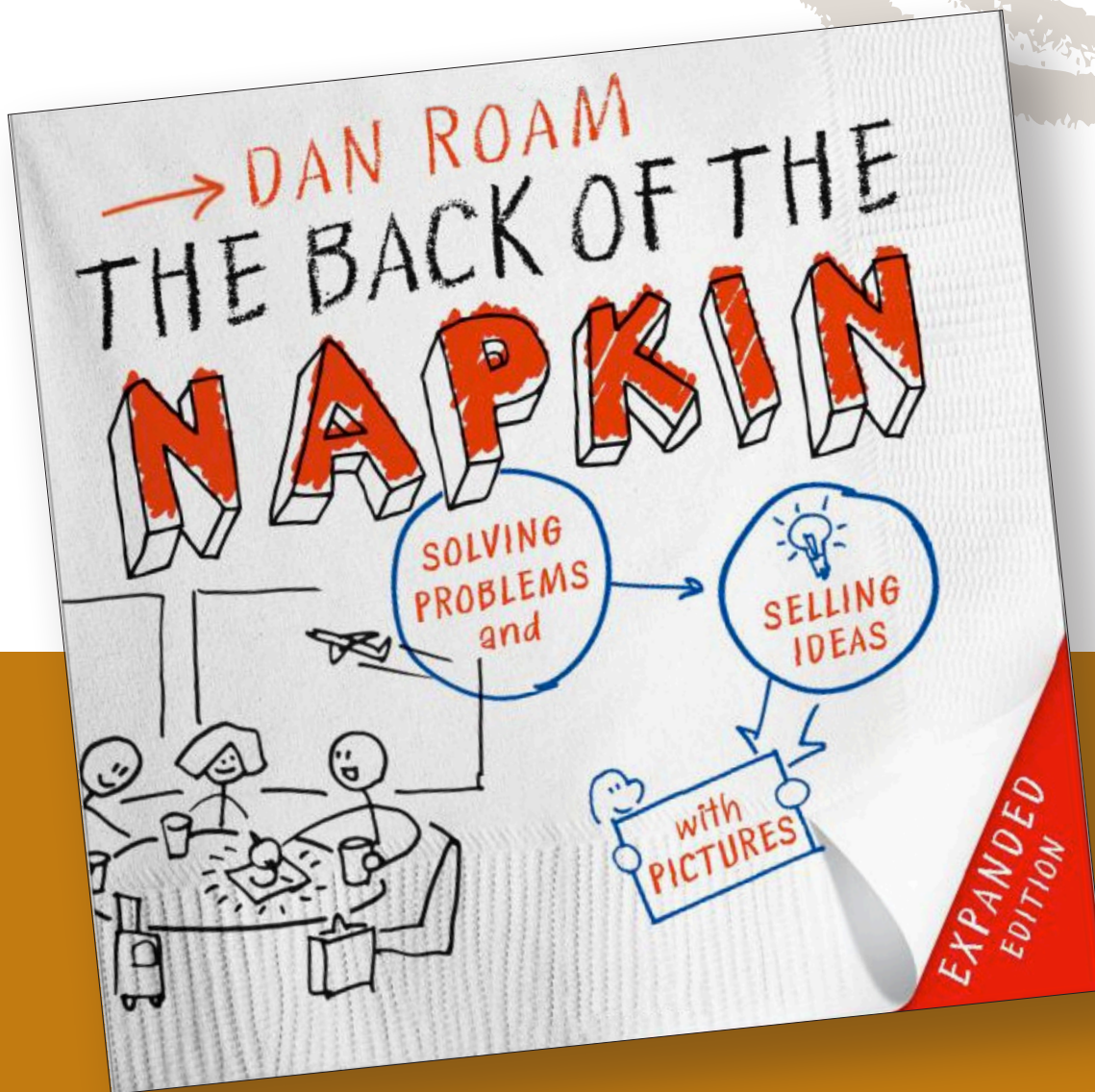


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# sums



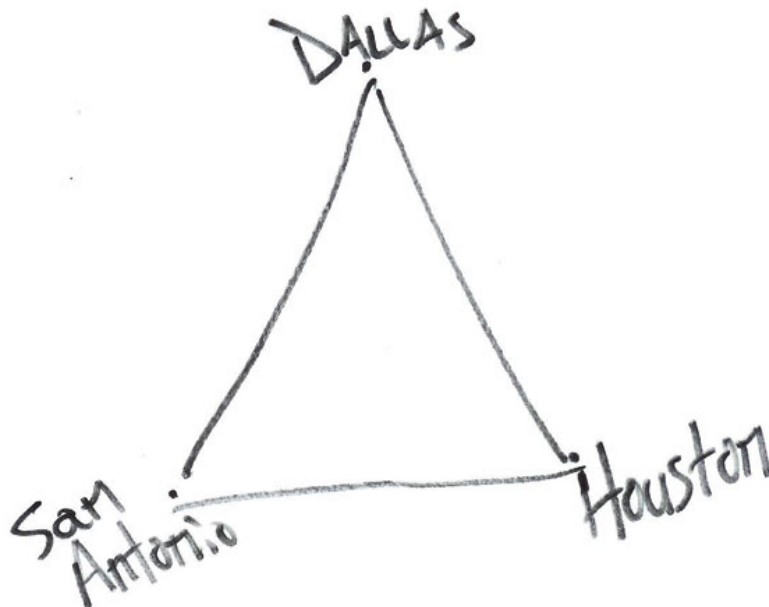
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## The Back of the Napkin | Dan Roam

The Back of the Napkin: Solving Problems and Selling Ideas with Pictures—Expanded Edition  
Penguin Group: New York, 2009. 304 pages.

*Any problem can be made clearer with a picture, and any picture can be made using the same simple set of tools and rules.*

When Texas entrepreneurs Rollin King and Herb Kelleher were brainstorming about how to beat the traditional hub-and-spoke airline system then in place, Rollins grabbed a bar napkin and a pen.



Three dots to represent Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.

Three lines to show direct flights.

### **Problem solved.**

The napkin sketch made it easy to sell Southwest Airlines to investors and customers – and the rest is history.

*There's nothing wrong with words...*

*...what's wrong is that they're not enough.*

## The Back of the Napkin | *Dan Roam (cont'd)*

Author, consultant, and visual thinker Dan Roam argues in his book *The Back of The Napkin* that everyone is born with a talent for visual thinking, even those who swear they can't draw.

1. There is no more powerful way to discover a new idea than to draw a simple picture.
2. There is no faster way to develop and test an idea than to draw a simple picture.
3. There is no more effective way to share an idea with other people than to draw a simple picture.

In a typical organization – including churches – there is a whole gang of smart people so overwhelmed by verbal data that they're hard pressed to know what to pay attention to.

That's where pictures come in. Whether drawing them, looking at them, or talking about them, pictures add enormously to our ability **to think, to remember,** and most importantly, **to do.**

*The basics of visual thinking have nothing to do with creating charts on a computer. Visual thinking is learning to think with our eyes, and it doesn't require any advanced technology at all.*

According to Roam there are three kinds of visual thinkers:

1. People who can't wait to start drawing (the Black Pen people).
2. Those who are happy to add to someone else's work (the Yellow Pen people).
3. Those who question it all – right up to the moment they pick up the Red Pen and redraw it all.

### *Which are you?*

**1**

**“Hand me the pen!”** Black pen people show no hesitation in putting the first marks on an empty page. They come across as immediate believers in the power of pictures as a problem-solving tool, and have little concern about their drawing skills – regardless of how primitive their illustrations may turn out to be. They jump at the chance to approach the whiteboard and draw images to describe what they're thinking. They enjoy visual metaphors and analogies for their ideas, and show great confidence in drawing simple images, both to summarize their ideas and then help work through those ideas.

