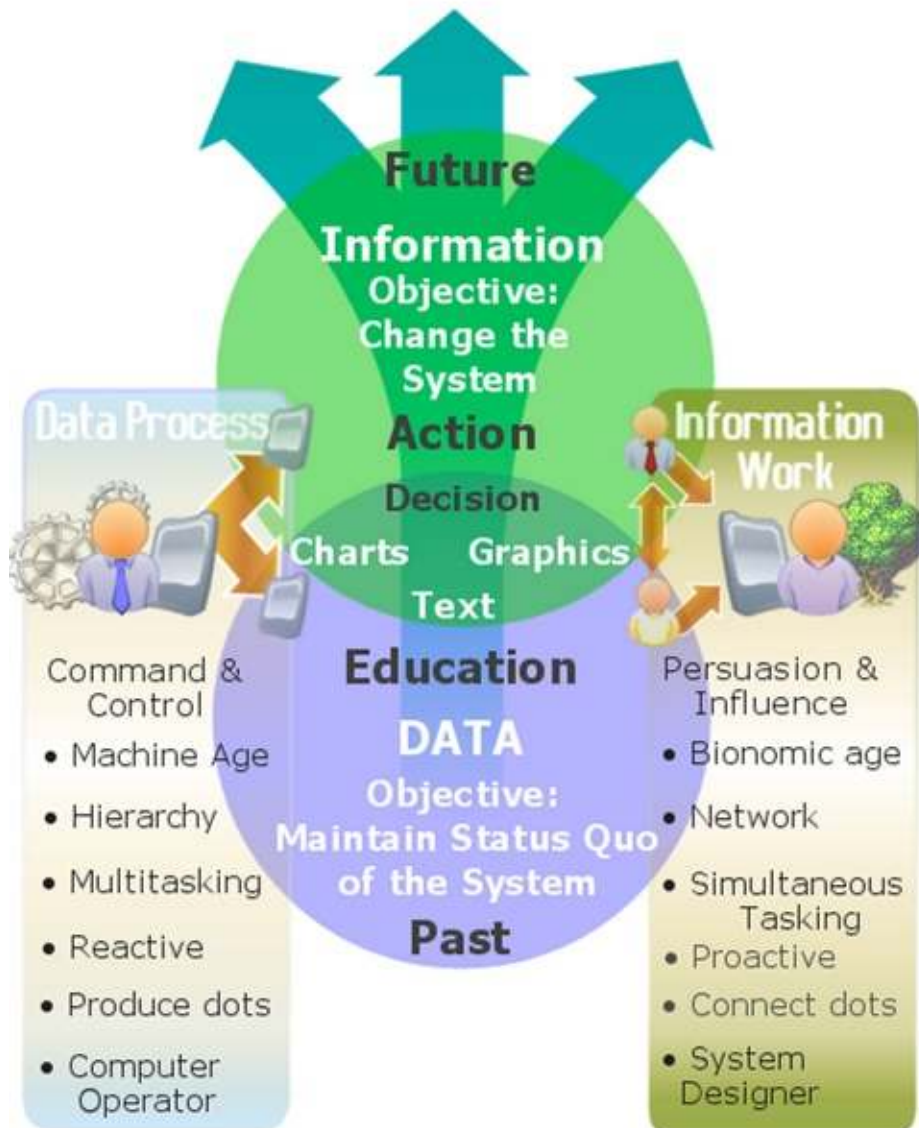


# The Infographic Difference



**A Design Crux Report  
By John Soellner**

Whether you have a problem to solve or something to sell, infographics change things. Infographics help you deliver the service, eliminate your problems, and make the sale.

Infographics and data graphics both use charts, graphics and text. Where data graphics and infographics differ is in their objectives.

Data graphics maintain the status quo, infographics are designed to change human actions. Use infographics when...

- You have to persuade a web site visitor to change into a buyer
- You have to demonstrate understanding for the user's context before presenting a solution to their problems
- You have to smoothly transition users to a new system by explaining how to accept change, rather than resisting it

Data is primarily about describing what happened, so it has no ability to change anything. Data is descriptive, and so focuses on the discrete, the past and the static.

Information is prescriptive, more concerned with the system dynamics of ongoing processes, evolving situations, and connecting discrete dots. Diagram data is about what happened and how. Infographics need to explain what happens next, which focuses more on why the infographic user should make the decision to act.



While data processing is about putting data points into a readable pattern, infographics persuade humans to take effective action. Data graphics focus on things and data points — infographics focus on human interaction.

Infographics focus on the ecosystem of connections and relationships, the system drivers and influencers driving the data. And while data graphics describe the issue, to earn the lofty title infographics must resolve issues.

In other words, when you want to make things happen and change attitudes, knowing the difference between data graphics and infographics is *crucial*.

## **How to Find the “Selling Story” Buried in Your Business**

Once you get past good looks, most website graphics are absolutely irrelevant to making a sale. You could swap out the graphics on most sites with any competitor — or any random business for that matter.

Sure the graphics on those sites look good, but they aren't 1) Educating the prospect about your product 2) Trying to persuade your site visitors about why they should become customers.

