Understanding Infographics

I think I need an infographic.

What is an infographic?

Information graphics or infographics are visual representations of information, data or knowledge. These graphics are used where complex information needs to be explained quickly and clearly, such as in signs, maps, publications, technical writing, and education. They are also used extensively as tools by computer scientists, statisticians, and mathematicians to effectively communicate complex data.

Types of Infographics

- Static
- Interactive
- Motion

Types of Infographics

Static Infographics

All information is placed on a single page and there are no dynamic elements on this page. Maps, product manuals, charts and graphs can all be represented by the static form of informational graphic.

Examples & Resources:

visualizing.org

information aesthetics

visual.ly

Good.is

50 Great Examples of Data Visualization

Showcase of Beautifully Designed Charts & Graphs

Types of Infographics

Interactive Infographics

Interactivity allow producers, designers and developers to visualize multiple layers of data in a single interface, while providing the viewer with a more engaging, dynamic user experience.

Examples & Resources:

Political Climate 2001-2010

Tracking Tropical Storm Tony

AARP Examples:

Hospital Room Safety

5 Myths About Canada's Health Care System

Home Office Ergonomics

Buying a Used Motorcycle

Types of Infographics

Motion Infographics

Motion graphics are usually narrative-based, and use a combination of illustration, data visualization, and kinetic text to inform a viewer on a particular topic. While this provides an entirely different viewer experience, this medium is valuable in walking the viewer through an explanation or series of comparative concepts.

Examples & Resources:

A Campaign Map, Morphed By Money

Top 10 Video Infographics of 2012

Types of Data

- Statistically Based Infographics
- Timeline Based Infographics
- Process Based Infographics
- Location or Geographically Based Infographics
- Real-time Data Visualization

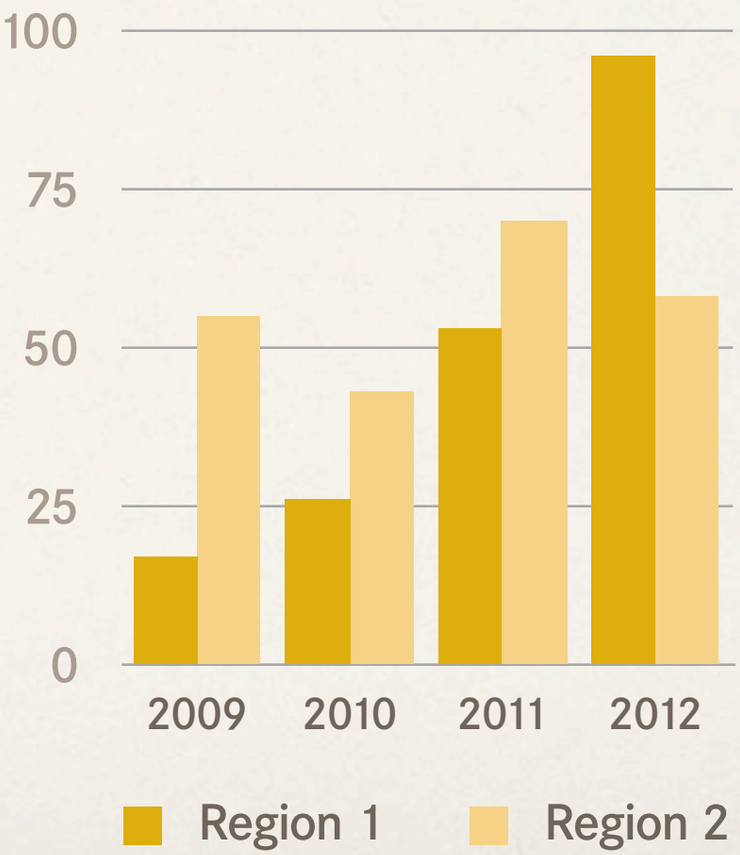
Types of Data

Statistically Based Infographics

Statistically based infographics include charts, diagrams, graphs, tables and lists. Among the most common devices are horizontal bar charts, vertical column charts, and round or oval pie charts, that can summarize complex statistical comparisons at a glance.
Illustrated graphics use images or photographs to related data.

Examples & Resources:

[HighCharts – Demo gallery]



Types of Data

Timeline Based Infographics

Timelines display a visual representation of data using a chronological sequence of events.

Examples & Resources:

30 Years of AIDS in America

Back to Ghana

Timeline JS (used to produce Back to Ghana)

12 Useful jQuery Timeline Plugins

jQuery Timeline Slider

Types of Data

Process Based Infographics

This type of infographic can often be used to depict workspaces or work flows. How to prepare a recipe or how to put something together would be examples of how process based infographics most commonly use images to describe data.

Examples & Resources:

How to Make Every Coffee Drink You Ever Wanted

Tablesetting

How to Build A Chicken Coop

Types of Data

Location or Geographically Based Infographics

This common type of infographic can be found everywhere. Metrorail maps, election results, city and country maps depicting everything from regional financial statistics to population and economic profiles are all good examples of geographically based infographics.

Examples & Resources:

Hospital Safety Superstars

America Votes 2012

jQuery Vector Maps

jQuery - U.S. Map plugin

jQuery SVG Map plugin

Types of Data

Real-time Data Infographics

Real-time solutions provide updated visual representations of real-time events. The popularity of Twitter and the increased tracking of social analytics offer some immediate opportunities for this application. Media outlets will want to see what topics are trending, and what people are saying on particular topics in real-time. Brands will be monitoring, tracking, and measuring their social presence and brand sentiment on the web, and they will want the most current information available, viewable in a well-designed and easy-to-understand interface.

Examples & Resources:

Wall Street Journal - Market Data Center

HighStock Demo Gallery

Creating a Successful Infographic

What's the best approach?

Creating a Successful Infographic

- Identify your audience, goals and data.
- Refine data to best reveal the information
- Assess the results to determine if the data has been interpreted in a way that reaches your audience and meets your goals.

Questions to ask when conceptualizing an Infographic

- What message, process, dataset or product do I want to explain?
- How much text do I have to read to figure out the graphics?
- Could you explain the same information just as well in a simple article or blog paragraph?

Questions to ask when finalizing an Infographic

- How long does it take for me to figure out what information the infographic is trying to convey?
- How much of the visualization is unnecessary?
- Does the visualization create relationships in the data that inspire more questions and leave room for more exploration?
- What action do I want to drive the viewer to take?
- Will people want to share it?

In conclusion...

A good infographic will accurately display information that the audience can understand. A great infographic will encourage the audience to think about the data story presented and ask questions that they otherwise would not have perceived without the visualization.