

Eliminating Ineffective Communication: How Datapipe Uses Lucidchart

Posted By: Joel Bangarter

October
04
2017

Employees around the world are plagued by the frustrations of ineffective communication. Countless hours are wasted simply conveying information—and too often the culprit is a painfully dense, multi-page document. Let's face it, text-heavy communication just isn't that effective. However, many people struggle to find an alternative. Patrick McClory, SVP of Platform Engineering at Datapipe, has a simple solution: make it visual.

As a longtime proponent of visual communication, Patrick has been diagramming for years. He eliminates text-filled documents wherever possible, replacing them with informative visuals. But in his role at Datapipe, Patrick faces an additional challenge. He explains, "I live in San Diego, and I have a team of 35 to 40 across the US, Costa Rica, and

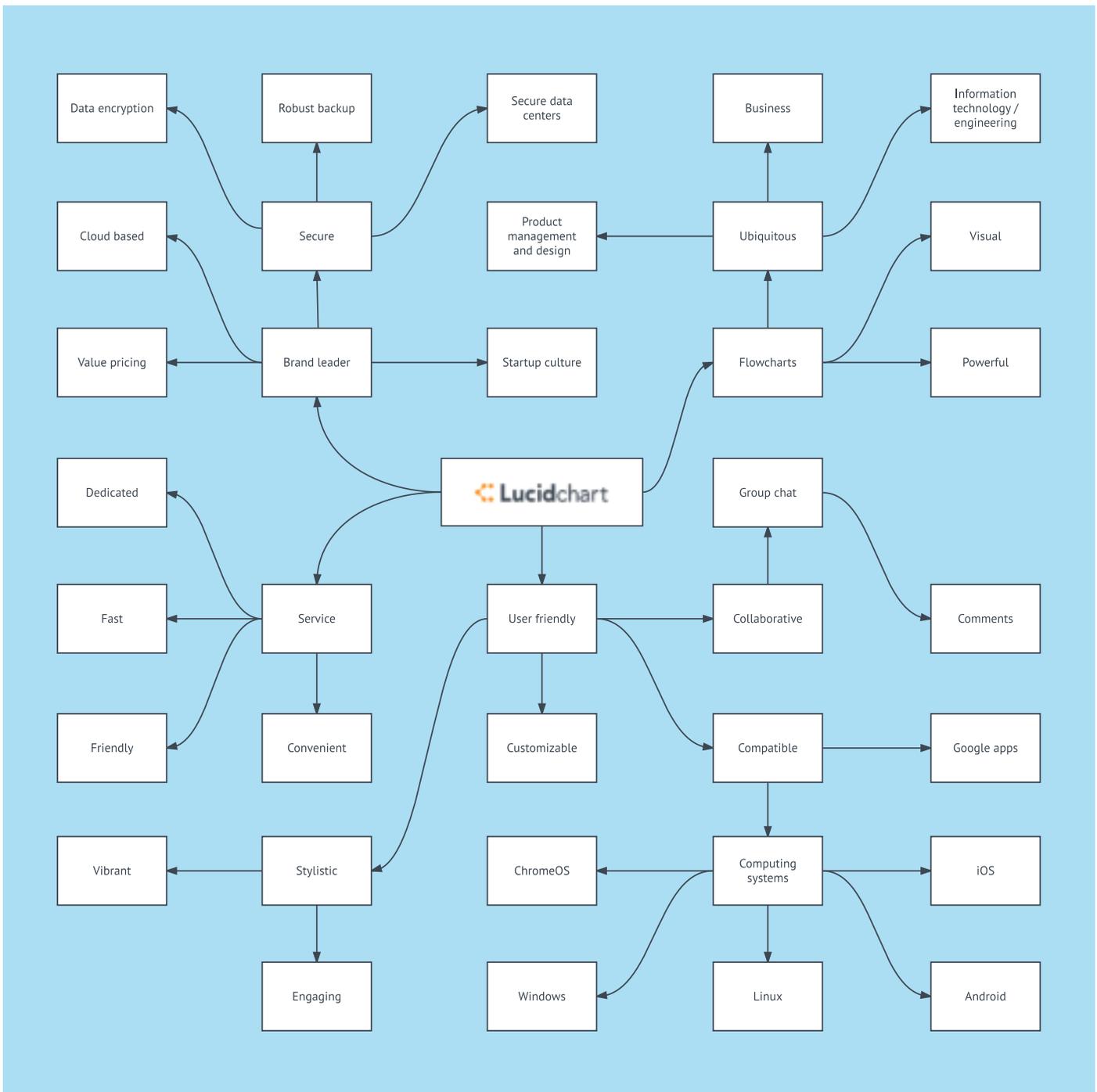
the UK—I can't just go whiteboard with them and say, 'Hey, remember that thing we drew last week?'" This is where Lucidchart comes in.

