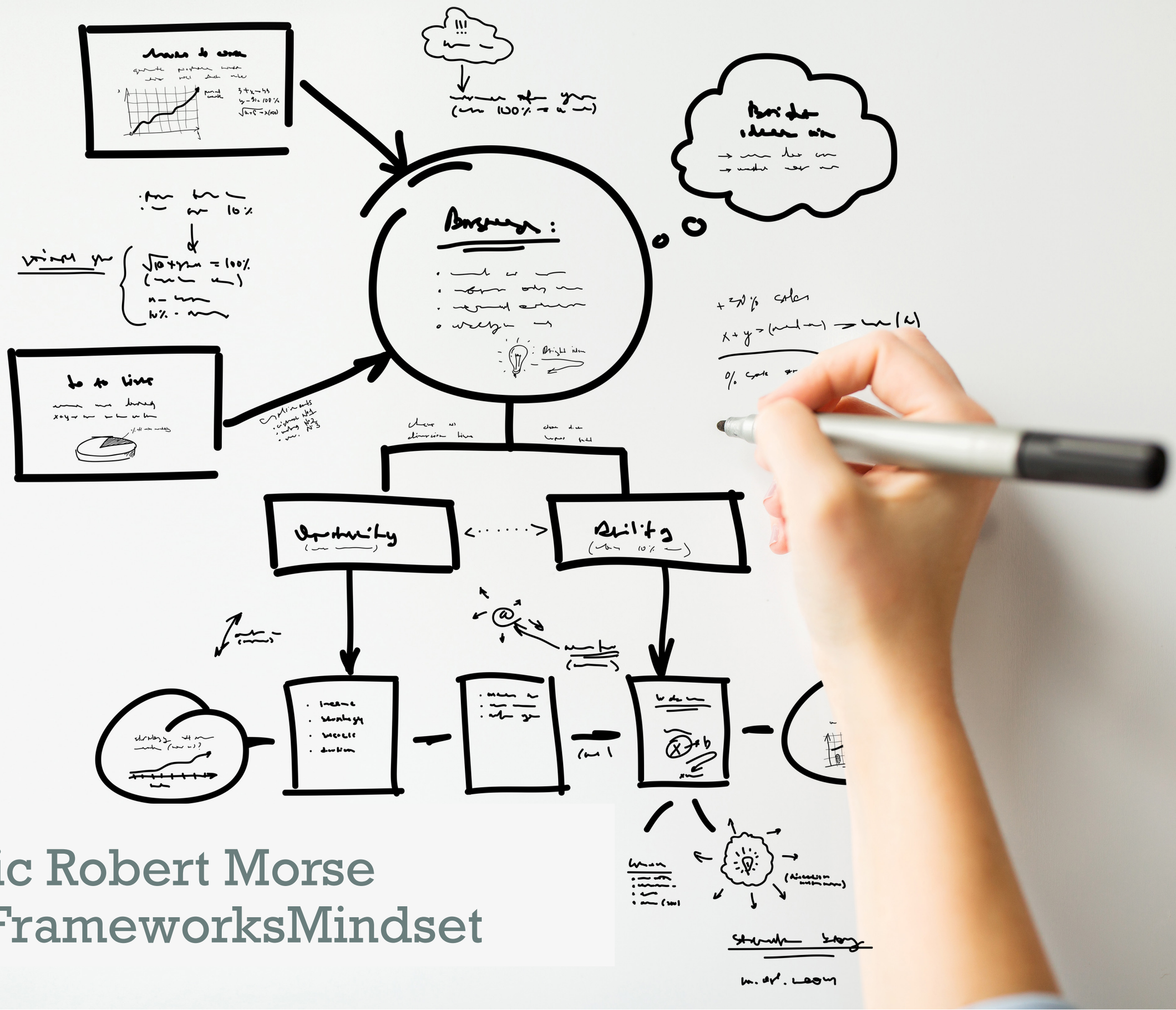
PLAY BOOK

VISUAL THINKING



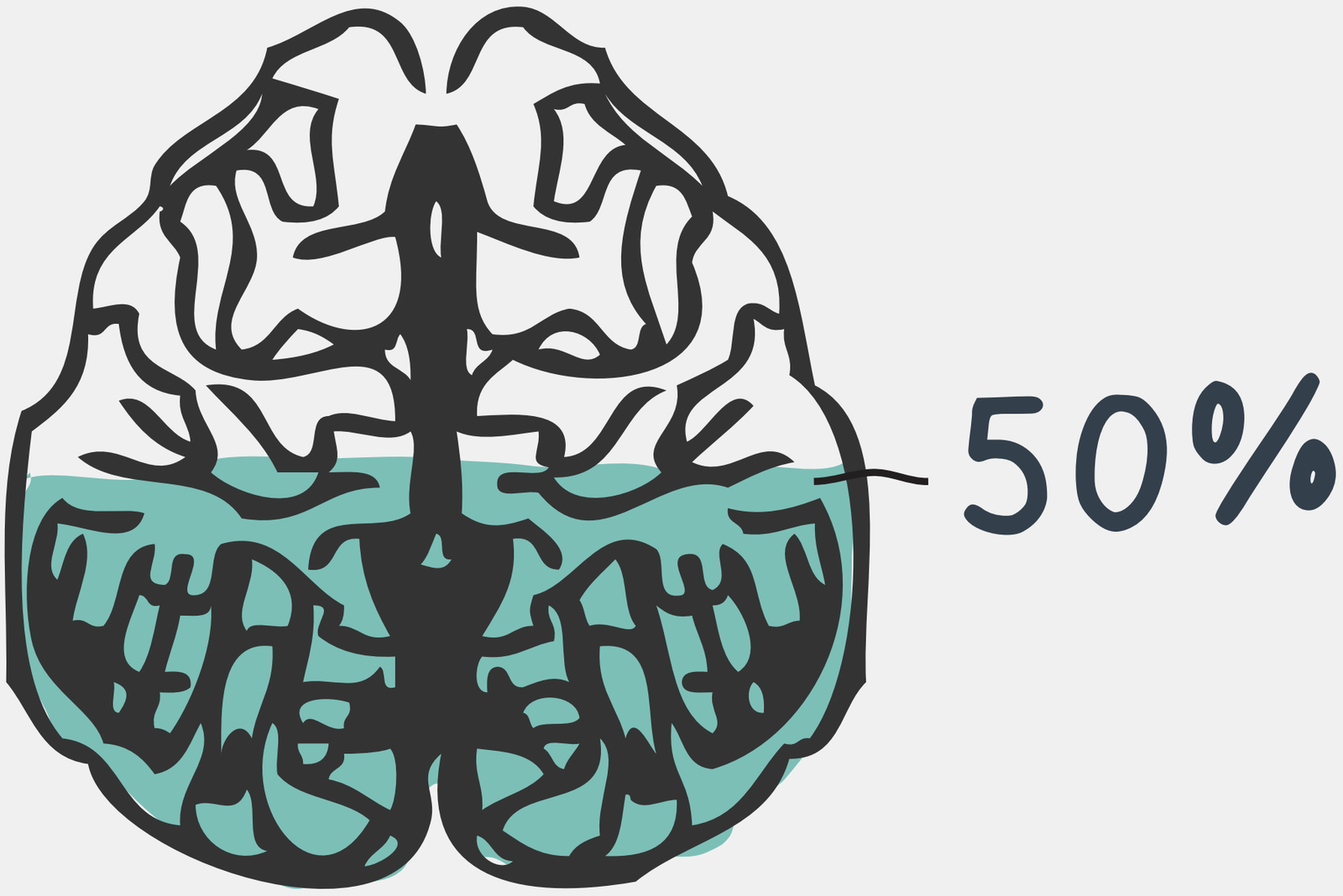
Eric Robert Morse
@FrameworksMindset

A VISUAL SPECIES

Ever since we lived in caves, we've been a using pictures to convey ideas.

Some cave paintings are estimated to be **52,000 years old**.

MADE FOR VISUALS



As much as 50%
of brain activity
is dedicated
to **visual**
processing.

Source: University of Rochester.

PICTURE SUPERIORITY

6%

Memory retention **without** images.

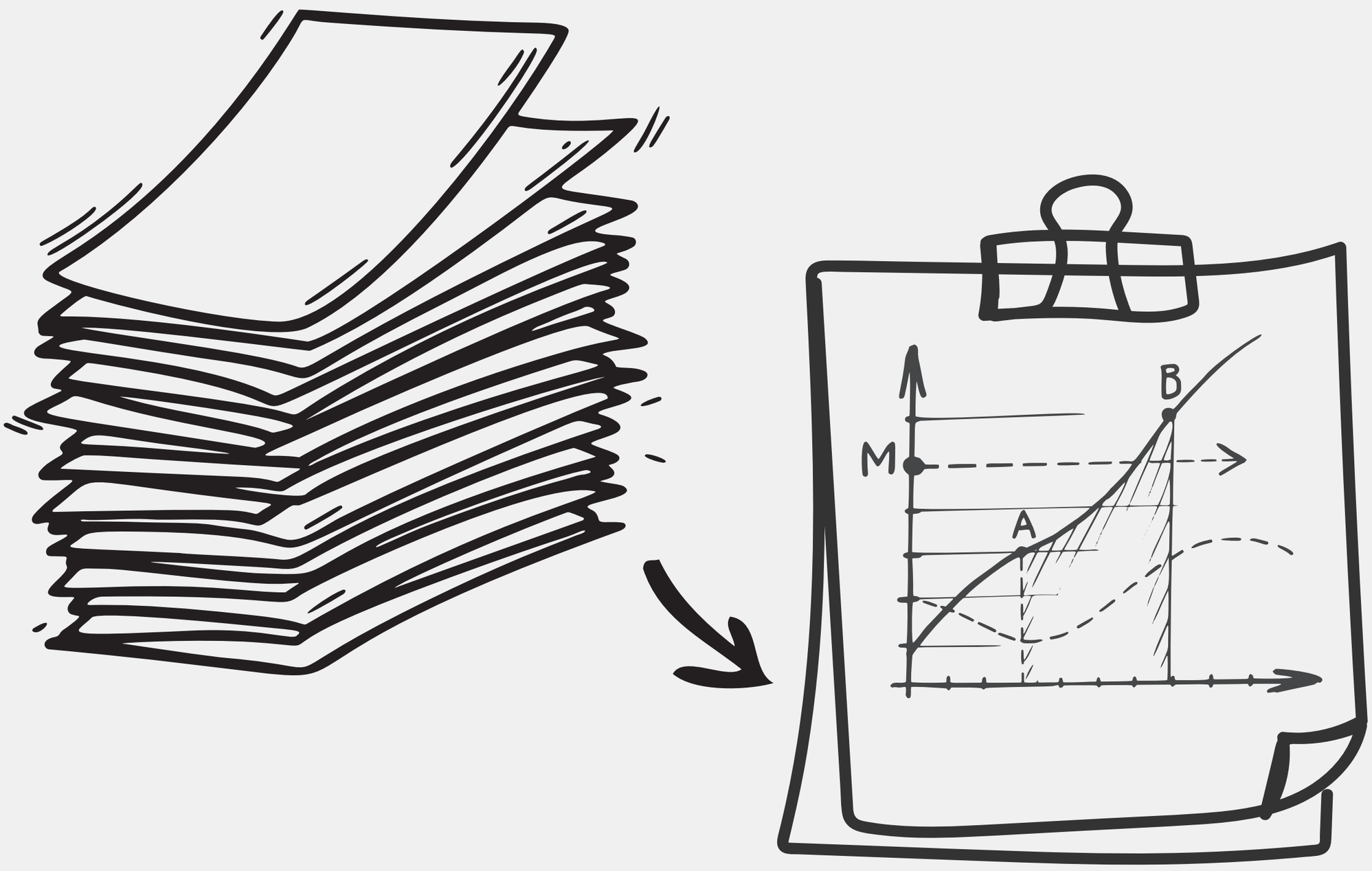
60%

Memory retention **with** images.

Source: John Medina, *Brain Rules*.

10,000 WORDS

In a 1987 paper,
Herbert Simon showed
that a symbolic proof of
several pages could be
presented in just **one page**
using a diagram.



Source: Simon & Larkin, ‘Why a Picture Is (Sometimes) Worth 10,000 Words’.

If you want to make a point,

make it visual.

When drawing pictures can help:

Brainstorming ☑

Problem Solving ☑

Analyzing ☑

Observing ☑

Collaborating ☑

Communicating ☑

Running through a Ninja Warrior Obstacle Course ☒

Planning to run through a Ninja Warrior Obstacle Course ☑

"That's great, but...

