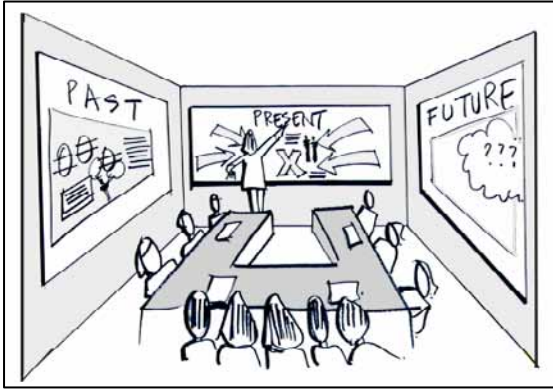


## **THE BENEFITS OF GRAPHIC FACILITATION: More Than Just Pretty Pictures!**

Graphic Facilitation is a facilitation method that uses a visual approach to help people SEE their thoughts, communicate and make decisions.

Often confused with its more illustrative cousin (Graphic Recording); Graphic Facilitation is more than just 'pretty pictures' ... it is a sophisticated thinking tool to help groups talk, brainstorm, analyze, dialogue, resolve conflict, reach consensus and move forward.



### **The Set-Up:**

Graphic Facilitation uses large, wall-size sheets of paper within seeing and hearing distance of participants.

A room with plenty of smooth, undivided wall space is needed, within seeing and hearing distance of participants.

Depending on the process, some charts are pre-prepared and others are created real-time using the group's input.

## **KEY BENEFITS OF GRAPHIC FACILITATION:**

### **Gets Everyone on the Same Page**

Think of business deals hashed out over a paper napkin or engineers huddled around a whiteboard. Our brains can only hold so much information ... getting our thinking out of our heads and onto paper increases understanding of concepts and agreements and literally gets everyone onto the same page. Graphic Facilitation does the same thing, only with much larger groups!

### **Elegantly Handles Different Points of View**

Got a group with lots of different views? Use Graphic Facilitation to get everyone's thinking out and up onto paper. When people see their views in print, they feel heard and acknowledged. And they can literally SEE what others are saying too. This technique creates a neutral entity (the chart!) to hold the hot spots. Get people tackling the issues through the chart, not each other!

### **Increases the Level of Dialogue ... Quicker!**

Human brains can only handle about 7 pieces of information until overload kicks in. The large charts hold information for a group – allowing them to develop shared meaning and to deal with higher levels of complexity – quicker. In building the charts together, they all share the same understandings and basic landscape of their problem ... freeing them up to debate recommendations and find solutions.

### **Involves All the Major Learning Styles**

Working graphically is obviously helpful for people who process information visually (82% of North American population). However this methodology also works for auditory and kinesthetic learners too. Especially when break out groups create their own materials and use them to present their ideas to each other. Then all of the learning styles get used simultaneously – results in meetings that hold the attention of all people, not just a selected few.

### Creates Excellent Meeting Documentation

Another beauty of working graphically: the meeting documentation is created as you go. Now with digital cameras and photo editing programs, it is easy to create paper and electronic files of your work. Just take photos of the charts and weave them into handy reports and PowerPoint presentations. This documentation keeps everyone accountable and on track. Good for remembering the meeting and good for explaining and sharing your work with others.



### Other Helpful Tidbits:

Graphic Facilitation isn't for every setting. It works best in venues where it is desirable and appropriate to have very public and visual discussions. Best settings: strategic planning, visioning, scenario and conversation forums.

You don't have to be an artist to be a Graphic Facilitator. Basic shapes, formats and words form the base of this visual way of working. There are pre-drawn forms (called templates) available on the market (see [www.grove.com](http://www.grove.com) for example) and many Graphic Facilitators offer trainings for their consulting, training and coaching colleagues --- sharing their tips, techniques and tricks.

Graphic Facilitation can be performed by one person: called a Graphic Facilitator (who performs both facilitation AND graphic roles) or it can be conducted by a Graphic Facilitation team (one person providing the facilitation role and one or more people providing the graphics role (when the graphics role is split out into its own responsibility, it is called Graphic Recording).

The International Forum of Visual Practitioners' website at <http://ifvp.org> has a geographic directory to help you locate graphic professionals in your area. This grassroots association also hosts a yearly conference that brings graphic practitioners from around the globe together (both seasoned professionals and 'newbies' alike). The IFVP website is a great central site for resources and more information on this rapidly growing field.

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### About the Author:

**Christina Merkley, M.A.** is a Graphic Facilitator, Coach and Mapmaker based in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. An expert in the graphic recording and facilitation methodology, Christina uses visual methods to help groups and individuals SEE and ACT on their best thinking. See <http://www.makemark.com> for links, resources and information on her Meeting Graphics 101 Workshop.

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