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| | EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS | |
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# Effective Presentations

**EP 25-1-91, Aug 90**

*“I hear and I forget.*

*I see and I remember.*

*I do and I understand.”*

. . . old Chinese Proverb

# Introduction

Clear, concise communication is integral to the information sharing process necessary to sound management decisions that must be made every day, Communication is all around us. Newspapers ,the mail system, telephones, television, radio and other media are constantly fighting for our attention, The Importance of effective communication cannot be overstated.

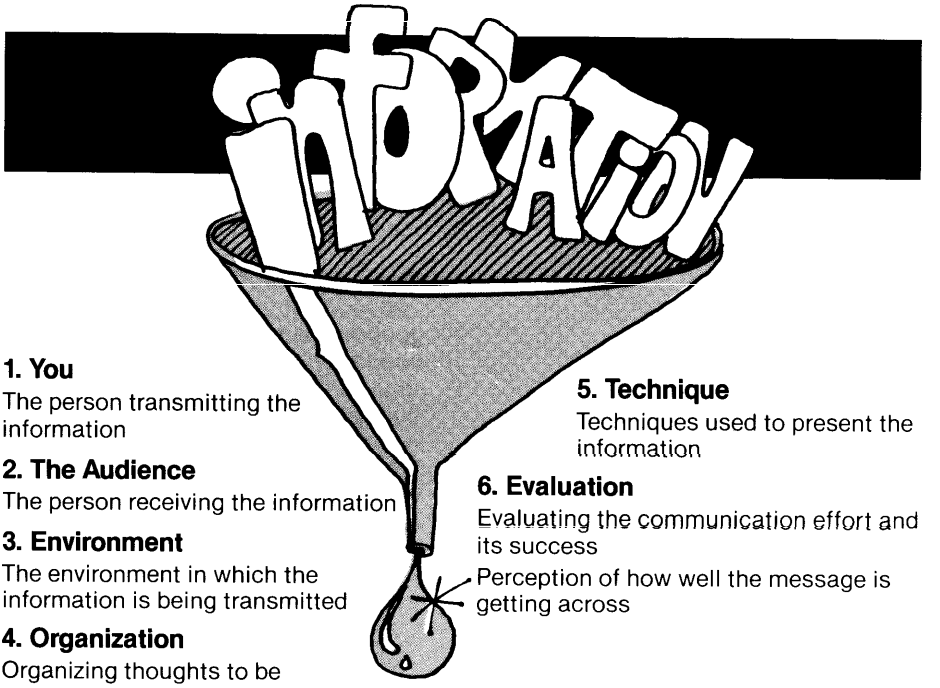
We communicate in many ways; talking. reading, writing, and in non-verbal ways. Probably the most important exchange of information is through personal communication, which happens each time we make our wishes and thoughts known to one another,

Many Corps of Engineers employees are required to communicate through presentations to groups of other employees or individuals outside the organization. This IS one of the most effective ways, and sometimes the only way to reach a particular audience. This guide examines the steps necessary to implement presentation techniques that will assist in the communication effort,

Albert J.Genetti, Jr.
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
Chief of Staff

# Effective Presentations

There are many factors to consider when developing a presentation, from initial planning and objective identification to audience engaging techniques and evaluation. The presentation format offers many advantages, the greatest of which is a captive audience. The presentation considerations outlined in this guide include:



**1. You**
The person transmitting the information

**2. The Audience**
The person receiving the information

**3. Environment**
The environment in which the information is being transmitted

**4. Organization**
Organizing thoughts to be communicated

**5. Technique**
Techniques used to present the information

**6. Evaluation**
Evaluating the communication effort and its success

Perception of how well the message is getting across

# 1. You (Transmitter)

Communication involves a sender and a receiver of the message. There are certain filters or barriers within you, the sender, that determine whether or not the message is actually transmitted. These filters include your assumptions about yourself, attitudes toward the audience and questions about the receiver's reaction. Every presenter must find his/her own method to identify and deal with each filter.

### Appearance

Corps employees who are giving presentations, whether to groups inside or outside the organization, represent themselves, their office and the organization they work for. A neat appearance is the first step toward making a positive impression on their audience.

### Courteous

Your job is to pass on knowledge that will benefit the audience. Be courteous in your delivery and patient with all questions, regardless of how simple the answer may appear.