I can't draw."

(Yes you can.)

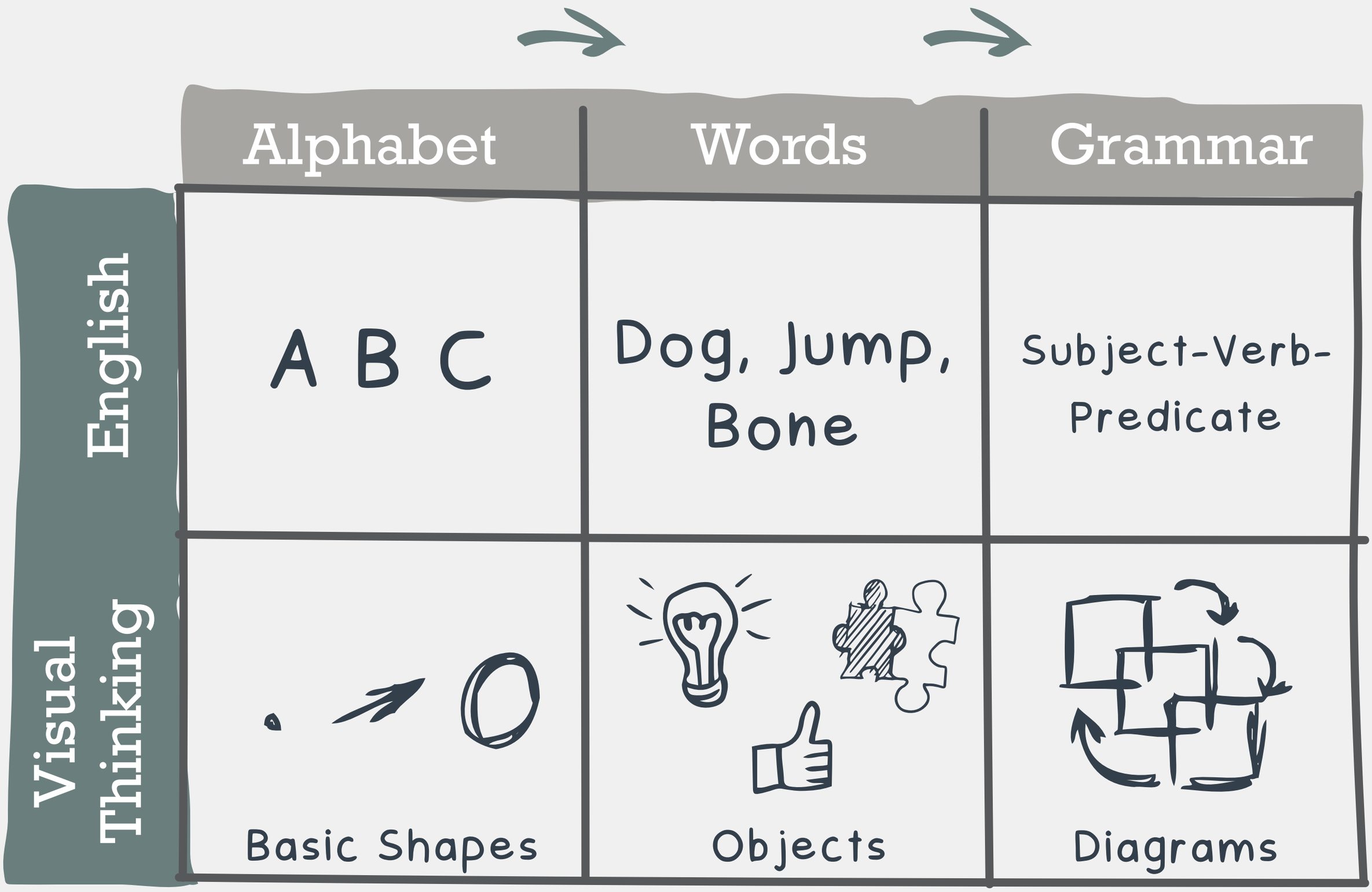
Just as you don't have to write a Shakespearean sonnet to write a good email,

you don't have to paint a *Mona Lisa* to **express yourself with visuals**.

START SMALL

A VISUAL LANGUAGE

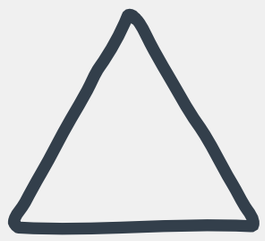
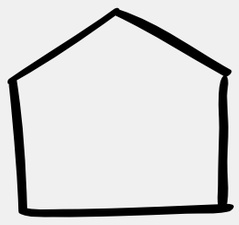
Like any language, Visual Thinking has an **alphabet**, **words**, and **grammar**.



Source: XPLANE Visual Thinking Sketch Notes.

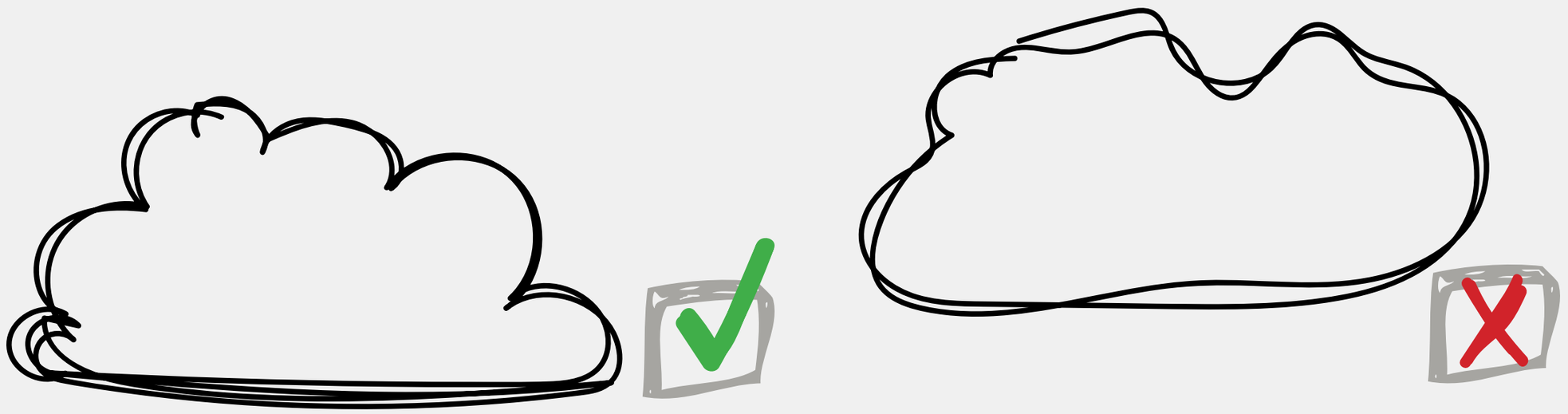
THE VISUAL ALPHABET

The **atoms of a language**. If you can create these, you can draw anything.

