

People learn from images as well as words,
yet most of corporate learning is delivered in text.
It's time to open our eyes to the possibilities.



By Jay Cross

Sight Mammals



The CEO feels he must point his company in a new direction or get killed in the marketplace. He has committed his thoughts to paper – 25 pages of dense text and spreadsheets. Now he turns to getting buy-in from his managers and employees.

A visual journalist interviews the CEO, interpreting his ideas into a large graphic. This “big picture” shows the relationships between major components of the new initiative. It highlights important aspects in a dynamic, non-linear fashion.

The CEO walks his senior team through the graphic. They quickly “get it” and move on to rollout and fine-tuning. The visual keeps everyone on the same page. The group focuses on critiquing the image rather than each other. The visual journalist revises the graphic on the fly, keeping everyone up to date and signaling that their input is valued.



The graphics help everyone picture their role in transforming the company. The images are easy to understand and engaging, as they appeal to both sides of the brain.

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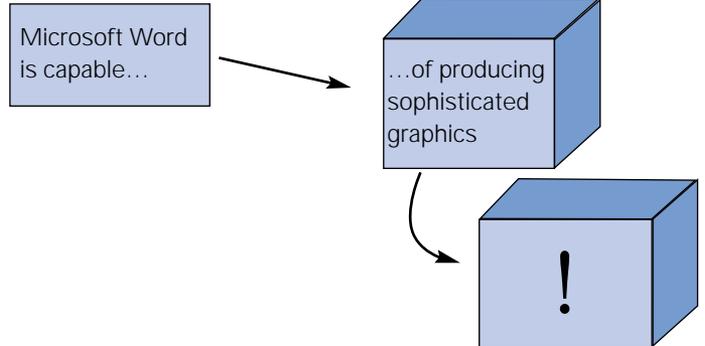
e humans are sight mammals. We learn almost twice as well from images and words as from words alone. Visuals engage both

hemispheres of the human brain. Pictures translate across cultures, education levels, and age groups. Yet, the majority of the content of corporate learning is text. Schools spend years teaching how to read but only hours on visual literacy. It's high time for us to open our eyes to the possibilities.

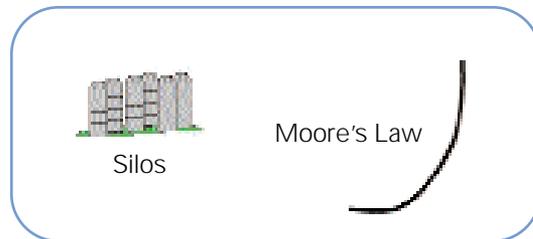
Visual literacy accelerates learning because the richness of the whole picture can be taken in at a glance. Visual metaphors unleash new ideas and spark innovation. Having a sharper eye increases the depth of one's perception and enjoyment of life. Rather than walk you through the nuances of color, tone, texture, proportion, and so forth, I just want to share some of the ways that visuals contribute to my own learning.

Drawing on experience

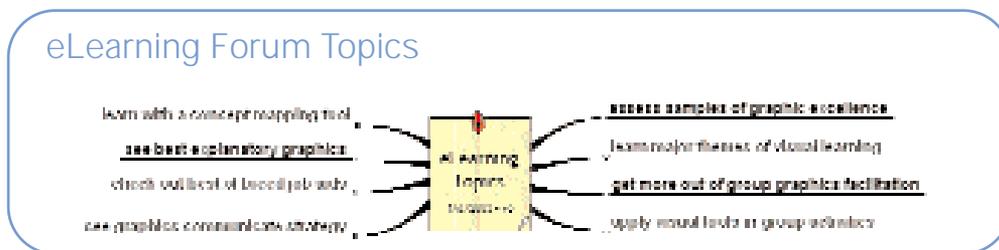
Visualization is a two-way street. We can create pictures as well as look at them. I often draw mind maps to brainstorm on my own and clarify my thinking. For example, see below for my goals for an eLearning Forum session on envisioning learning.



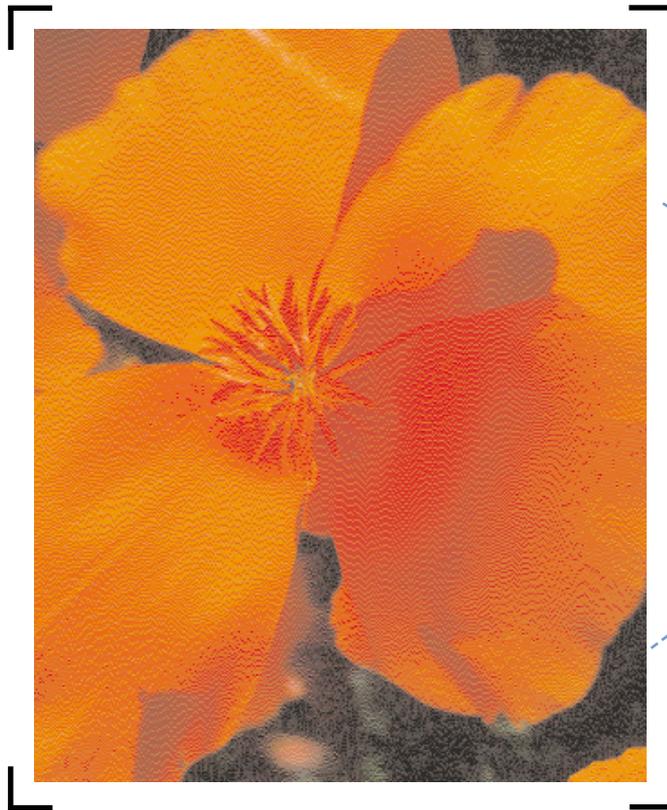
I'm not an artist. So when I want to express myself graphically, I select pictures from a collection of symbols. Here are some examples:



I also assemble simple pictures to convey concepts—for example, where we focus most of our attention. I draw those with PaintShop Pro, a US\$99 clone of PhotoShop [← jasc.com](http://www.jasc.com).



I drew the mind map upper right with MindJet's [← mindjet.com](http://www.mindjet.com) *MindManager*, a program that's as easy to learn as any I've ever seen. For simple diagrams, I rely on the drawing functions of Word or PowerPoint.



Framing potential shots trains you to **see more clearly** and focuses your attention on things



you might not have **noticed** otherwise. Such as, the flowers here are **beautiful** today.

When digital cameras came out, I had to have one. Now I carry a pocket camera nearly all of the time. I use my photos in presentations.

If you want to truly see more of what's going on about you, I recommend that you either carry a camera or pretend that you do, and be ever alert for good shots. Framing potential shots trains you to see more clearly and focuses your attention on things you might not have noticed otherwise. Such as, the flowers here are beautiful today.

Get the picture?

I could tell you about the power of visual learning, but I'd rather that you experience it. Look at the XPLANATION to envision the power of graphic media to point a company in a new direction:

◀ Source/XPLANE, the Visual Thinking Company, xplane.com

I'm not calling for us to convert all training programs into pictograms, charts, and cartoons. The

appropriate role for graphics is to amplify written presentation, not substitute for it. There remains an immense opportunity:

1. Visuals accelerate the learning process, and time is worth more than money.
2. Visuals make meetings more productive, efficient, and memorable.
3. No large players are paying attention to this market; they just don't get it. I suspect that understanding abstract art and interpreting financial statements are mutually exclusive skills.

It's time to rebel from the notion that words and numbers are somehow better than visuals. We're exploring the possibilities at the Center for Visual Learning ◀ www.internettime.com/visual.

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