

Show People How You Can Help Them

What happens when an engineering approach is applied to business communications? An engineering approach might call for deconstructing complex ideas into symbols, then reassembling the elements. Incongruously, technologists often take the same approach when explaining what they do for customers. Have you ever received a chart jammed with squares, circles, globes, arrows, all kinds of shapes connected by lines and arrows? If so, an engineer was attempting to reduce what he does to its essence in the hope that you—ostensibly the receiving engineer—would reconstitute the message from the symbols. Here is a recent example of what we encountered and how we used a simple visual story instead.

1 Get away from the abstract

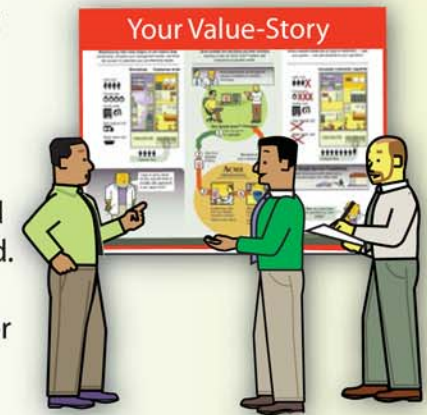
Getting across the time relationships or relative importance between events assumes that your audience understands your symbolic language. But symbols, like letters of some strange new alphabet, have no intrinsic meaning.



Customer Benefits / Value
Reduced CAPEX / OPEX

2 Listen for the story

Before a technologist could construct the boxes, circles, arrows and lines, he had to assemble a narrative about how, when and why things happened. In short, he created a story first. So, listen for the story.



3 Everyone speaks in stories

Regardless of the technical training of the listener, we all understand and enjoy stories. No need to jump into abstract symbols. Show interaction among characters. Include objects that have intrinsic meaning for your audience. Show benefits being delivered, albeit metaphorically. Organize your story in time or space, and you can show people what you do.

