Graphic Facilitation

drawn to communicate

by New Possibilities
Graphic Facilitation
Drawn to Communicate
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There are three main requirements of a good graphic facilitator.

Firstly, you must have an image library lodged in your brain. This needs to be readily accessed; the less thinking about drawing you need to do the better.

Secondly, you need to be able to pull out the key points of discussions and presentations. There isn't time to record everything, so you must sift out the salient points and discard the rest. To do this you must be able to really listen as you will be using your discretion to determine what stays and what goes.

Thirdly, you need to be able to work at speed. Your aim is not to interrupt the flow of conversation; this means you will need to work quickly as well as accurately.

This book contains an extensive image library, full of step-by-step images and tips to make your drawings clearer. There is however, no ‘official set’ of graphic images; I am not aiming to create a picture language, nor to make everyone draw like me. These pages simply contain images that I have found to be quick and easy to reproduce, as well as advice around making your recording easier to understand. Over time you will adapt the images and develop your own style – this is good!

Graphic facilitation is the art of recording the key points of meetings and discussions in images as well as words. The three situations where you may want to use graphics are when:

- Giving presentations
- Facilitating discussions
- Recording feedback

There are many reasons why you might want to do this and I have listed some of them below.

Having images in the record helps people who don’t use a formal means of communication to understand what is being discussed, or to remember it later.

The inclusion of images helps people who find written language difficult to follow e.g. people who are dyslexic, or those reading in a language in which they are not fluent. This is because the images allow people to quickly search the record for a particular section guided by the images, rather than having to read the full body of the text to find their target information.

Images help people to think creatively as they engage the right side of the brain, the side which deals with creativity. Using graphics is a powerful way of encouraging innovation in meetings and generating novel solutions to age-old problems.

A live graphic record supports the process of meetings; it allows people to see that their point has been noted and so move on from any soapbox issues. People are also able to add clarifications and corrections contemporaneously, rather than waiting for a set of minutes to arrive.

A graphic record facilitates ‘big picture thinking’: people can quite literally see what they are saying and spot the connections for themselves.

Having a graphic representation of information is invaluable for anyone with a visual learning style; presentations that rely solely on written and verbal information can make it very difficult for some people to participate.

Finally, having a live graphic record makes things fun – and this is the best way that I know to keep people interested and included in meetings and discussions which concern them.

Gosh! that’s a lot of reasons. Clearly there’s a lot more to graphic facilitation than drawing pretty pictures. There is a big responsibility attached to the role of graphic recorder; it is your job to explain concepts and include people in meetings, as well as to gather the evidence for later interpretation and action.

A word of comfort to those who aren’t ‘good at art’ and a warning to those who are. The role of the graphic facilitator is to record information and aid communication; you are not producing a work of art! Lavishing time getting an image to look impressive may satisfy your artistic sensibilities, but while you are engrossed in the detail of the drawing you can’t be recording the key points that people are making.
Just imagine that the above information was recorded during a conversation with Joan who longs for a Persian cat, doesn’t want to move house but has a tenancy agreement which forbids the keeping of pets.

The picture on the left is a fair likeness of a Persian cat, but that is all it is; a very nice picture of a cat. If all we take away from the meeting is that Joan wants a cat of her own, it may lead to the information being classed as a wish that cannot be fulfilled; it will not help people to recall details of the conversation later.

However, the image on the right provides evidence of the importance to Joan of owning a cat and ultimately influences how seriously the wish is taken. It also provokes further discussion:
- How can the tenancy agreement be challenged?
- What other ways are there for Joan to spend time with cats?
- What other ways are there for Joan to relax at home?
- What can we do about Joan feeling lonely?
- What opportunities can we create for Joan to show her caring nature?
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The Basics

The graphic toolkit
Paper
Tape
Pens
Colour
Chapter 1 - The Basics

**The Graphic Toolkit**

- **Roll of paper** - for large scale recording
- **Flipchart** - for small scale recording
- **Knife** - for cutting paper from the roll
- **Masking tape** - for sticking up paper
- **Digital camera** - for photographing completed graphic record
- **Water soluble marker pens** - for the bulk of your drawing
- **Pencil** - for marking backing sheet
- **Pastels** - for shading, quick to use but messy
- **Hairspray** - for fixing pastels, cheap brands work best
- **Crayons** - for shading, particularly where you need not to make a mess
- **Post-it notes** - for participants to jot down points you have missed
- **Roll of paper** - for large scale recording
**Paper**

*Put a sheet* of paper on the wall. Think of this one as your backing sheet; it's there to protect the wall. The ink in marker pens is very strong and can easily come through a sheet of paper; no one will thank you if you take down your graphics and have left a ghost image of everything you've drawn on their wall!

