

The Idea Shapers

The power of putting your thinking
into your own hands

Excerpt



Brandy
Agerbeck

Praise for *The Idea Shapers*

Once in a great while, a book comes along that turns on that lightbulb above your head. This is one of those books. As a lifelong doodler and drawer, I know I process the world visually—but it's easy to give up that spatial knowing for a more linear one, isn't it? Reading this book has re-sparked my visual way of interacting with the world, given me tools for doing just that, and created a deep sense of excitement and competence in being a visual thinker, once and for all. Thank you for this toolkit!

Patti Digh, Author of *Life is a Verb* and 7 other books
on living mindfully and intentionally

If, like me, you've stood with mouth agape, in awe of an impossibly, extraordinarily gifted person with the ability to visually explain and to draw pictures to record and even sort-of synthesize what other people are talking about: admit it.

You resent these people.

I did too, until I attended a workshop with Brandy Agerbeck, wherein she completely spilled the beans – showed us every trick in the book for doing like she does.

THIS IS THAT BOOK.

The Idea Shapers is the most approachable, dishy, memorable, implementable book on drawing in support of understanding and human communication you're going to have read this much of the blurb for: why haven't you clicked "add to cart" yet??

Dan Klyn, Information Architect and Co-Founder,
The Understanding Group, LLC

A new alphabet for the Visual Age. *The Idea Shapers* is an indispensable guide for the 21st century superpower of thinking critically and clearly in pictures.

Patricia Martin, Cultural Analyst,
author of *RenGen: Renaissance Generation*

Agerbeck's *The Idea Shapers* shares fresh insights from her years of strategic thinking. It's rare to find a book rich in systems that's clear and applicable right away.

Nancy Duarte, CEO of Duarte, Inc.
and best-selling author

Once again Brandy Agerbeck provides simple, clear and highly practical guidance for anyone who aspires to excel in visual thinking and facilitation. Brandy is a master practitioner and a natural born teacher. You can't do better than this book.

Dave Gray, Founder of XPLANE
and author of *Liminal Thinking*

In *The Idea Shapers*, Brandy Agerbeck shows us with compelling visual clarity that you don't have to be an artist to draw. And, that by drawing, we become more capable and creative problem solvers, expansive connectors of generative ideas and new possibilities, and more effective communicators. What are you waiting for? Pick up *The Idea Shapers*...and the pen!

Lisa Kay Solomon, Co-author of the bestseller *Moments of Impact: How to Design Strategic Conversations to Accelerate Change* and *Design a Better Business: New Tools, Skills and Mindset for Strategy and Innovation*

Brandy has crafted a rich encyclopedia of ideas, techniques and tricks to kickstart your visual thinking right away. Her years of experience leading rooms with her ninja-like visual skills will help build your skills immediately.

Mike Rohde, Bestselling author of *The Sketchnote Handbook* and *The Sketchnote Workbook*

The Idea Shapers is a wonderful, thought-provoking book for anyone who has wondered how visual thinking works. It holds terrific insights into the relationships between writing, drawing, teaching, learning, and making connections across disciplines. It's not just for artists, and not just for writers, it's for anyone who wants to challenge themselves to think in new and fresh ways.

Jennifer Farrington, President & CEO,
Chicago Children's Museum

The Idea Shapers is everything you wanted to know about being a visual thinking practitioner but were afraid to ask. Brandy takes us through a very thorough exploration of drawing as a thinking tool using twenty-four idea shapers. Each idea-shaper is unpacked rigorously and in detail, presenting a rich toolkit that will be of benefit to visual thinkers at all levels.

Andrew Park, Director of Cognitive
and Creator of RSA Animate

The Idea Shapers makes visual thinking accessible by showing how drawing-as-thinking expands your toolkit for puzzling through complex topics in order to clarify your ideas and make personal meaning. Explore the empowering process in this book, discover yourself as someone who draws, and open up new ways of engaging ideas and solving problems. You can draw and thereby think better, more creatively, and in more dimensions. How effective is *The Idea Shapers*? I drew this recommendation before I wrote it!

Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, Professor/Librarian,
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

As Brandy Agerbeck astutely points out in *The Idea Shapers*, the word "drawing" can imply not so much a completed, fetishized object but an active process, one that triggers a different sort of intelligence. Of course, we see this throughout the English language: we may draw pictures, but we also *draw conclusions*, we *draw inspiration* from our forebears, and when we have made up our minds about a difficult task we may *draw the line*. In this substantial new book, readers will learn how the act of drawing might be used to practice discernment

and sound judgment, and this is something from which we might all benefit greatly.

Ross Elfline, Associate Professor of Art History,
Carleton College

After fifteen years teaching Computer Science and building a 4000 square foot maker lab at our school (@LTMakers), the one thing I never thought I'd need to know or teach is drawing. Now, it is crucial that I do.

As the heart of my teaching has shifted from virtual and software-only problem solving to combined virtual and hands-on physical problem solving, there has never been a more critical need for me or my students to be able to relay thoughts, organize, and prototype ideas through pen and paper. Brandy's new book *The Idea Shapers* is helping our ideas see the light of day.

