Selecting your training aids

Introduction

Training aids are basically aids that can assist the trainer to make training better. Visual training aids in a training programme are used for the following reasons:

- To put a point across with more effect
- Participants take more in - 70% of the information is gathered through seeing
- To maintain interest
- To give experience by watching
- Focus attention in one spot or place
- It's a break from presenting
- Extensive preparation leads to a polished product and professionalism
- If you write points down, people feel listened to and it boosts their confidence
- To get participation
- They are tailored to needs
- They are transportable, convenient and fit into a schedule
- They keep you on track
- People can look at them independently
- People learn better if information is organized
- To model behaviour or skills
- To aid memory - provide a summary
- To stimulate discussion

The choice of an aid is left at the trainer's discretion and no absolute rules are laid down. Aids however have to fulfil certain requirements and the following can be of use:

- **Simple:** Aids must be simple and contain only essential information. Too much information can lead to confusion

- o **Realistic:** The aid used must provide a realistic and truthful image of the subject under discussion. If possible, the real article or a is always the best aid

- o **Accurate:** Aids must be accurate and correct in every way. If details are presented incorrectly, some attendants will remember the incorrect details despite the trainers effort to correct them during the presentation

- o **Colourful:** Charts, transparencies, diagrams and models must appear professional and have an impact on the imagination of the person attending the course. Colour can be used to highlight important details, and can enhance the appearance of the aid.

- o **Manageable:** Aids must be easy to manage and to remove and the presenter must be capable of handling them

- o **Readable:** Illegible writing is very disturbing and creates a negative attitude towards the presentation

- o **Suitability:** Aids must be suitable and in a good working condition. You should use training aids to suit your topic or activity

- o **Cost effective:** The cost of acquiring or manufacturing training aids must be reasonable and affordable

General advantages

Visual training aids have various advantages to the presenter and learner alike. Here are a few of the advantages:

- o **Arousing Interest**
  Passive listening by the attendant results in a decrease in the ability to concentrate and interest, while an aid which shows a specific item or activity can stimulate interest and bring about the necessary changes in the learning situation

- o **Correct presentation of ideas**
  If a new thought, procedure, process, etc. is only communicated verbally, each course attendant would translate it in terms of his own frame of reference which can result in different perceptions. But with the use of a good aid, illustration or model, the attendant can see exactly what the presenter is trying to describe and a uniform image will be created.

- o **They hear and see**
  Aids sharpen the impressions made on attendants as well as the trainer=s presentation of facts. They enhance, the learning process is enhanced because more senses are used. More than 80% of the learning process takes place through the eyes and ears and for that reason is it obviously more effective to use both the auditive and visual senses in the training process.

- o **Aids expand the attendant's experience**
  Through the use of models, slides, video recordings, etc a situation can be created in the classroom that might have been outside the attendant's frame of reference

- o **Time saving**
  A training aid can save time for both the presenter and the attendant. The visual image eliminates confusion as well as unnecessary questions

General hints

Finally it must be mentioned that any aid can only be effective if used professionally. The following are helpful hints to ensure professionalism:

- ❖ Take care that the exact number of aids is available and ready for use. Don't cram the lecture or presentation with too many training aids but also don't neglect the persons attending the course by using none. Ensure that the aid illustrates the important points and provide sufficient time for the use of the aid.

- ❖ Be sure that training aids are prearranged in the correct order of usage, and that the lesson plan clearly states what aid is going to be used at a specific stage in the learning session.

Training aids that can be used

Here are a few examples of visual training aids that can be used in the training.

