CDS DS 594

Chapter Four: Focus Your Audience's Attention

1. A Brief Lesson on Memory
   a. Three types of memory that are important to understand as we design visual communications: iconic memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory
   b. Iconic Memory
      i. Happens fast
      ii. Piqued when we look at the world around us
      iii. Information stays in the iconic memory for a fraction of a second before it gets forwarded on to the short-term memory
      iv. It is tuned to a set of preattentive attributes, which are critical tools in visual design tool belt
   c. Short-Term memory
      i. People can keep about four chunks of visual information at a given time
      ii. Don't want to make the audience work to get a the information (run the risk of losing their attention)
      iii. One solution is to label the various data series directly
      iv. Want to form larger, coherent chunks of information so that we can fit them into the finite space in our audience's working memory
   d. Long-Term memory
      i. When something leaves short-term memory, it goes into oblivion and is lost forever or goes into long-term memory, which is built up over a lifetime and is vitally important for pattern recognition and general cognitive processing
2. Preattentive attributes Signal Where to Look
   a. Our brain is quick to pick up on the attributes that stand out from others
   b. People tend to associate quantitative values with some of the preattentive attributes
   c. Preattentive attributes can be useful for drawing audience's attention quickly to where you want them to look and creating a visual hierarchy of information
3. Preattentive attributes in text
   a. Subsequent blocks of text employ a single preattnetive attribute each
   b. Preattentive attribute grabs attention and some attributes draw your eyes with greater or weaker force than others
   c. We can employ preattentive attributes to create visual hierarchy in communications

d. Leveraging preattentive attributes to create a clear visual hierarchy of information establishes implicit instructions for the audience, indicating to them how to process the information
e. We can signal what is most important that they should pay attention to first, what is second most important, and so on
4. Preattentive attributes in graphs
a. Thoughtful use of color and text is one way we can focus the story
b. Repeated iterations of the same visual, with different pieces emphasized to tell different stories or different aspects of the same story can be effective since it allows the audience to become familiarized with the data nd visual first and then continue to leverage it in the manner illustrated
5. Size
a. Relative size donates relative importance
b. If showing multiple things that are roughly equal importance, size them similarly
c. Alternatively, if there is one really important thing, leverage size to indicate that (make it Big)
6. Color
a. Resist urge to use color for the sake of being colorful; instead, leverage color selectively as a strategic tool to hihlight the important paths of the visual
b. Use grey to allow for greater contrast since color stands out more against grey than black
c. Use color sparingly, use it consistently, design with colorblind in mind, be thoughtful of the tone color conveys, and consider whether to leverage brand colors
7. Position on page
a. Without visual cues, most members start at the top left of the visual or slide and scan with their eyes in zigzag motion across the screen
b. If something is important, try not to make your audience wade through other stuff to get to it. Eliminate this work by putting the important thing at the top