Jeff Solin, Computer Science Teacher,
Chicago Public Schools and Creator of Lane Tech Makers Lab

I have read and shared (gifted!) Brandy's first book, *The Graphic Facilitator's Guide*, and her new book, *The Idea Shapers*, is going to get the same treatment. As a visual communicator for 35 years (I was Director of Information Graphics at Newsweek for a decade), I found myself taking notes on visual storytelling concepts outlined by Brandy. As a teacher, she has a wonderful voice, a straight forward and accessible manner for conveying her knowledge and skills through words and drawings.

Karl Gude
Director of Media Sandbox,
Michigan State University

The Idea Shapers: **The Power of Putting Your** **Thinking into Your Own Hands**

Brandy Agerbeck

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Also by Brandy Agerbeck

Co-created with Pamela Meyer

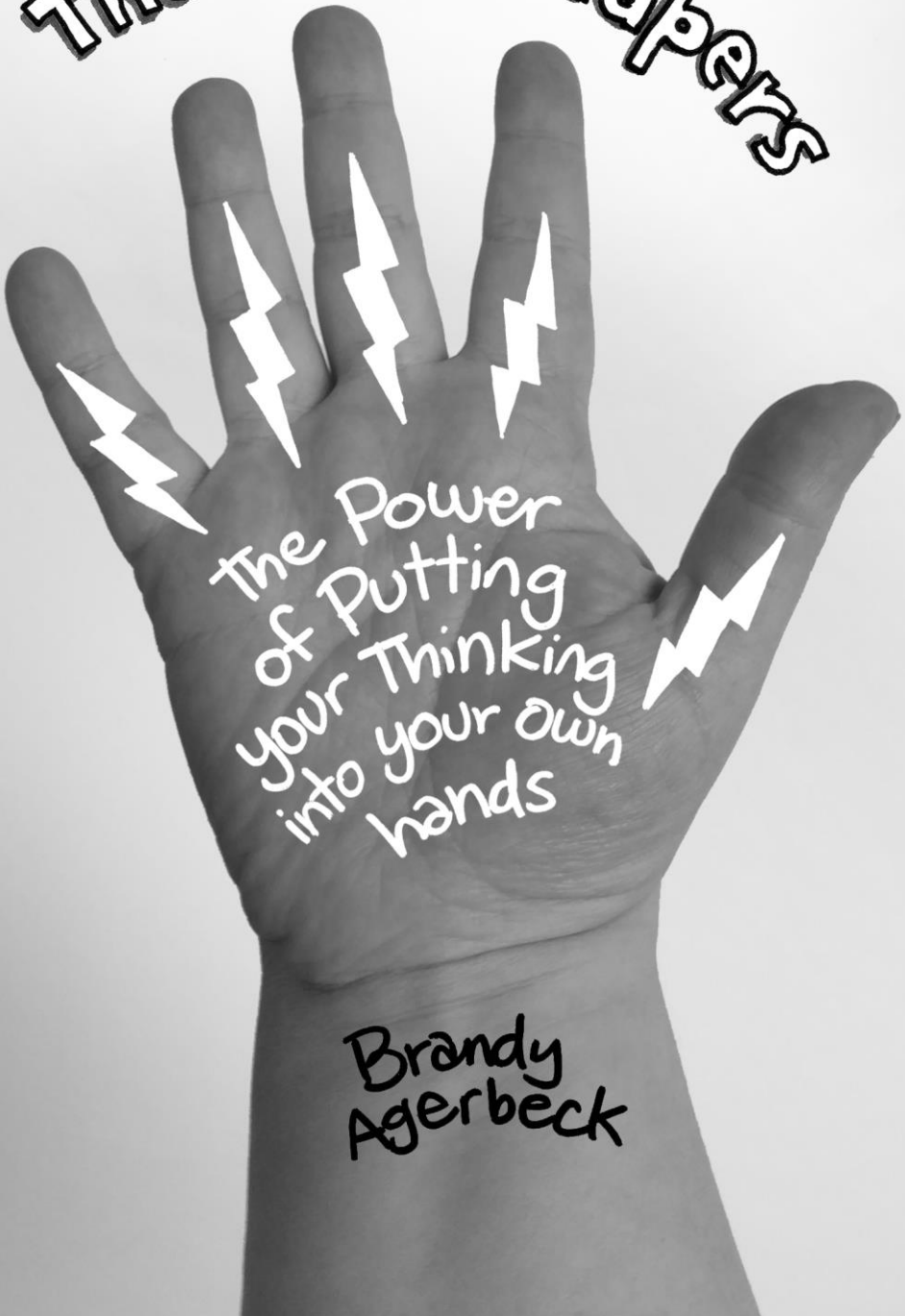
Permission: A Guide to Generating More Ideas, Being More of Yourself and Having More Fun at Work

The Graphic Facilitator's Guide: How to use your listening, thinking and drawing skills to make meaning