Try to understand your audience's needs. If the presentation outline needs to be adjusted to meet these needs, you must be flexible enough to accommodate them.

A smile has great power. It costs nothing. It enriches those who receive it without impoverishing those who give it. A smile is rest to the uneasy, daylight to the discouraged and sunshine to the sad.

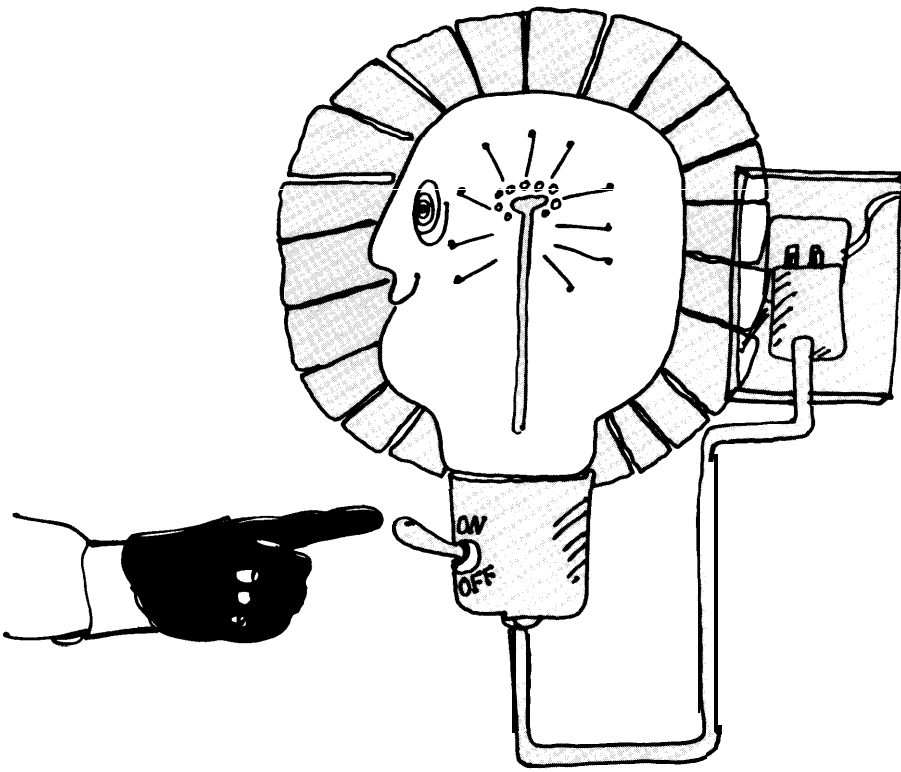
## 2. The Audience (Receiver)

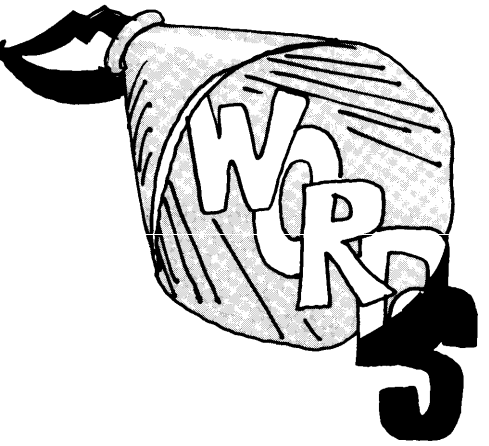
### Who

The audience IS your canvas—to be colored either vividly or drably by your presentation. You must analyze your audience. What level of knowledge about your subject do they possess? Can the presenter use technical jargon? Will the audience comprehend the information being presented and will they be sympathetic and friendly?

By understanding your audience you will be able to put your message in terms they understand. You will be better prepared to decide the information that should be presented, an appropriate sequence, which language style to use, and how to execute the presentation.

Put yourself in the receiver's shoes. As a receiver you may filter out information and therefore not hear certain aspects of the message. Some of the message may seem unimportant, too difficult, boring or redundant, etc..






**Hear Your Words**

Design your text for an oral presentation. Merely reading a paper does not make a productive presentation. Take a positive approach: It has been shown to be 50% more effective than negative information. Keep it simple. Use short, declarative sentences containing familiar words. Use key words near the beginning of each sentence. Design a pattern, a verbal or visual device which repeats key information throughout the presentation. Repetition IS also a very effective memory aid.

