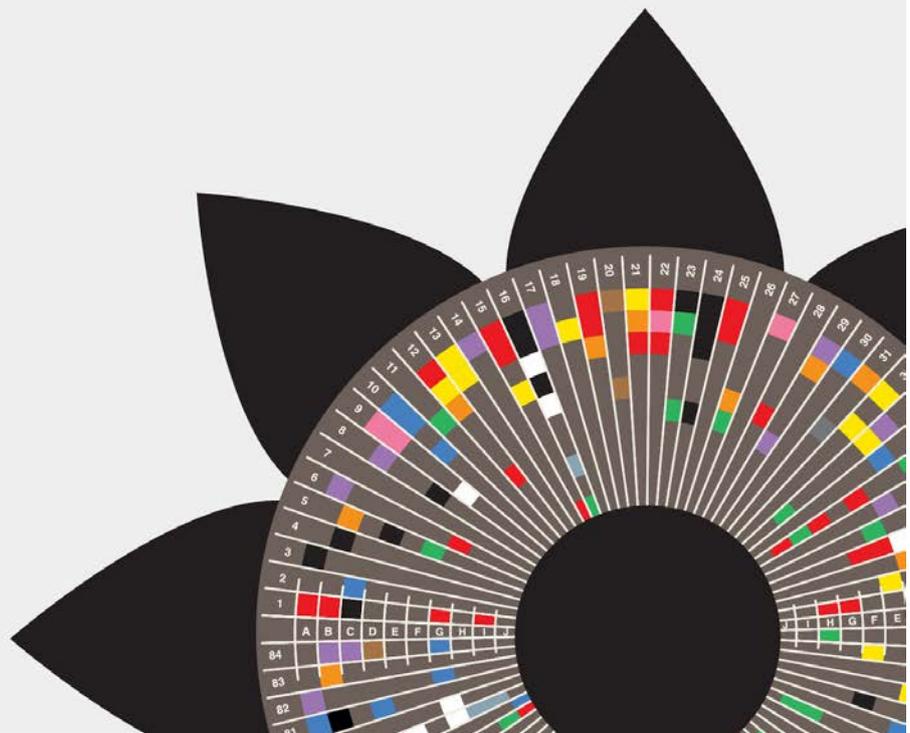


A Brief Guide to Producing Compelling Infographics



By John Dalton & Webber Design

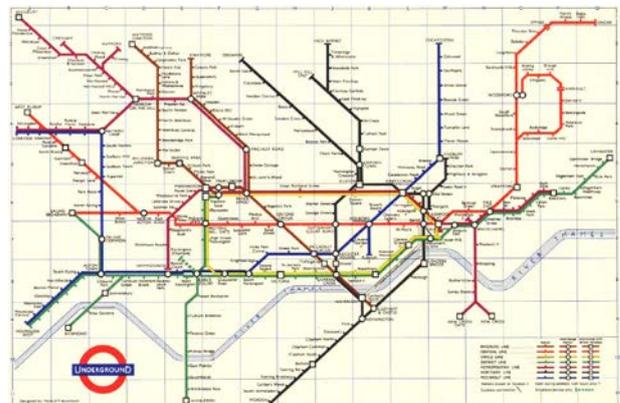
A Brief Guide to Producing Compelling Infographics

The way we process and share information has significantly changed since the start of the 21st Century. The principal cause has been the sheer amount of the data and information we encounter and need to absorb – in 2010 we were creating as much information every two days as we did in the time between the beginning of human civilisation and 2003.¹ Accordingly, it has become much harder to get your audience to pay attention to the information you want to share given the tsunami of information and data available. In the Industrial Age, we could just about cope, but in the Information Age we are all subject to information overload in the era of **big data**. One way of handling significant amounts of information is through visual representation and **infographics**.

Information graphics or infographics are visual representations of data or information that has been designed so that the reader can absorb and assimilate information and knowledge clearly and quickly. It is important to be clear about the story or narrative that you wish to convey and any graphic has both **flow** and **logic** to it.

The popularity of infographics has been in parallel with the rise of **content marketing**. The essential idea behind content marketing is to provide free content that should hopefully interest readers and those who come across the content, often through social media vehicles, and encourage them to visit a website and eventually, become a customer. Infographics have become an essential tool in modern PR communication, in particular with the growing influence of **Pinterest**.

The adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” is as true today as ever before and it should not surprise us that data and information have become visualised in order to be more easily understood. The rise of Pinterest and other social networks that rely on graphic content, like Slideshare, have started to redesign the way we communicate. Infographics are a great way of sharing knowledge and providing information. Arguably, one of the world’s best known infographics is the map of the London Underground originally designed by Harry Beck. Infographics are not new and evidence of their use dates back to the 17th Century.

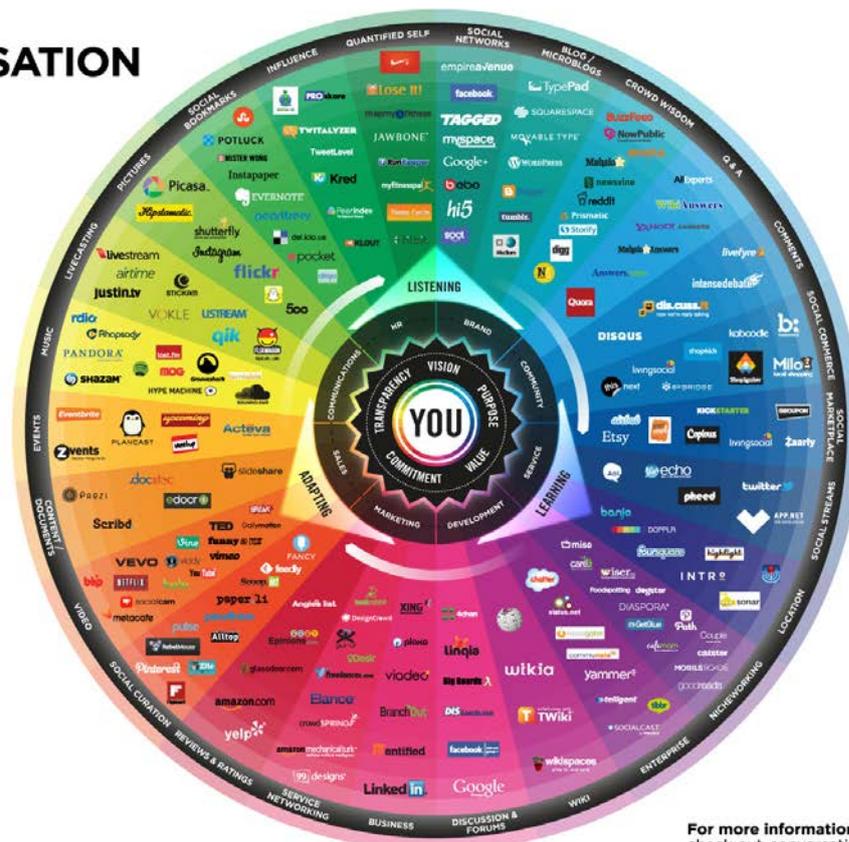


Harry Beck's Original London Underground Tube Map

1. Eric Schmidt: Every 2 Days We Create As Much Information As We Did Up To 2003 - TechCrunch
www.techcrunch.com/2010/08/04/schmidt-data

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But what elements make for a good infographic? The London School of Public Relations has put together some guidelines that (if the content of the infographic is appealing) should help create an image that is both attractive and should have some **viral potential**. As with all social media elements, infographics are about **liking** and **sharing**.

Guidelines to help create good infographics:

- 1) **Set clear goals:** As with every aspect of business, while creating an infographic it is important to have clarity of thought and objectives/goals. It could be brand image building, new customer acquisition, education, or simply to entertain. By having goals you can more easily determine what kind of information you need to include and how best to present it.
- 2) **What format are you going to present in?** Are you going to have a static, motion-based or interactive infographic?