Anthology co-edited with Kely Bird,
Sam Bradd and Jennifer Shepherd

Drawn Together through Visual Practice

The Idea Shapers



The Power
of Putting
your Thinking
into your own
hands

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Agerbeck

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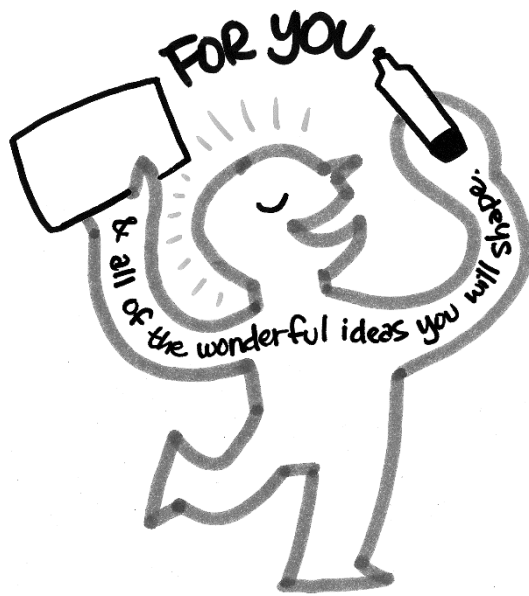
Page 2, 421: Mathias Weitbrecht

Page 285: TEDxWindyCity

Page 286: Steve Weinstock

Page 407: Guido Neuland

More resources at TheIdeaShapers.com







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The Properties + Powers of Drawing

Drawing is simple.

Drawing is tangible.

Drawing is spatial.

Drawing is physical.

Drawing is a powerful thinking tool because of these inherent properties.

When you turn your drawing switch back on, you give yourself a fantastically simple and powerful thinking tool. As we explored in *The Draw Quad*, there are many functions of drawing. This book focuses on the *Think* quadrant, on drawing as a process you use to clarify your thinking and make it concrete.

Drawing's properties will instill you with many powers. Let's look at four good reasons to pick up pen and paper and draw.

The Properties + Powers of DRAWING





Throughout this book, we'll focus on how endlessly useful drawing is as a mental and intellectual tool. Beautifully, the *physical* tools of drawing are extremely simple.

Paper and pen are accessible. Very likely, you already have the basic tools you need in your environment. If you don't, they are easy to obtain and affordable. While you could get fancy or fussy with your materials, I encourage you to keep them simple. Physical tools that are basic and ubiquitous are far more valuable than tools that are so precious or expensive you resist using them.

You already have tons of experience using paper and pen. Even if you stopped drawing at a certain age, you've likely never stopped writing. Your same experience making marks to form letters and numbers will serve you in making the simple lines, shapes and imagery you'll need to shape your thinking.

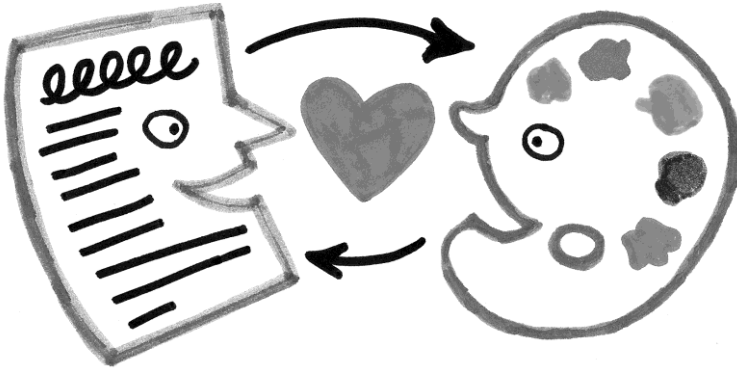
In *The Idea Shapers*, you will find new ways to use these basic tools to very productive ends; conversely, you may find yourself accessing old ways of working — habits you enjoyed before flipping your drawing switch off.

You can accomplish a lot with very rough drawings. Do not fret if your penmanship is rusty or your drawing skills are nil. You have two things in your favor. First, with idea shaping your drawing has an audience of one. As long as you create understanding for yourself, the marks you make on paper are working for you. **Messy drawings can still create clarity.**

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Second, like learning an instrument or a sport, practicing your writing and drawing strengthens your ability. You develop muscle memory and precision. **Practice makes progress.**

Words and images work together. Often when people tune into their visual thinking channel, they set up a false dichotomy — now images are good and text is bad. Or anytime they think of a word, they look for the visual equivalent. There need not be any antagonism between words and text. They are buddies. The content of your drawings will be a combination of the verbal (words) and the visual (shapes, lines, colors, images).



