

## Using Flip Charts Effectively

One of the most valuable ways to enhance the effectiveness of meetings is through the use of flip charts. The most common flip chart is the standard paper type that can be placed on an easel or taped to a wall. Another option is to make small, light, portable flip charts out of foam board. Measuring approximately 17” by 24” or 43 mm by 61 mm, they are easy to handle and flip chart paper can be readily clipped onto them. They are especially effective in small groups of 2 to 6 people as they allow ideas to be quickly recorded for review and editing by the group. Their small size and light weight allows them to be easily displayed when a group is sharing its ideas with other groups.

More recently, digital flip charts are becoming more mainstream, they are used by typing into a Word or PowerPoint document, and projecting it onto a screen or Smart Board. Either form of flip chart enhances the quality of meetings as they encourage people to contribute ideas to the discussion, facilitate the brainstorming process, and provide a public memory of what was said during a discussion.

Flip charts are particularly helpful when the topic under discussion is complex, or where there are a number of important factors that must be considered. Using diagrams or figures to capture sets of related ideas can also be very helpful. Moreover, the ideas and figures on the flip chart can be captured by taking a photo of each page. In this manner, a great deal of information can be easily transformed into documents or reports.

Experience has shown that encouraging people to use “good flip chart phrases” when working with flip charts can enhance their effectiveness. Taking the time to discuss and review the following key features of good flip chart phrases has proven to be especially helpful:

- Each phrase should contain a single piece of information that is easy to read and understand
- Typically, they have a basic verb-noun or adjective-noun structure.

For example, “stalled negotiations,” or “unhappy students”

- Information can be added to help describe the situation, but the phrase must still be clear and concise. For example, “negotiations stalled for two weeks”

Or “students unhappy with exam schedule.”

- Long-winded notes, like this one, are difficult to read and make categorization and integration of ideas difficult as this sentence demonstrates to all who will read it!

## **Using Flip Charts Effectively**

In addition to discussing the development and use of good flip chart phrases, taking the time to review the following acronym-based reminder of how to record ideas on a flip chart has been shown to be quite useful as the RECORD process attempts to ensure that people feel their contributions have been recognized and the words they used respected during group discussions based on the use of flip charts.

### **RECORD - Suggested Flip Chart Recording Process**

**R**ecord each idea exactly the way the person stated it

**E**nsure that the person is satisfied with the way the idea was “recorded”

**C**orrect or modify the phrase as necessary

**O**bserve the person to ensure that the idea was correctly recorded

**R**evise the phrase again, if necessary

**D**o take the time to nurture ideas, especially new ones, so that they are recorded effectively