



A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

There is almost no language that doesn't have the saying 'A picture is worth a thousand words'. Apparently it feels like a logical fact, but why is this?

It's simple: people remember images better than words, especially over a longer period of time. This phenomenon is called *picture superiority effect*. It refers to the idea that concepts that you learn by looking at images are easier and better stored into memory than concepts that you learn by reading text. Think back, for example, to the way we all learned how to read; through images you learn to read and put meaning to words. The added value of the principle is highly applicable to the legal sector: precisely where the word dominates, it is the image that triumphs.

Research into the *picture superiority effect* shows that if we only read a text, approximately 10% of the information is remembered three days later. If that same information is presented in a relevant combination of image and text, an astonishing 65% of that information is remembered three days later!

This can be explained by the difference in how the brain processes imagery in comparison to text, which I wrote about [before](#). Simply put: imagery has advantages over words when it comes to encoding and retrieving the

information from the memory. The processing of words requires more cognitive exertion. In addition, recent research in the field of associative recognition shows that the meaning of images is activated faster than words. Subsequently, images activate meaningful associations faster. This knowledge makes you wonder why I even bother to write this blog: image has sheer advantages.

Legal Design activates the *picture superiority effect* by using images, infographics, diagrams and other type of visualisation. When you use Legal Design you do not only communicate in a distinctive way, but you also use an incredibly successful way to let your audience remember the presented information. So next time you are wondering how to get your message across in a way that sticks? Think about the picture superiority effect. Do those 20 pages of text or 30 slides really sink in? Or is one picture worth a thousand words?

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