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Rebranding Visual Feedback as a Product-Making the Unspeakable Visible

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REBRANDING VISUAL FEEDBACK AS A PRODUCT

**Rebranding *Visual Feedback* as a Product:
Making the Unspeakable Visible**

by

Nicolette Wever

A Project
in Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

December, 2017

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Rebranding Visual Feedback as a Product

Why do visuals work and why do they have such impact on the process of change? Because visuals connect directly with feelings, they have the power to improve the life of others. They have the power to improve and enrich communication. They have the power to handle information overload and they have the power to bridge cultural differences. ‘Images speak louder than words’ because images are connected with emotions in our long term memory. When ten different persons look at one single image, they see ten different things. Like a mirror, the image reflects ideas in the mind of the person. It makes the unspeakable visible. And that is a wonderful starting point for *Visual Feedback*. This project investigates the need for visual thinking in general and for *Visual Feedback* in particular. Different sources are explored in relation to creativity and visual thinking, drawing from scholarly theory and practicing professionals from the field. By looking deeper into the ‘why’ of the product and how to apply it in the field, an explanatory animation is expected to develop, showing the value of *Visual Feedback* to the client.

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Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
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15 December 2017



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Student

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose and Description of the Project

The topic for this paper is the re-branding of a service I already provide, called *Visual Feedback*. My rationale for selection of this topic is that I truly believe in *Visual Feedback* as a product that fits me and has a potential to grow. I love drawing and illustrating combined with helping people developing themselves and find their talents. It gives me positive energy. This method/product connects my talent and my wish to improve the quality of life for others. I am convinced that we must become aware of the ways we can use visual thinking to improve our way of thinking, communicating, and collaborating. Looking at the overload of information the only way to cope with it is to communicate in a more visual way.

What is *Visual Feedback*

Visual Feedback is a service I developed about 10 years ago. During my work as illustrator and designer starting in 1991, I provided also internships for University level students of an Academy of Art. I started to visualize our communication during coaching sessions to clarify, emphasize or illustrate information to elaborate better comprehension for me and for the student. I learned that drawing and sketching on the spot, while talking with each other, really opened up the possibilities for solutions. As the internship often turned out to be more of a personal coaching in the creative field it worked well to use visual metaphors as conversation starter. I often used subtle humor in my drawings that seemed hit the nail on the head. It was not unusual for a student to burst into laughter or in tears, as the visual analogy made him aware of something he didn't know before. Poze concludes that "metaphor is a way to voyage back and forth between the so-called left

brain and the so called right brain" (as cited in Parnes, 1992, p. 193). Current research by Kara D. Federmeier, a professor of psychology and neuroscientist at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, shows that the idea of a split-brain is yet rather old. However it seems safe to say that we use all sides of our brains almost all the time, we change the use of our brain when we get older: Bilateral patterns tend to switch to bilateral patterns in healthy older adults. This might occur because older adults might have better learned how to be both logical AND creative? She says: Maybe ;-)
(<http://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2013/12/02/248089436/the-truth-about-the-left-brain-right-brain-relationship>.)

Working with visual metaphors and analogies suited other professional domains very well also, but by then, I didn't know why. Ridell provides some insight. He explains:

Neuroimaging has demonstrated that while metaphor, simile and analogy activate some areas of the brain in common, they also each activate different areas. This suggests that creative language has had sufficient evolutionary importance to be processed within more than one neural system (Riddell, 2016).

Around 2005 I decided to offer my visualizing skills to trainers and organizations in the field of personal development, change management, municipality, health care and business training. It was quite a risk to work in a field that is quite different from what I did before. I was used to working quietly on my own, take time to think about ideas, incubate and reflect. Now I had to think of ideas on the spot, and weave observations, visuals, metaphors and text into a whole concept. This work required an intense and dynamic way of applying. It required skills like diagnosing, listening, thinking, drawing, summarizing the content, asking questions, keeping an overview, facilitating group work, time keeping

and much more. In fact, I needed to use my affective, cognitive and metacognitive skills at the same time. Trainers discovered the added value of visualization and started to hire me to enrich the mostly verbal process with imagery and graphics. I truly enjoy working with other people, listening to their ideas and visualize what they have in their heads but can't get out. During the session the development process of the attendees was enriched by the visuals and gave a different dimension to the meetings. I think it is because images work as a catalyst for change: they have the power to make *The Unspeakable Visible*.

For this graduation project I chose focus on reviving my business as an independent visual thinker and communicator, building on the existing service/method and product *Visual Feedback*. I will be developing a skill and talent I already have: drawing other people's stories. I will use visuals to improve the quality of life of others. Besides that I will develop a new skill: Making a short and appealing (white-board) animation to brand my product *Visual Feedback* and the prior service in a visual way. It will be the result of a valuation plan for my business as visual facilitator. This valuation will be based on the method as described in Simon Sinek's 2009 book the book *Start With Why*. Finding answers to the WHY, HOW and WHAT of *Visual Feedback* will result in a clear mission and vision. I'm very much looking forward to it!

Personal Goals

What I intend to get out of this project is improving the method/service/product by giving it reason for existence and proper credibility. Implementing the knowledge about creativity and creative change I acquired in my master study, and about the domain of visual thinking acquired in my last academic papers will build a theoretical framework for my opinion. I want to discover and develop the unique or added value of *Visual Feedback*

to the existing market of change trainers communicating the unique selling points. In addition, I will strengthen my voice as creative change agent by finding a gap in the market and a different direction for the future. Last but not least I will develop a new skill: making (white-board) animations.

Why Visual Thinking is Badly Needed

There is a need for visual thinking because it has the power to handle information overload, it has the power to improve and enrich communication. It has the power to bridge cultural differences, and therefore it has the power to improve on the life of others.

It Has The Power To Handle Information Overload

Taking in account the enormous amount of data that comes our way via expanding means of communication, researcher Robert Horn (2003) is convinced that visual language offers a promising approach to deal with impediments in communication. He argues that visual language can enhance the development of human thinking skills in the next ten to fifteen years.

Because of the fast and powerful effect visual language offers, it opens up the potential for enlarging human brainpower, the capacity to grasp, understand, and more efficiently synthesize large amounts of new information. An example of one of the methods that can provide overview and retention is the method of Thinking Maps developed by David Hyerle in 2014. It consists of a framework to visually organize thinking, to remember and synthesize information, and reproduce it in a personal way.

Another method that shows similarities has been developed as visual assessment tool for students by Dutch researcher Frits Pals at the RUG (Rijks University Groningen).

I recently interviewed (F. Pals, personal communication, August, 25 and September, 8, 2017). He is working on publishing an article about his research in which he argues that a visual way of teaching and learning is much more effective than assessing students with a language based test. He loved the method/product *Visual Feedback*. It is great to find likeminded people to work with and we are inspiring each other with publications, insights and new ideas.