The video or DVD as a training aid
Video and DVD's are well-known media which can be found in almost every home and training department. The ability of a video/DVD to bring the outside world into
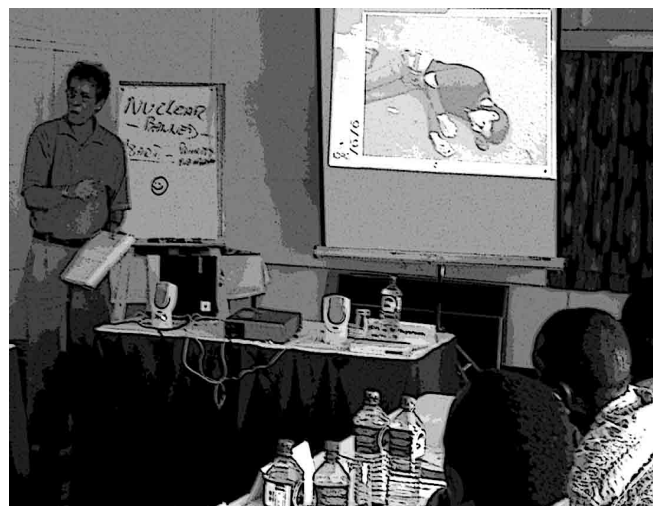
the lecture room should never be underestimated. By using a video/DVD you have access to experts and excellent examples in the training room. It is presented in such a way that it allows the learner to see, hear and even become emotionally involved and thereby increasing these credibility of these media.

Advantages of a video or DVD as a training aid

Here are a few of the advantages of a video/DVD as training aid:

- o Shows real-life examples of what you have been talking about.
- o Gives the presenter a rest
- o Provides variety to the programme
- o Motivates learners
- o Stimulates discussion
- o Powerful tool to create emotions

Disadvantages of the video as a training aid

A video/DVD also has some disadvantages. They are the following:

- o Video/DVD material is very expensive to develop.
- o It is one-way communication. The learners listen to something which the presenter cannot fully control. It is therefore very important to choose only the best and applicable material.
- o You lose contact with your audience for a while.
- o You may find yourself basing the presentation around it (an advantage if it is an excellent video/DVD)
- o The small screen of the standard size television does have the disadvantage that only a restricted number of persons attending a course can be accommodated at a certain time.

How to use the video/DVD during the training programme

For a video or DVD to be an effective training aid you have to ensure that prepare properly and how the hardware works. It is also important to ensure that the topic in the video is relevant to the topic that you will discuss.

Preparation

Here are a few things that the presenter should do before the start of the training programme or session:

- o Check that the video tape and video machine are compatible or that the DVD player or computer is working and compatible with the projector
- o Find out where the sockets are
- o Check the connections
- o Make sure the TV is on the video/DVD channel or that the LCD projector is working and test the video or DVD player, computer, TV or LDC projector before the presentation
- o Check that the volume and the colour control work
- o You may sometimes need separate speakers
- o Make sure the video is re-winded and tape is at the right point
- o Make sure everyone can see the screen
- o Acquaint yourself with the quality and content of the video/DVD before the presentation
- o Decide on the application and give an outline of the video/DVD before showing it
- o Pauses for discussions or elaborations must be planned carefully
- o Correct and well-planned questions/input and problems from the presenter can promote/stimulate the participation and involvement of learners

Steps to follow:

o Introduce the video/DVD while the TV or LDC projector is off

o Show the planned insert on the video/DVD (the timer of the video machine can help you pause at the right spot for the next insert). However, as various timers of video machines do not all give the same readings, it is necessary to check your readings of the video machine you intend using before the learning session commences.)

o Discussions ensure that the video/DVD contributes to expanding the learners' experience

Never make disparaging remarks about the video before, during or after it is shown, whatever you may think of it

White or black board as a training aid

The white or black board is one of the most common training aids that are normally available in most training facilities. It is board that you can write on with a pen or chalk. The board is another visual training aid that can assist the trainer. The main advantage is that you can re-use the same board, which means that it is more cost effective than, for example, a flip chart. You can even write information on the board before your presentation to save time.

Advantages of the white or blackboard

o Of all the training aids the blackboard and whiteboard are certainly the most useful and efficient and the training aid that is used in most of the training facilities all over the world

o Not only do they assist the learners in taking notes but also help the presenter build up the learning session step by step

