

MONDAY MORNING MANAGER

Harvey Schachter's guide on how to handle everything from overflowing e-mail to meeting overload

It's back to the future for presentations

The backlash against PowerPoint® is bringing flipcharts back into favour, according to communications consultant Roger HB Davies. That means managers have to become experts in using them to lay out information, illustrate points and record discussion. Here are tips he shares with clients (on flipcharts, of course)

THINK BEFORE YOU ACT

Ask yourself: "Does this flipchart add value to my presentation?" If you can be just as effective without the flipcharts, pass on it.

WATCH YOUR BACK

Always stand to the side of the flipchart. Avoid turning your back to your audience. This may mean practicing so that you can write in a straight line from that position. Ruled flipchart paper is available, by the way, to help keep you in line.

WATCH THE BACK

Print or illustrate large enough that those seated at the back can see what you are writing or drawing. Position the flipchart so that everyone has a clear view.

WATCH YOUR COLOURS

Invest in flipchart markers so that you can alternate between blue, black, red, brown and purple. This keeps points separated and helps your audience retain information. Avoid light shades such as yellow. Use red markers with care since some people find them more difficult to read from a distance.

WATCH YOUR WORDS

Avoid too much text – less than 30 words per sheet is ideal. Use bullet points where possible.

WATCH YOUR TIME

Manage your time wisely since flipcharts require sufficient time to write out. Consider whether you can prepare in advance or how to build in enough time during your presentation for the flipchart work.

KEY POINTS

Record a key point that you want to remember in pencil on the flipchart. Your audience will not see it but you will.

GET HELPERS

If capturing ideas and comments, use members of the audience to act as scribes so you can focus more on the audience, (Besides, they might have better handwriting.)

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Depending on the size of room, consider doubling up on flipcharts for both sides of an audience to view easily. This takes extra preparation time, but will be appreciated. Helpers, obviously, make it easier to handle two flipcharts simultaneously during discussion.

THINK VISUALLY

Experiment with simple graphic layouts on some pages to make the message more visually interesting – and more memorable.

THINK OF THE ENVIRONMENT

If the paper is fairly thick, the flipcharts can be reused on the reverse side. The existing writing may show through on thin paper.

REMEMBER THE BASICS

Check that you have enough paper. Try to write neatly.

Report on Business
The Globe and Mail, August 2009