It Has The Power To Improve And Enrich Communication

To communicate more effectively, we should use a tight integration of words and visual elements, also called 'visual-verbal language'. People remember 10% of what they hear, 20% of what they read, but 80% of what they see (Lester, 2006). Horn states also that "combining visuals with text improves communication and learning by 89%" (2003, p. 3). The speed of the brain in understanding visual communication has to do with the fact that it affects us both cognitively and emotionally. Visual clues enhance imagination and stimulate creative thinking because, according to Parkinson (2012) both brain hemispheres are addressed. Visualizing complex information helps us process the information more effectively and increases understanding and retention. That is one of the reasons why *Visual Feedback* works so well.

It Has The Power To Bridge Cultural Differences

Today multilingual collaboration, globalization and multi-dimensional awareness are key and visual language offers the most promising method to address new and highly demanding requests (Horn, 2003). It works so well because visuals, symbols and icons are known and used worldwide in different cultures due to the fact that they have a semantic meaning and take up less space compressing a whole concept into one image

(Broek, 2015). Using a mix of words and images also spreads the communication load. They are effectively used by designers in society communication because they can visually define a whole concept in one image and so take up less space in the brain. David Sibbett, who is a well known visualizer in Silicon Valley, takes his inspiration from designers and architects and looks into how complex organic systems are organized. He states that visual language is able to bridge apparent contradictions – by just visually shifting perspective. Example: Ups and downs in our lives can be visualized as a peaks and decrease diagram whereby the connection between those as action-reaction, suddenly becomes clear as before they would appear as two random happenings (Sibbett, 2014).

A good place to find visual communication examples that speak to many different cultures is an airport. This is the place where a huge amount of people from all over the world need information, quick and clear: Without demanding to read a stack of paper printed in a hundred different languages, an icon says it all. Icons are timeless, sustainable and time saving. Moving to an era where multilingual cooperation, globalization and multidimensional perception are mandatory, visual language and Visual Feedback as part of creative behavior is indispensable in society, business and education.

It Has The Power To Improve On The Life Of Others

Silverman (2005) contends that about 60 % of the people are mainly visual thinkers, yet a majority of our communication is language-based. Silverman states that there are two types of learners: Auditory-Sequential learners, who learn in a step-by-step manner, and there are Visual-Spatial learners who think in images and need the big picture. According to her seminal research in 2005, she found that 30% of people are Visual Spatial learners and 30% are a mixture of both. So, in fact most of the population

struggles to compose the big picture from just words. They need to visualize an image (in their heads) to transform information into knowledge. Those people can recognize themselves in a more visual way of communicating which *Visual Feedback* provides. Offering *Visual Feedback* will show them that there are other ways to organize information and communicate effectively.

Visual Feedback is a means to capture concepts during a meeting and as a model participants can take away to use for themselves. As part of visual communication for me it offers two main directions to improve the life of others:

First, when I am hired as change agent, *Visual Feedback* is helpful during meetings, company presentations and brainstorm sessions. Conversation contains a lot more than just words. Images, metaphors and visual analogies are used to decode text and direct attention. At the emotional level visuals connect with feelings and associations. They enhance imagination and stimulate creative thinking because various regions of the brain are engaged. This will lead to a more holistic approach to the challenge that appeals to the whole human, not only the cognitive aspects of the brain. Therefore people will literally *feel* happier.

Second, when I am hired as change agent, I can set an example to broaden the concept of communication. With attendees of a session I create a map of images, keywords, symbols and directions of thought that make stage for a creative mindset. Usually the atmosphere of a *Visual Feedback* session is relaxed, inspiring and fun. By showing how to use simple visuals for their own benefit (during meetings) and for others (their children, students) they will be able to discover their personal potential. This will also enhance their creative mindset. By observing my work and realizing that this is just

another way of dealing with information, not a matter of intelligence, people will gain confidence. Maslow (1954) writes in this theory that when the self actualization needs are improved, the personal growth and peak experiences will grow. By discovering their potential their lives will improve.

Why, How and What of Visual Feedback

Why

Although I didn't actively advertise for *Visual Feedback* the last years, I didn't stop drawing. As a designer I am familiar with the work the classic creativity researcher Rhodes (1961) describes as "the process of reorganizing knowledge (general or specific) and articulating that synthesis so that other people can understand the meaning." (p. 305). In conversations with my team of lecturers, in front of the classroom explaining, attending one on one coaching sessions with my students and during the frequent meetings at the University, I still feel the need to transform information into an image. This is done with humor, because I like to show a different perspective in making unusual visuals connections. Colleagues find it helpful to get a *visual* report of the meeting, with every topic clearly illustrated in images and a few words instead of ten pages condensed text. *Visual feedback* is also very helpful during brainstorm sessions, company meetings and developing and committing to a vision.

Visual thinking is an effective way to solve problems and activate change. It creates awareness, offers a skillset and a positive attitude towards growth. Creating change is pro-actively looking for places to bring about new solutions and approaches (Puccio et al., 2012). *Visual Feedback* makes use of an indirect and creative approach to solve problems, just as lateral thinking does.

Lateral thinking is a term which was promulgated in 1967 by Edward de Bono. It is solving problems by using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic. Lateral thinking, E. de Bono argues, is most effective in making connections and thus finding novel ideas. Visualizer Dan Roam (2014) stated:

There is nothing more powerful in discovering a new idea than to draw a picture; there is no quicker way to develop an idea and test it, than drawing a picture; there is nothing more effective when sharing an idea with others, than drawing a picture.
(p. ix)

According to my experience, *Visual Feedback* is a powerful engine for change, both personal and in teams, especially using visual metaphors and analogies. It leads the discussion away from personal focus, bringing a more distant view. Visual communication creates active participation, enhances imagination, provides overview and clarity and improves group memory and productivity. In conclusion: Visual communication functions as a true catalyst for change. This is especially true if the organization is used to work with a lot of text, as the use of visuals can be a relief.

How

For me, *Visual Feedback* is making the unspeakable visible. Visual communication is powerful, fast and connects directly with our emotions. Words, concepts, and ideas that are not hooked onto an image, and will go in one ear and out the other. Words are processed by our short-term memory (Parkinson, 2012, p. 8) and that makes them more volatile. Images connect directly with our emotions. We remember

images better "because they go directly into long-term memory where they are indelibly etched and processed in our long-term memory" (Parkinson, 2012, p. 7).

Therefore the situation might occur that when ten different persons would look at one single image, they see ten different things (Zadoks, 2008. p. 13). The reason is that like a mirror, the image reflects ideas that resonates in the mind of the person. It shows the perspective from which angle the image is perceived. It calls upon the subconscious. It makes the unspeakable visible. That is a wonderful starting point for *Visual Feedback*.

During a meeting, company presentation or brainstorm session I communicate the flow of ideas, topics and visions by drawing. As an observer, I listen and capture the content of the dialogue in sketches. When those images are shared with the audience it creates a different mindset because it helps people to connect with the content via images instead of words. Some people feel more at ease using metaphors or images than abstract concepts.

