Visual Analysis Assignment

Design is integral to technical writing. From graphics to font, every design choice should effectively communicate the document’s purpose and enhance the text. Identifying visual rhetoric is important in learning what makes engaging and readable documentation. This assignment will analyze the visual rhetoric of the [Dell Inspiron 3780 Service Manual](https://dl.dell.com/content/manual38457938-inspiron-3780-service-manual.pdf?language=en-us&ps=true).

Rhetorical situation

The purpose of this service manual is to provide procedures for safely removing and replacing hardware in the Dell Inspiron 3780 laptop. Also included are reference guides for BIOS troubleshooting, driver updates, and system diagnostics. This means that the manual is only useful in the context of laptop hardware maintenance.

The manual was written for Inspiron 3780 owners and technicians looking to troubleshoot, replace, or dismantle their laptop. The straightforward writing style appeals to both groups and gives them the confidence to successfully perform laptop disassembly. While readers with different Inspiron models may find some useful information, they’re not included in the target audience because their models may require different procedures and visuals.

Visual language

The manual has dimensions of 8.27×11.69 inches. At 115 pages, the manual is divided into 61 chapters. The first five chapters convey safety precautions and standard introductory information, while the last few chapters have reference tables and guides for system setup. The remaining chapters are either about replacing or removing a specific piece of hardware.

Dell Replica is the only font used. Every title is colored blue and in bold, with chapter titles using font size 24, section titles size 20, and table titles size 10. The table of contents is bold, black, and size 10 font. Procedures are black, size 9, and usually in bold. Extra notes and table text are also size 9, but are in regular format.

Images serve as a visual aid for each procedure. The tables communicate lists of items, resources, and codes, alongside their corresponding meanings and attributes. For example, chapter 5 includes a table listing all the screws used in the Inspiron 3780, including columns for their location, screw type, quantity, and reference images.

Impact through cognate strategies

Cognate strategies are used in design to keep the audience engaged and informed. Technical writers use six cognate strategies, all of which are present in the service manual.

1. Arrangement

The manual follows a consistent arrangement. Because the chapter and section titles are similar in font size, their alignment differentiates them. Chapter titles are aligned to the right with the chapter number, while section titles (such as “Prerequisites” and “Procedures”) are aligned to the left with the notes and procedures. Visual aids, by default, are placed below each procedure. A step that requires its own visual aid will have one placed below it, before continuing to the next step. Notes and introductory text always precede reference tables to communicate their purpose.

1. Emphasis

Manuals that deal with cautious topics like hardware repair need emphasis. Procedures are always in bold to emphasize their importance. Important information is also presented through warnings, cautions, or notes. Warnings have a red triangle with an exclamation point inside it, cautions have an orange triangle, and notes have a blue circle with an “i” inside it. While some chapters have multiple notes, all of them have the same beginning note about reading the safety information before working on your computer. While repetitive, it catches readers who are skipping chapters. For example, readers wanting to remove their system board may skip to chapter 40 without reading the introductory chapters.

1. Clarity

Clarity is best seen in the “Procedures” sections. The visual aids depict a specific part of the Inspiron, and include arrows and numbers corresponding to the step taken in that particular location. Some images zoom into a specific area and gray out the rest. This makes the image easier to read and understand.

1. Conciseness

The manual utilizes conciseness by including white space through the margins and large space at the end of each chapter. Proximity is used to group section elements, such as prerequisites or procedures. To avoid confusion and create contrast, the section titles are in a large blue font, while their section information is in the regular size 9 font. Most procedure steps are only one short sentence, preventing clutter and information overload.

1. Ethos

To gain the reader's trust, the Dell logo is on the first page. This tells the reader that the manual is credible since it comes from the company that made the Inspiron 3780. Blue, Dell’s signature color, is used throughout, reassuring them that the manual is from Dell. To some, blue symbolizes trust, and the manual always uses lighter shades of blue to communicate calmness or safety. Links to other Dell resources are also scattered throughout, keeping the reader inside the Dell sphere.

1. Tone

Reflecting Dell’s commitment to safe laptop disassembly, the tone is professional and non-threatening. Same with emphasis, procedures are consistently in bold to highlight their importance. The manual has a limited color palette to keep consistency, reassure the reader that they’re reading Dell documentation, and not appear overwhelming or immature.

Conclusion

Dell’s Inspiron 3780 Service Manual is an excellent document to study and analyze visual rhetoric. The visual aids, tables, white space, and wording make the manual engaging and easy to follow. In emphasizing safety, the manual creates a sense of trust between the owner or technician and Dell’s documentation and technology.