Meet your listeners at their level of understanding. Use metaphors: Compare unfamiliar facts with something simple the audience already knows. An example would be comparing the flow of water in a pipe with the flow of electricity in a wire. People learn more rapidly when the information relates to their own experience.

## 3. Environment (Where)

Barriers to effective communication involve three elements: the sender, the receiver and the circumstances that exist between the sender and the receiver. The environment where the presentation is performed is very important. Surroundings are as much a part of the presentation as the words that are used.

The environment includes a myriad of elements that must be factored into the presentation to maximize the efforts of accomplishing the objective. Things like time of day, lighting, seating arrangements, outside distractions (a beautiful day outdoors), room decor, acoustics, and so on.

The presenter should try to control the elements of environment as much as possible.

## 4. Organization (Why)

Much effort goes into preparing a presentation. This effort will be much more effective if an objective is clearly defined and focused on during the preparation process.

**Why**

Why are you communicating? What do you want to accomplish with your efforts? What do you want the receiver to think, feel or do? Is there a call to action? Defining objectives helps the presenter to maintain focus on the communication target. Many speeches, slide presentations and one-on-one talks fail because they lack this fundamental direction.

## Objective

Imagine you are taking a group on a trip from where they are now to where you want them to be. You are like a tour guide pointing out landmarks along the way.

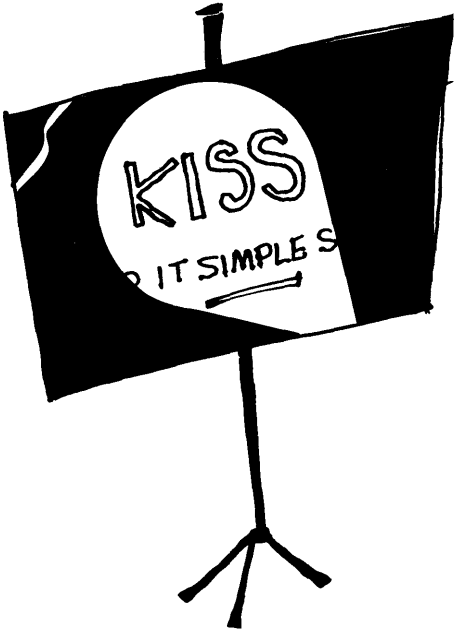
The objective must be simple and to the point. It must be measurable; not vague, such as “increase knowledge” or “improve attitudes. ” It must state the exact knowledge or attitude to be achieved or action to be taken as a result of the presentation. For example, you may establish an objective to persuade 80°/0 of a group of 25 college biology students to write letters to their congressman asking for votes on an important environmental issue.

## Order

When preparing a presentation you are confronted with an overabundance of related information. One of the most important parts of preparation takes place right at the beginning when you are determining and isolating the essential parts of the message. Simplify your facts until you reach the essential information that is necessary for building the presentation.

An audience is selective when remembering information. Identify the strongest facts required to get your message across. Five to seven major points is an optimum number. The 7-digit telephone number is the result of extensive research to determine the maximum number of digits that could be easily remembered. Many presentations drown under an overwhelming flood of facts. Reduce complex items to the simplest terms, then build these into the final message. Quantity and quality go hand-in-hand in effective presentations.

The audience should be given a map to follow the presentation so they know where they are going and when they will get there. Planning a presentation is critical to the success of the communication effort. Have a plan of execution and follow it like a blueprint.

