



How to Write Visually

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WRITING VISUALLY



What is visual writing?

- Making the reader "feel" or "see" the message
- We can paint a picture through our words that strikes the reader immediately
- We can make the point with the first keystroke rather than the last
- We can craft visual captions and images in the report that cause instant recognition

Weigh Stations

- The truck is overweight
- The truck weighs more than 80,000 lbs or 40 tons
- What image do you get from the 2 sentences?
- Went from so what? to Holy Cow!!

Tables

- Tables can be statistical nightmares
- Tables can be data dumps left for interpretation
- Tables can be creative and speak to readers

Department	Number of Vehicles	Adapted from Light Vehicle Report					
		Assigned Task?	Monitoring Program?	Replacement Plan?	Replacement Method?	Cooperative Service?	Computerized Tracking?
Sheriff	176	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Wastewater	120	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
Public Works	93	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Corrections	45	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Environment	25	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
Planning	6	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

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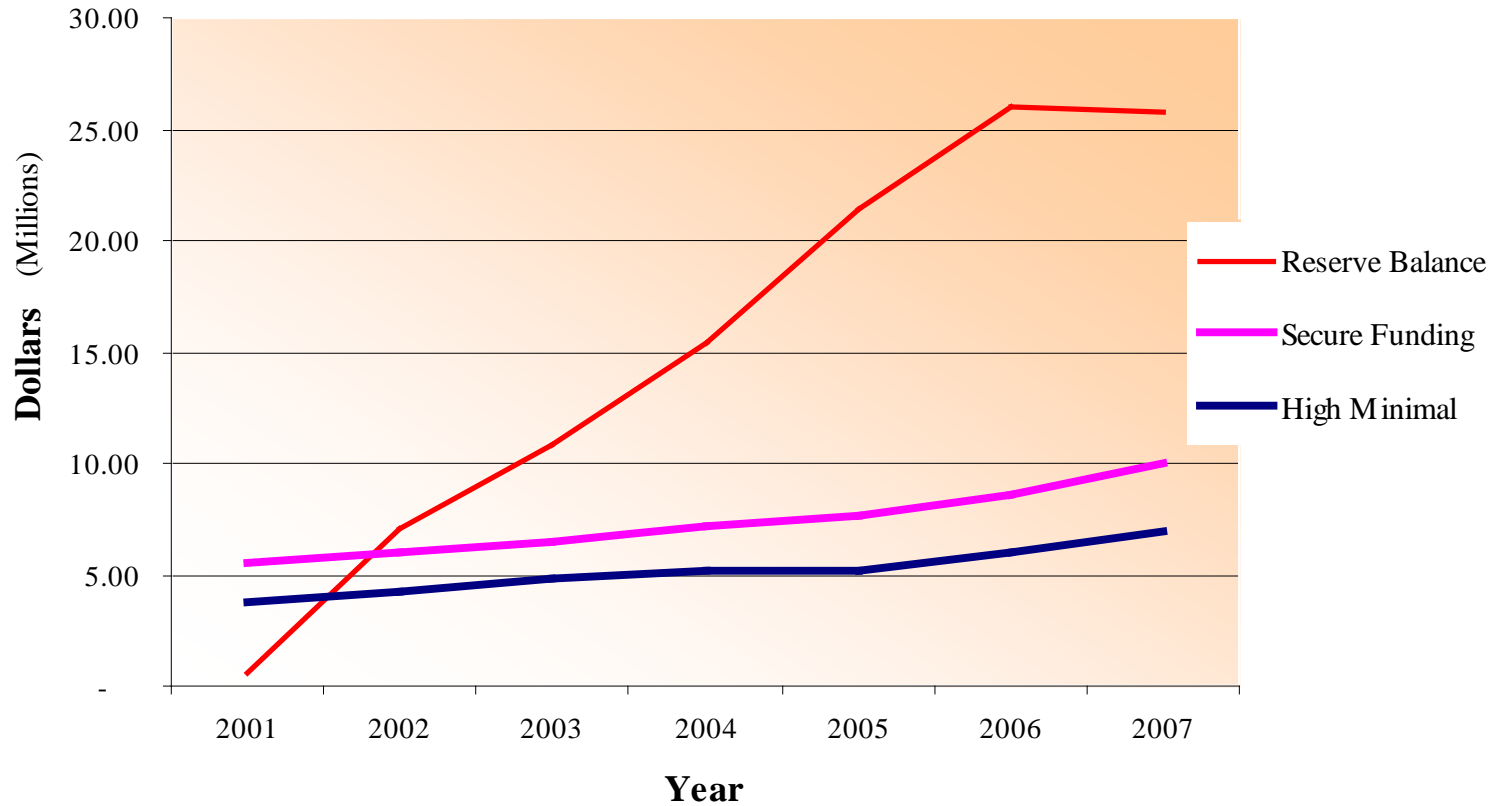
Accentuated Table