A roofing contractor can show a diagram of the parts of the roofing system they sell. The user looks it over, assumes all roofers do roughly the same thing, and moves on to another site to get a lower price.

Although such generic diagrams claim to be information, a better case can be made they are irrelevant trivia. The infographic version would be titled **"The Most Expensive Roof Starts Cheap"** You show your competitive advantage by explaining lowest price doesn't mean best value. The context of potential customers is served by explaining how to avoid a costly mistake.

And you show how you are different from competitors using lowball tactics just to get their foot in the door.

## Expensive Roofing Starts Cheap



Every business can find key information that shifts the economics and power relationships in an industry. With cameras it's "the megapixel myth." Inkjet cartridge manufacturers compete with refills and continuous ink systems. Often this information goes missing on a site, creating an opportunity if your business addresses the issue. Today's media savvy customer knows when the designer presents eye candy rather than information graphics.

Value can only exist at the intersection of information and price. Price alone becomes the sole determining factor when your prospects can't get the information to choose otherwise. I've talked to business people for less than five minutes and found value added information which was never mentioned on the site, in their brochures or graphics.

**The Bottom Line:** If you don't communicate the value the business brings to the table, don't expect the web site visitor to consider it.

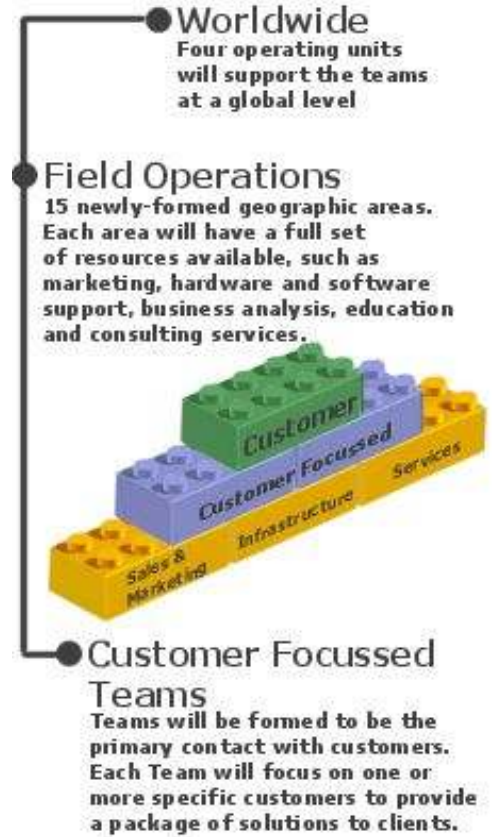
## What's Wrong With This Infographic Picture?

This is similar to a graphic of a corporate restructuring printed in a newspaper. Unlike this graphic, the newspaper infographic was in monotone grayscale.

Worldwide, four operating units will support the teams at a global level. First, there are three yellow blocks on the bottom, not four.

It quickly becomes obvious the diagram was vastly oversimplified. For example you can't see geographic areas or if their number or size has changed.

If you were a customer of this international corporation, you might want to know what a restructuring means for you. Unfortunately, you're told nothing about the advantages of the restructuring. It's all internally-focused — ironic given the purpose of the restructuring was supposed to show the company is trying to be more customer



focused.

There is no problem turning out such graphics. Just don't call them information graphics.

Imagine you are a stockholder, a customer or an employee. Would anything about this graphic inform an action you might decide to take? If not, then you see



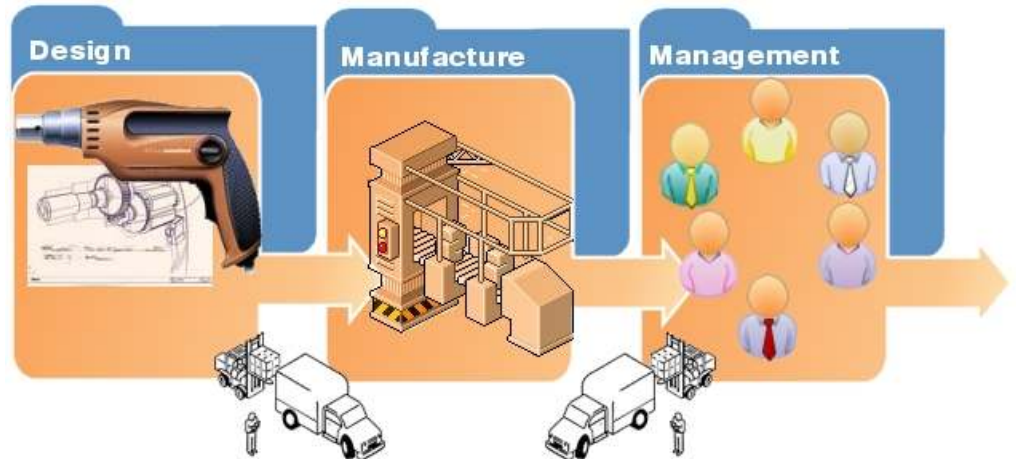
Different people, in different roles, with difference of opinion. There is a situation and "fire," a problem that needs solving.

the graphic isn't taking on the issues of restructuring.

