

NOTE: In this time of the convergence of communications between numerous types of once-discrete media, it's beginning to look as if the scientific belief that "everything is the same thing" is true.

Whereas business was once confronted with the then-staggering choice between individual still slides vs filmstrips or films; and between 2.5x2.5 slides vs lantern slides; or between filmstrips vs live-operated, over-size slide reveals; or between anything static vs video recording via owned cameras; or, later, between floppy disks vs silicone wafers; or between all of those vs wire or tape or CD or VCR; or between CD vs DVD; or between the latest form of video conferencing (VC) vs live meetings; and now, between all of those and that newest electronic marvel, whenever. . . . Well, you get the idea.

What's truly salient is that all of those life-shattering choices were centered on the technology and what it could do. None of it was concerned with your needs, functions, purposes, or budget. Ditto for the company's secretarial force: software Valhalla 27.96 probably didn't prepare letters substantially better than did Valhalla 1--but it did cost more and titillate those whose sole judgment was made simply because 27.96 was "the latest." Business finally caught on, and roll-outs of new softwares are remarkably less-widely embraced. As of this writing, the French have just approved a new concept in browsing systems. The ultimate, it seems, exists only for an instant. When Columbus stumbled on the Americas, the motto of the Spanish court became "Plus ultra": You can go farther.

Yet, regarding the marvelous technology and media, Gertrude Stein probably would have said, "An image is an image is an image."

The eye does not distinguish between the particular medium or media that is/are presenting images to the eye as a learning tool. (Research from the 1960-70s.) Truly, an image is an image is an image. And it can be distributed instantly to people anywhere in the world. But is that good?

Today, technical people believe that the digital age is still in its opening phases. So, with the convergence of various media, it's more necessary now than ever to determine whether your choice of media and image-providers is based on intelligent assessment of your company's needs vs the benefits of different equipment. . . or on a possibly-dumb purchasing decision that was made years or decades ago by It-doesn't-matter-whom. . . and won't be replaced now because it's "too expensive." Lost opportunity, if any, can be more expensive.

Apparently, in today's world, anything that can be digitalized will be. And much of that might be received over the latest and smallest appliance, whether that be text or music over cell phones or ipods or Bluetooth or whatever's next.

It's likely that even the largest programs will ultimately be able to be squashed onto mini-screens in a busy-someone's hand. The over-arching question is, "Should it be?"

You can put the Grand Canyon's image on a postage stamp, too. . . but is that postage stamp image a reasonable facsimile of the Grand Canyon? Well, you can't tour a stamp! On the other hand, you can orient people so that they might recognize the original, when it's seen.

Now apply that concept to your next sales and training meetings: What's your purpose for calling that meeting, and what must the participant do as a result? Do you make that *doing* possible via practice?

--First, when you buy a computerized system for VC or training or other communication, will it meet your actual and anticipated needs for a reasonable time ahead? Don't bend all future communication and training to suit an out-moded system.

--Second, are your scattered users already able to control the mechanisms, or will they need special training--or is the technology "wrong" for your real needs?

--Third, will you be able to package (or repackage) your intended programs in the media format that you are expecting to select? As we wrote in *Achieving Objectives in Meetings*, (Corporate Movement, Inc., back in 1973), and again in *Sales Meetings That Work* (Dow Jones-Irwin, 1983) "a hamburger is a programmed steak!" Yes, you can chop things up, but research has already proved that chopping can work for facts but not for concepts. If you chop, will you be able to recognize the result? And can you live with that result? Given contrary information from research, there went the ultimate (of its time): programmed learning. . . another fad.

--Fourth, are you keeping in mind the fact that there are significant drop-out rates at mail-correspondence courses and on-line courses, even with supposedly-committed learners at prestigious schools and other learning institutions? What would drop-out potential among employees at the computer screen (or--Silly!--at cell phone

or i-pod or [?]) mean to your company? How would you test and control? One *Training article quoted in my "Final Thoughts" section address the drop-out problem in distance learning.* This is not to deny that some sales persons will fall asleep in an auditorium presentation. The effect is the same: drop-out. Ditto the result: Duh!

Now consider the discrete problems you might be facing, such as pay scales or harrasment: Have you already ruled out the possible contribution of communication failures to the apparent problem? It's possible that you're not seeing the communications forest for the problem trees!

Although the group communications industry doesn't want to acknowledge it, meetings, conventions, and training programs are a single field: the industry sells to our field by methods that are not always accurate or helpful--or honest. Much misinformation and disinformation abound. . .to a degree that seems to defy accident. Otherwise,

--a) why would an airline advertise (arrive in Europe) "Fresh as a daisy," although travelers would really be arriving in Europe in their mid-morning, which was about 3 am on the travelers' eyelids?; or

--b) why would an airline show the face of a pretty agent who had "Planned (#) meetings already today," when meeting managers know that it takes about one week to plan one hour's program--properly?; or

--c) why would an industry magazine bad-mouth VC when its only negative attribute was that VC could save substantial money for user companies (at the expense of travel-trade advertisers)?