Visual Feedback also creates awareness, because 'Seeing is believing'. Seeing is believing is an idiom first recorded in this form in 1639 that means "only physical or concrete evidence is convincing". It is the essence of St. Thomas's claim to Jesus Christ, to which the latter responded that there were those who had not seen but believed. It leads to a sophistry that "seen evidence" can be easily and correctly interpreted, when in fact, interpretation may be difficult. If you see the drawing of your thoughts, they are materialized into a concrete tangible picture thus convincing and presented as if it already exists. Visual metaphors use an image to create a connection between different ideas. Imagery unlocks the unconscious. The use of visual metaphors helps to keep the discussion away from personal focus, bringing a more distant view. It creates team feeling

and awareness and is a powerful engine for change, both personal and in teams. A visual exploration of a vision or mission will invite people to create a clear common goal that is supported by the whole team. A byproduct of this product is a safe creative environment in which people feel safe enough to draw and speak out on their underlying sentiments. That way images are a catalyst for change.

What

Most trainings are forgotten, but with visuals you can extend the learning by creating a visual reminder of your goal, vision and/or success. Training is a service, but there is also a product connected to it which is offered to you at the end of a session or a series of sessions. A tangible product as a reminder will make the effect last much longer. A product like big charcoal drawings on the wall made in co-creation, visual reminders like a postcard with a personal goal, a poster with a visual summary of the session, a commissioned company artwork with mission and vision visualized, you name it!

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

My investigation into the literature will be concentrated on three relevant thinking directions: *Start With Why* by Simon Sinek (2009), the Creative Skills of E. Paul Torrance as described in the book *Making The Creative Leap Beyond!* (Torrance & Safter, 1999) and Visual Thinking as described by Hyerle & Alper in 2014 in *Pathways to Thinking Schools* (2014) and Horn, in *Visual language and Converging Technologies in the Next 10-15 Years* (2003). Occasionally in my process I will certainly use the broader concept of creativity as presented in *Creativity Rising, Creative Thinking and Creative Problem Solving in the 21st Century* (Puccio, Mance, Switalski & Reali, 2012).

Start With Why

Reading the book of Simon Sinek *Start With Why* (2009) provide a concise method to realign my current story. For Sinek, starting with *Why* means seizing three clear business, leadership and marketing opportunities. Two examples: The Celery Test and the Golden Circle are presented next.

Celery Test: Align your portfolio – and behavior – with the ‘celery test’. If you start with *Why*, consumers can look at your range of products or services and immediately know what you’re all about and what you stand for. It’s like seeing a supermarket basket full of healthy products, including rice milk and celery. But if you have a bag of M&Ms in the basket, the message is muddled and the power of *Why* is diminished. So take the Celery Test – is your product line-up coherent in signaling *Why* you do what you do? Likewise for your behavior, do your ‘what’s’ signal a consistent ‘why’? If not, you are missing out on sales and success.

Golden Circle: If you want to motivate people to buy your stuff, start everything with *Why*. The research, the concept board, the design, the communication. *Start With Why* is a useful framework, and I've found (in teaching this method in class) that the Golden Circle and Celery Test are practical tools that can guide motivational research and innovation. Ultimately though, whilst Sinek talks the 'Why' talk, for us, what he's really saying is that what matters is not the 'Why' but the 'Who'. Smart marketing is about helping people be who they are and want to be (Sinek, 2009).

Besides this literature, I will also use the book *Copy & Concept* by Thobokholt (2014). This book is about finding a good concept, composing a brand identity, how to tell the story behind the brand and what media to use. I will also interview some designers specialized in brand identity and ask for advice how to re-brand *Visual Feedback* as a product.

Creative Skills

A quick look at the creativity skills I use in my work, they are mainly: Listening, Being Aware of Emotions, Highlighting the Essence, Identifying the Problem, Visualizing it Rich and Colorfully, using Humor and Fantasy, and Looking at it from Different Perspectives. Digging deeper shows a striking result that providing *Visual Feedback* uses of ALL the creative Skills that E. Paul Torrance describes in his book *Making the Creative Leap Beyond!* (Torrance & Safter, 1999). Dr. E. Paul Torrance was an American psychologist who became known through his pioneer work in the field of creativity and education. His research in this field is of great influence. He developed the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT), which is still widely used. Through his research on these tests, Torrance composed a set of total eighteen creative skills: Finding

The Problem; Produce and Consider Many Alternatives; Be Flexible; Be Original; Highlight the Essence; Elaborate, But Not Excessively; Keep Open; Be Aware Of Emotions; Put Ideas Into Context; Combine And Synthesize; Visualize Richly And Colorfully; Enjoy And Use Fantasy; Make It Swing, Make It Ring; Look At It Another Way; Visualize The Inside; Breakthrough: Extend The Boundaries; Let The Humor Flow and Use It; Get Glimpses Of the Future. (Torrance& Safter, 1999; Murdock, & Keller-Mathers, 2002). Even before I knew them, I used these skills already. This forms the bases for my belief that this product is a result of my talents and passion, enhanced with my skills and experience. That reassures me that I can walk this talk. Deliberately incorporating creativity skills in my direction for the future will hopefully inspire others to change by experiencing the power of creative thinking and visual communication.

Besides creative skills, I found Torrance's Incubation Model (TIM) (Torrance, 1979) very helpful in articulating the strengths of the product *Visual Feedback*. By using the three stages in designing a session or meeting, *Heightening Anticipation*, *Deepening Expectations* and *Extending the Learning*, the focus of creative change sessions will be well defined.

As the training/change session focuses on *Deepening Expectations*, the tangible product connected to it at the end of a session embodies the stage *Extending the Learning*. It will make the effect of the training last much longer, because it's visual. This is totally different from a list with bullet points or rules and regulations. This piece of art is an indirect reminder. Where others just see a pretty picture, every time *you* look at it, it will remind you (subconsciously) of your intentions during the change process.

Visual Thinking

The global concept that Visual Thinking is a trend is based on fifteen+ years of research of Robert Horn (2003), of which I have downloaded several articles and Power Points presentations that illustrate his view. A friend and colleague of Horn is David Sibbett. He wrote the book *Graphic Facilitation* in 2010 (Translated in Dutch as *Visuele meetings* in 2014), based on his experiences which started in 1972, as graphic facilitator in Silicon Valley and with Apple. His informative and experience based book explains the methods he uses with groups to improve collaboration and understanding and why it works so well. Like mine, his motivation to work with visuals is to eliminate confusion that rises by inadequate or conflicting mental models. In meetings a lot of time is spent to resolve these differences that exist in the heads of the people. To improve our way of thinking and communicating, we must become aware of the many ways we can show the world how we think. I always tell my students to ‘Show Me, don’t Tell Me!’ In that respect, visual meetings are very productive. They offer a safe way to become aware of our metaphors and offer a creative way to create new metaphors together. (Sibbett, 2014, p. iv).

