VISUAL MARKETING

The Power of Images

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Visual Marketing

We live in a visual world. We use our eyes to see the things that influence our reactions, our behavior and even our decisions. Visual marketing is an important part of any business' marketing plan.

What is Visual Marketing?

According to Wikipedia.com, "Visual marketing focuses on the studying and analyzing how images can be used to make objects the center of visual communication. Images — when done deftly – can turn concepts and intangible things into something concrete. That helps people envision a brand and its message in their mind's eye — and remember it when it comes time to buy."

In simpler terms, visual marketing is the act of connecting the power of images with your written content to create memorable marketing. Images have the ability to turn your ideas and concepts or brand values into an actual visual that people can see and remember.

Visual marketing enhances a marketing campaign by increasing a consumer's buying behavior through recall, memory and identification.

The growth of social networking platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Timeline feature of Facebook are proof that people want to see what they are buying.

Visual marketing includes everything that offers a visual cue: your logo, sales tools, signage, uniforms, brochures, websites, your brand and anything that comes in contact with your customer.

The use of visuals isn't limited to photos and images. Visuals include images, graphics, charts, infographics, cartoons, graphs, memes, photos, videos and visual note-taking or graphic facilitation. Graphic facilitation is the exercise of using words and images together to create a conceptual map of a conversation, often used in meetings, conferences and similar types of meetings.

The Value of Images

You've probably heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." It has been proven as a fact, especially since the advances in the Internet. This saying is actually back by proof. It's been shown that the brain processes images up to 60,000 times faster than text. The value of images can be marked in the way it increases (or decreases) your traffic and conversion rates, the retention kept by your audience and the way customers remember your brand.

Check out these facts on visual marketing:

1. 90% of information sent to the brain is through our vision. Visuals are process 60,000 times faster in the brain than text is. (Sources: 3M Corporation and Zabisco.

2. 46.1% of people say a website's design is the number one gauge they use for the credibility of a company. (Source: Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab)

3. People respond better to visual information than plain text.

4. Infographics grow traffic an average of 12% more for publishers than those who don't use them. (Source: AnsonAlex)

5. Visual content drives engagement. Photos and videos on Facebook Timeline for brands saw an increase of 65%.

6. Blog posts with videos attract 3 times more inbound links than text posts. Viewers stay on a page with videos on them up to 100% more time than those without.

7. Over 60 hours of videos are uploaded every minute on YouTube.

8. 85% of US internet users watch videos online. Adult males spend 40% more time watching videos online than females.

9. Articles or blog posts with images will get viewed 94% more often than those with text only. In fact, visuals can attract up to 3 times more traffic.

10. Visuals on your website can increase monthly unique visitors by up to 300%.

11. After watching a product video, viewers are 85% more likely to purchase.

Visuals add value to your marketing because of the way the brain processes images quickly. Placing an image or video in your post can increase viewership and more likely be shared through social media.

Why images are important

Images are more important than ever in your online marketing plan. Savvy online marketers are using images everywhere, on social media sites like Pinterest to Infographics on their own sites and every place they build content. These marketers are using them effectively to present their message to their specific target market.

Images provide several useful functions online:

Images provide a visual way for you to communicate your message by supporting the story you are telling. People can try to visualize something you are saying in written content, but add an image and the picture becomes instantly clear to them. The saying, "let me show you what I mean" might possibly be one of the best ways to get your idea across. Giving a visual reverence rivets your markets attention.

They can give you another way to get search engine optimization for your blog posts, social media blurbs or your web pages. By placing a keyword related alt tag and associated text on your image, you can easily increase your SEO optimization.

Images make your marketing more interesting. Studies have shown that an image-based marketing message will be more likely to go viral and be shared than a text-based message.

Images evoke our emotions and capture our attention. We make purchases based on how we respond to an image. Give the viewer a picture of what you are talking about and you get their attention. Emotions like shock, sympathy and scandal will always grab attention.

Emotion drives attention which drives learning.

Robert Sylwester, A Celebration of Neurons (1995)

Most messages can be reinforced with one simple emotional image to go with the emotional content you write.

Images are important in your online and offline marketing efforts. They evoke emotions, grab our attention and help you improve your SEO. Images are the reason sites like Pinterest and YouTube are so popular.