Point	Line	Arrow
Circle	Square	 Triangle
Curve	Oval	Infinity
Rectangle	 Polygon	Cloud

The key here is *distinctiveness*.

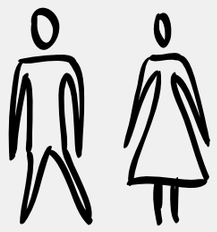
If you're drawing triangles, make sure they've got three angles.



If you're drawing a cloud, make it a cumulus.

VISUAL WORDS

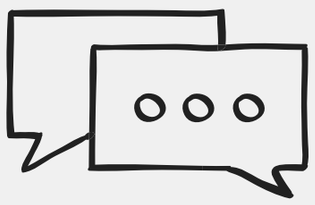
Combine shapes into objects to **represent ideas**.



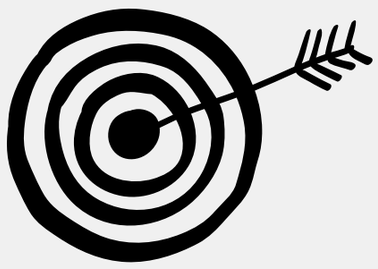
People

Idea

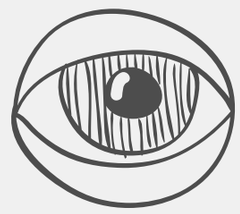
Search



Communication

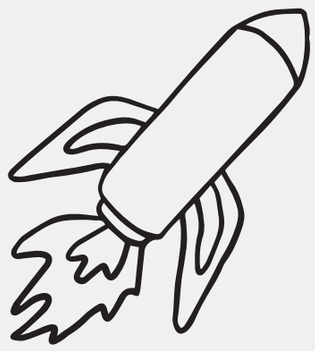


Goal



Vision

Timeline



Launch

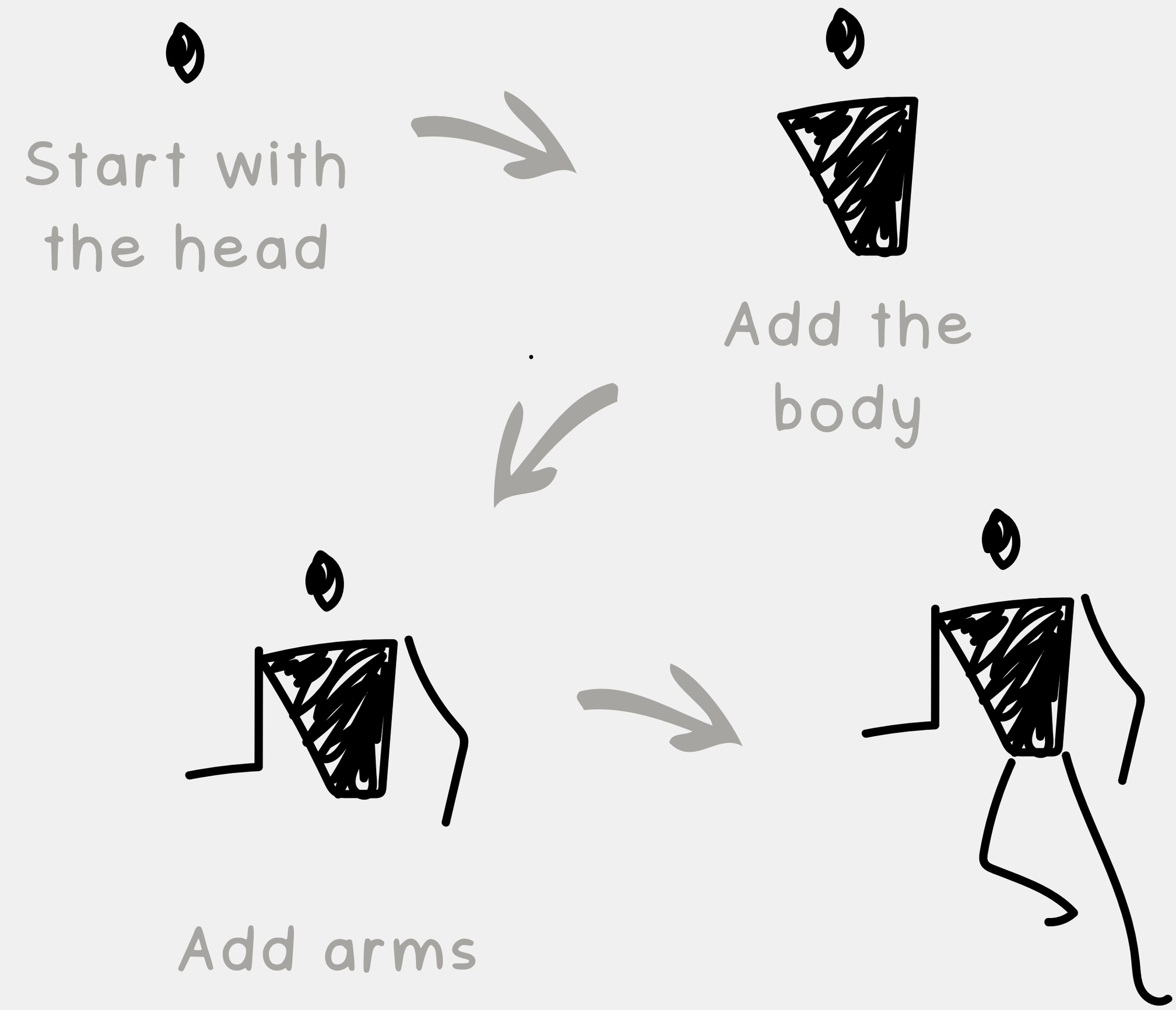
Security

Process

Speed

Agreement

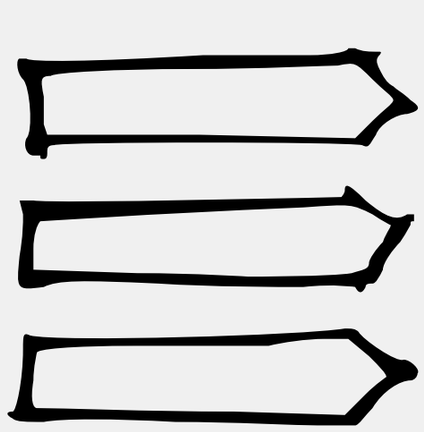
Remember, it doesn't have to be the *Mona Lisa*.



