



COMMUNITY TOOL BOX

DISPLAYS

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

Well-designed displays can attract attention at conferences, shopping malls, libraries or outdoor events. As such, they provide an excellent venue for sharing information, educating and involving citizens, promoting helpful actions, creating linkages and building general awareness. Best of all, once created, they can be grabbed at a moment's notice to be used again and again, with no additional production costs.



JUST THE FACTS

Displays can be anything from a simple folding poster board to computer-based displays to elaborate walk-in booths. The information on a display usually includes text, photographs and maps. The text should not try and cover every detail about a group, program or project. People are predominately attracted to visual information; so, in this case, a picture is definitely worth a thousand words. Select professional images that are eye-catching and make use of creative headlines for text. No matter where your display is set up, there will be visual competition for people's attention, so make it fun and innovative.

Because, ideally, displays will be used many times, they should be portable. They also need to be large enough to attract people. Size and transportation requirements need to be taken into consideration when designing a display.

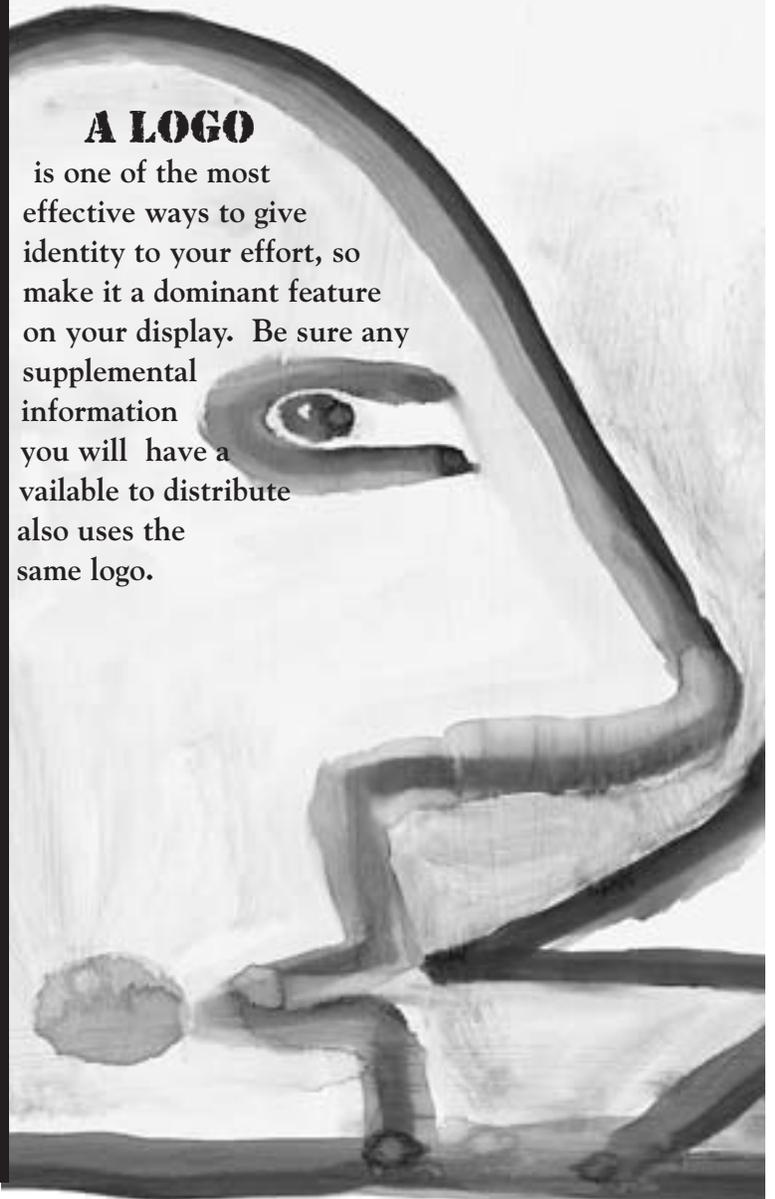
HOW TO DO IT

I. MAKE A MESSAGE

Decide what is the one message, or theme, you want to communicate and who is your most important audiences. The message must be something simple enough that anyone just passing by and looking at your display will be able to understand. Once you have a message, select images that support it. Remember, it is better to have a few large graphics and titles than a lot of information.