- 3) **Make it relevant to your audience:** Make sure it is directly linked with your goals and targeted to the relevant audience. You will use a different kind of data and formats when making different presentations depending on the audience, the demographic and the key messages you wish to convey.
- 4) **Make it meaningful:** In other words, it should tell a story. Data presented in an infographic cannot just seem 'out of the blue', it should have a relevant narrative that supports your main topic. If you are making an infographic about the Human Impact on the Planet you need to make sure that the data you use is directly relevant and this also means being as up-to-date as possible. Remember to avoid talking about your own product – people look at infographics for information, not an advert or an opportunity to sell.
- 5) **Focus on efficacy:** by definition, efficacy is the ability to produce desired or intended outcomes, and, as such, efficacy is fundamental to the development of a successful infographic. Successful infographics are appealing, memorable and above all, comprehensible to the reader.
- 6) **Have an effective narrative to convey the data and knowledge:** a good infographic has to tell a basic story, with some form of structure, usually with a beginning, middle and conclusion.
- 7) **Make sure it is well designed:** the appearance of infographic is, after the headline, usually the first thing that will attract people to your graphic. Clever and creative use of typography and colours will win you customers. Colours are especially important and getting the colour balance and relevance right is not an easy task. The narrative should work with the design so that it is clear what story or issue is being told and how it should be followed by the reader. A good designer makes a successful infographic clean and simple, and not overly complex or cluttered.
- 8) **Make it original:** both in terms of content and presentation. You have seconds to grab your reader and make them read your infographic.
- 9) **Choose a persuasive headline:** A good or bad headline is responsible for 90% of people viewing (or not viewing) your infographic.
- 10) **Do your research:** limit your sources, which will allow you to avoid using contradictory materials. Preferably, do not use data older than a year, maximum two years (always list the timeframe your data relates to within the graphic).
- 11) **Use trusted resources:** remember that by using credible and trustworthy sources you will avoid many problems, for example, quoting incorrect data or data created with political agenda (use unbiased sources if at all possible). Do not forget to cite your sources and recognise the source and intellectual property rights of a source.

- 12) **Make sure your sources are cohesive:** while sometimes you can find all the data you need in one document, most of the time you will be forced to look for more publications. Ideally you should use as a limited number of sources, but if you need to use more sources, make sure they create a consistent narrative.
- 13) **Ensure you have an outreach plan:** creating an infographic is not enough. You need to know how to publish it to ensure it has the largest possible reach. Will you promote it on your blog? Social media channels? Or would you use it in one of your publications? The best approach is to create an infographic which can be used across various platforms, whether it's Pinterest or your new White Paper.

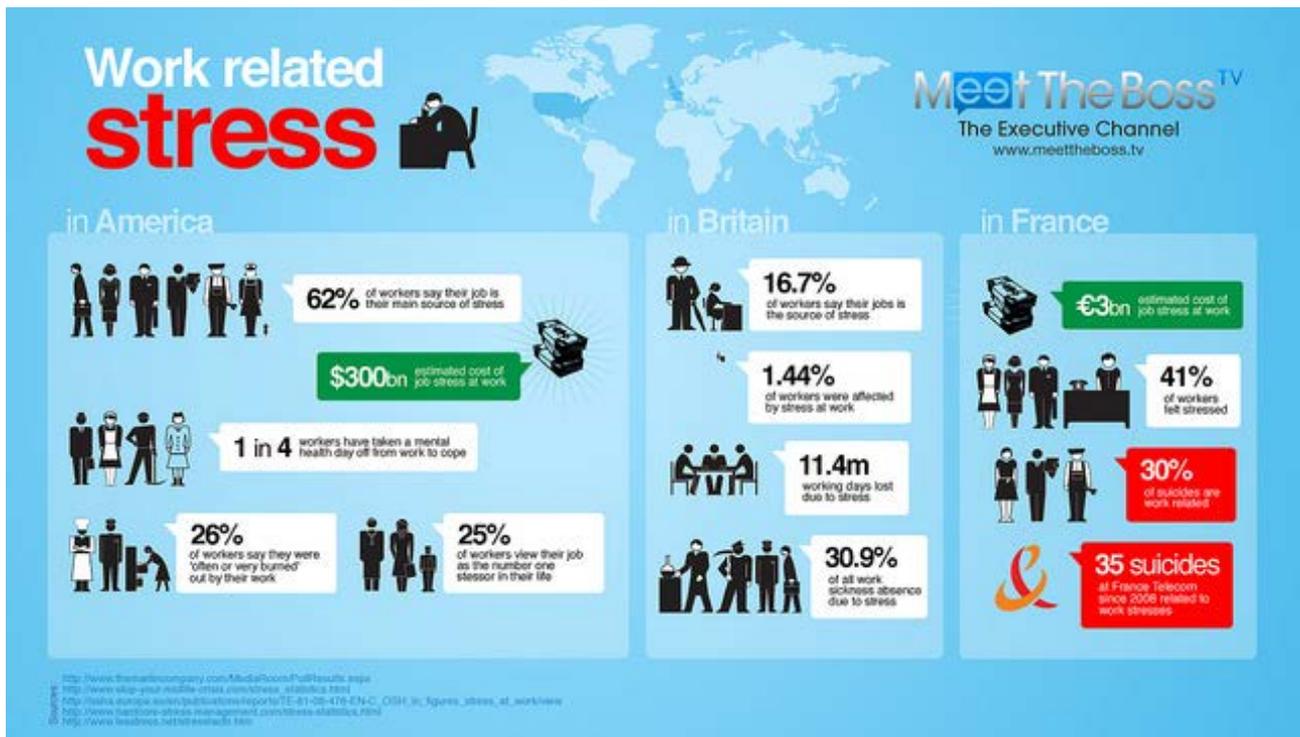
Format and Different types of infographics

