

CHAPTER TWO

The KWICK Method for Creating Persuasive Visuals

In the previous chapter we have seen why persuasive visuals need to be used in presentations, but the natural questions are “What is a visual slide?” and “How do you create a persuasive visual?” This chapter defines a visual slide and gives an overview of a five-step method that you can use to create persuasive visuals of your own. Each step will then be explained in detail in the subsequent chapters.

What is a visual slide?

A number of commentators have suggested that the solution to overloaded text slides is to create only slides that contain no text. They suggest that by eliminating text, the problems with poor slides will be solved. But this advice is too short-sighted. It is important to know the two ends of the spectrum – all text or no text. But I do not think that either extreme represents the best option. A balance is more effective than either extreme. There is a role for text and visuals on slides.

Instead of defining a visual slide by what is absent, my definition is, “A visual slide is not the absence of text—it is the presence of a visual that encourages a conversation with the audience.” Let me explain the parts of this definition.

The first part of the definition makes the point that it is not about a lack of words on the slide. It is more than that. The second part refers to the visual on the slide. This visual could be a picture, graph, diagram, illustration, media clip or other visual.

It does not relate to a specific type of visual, but merely that one is present on the slide, usually along with some text.

The last part of the definition is the key part. The visual you are using encourages the audience to think, consider your point, and engage in conversation with you, as the presenter. A good presentation is not a one-way communication. It occurs when the audience and presenter are engaged in a discussion of the ideas that are being presented. Involvement increases the level of caring the audience has with the ideas.

We will use this definition as the basis for our discussions in the rest of this book. Having a definition gives us parameters for our investigation of visual slides, but it does not provide clues as to HOW to create those slides.

What is the KWICK Method?

In my work with both individual presenters and within organizations in training groups of executives, I recognized that presenters liked the idea of creating visual slides, but did not have a simple process that would help them create the slides.

We are not usually inclined to think visually. We usually write our thoughts, which leads to putting paragraphs of text on to slides. We also think that to create visuals, we need some design and graphics training, which many of us do not have. In short, it looks difficult, so, expecting to fail, we do not attempt it.

Initially, making the move from text-overloaded slides to persuasive visuals can seem daunting. We are moving from our comfort zone to a new way of not only creating slides, but of using them in our presentations. There is a risk of failure—What if they laugh at my slides or, even worse, do not understand my message because it is not written out?

I suggest that the greater risk is not differentiating your presentation from all the others that the decision-makers are seeing. Not standing out and not being remembered will lead to greater failure.

The anticipated difficulty and fears can be overcome with the five-step process I introduce in this section. I developed this process by stepping back and examining what I go through to create slides for clients. I also looked at the principles of persuasion that we discussed in chapter one to see how those ideas would integrate with the process I already used. I discovered that there were five simple steps that would help presenters unleash the power of persuasive visuals in their own presentations.

The KWICK Method

The five steps are arranged as the acronym KWICK. It makes the steps easy to remember and apply. It also emphasizes that the process is neither long nor hard. The five KWICK steps are:

- K** ey point
- W** ords that suggest the visual
- I** n context
- C** rystal clear
- K** eep focus

The next five chapters explain each of the steps in great detail, but let us look at an overview of what each step represents.

The first step is to get really clear regarding what the **Key Point** of the slide should be. Each slide should make one point and one point only. This first step articulates the key point for each slide. If you are not clear on the point of the slide, any

visual you may create will be confusing. Analyze the data or other inputs and decide what the strongest point will be for this slide. It may be that your data leads to two or three important points. If so, you must create two or three slides, with one point for each. State your point as a sentence. The sentence does not have to be expressed in perfect grammar, but it should clearly state the conclusion you want the audience to draw from the slide. It will become the headline for your slide. In chapter three, we will look at the process for analyzing data to determine the key point, the difference between a title and a headline, and how to determine if your headline is the right length and structure.

Now that you know the key point, next, you should not only decide to use a visual, but determine which one. But how do you know what visual to create? You look at the **Words That Suggest The Visual**. Once you have written the headline for your slide, look at the words and phrases you used to summarize the key point.