A LOGO

is one of the most effective ways to give identity to your effort, so make it a dominant feature on your display. Be sure any supplemental information you will have available to distribute also uses the same logo.



2. DON'T SKIMP ON DESIGN

Keep in mind that printing needs to be legible and photographs and maps recognizable from several feet away. You probably should consider soliciting professional help to design and produce the final product.

There are several portable display units available commercially.

Tradeshow companies can also build displays to specifications for a much higher cost.

3. DECIDE WHERE IT WILL BE USED



Contact the local community center, town hall or library to see if they will permit you to post a display in their lobby. Same with an area shopping mall.

Research regional fairs and festivals to determine if the audience who attends are people you need to reach.



If you are an invited guest speaker at a conference, ask the conference organizers if there is an exhibit hall or a designated area to set up a display.

displays

Use It If...

- You are trying to increase visibility and want to reach people who may have never heard of your cause.
- You have several opportunities to share your message at festivals, in a public building or at conferences.

Forget It If...

- You do not have the budget to professionally produce a display or the in-house knowledge of graphics and design.
- You cannot identify opportunities to use a display.
- You do not have the human resources to send someone to set up and tend the display nor the economic resources to cover transportation costs.

Timing is Everything

Displays work effectively at the beginning of a project to help establish the identity of a group.



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COMMUNITY
TOOL BOX

Presentations

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

People's number one stated fear is public speaking. And when a presentation is before a hostile audience, the stress can really build. Yet there is nothing like in-person performances to give projects a human touch. We find that doing presentations is an extremely good way for a group to increase visibility and gain public recognition. For citizens, it is a chance to get more information and have their questions answered, replace a nameless bureaucracy with a human face, and network with their neighbors to further discuss events and rally support.

**Presentations:
A sharing of information between
a speaker and an audience.**



JUST THE FACTS

Presentations can run the range of delivering a talk without any visual aids to a multimedia demonstration and script. Images and props can certainly help a speaker, but they will not mask a poorly prepared presentation or a speaker who is extremely uncomfortable. It takes planning and practice to present a project or story in a manner that is coherent, convincing, and aesthetically pleasing.

A presentation should be designed to meet a specific need or request for information. Ideally, a speaker might offer several alternatives so that organizations can pick the most appropriate topic. Or there might be one overview presentation that can be revised to target specific audiences and different ages. Consider revising the presentation, including changing the graphics and photographs, as a project progresses so the information is always current.

Remember, in multilingual communities it is important to provide interpreters. Signers for the hearing impaired may also be necessary.

SOME ADVICE:

- TAKE COURSES IN PUBLIC SPEAKING, GROUP LEADERSHIP, AND PRESENTATION GRAPHICS.
- WATCH HOW OTHERS PRESENT. NOTICE THEIR PARTICULAR STYLES OR MANNERISMS. PICK UP POINTERS AND BEHAVIORS TO EMULATE, AND MAKE NOTE OF THOSE TO AVOID.



HOW TO DO IT

1. Define your message

One of the most common pitfalls of presentations is not having a simple, clear message. It is natural to want to share everything you know about a project or subject with the audience, but too often such presentations turn into lengthy, rambling lectures. Decide what is the most important piece of information you would like everyone in the audience to understand. Develop an outline based on that message: introduce it, explain it, and conclude with it. Presentations can be factual information, personal information, or a combination of both; it all depends upon the purpose. The simpler the message, the more likely people will remember it.

2. Get visual

Graphic images are not required to be part of the message, but they can be a powerful addition. If they will be used, they need to be relevant to the message. They are strongest when they reveal something words cannot yet directly correlate to what is being said.

If you are going to use a slide projector, select only visually pleasing, in-focus pictures. Do not include an image that is unclear; you do not want to have to apologize for a bad slide.

For charts and tables, remember that charts can be indecipherable from a distance and should be broken into easily viewed and understood parts. Most material that appears in a book must be reworked for a larger format presentation.

If you have a computer and a projection unit, or the meeting facility does, technology offers some exciting options for presentations. Using presentation software still requires good design and production decisions. For instance, resist the urge to have bullet points or text on the screen and then proceed to read them verbatim. It is boring and insulting to the audience's intelligence. Most of all, nothing is gained that cannot be done through a printed handout.