This way of creative teaching and learning is backed up with current interviews with Dutch researcher Frits Pals (F. Pals, personal communication, August, 25, September, 8, 2017).

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SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Plan to Achieve Goals and Outcomes

As framework for the development of this project I'm planning to use the method of Simon Sinek *Start With Why*. The project will consist of rebranding myself as change agent, designing and researching all the ways to communicate my existence. Besides this paper, the focus lies with creating an (whiteboard) animation about the benefits of *Visual Feedback* as tangible master project.

Finding my Unique Selling Point as change agent means rebranding my company. Naturally there are accompanying products to be designed, like for instance a catchy company name (or do I need a one?), a new logo, a website (the domain *Visual Feedback* is already claimed), example products like an 'explanation' (explanatory animation) of *Visual Feedback*, description of services for different audiences, references). These products are not all actually made at this point, but might derive later. Presenting *Visual Feedback* in an engaging visual way (for instance a white board animation) will force me to highlight the essence of my work and translate this academic paper into an commercial, colorful, convincing and engaging product.

Project Overview

The product outcome consists of an animation about *Visual Feedback*, which is backed up with a scholarly paper providing all the sources and theoretical framework. The work includes: Planning, reading, talking to people, checking the internet and sketching out different subjects at a time. Here is how I stay on track. Follow the planning my process buddy Conny set up, sit and talk with each other every two weeks at least, providing insights, overview, thorough feedback, positive energy and chocolate!

Actions

The major actions include re-reading the literature and writing my plan, visualizing insights and keeping overview by mapping my thoughts. I will present myself right away as expert in creative change, promoting the benefits of *Visual Feedback*.

Additionally, the following actions are included:

- Exploring existing visual training methods and companies, find good and bad examples of Visual Harvesters, Visual Practitioners, Visual Journalists and so on...
- Use my experience in *Visual Feedback* to build an engaging story for my animation.
- Use my master study to build the theoretical background and use fundamental research to create awareness of the need for *Visual Feedback* as a product or service.
Re-read a lot.
- Read literature about branding and identity (*Copy & Concept*).
- Interview former clients, get references of service/product *Visual Feedback*.
- Interview branding experts for tips and tricks.
- Highlight the essence of the service/product *Visual Feedback* (the Why, How, What of Simon Sinek). Choose a set of 3/4 services and products, related to 3 directions: business, personal coaching and education. Do the celery test (Sinek).
- Connect practical experience to academic sources which proves that what I intuitively did or knew, really works because research proved it. Or connect the research to a new insight: Knowing this now, I would choose a different approach to strengthen my service/product *Visual Feedback*.
- Translate this reflective academic paper into a attractive and commercial story, building a business plan, communication plan, website, brand identity, core values,

REBRANDING VISUAL FEEDBACK

logo, around *Visual Feedback*. Making the latter visual, and learning a new skill:

Creating a (whiteboard) animation to present my product visually.

In the Appendices a timeline with an overview of dates and connected actions included. (Kindly designed and provided by my buddy Conny).

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Description of Outcomes

As I started my project I was very excited and feeling energetic and positive about deepening the learning on my professional change: From drawing illustrations *for* other people, to using drawing to communicate better *with* other people. What I hoped to get out of this project is described in section one as personal goals, they are in short:

1. Finding a different professional direction for the future.
2. Brand my identity as change agent
3. Implementing the knowledge about creativity and creative change.
4. Require more knowledge about the domain of visual thinking.
5. Discover and develop the added value of *Visual Feedback*.
6. Improvement of the service and product called *Visual Feedback*.
7. Communicating the unique selling points of *Visual Feedback*.
8. Strengthen my voice and identity as creative change agent.
9. Developing a new skill: making (white-board) animations.

As I was reading the literature and all the information provided on the internet, I started to realize that visual thinking, visualizing or visual note taking was bigger than I thought. There are many more people around with the same qualities as I. They wrote several best-selling books (Dan Roam), started successful companies (IDEO), provided workshops worldwide (David Sibbett) and held brilliant TED Talks (Patti Dobrowolski), it sometimes made me feel as if I was born too late.

The thing that always cheered me up was to think about people and companies who were really helped with the *Visual Feedback* I had provided. Reading my bio and the

references on my websites (www.studiodroomwever.nl, www.nicoletteweever.com, www.visualfeedback.com) and LinkedIn page makes me realize what things I have already achieved. I don't have to become world famous, just help people in my environment to improve a little bit on the quality of their life. And there are many people showing interest while writing this paper. That strengthens my confidence.

Working on the personal goals to rebrand *Visual Feedback*, I developed some actions and products during the last 2 months:

Products:

- Design of new website called *Visual Feedback*.
- Update of existing website with renewed information on *Visual Feedback*.
- Three power point presentations, all for different audiences.
- Long and a short storyboard text for animations.
- Several animations in different formats, with and without sound, for different applications. One of them is described below as the final product for my graduation.
- A huge amount of my own illustrations on the topic of visual thinking and *Visual Feedback*.
- Branding actions like:
 - Creation of new logo, identity, core values, slogan and a introductory pitch.
 - pitching on Creative Expert Exchange (CEE) dinner and beyond.
 - promoting one of my animations on Linked in that led to approximately ten appointments about *Visual Feedback*;

- creating several visuals on CEE, promoted on Facebook, which led to more recognition in the creative world and some nice professional connections for the future.

Description of the Final Product

My final product that accompanies this paper and will visually communicate the Why, How and What of Visual Feedback will be a (Whiteboard) Animation, 'Explanimation' of maximum 3 minutes that will be published on You Tube, my websites and other social media. The animation has the purpose to introduce the viewer to *Visual Feedback* through the general trend that there is a need for visual thinking to improve on our lives. The background of the story is composed through the three stages that Simon Sinek promotes in his book: Start with "Why, How and What" of a company or product. The viewer is lead through the story, that is drawn by hand to show most parts of the content in visuals, accompanied by words or short text and background music or a voice over.

As I look back on the goals I can say that I mostly achieved what I had in mind. The (re-)learnings and progression during the graduation project mainly took place by writing and drawing the scenes for the storyboard of the animation; writing an elevator pitch, converging on my services and testing those products over and over with different audiences. The feedback I got gave me the insights I needed to improve and take it a level higher. For the animation I had to synthesize and converge this whole paper, in fact several papers into a crisp and clear story of maximum 3 minutes. As a high Ideator this is not my strong point. But forcing myself to use the creative skill 'highlight the essence' again and again, helped by my buddy, finally got me where I wanted.