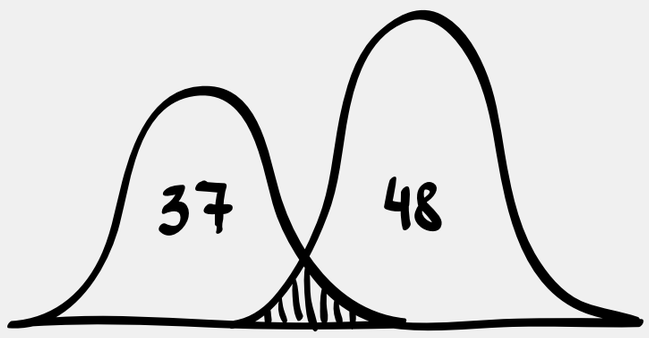
Channel your inner caveman.

VISUAL GRAMMAR

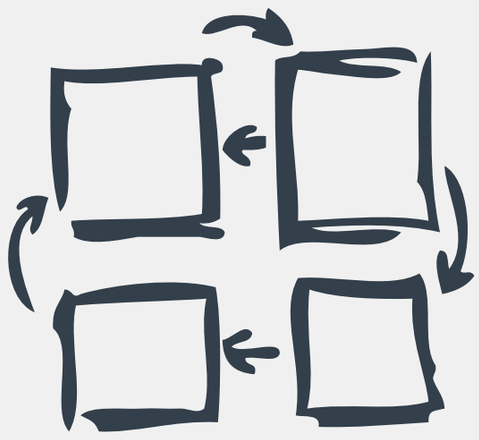
Finally, show **relationships** between objects to form diagrams.



