Develop a Visual Framework

Ready to be a Thought Leader?: pages 134-139

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 find a way to 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: you can show as well as tell others your ideas.

Exercise: Create a Visual Framework

The goal of this exercise is to identify a visual way to depict your big idea. This may be the path you want others to follow to achieve the What If? future you envision or the steps to repeat what you have accomplished.

Here are a few examples of visual frameworks:

Chip Conley, founder and former CEO of Joie de Vivre Hotels, developed a detailed framework, based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, which guided his actions as he turned his hotel business around in the midst of a downturn. Dr. Michelle May created a simple visual image to help individuals struggling with unhealthy eating patterns.

Use the steps that begin on the following page to create your visual framework.
1. **List the Steps for Your Visual Framework.** In the space below, list the steps or elements in the framework you would like to depict.

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 
   5. 
   6. 
   7. 
   8. 
   9. 
   10. 

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 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, and those who don't. Which images do people respond to? This is an iterative process that takes tweaking. (Alternatively, hire a graphic artist you know or hire one through an online marketplace of freelance designers, such as Elance or oDesk).

4. **Name and Protect Your Visual Framework.** Once you're satisfied that you have the right framework, find a great name for it (see page 139) and then protect it (see page 141).