## The Back of the Napkin | *Dan Roam (cont'd)*

2

**“I can’t draw, but ....”** Yellow Pen people (or highlighters) are often very good at identifying the most important or interesting aspects of what someone else has drawn. These are the people who are happy to watch someone else working at the whiteboard – and after a few minutes will begin to make insightful comments – but who need to be gently prodded to stand and approach the board in order to add to it. Once at the board and with pen tentatively in hand, they always begin by saying “I can’t draw, but...” and then proceed to create conceptual masterworks. These people tend to be more verbal, usually incorporate more words and labels into their sketches, and are more likely to make comparisons to ideas that require supporting verbal descriptions.

3

**“I’m not visual.”** Red Pen people are those least comfortable with the use of pictures in a problem-solving context – at least at first. They tend to be quiet while others are sketching away, and when they can be coaxed to comment, most often initially suggest a minor correction of something already there. Quite often, the Red Pens have the most detailed grasp of the problem at hand – they just need to be coaxed into sharing it. When many images and ideas have been captured on the whiteboard, the Red Pen people will finally take a deep breath, reluctantly pick up the pen, and move to the board – where they redraw everything, often coming up with the clearest picture of them all.

*Regardless of visual thinking confidence or pen-color preference, everybody already has good visual thinking skills, and everybody can easily improve those skills. Visual thinking is an extraordinarily powerful way to solve problems, and though it may appear to be something new, the fact is that we already know how to do it.*

Using these simply powerful tools, he shows anyone how to clarify a problem or sell an idea by visually breaking it down using a **simple set of visual thinking tools**.

### 3 Basic Visual Thinking Tools

In order to think visually, we must rely on the interaction of three “built-in” tools:

1. our eyes
2. our mind’s eye
3. our hand-eye coordination

Our eyes may be the tools through which we see the world around us and see visual patterns within it, but it is our mind’s eye where we manipulate those patterns by taking them apart and rebuilding them. We then rely on coordination between our hands and eyes to put those ideas on paper in order to share with others.



## The Back of the Napkin | *Dan Roam (cont'd)*

### 4 Steps of the Visual Thinking Process

There is a learnable, repeatable, and useful process to visual thinking:

1. **Look** – the semi-passive process of taking in the visual information around us
2. **See** – an active process where you are selecting which inputs are worth more detailed information
3. **Imagine** – what happens after the visuals have been collected and selected
4. **Show** – summarizing what we've seen, finding the visual framework for representing our ideas, and answering our audience's questions

### 5 Questions to Help Open Your Mind's Eye

The five questions below make different demands on how your mind sees and activates the many different thought centers in your brain. Roam uses **SQVID** as a visual tool to help activate every corner of your mind's eye to fully realize a mental image. It also helps us see that image through the eyes of our potential audience.

1. Simple or elaborate?
2. Qualitative or quantitative?
3. Vision or execution?
4. Individual or comparison?
5. Change or status quo?

The linear view of **SQVID** allows you to walk through the five questions in order and think how you might describe the idea according to each option. The equalizer view of **SQVID** is driven by your anticipated audience's reaction, and allows you to focus on which type of picture will be best to show them. By forcing your mind's eye to look at your idea in multiple ways, you will start to think about the best way to present your idea to your audience.



## The Back of the Napkin | *Dan Roam (cont'd)*

### 6 Ways We See and Show

While *looking* is about collecting the raw visual information that is in front of us, *seeing* is about selecting what is important. Really good seeing is even more than selecting what is important; it is problem recognition.

1. Who/what? – *portrait*

2. How much? – *chart*

3. Where? – *map*

4. When? – *timeline*

5. How? – *flowchart*

6. Why? – *plot*

Broadly speaking, there are six ways we see. But because they encapsulate all the ways we see, they also encapsulate all the ways we can show. By linking the two together, Roam delivers **a framework of problem-solving pictures**.