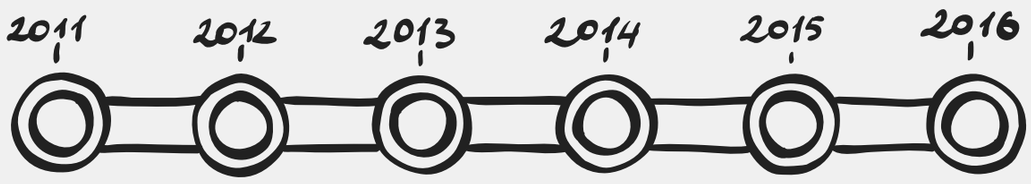
List



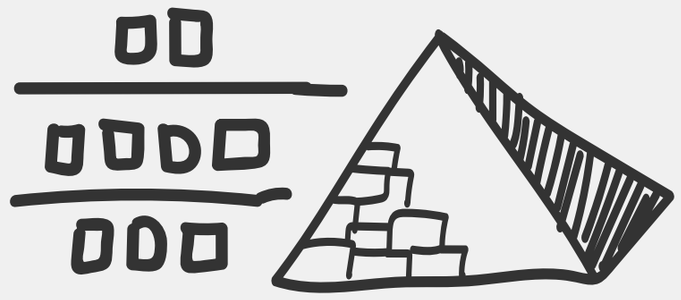
Comparison



Process

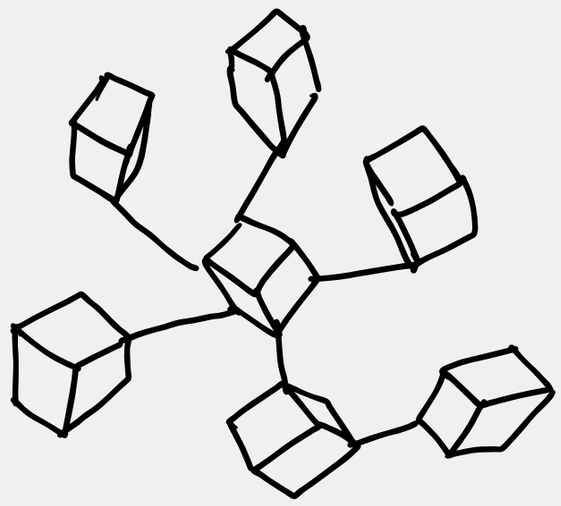


Timeline



Hierarchic

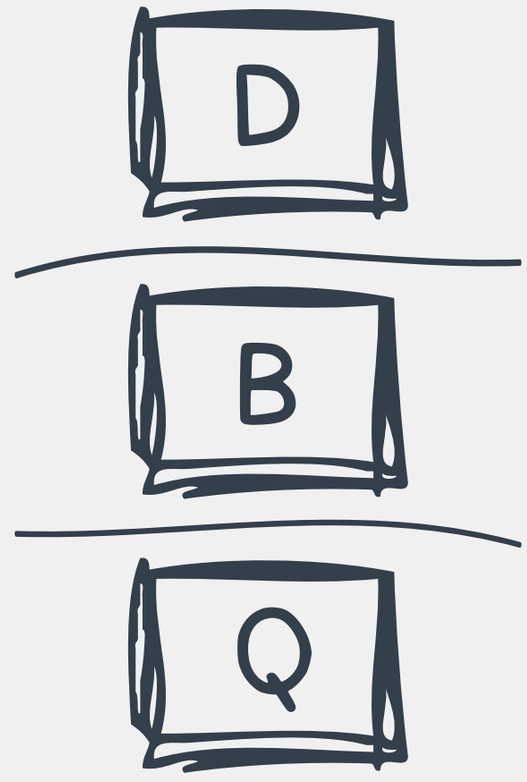
Geographic



System

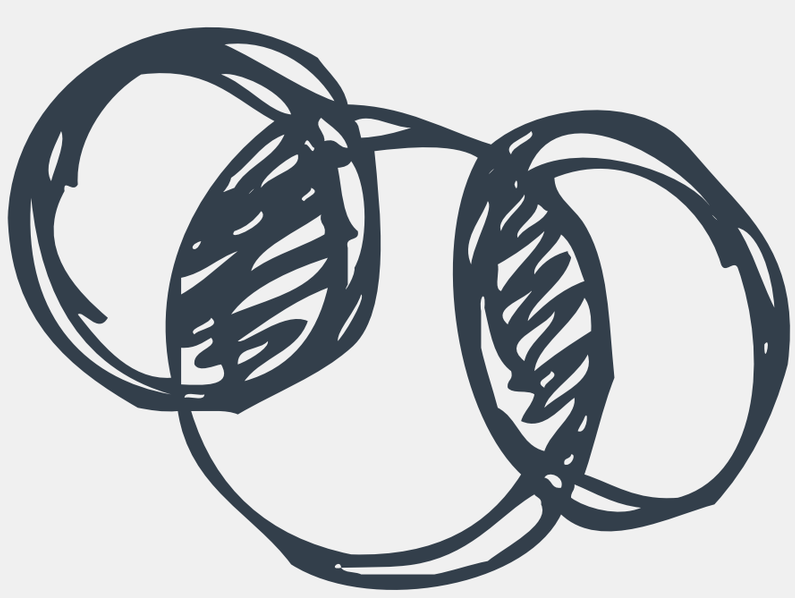
The key here is *knowing what relationships to show*.

"Project D is **more important** than Project B, which is **more important** than Project Q."



Hierarchic

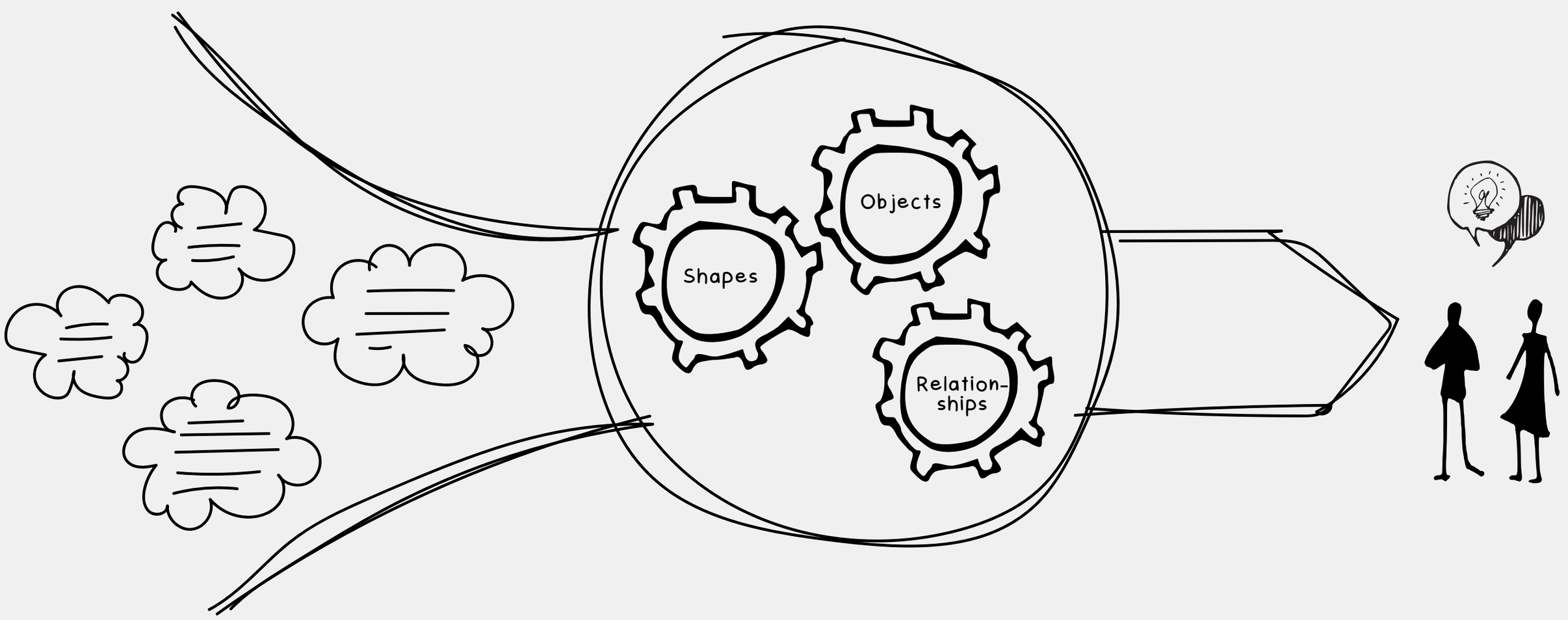
"Agnes handles **some** of Margo's and Lucy's work, but Margo and Lucy don't do the **same** work."



Comparison

VISUALIZATION

Altogether, Visual Thinking uses a visual alphabet, words, and grammar to turn **thoughts into pictures**.



The more **complex** the thought,
the more **useful** the picture.

"So, what does Visual Thinking look like in action?"

(Glad you asked.)

SCENARIO #1

Say you're given a logistics problem in which you need to identify the towns in Orange County that are **connected to three other towns**.

You know that one road runs from Abbey to Brown by way of Clinton.