Examples of outcomes related to the designed products:

<p>1. Finding a different professional direction for the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design of new logo, core values, slogan, and a introductory pitch. This deepened the learning on my professional change: From drawing illustrations <i>for</i> other people, to using drawing to communicate better <i>with</i> other people. - Acknowledging the existing skills, mindset and required talents and combining them with new acquired tools and methods. - Discovering <i>why</i> I want to make the switch and why I feel the need for a new direction.
<p>2. Implementing the knowledge about creativity and creative change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-design of existing websites and design of new website called <i>Visual Feedback</i>. - Creating a “explanation” about it.
<p>3. Require more knowledge about the domain of visual thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading, visiting websites and listening to TED Talks about visual thinking, checked out companies who provide services alike; made new connections with people who are interested or experienced in this field. - Found out Dutch organizations who provide workshops in visual communication.
<p>4. Discover and develop the added value of <i>Visual Feedback</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gathering feedback from pitches, client interviews, colleagues, social network posts, buddy talks and reactions on my work. Discovering my USP’s.
<p>5. Improvement of the service and product called <i>Visual Feedback</i> through the ‘Celery Test’ (Sinek, 2009).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of several elevator pitches. - Converged my service to three basic products which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coaching teams and individuals revealing personal talents using <i>Visual Feedback</i>. - Coaching individuals teams towards a mission and vision statement, or personal goal using <i>Visual Feedback</i>.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating a tangible end product to conclude the session with: an artwork expressing the mission and vision or goal of an individual or team.
6. Communicating the unique selling points of <i>Visual Feedback</i> .	- Pitched (on Creative Expert Exchange (CEE) dinner and beyond) .
7. Strengthen my voice as creative change agent in finding a gap in the market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoted one of my animations on Linked in that led to approximately ten appointments about <i>Visual Feedback</i>; - Created several visuals on CEE which led to more recognition in the creative world and some nice professional connections for the future.
8. Develop a new skill: making (white-board) animations.	Creation of several animations in different formats, with and without sound, for different applications. One of them is described below as the final product for my graduation.

Figure 1: Table with outcomes related to products

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

Learnings on Time Management

As a lot of people, my roles in life are many as are my interests and activities. It's a real challenge to organize your life as there are only 24 hours in a day. As mother, life partner, lecturer, entrepreneur, mentor, master student, colleague, friend, daughter I find it hard sometimes to set priorities. There are many ways to organize your day and for me, as a visual spatial person, a *visual* planning like an analog scrum board has proved to work best. I also plan in time to go to the gym or Tai Chi. That way I won't forget to relax. At busy times it really helps me to visually set priorities and work effective and stay healthy.

Sep 21: Started to use an app for my key learnings as it helps to use a device you always carry with you. I use my phone and an app called Day One. Besides, my buddy Conny and I meet every week to provide each other feedback and to keep the work going on a regular basis. During the project it worked very well, especially while we live in the same town, we could meet over coffee on very short notice.

Sep 25: I feel bad. Got the flu. Can't read or write a thing, these things must be calculated in the project timing, but usually they are not. I know that, but still.

Oct 9: Left for Creativity Expert Exchange (CEE) in Buffalo! Did plan to work at night, so I brought my laptop and books, brushes, markers and sketch books with me.

Learnings on Branding (The Why)

The most important question for me to answer was: *Why* do you like to do what you do? And *Why* is that important to you and *Why* could it be valuable for others? In every company it has to be the main question that anchors the mission and vision. But the

contradictory is that the *Why* doesn't come from looking ahead at what you want to achieve and finding a out a proper strategy to get there. It comes from the complete opposite: The *Why* for every individual or organization comes from the past. It is born from the upbringing and from life experience, ideals and convictions. Every person has a *Why* and every organization has one too. But remember that an organization is one of the *What's*, a tangible object the founder(s) has done in their lives to prove their personal *Why*. The hard part is not finding the *Why*, it's the discipline remaining in balance with that authenticity and staying true to that personal gut feeling. (Sinek, 2009. p. 214-215). Since I worked this out for myself, a personal quote that reminds me to be consistent in every story I tell and every assignment I accept is: 'Walk the Talk'.

Sep 22: Today I worked on the *Why* of my product: Why do I believe that there is a need for visual thinking and *Visual Feedback* in particular? My research of the literature concludes that as a part of visual communication *Visual Feedback* has the power to handle information overload, to improve and enrich communication, to bridge cultural differences. And thus it has the power to improve on the life of others. This is exactly what my product/service/method is all about.

I found the title for my service or product years ago as I discovered the power of visual communication. This type of work is now known in the world by many different names like (Professional) Doodling, Visual Note Taking, Graphic Recording, Graphic Facilitation, Visual Facilitation, Visual Thinking, Sketch Notes, mindmapping and more. In the Netherlands these names are not very commonly used, so I decided to keep the name *Visual Feedback* for this work as this is a unique name and I own the web domain.

Oct 3: I read the book “Start with Why” of Simon Sinek. The steps which gave me exactly the guidance that I needed. I discovered my why: that my opinion about the need for visual thinking is acknowledged everywhere around me. In these fast changing times, with an overload of information, globalization and the development of new technologies, and new form of communication arises. People think in images. In my experience using visual language *as part of creative behavior* is indispensable in society, business and education where communication and co-operation is key. On a personal level it opens up the potential for enlarging the capacity to understand, organize, synthesize and efficiently share large amounts of new information. That is what I see as a tremendous asset and want to share with the world. The next challenge is *how* to communicate the usefulness of that broad concept.