o Although the blackboard is still in use, it is
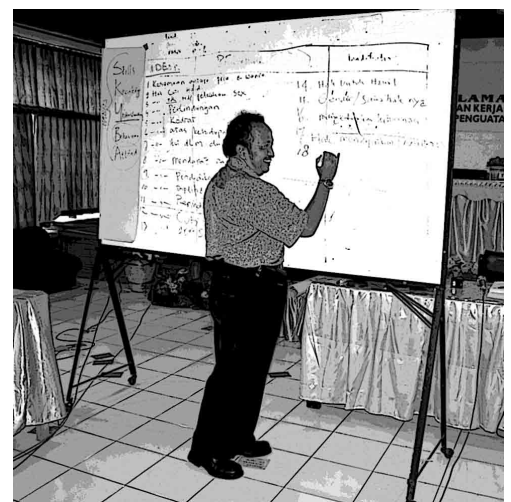
systematically being replaced by the white board. The biggest advantage of the white board with its smooth white surface is that it is dust free and can be cleaned with a soft cloth

o The white board can be used instead of, or in support of the blackboard and can be mounted on the wall of the lecture room or on a footing. Only special pens should be used on the white board.

o The board makes it easy to collect learner's ideas

o It is flexible, you can wipe off errors

o It is a great help for making spontaneous notes while you go through a learning session

o You can erase information that is no longer relevant to the learning session

o Another advantage is that it consists of a steel base and can therefore be used as a magnetic board as well. The magnets must be small but strong enough to hold maps, charts and even small models.

o The largest single advantage of the magnetic board is the fact that it is very time effective, because charts, diagrams and drawings can be made before the learning session commences and can be used over and over again. One can even be rather original and create movement on a magnetic board.

Disadvantages:

o If prepared beforehand, there is no element of surprise

o One cannot store information once the board is full

o Writing is sometimes not bold enough

o Difficult to move about

How to use the board:

The use of the blackboard and white board must be planned well in advance and integrated into the lecture plan before the learning session commences:

- o If it is a large board you can start by dividing the board into two or three large areas and use only one at a time
- o Writing must be legible, big enough and not too cramped
- o Write down the important points as you go along. This can help you a lot but be careful that you do not write too much and it becomes too much.
- o Use headings to focus everyone's attention on the subject you are discussing
- o Use the same colour for information under the same heading
- o The presenter must write fast and clear, an art that can only be mastered with exercise
- o Use acknowledged abbreviations that will be understood by the learners and interpreted correctly. It is advisable to give verbal explanations of the abbreviation used.
- o Stop talking when you start writing on the board. Failing to do so will mean that contact with the learners will be broken and it will be difficult for them to hear. (especially in bigger groups)
- o Clean the board after the learning session, unless certain points will be used in the following learning session
- o Spare no effort in making decent drawings and diagrams. If you doubt your competence, the drawings and diagrams can be drawn on the board before the learning session commence.
- o Avoid making a squeaking noise when writing with chalk on the blackboard. This can be prevented by holding the chalk at an angle of 45 degrees to the board when writing.
- o Use different colours to brighten up your writing and drawings on the board.
- o Never use the board as a scribbling pad

o Use darker colours, which will be more visible to the learners. Certain colours are easier to read than others for examples black, blue, green and red. Orange and yellow is more difficult to read and those colours can be used to highlight certain important topics.

It is important that you use a white board pen. The permanent marker will damage the board and will not rub off. (Should you have written with a permanent marker on the white board, you can clean it with methylated spirits or window cleaner, but remember, every time the board is cleaned with a chemical cleaner the life span of the board is shortened dramatically. **NEVER CLEAN THE BOARD WITH ACETONE, THINNERS, PAINT STRIPPER, TERPENTINE OR PETROL**, which will result in the instant destruction of the smooth layer of the board. (This is almost as good as using dynamite to clean the board.)

General hints

o Check to see that the kind of pen is suited to the board you are using

o Write clearly and neatly

o Ensure that all the learners can see the board

o Watch your spelling

o Wipe the board when you have finished

o Keep spare pens (chalk) handy

o Test the pens before the learning session commences to ensure that they are in working condition

o The board and the overhead projector can be combined very successfully. If it is necessary for you to indicate or highlight very intricate pictures such as these of fingerprints, for example, you can reflect a transparency on the board and indicate or highlight with colour on the board, thereby enhancing the learning.

o If intricate pictures need to be drawn on the board, you can make a transparency of the picture, reflect the picture onto the board and trace it onto the board with the relevant pen (chalk)

o A big window or glass door that is easily accessible can also be used as a whiteboard. All you have to do is to cover the window or glass door with a white cloth or flipchart paper at the back.

o A sheet of plastic that is tacked on the wall with tape can also be used as a whiteboard. (Builder's plastic works especially well because it is strong, big, sold at most hardware stores, available in white and very inexpensive.)

