



Inspire with Comics

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PART 1

**An image
is worth
a 1000
words**



An image is worth a 1000 words

But you will be hard-pressed to represent 1000 words with a picture.

What can you represent in pictures... systematically?

Used comics 3 times:

- Lesson overview in training (Altitude).
- Product overview (Thales).
- Business process overview (Farfetch).

Complexity at Altitude Software

I worked at Altitude Software between 1997-2014, from v4 to v8.

Software for call centers, used by:

- Agents, Supervisors.
- System administrators, System engineers.
- Developers.

Supervisors did not know that the software could solve everyday problems.

- Product too complex.
- Official training takes 5 days.
- Supervisor rotation.

Kevin Cheng presentation, SHiFT'2006

Kevin was an experience designer at Yahoo.

Kevin used comics to express user stories (use cases):

- Comics can abstract faces and interfaces.
- Comics add meaning (feelings) to "simple" words.

My take: Comics could raise the awareness of agents and supervisors.

A long road to comics

- 2006, Kevin Cheng at SHiFT.
- 2010, hired Patrícia Magrinho as illustrator.
- Dec-2012, started comics as a side project.
- Mid-2013, Summer reading of Kevin Cheng's book.

Comics at Altitude Software, 2012-2014

Together we learned to create comic strips that looked both professional and politically correct.

- Supervisor training takes 5 days.
- Each comic strip introduces a training lesson.
- 34 comic strips.

Outcome: engagement and meaningful conversation at the beginning of each lesson.