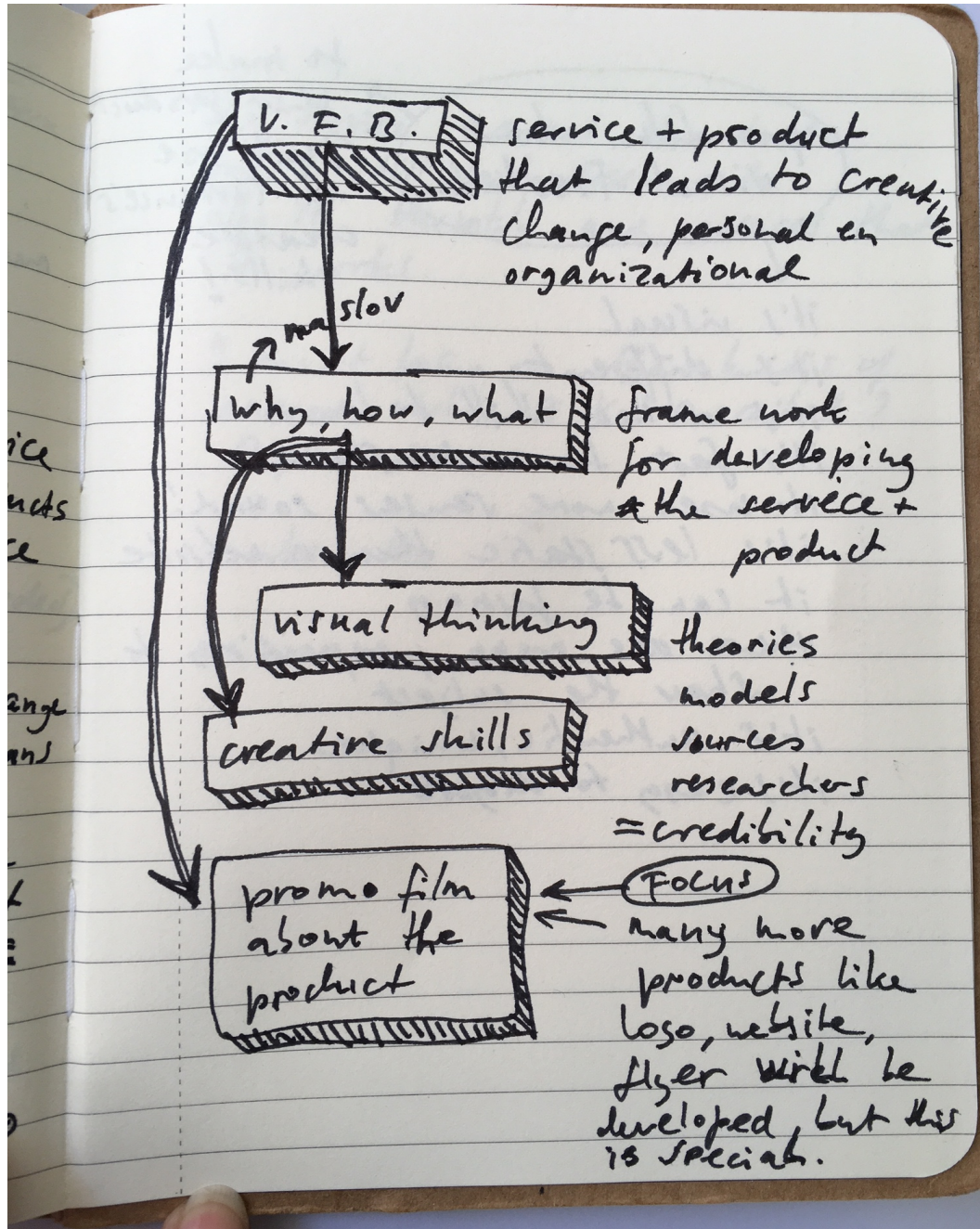


Figure 2: First sketch of The Why, How and What.

Oct 14: I went with five other classmates of the first European cohort of ICSC, *The Euriginals*, to SUNY Buffalo State. The cohort exists of nine students, originated from Belgium, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands, and we were invited to the opening dinner of the Creativity Expert Exchange (CEE). Everyone was very curious about the

students from Europe, so they came to welcome us and have a chat. People were not aware that there was a European cohort that follows the same curriculum as ICSC Buffalo, and when they found out, they asked about the subject of my master project immediately. It turned out that I had to tell in 3 sentences what my master project was about. Of course I failed brilliantly as I didn't prepare a pitch as I was supposed to go to a dinner, not a networking meeting. Wrong! I learned that you have to keep a pitch ready at all times. Gerard Puccio once said in class: "Fail to prepare is prepare to fail". I will never forget. That night I set a goal for the next day: prepare an elevator pitch for the next dinner. Just in case. Private key learning: In America you have to pay for your own drinks even when you are invited on a formal dinner..

Oct 17: At the conference I was drawing the speakers and their story. *Visual Feedback* in practice. A lot of the people sitting around me were enthusiastic about it and took some pictures. When people see it, they love it. Especially when I explain that the power of the visuals lies in the fact that images connect to the whole brain, they reveal hidden layers of emotions and situations. And thus makes the invisible visible. I learned again that this art of 'making the unspeakable visible' makes my work different from other facilitators who also visually facilitate the process, but without going into the content. I realize the value even more: My re-learning about branding is about acknowledging the value for *myself* in the first place and for others. For me it such a natural skill that I sometimes forget how special it is. It is important to make myself seen as provider of this unique service and product. Because this is exactly what my master project is all about: Branding *Visual Feedback* as a useful product!

Unique Selling Points

Oct 18: Unique Selling Point of a session with *Visual Feedback* is to be found especially in the last stage. According to the Torrance Incubation Model (TIM) this stage is about *Extending the Learning*. Most verbal based trainings are forgotten soon after they have finished, but with a visual reminder you can Extend the Learning of individuals and groups. A visual reminder of your goal, vision, or success in the form of an artwork will help to remind you of your intentions! One of my other Unique Selling Points as illustrator is my authentic style of drawing which is based on training in Art School using the art of seeing, not a quick trick from a book that provides a common imagery. Besides that I use a brush, not a marker. A third USP might be the experience I have in teaching and training. I am a lecturer in Design Thinking, and this process is very similar to the Creative Problem Solving method (CPS). Practicing both with my University students bring on various insights in improving and combining the methods enhancing them with visual thinking elements.

Nov 6: A solid re-learning for myself: It's always more difficult to compose your own story about why you do what you do, then the story of someone else. As if you have a blind spot for your own talents. When you grow up with a certain ability for so long, this skill becomes natural, and doesn't feel so special to you anymore. But that doesn't make it worthless for another. On the contrary: the words I hear most are still: "I wish I could draw like you".

Learnings on Storytelling (Pitching)

People love stories. Stories are the reason we stay up late to finish a book, watch a movie or remember a certain ad on television from long ago. Stories engage us like

nothing else. I tell my students that if done right, storytelling is making communication more engaging, more impactful, and more motivating. The power of stories is that they create an emotional journey that motivates us to act.

Oct 13: At dinner with my *Euriginals* colleagues Ingrid and Conny I checked the story I composed after doing the Celery test of Sinek. They understood what service I was providing and validated what I thought that the unique selling points were. The outcome of the test was to focus on three main dimensions of my work.

These three domains are:

- Coaching individuals and teams using *Visual Feedback*
- Creating a vision statement using *Visual Feedback*
- Creating an artwork as tangible result of the session.

Oct 14: I practiced my pitch during a festive dinner party, but as I talked to people, it occurred to me that some were professionals in the field of creativity and visual thinking, some were familiar with the topic and some just liked to talk to an European student. All these people asked what I was doing and all of them needed another story, tailor made to what my work as visual communicator is about and what it could mean to them. My learning consisted of the question: How do you know what story to tell, if you know who they are and what they do. I had to tell them something that made my work useful to them so they would become interested. My solution to this problem was to list some questions that would relate to a general problem situation a potential customer would recognize. That way I could offer a tailor made solution that included *Visual Feedback*.

For instance: “Do you sometimes feel like you are overblown with amount of the information we have to read and process in order to do our work properly? I can help

you by introducing visual thinking methods to organize and process information, so you are able to learn faster, remember more and create an overview.”

Or: “Do you want to develop yourself in another direction but not sure what your strengths are? Then I can offer you a visual coaching session where your talents are visualized so you get a tangible insight on your potential. Which can help you with personal development, job interviews or pitches.” I re-learned that a pitch for several occasions is very important to have a successful follow up.

