



TIPSHEET

Do pictures say more than a thousand words?

The six most frequent mistakes when creating and using infographics

1. *“We already have good images.”*

The key question is this: Which target group are your images aimed at? In most cases the target group is different to the one, which is being addressed in the White Paper. The images are either intended for the purpose of advertising and not for their content, or their complexity is simply far too technical for a general audience to understand. That means, you have to start again at the beginning with the images. The general reader with an interest in the subject does not normally understand what particular symbols or colours may mean, although they may be common practice in your subject area, nor are they satisfied with the advertising images. In this situation a “translation” is necessary between the knowledge which is necessary to understand an image and the existing knowledge of the general reader.

2. *“An image is made quickly.”*

It is a well-known expression that an image says more than a thousand words. With this in mind, the time spent on creating a good quality, meaningful image can be better appreciated. It takes time to design an image to the point where a complex process is portrayed coherently, the technical details and the use of metaphors are correct and the colours are consistent. A White Paper uses only a good quality image, which is not made quickly – most of the time you spend even more time on it than the text!

3. *“Our image should present all of the technical details correctly.”*

In particular, engineers tend to have a passion for endless details and confusing complexity. This often leads to a situation where, apart from them and their colleagues nobody else understands the diagram. A successful infographic should be as easy as possible to understand. Details are still important - however it depends on choosing exactly the right detail for a particular message. A perfect infographic finds the balance



between technical and strategic information. It communicates complexity with few, but carefully chosen details.

4. *“What you don’t understand at first in an infographic, you can still explain in the text.”*

We live in an era of rapid visual communication. If a message is not correctly portrayed optically for a start, it is permanently lodged this way. “A thousand words” are often too few to “correct” or to “explain” an incorrect or overly complex image. A good infographic can make do with as little text as possible, for all of the important ideas and processes are correctly explained to the viewer intuitively from the image.

5. *“We can draw up an image, and add the rest later.”*

The eye grasps immediately what images express – conscious and subconscious messages are directly transferred. The “genuine faith” in the contents of a White Paper is determined therefore to a large degree by the unity of the image language chosen and the images which are used with the appropriate drafted text. This is the only way for visual and textual content aspects to be moulded together into a high-quality White Paper.

6. *We present our facts objectively.”*

An image must depict the facts correctly. Since both text and image are combined in an infographic, a mistake in the interpretation can be made quickly. This is particularly true for statistical data. Edward R. Tufte, a British infographics expert, once said in relation to this: “graphical excellence requires telling the truth about the data” (Tufte, 2001). If – either consciously or subconsciously – the images say something different from the figures, then according to Tufte, a “lie factor” is present. Critical readers become suspicious quickly, if visual and textual information do not correlate in a White Paper. Therefore, in a White Paper it is always necessary to consider infographics as part of the whole and correspondingly to design them as such.



Would you like to receive more information?

Please contact:

knowledgeatwork

Dr. Sybe I. Rispens

Wrangelstrasse 22A

10997 Berlin/Europe

Tel: (49)030- 692097520

Fax: (49)030-692097529

E-Mail: info@knowledgeatwork.eu

Internet: www.knowledgeatwork.eu