We can use the simplicity and immediacy of pictures to discover and clarify our own ideas, and use those same pictures to clarify our ideas for other people, helping them discover something new for themselves along the way.

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### Recommended Resources

1. Be sure to follow the links in the summary above (or go [here](#)) to view and download tools from Dan Roam that will illustrate the ideas in found in *The Back of the Napkin*.
2. **Read** how Auxano founder and team leader Will Mancini discusses three ways design and image are useful as a leadership tool in churches.
3. **Read** this story in Fast Company magazine to see how Walmart, Microsoft, and other organizations use the power of images to digest big ideas.

### Amazon Links

*Hardcover link*

*Kindle link*



## Go Ahead Actions for Vision Clarity

by Mike Gammill

### Vision Clarity Connection

“Doodling” in meetings has always helped me think. The downside is that it can make it appear that I’m not paying attention, but the upside is that those “barely fit for the wall of a cave” drawings can help clarify complexity, defog obscurity, uncover opportunities, and even share ideas. I am equally bad at art with both hands, but there is something personal, emotional, and, dare I say, contagious about a hand-drawn sketch that simply conveys a problem or solution.

Dan Roam develops visual thinking to another dimension. First, the four steps to visual thinking (Look, See, Imagine, Show) are easy to follow. Second, SQVID (Simple or Elaborate, Qualitative or Quantitative; Vision or Execution; Individual or Comparison; Change or Status quo) offers five critical questions that can help break down any complex problem. Finally, the 6 ways we see and show provide the necessary link between the problem or solution and the accompanying visual image we can employ to draw problem-solving pictures. From the wall of the cave to the conference room, indeed.

### Go Ahead

#### **Utilize the power of the napkin sketch in your next sermon.**

Remember how overhead projectors allowed schoolteachers to write on a transparency as they taught? You might be a bit too hip to return to the overhead projector, but apps like Paper for tablets allow novices to draw simple illustrations and export them as JPEGs or PNGs for use in your media presentation program and website. If you don’t want to attract too much attention to your artistic skills, enlist a team member who is handy with a stylus to illustrate your main points with simple three-color illustrations.

#### **Draw a volunteer flowchart to facilitate intra-department collaboration.**

Help your ministry departments work together better by asking department leaders to draw a flowchart that answers when and how one department’s leader “hands off” a volunteer to another. The conversation will help cooperation between departments and can also provide a simple visual tool so that everyone will see how volunteer ministry works between departments.

#### **Use a pin drop application, like a multi-variable plot, to understand better “why” people participate in your ministry.**

A pin drop map can be read as a multi-variable plot that can help you uncover the “why” question. Tools (such as <http://mapalist.com/>) can easily and quickly convert an excel spreadsheet of addresses and zip codes to a pin drop map that visually shows you the effective range and area of your church’s reach. Such a map can reveal the unique challenges and opportunities your ministry has in making disciples. It also, when coupled with your knowledge of the socio-economic realities of your ministry context, can reveal significant socio-economic data about who is really participating in your ministry and who isn’t. Together, these significant insights can reveal “why” people are participating in your ministry and help shape your strategic decision-making.



## More About Mike Gammill

As Lead Navigator for Auxano, Mike Gammill is passionate about using Vision Clarity to help the local church find its unique place in the Kingdom of God. Mike has fifteen years of experience serving the local church in multiple capacities and has a demonstrated ability to walk alongside pastors and leaders to uncover innovative ways to strategically implement vision through Christ-like leadership.

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Auxano is the only vision clarity consulting group that will guide your team through a God-ward and collaborative process called the Vision Pathway. To learn more, visit [auxano.com](http://auxano.com) or check us out on [Twitter](#) and our [Auxano](#) and [VisionRoom](#) Facebook pages.

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