

DESIGNING DIAGRAMS AND CHARTS

Follow your reader's eyes

Recall with Substantin 1

Increase	Constant	Decrease
50%	48%	2%

Sequence of columns?

The order of columns in this table is ineffective. Your eyes move from the top left to the bottom right of a page and consequently the word 'Decrease' (the least important one) sticks in the reader's mind whilst the word 'Increase' (the more important) is lost.

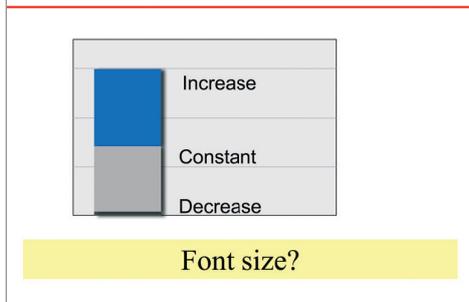
Recall with Substantin 2

Decrease	Constant	Increase
2%	48%	50%

Appropriate way of depicting data?

Rearranging the columns results in a version of the table that draws more attention to 'Increase' and makes it more memorable. But, ask yourself, is a table the most appropriate way to illustrate the data?

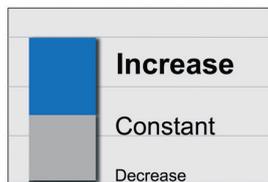
Recall with Substantin 3



This diagram conveys the message more effectively than a table. However, the sizes of the letters are out of proportion to the relevance of the group they describe.

Use your fonts to reinforce your message

Recall with Substantin 4



Symbolizing Action?

This diagram shows font sizes that are in proportion to the relevance of the group they describe. But, the diagram looks static. You might add a simple symbol to illustrate action and dynamics.

Introduce a dynamic

Recall with Substantin 5

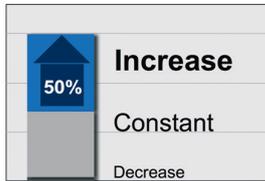


Precise Number?

The upward arrow shows the direction of the change ('increase') and emphasizes the dynamic nature of the product. However, the precise degree of change remains unclear.

Be precise

Recall with Substantin 6



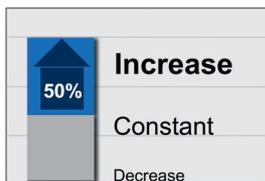
Brand name?

Ask yourself: What is the one number you want to convey? The one number the reader should remember is now in the arrow. Never display two numbers prominently.

One is enough. However, the reader's mind still remains unclear about the name of your product.

Use the brand name

Recall with Examplex 1

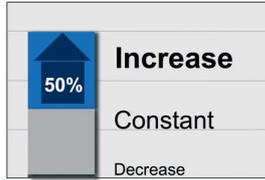


Branding?

If the scientific context allows, swap the substance name (here 'Substantin') with the brand name (here 'Examplex'). Remember, your brand includes more than just a name. The brand name needs to be represented with an approved style, colour, font type and so on.

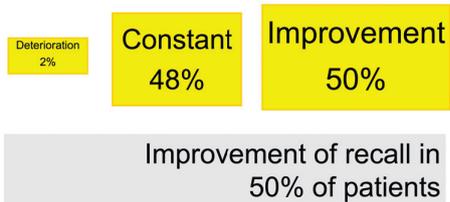
Strengthen your brand

Recall with Examplex 2



This diagram is one example of enhanced layout and design depicting the benefit of the brand.

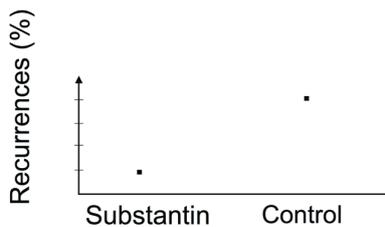
Recall with Examplex 3



This diagram is another example of enhanced layout and design. The surface area of the three squares is weighted according to the relative importance of the group. Form and colour are reminiscent of Post-it® Notes. A similar version to the example was chosen by the company advertising Climodien®.

Make your diagrams clear

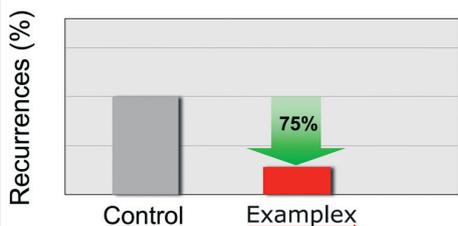
Poorly Visible Results



Consider the following results of a clinical trial in herpes virus infections: Substantin reduced recurrences by 75%. Imagine you are sent the diagram shown in the chart.

What is your first impression? This version has a number of elements that you might improve to represent the results more persuasively.

Clearly Visible Results

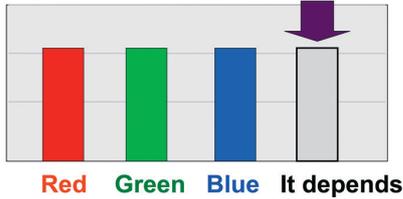


Dots have been replaced by columns. The product column has been moved to the right-hand side. An arrow indicates movement and highlights the product benefit. A relevant number has been added. The typed substance name has been replaced by the product logo. (In scientific documents, you would of course retain the substance name rather than the brand name.)