<i>Table 1.1: Estimated Cost of the Rodeos</i>			
<i>Description</i>	1999	2000	Total
<i>Personal Services</i>	\$316,380	\$435,600	\$751,980
<i>Awards</i>	7,622	10,582	18,204
<i>Jackets/T-shirts/Hats</i>	8,355	13,228	21,583
<i>Miscellaneous¹</i>	20,064	25,517	45,581
<i>Food</i>	9,851	16,840	26,691
<i>Expense Accounts</i>	1,749	4,737	6,486
<i>Totals</i>	\$364,021	\$506,504	\$870,525

¹ Portable restrooms, construction cones, bleacher rentals etc.

Simple Graph Tells All

Johnson County Health Care Fund Reserve



Pictures Help

The Rodeo is a 5-day competition where various public works departments in the region compete in events on public works equipment. In each event, drivers penalized points for making mistakes, such as knocking a tennis ball off a cone they were supposed to drive around or dropping a bucket they were supposed to pick up with the equipment.



OOH Nice
Bowling Ball



Demo: Do Not Knock Over Cones



Side Bar Call Outs

**Mother leaves
child in the cold**

**Money made
on side during
work hours**

**Collections for
charity were
not used for
charity**

**Established rents
were not
defensible**

**Inspection
program
favors breeders**

**The District did
not follow
Federal Law**

What does this tell you?

Component Units Should Improve Procurement and Monitoring

The city's component units need to improve their procurement and monitoring practices to assure that the quality and value of legal services provided are commensurate with their legal services expenditures. Although legal fees can be a significant expenditure of public funds, many of the providers were not selected through a competitive process. Only one component unit could provide a written agreement with each of their legal service providers. And, not all of the component units have evaluated their need for legal services or alternative delivery methods.

Establish and Follow a Procurement Process

Only two of the eleven component units reported using a formal procurement process for the selection of legal service providers—the Port Authority and MAST.

How Busy Do You Want The Report

- Too often form has taken over substance
- Some reports have executive summaries and report highlights, and other instructions before one reaches the report content
- Have seen some with roadmaps on how to read (legitimate reason or not?)

Report Presentation?

Helpful Tools for Getting to the Detail 🔍

- In most cases, an “**At a Glance**” description of the agency or department appears within the first few pages of the main report.
- **Side Headings** point out key issues and findings.
- **Charts/Tables** may be found throughout the report, and help provide a picture of what we found.
- **Narrative text boxes** can highlight interesting information, or provide detailed examples of problems we found.
- **Appendices** may include additional supporting documentation, along with the audit **Scope Statement** and **Agency Response(s)**.

Report Presentation?

Get the Big Picture

Read these Sections and Features:

1. **Executive Summary** - an overview of the questions we asked and the answers we found.
2. **Conclusion** and **Recommendations** - are referenced in the Executive Summary and appear in a box after each question in the report.
3. **Agency Response** - also referenced in the Executive Summary and is the last Appendix.

ERRONEOUS INVOICE

Labor 10 hours @ \$48.10	\$491.00
Materials	151.36
10% Markup on Materials	15.23
3% Small Tools	59.18
	<hr/>
Amount Due	\$716.77

On its face, the invoice has to be studied to even determine that there is a problem. Now look at it with a few visual enhancements.

