Visual Persuasion: Using Graphics in Appellate Briefs

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Publications

Authors:

Griffin Terry Sumner

Although words have long been the appellate weapons of choice, don't underestimate the persuasion power of visuals in crafting impactful briefs. As most briefs are now filed—and read—electronically, including an image to capture attention and clarify complex information is increasingly paramount. Incorporating visuals—pictures, graphs, charts—into appellate briefs is a game-changer, offering a breath of fresh air to text-weary eyes and condensing complex ideas into a single, powerful impression.

The adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" is never more true than when you translate a convoluted table of data into a clear, colorful graph. Suddenly, trends and comparisons leap off the page. Timelines unravel the knot of dates and events. A strategic chart placed in your brief can serve as an anchor, bringing the judge back to your key points during deliberations. So, working alongside your carefully chosen text, visual graphics amplify the very purpose of an appellate brief—illuminating arguments, aiding comprehension, and ensuring your points are both seen and remembered.

But there are rules and limits to bear in mind when integrating graphic elements:

- **Relevance.** Each visual must directly support your argument, not distract from it.
- **Simplicity.** Overly detailed graphics can muddle rather than clarify.
- **Ethics.** Visuals must be honest representations of facts or expert opinions and comply with the same standards of evidence as textual arguments. Cite sources for your graphics just as you would for quotations and treaties.
- **Professionalism.** Every chart, diagram, or photo should maintain the formal tone of the appellate brief.

Experienced appellate advocates have learned that continued success means adapting to digital readers and a more visual-centric culture. Briefs that embrace this fusion of imagery and

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argument will stand out, resonate and, ultimately, persuade.

Frost Brown Todd's appellate advocates have a proven track record of success in appeals involving questions of first impression, bet-the-company judgments, and decisions that shape the rules under which our clients will operate well into the future. For more information, please contact the author, Griffin Terry Sumner, or any attorney with the firm's Appellate Practice Group.

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