The minus side is that it is a flat, two-dimensional portrayal, inanimate and uninteresting. It can only give the bare-bones information, and you need to draw several diagrams to show the extra possibilities or do a lot of crossing out and mish-mash. I find the next way better, more succinct and more persuasive (also more fun).

• Use a few tangible objects on the desk or coffee table, or on your person, as symbols of the various parts of your idea. Cups, paperweights, ashtrays, paper clips, pens, etc., work very well. Designate each one as a part of the routing system: "The cup is a . . . and the two ashtrays are the . . . " Pens and pencils make excellent "arrows," showing directions and connections.

Then set up the current route (your opposite's preference). You can talk about each step as you build it (what it's for, how it moves to the next place) and actually move the objects around. You can get your opposite number involved, too.

This provides three-dimensional plus tactile visualization (much more interesting). It's more colorful and more active. It can show movement and retrace steps to show variations with the same basic objects. You can set up two systems, side by side, for instant visual comparison. It's a novel and original way to tell, bound to capture interest and attention as well as better comprehension.

Ask Before You Tell

To get someone involved right at the top of your presenting an idea, start by asking them an interesting question. A few startling bits of trivia relating to your subject: "What do you think is the biggest. . . ?" or, "How much money do you think is spent each year on. . . ?" This approach engages your opposite number in trying to answer and being properly surprised by the right answer. It also establishes your expertise very quickly *and* it's a different way to start, not openly aggressive or sales-oriented.

Discussion

Create a Positive Environment

Primary in any discussion is the environment in which it happens. If it's a challenge session in which the goal is to put you on the defensive and make you answer negative comments, it's not a discussion.

Host and visitor should both be aware of the optimal circumstances