*Never work* on your backing sheet. If you think you might forget, take a pencil and draw a big cross on it as a reminder.

*Stick several* sheets of paper over the top of the backing sheet; these are the ones you will be working on. Stick them up individually. You will need to be able to take them down one at a time.

*Stick your paper* at a comfortable height for you; too high and it will make your arm ache, too low and your back will get sore.

Ideally you should be working on a totally flat wall; however if there are a few lumps and bumps, putting up a thick wad of paper will help.

**Tape**

*Use low tack* masking tape; it is less likely to damage wallpaper or paintwork.

If you only have ordinary masking tape, stick it on your trousers first, to remove some of the tackiness.

*Be very careful* not to stick tape over joins in the wallpaper; this is the place where it is most likely to rip.
Chapter 1 - The Basics

Stick the tape at right angles to the paper; not diagonally over the corners. When you come to take the paper down, the tape can easily be folded in and papers stacked together. If you've stuck the tape diagonally, it's hard to fold the sticky side in on itself. With small areas of glue exposed, completed graphics sheets tend to stick together.

Stick the tape on all 4 corners - if you only stick it at the top, the paper will flap around and be difficult to work on.

Peel each piece of tape off carefully. Never hold the paper and pull as this can pull off chunks of paint or wallpaper.

Pens

Always use pens with water soluble ink; you will drop them. Take off all of your pen lids and drop them on the floor. Don't try to stick them on the ends of the pens, they fall off.

Hold as many pens as you can between your fingers. Don't hold them in a bunch; you won't be able to swap colours quickly enough.

Wedge tipped marker pens are the ones which give the boldest lines. Depending on how you hold them, they will either draw thick lines or thin ones.

For the most part, you need to be drawing thick lines. A graphic record can become very busy: shapes drawn with thin lines tend to get lost.
Colours can be divided into two main categories: WARM colours and COOL colours. These are sometimes described as being on different sides of the colour wheel.

There are also colours which are paler or stronger than others. This difference will affect the feel of a graphic representation of emotion.

Yellow

Be aware that anything drawn with a yellow pen will not be visible from a distance of a few feet. This makes it very useful for drawing templates onto your paper prior to a meeting, or for sketching images which you haven’t drawn before. It can also be used to include in a record, something which a person finds distressing but which, nevertheless is important to capture. For example in her meetings, Christie talked about being absolutely terrified of needles. She wanted these feelings to be recorded as well as information about how she needs to be supported in certain medical situations. The graphic recorder duly drew a syringe in grey. However, with a picture of this frightening object in front of her, Christie was unable to move beyond the fears which it invoked. So at the next meeting, when needles came up again they were drawn in yellow. This allowed Christie to come up to the paper and satisfy herself that this dreadful fear had been recorded, but when she returned to her seat the troubling images faded and she was able to think about other more positive things.

So, although there are some notable exceptions, yellow should generally only be used as a highlighting colour as yellow images cannot be seen by an audience.

Black

Be aware of the power of the black pen. Black it is the strongest colour and will dominate your graphic. It is therefore best used sparingly to highlight the most positive and important things on the paper.

If you represent the most difficult times in a person’s life in black, then this is what the eye will be drawn to, making it difficult for a group to move on. Where discussions focus on things which make people angry, the facilitator will generally want to hear the points being made and then help the group to consider what needs to be done in order to stop the annoyances happening again.

Keep the black pen on the floor by your feet and only pick it up at the end when you know what the key positive issues are which need highlighting.

If you feel an overwhelming urge to use black for sombre or scary images, pick up the grey instead.
The Image Library

Lines
Basic shapes
Stars
Arrows
Words
Buildings
Communities
People
Animals
Transport
Lines

Start with straight lines - vertical and horizontal; concentrate on keeping them thick, straight and even.

Short lines and long lines - keep them evenly spaced.

Swap pens in between each line; it is important to get used to pulling pens out and putting them back quickly.

Diagonal lines - practise them in both directions.
Chapter 2 - The Image Library

Zig zags - concentrate on getting the peaks and troughs as even as you can. You will need to turn your pen at the points to avoid some of your lines getting skinny. You will need to be able to draw them horizontally and vertically.

Wavy lines - concentrate on getting the waves as even as you can. It is almost impossible to turn the pen to keep lines the same thickness, so don’t worry about them getting skinny in places. You need to be able to do these horizontally and vertically.
Words

Graphic recording isn't just about pictures - the words on the paper are just as important and need to be easy to read. Words need to be printed clearly but don't be tempted to use block capitals. Most people read by recognising word shapes and words can look very different in capital letters. eg rabbit and RABBIT don't have even one letter shape in common. There are various ways to make words stand out - the rule with all of them is to write the word first and then draw around it.