Learnings on a Creative Leadership

Oct 31: While talking to my colleagues at the University, it occurs to me that many people in education are tired. It is an ever changing workspace, and a great deal of improvisation and creativity is needed to survive in front of a class. It makes the job very challenging yet interesting, combined with the ownership of the content and working with young adults. Nowadays, it seems like the ownership on educational content is overruled by formalities and system requirements. In my view the restrictions on personal creative leadership in their work makes people loose their spirit. One of the characteristics of creative people is a positive attitude and the need for freedom to determine their own constraints. Maslov stated that for people to feel fulfilled and self-actualized they need autonomy, independence, and self-determining (1954).

That might explain why teaching/coaching from a pro-active solution based approach, like the CPS or the Design Thinking method I am using, actively levers the mindset to positivity and ownership. People feel they own the situation and are not blocked by problems but merely challenged. Using divergent thinking, the Creative Skills and using statement starters like: “What are all the ways to solve this?”, has proved to me that

creative leadership is the most powerful mind changer in life. My challenge lies in helping students to develop this mindset, positively activating them to solve problems using divergent thinking, use a positive/creative mindset and therefore act on creative leadership.

Learnings on the Benefits of Visual Feedback

I learned that 60% of the people have a preference for visual thinking and learning (Silverman 2005). So, when I was preparing a progress interview at my work, where I had to share my view on my work and my goals for the future, I decided to visualize these subjects and bring this to the interview. To give *Visual Feedback* to my team leader.

Nov 13: Had my progress interview today. I had visualized my current situation merely as a conversation starter. The following drawings included some ideas for follow up. This successful approach worked out well for several reasons: 1.) I experienced again that the metaphors on paper led the discussion away from a personal view and created understanding and empathy. 2.) A huge but implicit effect of *Visual Feedback* is: When sharing a drawing you have to sit *next* to each other in order to see the sketchbook. This creates a feeling of togetherness, the feeling of a conversation *with* one another. Which is the opposite of the common interview situation where you sit in front of each other. That interview setting is much more confronting. 3.) This experience also resulted in the discovery of a shared need to capture information in images in order to understand and communicate the big idea. 4.) All these ideas in the end lead to a possibility for me to help developing the vision for our University, using visuals to enhance co-operation, communication and consensus.

Nov. 19: I realize that I used visuals to communicate ever since I live with my dyslectic foreign husband. After a few months that our daughter was born, I started to work again and I had to communicate information about feeding, sleeping, and other things. I found out that a one page letter with small drawings and very few words worked best to communicate the message. In one glance he understood the information. My daughter is now fourteen years old, and I help her with learning. Like many teens, she has trouble to comprehend and process large amounts of written information. Visual thinking helps her to translate complex abstract information into simple visuals and thinking maps that help to remember the content, make connections and provide overview. Her grades go up thanks to that system.

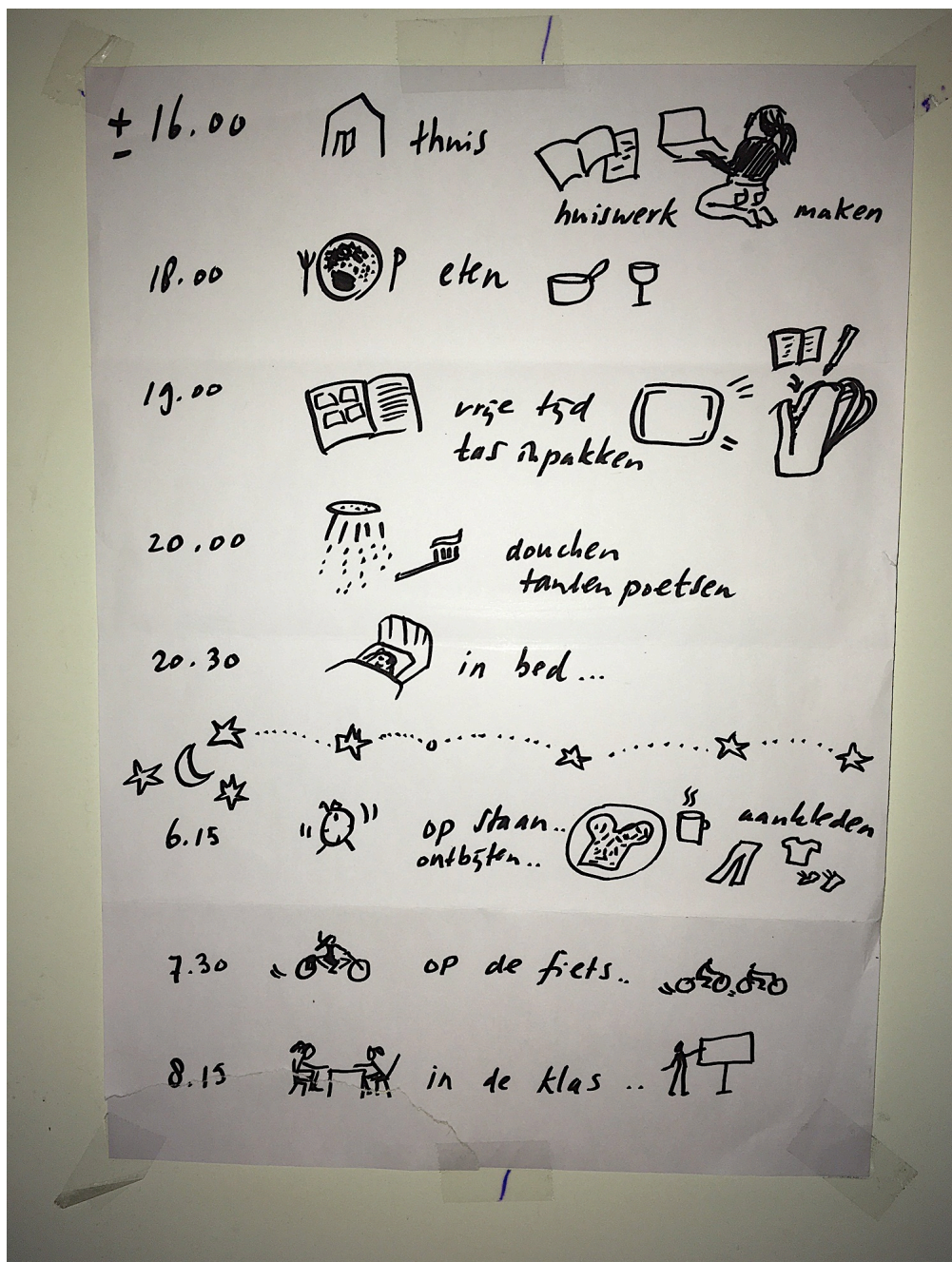


Figure 3: Daily home schedule 2017.

