



LET ME PAINT YOU A PICTURE

Everyone does it, every day and often unconsciously. And yet the word 'framing' leaves a bad taste in the mouth for many of us, however it is inextricably linked to the legal profession. This time we will address the power of using framing in combination with legal design. Because a story without a 'frame', a structure, is a story you will forget.

Framing is about conveying a message by means of a framework. People can't constantly interpret the world around them as never seen before in order to understand it. You understand it because your brain processes the information through interpretive schemes that the brain builds up during your life. By using these schemes our brain is capable of quickly placing information. Framing is therefore nothing more than the cataloguing of your message to ensure that it is quickly understood by the recipient. Think of it as a highway through your brain; if done correctly it will immediately evoke an image in your mind.

Framing is still relatively young. The concept was first written about in the late 1990s, and researchers have been investigating the principles behind it since the 1970s. In 2002 psychologist [Daniel Kahneman](#) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics for his contribution in this field. But, people – and lawyers in particular – have of course been telling stories for centuries.

Lawyers are storytellers; it is their job to always effectively convey the position (the story) of their clients. They therefore often opt for this perspective and look for a frame that aligns with this. Yet one can wonder if this is always the most effective frame? Or is the most powerful story (sometimes) hidden in the strength of a different framework, shedding an unexpected light on the core of the dispute?

A frame forces you to think about **who** you are going to tell your story to and what your **objective** is. Then you choose the frame that is considered the most powerful in terms of immediately triggering an image in one's mind. Whenever possible, do not only do this with words, but literally have your frame supported by images. The power of *legal design* when compared to *design* is obviously that the former perfectly links up with the frame chosen by the lawyer.

After all, the power of the chosen frame is its capacity to immediately invoke an image in your brain. It happens so fast that you don't even give it active thought. If a frame is used with expressions like 'keep your eyes on the ball' or 'smooth sailing' that immediately evokes emotions and translates into something the recipient can visualise, chances of your message being remembered have instantly gone up. That's the benefit of using frames. And if you support that frame with images, you can be sure that you have managed to convey the client's perspective as effectively as possible.

Because in the end; it's not about *whether* we think about an issue but *how* we think of an issue.

Legal Design | *Designed to deliver*

— Author: S. van Hecke