No matter what format is used (slides, overhead projector, posters, or computer generated), limit the graphic images to the ones that make the biggest impact and pace how the images are changed to create an interesting and memorable impression.

3. Practice, practice, practice

There is no such thing as too much practice! Rehearsing can help alleviate nervousness; it lets you know exactly how many minutes the presentation is; and you can more clearly communicate a sense of conviction to which audiences will respond. Whether speaking from a fully written script or a bullet point outline, practice in front of a mirror, or better yet, with a video camera. Use the graphic images to get comfortable changing the images. Do it over, and over, and over. Practice makes a critical difference to the strength of any presentation.

4. To hand out or not to hand out

It can be very helpful to have available supplemental materials like brochures or newsletters, or even copies of the presentation's key points and important charts or tables. Just be sure not to distribute handouts until after the presentation. If information is given in the beginning, people will read, not listen to the speaker. If information is passed out during the presentation, there will be disruption of paper rustling and people talking. If it is at the end, but before the speaker concludes, any chance for a strong, stirring finish is lost as the audience shifts its attention to the handouts. Many professional conferences request copies of speeches for audience members ahead of time. If the purpose is for attendees to write notes, prepare an outline that highlights key points but does not steal the presentation's thunder. However, if the remarks will be compiled in a compendium, then provide a full text.

5. Hit the road!

Once the message is done, begin contacting groups and organizations to make a presentation at one of their regularly scheduled meetings. Many groups are always looking for guests to have on their agendas. Before going, be sure to tailor the message and information to that group. Also look for events, upcoming conferences, workshops and seminars where your presentation could fit in.



Use It If...

- You want to increase visibility and people's awareness of your cause.
- You have a limited budget and find producing, printing and distributing print materials like newsletters or brochures are too costly. With one-time production costs of developing slides or having images enlarged for posters, presentations can be made repeatedly. Some hosting groups may even pay for travel expenses.
- You would like people to get a sense or feeling for the subject. Pictures, graphics, and other props allow an audience to experience a place or situation, almost like being there firsthand.

Forget It If...

- You are not comfortable speaking and cannot take a class to learn. A speaker who is too nervous or boring will not help the cause. If no one else can be recruited to speak on a project's behalf, research other public outreach methods such as meeting one-on-one or hosting small group roundtable conversations.
- You do not have the time to get good quality images or graphics or the time to prepare and practice. Remember, the quality of the presentation will have a direct correlation in people's minds about the quality of the project.

Timing is Everything

Look for opportunities to give presentations throughout the life of a project.



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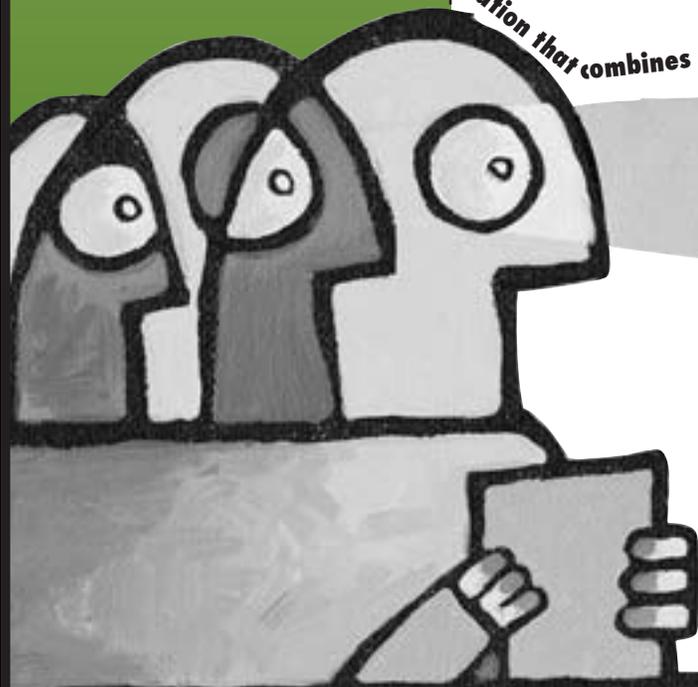
Videos

WHAT WE'VE FOUND

Producing videos for a project or cause involves more than someone having a camera. The most effective videos are professionally produced, which requires having time and a large budget. They work well when shown at a lecture or workshop or given to groups or individuals to view at their convenience. But in our media-saturated society, standards are set high and viewers will expect the same polished productions they see on television. Quick, homemade movies may block your key messages from getting communicated.

