

Legal information Mapping

graphic models to make legal information accessible

Original book in Dutch is titled “Visual language for lawyers” (“Beeldtaal voor juristen”), author Susanne Hoogwater, First edition published in 2005, second edition in 2009, both by major educational legal publishers in the Netherlands.

From the Cover

The law is for everyone, but it is not accessible to everyone. Lawyers carry a big responsibility to build a bridge from this legal fiction to daily legal reality. Is it truly possible to present a solid legal puzzle in a userfriendly form? Yes, and visual literacy skills for lawyers are the foundation

This book shows how to use graphic models to make legal information accessible and useable for non-lawyers, from highly educated information professionals in other disciplines to people with a more basic educational background.

Legal Information Mapping is a visual book. It contains more than thirtyfive different visual diagrams on topics and themes that are relevant for a wide legal audience. By applying the method of this book, (future) lawyers will develop their skills to create their own graphic representations to explain their legal work to their clients and end users. The balance between legal precision and accessibility is the unique focus of this book.

Inside cover

About the target audience

This book is intended for the legal practice and higher legal education. Corporate lawyers, attorneys and other legal professionals can use graphic models in order to make their legal memorandums, contracts, trial documents and newsletters, more attractive and accessible for their clients and other end users. Visual support is also a valuable addition to presentations inside and outside the courtroom.

In legal education visual diagrams stimulate and active thinking and learning process, in a form that appeals to the visual culture that is so familiar for current students. The method engages analytical, creative and communicative skills. Students learn how to deliver their assignments and projects in a professional en clientoriented form.

Educators can use diagrams and informationgraphics in educational materials and as 'werkvorm' for their students.

All (future) lawyers can use visual diagrams as a visual tool for their own knowledge management and workprocess: staying up-to-date with the latest legal publications, note-taking, file organization, planning and brainstorming.

About the author

Susanne Hoogwater-van der Meer has a broad experience in legal practice in the Netherlands. She worked as an attorney, corporate lawyers and legal educator since 1992. She started her company *Legal Visuals* in 2005. She currently lives in Denver, Colorado, United States and works for Dutch clients. *Legal Visuals* offers professional training for lawyers and translates legal information into accessible and persuasive visual communication.

Legal Information Mapping is based on her interest in the userfriendliness of legal services, the graphic display of information, legal communication and creative thinking. She developed a unique expertise in this combination and intends to share this with the international legal community by publishing an English edition of this book.

INTRODUCTION

Graphic representation is a useful tool to present legal information - varying from general regulations to answers to specific practical questions - in a more accessible and attractive form. This book shows (future) lawyers the possibilities to use visual approaches in their work or study.

The legal domain produces a vast amount of detailed text, such as the conditions of an insurance policy. Lawyers love working with words. Otherwise they would have made a different career choice. However, the law is for everyone and of everyone.

A solid legal puzzle can be packaged in an inviting and practical form. Legal information mapping is a method to bring the law closer to the hearts and minds of its users, by using the power of visual display. And simultaneously it will facilitate an easier connection between users and lawyers and their legal expertise.

The visual language in this book is a combination of graphic organizers and visual thinking tools. If part of the daily work. The core task of law students is to process information and acquire knowledge. The use of graphic organizers is an active way to approach this task. Moreover it is a practice in visual thinking and working, by which lawyers build their skills to design visual communication tools for end users.

Legal Information Mapping has the following benefits:

- The legal message comes across more effectively
- Legal products become more functional and more userfriendly.
- Lawyers widen their professional skills:
 - basic skills in information visualisation
 - the use of visual tools in the communication with end users
 - the use of visual tools for their own knowledge management
- Enhancement of the image of legal professionals.

Visualizing is not the same as simplifying. The information becomes more accessible, easier to understand and more likely to be remembered. However, 'reading' and understanding legal information maps is a matter of time and concentrated attention. The legal information maps usually have a high information density. In legal practice they serve as an addition to other forms of explanation and advice of legal matters, but they are not intended to replace such expert advice. The expertise and communication skills of lawyers are undeniably the core of the work.

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