Nov 26: I now realize that I don't have a tangible vision for myself in my new role as change agent. Just like it helps others, I need a visual goal too that gives me a glance of my future professional direction. What do I see myself doing? How does my

future look like? This conversation around “What I see myself doing?” will continue in section six.

What Worked Well

Writing this one paper, it worked well to combine several activities linked to the graduation project at the same time. The learnings from one could be transported to the other and when I had a writers block on my paper, I could work on drawings for my animation. My thoughts would go on working on a subconscious level to compose the text for my paper I was struggling with.

When drawing speakers and their stories on CEE, it worked well that I had already some experience in the field of *Visual Feedback*, so I knew when to draw and how. Besides that, I knew what the effect of the drawings was and the message it carried. I could share the value and that made it successful with the speakers.

What would I do different next time is:

1.) When visiting a conference or talk, prepare *Visual Feedback*, even if not commissioned to. At CEE I just started drawing, but if I had taken the time to do some desk research on the speakers first, I think the result would have been more complete. Usually I complete the drawing afterwards, redesigning the drawings and creating a poster a one pager or an artwork out of it. On the other hand, the drawings I made at CEE were more spontaneous, and that shows an artistic quality too.

2.) Next time I will contact every speaker immediately after the talks and I show them my work in person. As follow up, I will send them a picture of my drawings and make further appointments. After CEE I only had time for two follow up actions. One of them is shown in the figure below.

 **Nicolette Wever** is met Roger Firestien. ⋮
26 oktober ·  

Visual of Roger Firestien, made during #CEE conference in Buffalo.



 Leuk  Opmerking plaatsen  Delen

 Léonie Kasperts, Nico Dob en 23 anderen

 **Marta Davidovich** · 7 gemeenschappelijke vrienden
Very cool!!!
Leuk · Beantwoorden ·  1 · 26 oktober om 16:16

 **Roger Firestien** Nicolette: That is so much fun. Thank you! I think you really captured the passion I had around the CEE conference and all the great work that our colleagues are doing in this field.
Leuk · Beantwoorden ·  1 · 26 oktober om 20:41

Figure 4. Visual feedback on CEE with Roger Firestien.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

During the graduation period I had the privilege to visit the CEE-Talks in Buffalo. During conversations with attendees and listening to Creativity and Change Leadership-talks, it occurred to me that most speeches promoted the huge impact of creativity in their personal lives. Though the talks were very different in content and there was a wide range of perspectives on how people implemented creativity, the aspect of the power of creative thinking in personal development and the power to influence your environment by mastering the art of creative leadership was an overall topic. In that respect I think this proves that creativity is a catalyst for change. By the way: This is not what the branding of this master study is communicating and I think it might be worthwhile to investigate if it should.

What I see myself doing next is:

- First of all, finish the animation in the best possible way.
- Secondly publish the video on several platforms and creating smaller spin offs, used to tickle the viewers, interest new clients or share my work. The skill of animating will help me to create other content, as I learned that it is broadly used in learning environments and widely appreciated by students. If it's easy to make and appealing at the same time, that's great.
- Create a visual goal of my future as visualizer and change agent. I found out that creating a tangible goal really helps to reach it. Maybe by painting a self portrait in my new role, creating a diary of my perfect week, making an 'imaginary journal' placed in the future, in which I can look back on my achievements.

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- Implement my brand. Create an overall visual identity to jumpstart the new professional direction.
 - Send drawings of CEE to all speakers, reconnect and plan follow up actions.
 - Talk to the 10-15 people who are interested in *Visual Feedback* or Visual Thinking and are now on the waiting list.
 - Make a good business proposal for the intake meeting, talk to colleagues in the field about how to set up a plan.
 - Start to visualize more meetings in my University, offer help in creating a vision using visual methods. Go on with providing workshops for colleagues that give insights on creative teaching and learning. ‘Walking the talk’ of a creative mindset.
 - Stay in contact with other educators all over the globe to learn from their work at schools implementing creativity and talk about the creativity curriculum they designed.
- This also serves as an inspiration to design a minor in creativity myself one day!

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Appendix A Process Plan

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Master Project Nicolette Wever	Explore and gather data			Analyze and visually structure data		Ideation Animation			Iterate Animation		Finalize project			
	wk 37	wk 38	wk 39	wk 40	wk 41	wk 42	wk 43	wk 44	wk 45	wk 46	wk 47	wk 48	wk 49	wk 50
	11-Sep	18-Sep	25-Sep	2-Oct	9-Oct	16-Oct	23-Oct	30-Oct	6-Nov	13-Nov	20-Nov	27-Nov	4-Dec	11-Dec
Literature review Creative Skills														
Look for existing visual training methods and companies, good/bad														
Review existing website www.nicolettewever.com														
Start writing communication plan -Animation														
Start design website www.visualfeedback.nl														
Invite people for evaluation of the plan & animation														
Submit Paper Sections 1-3														
Sketch timeline/storyboard animation														
Write Paper Section 4														
Evaluate timeline/storyboard														
Adapt timeline/storyboard														
Finalize Animation and finalize overview communication plan														
Submit Paper Sections 4-6														
Revise and finalize Paper Sections 1-6														
Submit Paper Sections 1-6														
Revise and finalize Project Paper														
Submit Final Project Paper														
Presentation and publishing project														
Keeping dairy with learnings and insights														

Figure 5. Schedule paper and project

Appendix B Storyline voice over

Storyboard Animation text

Story in English, later translated in Dutch.

The branding of Visual Feedback. Nicolette Wever, 2017, December 14.

00.00 Nicolette Wever (voice over)

Hi, my name is Nicolette Wever.

I capture conversations in drawings to use it as feedback.

Visual Feedback.

I facilitate creative change by using visuals and images to communicate.

Communication is more than words alone.

It's about feelings, ideas, and gaining new insights.

It's about showing what's on your mind.

And that works best in a drawing.

That way: Visual feedback, shows insights, that otherwise stay hidden.

The content of a meeting or brainstorm session is captured in drawings.

The drawing helps to understand information, because the visual and verbal clues will help you remember, what you need to know.

It also helps you, to keep an overview.

And because visual communication makes use of metaphors and analogies, there is also room for different perspectives.

That way visual thinking embraces diversity, and enhances co-operation.

Working with visuals improves learning because: seeing helps you to remember.

We remember 80% of what they see.

My visuals will show connections that otherwise stay hidden.

That creates awareness and an opportunity for growth

Drawing an image of your goal will help you to reach it.

This vision can be embellished in an artwork, that reflects the outcome of the change process in one single glance.

Research has shown, that a visible goal, makes change much more effective.

It makes, the unspeakable, visible.

Figure 6: text for storyline, voice over

Appendix C Screenshot “Explanation”



Nicolette Wever

Figure 7: Screenshot explanatory animation December 2017.

Animation on You Tube: <https://youtu.be/bE-fa726Os4>

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Nicolette Wever

December 2017