

THE DIRECTOR

Moral of the story: *Ask for what you need in order to do your best work. Be clear and explicit. Otherwise, you get what you get.*

A few years ago, a consultant brought me in as a graphic recorder on several occasions with one of his long-term clients. I will tell you about two of the occasions that I was involved in-- the first and the second. The client was a Hollywood director. I'm not mentioning names, but that fact is paramount to the story.

The first gig we did was in the director's studios in northern California. The consultant didn't do a very good job of informing the director of my physical needs – like wall space or boards, an easel, room to work, a place to put my tools. He also wasn't too clear on the value of my recording or why I was even there in the first place. I think the client tolerated me in deference to the consultant.

So with his limited knowledge, the director held the small meeting of about 5 or 6 people in the very bottom of a building he owned. It was his sound studio. The walls were made of dark carpet. The walls warped in and out (I guess for sound purposes). There was not a flat space to be had. I had one teeny corner of the room in which to record. Thankfully, I had an easel!

To make the best of it, I recorded on the easel and every time I ran out of that sheet of paper, I would tear it off and run up and put it on the carpet with long tacks that I actually had in my tool kit! (The lesson: always be prepared for any eventuality, especially when it comes to walls.) In essence, I was creating the wall as we went along, rather than starting with a wall. I was sort of climbing over people to do this because the space was so small. The whole thing was very disconcerting as a recorder. The group didn't seem to get much done and it was depressing.

Fast forward to the second gig. This took place at the director's winery. (I had to tell you that because that is also part of the story.) It was to be

an important strategic decision making conversation for all involved. There were only 5 participants. This was about their future.

A day prior to this sit down, the consultant and I explained the benefits of using a large board so people could see everything at the same time and see the parts and the whole simultaneously, more or less have a systems view. And be able to use the graphic display as a referent as well as a point of departure for creative ideas and solutions.

Well, we definitely got our points across. We pushed a button of understanding and the world opened up!

It just so happened that, at that time, the director was doing shoots on his winery for a new movie of his. So all the cast, crew and tech guys were staying on site. He must have called in the troops that night because the next day when we showed up to have the meeting, we were 'directed' to a new space. When we walked in, we couldn't believe it.

Over night in this huge room, he had created a comfortable space with couches and tables and plants. The crew had built a wall approximately 4' tall and at least 12' long which was perched on sturdy wooden legs, perfectly suited for recording for someone of my height. It had a corresponding lip under the wall to hold any number of pens or other tools. There was a supply table on either side. There was indirect lighting that was perfect for recording. It was like a dream come true. It was very clear -- the man knows his sets!

Anyway, the meeting was fantastic. They came away with what they needed. The graphics were appreciated, as was the facilitation.

Not everyone is going to stumble into a situation like this but when we ask for something, we often get it. When we aren't clear about our needs, we often get things we don't want.