If you use pins to 'stick' the word to your paper, remember not to mix warm and cool colours. The line of the pin crosses the line of the box so they will need to be from the same side of the colour wheel.

Screws are another good way to fix a word to the paper; they look more screw-like if the heads don't all line up.

To stick the word up with masking tape you will need to leave gaps in the box as you draw it. The pieces of tape get fitted into the gaps afterwards.

When using spikes it is easier to get round the corners if you draw a long one followed by 2 or 3 short ones. Spikes are useful where you are trying to portray a feeling of energy.

Clouds need to be drawn with the same motion as scalloped lines: go-stop, go-stop. If you want to do a double cloud, it works best to put the second one round the outside of the first. Clouds are useful to convey softer feelings.

Use yellow to highlight words. A light scribble with the yellow pen is all it takes to make a word stand out; there's no need to colour in neatly. Excessive 'colouring-in' also wastes valuable seconds and can saturate the paper making it prone to rip.

Using the black pen to draw in a shadow will make the word much bolder. You need to decide where to put the shadow - underneath and either to the left or right of each line. Whichever you have chosen, stick it to the whole word.
Buildings

A house is a box with a triangle on top, a small box for the door and L's for the windows. The L's are depictions of the shadows cast by the window frames and so they need to face in the same direction.

A pub is a big house, with a trapezium roof and a square sign sticking out of the side. The sign won't be to scale as you will need to draw the pub name on it. If it is important that you represent a particular pub then the sign may need to be very large indeed. For a generic pub sign, use a simple image such as a crown, which is easy to fit in a small box.

A shop is a box with 2 other boxes inside for the door and window. Leave space to put the name of the shop across the top.

A block of flats is a tall thin box with rows of 1's for the windows.

Buildings such as hospitals and day centres have flat roofs and double doors.

Factories have a series of triangles for the roof and high windows.
A Synagogue has a Star of David.

To depict a Gurdwara (a Sikh Temple), there needs to be an orange flag alongside the domed building. The symbol on the flag is a line with a circle at the top, and crossed crescents underneath.

A church is a tall thin triangle with a cross on top, sat on a low box (with one corner cut off).

Mosques are made up of half a circle sat on a box, with 3 balls and a crescent moon on the top. It helps to draw Mosques in dark green because it is an Islamic colour, or to draw them orange to symbolise the golden roof.

To represent the complicated architecture of a Hindu Temple, draw a stepped roof on a box. It helps to use pale blue or grey to suggest pale coloured stone. The symbol is the word 'God' so needs to be drawn carefully. However, there are many different versions of this symbol used, so variations are possible.

If you are unfamiliar with any of these symbols it would be a good idea to spend some time practising; people could be very offended if you get wrong something as sensitive as the symbol of their faith.
Communities may be constructed from the library of buildings. Always start at the front and work backwards, missing out any lines which go behind something else. People need to see themselves reflected in the community, so include buildings from different faiths. Change pens frequently to make the community as colourful as you can. If you are drawing a particular community, think about what landmarks or distinctive buildings there are, and include them. If you are drawing a city, include more flats, industrial buildings and chimneys – and make sure all of the buildings are touching. To give more of a rural feel, spread the buildings out and include more houses, shops and pubs and fewer industrial buildings.
Getting the proportions right

The triangles for the arms need to be narrow or the person looks ‘bat-winged’.

The bottom line for the arms only comes back between half and two-thirds of the way. If you come back too far, your people will all look like supermodels.

The 2 straight lines from underneath the arms represent the body and legs together, so these lines need to be long. If these lines are too short, your people will all look like children.
Chapter 2 - The Image Library

Getting the proportions right

The boomerang-shaped curve for the first arm needs to leave a chest gap which is roughly the same size as the head. If it is too big it won't look like an arm at all.

The straight triangle for the second arm needs to be long and skinny, otherwise it looks like a flipper.

The line for the hand needs to flick back, rather than sit at a right angle or it will stop the arm being recognisable.

The line for the back of the legs is in line with the back of the head, not the elbow.
Horses

Begin with the curve of the neck.

Draw a loaf of bread shape for the head at 90° to the neck. Leave a small gap at the top.

Add a little triangular ear.

Draw a straight line out from the back of the neck.

Draw 2 more vertical lines to mark the inside of the legs.