Take care not to:

o Use incompatible pens (permanent markers)
o Write too small
o Write long, difficult sentences (remember the 5 x 5 rule)

This **will not** help the learners to understand your message:

o Talk while you are writing
o Forget to put the caps on the pens (these pens dry out very quickly)
o Use a pen that is too thin for the learners to see what you have written
o Stand between the learners and the board; or
o Leave material up on the board once you have finished with it

The flip chart as a training aid

The flip chart is visual training aid that will enhance a training programme. It is especially relevant in areas where there are no overhead projectors available or there is no electricity.

The flip chart is basically an A1 size paper pad that is attached to the stand.

If you do not have a stand available you can paste the sheets on the wall with "Prestik/Bluetack" or tape. To a certain extent this will give you the same result.

The flipchart is ideal for small groups and group work, because not only can you use it to show information that was presented by the presenter in advance, but the groups can also use the pad to recall what happened in the group during discussion.

After you have written information on the sheets, you can take them off the pad and display them around the training area as reminders throughout the course. They are useful if you want to remember objectives or remind them of models, for example.

It is well worth preparing material in advance, if you want to use a flip chart is its best advantage. It makes you look more professional and it saves time during the course too.

The first and most important thing to remember when you are using the flip chart, is to make sure everyone can read what you are putting onto it. That means a bold heading on every page with short, sharp messages or keywords or abbreviations, if necessary. Don't worry about taking your time because your aim is to write clearly. As on the white board, writing long, straight sentences on a flip chart can be difficult. Your writing tends to get smaller as you get to the edge of the page. So keep things short and be careful at the bottom of the page as it is hard to write down there.

High-quality flip charts are exceptional aids to explain something that is difficult to convey verbally. They include diagrams, sketches, photographs and graphics. The charts have to be prepared and used with expertise.

Advantages of the flip chart

There are various advantages when using a flip chart during a training session:

- o It is not an expensive training aid

- o It is easy to prepare beforehand, retaining the element of surprise.

- o No need to clean it

- o Orders audience's ideas neatly

- o Can be moved around to the best position

- o Easy to make notes on

- o Good for group work

- o Dispenses with need to rewrite notes if you are doing the same presentation more than once

Disadvantages of the flip chart

The flip chart also has its disadvantages:

- o Smaller than white board for developing discussion on 1 sheet
- o Paper sometimes incompatible due to wrong number of holes at the top
- o Pens can run out
- o Can be awkward to carry with you
- o Visibility problems

How to use a flip chart

Here are some hints on how to use the flipchart:

- o Make sure you have enough paper
- o Make sure you have got enough different coloured pens
- o Make sure flip chart is positioned firmly
- o Make sure flip chart is in the best position
- o Choose a standard size that is easy to handle and store
- o Use paper with a cloth basis. Not only is it stronger, but also handles easier.
- o Use clear, legible writing, considering the distance from which it has to be read
- o Make charts attractive by using different colours
- o Place the flip chart high enough for all the learners to see
- o Use a pointer to point at specific words on the charts
- o Tab sheets so you know where you are if more than one is prepared beforehand
- o Make notes in faint pencil on the flip chart if using it to build a discussion
- o Leave blank sheets in between your pre-prepared sheets
- o Use key words and phrases
- o Keep ideas simple - 1 or 2 per page
- o Use facts only and present them simply
- o Emphasise by underlining

o Have the board on your left side if you are right handed (and vice versa if you are a left-handed) as you obscure much less of it when you are using it.

Make sure that you do not do any of the following:

o Write too small

o Write words too close together

o Write sentences that are too long

o Cram too much onto the flip chart

o Hug the flip chart

o Stand in front of it

o Talk with your back to the audience while writing

o Use jargon and abbreviations the audience are not familiar with

o Leave material up once you have finished with it, it will prevent learners from being distracted

The overhead projector as a training aid

The overhead projector was one of the most commonly used visual training aids but is steadily being replaced by computers using power point presentations and a LCD projector. Many countries still utilise overhead projectors.