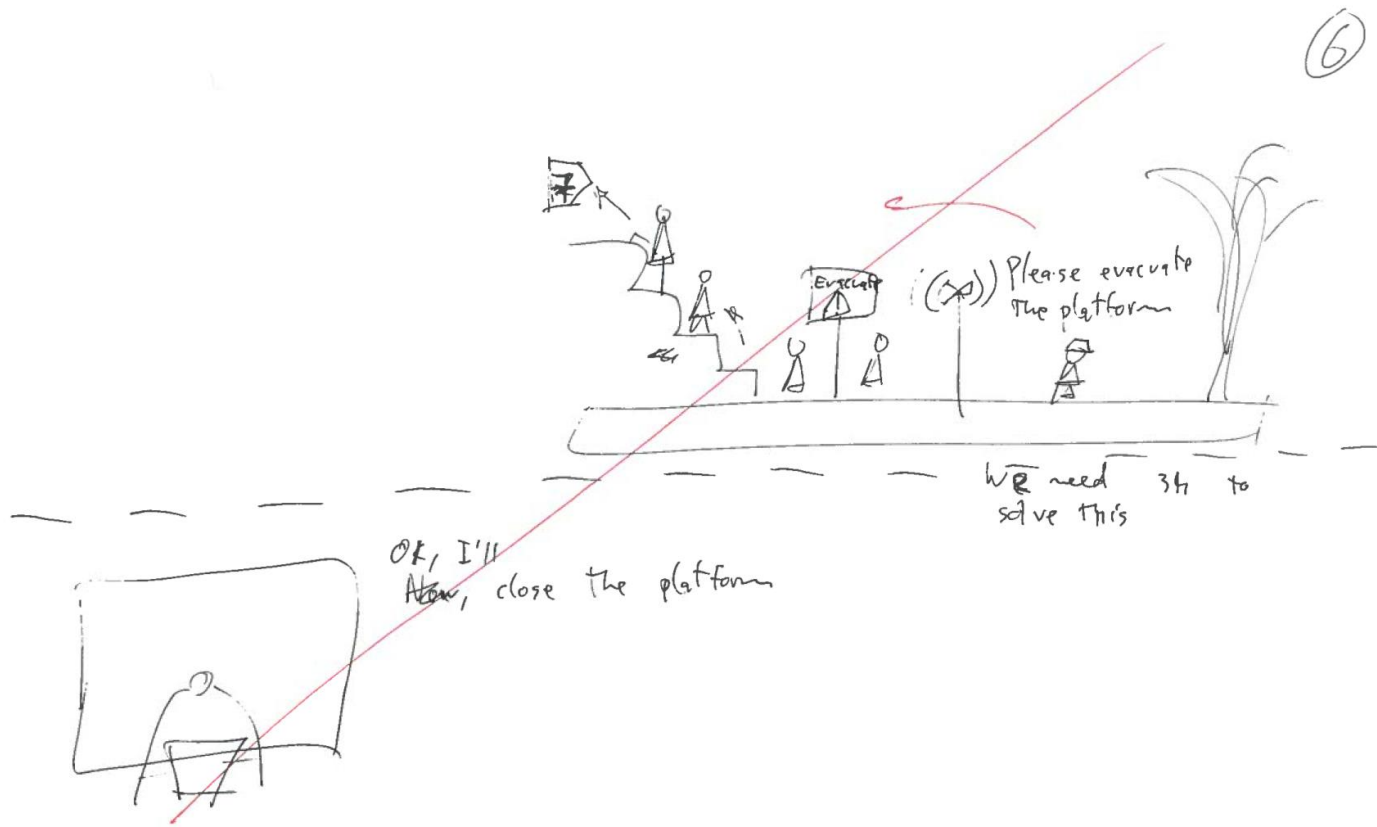


Product story at Thales, 2016

I worked at Thales during 2016,
on software that mostly announces train schedules.

How does the software improve the experience of staff and travelers?

1. Enumerate features.
2. Identify impact on company, staff, and travelers.
3. Craft diagrams that organize features.
4. Craft story that illustrates most features.



Illustrator turned my hand drawings into vectorial drawings.

10-page overview with diagrams.

Short video with animated illustrations.

Business processes at Farfetch, 2017-

I have been working at Farfetch since Nov-2016.

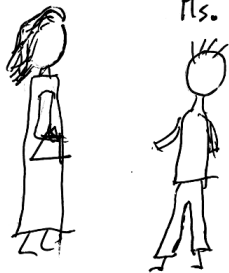
How to explain the business processes of a company with 1000s of workers? Farfetch is not “just” an online store.

No illustrator, so hand-drawn figures.

- Jun-2017: First drawings (1d).
- Nov-2017: 16-page booklet with 58 panels (11d).
- Oct-2018: Booklet with 75 panels (17d).

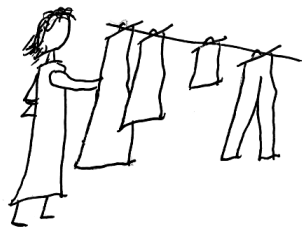
FARFETCH

Welcome back,
Ms. Mary!



AUTHENTICATE

Should I take
this dress?



FIND PRODUCTS

Do you have my size?
Perhaps in another store?



CHOOSE VARIANT

I'll take this dress!



ADD TO BAG

Please deliver tomorrow
at my home...



CHECKOUT

Do you accept credit cards?



PAY

PDF:
16-page booklet.

HTML:
Relate
individual panels
with tutorials
and references.

Learning objectives

At the end of the module, you should be able to:

1. Identify good comics.
2. Identify people stories behind product features.
3. Craft insightful comics to explain product features.
4. Explain products with coordinated sets of comics.

PART 2

Why are comics effective?



Sequential art

Comics is sequential art:
Words and art placed in a sequence.

— Will Eisner, 1985

Kevin Cheng 2012 —eBook \$22

Kevin Cheng, 2012.

See What I Mean: How to use comics to communicate ideas.

Rosenfeld Media.