Videos: A form of communication that combines

color, motion, speech, music, graphics, and other audio and visual elements to deliver a specific message.



Just the Facts

Videos are an ideal format for depicting a variety of sites, activities, individuals, stories, plans, etc., in one convenient easily transportable and usable medium. The program should be 10 to 15 minutes in length.

It is possible to effectively take slide programs and convert them to a video format. This is a simple, relatively inexpensive approach. It does not, however, take full advantage of the medium. Motion pictures are one of the great advantages of video. There are ways of mixing small amounts of motion footage or interviews into a slide presentation conversion that can enhance the final product. Also considering adding graphic elements such as maps, charts, diagrams, illustrations and even animation.

If professional production is too expensive, consider seeking the help of high school or university students or volunteers. Offer to display full credits in the film acknowledging the names of everyone involved in its production and writing a press release to announce its completion or first viewing that also lists those who volunteered their talents and services.

Considerations:

- Decide if the narrator should be a neutral professional or a member of the community.
- Check for issues of copyrights for any images or background music selected. This is particularly critical if the final product will be sold or people will be charged admission for viewings.
- Determine if the video will always be shown with a person there to explain it and answer questions or if it will be a stand-alone piece. If the latter, it is even more important that a slide lists where to get more information and the date of production.
- Be sure to get the highest quality possible of original footage for the master copy so that distribution copies will be better quality.



How to Do it

1. Develop a message

Before any footage is filmed or any stories are recorded, it is vital to determine what will be the goal of the video. Define exactly what main points need to be emphasized and how images will support that message. If the message is not clear, even the most beautiful filming will not help communicate the goal.

2. Write a script

Once the goal is clear, write an outline then expand it into a complete script. Write the narrative word-for-word. When that is done, create a storyboard. This is a visual outline. The text is typically written on the left side of a page and, on the right side, is a list of the desired visual images that relate to the text. This sequential series of text and images focuses the efforts for collecting footage and allows for revisions prior to any filming.

3. Direct, design, and produce

Shoot raw footage, collect existing stills or moving images, audiotape sounds, conduct interviews, select and record music, tape the narrative or voice-overs. When everything is gathered, postproduction editing begins. This final step is what can make the difference between an amateur and professional product. The video should be lively, visually interesting, and focused on the key points of the message.

4. Premier the final product

With video in hand, write press releases and look for audiences to show it. Or, make copies from the master and generate a distribution list. Write a letter of introduction and mail or hand deliver the cassettes to everyone on that list.



Use It If...

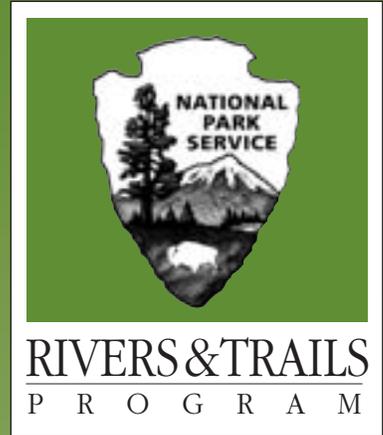
- You want to stimulate viewers' imaginations and elevate the appreciation of resources in your project area.
- You want to communicate a clear message using professional, sophisticated technological tools.
- You can further utilize the footage for cable TV, excerpts in public service announcements, or to show as part of an exhibit display at conferences, festivals, and workshops.

Forget It If...

- You do not have the budget to professionally produce a video or the time due to the length of a project.
- There is not a single, clear message to communicate.
- You think the video might be perceived as a waste of funds or too lavish based on the community, size and scope of the project, or public feedback.
- You do not have a plan for showing the video due to lack of equipment or there is a lack of interest by other groups for viewing copies.

Timing is Everything

Videos are good communication tools to use at the beginning of a project to help establish the purpose of a project or identity of a group, and at the end of a project to show highlights and how much was accomplished.



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