Promoting your Brand through Images

You know the importance of images in your marketing strategy. But how and where do you use images to promote your brand? If you're not sure what types of images you should be adding to your marketing, start by what you want to achieve. Do you want to help people? Show your expertise in something? Are you wanting to start a conversation? Then you can work backwards to how you can accomplish this with images.

Here are some ideas on promoting your brand with images:

One of the most important marketing tools is your brand image or logo. Your goal is brand recognition. It gives your business credibility while inspiring others to share your business with others. Place your logo on your business stationary, within your business cards, in your email signatures, on brochures and signs. Your brand should be included on your website and all your merchandising materials.

Network through visual social media. Share images of your products, of your customers and any images that promote your brand in a positive way.

Attend or participate in trade shows and exhibitions, using images in your exhibition boards.

Use print ads in magazines, newspapers, coupon books, trade journals and industry magazines. Choose print mediums that are suited to your business.

Place your brand images in any advertisements you buy. Some places you can use advertisements might be at trade or networking events and in related newsletters or websites.

Direct mail is still a viable visual marketing source. Mail out letters, brochures, postcards or catalogs that include your product images, your brand logo and other types of images.

Promote your brand online with a well-designed website that includes your brand logo and product images.

Pass out freebies that include your name and logo. Freebies can be anything from calendars to pens to coupons.

Think beyond just product photos or logos. Think about what else you can say with your images and what your fans want to see.

It could be inspirational quotes or lyrics, infographics, printables or worksheets, fun and entertaining graphics that might include cartoons. Any type of graphic or image that showcases your product or service in a new and different way such as before and after photos or how the product or service is being used.

Promoting your brand or logo through images doesn't necessarily mean just your business logo. You want to keep a consistent look throughout your branding. By thinking outside the box in terms of other types of graphics you can use can be the one thing that viewers will remember and share.

Putting your Best Image Forward

You're already leveraging SEO with your content and getting traffic to your website. You are using images to promote your brand. Now you need to focus on getting that traffic to say on your website. This is where a good website design will help.

Why should you use a professional website design?

A professional website design makes a great first impression to your visitor. The website should represent who you are and what you're offering. Is your site credible and trustworthy? Does it look like a professional designed it (even if they didn't)? Is it easy to navigate? Does your site make them feel welcome and know they are in the right place?

When designing your website ask yourself these questions. Design might not be the most important factor but it does play an important part of the first impression a visitor gets.

Tips for creating a great website design:

1. Using colors correctly. You need to use the right colors for your audience. You want to draw attention to certain elements using color. Not everything should jump out at your visitor. Also you should avoid using lot of different colors on your website. Instead, pick two to four colors for the main website and your marketing materials.

2. Avoid using animations, gadgets and other media when not necessary. Flash animations might look cool but do they really work with your brand? Avoid

background music or animated backgrounds as well. Media and animations should support your content.

3. The layout. The layout should have clear navigation. The page elements should be organized instead of randomly placed all over your site. Use lots of white space by avoiding clutter. It's hard to read a page that is crammed with elements, widgets, ads, images and text. Your eyes don't know where to land. If your site is too busy, your visitor will most likely click away.

4. Fonts. Your typography needs to be legible. Carefully select font styles, font colors and font sizes that are easy for anyone to read. Most people scan pages. Using bullet lists, section headers and short paragraphs make scanning easier. Make sure your information flows well from left to right and top to bottom. Use a white or light colored background with dark colored or black text.

Why does consistent brand image matter?

A logo or brand is what customers think of when they hear or see your name. Using different images or names for the same brand is confusing to customers. You need to create a consistent brand that carries the same design, colors, voice and style across all your marketing and products. Make sure your social media personalities fit with your brand image as well.

Having a consistent brand makes it harder for others the misrepresent you.

Logo consistency includes the colors and style as well as where it's placed on your product or website. Place your logo or brand symbol in a prominent location on your website and all your products. On your website this is often at the top left or center of your header.

Keep elements consistent from page to page on your website and affiliate materials. Your website elements should have consistent color, photography styles, and font styles throughout. The navigation on your website should remain in the same location of your layout on all pages of your website.

Without consistency, and your message and design are often different, you customer can become confused and might end up mistaking your brand for your competitor. Then you risk the loss of the customer.

How do you avoid a cookie cutter site?

First of all, what is a cookie cutter site? Cookie cutter sites are sites that are created with the same template, using nearly the same copy and images.

You want to avoid having your website look like all the others out there. You can do this several ways. The first way is by having your website custom designed to your needs and customers. This means setting up elements so they flow well yet work for you.