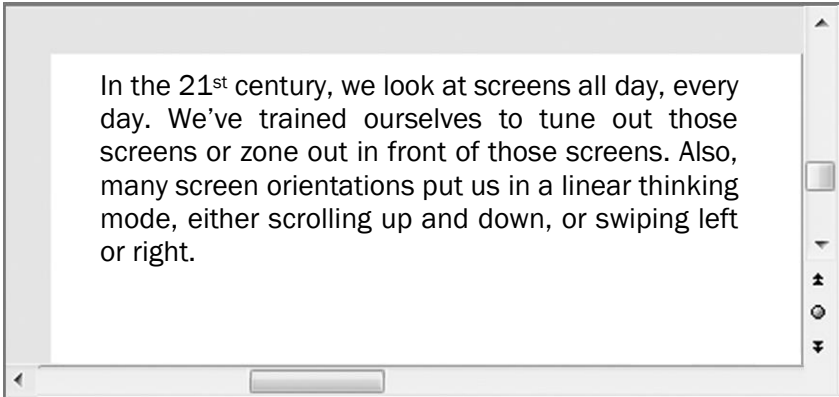
Paper and pen are endlessly adaptable. Both of these tools come in a vast array of sizes and colors. I do most of my drawing either on 3"x5" blank index cards with felt tip pens or on rolls of paper 4 feet tall with big markers. Big sheets of paper can be cut down to whatever size you need. You can fold paper however you like, tape it up, tear it in half, crumple it up when you're fed up, flatten it out again when you reconsider that discarded idea.

Paper and pen are portable. Okay, sure, index cards are easier to tuck into a pocket than a giant roll of paper. Still, you can tape a yard or two of large paper to a wall, then later, roll it up to tuck away or bring to a new space.

Paper and pen are low-tech. Yes, an ink pen will go dry (eventually) or you can fill a sketchbook (eventually), but (in the meantime) these tools are still ridiculously easy to use. No batteries to recharge (aside from your mental ones), no passwords or software updates.

Wither digital?

If using a program on your computer, tablet or phone allows you to draw more, by all means, go for it. But please consider this:



Real, live, physical materials can facilitate spatial thinking in every direction. There is something beautiful and powerful about using physical, tangible, non-electronic tools to work out your thinking. We'll explore this further when we discuss the other three powers of drawing.

Get your hand on tools without an on/off switch and see how they may inspire you to think differently than you do with your devices.

Which paper? What pens? How to choose your materials

You will discover your best tools through experimentation and experience. Here are a few very simple criteria for selecting your tools of choice:

They are accessible. You can afford the materials and they are always around and ready to use.

An enduring love for office and art supply stores can be a symptom of a kinesthetic and visual learner. Fetishizing supplies can create

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the curse of the beautiful journal that never gets touched, because it is “too nice” to use. I want you to *use* your materials versus admiring them from afar.

You can shape an idea on very “lowly” materials. On the back of an envelope or napkin with a ballpoint pen. You could collect the backs of can wrappers, insides of cardboard boxes, the back of now-irrelevant printouts. Aren’t those in constant supply?

No matter what you choose, they must be close at hand.

They are healthy. Since you are getting up close and personal with these materials, please take good care of yourself.

My college art degree focused on intaglio printmaking. While I loved the medium and what I learned, in four short years, I felt the damage done by being exposed to acids and solvents and all the other chemicals. Please pay attention to how your physical materials impact your body. I choose water-based writing implements and avoid the toxic fumes of alcohol-based pens or the messy particles of chalk medium.

They are useful and adaptable. First and foremost, use materials that feel good to you, that behave the way you want. If you don’t like the feel of a paper under your fingertips, you won’t enjoy drawing on it. Likewise, if the ink bleeds on the paper or smears easily, drawing will be an unpleasant experience.

Some markers and pens are easier to control than others. For instance, the long, tapered flexible nib of a brush tip marker or drawing with brush and ink can create a variable line. In an experienced hand, these materials can do beautiful things. To the new drawer, a brush-tip marker may feel squirrely and out of control.

A bullet tip marker has less variety but more control. The nib’s base is stable and draws the same at any angle. The majority of drawings in this book were drawn with a fine, bullet-tip marker.

When I work at a larger scale, I use chisel-tip markers because they can be held three different ways, resulting in three thicknesses of line in one pen. I have learned through practice how to make one

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marker very versatile. When I teach my three-day visual thinking immersion, The Lab, I give my lab partners what I use professionally, BigOne markers from the German company Neuland. These giant chisel-tip markers take some practice to handle well, but they are so adaptable.



Experiment so you can choose your few, simple tools that you are most comfortable with. And always have those tools at hand. **And use them.** The more you practice with your tools the more confidently you'll use them and the more uses you'll discover for them.

The Materials I Choose

I prioritize my health, consistency and sustainability. I cannot handle any kind of fumes. I prefer smooth paper, not rougher paper with a “tooth.” I like having a wide variety of colors to draw with — my refillable markers even allow for color mixing — though I default to a smaller palette of favorite colors.

My idea shaping tends to range from 15 square inches of an index card to 32 square feet of paper in my graphic facilitation work. I need a couple smaller nib sizes for working small, a couple larger nib sizes for working large.

This book began as stacks and stacks of 3"x5" blank index cards and two felt-tipped pens — one black, one yellow.

In all my graphic facilitation work, I walk into my clients' meeting spaces with a roll of paper that's 4 feet tall and a case with 24 markers: 12 colors, each with a thicker and thinner chisel tip marker.