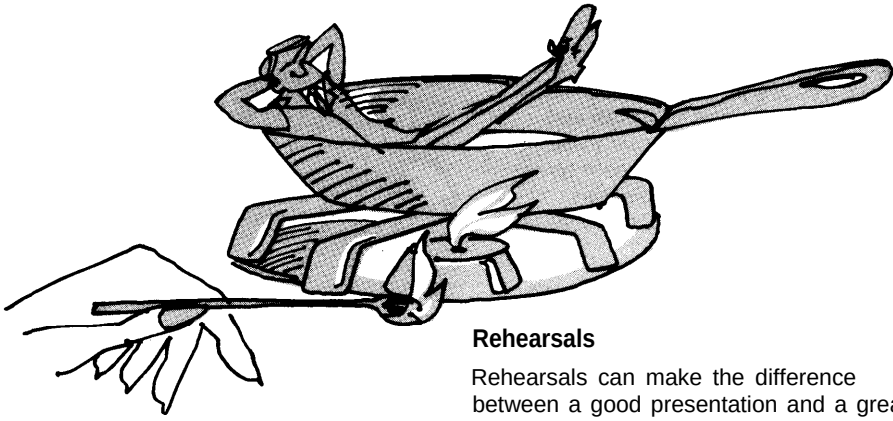



## Timing

The average speaking rate for a presentation is 120 words per minute. With this scale, you can estimate 1800 words spoken in a 15 minute period.

The presentation should be organized into three areas. The first area of concern is the introduction, which should include announcements and purpose. The second area that needs orchestration is the body of the presentation. The body should cover the main points from simple to more complex, then build one point upon another. And finally, the summary. The summary should draw conclusions and make recommendations.

Determine the length of your introduction and length of your summary. Subtract from total presentation length to get the amount of time for the main body of the



presentation. Time should be included for pauses and changes of pace to add interest to the message.

Time may also be given to audience participation. The more senses used when communicating—sight, sound, taste, feel, smell—the more the communication will be remembered. Toward this end, there are many communicative vehicles available to get your message across: objects, videos and slides—to name just a few. People retain 10°/0 of what they hear, 20°/0 of what they see, and 90°/0 of what they do.

## 5. Technique (How)

Now that you have decided what to communicate, the next step is to determine how to get the message across. Each presenter must develop his or her own style of speaking and nonverbal communication. Try to put yourself in the place of the audience and interact with their needs to receive the information.

No matter how formal or informal the presentation is going to be, some degree of structure is indespensable. The speaker must keep the message from sounding like hopeless rambling. Don't allow stage fright to keep you from being yourself. The ultimate achievement of all great speakers is to let their personality shine through.

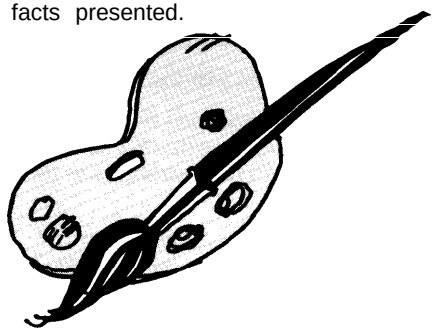
### Rehearsals

Rehearsals can make the difference between a good presentation and a great presentation. Say the words out loud. Think of how they sound. Speak clearly with adequate volume. Remember that your level of enthusiasm, motivation and interest will be reflected by the audience. Check timing and edit where necessary. Go over your presentation with visuals in the space where it will be delivered.

### Visual Aids

Projected visuals can communicate complex information more rapidly than the spoken word. Make sure, however, that they relate to the subject of the presentation. Too often presenters use visuals as a crutch and tend to put the presentation narrative on each visual. Visuals should be used to strengthen your message, not to carry the weight of it.

Visual aids draw audience participation by attracting and holding attention. Complex ideas are often difficult to express in words. Visuals can communicate a wider range of information in less time and reduce misinterpretation of the facts presented.



## Preparing Good Visuals

Your words and visuals must fit together to make a single point. Visuals should use a minimal number of words and should be uncluttered in order to be clearly read by the farthest member of the audience. Some basic tips on preparing good quality visuals include:

- Assemble available documents, photographs or drawings. Assemble graphs and charts that contain statistical data.
- Make rough sketches of concepts that have not been visualized before. Suggest new photography that may be required.
- A visual is only as good as the facts it contains. Verify accuracy of facts and figures before slides or art is prepared; afterwards will be too late.
- A single well-chosen idea clearly presented makes each picture "worth a 1000 words. " Simplify the information. When too much information is crowded on a visual it will not communicate. illustrations and charts should be used sparingly for key ideas only.
- Don't use white backgrounds. Deep background colors are much more effective. Colors should be used consistently to avoid confusion and to shorten the communication processing time. For example: blue background with white letters throughout the presentation.
- Good legibility leads to better attention and audience commitment. Type should be well-spaced and legible. White type with a drop shadow on a dark background is an excellent combination.
- Data should be plotted in graph rather than tabular form for greater readability.