Erroneous Invoice


Labor 10 Hours @ \$48.10	→	\$491.00	→ \$657.59
Materials		151.36	
10% Markup on Materials	↗ ↘	15.23	
3% Small Tools		<u>59.18</u>	
	Amount Due	\$716.77	WRONG
	3% of 657.59 = \$19.73		

USAGE TREND-OXYCONTIN

Year	Number of Prescriptions	Number of Recipients
2000	27,842	5,405
2001	45,636	7,860
Increase	64%	45%

RECIPIENTS' OXYCONTIN ACTIVITY

Number who:	FY 2000	FY 2001
Visited many doctors and got controlled drugs	1,826	2,074
Obtained 1 or more Oxycontin prescription	661	986
Percent obtaining Oxycontin	36%	48%



Audiences

- Legislator—Does not read cover to cover—Executive Summary
- Legislative Aide—Scans report—tasks Staffer
- Staffer—Reads cover to cover and briefs others
- Public—Reads what they want to—newspaper accounts
- Newspaper—hawing for story—reviews for news.

Concept of Quick Reads

- You owe it to your audience to convey the message quickly and succinctly
- Use Executive Summaries judiciously
- Present complete picture quickly
 - Condition
 - Cause
 - Effect
 - Recommendation
 - Management Response

Concept of Quick Reads

Executive Summaries

Using the Charge Paragraph

Placing Recommendations and Agency Responses

Crafting Paragraph Captions

Make the report readable in 2 minutes

Executive Summaries

- Important or Not?
- Depends on size of report, issues and audiences
- Not all reports need summaries

Executive Summaries

- Only needs a short paragraph and a page reference for each topic point
- It should be refined to a page or a page and one half
- Not every report issue has to be in the summary
- Any longer, you've lost the reader!

The Safety and Well-Being of Foster Children Needs Management Attention

Case reviews disclosed division personnel did not:

- Make required in-home visits to foster children.
- Effectively follow up and ensure runaway children received enough attention.
- Place children in available foster homes.
- Take action to locate all the state's foster children even after other states did; but instead, relied on a substitute method using a family support team concept which did not accomplish this purpose.

Division officials cited lack of resources to conduct their duties. However, supervisors did not properly supervise operations and staff did not properly perform their duties.

As a result, some children remained in foster care too long, some were not removed from their homes and some were at risk.



Descriptive
Title



Condition



Cause



Effect

Recommendations

- Where do you place audit recommendations?
- Where do you place management comments?
- Where would your audience prefer to see them?

Suggestion

- Place recommendations immediately following the charge paragraph
- Place management response immediately after the recommendations
- Auditor's comments if needed next
- So what's the visual?—A thumbnail complete picture of the audit result

Performance measurement is needed to determine efficiency

County-wide vehicle maintenance performance measures were nonexistent. Most departments do not have quality standards or performance measures established for their fleet maintenance program.

Timeliness criteria for maintenance performance is needed

County departments and offices do not have criteria established to measure the timeliness in which PM services are performed.

Vehicle preventive maintenance guidelines need to be consistent

Preventive maintenance (PM) guidelines, identifying services performed to maintain vehicles and keep them operating at a peak level, vary from department to department.

The 2-Minute Drill

- A good target for report writers is to have the report contents consumable in 2 minutes
- With a combination of executive summaries, charge paragraphs, recommendation and comment placement, and specific captions, the quick read can be done

Let the Captions Do the Talking

- The safety and well-being of foster children needs management attention
- Foster care is a safe haven for children in need
- Child deaths rarely occur in foster care and are often preceded by hotline calls
- Foster children did not receive required oversight visits
- Discrepancies were found in documentation of oversight visits
- The division has not conducted a statewide inventory of children in foster care

Let the Captions Do the Talking

- Foster children are unaccounted for
- Runaway foster children are not consistently managed by social workers
- Parental rights are not terminated timely
- More could be done to place children in foster homes
- The division needs to pay attention to prospective foster parents' desires and capabilities
- Telephone numbers for prospective foster parents were inaccurate in the division directory

What Happened

With just 12 captions

You have just read a 22 page audit report!

Summation

- The concept of quick read is possible no matter what audit format is used
- My illustrations conform to what I think is the best way for now
- You may write and format differently but getting the message out is a common element for all of us
- Writing visually is slick, easy, and helpful to the casual as well as the detail reader

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