I do all my best drawing and thinking work with those simple tools. It's not about having hundreds of different markers or pens. Or about having the most types of paper. **It is about learning how to use a few very, very simple tools well.** And I will teach you just that throughout this book.



Storage corner of desk holding drawing supplies

A Large markers in about 20 colors

B 48-inch long rolls of paper

C Artist tape

D Cardstock, letter size and tabloid size

E Storage cubbies (myriad of supplies, not all drawing materials)

F Blank index cards

G Small markers

H Sketchbooks, especially love the thin, Landscape-format

I Filled index cards

J Erasers

TANGIBLE

The Power of Getting your Ideas out of your Head & Onto Paper

Beyond the ridiculously simple physical tools of drawing, is the ridiculously simple act of getting your ideas out of your head and onto paper.

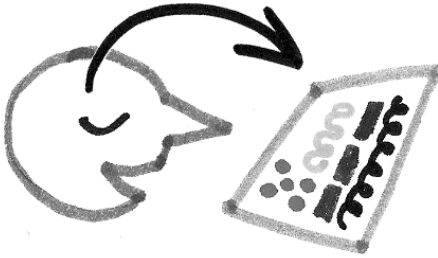
Consider the ever-increasing sources of information we encounter every day. We continually fill our head with new messages, piling on top of the older ones and the oldest ones we've been carrying around for a long time. This is tiring. This is overwhelming.



You know what feels good? Getting some of those ideas out of your head. Relieving yourself of the burden of carrying all those thoughts. Putting these ideas in their place on a piece of paper. **Drawing makes your ideas tangible.**

You create a place for your ideas to go so they no longer clog your head or divert your attention. When you get your ideas out of your head and onto paper, two things happen:

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Drawing reduces the feeling of overwhelm. First, you free up space in your mind where you were holding that thought. This is one of the biggest benefits of drawing for me personally. I find when countless items turn in my head and stress me out, they end up being a lot fewer

items when I get them on paper. The thoughts were simply playing on repeat and had nowhere to go.

The transparency of drawing can be scary. You may be facing a problem or an idea for the first time. Seeing your thoughts in stark black and white can be disconcerting, but remember —

Drawing is your first step in making your ideas a reality. This critical first step begins your process of making your idea come to life. Placing your idea on a surface allows you to see it from a new perspective, try different angles and relate this one idea to others you've made tangible.

Now you've begun to make that idea as physical as the paper you put it on. This leads into the next two powers of drawing.

Complexity

360°

SPACE

The Power of Shaping your Thinking

SPATIAL

Once you have made your idea tangible by putting it onto a piece of paper, you now have the opportunity to shape it, push it around, make new connections and identify relationships between ideas. **You can take your drawing into any direction on the page, because drawing is spatial.**

We are three-dimensional people living in three-dimensional space. When we were little kids, we crawled over everything, put half of what we found in our mouth. We wriggled and jumped and grabbed stuff to get a sense of our place in the world. **We used our whole bodies to learn.**



Part of "growing up" was sitting still. Often in desks, often for long chunks of time. Young or old, we are asked to learn, to think, to make sense of the world by looking at flat surfaces: book pages, printed pages, computer screens, slides projected onto screens, chalk boards, white boards, bulletin boards. These surfaces chock full of words. Words in straight lines, lines piling up into pages of text.

We create and consume far more text than we ever have before. Our access to information is endless and immediate. Text surrounds us, unless we actively choose to limit our sources.

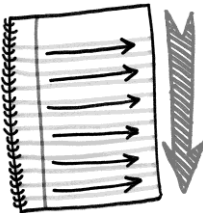


We all have learned how to navigate the reading experience. We start in the upper left corner. We read from left to right, from top to bottom. (Other language systems may read right to left or vertically, but they still rely on lines of text written in a consistent way.) Consistency of writing allows you to tell a story: to convey a message in an ordered way.

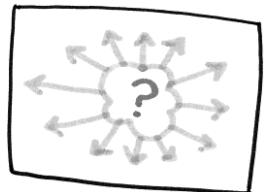
Text is a mighty fine *delivery system* for information. It can be a difficult system for *digesting* complex information.

The Idea Shapers aims to give you the tools to navigate, process, absorb, and make sense of all of these inputs coming at you.

Again, we are three-dimensional people living in three-dimensional space. "Dimensionalizing" our thinking allows our ideas to take any shape they need to. Thoughts no longer have to follow in a straight line. You have 359 other directions to go. This opportunity lets you take in multiple information sources and discover how they fit together. How the pieces relate to one another. What form they take.

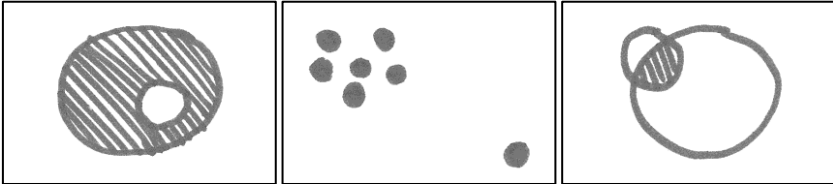


Drawing is spatial. While you may work on a flat piece of paper, you can place your ideas anywhere on the page. You don't have to move left to right, top to bottom. You can relate two pieces of information in any direction, 360 degrees.