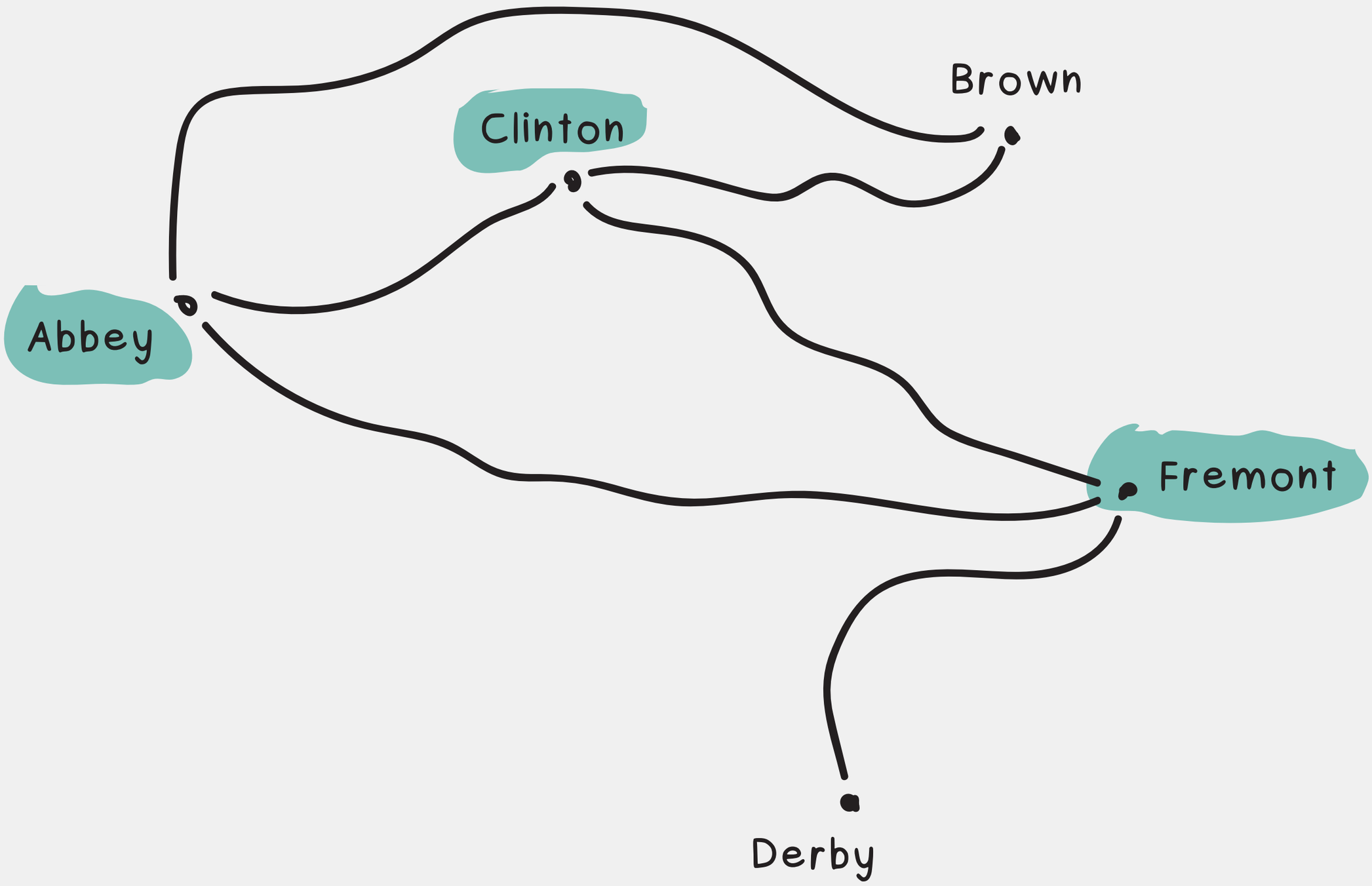
One road runs from Clinton to Derby by way of Fremont.

And another road runs from Fremont to Brown by way of Abbey.

Question: Which towns are connected directly to three other towns?

SCENARIO #1

Solving it in your head is tricky. But drawing a diagram practically solves itself.



Abbey, Clinton, and Fremont are all connected directly to three other towns.

SCENARIO #2

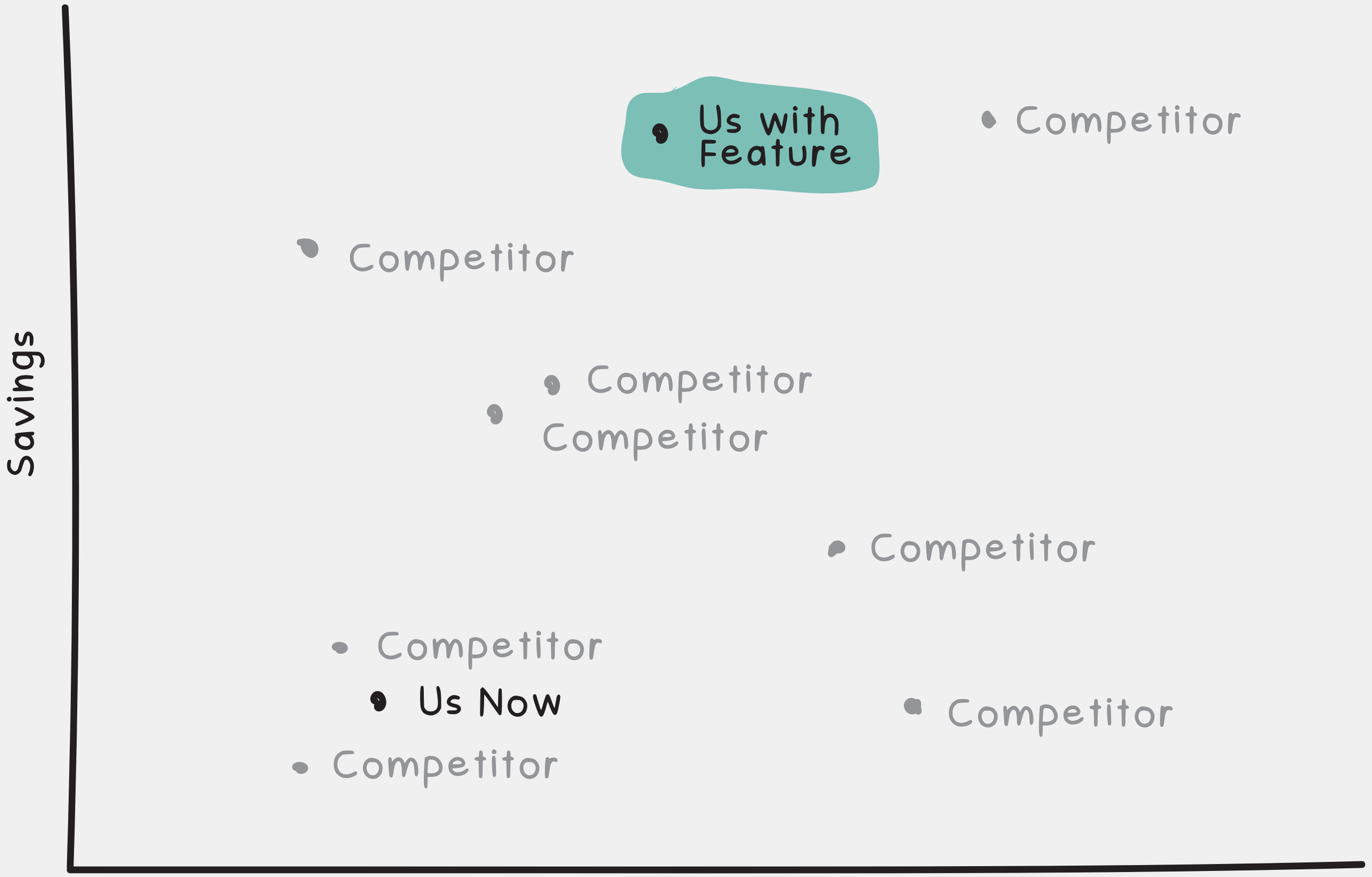
Now, say you're tasked with making a pitch for a **new product feature**.