The special thing about the overhead projector is that you can use it in daylight and you do not need to darken the room completely. You can also prepare transparencies in advance. So you can be confident that your materials won't fail. You can face your students while you're using it, instead of turning your back on them while you're writing on a board or a flip chart.

Overhead projectors come in different shapes and sizes but they all work basically in the same way. When you switch it on, the light inside lights up the transparency placed on the

glass screen on top of the body. The light travels up to a mirror mounted on an extension arm above the screen. The mirror reflects the light and throws a mesophyte image onto the screen. Setting up the projector is easy. The final product looks professional and saves time.

Advantages of the Overhead Projector (OHP)

- o The overhead projector is simple and easy to use. No special skill is required.
- o A variety of user techniques can be applied during a presentation
- o The pace of the presentation can be controlled and altered
- o Unbroken eye contact with the audience is possible
- o It is not necessary to darken the room
- o It requires little maintenance and upkeep. Only regular cleaning is necessary and the globe has to be replaced every now and then. (Make sure that both globes are in working order.)
- o The overhead projector is ideal for different group sizes and virtually any group can be reached
- o The nature of transparencies makes it easy to manufacture, store and reuse later
- o Transparencies which can be developed for use with the overhead projector are particularly suitable for line sketches, diagrams and graphic presentations in which actual situations can be portrayed easily.
- o A recent development in overhead projection is the polarisation of transparencies, making it possible to create movement. By using special type of transparency and a small lens adjustment revolving wheels, the flow of liquids, etc. can be shown. Polarization therefore expands the effectiveness of the overhead projector.
- o Good for gradually building up a case, especially if you use masking technique, placing a piece of paper over part of the transparency and gradually revealing more facts.

Disadvantages of the Overhead Projector (OHP)

o There is plenty of scope for distraction in blocking or distorting the image.

o The plate and lens can get dirty

o If there is no electricity you cannot use the OHP

How to use an overhead projector

o The projector must be placed on a firm stand to ensure stability. On both sides there must be enough room to place transparencies before and after use.

o The height of the projector must be convenient for the trainer. If a trolley with wheels is used it has to have brakes to ensure that the trolley does not move out of the fixed position. The power cable must be placed so that nobody trips over it.

o By changing the projection distance the size of the image can be altered. The further the projector, the larger the image and vice versa.

o The focus adjustment is done by raising or lowering the projection head. This is done by turning the focus button. Focussing must be done by placing a transparency or a flat object on the projection surface. The focus button is turned until the erect focus is obtained.

o A blue/yellow border is formed when the height of the lamp house does not match the projection distance. This can be corrected by raising or lowering the lamp house. If the projector is not fitted with such a facility it must be moved to adjust the projection distance.

o Key stoning appears when the projecting distance is not equal on all the sides of the image. The sides of the projected image having a longer projecting distance will be projecting much wider than the other. We can distinguish between vertical and horizontal key stoning. Vertical key stoning can be corrected by tilting the screen either forward or backwards or the projector can be lifted or dropped. Horizontal key stoning can be corrected by swinging the screen

horizontally or by moving the projector, causing the projecting axis to form a rectangle.

- o The screen can be placed in the centre or in one corner in the lecture room. By placing it in a corner the view will be least hampered and more learners can be accommodated in the lecture room. The right or left-handedness of the presenter, as well as certain other practical considerations will determine where the screen will be placed. Learners must sit at an angle of 45 degrees to the screen and not have to look upwards more than 30 degrees.
- o Switch off the projector when exchanging transparencies.
- o Use a pointer and point on the transparency and not to/on the screen.
- o Be careful not to place your hand on the transparency when switching on the projector.
- o When you want to focus attention on yourself, switch the projector off.
- o Information and sketches must be large enough to read.
- o Allow learners to copy information and to integrate the information before switching off the overhead projector.
- o In a lecture room with a fixed screen in the centre, the presenter must be careful not to block the image.
- o The subject of the lecture can be dealt with step by step by placing a sheet of paper over the transparency and by moving it downwards as each point is discussed.
- o Computers also have worked their way into the training room. Connect a high-quality LCD display panel with a standard PC, place it on an overhead projector and it will project whatever graphics are displayed on the computer monitor, onto the projection screen.