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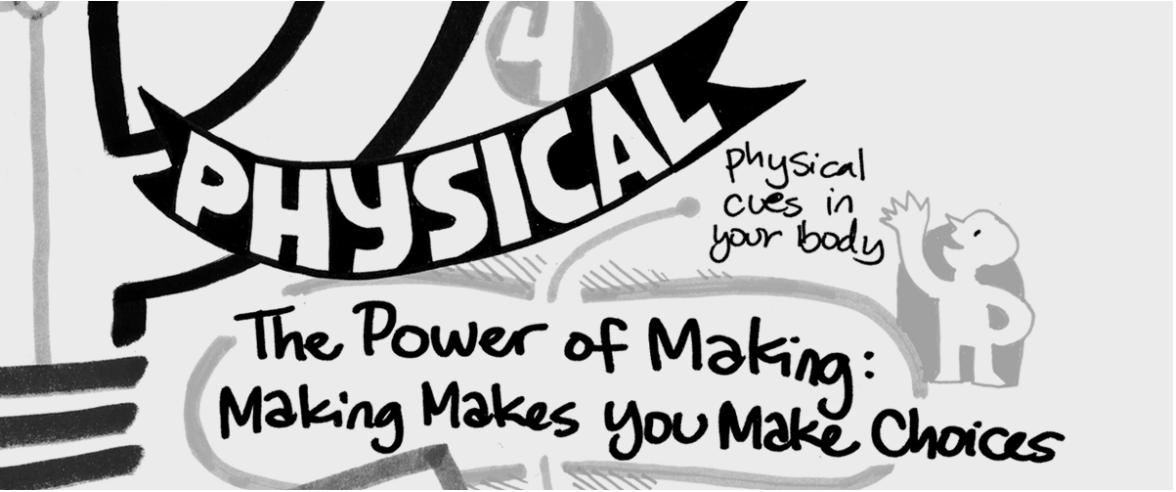
Thinking spatially handles complexity more adeptly. Linear thinking forces your thinking into a sequence. One idea, then the next, and then the next. Spatial thinking allows ideas to sit next to each other, to huddle in groupings, for an idea to be held within another, or overlap, for an idea to be an outlier, far away from the others. Throughout this book, you'll learn countless ways to represent relationships between ideas.



If we look at one notebook page, one screen, one slide, we only view a piece of the whole. When we flip to read the next page, it is difficult to retain the former. Creating a drawing, especially with Idea Shapers like **The Landscape** and **The Poster**, we can see everything at once.

Spatial thinking develops your ability to see new perspectives. It allows you to rise up off of the surface of the page and scan the whole picture. It allows you to focus on a specific detail in your drawing and see a problem from a specific vantage point. You can switch vantage points. Drawing lets you see how the pieces fit together to create a whole.

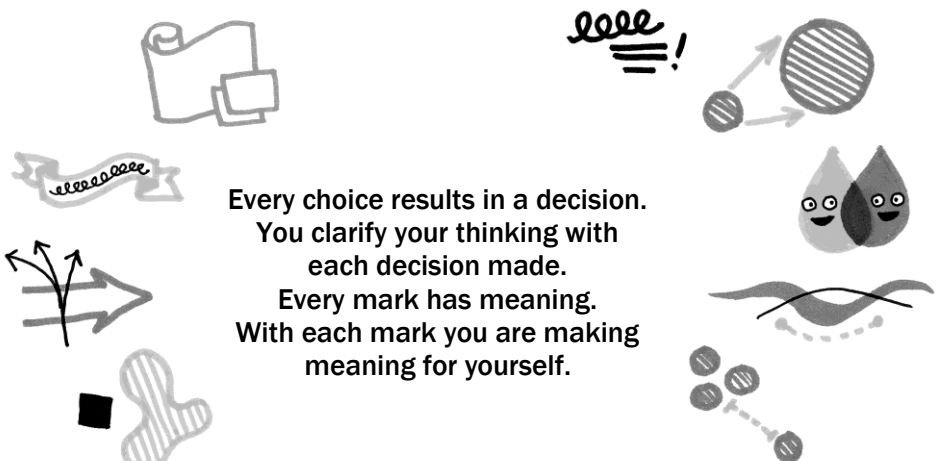
By breaking the tyranny of the straight line, we are faced with exponentially more options. No need to get nervous. This leads into the next power of drawing.



As was shared in The Draw Quad, we focus on drawing as a process. We evaluate a drawing's success by what it allows us to do. We hush our Inner Critic from judging the drawing as a product. Still, we are *making* a drawing.

Within the making of a drawing are countless choices. A power of drawing is in the choices that make a physical drawing. When you use any of the Idea Shapers, you are making physical objects. A drawing. A stack of cards. A giant map. A tiny icon. In your object-making you make a multitude of choices: which pen to use, which color, what surface to draw on, what to draw.