Instead, try showing different groups of people, and how the actual customer situation relates to what the company does. Show user profiles, actions, interactions and the system dynamic. And show how you get to the crux of the situation to make the future an improvement over the past.

Restructuring can be traumatic for some. One way to reduce resistance is to show a structured step-by-step plan.

In a similar fashion, show customers the value chain. Show how each step benefits the customers, not merely a reshuffling of blocks on the org chart.



## Data Graphics versus Information Graphics

You can recognize a data graphic by the way human nature is the abstraction, and technology gets all the focus and detailed description.

In normal graphics, humans are merely data processors. As machine operators, data processing software rarely has to communicate information to users about upcoming problems, unless the user asks the right question at the right time. Data processors react because that's all they're allowed to do.

If the user was lucky or smart enough to stumble on a problem, deciding how to solve it is a matter of intuition rather than judgment informed by the



computer system. And the user is merely a cog.

Computer workers can't change the system, so they lack the power attributed to information. Information isn't power without the authority to act. Graphics treating users as passive aren't infographics.

Information graphics show the people as the point of the graphic. Persuasion and influence replace machine age command and control. Bionomic perspectives of the economy as an organic, growing ecosystem better fit today's shifting economic reality.

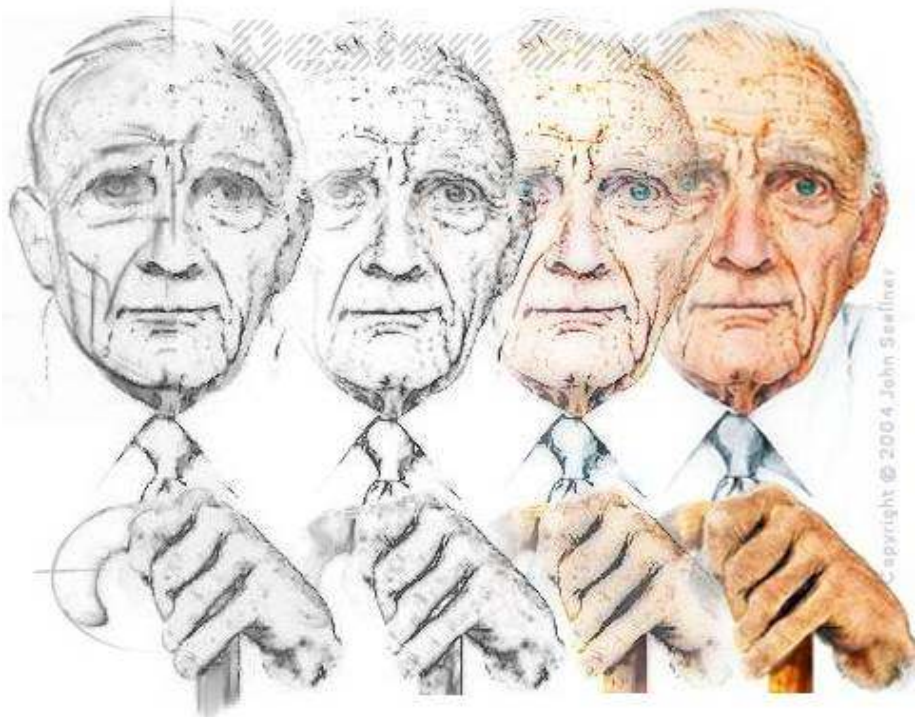
Information work, like bionomics, is the emergent property of system dynamics, not a loose collection of individual discrete tasks. Emergent behavior is much more about human action and reaction, not the mechanical dictums of the job description. Information workers achieve objectives, they don't execute tasks. While multitasking burnout is a hazard of data processing, information work is about simultaneous tasking. An installation infographic can reduce tech support calls while increasing customer satisfaction and word of mouth.

Rather than operating Microsoft, Oracle or SAP applications, working within the system, the user is a critical part of the system by helping it grow and improve.

I can work with you to develop informative graphics which get to the crux of your situation to solve real problems. Skilled in a wide variety of illustration styles, the graphics

I create for you inspire a human connection.

When you need readers to connect on a deeper level, realistic images can be more relatable. Real human beings can show interaction through storyboarding techniques. And the reader is persuaded because you understand the



power of information graphics.

## Design Crux Infographics Get the Job Done

Your Design Crux infographic is different because it goes beyond looking “pretty” to achieve your objective.

- Sell more product by visually demonstrating how your product solves problems, not just how it works
- Convince stakeholders with the same kinds of storyboards advertising firms use
- Use cutaway diagrams that show competitive advantage and the user benefits which drive sales
- Reinforce the key ideas for employee success with a quick reference, infographic visuals reduce errors because they reinforce training
- Use visual information design to connect the dots which make you money, Design Crux infographics pay for themselves
- Create a bias for action in the viewer, not idle art appreciation

Most infographics focus on technology. Design Crux infographics add the missing system dynamics and human factors driving decisions. By revealing the unseen, infographics can help you reach your objectives. It’s easy to get started so [Contact Design Crux Today.](#)

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