There is no accepted way currently to categorise infographics, but there are recognised different types of graphics. There are three key formats:

- Static
- Interactive
- Motion

Static infographics are the most prevalent form of graphic that are used for internal reporting and presentations, editorial content for media and social media/PR distribution. For example, static infographics are used within the PR industry as part of a virtual press release. Equally they can be used as part of an editorial to highlight data and information in an interesting way.

Examples:



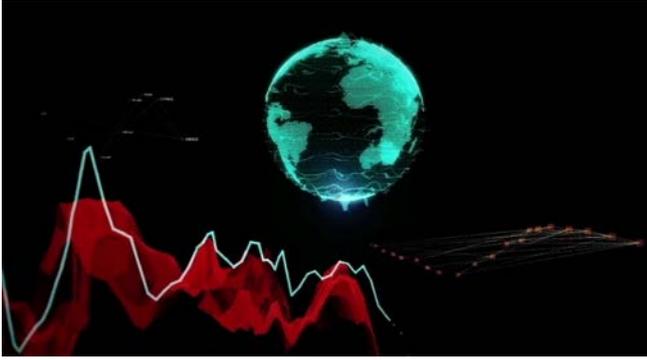
Work Related Stress, GDS Infographics: www.flickr.com/photos/gdsdigital/4514262548

Interactive Infographics are graphics that allow the user to interact with the data. They are powerful tools as they have multiple layers within the graphic interface, which means that you can control the amount of information the reader sees and they are not overwhelmed by the immediate content. Many medical infographics are interactive, as are maps.

Examples:



How Search Works, Google, www.google.co.uk/intl/en/insidesearch/howsearchworks/thestory



