

4.7.11: Why It Matters- Visual Media

Our prehistoric ancestors struggled, rock in hand, to carve just the right picture into the wall of the cave, hoping that someone would come along and understand the story being told. They may have drawn stick figures with spears, a woolly mammoth in the distance about to become dinner. In the next series of drawings, the mammoth has been struck, the stick figure looming over him. In a third series, a gathering of stick figures at a fire, presented with a feast.



There is beauty and clarity in the simplicity of the prehistoric man's drawings. You understand his hunting victory even though he's used no words. Prehistoric man was on to something with this approach.

Fast forward to today where studies have been done on the impact of visual aids:

- Only 70 percent of people reading labels on medicine containers understand the instructions when they are written in text form, but that understanding increases to 95 percent when the text is accompanied by images.^[1]
- People follow written directions 323 percent better when the images accompany the instructions.^[2]

From this, we know that visual media can make your communication easier to understand. But does it help you make a point or sell an idea? When listening to an oral presentation, 50 percent of an audience will be persuaded by the speech alone, but that number increases to 67 percent when the speech features visual aids.^[3]

Because of this, we know that visual media can make your communication more convincing. In an age in which we humans are asked to process more information than we have ever processed before, let's look at today's trends:

- People are 80 percent more likely to engage with content when it features color visuals.^[4]
- Facebook audiences are 651 percent more likely to engage with a post if it includes an image, compared with posts that don't.^[5]

This shows us that visuals attract attention and draw our audiences in. Visuals make our communication noticeable.

Communications are more memorable, persuasive and easily understood when visual media is involved. Like prehistoric man, we can use visual media to more effectively deliver a message. In this module, we're going to talk about the uses of various visual media—charts, graphs, images, and even video—and how communicators can leverage them to connect with their colleagues and other professionals.

1. Dowse, R. & Ehlers, M. (2005). [Medicine labels incorporating pictograms: Do they influence understanding and adherence?](#), Patient Education and Counseling, Vol 58, Issue 1.
2. Levie, W. J. & Lentz, R. (1982). [Effects of text illustrations: A review of research](#), Educational Communication and Technology.
3. Wharton School of Business. 'Effectiveness of Visual Language'.
4. Green, R. (1989). [The Persuasive Properties of Color](#), Marketing Communications.
5. [Social Intelligence Report](#), Adobe Digital Index Q4 2013

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