## Choosing the Right Media

Viewgraphs (Overheads) can be used in bright light; they promote more audience involvement and can be rearranged at the last minute.

Liquid Character Display Projection Panels compliment and provide a wider range of possibilitles with anything that

can be created on a personal computer.

The first models introduced were limited to black and white and had low resolution. Today some models offer a range of colors. Liquid Character Display Projection Panels require a personal computer to operate.

Slides offer brighter, deeper color, look more professional and are lightweight, making them convenient to carry on the road.

Video monitors offer richer colors and clearer pictures than video projection but are limited in the image size. Large audiences require several monitors.

Video Projectors are becoming increasingly more popular. High Definition Television and video projection offer the best results for large groups of people.

Many software programs are available to interface PC graphic packages with video output devices. This media is getting more economical and easier to use with each technological advance by the industry.

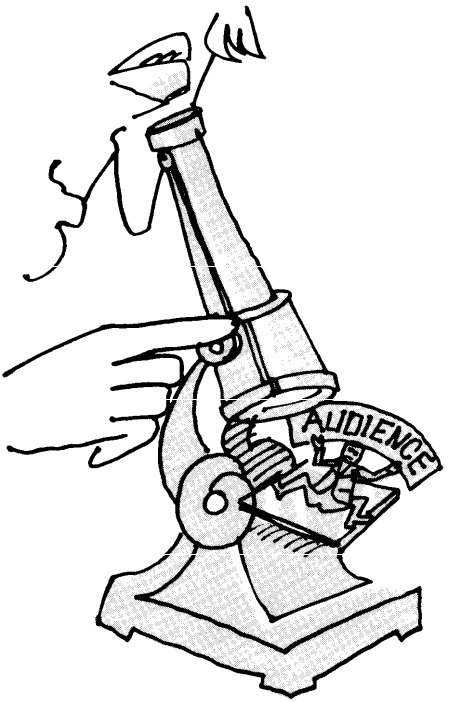
Video Teleconferencing Centers are available in limited locations throughout the

There are many other visual aids and methods available from flip charts. black boards, white boards, still video and audio presentations to 3D modeling and product demonstrations that are readily available for your consideratlon.

### Get Help Early

There are many techniques to enhance Images, as well as technical limitatlons. In preparing visual materials. Contact your visual information manager early for good illustrations and visual aids. It takes time and thought to prepare the most effective artwork, photography, slides, etc.

A check List for effective presentations is included in the back of this guide for your convenience.




## 6. Evaluation (Result)

Evaluation is one of the most critical steps to success; throughout the presentation and at the end to ensure the objective was met or exceeded. You must not only convey information. but project an image as a leader in communication. This reflects a positive image on you. your office and the organization you represent.

### Perception

Perception is perhaps the most difficult communlcatlon consideration. It requires constant monitoring arid evaluation. Sclentists and psychologists have been working for many years to try to understand the power and variations of perception.

People have a general tendency to perceive things as complete and unified. This means that we tend to fill in the pieces that are missing. A presentation that does not clearly give the audience a direction in which to go risks allowing them to find their own, possibly Incorrect, way.

When the public sees a Corps' logo, we like to think that they are filling in the pieces that include things like "Contemporary Engineering Organization, " "Quality" and "Professionalism. " The viewer, when looking at the castle and signature, sees more than its physical makeup. Perception reflects past experiences, emotions, needs and expectations.

**US Army Corps of Engineers**

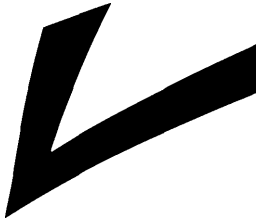
There are no guarantees that come with the communication process, but the person who is well prepared and continues to evaluate content, technique and interaction with the audience, based on a predetermined objective, will have a higher rate of success with effective communication.

For additional information about effective presentation techniques or support services available, contact the Visual Information Manager located in the Information Management Office at your activity.

# Check List

You are the authority on your subject. You have put together a presentation combining the right words with the right pictures. All the hard work has been done before you stand up to speak. Relax, enjoy the experience of being rewarded by your own effective presentation.

The following is a quick reference check list of items that need your attention:



**Preparation**

Have you clearly written the objective of your presentation?

