

NeoCon Reigns Supreme

by Brad Powell
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PolyVision's Thunder

This NeoCon was replete with estimable products, but our pick of the most significant is **PolyVision's Thunder**, an electronic flip chart that facilitates proximate and remote learning and collaboration. We were fortunate to be invited to spend time with **Michael Dunn**, CEO of PolyVision, the single exception to our rule not to do interviews or make appointments at NeoCon. This was one of the most stimulating educational sessions I have had in years.

While we regretted that this was not a keynote, the interview will be published shortly. The nub of our talk, and of Thunder, is a perceptive use of learning theory concepts – persistence and context – to foster meaningful communication and collaboration, in the workplace, in educational institutions, and in other settings. Communication and collaboration are, essentially, learning phenomena; and learning, whether in a knowledge or a creative setting, is the quintessence of what goes on.

In form, Thunder is a flip chart whose scribing surface is projected upon a wall, which can be in the same room or in several rooms remotely located. When a page is flipped, the past pages continue to be displayed thus enabling learning, in the context of the whole presentation, to continue. The flip chart interacts with the displayed pages and connected computers, and all of the written interaction can be stored for later continuation or distributed to each participant for review and further consideration.

Anywhere people work together, Thunder will be a major technological addition. Imagine, for example, the enhanced capability among distant offices of design firms and construction and expert project participants, all reviewing and commenting in real time on project documents. But, Thunder is not cheap; basic equipment and software is in the \$100,000 range. On the other hand, for most situations, progress could be made if much of the video-conferencing equipment were junked and replaced with Thunder or a similar communications tools. (Obviously, there are situations where feelings and related emotional/political content are critical, as opposed to thoughts and related data.)

During the on-site demonstration I attended, the third team this NeoCon from Deloitte (the big accounting firm) was listening to the presentation.

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