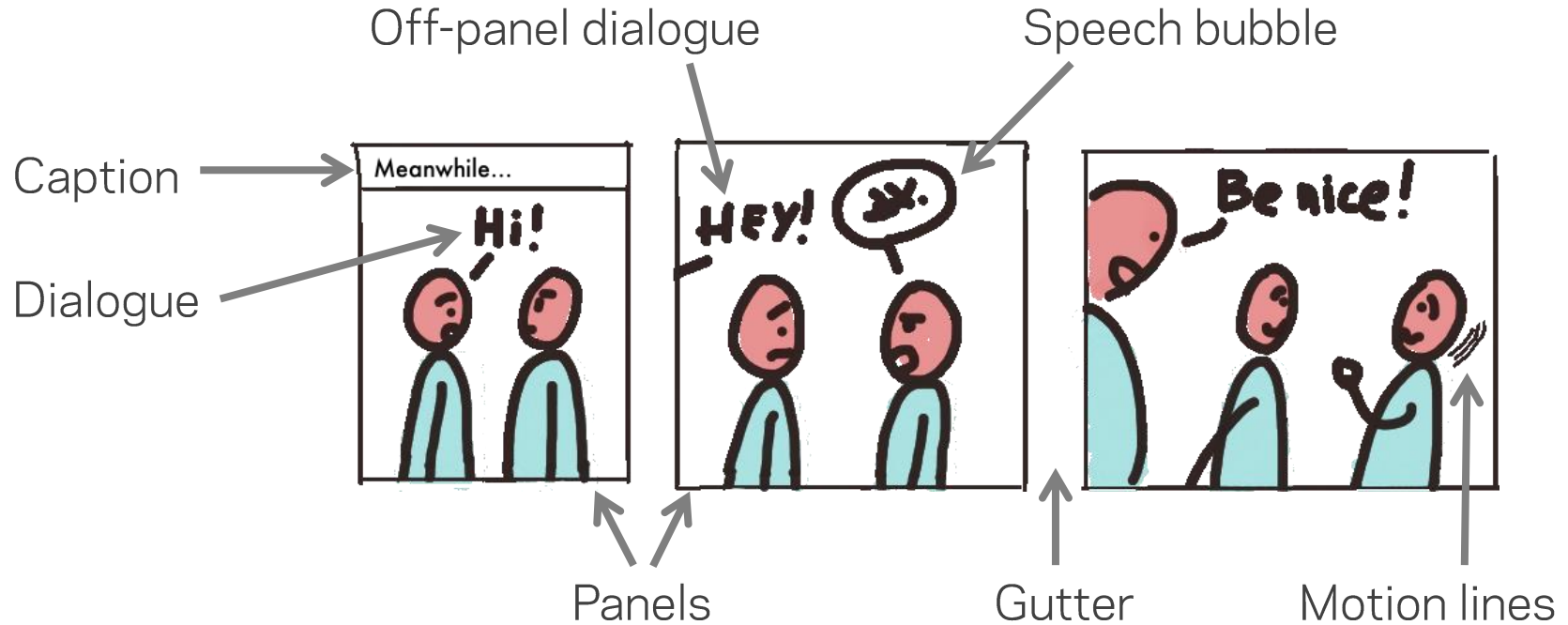
USD \$22

rosenfeldmedia.com/books

rosenfeldmedia.com/books/see-what-i-mean/



Vocabulary

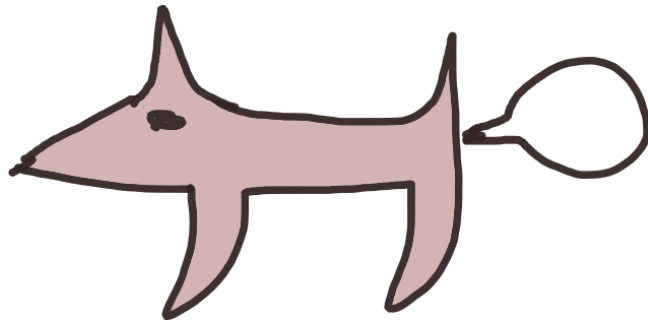


Kevin: Communication

Comics are a universal form of communication,
more easily understood and older than words.

— Kevin Cheng

Universal symbolic language.



Kevin: Imagination

You can abstract the unimportant details in a comic, encouraging the reader to focus on the areas of the story that are most important.

— Kevin Cheng



Kevin: Expression

You can express emotions just by changing the eyebrows and mouth.



Kevin: Expression

By combining words with simple facial expressions and body gestures, comics can provide more meaning than either words or pictures.