You know how customers perceive us with our current product offering.

And you know how customers perceive our competitors.

Question: What's the best way to demonstrate the impact of the new feature?

SCENARIO #2



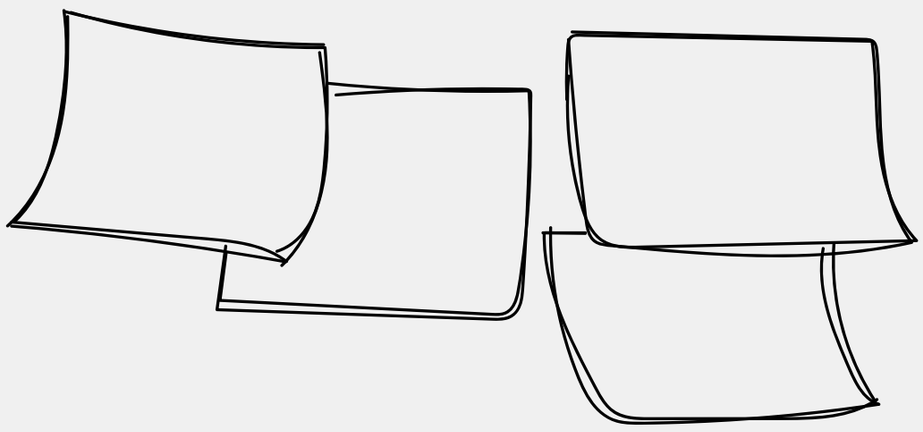
Drawing it out on a graph shows the feature's benefit in plain sight.

"Wow! Visual Thinking is awesome!"

(That's what I'm talkin' about.)

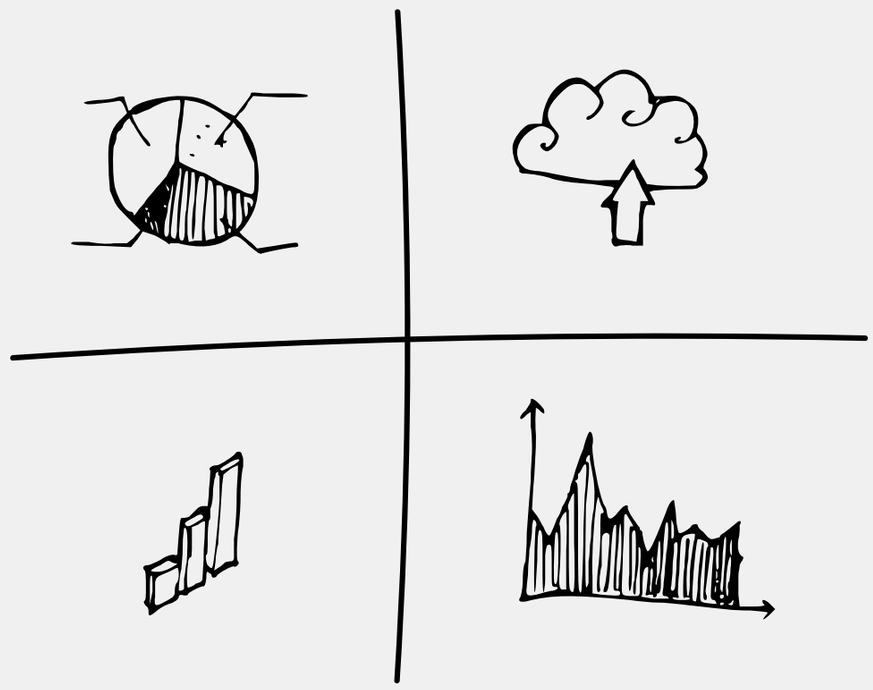
Use Visual Thinking any chance you get.

Brainstorming →



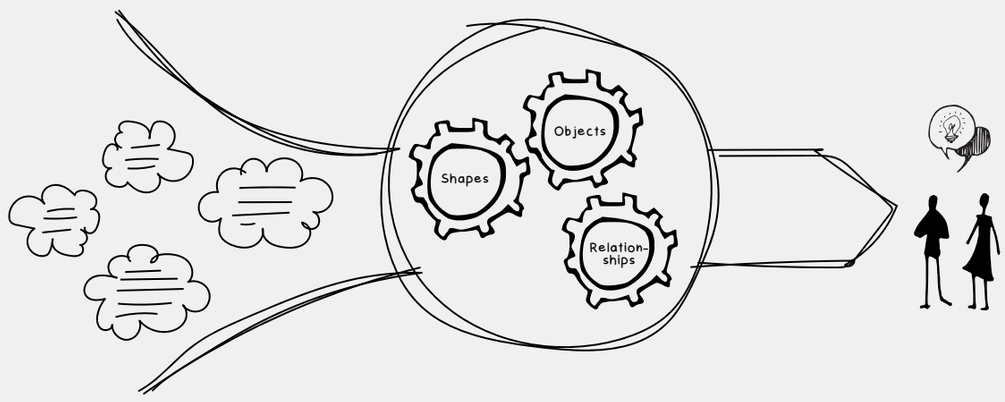
Use stickies and cluster ideas

Emailing project results →



Use an infographic

Promoting your team →



Use a framework

Now it's your turn.

Go forth and Think Visually.

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Thanks for reading!

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