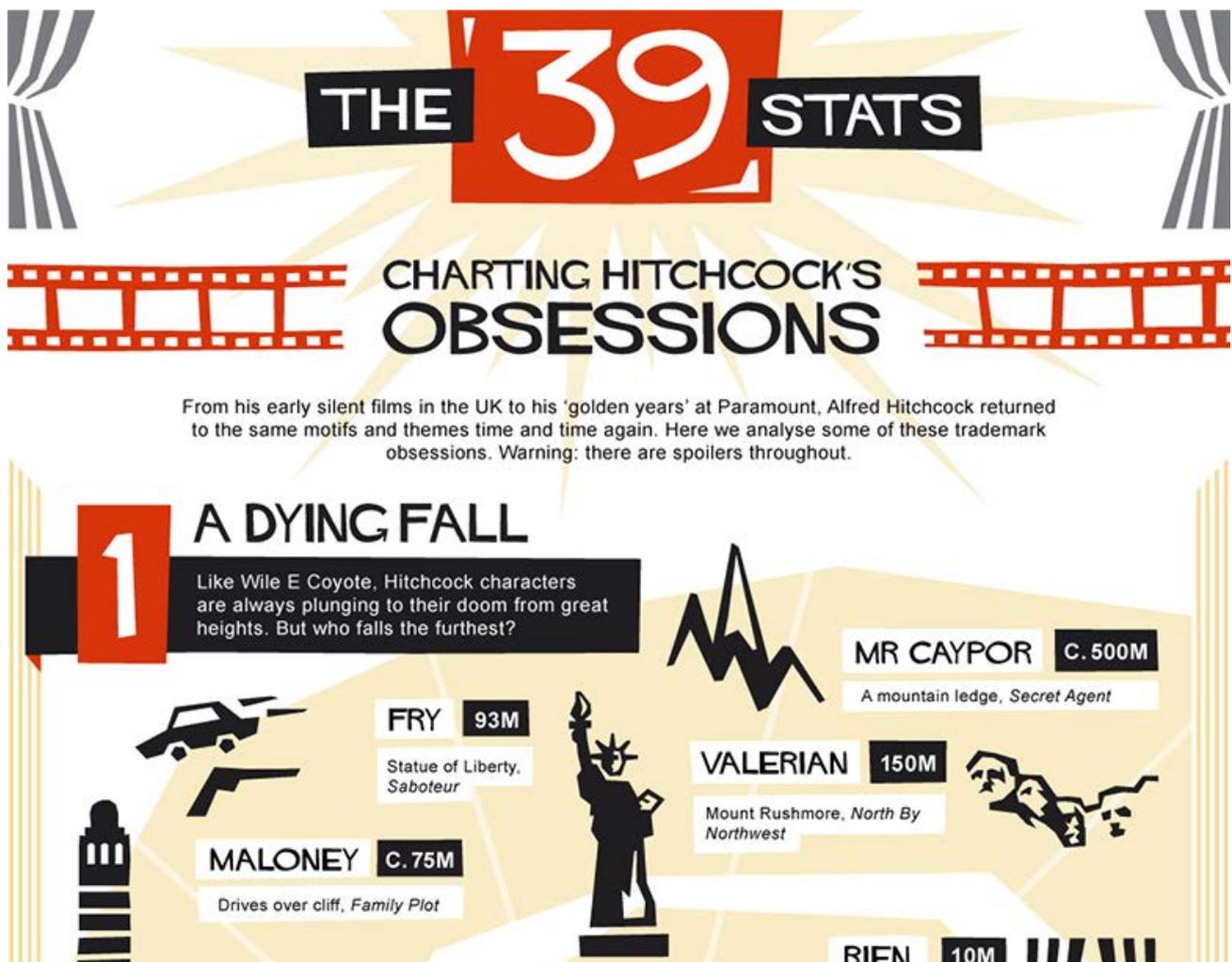
Bitcoin Explained, watch here: www.vimeo.com/63502573

Motion infographics use motion to animate graphics, usually with a voiceover to narrate the graphics and Motion infographics guide the viewer. These fluid visuals can be very effective in conveying a message, whether that message is about the environment or bullying in schools.