— Kevin Cheng

*But I don't draw expressions.
The designer couldn't draw faces.*



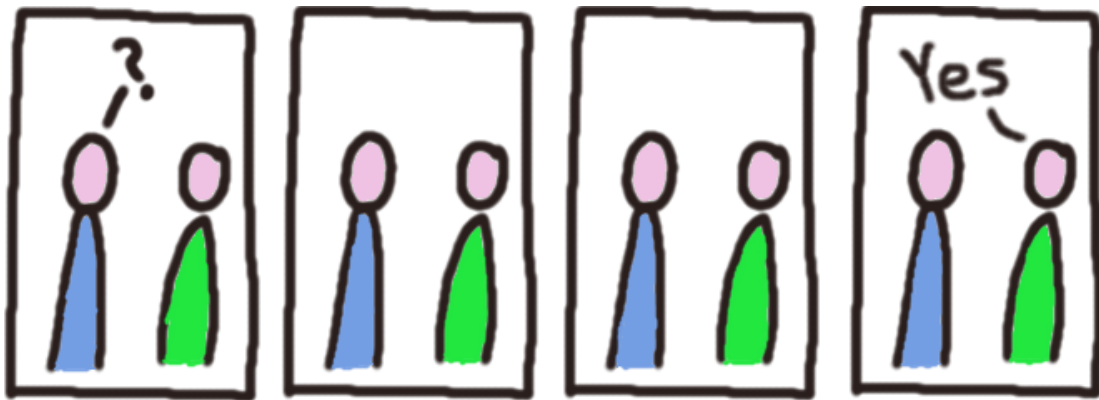
Kevin: Time

The use of white space, panel size, and reference points provides many creative ways to express time in comics.

— Kevin Cheng

Sequence over time.
Or repeat panels.

*I concentrate on the
"moment of truth".*



XKCD: wonderful and inspiring

Characters with the most limited expression explain complex topics.

Explore every limit:

- xkcd.com/17 — Single panel.
- xkcd.com/162 — Love.
- xkcd.com/1110 — Very large panels
- xkcd.com/1190 — Very long animations.
- xkcd.com/1732 — Infographics.

Me: Good comics



Situation.

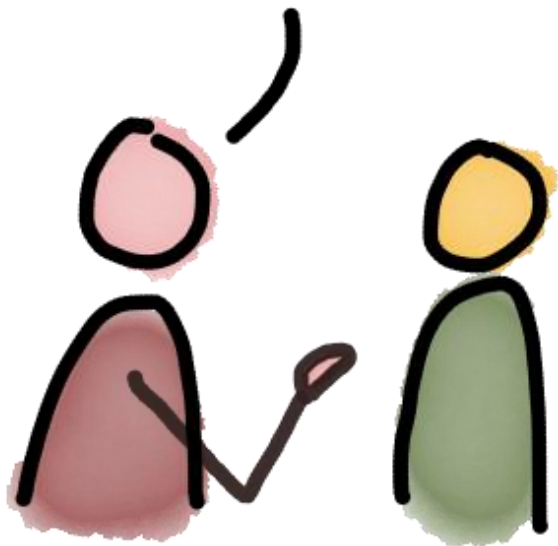
Actors.

Action.

Dialogue.

Me: Bad comics

I was surprised
by a book today



Telling instead of showing.

Talking heads?

Even worse when it's a single head.

Even good authors occasionally downgrade to "talking heads".

Types of comics

Comic strips	Less than a page.
Comic books	Like a magazine.
Graphic novels	Cohesive storylines, bound books.

*We will focus on 1-panel comic strips
that you might assemble into a comic book.*

PART 3

You don't need to be a (recognized) artist



What is an artist?

Is random music art?

Evolution of my style:

- Limitations of illustrator, concerns about international audiences.
- Hand-drawn comics in Farfetch.

Basic shapes

If you can draw a few basic shapes,
you can make useful comics.



EXERCISE 1

Copy the copybook



FARFETCH



EXERCISE 2

Draw a meeting of two



EXERCISE 3

Draw a human ringing a doorbell



EXERCISE 4

Draw a human in a recognizable city



EXERCISE 5

Draw the person next to you



PART 4

My Process



My process

How to create comics that explain a product:

1. List the features.
2. Look for the people.
3. See how it works for people.
4. Identify before and after, look for change.

Find the situations and actors of a decisive moment.

Process demonstration

Sony introduced the Walkman in 1979.

- Who would use the Walkman?
- In which situations would they use the Walkman?
How would they benefit?
- Which moments would showcase the benefits?



Sony Walkman TPS-L2 features, 1979

- USD \$200.
- 2x AA batteries.
- Two headphone outputs.
- Hotline button activates small mic to partially override music with ambient sound.
- Headphones weight 50g (not usual at the time).
- “Pretty good” sound quality.



How good are the comics?

- Features covered?
- Inspiring?
- Talking heads?
- Effective?

EXERCISE 6

Craft comics for Doorbell 8x4



FARFETCH



How good are your comics?

- Features covered?
- Inspiring?
- Talking heads?
- Effective?



SUBHEADER

References

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