

What is this?

BIG INTERACTIVE SCREENS AS TOOL FOR DELIBERATION

In 2013, I visited the Electronic Visualization Lab at Univ. of Illinois - Chicago, where they have built an extraordinary tool for group collaboration - a 6 x 26 foot interactive screen.

I brought a couple dozen of my information murals (most having to do with climate change and sustainability) and gave a lecture-demo using the big interactive screen. Topic: How to use Visualization for Situation-as-a-whole Thinking.

Their screen is a multi-touch with software so that several persons can stand beside it and use the screen to discuss, illustrate, debate, collaborate. They can quickly pop their desktop screens from their laptop computers right up on the big screen and manipulate them at will.

In my talk I kept the set of 20 (yes, twenty!) info-murals as little thumbnails over at one corner of the interactive screen....and with a flick of my fingers could sling them across the big screen and enlarge them with a simple i-phone like movement. And enlarge it for detail. And flick it away with a finger-point. At last we can deal rapidly, and interactively with huge complex problems at multiple levels of abstraction, and multiple points of view with a flick of the wrist and, of course, a flick of the mind.

With these screens, I think we're the beginning of a new tool for dealing with complex discussions in groups as members of the team can pop their desktops onto the screen easily and their contributions can be easily grouped, enlarged, modified, etc. It's ideal for strategic discussions where different contexts can be represented on large information murals (as in the WBCSD Vision 2050 mural).

Robert E. Horn
Senior Researcher
Human Science and Technology Advanced Research
Institute (H-STAR)
Stanford University
Fellow, World Academy of Art and Science
email: hornbob@earthlink.net



Platforms for Thought

One of my research and development projects is to create what I call a series of "platforms for thought." These are analytic structures that can take specific and often distinctive visual forms. Human thought often divides a process into a series of "stages" that in some way have identifiable characteristics and enable humans to think more easily about them. This is especially important in solving the limitations short term memory that we all of have (often identified as 7 +/- chunks of information) These platforms for thought hold steady quite complex situations in a way that human minds can grasp quite quickly their contents and patterns.

The use of these idealized stages can enable focus on particular stages for analytic purposes. It has been our experience that multiple view of complex situations are important, and that, while different kinds of diagrams can be imbedded in different larger platforms, it is often useful to be careful about loading a single infographic with too many different kinds of thought platforms.

Other kinds of platforms for thinking

We now use some 25 different large contextual platforms in this series of experiments. "Platforms for Thought" will be the subject (and title) of my next book.

Robert E. Horn
Stanford University
President, MacroVU®, Inc
hornbob@earthlink.net