Types of infographics

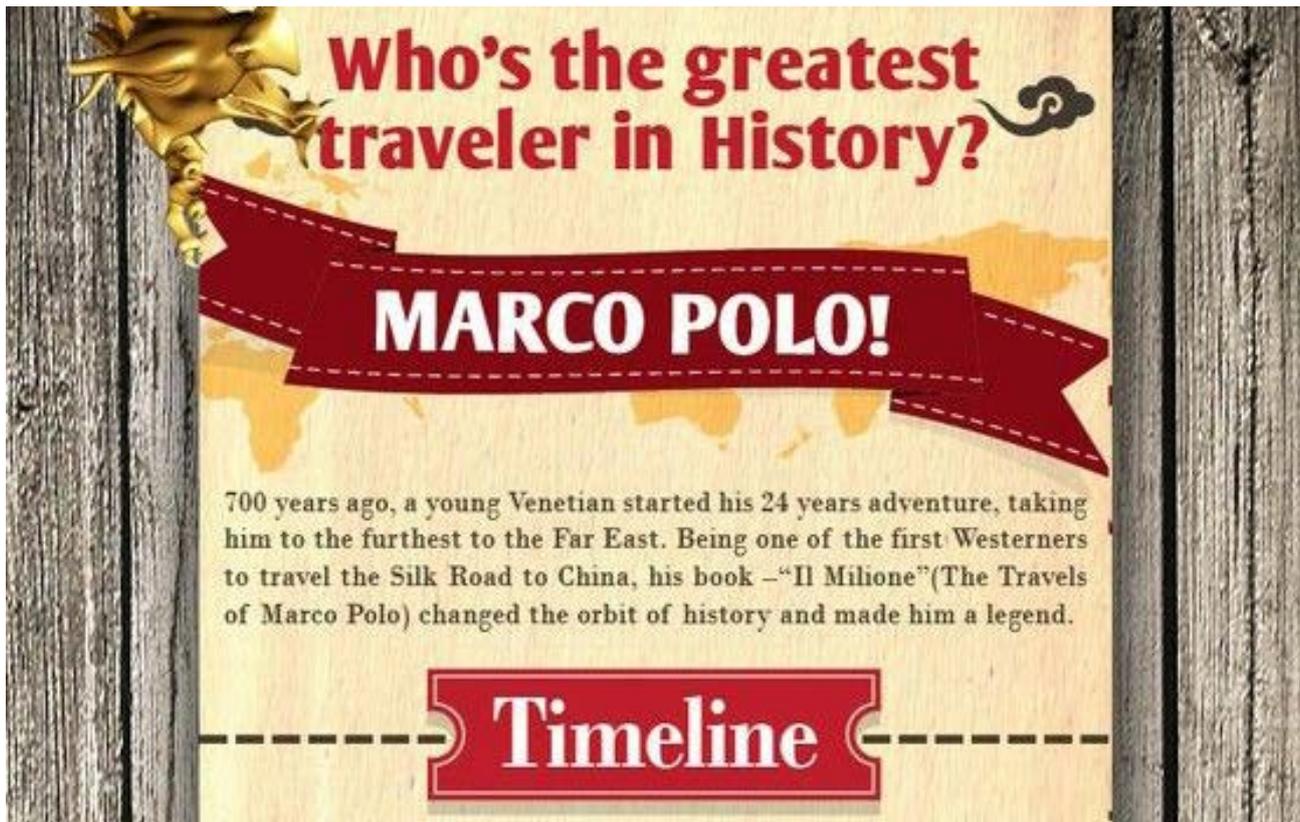
Outside of the standard formats of infographics there are various types of graphics. There are five primary visualisation categories:

1. Statistical



The 39 Stats: Charting Hitchcock's Obsessions, The Guardian, to view in full visit: www.theguardian.com/film/picture/2013/aug/12/alfred-hitchcock-film-statistics

