

# Mission Innovation: Why Visual Storytelling Is Crucial in Business-to-Business

RALF M. RUTHARDT

## Abstract

Innovation alone is not enough—how it is explained to the market is crucial. Especially in the sensitive mission phase, when new products or solutions first encounter customers, communication about success or failure is decisive. Today’s business-to-business (B2B) target groups are under enormous pressure to stay informed; their attention spans are short and their willingness to read long texts is declining. Traditional communication quickly reaches its limits here.

Visual storytelling offers the solution: Images, videos, infographics, and interactive formats make complex issues easier to understand, lower cognitive barriers, and strengthen emotional connections. Studies such as the LinkedIn report *The Art & Science of Video Storytelling* show that marketing measures lose relevance without visually strong elements.

This article shows why visual storytelling is not a “nice-to-have” for start-ups and innovative companies but rather a strategic lever. It provides practical recommendations, identifies risks, and illustrates how companies can present their innovations in such a way that they are understood, remembered, and accepted by the market.

**Keywords:** storytelling; innovation; marketing; product management

## Introduction

Let's imagine a company that has a significant innovation in the pipeline that will take businesses a big step forward in digitalization. Marketing measures are launched to explain the innovation to the target group—and nothing happens. Months later, potential customers have already dismissed the news as irrelevant. Sometime later, a competitor appears and enjoys resounding success.

What could be the main reason for this? The company was unable to successfully explain the innovation and its benefits to the target group. It used too many words to describe the wealth of features and, in doing so, conveyed complexity above all else. It also ignored the limited time available to potential customers. Visual storytelling counteracts this.

Let's illustrate this with an example from around thirty years ago. Imagine a company that has brought a sensational innovation to market maturity. At that time, banks used to send payment details to account holders digitally in SWIFT format. Suddenly, the invoice and customer numbers provided by customers were no longer only available on a printed account statement but also in the electronic account statement. Yes, there was a time when printed paper was the basis for posting account statements in accounting departments. The fact that this changed was an opportunity for *innovative* software solutions at the time.

With the advertising message that account statements and thus customer transfers could now be posted automatically, the added value of an accounting manager was explained in two sentences. It was immediately apparent to potential customers that this would result in significant personnel savings. The functionality could be explained in a few words and the added value was obvious. It was a “paradise” for the market launch of this software solution.

When supplier invoices, customer orders, and many other business processes were automated a few years later, complexity arose. Such innovative solutions now consisted of several components, including neural logic,

workflows, and integration into enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems such as SAP. Two sentences were no longer enough to explain everything. It became complicated—and I myself experienced how elaborate marketing measures did not bring desired success. Too often we got lost in the details of functionalities when communicating with interested parties and failed to meet people where they were in terms of their technical and technological knowledge.

Let's go back to the beginning: In 2025, a company is in the start-up phase or wants to launch an innovation on the market. It faces a key challenge: How can it generate understanding, credibility, and enthusiasm in a very short time given that the attention of interested parties is limited and stakeholders are often confronted with high cognitive hurdles? Such hurdles can arise when subject matter is complex or explained using technical jargon.

One could argue that the digitalized world has simply become complicated or even complex. However, the promise of digitalization is different: simpler. Automated. Scalable. Attractive return on investment (ROI). Accordingly, the expectation of decision-makers is: Explain it to me in a way that I can understand with my knowledge and experience—and explain it to me in the limited time I have available for this decision.

This is where visual storytelling comes into play. This refers to narrative forms that rely heavily or predominantly on images, diagrams, animations, or videos. In the context mentioned above, this type of storytelling becomes a decisive factor. This is because the “missionary phase” is particularly risky for innovation. The aim is to communicate the unknown or even unimaginable to the target group in such a way that the probability of success and added value are highly rated. Success means that the innovation will work and added value is of great importance because it ultimately determines the speed of a purchase decision and the price.

In this “missionary phase,” visual storytelling is not just a nice add-on for entrepreneurship, but a necessity in our time. Let's take a closer look.

## The Missionary Phase: Characteristics and Requirements

I use the term *mission phase* here to refer to the phase in which a start-up or innovative company is no longer just developing a product but wants to bring it to market—a product or solution that goes beyond what is generally expected. In this phase, it is important not only to convince potential customers but also to bring them to a new level of knowledge and understanding. They must understand the function and primary benefit (USP) of the innovation and at the same time assess whether and how they can use it in their company. This must be done as efficiently as possible because decision-makers have limited attention, patience, and willingness to read in depth.

In the past, as shown above, innovations were often easy to communicate linguistically. For years now, we have been reaching the limits of acceptance among target groups when it comes to the sole use of language—written or verbal: Explanations of terms are needed. Abstract functions and technical details have to be put into words, which can be difficult, tedious, and potentially misleading.