Have you analyzed your audience (size, age, experience, education, special interests, etc.)?

Have you prepared an outline, organizing your presentation around a theme and presenting ideas in a smooth sequence?

Have you researched your supporting information for accuracy and anticipated questions?

Have you carefully selected slides or other visual aids that are relevant and have good composition and quality?

Have you practiced your presentation and checked for slide sequence and timing as well as for a smooth delivery?

Did you give the presentation an interesting but understandable title?

Does your program need additional materials to be shown or handed out?

Have you checked to see if all equipment is available and in good working order?

Have you made all necessary travel arrangements?

**Before the Program**

Have you checked out the meeting room (keys, lighting, public address system, noise, ventilation, outlets, etc.)?

Have you set up all of your equipment (prefocus and center image, set up screen, extension cords, etc.)?

Did you consider appointing and instructing someone to help you with the lights, projector and/or doors (for late arrivals)?

**Presentation**

Did you make all necessary announcements?

Did your introduction include a welcome, arouse interest and set the stage for the presentation?

Did you work in the name of your organization?

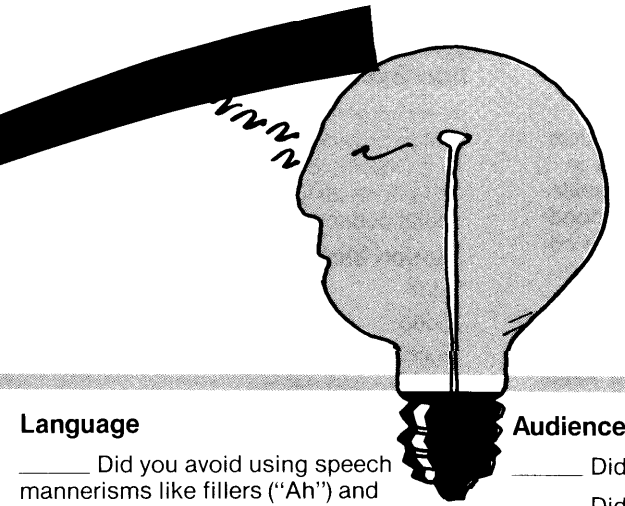
Did you have smooth transitions between sections, ideas and slides in the presentation?

Did you avoid distracting body movements (change jiggling, swaying, etc.)?

Did you avoid making direct reference to the slides?

_ Did you stick to your theme?

Did you finish with a strong, definite conclusion?



## Language

_____ Did you avoid using speech mannerisms like fillers ("Ah") and unnecessary or repeated phrases ("OK," "SO" and "You Know")?

Did you use appropriate language for your audience and explain technical terms when used?

Did you adapt your volume to the audience so all could hear you?

Did you pronounce words correctly and distinctly?

Did you vary your tone as well as your pace to add emphasis and interest to your talk?

## Feedback and Evaluation

Were you aware of audience reactions and feedback?

Did you start and finish on time?

Did you have someone (Colleague) give you candid criticism?

Notes for improvement:

## Audience Rapport and Interest

_____ Did you speak with enthusiasm?

_____ Did you maintain eye contact with the audience?

Did you speak in a friendly, conversational tone?

Did you relate to the audience's interest and experience?

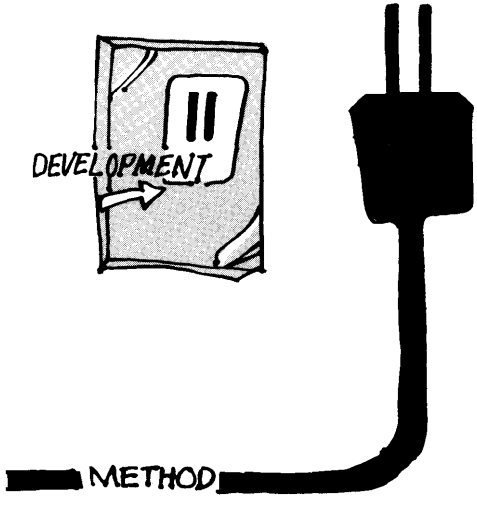
Did you use questions, examples, stories or comparisons?

Did you use quotation, testimony or narration?