2. Time-Series



Marco Polo Timeline, to view in full visit: pinimg.com

3. Maps

Largest African Populations

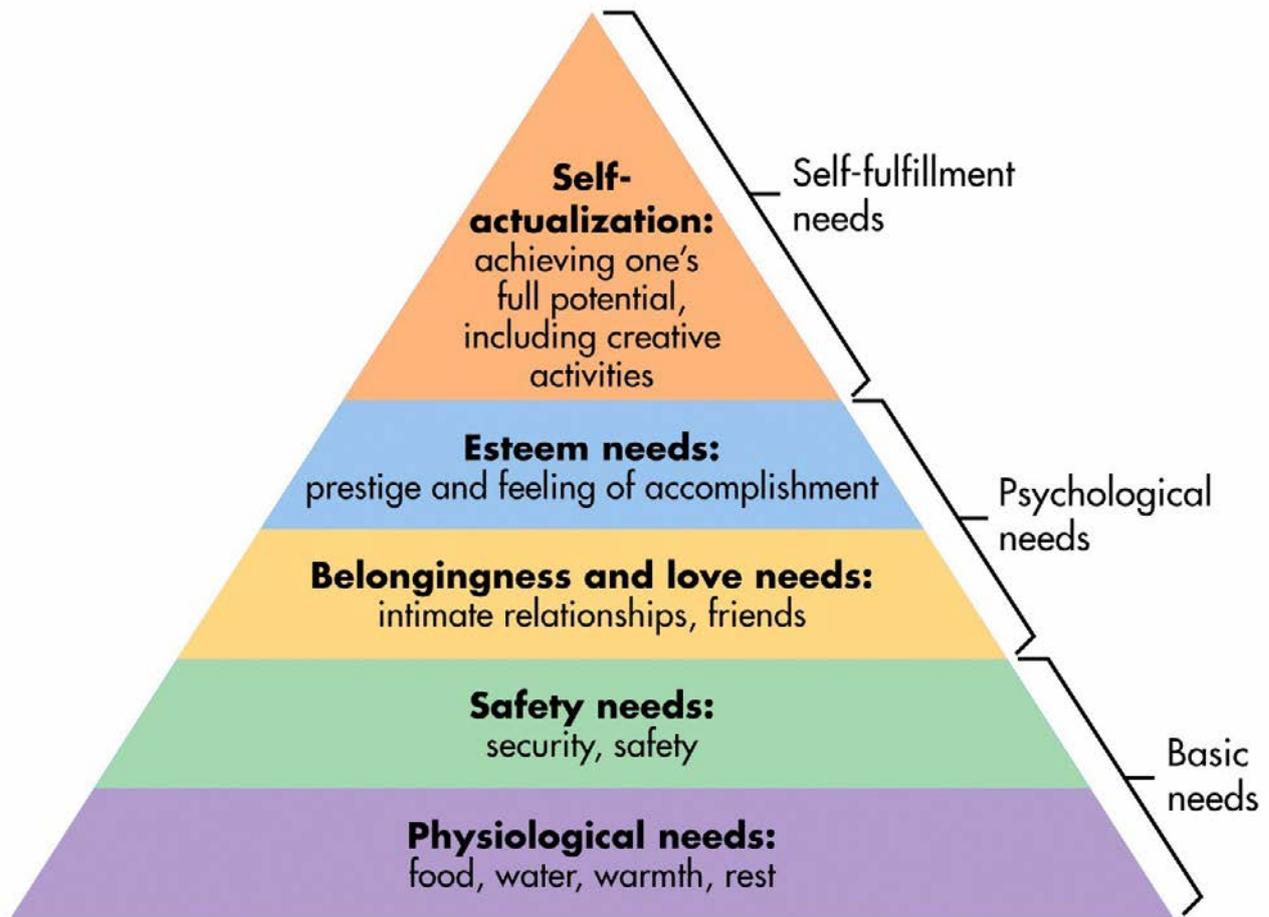


With a population of over one billion people, we take a look at Africa's largest nations.



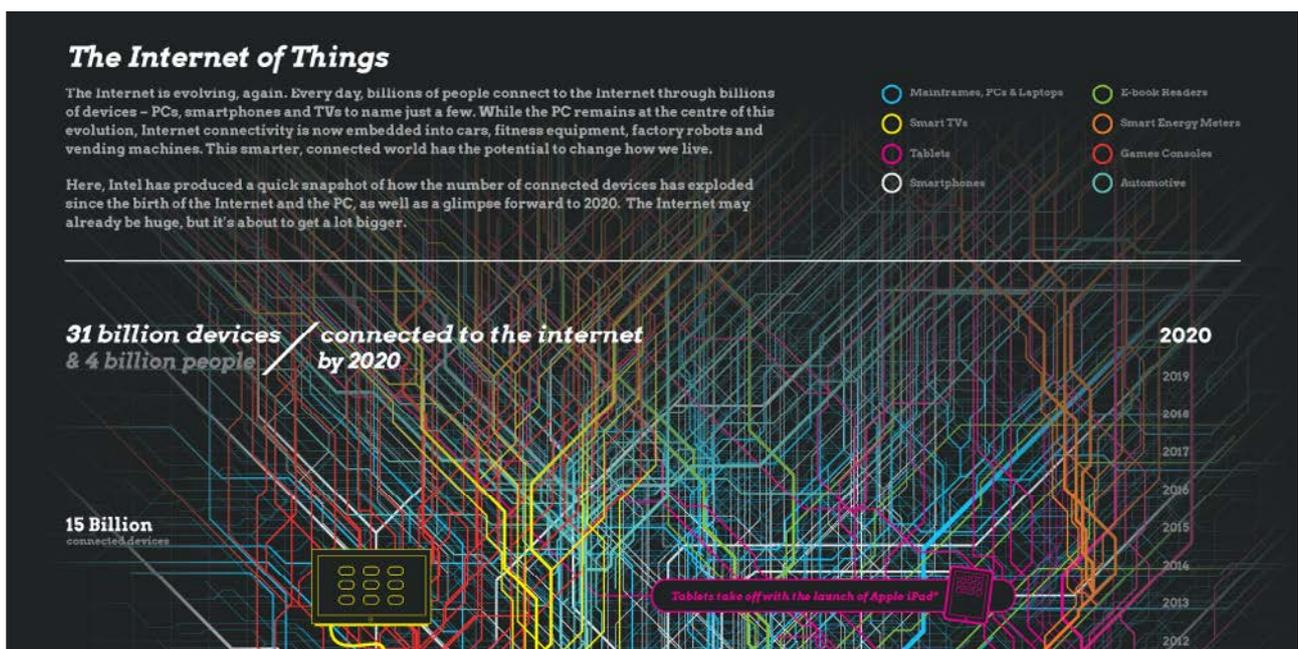
Largest African Populations, Afrographique, to view in full visit: www.afrographique.tumblr.com/post/58773955824/an-infographic-mapping-the-largest-african-nation

