

PROJECTED IMAGE STRATEGIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

©copyright by Robert (Bob) W. Lucas

Technology continues to provide a variety of stimulating and easily developed visual aids. With the software currently on the market, you can create eye-catching visuals and handouts that were available only through professional graphic artists and printers. In a short period of time, most trainers who know their way around the basics of a computer can learn to use presentation and layout graphic software. Such software offers maximum flexibility by allowing the creation and modification of materials in a matter of minutes versus days that previous production processes required with programs like PowerPoint, Harvard Graphics, Freelance Graphics, Quark, PageMaker, and later versions of Word and WordPerfect, an average trainer can do much of the layout work that used to be done by graphics professionals. And with programs like Corel Draw, Adobe Illustrator, PrintMaster, and other many other graphics and clip art programs, you can create wonderful handouts and projected visuals by moving art, font and a variety of images around in different programs (see Resources for Trainers for more information on these sources).

Usage Tips

The following are suggestions for using slide shows.

- Before participants arrive, check the operation and focus of your computer and projection units.
- If you are using an LCD projection system that sits on top of the overhead projector glass and uses the projector's light to display an image on the screen, look in the owner's manual to ensure that the overhead projector has a bulb that is bright enough. Most LCD units need a light source that projects at least 2000 LUMs (a measure of brightness).
- ALWAYS plan backup training aids in case of equipment failure. This is crucial if you are taking your own laptop computer to another location where someone else will provide a projection unit. Too often, the equipment does not connect well or your computer may be damaged in transit. I generally make transparencies of my computer slides and have them with me in case I need to switch to an overhead projector presentation. If you had not planned to use an LCD, remember to request an overhead projector as a standby resource. I also request a flip chart for smaller groups and rooms.
- Place your projection screen where the audience can easily view it. Check the visibility before participants arrive by projecting an image, then going to various points in the room to verify a clear line of sight.
- Have a twenty-five foot extension cord with multiple adapters on it available in case there is no electrical outlet conveniently located to the front of the room.

- Dim the lights directly over the projection screen to prevent glare.
- Follow a standard format - either all printed vertically (portrait) or horizontally (landscape).
- Limit lines of text to 8-10 and words per line to 6-8 to avoid looking too cluttered.
- 1/4-inch sans serif lettering (approximately 30 point font) is usually large enough for text when presenting to groups of 100-200. Title lines should be slightly larger to make them stand out. These sizes assume that your room configuration is simple (e.g. theater style) and audience view is unobstructed.
- When preparing slides, use upper case for title lines and upper case for the first letter of a word on a new topic line and for proper nouns followed by lower case for text. This makes reading easier.
- Use bold lettering to make the words stand out on the screen.
- Add color to your slides by having the title line a different color from that of the text. You can use any dark color or even red to make the title stand out.
- Try choosing two different colors (e.g. yellow and white) for use on text lines when using a dark background. For each new point made, alternate the colors. For example, point one would be in yellow, point two in white, then point three in yellow, and so forth. Stay away from red for text lines because it is difficult to read, especially from a distance or for people who have red color blindness.
- Ensure that your slide fonts and background colors are complimentary. If you are unsure about a combination, either refer to a graphics source (e.g. artist, book or other person with good color perception) or do not use the combination.
- Do not use excessive special features when designing your slides. Select one or two options and carry that theme through the entire presentation so that the media does not become the focal point and distract from your message. For example, choose one or two types of slide opening (e.g. drip, dissolve, or fade).
- Add clip art that compliments the written words to your slides to help attract and hold attention. Keep your images small so they do not distract from the words.
- If you use a commercial video segment, preview it and become thoroughly familiar with the content before learners arrive. Have prepared comments to introduce the segment, give participants specifics to watch for in the clip and review what they saw afterwards, if appropriate.

- When possible, use a remote control to allow you to move around the room and still operate the slide show. This frees you from having to stand next to the computer to punch a button when you want to advance a slide. An alternative is to have an assistant positioned to change slides when you are ready. This often takes considerable practice and coordination, so think about using a helper before participants arrive.
- If you are nervous, DO NOT use a laser pointer to direct learner attention to something on the projection screen. Your hands will be shaking and the nervousness will be obvious and magnified as the red dot dances around the screen. Also, if you are going to use a laser pointer, be very careful not to shine it into your eyes or that of someone else since eye damage can occur.

Creative Slide Design

Depending on the computer program used to create your presentation, you can do a multitude of things to enhance the images and impact of what you show your learners. Some of the more common things that you can do with your computer-generated slide shows:

- Insert sound or movie clips that can demonstrate or explain short segments of information into your presentation at appropriate points.
- Include animation in which you have characters, such as dinosaurs with your actual face or that of various learners as the head, walking across your screen to drag in text. Use such features conservatively so that the images add value and are not just there for amusement.
- Add graphics or text that seems to float around the screen by changing locations. This effect might be used with a graphic that you project for the duration of a break. For example, a smiling sun face that moves around.
- Try using creative graphic fonts for title slides or title lines to add a bit of variety.
- Flip objects or images so that the same image is used in a different position. For example, you might have two versions of your own caricature facing one another on either side of the slide at the bottom.
- Add a 3D (three dimensional) effect in which letters or words appear stretched or to come in from the distance.
- Make words or images appear to have a shadow behind them.

- Insert charts, tables or text boxes into slides to help explain key points of the presentation.

Bob Lucas B.S., M.A., M.A, CPLP is an internationally-known author and learning and performance professional. He has written and contributed to thirty-one books and compilations. He regularly conducts creative training, train-the-trainer, customer service, interpersonal communication and management and supervisory skills workshops. Bob can be reached at blucas@robertwlucas.com or through his website www.robertwlucas.com. Follow his blog at www.robertwlucas.com/wordpress and like him at www.facebook.com/robertwlucasenterprises