# Visual Information (Vi) Products and Services

Visual Information discipline products and services manage information in support of Corps' management goals. Each VI product is developed around a clearly identified communication objective. This is accomplished by providing effective VI products that are used to provide increased understanding of management issues and to communicate the Corps' role in water resource development.

Visual Information is the method of disseminating or communicating data or information in the most effective and efficient manner, accomplished through, but not limited to, the life cycle management of: still photography, motion picture photography, video or audio recordings, graphic arts, visual aids, models, displays, visual presentation services, electronic publishing, computer generated visuals, conferencing and teleconferencing, and the processes to support them. The VI discipline includes the following programs, products and services:




**The Unified Visual Communication System**

A comprehensive communication plan which provides specificatlons in the form of a Graphic Standards Manual (EP 310-1-6) for all Corps public information visual communication media.

**Motion Media Production**

Film

Video

Multimedia

Combination Media

Audio

Distribution

**Audiovisual Equipment Loan**

Property Accountability

Equipment Management (inventory control, repair, replacement, upgrades, etc.)

**Audiovisual Support**

Conference Room Design

Projectionists

Multimedia programing

**Projected Visuals**

Slides

Viewgraphs

Video Projection

LCD Projection Panels

Blackboards/Whiteboards/Flip Charts, etc.

**Photographic Support**

Documentation

Official Portraits

Duplicating

Film Processing

Camera Loan

Equipment Management (inventory control, repair, replacement, upgrades, etc.)

**Exhibits and Displays**

Development and Production

Shipping and Receiving

Setup and Strike

Convention Services and Manning Coordination

Exhibit System Management (inventory control, repair, replacement, upgrades, etc.)

**Videoteleconferencing**

Arranging conference bookings with Army-wide Videoteleconferencing Centers

Assisting with development of video communications assistance

**Illustrations**

Technical Illustrations

Publication Drawings and Diagrams

**Presentation Techniques**

Identifying Appropriate Media

Identifying Objective

Evaluation

Technical Advice and Support

### *Other VI Management Responsibilities*

There are several Information Management disciplines that have responsibility to manage organizational requirements that fall into a gray area. While regulations are rigid and draw definite lines of responsibility between these disciplines, changes in technology are bringing parts of each discipline into an overlapping mode to meet the needs of the organization and promote efficiency along the way.

The following areas have, over time, overlapped into the Visual Information discipline:

**Publication Design**

Conceptual Design

Typesetting

Paste-up

Interface between customer and Printing and Publishing manager

**Visual Libraries**

Storage and Retrieval Systems

Customer Assistance with Research

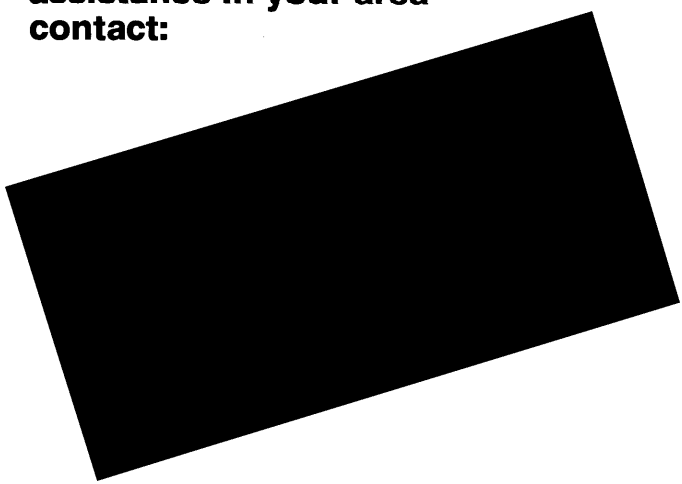
Submittals to Archives and Headquarters, Department of the Army

### *For additional information on VI regulations, mission and responsibilities:*

- AR 25-1, The Army Information Resources Management Program
- ER 25-1-90, Visual Information Management
- ER 360-1-2, The Unified Visual Communication System
- DA Pam 25-1-91, Visual Visual Information Procedures
- EP 25-1-90, Computer Generated Visuals User's Guide
- EP 310-1-6, Graphic Standards Manual
- EP 310-1-6a and 6b, National Sign Standards Manual
- The Corps Electronic Publishing Style Guide

U. S. Government Printing Office: 1990-273-967 (20715)

**For Visual Information assistance in your area contact:**



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