Using Lucidchart, Patrick can create compelling visuals quickly and easily, and he can share the diagrams with his team. Lucidchart also allows the team to collaborate on documents in real time, enhancing communication and understanding. Of Patrick's many uses for Lucidchart, we've highlighted two of our favorites below.

Whiteboarding out complex ideas

"Cloud" is one of the most common terms in tech, and, as a central aspect of Patrick's work, it is something he and his teams need to thoroughly understand. However, pinning "cloud" to a specific definition isn't an easy task—for being so recurrent, the term is oddly ambiguous.

"Cloud is this big, ubiquitous term," says Patrick. "One of my teams was trying to get their heads around it. What does it really mean? What is the real scope of cloud?" To answer this, Patrick turned to whiteboarding, a task he carries out in Lucidchart. "I wrote 'Cloud is...' and divided it into three main topics, then broke into definitions of each topic. I talked about the relationships between them, and when only two of them are present, what's the difference?"



(<https://www.lucidchart.com/documents/editNew/d9f718ff-c52f-4026-bb68-2258c8748e6f>)

If you're interested in using Patrick's strategy, customize this concept map template with any subject (Click on image to modify online)

As Patrick fleshed the diagram out, breaking each section into increasingly specific pieces, the whole picture came together. It became a comprehensive guide to the concept of “cloud” that quickly brought his team up to speed. And because the whiteboarding process boils away any excess fluff, it was easy to take in.

The final diagram proved useful not only internally, but also as a client-facing document. Datapipeline builds and provides managed cloud services—not an easy sell, if your clients don’t understand what you’re offering. “I’ve used this diagram in various forms with Fortune 500 companies and with clients to level the playing field for discussion,” says Patrick. “One diagram essentially cuts two or three hours of conversation down to 20 minutes of discussion to get everyone on the same page; then we can go talk about what matters.”

Beyond this specific instance, Patrick has employed whiteboarding to a variety of ends. Whether it is used to lay the foundation of a blog post or create the beginnings of a blog post, the whiteboarding process has proved invaluable. When it comes to breaking down complex thoughts and getting organized, nothing is better.

Keeping code consistent

Software engineers like to do things their own way, and Patrick's teams are no different. But if they all follow individual preference, the code is impossible to manage—it becomes a hodgepodge of various styles, not a coherent piece of software. To prevent this, Datapipe has a set of processes and building blocks for building their APIs. But there's still one problem: how do you communicate all of those guidelines to your engineers?

Patrick's solution, unsurprisingly, is visualization. "What I'm trying to do is figure out the best, most concise, most direct way of saying, 'Here's what we're doing and why. Here's a piece of the puzzle. Here are the components. Here's the structure,'" he explains. "And it's all done visually."

Using Lucidchart, Patrick laid out the structure of how Datapipe builds their software, and he provided detailed documentation for each element. The diagram contains an incredible amount of information but presents it in a digestible way. It allows the engineers to see the whole structure, giving them an increased understanding of the company's guidelines: "By being able to knock this together in a visual format... we were able to really hit home to the engineering team why it was so important to follow the underpinnings of this design."

Now, Patrick uses the diagram while onboarding new engineers. "It's become sort of required reading for every engineer that starts," he says. Patrick achieved his initial goal—more consistent code—but there were also some unexpected results. As Patrick and his teams review and discuss the diagram, they've been able to approach the designs critically. Questions arise, and, in the process of answering them, the designs change and improvements are made. "Bringing this diagram into the forefront has helped us not just build a more communicative team, but also build a stronger design," explains Patrick.

Collaborate and communicate, no matter where you are

Patrick's uses for Lucidchart all come back to one thing: streamlining communication. Creating visuals is the first step, but effective communication also requires collaboration—Lucidchart makes both possible.

"Lucidchart takes an hour on the phone, working with people in real time, as opposed to days and weeks of going back and forth with files," says Patrick. "That really is the value to me, that collaborative effect... My team is distributed across the U.S., and it's that digital collaborative process that's become the reason we're hardcore, ardent users of Lucidchart—I wouldn't use anything else because of this specific ability."

Share On:

[\(/#facebook\)](#) [\(/#twitter\)](#) [\(/#google_plus\)](#)
+ (<https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.lucidchart.com/articles/eliminating-ineffective-communication&title=Eliminating%20Ineffective%20Communication%3A%20The%20Power%20Of%20Visuals>)

About the Author

Joel Bangerter is a rising sophomore studying English at Johns Hopkins University. He is working as a content marketing intern at Lucid Software for the summer. After work, Joel enjoys reading, camping, and spending time with his dog, Goosey.



