

## 11 Tips for Using Flip Charts More Effectively (Jan 07)

By Lenny Laskowski

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. One should not assume that investing a lot of money in high tech visual aids & equipment will "make" your presentation. The best visuals have been and still are the simplest. Remember, the purpose of using visual aids is to enhance your presentation, not upstage it.

Since most presentations are delivered before small groups or 35 people or less, the flip chart is the perfect size. I feel the flip chart will continue to be the workhorse of most training seminars.

There are several advantages of using a flip chart. Here are just a few:

**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.

**Flip charts are economical** - They do not require you to use any special films or printers to produce them.

**Color can be added very easily** - An inexpensive box of flip chart markers allows you all the creativity you want.

**Flip charts allow spontaneity** - Any last minute changes can be easily made. 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, we often find that the visuals become the presentation and not the speaker. As a speaker, your visual aids should not be the presentation. You are!

Even though flip charts are low tech, they are reliable and don't require any special skill to use them but here are some tips to help you use them effectively.

1. The best flip chart stands have clamps at the top and will hold most type 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. I have seen many presenters struggle to tear off a sheet evenly.
4. When preparing your charts, it is best to first design your charts on paper first before drawing them on the actual flip chart pad.
5. Lightly write your text in pencil first before 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 makes it easier to read. I like to use the 7 x 7 rule. Have no more than 7 words on each line and no more than 7 lines to a sheet. Using a 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. You can also find "scented" markers. They usually come in various fruit scents.

7. Avoid using the colors yellow, pink, or orange. These are extremely difficult for the audience to see. Don't make your audience have to strain their eyes to see your points. Avoid using too many colors. Using one dark color and one accent color works best.

8. You can write "lightly in pencil" any notes next to key points you need. The audience won't be able to see them. You may also write what is on the next sheet. Knowing this will allow you to properly introduce your next sheet.

9. If you make any mistakes you can use "white out" to correct any 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 the written material from other sheets to "peek" through.

11. Properly store and transport your flip charts in a case or the cardboard box that some 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. I have some flip charts I have used over 100 times and they still look as good as new.

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 printing, ask someone who does prepare them for you. A poorly prepared flip chart can be very distracting.

The most important point to remember in preparing your flip charts is to start preparing them early.

Lenny Laskowski is an international professional speaker and the author of the book, *No Sweat Presentations - The Painless Way to Successful Speaking* and several other publications.

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