, etc.).
- **Toolbox with Tools** - toolkit (set of products, tools, methods, materials, documents, etc., each designed for a specific purpose, and related to the other tools in the kit).
- **Knitting Needles and Ball of Wool** - 'stick to the knitting' metaphor, do the essentials before taking risks.
- **Chopsticks** - try new things, experiment, practice, new experiences.
- **Orange** - goodness, simplicity, it is what it says, clarity.
- **Tools** - for making specific points or representing specific ideas, actions, priorities, aims, etc.
- **Hammer** - impact and power themes and ideas.
- **Six Inch Nails** - when you want to make a point or a number of 'points'.
- **Police Helmet** - checking, monitoring, knowing and applying the rules.
- **Rugby Scrum-cap or Hockey Mask** - protection (of customers, business, information, territory, etc.)
- **Lone Ranger or Zorro Mask** – discretion; be mindful of competitors; guard sensitive information (plus lots of jokes besides...)
- **Army Helmet or Flak Jacket** - protect, fight, and dig in for a struggle, 'call to arms', a rallying call for a special effort.
- **Miners Light (Head-band or Hand-held)** - seek, look, find, search - great for customer prospecting themes, and researching information.
- **Magnifying Glass** - Seek, Discover, Examine, Probe, Research, Etc.

- **Big Textbook** - research, facts, evidence, know your facts, product knowledge, understand the detail (can also be used as a humorous threat in the event of breach, failure or transgression, referring to the 'throw the book at someone' expression).
- **T-square or Set-square, or Ruler** - accuracy, measurement - if you can't measure it you can't manage it.
- **Spirit Level** - level playing field, fairness, even-handedness, careful construction (of anything), establishing a good platform.
- **Brick** - strength, robustness, durability, reliability.
- **Chocolate Snack Bars** - be good to yourself, enjoy yourself, life balance, work-rest-play, etc.
- **Binoculars or Telescope** - field research, competitor intelligence and information, forward planning, looking ahead, and probing for answers, vision.
- **Globe** (*inflatables are easy to find*) - travel, global markets, widen search for customers, partners, suppliers, sourcing, transport, import, export, international law, currency conversion, exchange rates, time differences, cultures, ethnicity, people - really you can do mostly anything with a globe.
- **Big Clock** - time, and time management, scheduling, planning.
- **Old-style Alarm-Clock** - deadlines, wake-up call, call to action.
- **Sign-post or Milestone** (*make one out of card*) - planning, milestones, direction, project-management.
- **Goggles** - don't be blinded by science, gobbledegook, waffle, misinformation, protect your judgement and vision.
- **Big Spectacles** - vision, inspection, scrutiny, apply your intelligence (like 'Brains' from Thunderbirds).
- **Football or Rugby Ball** - play, have fun, exercise.
- **Big Egg-timer** - get on with things, the sands of time...
- **Regular/big fluffy Dice** - risk-taking, leave nothing to chance; understand the odds of success before taking risks.
- **Lawyers Wig (and gown?)** - be legal, act within the law, apply the law.
- **Beach Ball** - rest, relax, take a break, take your holidays, and ensure your staff does so too.

- **Dumbbell** - exercise, keep fit, healthy body healthy mind.
- **Nodding Dog (from the back of a car)** - be somebody, make a difference, don't just be a nodding dog, don't surround yourself with 'yes-men', don't be a 'yes-man'.
- **Big Rock** - search (leave no stone un-turned).
- **Juggling Balls** - creativity, juggling tasks and priorities (keeping all the balls in the air), using different parts of the brain, relaxation and stress-prevention, fun, practice makes perfect, dexterity
- **Top-hat (and tails? - easy to hire)** - going up-market, going after bigger business, improving quality, aspiring to greater higher things, increasing performance, positioning with the market leaders rather than the price-cutters - lots more on the themes of improvement and setting higher aims.
- **Old-style Mobile Phone** - pace of technology change, different perspectives and attitudes, changing fashions and trends.
- **Conductors Baton** - orchestrate, co-ordinate, manage, timing, time-management, turn up the volume or tempo, and anything else related to managing resources and timescales.
- **Large framed picture or print of a famous masterpiece with an obvious message or theme** - a picture tells a thousand words, use diagrams, pictures and images when you need to communicate clearly.
- **Whisk** - mix and blend resources, people, team-building, shake things up (change).
- **Wooden Spoon** - change and check (add, stir and taste) cycle of improvement, the simplest tools are often the best, simplicity, multi-tasking.
- **Big silver spoon or Steel ladle contrasted with a wooden spoon** - inspire people, don't suggest failure (wooden spoon is metaphor for last place).
- **Pack/deck of Cards** - keep your cards close to your chest, discretion, secrecy, shrewdness, calculated risk.
- **Doctors Stethoscope** - diagnose before taking action, empathy and understanding, listening skills, active listening, professionalism, expertise, consultative approach.
- **Indoor Fireworks** - attention, impact.
- **Torch** - light the way, lead people, find the best direction, discover, adjust to strange unknown situations, illuminate facts, shed light on uncertainty, dispel rumour and misinformation.

- **Air Freshener Spray** - atmosphere, environment, duty of care, working atmosphere, clear the air (dispel rumour and bad feeling).
- **Whip** - excitement, action, drive, determination.
- **Doctors-style Leather Case** - professionalism, expertise, consultative approach.
- **Spinning Top** - balance, fairness, equity, equality, non-discrimination.
- **Cardigan, Pipe and Slippers** - ageism, respect the knowledge/experience/feelings of older workers, avoid stereo-typing people and making assumptions about age and character.
- **Baseball Cap** - avoid stereo-typing young people, develop and invest in youth, different culture, attitudes, bigotry.
- **Camera** - respect people's privacy; avoid work encroaching/impinging on personal lives.
- **Telephone Directory** - find new people, prospective customers, suppliers, contacts, networking.
- **Old-style Telephone** - communications, talk, it's good to talk (rather than email).
- **Flowers** - say thanks, acknowledge efforts.
- **Carrot** - incentive, incentivise, motivate, reward, motivational styles and methods.
- **Medal on a ribbon or a trophy** - give recognition, motivate, achievement.
- **Paper Plane** - aim high, explore, strive.