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White paper

Infographics and how they can help your business

Information graphics don't just entertain and inform, they can also be an essential online marketing tool.

What are infographics?
In an increasingly complicated world, it's becoming more necessary than ever to convey complex information in a concise, easily digestible format. Information graphics are images designed to convey a wealth of in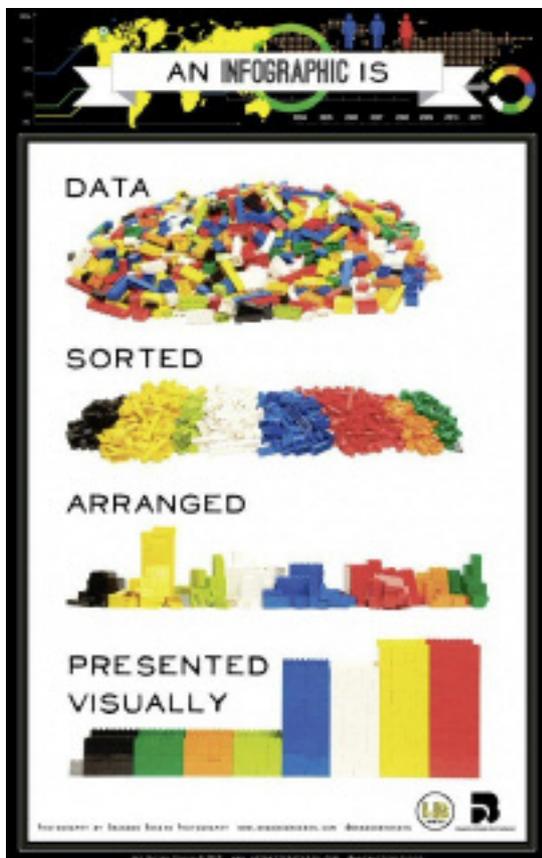formation quickly and effectively. They may be composed purely of pictures, but they may also include text. They can be static or animated too, and are generally used to present a rich level of information and detail without the need for intimidatingly dense blocks of text.

A good infographic can convey a wealth of technical information, detail and statistics in easily digestible chunks, along with visual memory aids to boost retention.

In the modern online world, infographics are made to be shared, and as well as being used by brands to explain their products and services, they're increasingly being used as a powerful social marketing tool.

How infographics work
A picture is worth a thousand words, as the saying goes, and it's true that most of us think in pictures. A strong image, linked to carefully scripted information can, in the right context, convey meaning much more effectively than any list or carefully worded explanation.

Effective infographics should be understood intuitively, and convey relevant information more easily than text alone – basically, if you

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need to explain the infographic, it's probably too complicated.

One of the most famously effective infographics is the London Tube map[1]. Harry Beck's 1931 design rendered the fiendishly complicated London Underground system in diagrammatic form for the first time and his masterpiece of economic representation has helped millions of residents and visitors make sense of one of the world's most complex cities ever since.

He did it by ignoring the actual locations and distances between stations, instead rendering them on a schematic based on an electrical wiring

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diagram. His approach informs much of the thinking behind infographics. By removing unnecessary or irrelevant detail he was able to convey the core information in a succinct and easily understood way.

Far from 'dumbing down' explanations, infographics make difficult concepts easier to grasp and help readers to gain greater understanding of a topic in a short amount of time.

They can also be invaluable for pitch presentations, where you need to make an impact and impart information as quickly and effectively as possible. This infographic plublished by The Guardian covers the complex subject of UK public spending[2].

▪ **They generate interest**
Bright, colourful infographics draw the eye and encourage readers to delve further than they might with a simple passage of text. They can

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From a branding point of view, the Tube map has also become a style icon, used on a host of products, whether or not its information will be actively used.

How infographics are helping business
Infographics are an invaluable business tool, whether they're used to explain complex concepts, to generate interest or to raise awareness.

▪ **They inform**
Infographics are used to illustrate process diagrams, concept maps, visual narratives, simulations, timelines and many other concepts where a lot of information needs to be conveyed concisely and in a relatively small space. Infographics can be added to websites, promotional emails, brochures, posters and other promotional material (they can be especially useful in white papers, for instance).

highlight percentages and present graphs in an arresting and memorable way and are ideal for making process diagrams, concept maps, visual narratives and simulations more attractive.

Quality infographics have the potential to 'go viral' and be passed around the internet via blogs and social networks. A well-designed infographic can generate interest that text alone cannot, and they're perfectly suited to today's 'Like' culture, where people post links to interesting content through social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest. What's more, because the reader can absorb more information about a brand in a short time, a stronger impression can be made upon them within a limited attention window.

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Even better, if a link is embedded in the infographic, each time it is reproduced somewhere else potential customers are lead straight to the originator. **This Google infographic explains how its page rankings system works[3].**

▪ They build brands
Besides including a logo, infographics can also represent a visual marketing style or corporate ID, providing additional visual recognition triggers for potential customers or clients. Presenting existing written content as an infographic can also give it a new lease of life. **This infographic from Nokia is designed to promote its Asha handsets[4].**

▪ They entertain
Infographics offer lots of scope for humour and visual jokes, which can often act as memory aids. An entertaining infographic that makes people laugh as well as teaching them a little bit about a brand is the best way to increase the chances of it 'going viral'. **Splashnology has put together this list of what it considers to be some of the most entertaining infographics[5].**

Making the most of infographics
Simply throwing a clutch of images and text on a page does not make an effective infographic. A good infographic will contain a flow of ideas, like a good piece of writing or a well-directed information film, that guides the reader through the information via an intuitive route with little effort on their part.

Posting the infographic online is only the first step when using it as

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part of an integrated marketing campaign. To get the most out of it, follow this simple checklist for making it as effective as possible.

▪ Surround your infographic with relevant SEO text. Search engines like Google can't read images (yet), so your infographic will stand a higher chance of ranking in search engines.

▪ Use social sharing buttons to encourage readers to share your infographic. Some of the most common are **Tweetmeme[6], StumbleUpon[7], Facebook Share[8]** and **Digg[9]** – make sure they're listed near your infographic.

▪ Embed code[10] making it easy for bloggers to post your infographic on their own site – but with that all-important link back to you.

▪ Offer a 'click to enlarge' option if you can't post your infographic full size, or give readers the opportunity to download a PDF.

Conclusion
Infographics are a great way to convey a lot of information in a clear, compelling and easy to understand format. Although a lot of background research is often required to pull together the necessary facts and figures and the services of an experienced designer are needed, if they are well put together and entertaining, they are well worth the effort as they can be a powerful promotional tool to help build any brand.

Links contained within this white paper

1. http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/standard-tube-map.pdf
2. http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/oct/26/government-spending-department-2010-11
3. http://www.zippycart.com/infographics/google-pagerank-defined.html
4. http://www.phonearena.com/news/Nokia-Asha-infographic-shows-the-best-of-each-handset_id29229
5. http://www.splashnology.com/article/27-interesting-and-funny-infographics/4465/
6. http://www.tweetmeme.com/
7. http://www.stumbleupon.com/
8. http://www.facebook.com/share_options.php
9. http://www.digg.com/
10. http://openmarketing.com/blog/how-to-create-embed-code-for-your-infographic/

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