When deciding what to draw you will also make many decisions about your content: Does this idea belong in this drawing? How do I phrase it? Is there an image that supports it? What is the placement? Size? Style? Color? How does this one piece relate to the other pieces I've already established on the page?



**Every choice results in a decision.
You clarify your thinking with
each decision made.
Every mark has meaning.
With each mark you are making
meaning for yourself.**

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Choosing, deciding and meaning-making need not be daunting. Each Idea Shaper is one simple tool, one visual thinking concept. You can use and assemble them any way you like. And as you develop more experience and competence, you'll discover which tools work best for you and in what situations.

Just as your drawing hand gets stronger and more confident through practice, so do your visual thinking muscles. These choices will come faster and more easily. Again, practice makes progress.

A decision you make need not be definite. Every time you shape your ideas, you explore, experiment, iterate. Again, idea shaping is drawing as a process, not a finite product. Therefore, each drawing you make is a step closer to understanding, meaning-making, solving. If a drawing isn't working, change it. If a drawing really isn't working, grab a new piece of paper and try again. Since all you need is paper, pen, you and some time, the risks are low and the rewards are many.

These choices are interdependent. No Idea Shaper stands alone. And one decision will invite more. Many decisions will happen simultaneously. On the next pages is a list of the types of choices you make in visual thinking, with Idea Shapers listed that connect to each type of choice. These discrete pieces are accessible and learnable. As you work, you'll find yourself building one Idea Shaper onto another, giving you a robust set of tools that will ease your drawing and your meaning-making.

An Overview of Your Choices

Materials

What will I draw on? How does the form (shape, size, quantity) of my materials support my work?

The Idea Shapers that focus on material choice are:



The Stack



The Poster



The Landscape





The Postage Stamp


Content


What will I draw next? Do I begin my drawing with a central image or a structure in mind? What is the next piece of relevant information that I put on my page? Does it take the form of text, a line, a shape or a whole picture? What patterns and themes emerge as I work?


The Idea Shapers that help you structure content:


 The Objective

 The Lasso


 The Retort

 The Investigator

 The Filter

 The Integrator


 The Anchor


 The Activator

Scale

How does the scale of my drawing support my **Objective**? How big does the next thing I draw need to be? Is it the same scale as other items on the page to create consistency? Is it larger or smaller to support an organizational hierarchy? Does it need to be humongous or teeny tiny to create contrast?

The Idea Shapers focused on questions of scale:

 The Poster

 The Pyramid

 The Postage Stamp


Color

In what color does this item need to be drawn? Is it the same color as the last item, or do I need to differentiate it from other items? Am I choosing a color that creates harmony or discord with the other colors on the page? Does the color need to recede on the page or pop forward? How am I limiting my color palette to make sure my color choices are meaningful?

The Idea Shapers that help you make color choices:

 The Spectrum

 The Fill

 The Trio

Proximity/Placement

Where am I placing this new element on the page? Does it need to sit close to another item to show that the two are related? Does it need to be set apart to show it is distinct and separate from what is on the page? How does the placement of this item relate to the page? Does it follow a structure or shape for the whole drawing? Does being in the center of the page or on the periphery matter to this item's meaning?

The Idea Shapers with proximity/placement choices:



The Cluster



The Anchor



The Buffer



The Integrator

Line

What will I draw to show relationships between items? Is a line connecting two items? Is a line forming a containing shape around an item or a grouping of items? How do the color, thickness and quality of the line represent the nature of the relationship I am drawing?

The Idea Shapers that use the power of line choices:



The Connector



The Container



The Flow



The Lasso

Shape/Form

What shapes am I drawing to create distinct areas of meaning within the drawing? Am I using shapes to create boundaries between different categories? Would overlapping shapes distinguish different relationships? How does the color, scale and line quality of this shape change its meaning?

The Idea Shapers with meaningful shape/form:



The Container



The Flow



The Anchor



The Integrator



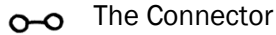
The Lasso

The Idea Shapers • Agerbeck

Direction

How am I creating movement in my drawing? When do my ideas need to be shown in a sequence? How do my eyes and mind travel around the drawing?

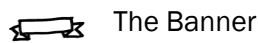
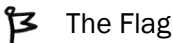
The Idea Shapers for expressing direction:



Labeling

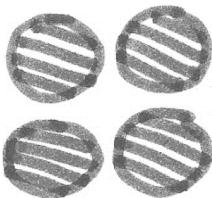
When am I choosing to name and label an item or a grouping? How am I using scale, color, shape and treatment of the label to support the content of the idea?

The Idea Shapers that help form your labeling choices:



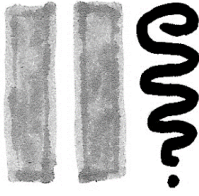
Consistency and Contrast

A huge amount of your visual thinking will come down to this last pair of choices. Our brains are pattern seeking machines, constantly looking for what does and doesn't fit together. When you choose to draw related items consistently (like making all the bullets in a set the same or using logical color coding) your brain can focus on the content, not incidental inconsistencies. When you actively single out an item and make it different from its neighbors, that pattern-breaking item will pull your focus toward itself. Take advantage of pattern-making and pattern-breaking in your work.