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

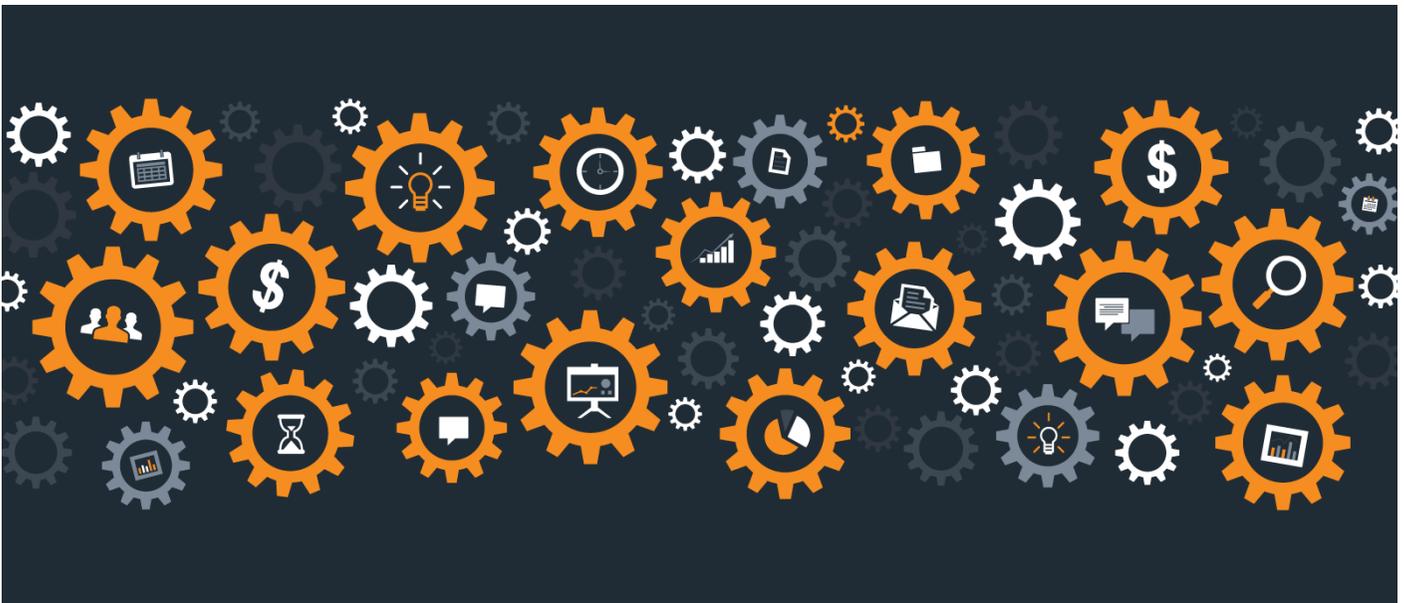
Get Lucidchart articles sent right to your inbox.

Email address

Subscribe

Write for us (/blog/write-for-us)

Popular Now



(/blog/lucidchart-fueling-effective-financial-planning-at-uber)
Lucidchart Fueling Effective Product Management at Uber (/blog/lucidchart-fueling-effective-financial-planning-at-uber)

How Lucidites Use Lucidchart: Diagrams for Marketing (/blog/how-lucidchart-uses-lucidchart-for-marketing)

Fantastic Flowcharts and Where to Find Them (/blog/fantastic-flowcharts-and-where-to-find-them)

About Lucidchart:

Lucidchart is an online flowchart maker (<https://www.lucidchart.com/>) used by more than 8 million people around the world to create flowcharts, network diagrams, ER diagrams, UML diagrams, mind maps, and more. Because of its intuitive user interface and collaborative features, it is the most popular online Visio alternative.

(https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/tour/visio_alternative)

Lucidchart is one of the most popular productivity apps for G Suite, Confluence, JIRA, Jive and many other leading platforms.

Lucidchart

Tour (<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/tour>)

Templates (<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/examples>)

Pricing (/users/registerLevel)

Blog (/blog/)

For Companies

Google Integrations (<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/google-integrations>)

Atlassian Integrations (<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/atlassian>)

For Teams (<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/teams>)

For Enterprise (<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/enterprise>)

About

Help (<https://lucidchart.zendesk.com/hc/en-us>)

Terms (</pages/tos>)

Privacy (</pages/privacy>)

Contact (</contact>)

Lucid Software

Press (</pages/press>)

Affiliates (</pages/affiliate-program>)

Careers (<https://www.golucid.co/jobs>)

Lucidpress (<http://www.lucidpress.com/>)

FB TW G+ YT LI

(<https://www.facebook.com/lucidchart/>) (<https://twitter.com/lucidchart>) (<https://plus.google.com/+lucidchart>) (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC16408682647256511d1ps18>) (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/lucidsoftware>)

© 2017 Lucid Software Inc.