Visualization significantly shortens the process of explanation and understanding. Here are some plausible reasons why visual storytelling is particularly important in the mission phase of an innovation in a B2B context:

1. Reduction of cognitive load and shortening of comprehension time.
2. Addressing more senses and more impact.
3. Appealing to multiple senses and greater memorability.
4. Gaining attention in a flooded information landscape.
5. Trust, credibility, emotionalization.

Let's look at some empirical evidence. In its report *The Art and Science of Video*,<sup>1</sup> LinkedIn Creative Labs shows that creative, visually powerful videos

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1. LinkedIn Creative Labs, *The Art & Science of Video Storytelling* (LinkedIn, 2025). [https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/marketing-solutions/global/en\\_US/site/pdf/wp/2025/the-art-and-science-of-video.pdf](https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/marketing-solutions/global/en_US/site/pdf/wp/2025/the-art-and-science-of-video.pdf).

are a key driver of campaign impact in B2B campaigns. In other words, the very short attention span and the audience's tendency to "switch off" are among the biggest challenges. Without strong visual or video-based storytelling elements, there is a risk of losing relevance.

Let's take a look at some neuroscientific aspects. Visual information is processed much faster than text and helps build trust and memory. It is now common knowledge that younger generations have a short attention span (approximately eight seconds). Nevertheless, this fact should be acknowledged. And once interest has been aroused, even complex content can be absorbed, provided the introduction is visual. The rationale behind this requirement for visual storytelling is self-explanatory. Our everyday lives are full of information. A lot of it floods in. The most nonsensical and unimportant stuff often grabs our senses with images, sound, and effects. In this social and communicative context, how is it supposed to work if important info is reduced to text? If marketing wants to be effective, even in B2B, it has to simplify complexity through visual storytelling, shortening decision cycles and making positive decisions possible.

Let's ask ourselves what visual storytelling might look like in the missionary phase. Explainer videos and product demos are key tools in the mission phase of innovations. They make it possible to immediately demonstrate the features and benefits of a solution—ideally in an interactive format. It is crucial that these formats are short and focused, highlight the most important USPs, and use a clear story structure: from the problem to the solution to the specific benefits, best illustrated with practical examples.

Infographics and process diagrams that visualize complex processes and structures are equally valuable. They reduce cognitive load by making connections visible at a glance. The key here is to use a consistent visual system and reduce complexity to the essentials—less is often more.

Interactive visualizations or augmented reality applications can be particularly effective. They allow users to explore content themselves and thus build a deeper understanding. Since these formats are resource intensive, it is advisable to start with pilot projects in order to gain experience.

Visual case studies link innovations to specific use cases, creating a human connection. Potential customers can identify with similar situations and more easily understand the benefits. It is important to ensure transparency, make clear before-and-after comparisons, and—where possible—show the ROI.

In addition, data visualizations and dashboards play a key role in making key performance indicators (KPIs), trends, or effects understandable and transparent. They help decision-makers make informed assessments. The top priority here is simplicity in presentation and regular updates.

Last but not least, visual brand and design systems ensure a consistent visual identity. Consistent colors, typography, symbols, and templates create recognition and make it easier for even smaller teams to create consistent communication materials.

As effective as visual storytelling is, it must be approached professionally. Over-visualization can be distracting or even appear unprofessional. The costs and effort involved should not be underestimated, especially in the case of complex video formats, for example. Added to this are cultural differences in the interpretation of visual codes, technical access barriers on the customer side, and the challenge of validly measuring the ROI of the measures. The latter in particular can become a risk if you position yourself with expectations that an expert audience can immediately refute.

Here are a few recommendations from my experience as entrepreneur:

- Visual storytelling should be planned early on, not just shortly before market launch.
- A “minimal viable visual story” is often enough to make an initial impact—it doesn’t have to be the perfect video or dashboard right away.
- An iterative approach with testing and feedback loops helps to continuously increase comprehensibility and relevance.
- A consistent design system and clear story architecture are cornerstones of coherent and credible communication.

- Different channels and contexts require adapted formats; a pitch deck has different requirements than social media.
- For global orientation, visuals should be as universal as possible or specifically localized to avoid cultural misunderstandings.
- Finally, it is important to define metrics for success in order to be able to demonstrate the impact of visualizations.

Let's return to our corporate scenario. A competitor enters the market and utilizes visual storytelling. This can be decisive in determining that they achieve market success, despite entering the market later and possibly offering an inferior innovation, while our example company does not. Therefore, in the mission phase of innovations in the B2B sector, visual storytelling is not a luxury but a strategic lever. It enables complex innovations to be communicated with maximum time efficiency, facilitates understanding across language and cultural barriers, attracts attention, and builds trust. Start-ups and growing companies that consistently use these tools have a better chance of successfully establishing their innovations on the market.