--d) why would a magazine attempt to claim that conference, seminar, clinic, etc, were determined by duration, rather than by purpose. . .except to eliminate purpose as a prime consideration for programming. . .in favor of purchased *anything*?

For years, the meeting/convention industry/s controlled-circulation (advertiser-dominated) magazines have denigrated VC on the basis that "It's gotta be face-to-face." Well, if people can get loans and lovers and scams on the computer, clearly "It don't gotta-be."

No company always needs a central business meeting in a hotel via an airline--get the message? American Express has already established that two-thirds (yes, 2/3) of the annual travel budget of the typical company is given to travel for the annual, central business meeting. Could that be a reason why VC is not seen as a worthwhile alternative to travel? If your company could save much of that amount occasionally, could it spend the money in a worthwhile fashion--such as better training materials, facilities, and time?

Just as a chalkboard or computer is empty when purchased (let's not quibble over resident software), any VC system that you might purchase or upgrade is also empty when purchased. Adding content is your understood obligation. . .but adding appropriate content is the often-ignored caveat. Ditto for the anticipated content of any meeting that you choose to conduct via VC. Is the content appropriate for the occasion, or is the equipment appropriate for your purpose?

Consider that the Army found, in its first tests of VC, that some of their multi-party conversations degenerated into discussions of whether certain participants needed new roofing on some barracks on their bases. Roofing discussions were not the purpose of the test conferences. Clearly, agendas need be strict: adhere to your agenda! Yet, at the time of 9/11, our entire Government functioned via VC to control the nation and its defences. So, if the nation can function on VC why can't your company (according to the controlled-circulation magazines in the meetings/conventions industry)?

Why keep talking about meetings? Because in recent years, *Training Magazine's* surveys have determined that the greatest number of group communications events in companies are conducted via meetings. Consider: the majority of the majority! Still! Despite glorious gadgets. Classroom media and world wide web media function differently to serve different needs.

In the days of the old lens/electronic media (as outlined in the opening paragraph #2, above) the military had established a decision system--algorithms--for choosing the proper venues and visual equipment for everything that had been invented to that time (the 60s). Computers and distance learning didn't exist. Given current wars, the military hasn't concentrated on proving new media, such as cell phones and collaboration. Ah, shucks.

Therefore, because the algorithms provided by the military for its own, original version(s) of ISD and contained intact in the (award-winning Navy version), Cavalier's book *Common Sense ISD*, computer-based alternatives can't included in the selections offered. Don't panic! You'll need to consider the image that's delivered. Are the equipment and message appropriate for that image to be delivered to scattered places and people who

could easily drop out? Or can you make it appropriate? Or finger or measure the drop-outs? Or would you pick a computer-based something simply because it's 'new.?'

Significantly, those military algorithms also specify the best delivery surround, including classroom, field, lab, etc. Those specifications are still valid today and help you to make decisions that are sound, according to ISD specifications. Given multiple corporate-versions of the military service-versions of ISD, it's not possible to know in advance the value of any variation. Cavalier's version is not a variation except for unnecessary control systems simplified or eliminated and useful materials added. Check that title before you sign off today.

If you're aware of a *Training* magazine "downer" article relating to ISD about 2000, be aware also that it provoked a firestorm of reader protest: Competent readers know that any failures in a supposed "ISD" program are those of the programmer, not the ISD method. See details of ISD--and other-related backtracking--under this website section "Final Thoughts," at the asterisk below the book *Common Sense ISD*, found under "Titles."

And, finally, there's one more convergence that's absolutely essential: between your brain and your budget! There's no sense to plan for more than you can afford now--unless for several budgets ahead.

If the caveman survived on **follow me and imitate me**, so will your associates and employees. . . even today. In theory. Huge company size and scattered offices make follow me difficult. But electronic media will make ersatz follow me possible. You can see, in that context, that the "old" media can do most of the work that the "new" media can. The old media just won't seem as modern or sexy or glitzy as the new. But it works: does chalk on a blackboard deliver a different learning concept from letters on a computer screen?

See this website's "Industry Recognition" button for bulleted information regarding other research findings--decades ago; published in '85. Find the *FirstTake* magazine cover and 2pp of text, located at about p12 (scroll) of 44pp. Find identification and real answers there to some of today's real problems, as published in columns and reprinted in this author's book, *Achieving Objectives in Meetings*, in 1973. Then you will understand how the meetings/conventions *industry* has misled and disinformed the meetings/conventions/training *field*.

Now make another major effort to converge your brain and your budget!

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