4. Hierarchies



Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs", www.21stcentech.com

5. Networks



Internet of Things, to view in full visit: www.bitrebels.com/technology/the-internet-of-things-every-device-that-connects-us-infographic/

2) Photo Infographics



3) Vs. Infographics



Pages vs. Plus: A Guide to Your Brand Strategy, Pardot. To view in full visit: www.pardot.com/infographic/facebook-google-guide-brand-pages-infographic/

4) Research Infographics

KLOUT

is one method of measuring your online influence, generating a score based on your performance across the social media networks you use.

The current average Klout user score is **40**

Some Factors: Activity, Authenticity, Interaction, Social Reach & Network

98

Authentic Earned Media

Klout is useful to brands, as it sells brands the chance to give specific influencers access to products.

4 x [User Icon] [Clock Icon] [Mouse Icon] ÷ [Pound Icon]

Klout also capitalises on social networking's greatest asset: **Authentic Earned Media**. Authentic Earned Media accounts for 4x the users, time spent and clicks through than traditional paid adverts, at 20% the cost.

This is because **92%** of social media users trust the recommendations and opinions of friends, family and colleagues more than adverts or publications.

High Impact: Top Klout Scores

Barack Obama: 99 President of the United States	99
Lady Gaga: 94.9 Musician	94.9
Ellen DeGeneres: 94.7 Talk show host	94.7
Bill Gates: 93.6 Founder of Microsoft	93.6
Richard Branson: 92 Founder/CEO of Virgin	92

Various Top Influencers on Klout

[scores accurate as of March 2014]

Perks and Rewards

The rewards that Klout presents to high-ranking users (scores of 55+) are named Klout Perks. These both incentivise further use of Klout and allow the influential users to effectively promote the products or services. These often vary between individual members based on their audience.

This is how brands can target specific demographics - key opinion formers hold significantly more influence than any amount of traditional marketing.

The human connection has much more value than any faceless advert. Klout recognises this, utilising Perks to allow brands to interact with people with large networks - Those with high Klout scores - thus indirectly promoting their products and services via an established and trustworthy user.

6 Tips for Raising your Social Influence Success

CREATE CONTENT WORTH SHARING

People only share content that is relevant or otherwise enjoyable. This may sound difficult, but there are simple ways to figure out what is really worth sharing:

- Is it relevant to your niche?
- Is it interesting [articles, quotes and images]?
- Can you talk on it further, or engage in discussion?

CREATE DISCUSSIONS AND FOSTER COMMUNITIES

Social influence stems from you interacting with your audience and forming relationships. This can be as simple as wishing your followers a good weekend, or beginning a discussion on a relevant niche topic.

INTERACT WITH INFLUENCERS

Retweeting or otherwise commenting on a given subject in direct communication with an existing influencer can establish a continuing interaction, resulting in them indirectly promoting you when responding to your discussion.

Klout Infographic, The Centre for Issue and Crisis Management, 2014

Conclusion

Infographics have a number of important uses. Firstly, they make data, which leads to information, which in turn leads to knowledge, more interesting and easier to assimilate. Second, one of the most challenging aspects of 21st Century PR and message communication is gaining peoples' attentions. Infographics (done well) do just that, and in so doing, further help convert attention into understanding. They are generally more persuasive than conventional methods of communicating data and complex issues. Thirdly, assuming that your data sources are credible, infographics are effective vehicles to convey information and knowledge as they simplify things and make them more memorable for someone to convey. Fourthly, their utility seems endless: they can be used for business communications, medical stats and communications, science and education, environmental communications, content marketing strategies, journalism, or politics. Finally, as well as all the above, good infographics heighten brand awareness and can be excellent tools of reputation management.

Further Reading

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TOSELAND, M., TOSELAND, S. (2012) *Infographica: The World As You Have Never Seen It Before*. 1st Ed. Quercus.