

A WHITE PAPER ...

VISUAL COMMUNICATION, and it's role in collaboration and modern OFFICE DESIGN.



What is a white paper ?

A White Paper is a report or guide that informs readers concisely about a complex topic and presents the writers philosophy on the topic.

VISIONCHART has been studying collaboration and the use of visual information for the last 30 years. We have seen many changes in work, workers and the workplace. This is not the definitive work on the subject. More, it is an evolving work in progress.

There is a demand for workplaces to offer *new* forms of collaboration.

Collaboration can be defined as, individuals working together to create new results or benefits.

Many organisations are trying to force fit collaboration into existing workspaces rather than having it planned and done right the first time.

Subsequently, there is a role that designers should be playing *early on* in a projects time frame, to include visual collaboration areas and items suited to that end.

A fundamental shift has occurred as most work today is not done by individuals, it's done with *others*.

There's an African proverb that says, "if you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together".

It's a "we" activity.

And it happens in hallways, break rooms, formal meeting spaces, work stations ...

So any increase in collaboration implies the need for a different type of workplace and tools used within it.

The simple truth is that the environment you work or learn in, influences your thinking. Inadequate facilities, access (or lack of) to writing surfaces, poor acoustics, lack of privacy (easy distractions) all affect outcomes.

It could be considered that the modern workplace is designed around *3 separate work zones*.

These zones all have a dependent relationship with each other but in their own they present a specific worker/student activity.

1

The FOCUS ZONE : Everyone needs time to concentrate, *think* and analyse a situation in their own 'head down' zone. Individual work requires deeper focus. Typically this is the office work station or work cluster design arrangement which should be equipped with areas and items to collect those thoughts. Work screens should have a provision to be pinnable and/or include writing panels which are incorporated for random insights and thoughts.



The Focus Zone

Deeper thoughts .. and random insights



2

COLLABORATING ZONE : Working with one or more co-workers to collectively brainstorm and develop insights. Where it's done is often a little random, so the tools for collaboration need to be available in what is often on a mobile basis.

A formalised meeting room is *not* necessary at this point, as the meeting can be spontaneous. So the ability to *quickly* access mobile writing screens that also offer acoustic and privacy properties, means that workers can brainstorm on a small group basis without the need for formality. Ideas are not lost. They become *action*.

Thoughts are translated visually so that small groups are all on the same page.

Modern workspaces should encompass open plan meeting areas, typically for between 4 and 8 people with multiple power sources, adjustable height tables and a circumference of moveable whiteboards and pinboard panels which offer privacy, noise reduction and that spontaneity, where all attendees feel valued for their opinion and insights. It's an easy to access area, that's intelligent. Meetings become more inclusive. More democratic.



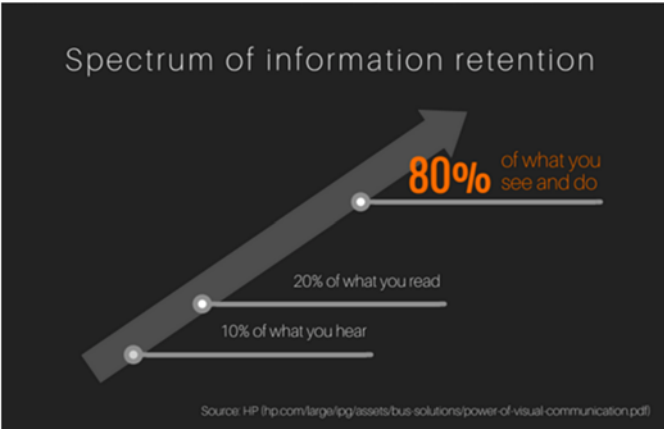
3

LEARNING ZONE : Is about building knowledge. When thinking is made visible, learning is accelerated. The following graph highlights HP research that confirms information is retained when you combine visual elements into the meeting. Learning should be an integrated part of any organisations culture, so the place where this is done, is more formal, to accommodate most of the team involved.

Such teams have now expanded to include the original spontaneous attendees (2-6) with other team co-workers (7-12+) who can now be incorporated as part of the 'go forward' deeper commitment.

This is the point where we have basic agreements and need to move the team *forward* from this point. A defined meeting area/room is designed with walls and sufficient seating to accommodate all the team with Vertical Knowledge Spaces (VKS), power supply, projection, LCD panels and teleconferencing options.

3



Source : Hewlett Packard

Continued... Other team members are now conversant with the solution and can now action the ideas on a more structured basis throughout the organisation.

Walls offer the ability to create a knowledge space. These encourage the natural energy of participants and create an *information 'buzz'*. Further, such information walls can be projected onto, *written* on or have information *pinned* into. Walls become smarter.



How many good ideas are lost .. simply because they're forgotten !

Collaboration is not just saying 'I wanted to keep you up to speed on this'.

This is low intensity interaction. Gen Y generation (the oldest of which is now around 39 years) come to work to leverage social connections and participate in collaboration on demand.

Research indicates that 70% of workers say they spend at least 15 minutes looking for a suitable place to meet. This time delay is worse if there are no writing spaces – fixed or mobile available.

Thoughts and insights cannot be quickly captured ... hence ideas stagnate. Inspiration from just a verbal meeting is just not sustainable.

Spaces where no visual communications products are offered are quite simply ... *dumb zones*... where talk is cheap and no 'go forward' ideas are recorded and communicated.

Visionchart offer *mobile* and *Vertical Knowledge Spaces* (VKS) that can be integrated with technology such as projectors and meeting software.

I will also refer to a new meeting item ... 'SnapBoard' app for iOS and Android, which is available as a free download and offers a smart capturing of written information onto tablets or phones. Workers who were not at the meeting, can be emailed the exact whiteboard screen contents which can be annotated and saved or emailed or uploaded to various social media sharing platforms.

This is ideas in *action*.

