

Cheat Sheet: Visual Media

Essential Concepts

Designing Your Message

Visuals support and can even improve communication. Visual media makes your message more accessible. It helps your audience process the information faster, it can even transcend cultural and language differences. With visual media, your reach is wider and your message more powerful. To integrate visuals successfully, adhering to principles such as clarity, consistency, relevancy, and persuasiveness is essential. Clear, simple visuals aid in quick comprehension, while maintaining a consistent style and relevancy ensures that the visual elements align with the brand's message and enhance the communication's overall impact.

Additionally, the design of visual media should consider elements like contrast, alignment, hierarchy, and repetition to organize and emphasize information effectively. Contrast highlights key elements within visuals, alignment organizes content, and hierarchy prioritizes information, making the message clear at a glance. Repetition in visual elements like icons and colors can unify the communication and reinforce the brand. Effective visual communication not only supports the message but also engages the audience, making the content both impactful and memorable.

Selecting and Sourcing Images

Visual content transforms communication by significantly enhancing viewer engagement, comprehension, and the likelihood of content being shared on social media. Visuals are far more likely to be viewed and shared than text-only content. Guidelines for selecting effective images include ensuring clarity, maintaining consistency with other images in the document, capturing the audience's emotions, and adhering to the brand's identity. These criteria help in creating content that is visually appealing and strategically aligned with the messaging goals.

Effective use of images includes using visuals where the content is complex or emotionally charged, where visuals can more effectively convey the message than text. However, text may be more appropriate when detailed explanations or impactful statements are necessary. It's important to follow copyright laws when using images. Another option is utilizing open-source images that may be free to use with proper attribution to the original creators.

Choosing and Using Graphics

There are a plethora of charts and graphs designed to help communicate different kinds of information effectively. Bar graphs, often used for comparing various categories, and line graphs, ideal for showcasing trends over time, are among the most common tools for representing numerical data. Pie charts excel at illustrating the composition of a dataset, visually breaking down the various pieces of a whole. For more dynamic comparisons, variations such as donut charts and stacked line graphs can offer insights into both trends and proportional distributions.

Non-numerical data isn't left out, with tools like Venn diagrams for showcasing similarities and differences, flow charts for outlining processes, and Gantt charts for planning and tracking projects over time. Organizational charts provide a hierarchical view of an entity, showing reporting relationships and structural organization, while pictographs and infographics combine images, data, and text to simplify complex information and enhance engagement.

When preparing a visual presentation of data, the selection of the appropriate graphic form is crucial, but so is the presentation style. The chosen graph or chart should adhere to standards that ensure it is clean, simple, and consistent with the branding. Titles and captions play a vital role not only in framing the graph but also in lending credibility and context to the information presented. Effective use of captions can enhance understanding by providing essential details such as the variables plotted, the units of measurement, and any relevant contextual information. Ensuring that these elements are not only informative but also directly relevant to the audience is key to maintaining engagement and clarity in data communication.

Effective Use of Visual Media

Visuals play a crucial role in business contexts such as annual reports for stakeholders. These reports often incorporate strategic plans and financial data, enhanced by visuals to make the complex information more accessible. Tools like slides enable speakers to reinforce their messages visually, though it's essential to use these tools effectively, avoiding reliance on them for engagement alone. Visual media must also be accessible, designed to be inclusive of all audience members, including those with disabilities. This ensures that everyone, regardless of ability, can understand and engage with the content.

When preparing for a presentation, it's important to differentiate between speeches and presentations. Speeches may not require visuals unless specific details are being discussed. In contrast, business presentations benefit from visuals such as agenda slides, which guide the audience and establish a clear plan. These should be concise to keep the audience engaged. Effective communication also involves revising and seeking feedback on visual media to ensure alignment with the intended message and audience needs. Finally, evaluating the effectiveness of communication can be achieved through tools that measure audience engagement and comprehension, such as surveys and analytics, providing insights into the impact of the delivered message.

Glossary

accessibility

the design and presentation of content in a way that ensures it can be accessed, understood, and enjoyed by as wide an audience as possible, including individuals with disabilities

alignment

a sharp, linear order to the elements of a visual conveying a connection to each other

alt-text

short way of saying alternative text, a short text description of graphical content on a webpage, designed to provide context and convey the essence of the visual for screen reader users

balance

the distribution of visual elements in a design in a way that ensures a sense of stability and harmony, either symmetrically or asymmetrically

bar graph

a visual representation that uses rectangular bars to show comparisons among categories, with the length or height of the bars corresponding to the values they represent

caption

in the context of still images, a brief text description that accompanies an image, diagram, or chart to provide context or explain what is being shown

captions

in the context of videos, captions are text overlays that provide a transcription of the dialogue and auditory information, such as sound effects and music cues, to aid viewers who are deaf or when audio cannot be played

contrast

when two aspects of an image are strikingly different from one another

Creative Commons

a nonprofit organization that provides free licenses allowing creators to legally share their work and stipulate how others can use it

Creative Commons license

a public copyright license that enables the free distribution of an otherwise copyrighted work under specific conditions set by the creator, such as attribution, non-commercial use, share-alike, or no derivative works

exploding pie chart

a variation of a standard pie chart in which one or more slices are separated from the rest of the chart to emphasize specific data points or categories

fair use

a legal concept in U.S. copyright law that allows limited use of copyrighted material without requiring permission from the rights holders, typically for purposes like commentary, criticism, education, or parody

flow chart

a diagram that represents a process or workflow, typically using boxes or other shapes connected by arrows to show the sequence of steps and decision points

font

a set of displayable text characters in a specific style and size; also sometimes called a typeface

Gantt chart

a type of bar chart that represents a project schedule, showing the start and finish dates of various project elements and tasks, often used for tracking project timelines and progress

hierarchy

the arrangement and presentation of visual elements in a way that clearly shows their order of importance within the design

infographic

a visual representation of information, data, or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly through the use of charts, diagrams, images, and minimal text

line graph

a type of chart used to display information as a series of data points connected by straight line segments, typically used to visualize trends over time

negative space

the empty or open areas around and between the subjects of an image or layout

open source

creative works made freely available for use, modification, and distribution

organizational chart

also called hierarchy chart, shows people in an organization and their reporting relationships to managers

pattern

a repeated decorative design that is used to enhance the aesthetic appeal and coherence of the visual elements

pictographs

also called icons, use symbols and imagery to convey data, information, or ideas

pie chart

a circular graph divided into slices to illustrate numerical proportions, with each slice representing a category's contribution to the whole; may also be displayed with a open space in the center like a donut

proximity

objects positioned closer together conveying they are related

repetition

the use of the same or similar elements throughout a design to create a sense of unity and consistency

royalty

a payment made to the copyright owner for each use that doesn't fall under fair use

royalty-free

a licensing method where a user pays a one-time fee to use copyrighted material without paying additional royalties or license fees each time the content is used

screen reader

a software application that converts alt-text on a computer screen into speech or Braille, enabling visually impaired users to interact with digital content

stacked comparison chart

displays the breakdown of multiple categories stacked on top of each other within bars, making it easy to compare the total and the composition of each category at once

stacked line graph

a type of chart where lines from different categories are stacked on top of one another to show the cumulative effect, making it easy to visualize the total across categories as well as the contribution from each category over time

table

a systematic arrangement of data in rows and columns, typically used to organize and display detailed information for easy reference and analysis

transcript

a detailed, written record of spoken content such as what is said in a video or during a live event, allowing people to read what was spoken and access the information in a text format

Venn diagram

a graphical representation that uses overlapping circles to illustrate the logical relationships and commonalities between different sets of items