Develop a Visual Framework

The essential difference between leaders and thought leaders is often the latter's ability to distill their know-how into a replicable model so that others can be inspired and empowered to expand on what they have accomplished. Not every framework, methodology, or set of best practices will lend itself to a graphic, pictorial, or visual representation, but if you can represent your ideas in a simple, visual way, you'll go a long way toward engaging followers and explaining your ideas. Most people are visual learners—they learn more quickly with their eyes than their ears. Think of yourself as a visual storyteller: can you show as well as tell others your ideas?

Exercise: Create a Visual Framework

The goal of this exercise is to document a visual framework, procedure, process, or methodology that represents the path you want others to follow to achieve the What If? future you envision. What are the steps others need to take to repeat what you have accomplished? For example, Dr. Michelle May created a simple visual image to help individuals struggling with unhealthy eating patterns. Chip Conley modified Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to create a much more detailed framework that guided his actions as he turned around his hotel business in the midst of a downturn. He shares this in his book *PEAK: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow*. 

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1. **List the steps for your visual framework, procedure, process, or methodology.**
   What are the specific steps or elements in the framework you would like to depict?

   1. ____________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________
   4. ____________________________________________
   5. ____________________________________________
   6. ____________________________________________

2. **Select an image for your visual framework.** Are the steps listed above best depicted as a list, process, or cycle? As a hierarchy, items in relationship to one another, or a matrix? Or would a pyramid be best? For inspiration, look at the SmartArt menu in Microsoft PowerPoint which has a huge variety of options, or use your favorite search engine to look for existing images of frameworks or methodologies.
3. **Test Your Visual Framework.** Use the space below to present your ideas in a variety of ways and then test those images with various people—those who already know what you’re talking about as well as those who don’t. Which images do people respond to? This is an iterative process that takes tweaking. (Alternatively, ask a graphic artist you know for help or hire one through an online marketplace of freelance designers, such as Freelancer or Upwork).