Use your brand colour

The Product Column Colour

should be ... the brand colour



Always use your brand colour for the column depicting your product. If your brand colour is red, then the column should be in red. If your brand colour is blue, then the column should be in blue. Don't let your agency get away with a different colour.

Your readers should associate the colour and the data set with your brand. This helps them to recognize at once which results belong to your product.

The Placebo Column Colour

should be ... inconspicuous



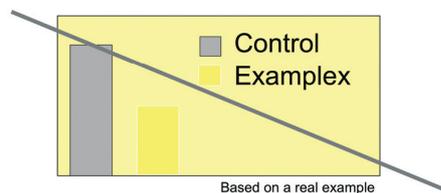
e.g. Grey

Use a design for the column or pie chart segment representing the placebo or control group that ensures clear differentiation from the comparator. The obvious choice is the use of the colour grey in its various shades. This makes the placebo column unobtrusive.

Use contrasting colours

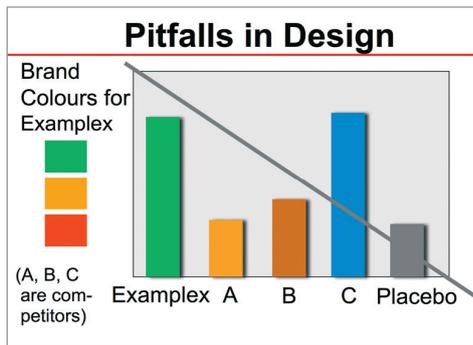
The Background Colour ...

... should be different



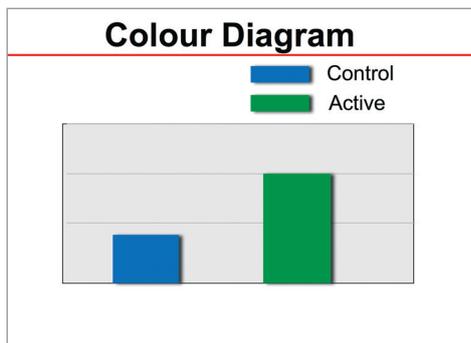
Choose a background colour that ensures sufficient contrast. Avoid using a shade of the brand colour which may only confuse the brand and control drugs.

Beware of the design pitfalls

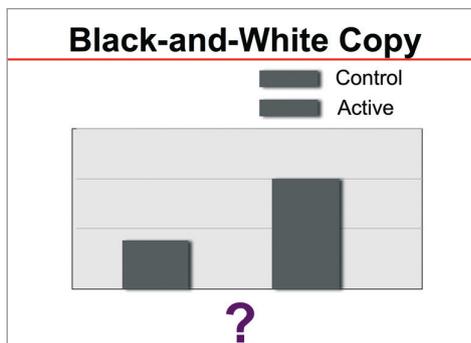


The agency that produced this diagram has committed several mistakes. The placebo column is placed at the most advantageous position (the right hand side). One of the competitor columns uses a brand colour (light brown). The competitor data showing superior results has been given a highly prominent position instead of placing the column at the left hand side where it would be more appropriate.

Think 'black and white'

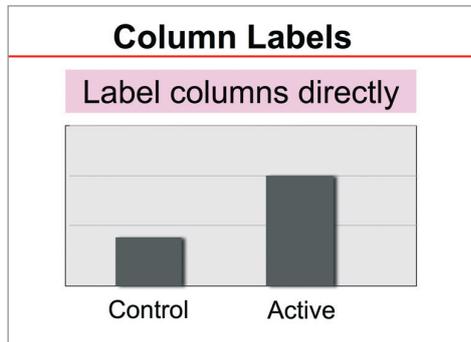


There is one simple point you need to bear in mind when designing or approving a colour diagram. Remember that sales representatives may make black-and-white photocopies or may fax your colour diagram (which will then invariably come out in black-and-white).



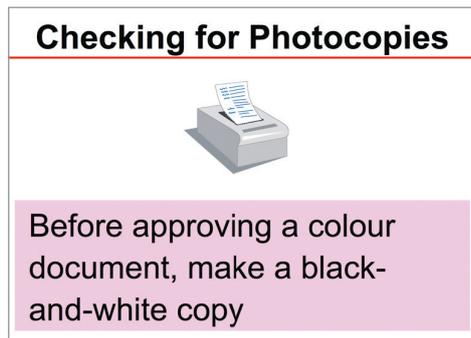
In this example, the reader cannot distinguish which column represents which group, since the blue and green chosen as original colours became virtually indistinguishable when transformed into greyscale.

Label columns directly



Avoid using keys in diagrams (which is often the default choice in your computer software). Label the columns directly instead. This allows the product column to be easily identified even on a black-and-white copy.

Test your colour illustrations



Before giving your approval to any colour document, make a black-and-white print-out or a black-and-white photocopy and check that it is clearly understandable.

Work on your design skills

A Graphic Designer



Invite someone to your team who has experience in designing graphics, posters, ads and other types of visual communication

Look around: Where can you find a graphic designer? In your department? In other departments? In your external agency? Invite this person to your team meetings. Can you get this person to work for you in a more intensive way - officially or unofficially? If this is not possible, consider initiating a 'style and design review board' where people comment on pieces from your competitors as well as on your own internal drafts.