Consistency

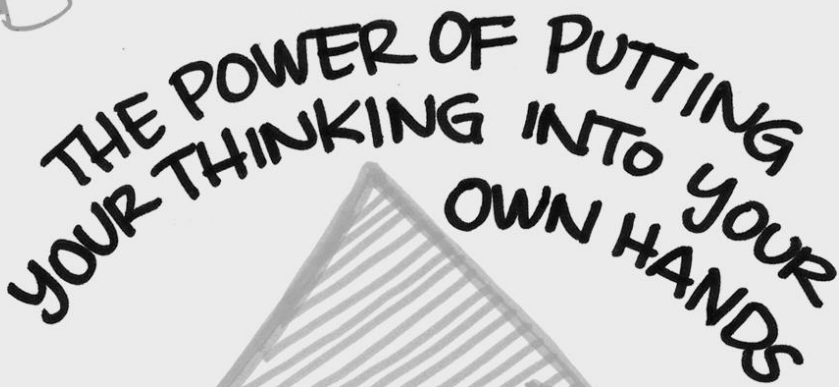
Am I creating patterns of color, shapes, lines that help create understanding in my drawing? Am I choosing motifs that set up organization in my drawing? Am I using the motifs consistently?



Contrast

Where am choosing to show differences in scale, color, shape, line to show a contrast in ideas? How am I breaking consistencies in my choices to represent a juxtaposition between two items?

Making physical drawings will give you important physical cues. As you use your body to make these choices, decisions, drawings — listen. Is your gut giving you clues? Are there points where you feel more tension or perhaps a wave of relief? Getting out of your head, you may find yourself tuning into your body. Notice what signals your body gives you as you shape your ideas. This is vital information.



THE POWER OF PUTTING YOUR THINKING INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

These beautiful, simple materials of paper and pen. The relief and new perspective of getting your ideas out of your head and onto paper. The ability to break linear thinking to push and shape your thinking in any direction. The act of making, chock full of choices. The simple, tangible, spatial and physical properties of drawing all add up to the most vital power of all —

You are putting your thinking into your own hands. You are making meaning for yourself. Instead of passively receiving information, letting it accumulate until you feel overwhelmed, or simply ignoring it, **you take action.** You are an agent of your own thinking. Your thoughts or ideas don't control you; you are in control. Through these simple physical materials and simple processes, you become a clearer, more critical, more competent thinker.

No one can make your drawings the way you do. Your drawings are personal. Your drawings are your own. You bring your life experiences, your culture, your preferences and biases, and your skills to your work. This is your unique perspective.

While I poured all of my experience, culture, preferences, biases and skills into this book, I look forward to seeing how you make these Idea Shapers your own.

It is impossible for me to make un-Brandy drawings. That's what comes of four decades of practice. And I don't expect or want you to make Brandy drawings. I want you to make your own drawings, find your own style. Being yourself is so much easier than trying to mimic someone else. I strived to make The Ideas Shapers easy to learn and make your own.

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You will make meaning in your own way. You'll find through practice what works for you. Over time, you'll see patterns emerge in how you make drawings and how your thinking shifts as you use these concepts. A classroom or an office of people could be given the same objective and the same physical materials, but each person will tackle the assignment in their own way.

Your work and the tools you choose will shift depending on the task at hand. In some cases, you'll start with a blank sheet of paper and see what shape emerges. Other times, you may actively be shaping content to a specific end.

If you know you need to come up with three posters for your classroom, you may make three separate, large-scale sketches. Working large gives you the opportunity to step back and see how the drawings work in their environment. If you begin to outline your next book, a pile of index cards can start you off right, giving you the chance to sort and shuffle as part of your shaping. Wrestling with a difficult decision? A single, plain piece of paper can hold the pieces of your quandary and help you see the situation for a new perspective.

As you use the Idea Shapers, you become an Idea Shaper.

You may not feel comfortable being called an artist, or even a drawer. I hope, through practice, you'll come to call yourself an Idea Shaper. Much like the double meaning of the word drawing, "The Idea Shapers" stands for both a set of visual thinking tools and for the person with the agency and courage and discipline to pick up pen and paper and draw. The world is complex. Every one of us is learning, navigating and seeking understanding. **We need you and your idea shaping.**

And now, onto the first step and your first Idea Shapers!



“A new alphabet for the Visual Age.”

Patricia Martin, cultural analyst, author of
RenGen: Renaissance Generation

Long to feel less overwhelmed? Wish for clarity in your decision making? Looking for lucidity in your thinking? Seeking confidence in your communication?

The simple solution is at your fingertips.

Paper and pen.

In this guide, Brandy Agerbeck reveals using drawing as your best thinking tool, making visual thinking attainable and enjoyable through a set of twenty-four Idea Shapers. Each concept combines fine art and facilitation to turn abstract ideas into concrete drawings that help you do great things.