These words will give you clues as to what type of visual will work best for this slide. If you talk about the trend of data, create a graph. If you wrote about a flow or process, use a diagram. Pay attention to the words and the best visuals will come to mind. Photos, diagrams, graphs, video clips or screen captures can be utilized. Get additional clues by listening to how you describe the point to others.

In chapter four we list common words and phrases to look for and what visuals each may suggest. This list will help you to see ideas and concepts you regularly present in a whole new way.

Once the type of visual has been selected, the next step is to create the visual. The most important part of creating the visual is to make certain that it is **In Context** for the audience. The

audience must be able to relate to the visual to become engaged with the message. When creating visuals for your slides, represent your idea in such a way that the audience will be able to understand your point. This goes back to some of the core persuasion principles. Perhaps you need to compare it to something they are familiar with. It may be that you have to present it at a high level because they do not want to be swamped with details that are not relevant to them. In chapter five, we go into considerable detail about how to create the different visuals that you will most likely use on your slides. Visuals such as graphs, diagrams, photographs and media clips are covered. For each visual, examples of a typical text slide and a more persuasive visual are shown. Then we discuss the best design practices for each type of visual.

After the visual has been created, your next step is to make sure the point is **Crystal Clear**. Message clarity is paramount to a successful presentation; the point of the visual must be easily understood. Methods for improving the clarity include:

- The proper use of well-designed callouts containing both graphics and text to direct the audience's attention to the most important part of the visual;
- The use of photos embedded in graphs or diagrams to further enliven the point;
- The use of shading in some pictures or graphics to emphasize certain areas—by having surrounding areas fade out to the background.

Chapter six covers each of these techniques in detail and explains what they add to your visual.

Once the slides have been created, It's Showtime! All your hard work in creating the slides will be wasted unless you **Keep** the **Focus** of the audience where you want it to be. As you are

presenting, the audience can get easily confused. The visual must be presented in a logical manner that keeps their attention on the conclusion you want them to draw from each slide. Chapter seven covers techniques, such as:

- building the elements of your slides, piece-by-piece;
- breaking down complex diagrams or examples;
- using advanced techniques that allow the audience to dictate the order of topics and;
- presenting to audiences in different locations at once through web presentation services.

At the end of each chapter, you will see the ideas applied to two example slides—one from a sales-type presentation and the other from a current situation update-type presentation. These slide makeover examples will build throughout each chapter, so you can see the creation process applied to one slide the whole way through. Here are the two example slides as they were originally designed.

Slide Makeover Examples

Example #1: Sales Presentation Slide

Widget Features

- The ABC widget has greater strength than any of the other competing widgets. It can withstand 106 lb/sq in pressure, while the XYZ widget only withstands 79 lb/sq in and the MNO widget withstands 72 lb/sq in pressure.
- The ABC widget can be used in 14 different applications, ranging from pipe uses to boiler uses. The XYZ and MNO widgets are restricted to 5 uses each.
- The ordering process for the ABC widget is easier because online ordering is combined with regional warehouses that ensure quick delivery to 85% of major centers within 1 business day if the order is placed before 4:00 pm local time.

This is a typical sales presentation slide, listing features of the product. It is overloaded with text and the message is muddled. We will transform this slide into a persuasive visual using the KWICK method.

Example #2: Current Situation Slide

Project Status

Phase	Budget ('000s)		Schedule	
	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned
Design	185	172	Jun-27	Jun-15
Development	27	156		Nov-18
Testing	0	97		Feb-02
Implementation	0	124		Apr-30

Notes on Progress:

- Phase 1 finished a few days late and cost overrun was due to extra shipping costs of parts from supplier
- Phase 2 progress a little slow due to more complex design decided on in Phase 1
- May run in to cost and schedule challenges if design is too complex to integrate into existing processes and equipment
- Still working on buy-in on selected design

This is a typical slide used in internal presentations to update executives about the current status of a project or initiative. It includes a spreadsheet and text, with the key message buried in the slide somewhere.

Decisions need to be made, but the decision-maker will not easily understand what is being presented and what decision they are being asked to consider. A clear visual slide will emerge after the KWICK method is applied.

There is no longer a need to feel intimidated when creating persuasive visuals. This role is no longer restricted to those who have advanced training in graphic design. You can apply the KWICK method to your next presentation and create persuasive

visuals that will be effective. Decision-makers will sit up and take action.