Drop down a straight line from under the chin and one from the back. The 'space' between these 2 lines and the back needs to be a square.

Put in a line to mark the underside of the horse's belly; this needs to be roughly halfway up the square.

Join up the legs with 2 little lines for the hooves.

Add an eye, mane and tail.

When you first start drawing horses it is a good idea to draw them in grey. Even the oddest looking horse starts to look a lot more equine once it has a saddle and bridle; the stronger colours work very well for this.
Cows

Start by drawing a loaf of bread shape for the face.

Add a leaf shape to either side, sticking out at 90°.

Sit 2 horns curving inwards in between the ears.

Join up the head with a shallow curve and add eyes and nostrils.

Draw a line straight across for the back and then down for the hind leg. Add a second vertical line for the front leg, coming down from the head. Keep the proportions for the body low and wide.

Put in a horizontal line for the cow's underbelly.

Draw 2 more vertical lines for the insides of the legs.

Finish with lines to join up the feet, a stringy tail with a leaf shape at the end, and udders.
4

Live Recording

Recording live information
Working with other people
Recording as part of a team
Story shapes
The process of recording
Branching

A branching story is one with a timeline running through the discussion but where people keep going off at tangents. For this shape, start with the S-shape as for the linear story, but use the spaces to record the digressions.

Cluster

In cluster stories people are discussing different aspects of a central theme. For this story shape, write the subject or title in the middle of the paper and record people's key points around it.

Scene

Sometimes it can be very powerful to build the information from a cluster story into single image depicting the scene that people are visualising. You need to spot very early on that this would be good information to build into a scene, but when it works it is highly effective.
Default Position

If you have no idea what kind of information you are likely to be hearing, a good place to start is a third of the way down the page and a third of the way across. This gives space to quickly sketch in a yellow S-shape if the story turns out to have a timeline, but also leaves space to cluster the information around a central point.

The process of recording information

When you are recording information your mind is working at a complex level, because you need to do several different things at once. You must:

- Listen to and remember what is being said now
- Recall and represent the key points made a few moments ago
- Choose which images to use and what words to include
- Decide how to organise the information

So in a similar way to simultaneous translation, there is a constant flow of information coming in, which needs to lodge in your brain for a slight delay, before it is 'interpreted' onto the paper.

Graphic recording is very tiring because it is such a complex process; there comes a point that your brain will be too tired to hold onto information long enough to record it. Build breaks into meetings to allow recovery time. Once you're experienced 1-1.5 hours is a fairly comfortable stretch, but 2 hours continuous recording should be the maximum.
Making Sense of the Information

The use of arrows
Separating sections
Shading
Giving emphasis
Making sense of the graphic

The information recorded during a hectic meeting is often plentiful, which can make the graphic disjointed and difficult to read. It is important to be able to pick out which elements are related, which are separate and sometimes the order in which the information was gathered. There are several things that can be done to make all of this clearer:

- Arrows
- Boundaries
- Highlighting words
- Shading

Over the following pages are some suggestions for making the graphic record easier for people to understand. There is a lot to take in but please don't panic; think of this section as a set of refinements to your recording technique.

When you feel you are good at recording the key points, pick something from the next section and work on incorporating it into your recording work. When you are comfortable with it, take another to work on.
The use of arrows

Arrows need to be clear and bold in order to stand out. It is much easier to pick out the arrows if they are all the same colour because this creates a pattern which the brain will recognise.

Cast your eyes over these two images and look for the arrows. In which example do you think they are easier to find?
If all else fails

Sometimes when you are recording, you draw something that looks nothing like it is supposed to and the more you fiddle with it, the worse it gets! Best advice is to STOP! Draw a luggage label, with what it was supposed to be written on it, and 'attach' it to your dubious drawing. People will laugh with you, they will get the point you were making and it will be ok!

Below is the now legendary Poodle-Judge. During a fairly serious meeting the concept of judgements was discussed. Dutifully, the graphic recorder set about drawing a serious looking judge. Unfortunately, the judge looked more like a poodle than it did a member of the establishment, and the more that was added, the worse it got. In the end, a label declaring that the dog in question was in fact a 'very stern judge' saved the day and the Poodle-Judge passed into graphic facilitation folklore!

The End
Graphic Facilitation
Drawn to Communicate

Like 'fear of flying', fear of graphics has caused enormous discomfort for many enormously talented people. This book is positively therapeutic. It takes you by the hand gently, and leads you through simple exercises step by step, and then suddenly, from your own hand, recognizable images begin to appear. For either 'graphics terror' or 'graphics tune-up, this is a great addition to your resource kit...

Jack Pierpoint, Inclusion Press