General hints

- o Know in advance how to operate it
- o Have your transparencies in order

- Have a spare light bulb
- Know where the socket is
- Make sure it is in a working condition beforehand
- Clean plate and lens
- Make sure it is in focus
- Make sure your image fits nicely on the screen
- Position the overhead projector so that the whole audience can see it
- Place a small table next to the overhead projector where you can put the transparencies

Do not:

- Insert the transparency upside down
- Have the transparencies and your notes a long way away from the projector
- Stand between project and the screen
- Leave the overhead projector on when you are not using it, the bright light will distract the learners, even if you did not leave a transparency on
- Whip the transparency away before the learners have had time to finish looking at it.

5X5 rule - not more that 5 sentences with not more than 5 words per sentence

The power point presentation as a training aid

Today there is an ever increasing use of laptop computers. With a laptop and a beamer or LCD can be used to project information from the computer on a screen. Programmes like power point presentation can be used to prepare presentations in advance.

With a computerised presentation the presenter can develop a slide show, video clips and a variety of graphics to enhance the training session.
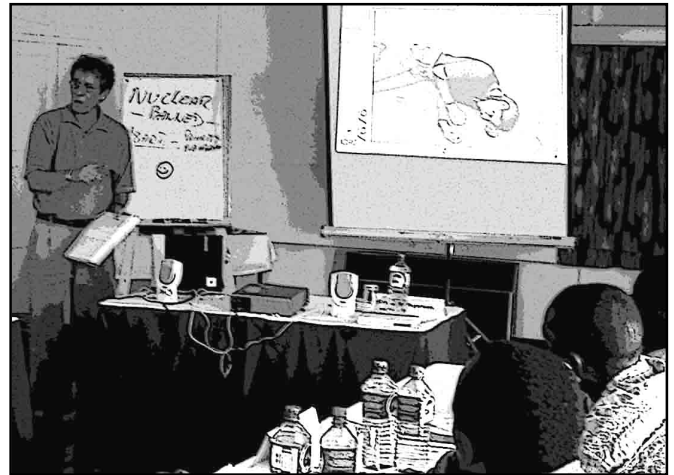
Advantages of power point presentations

- o It can be prepared in advance
- o The pace of the presentation can be controlled and altered
- o Unbroken eye contact with the audience is possible
- o It is not necessary to darken the room
- o Photographs and graphics can be added in the presentations
- o There are many websites and CD's available with photos and graphics
- o Video clips can be added to presentations

Disadvantages of power point presentation

- o You need electricity
- o The projector of LCD is very expensive and not always available, especially in remote areas
- o Some trainers may have trouble to operate the equipment
- o Some trainers are not computer skilled or may not know the programme and

may have trouble to develop a presentation

- o It may happen that the computer and projector are not compatible

How to use power point presentation

- o The projector must be placed on a firm stand to ensure stability. There should also be a table or stand available to place the PC
- o The power cable must be placed so that nobody trips over it
- o The projector must be plugged into the PC. The PC should then be switched on
- o Open the Power Point programme and then the presentation that you would like to use during the session
- o Press the Fn-button together with F7-button to project the image through the projector. It may happen that the computer and projector are not compatible.
- o By changing the projection distance the size of the image can be altered. The further the projector, the larger the image and vice versa
- o The focus adjustment is done turning the focus of the lens. Focussing must be done before you start your presentation
- o In a lecture room with a fixed screen in the centre, the presenter must be careful not to block the image

General hints

- o Know in advance how to operate it
- o Practice before the session and time yourself
- o Make a printout of the presentation where you can make some notes
- o You can also make copies for the participants where they can make notes
- o Make sure that the electricity works
- o Make sure that the PC and projector is compatible
- o Make sure the projector is in focus
- o Make sure your image fits nicely on the screen
- o Position the projector so that the whole audience can see it