Another option is to use your own images. Marketing experiments have compared the use of stock photography and real images on a website. The results found that real photos of real people out-performed the stock photos by nearly 95%. The reason behind this is the fact that stock images are unrelated. They don't necessarily show your brand as it really is.

Try to use meaningful images on your site. Every visual you place on in your marketing transmits a subconscious message to your audience.

Don't break the left margin. By this we mean that the left margin should always stay as the anchor to your page. It's what gives our eyes a place to return to. Think about when you read a book. Of course, the opposite is true in locations where text is read from the right to the left.

Avoid placing left-aligned images in your body copy. Of course, copy can flow around the image, if you want.

Putting your best image in front of your target market begins with having a consistent brand image and a well –designed website. It's best to have a website that looks professional with real photography and an overall consistent layout. The elements of every page of your site, from the home page to the contact page, should all be in the same location.

Planning your Visual Marketing Strategies

Having a well-designed website is the start of your visual marketing plan. It's always been said that content is king. And while this is true, visual imagery comes in as the queen. Visual marketing simply means using images in a way that communicates a certain message you want to deliver about your business. Creating a visual marketing strategy should be just as important as your content marketing strategy.

The images you use in your visual marketing plan can be still images, cartoons, graphics or videos and presentations. They can be based around your products or services, can contain information or photographs, anything you are already using in your business in some way. They can be shared online or offline.

Images you have shared on your Facebook page, Pinterest board or added to a blog post or videos you use for business are all a part of your visual marketing.

Decide on where you will be using visual images.

Will it be on your blog posts, in social media sharing sites, on YouTube or other video sharing site? Will you be using photographs in your products and services, on brochures and newsletters?

Use Pinterest and Facebook to attract followers using your own images.

Include quality images in every blog post you publish.

Share photos and videos with Instagram, Vine and other video apps.

If necessary, hire a professional photographer to take photos of your products to share on your website and social channels.

What kinds of images can you use?

The types of images you can use in your visual marketing strategy are unlimited. Real photographs you take or have taken, stock photography from photography sites, graphics you have created, charts, slides and presentations you create, as well as videos you take.

Other types of visual imagery could include infographics, charts, visual how-tos, screenshots, line art, hand drawn graphics, cartoons and anything else that is visual.

You can create your own images with all the tools available online or have them created for you.

Can every business benefit from a visual marketing strategy? Yes but in different ways. A business that sells products can use imagery better through Pinterest and Instagram. A service based business, on the other hand, have to be more creative. Yes you may have products to sell, but you can also show photos of the conferences you attend, your staff and office. A graphic design firm can show off their work with images of their finished jobs. Service type businesses can use infographics to quote statistics or list their services and benefits. Product based businesses can add images of customers using their products.

Basically, your visual strategy should tie in with everything you are doing in marketing already. You are using text content in your marketing, on your blog and in social media. Adding visual marketing to the mix ensures you are taking the next step to reach the part of your market who responds to imagery best.

Using Entertaining, Clever, Eye-catching Images in your Advertising

Using images in your visual marketing is a natural way of showing as well as telling. You should be doing this using entertaining, clever, eye-catching images that are placed in the right area of your website or marketing product.

It doesn't matter whether you use stock photography, real images or videos there are a few elements you should follow to make them work.

To start with, placement on your website does matter. We read in a specific order. People will look at an image first. Then they scan your headline and then onto the body copy. That is if they find the headline interesting.

Often the image is placed at the top of a page before the headline.

Once you have your image, create a catchy caption. Captions get read four times more often than body copy. A caption under every image gives you the opportunity to press home your main point.

If your image isn't relevant to your copy, it's a waste of space. It serves only to confuse the reader. Avoid this if at all possible.

Choose images that are eye-catching or clever. For example, if you are selling a book on weight loss, an eye-catching image of a before and after shot is relevant. Look for images that entertain your readers. These could be graphics or infographics you have created or cartoons or simply a clever image.

The best kinds of images to use in your visual marketing are images with a story and images that demonstrate. A story appeal image is best for the top of your page since it gives a strong sense of curiosity to your viewer. He sees it and wants to know what is going on in the image. So he reads the copy that follows it to find out.

Entertain and inform your viewers with eye-catching and clever images that are relevant to your copy. Images that tease your reader into reading the copy and adding captions to all your images keeps the viewer reading.

Where to Use Images:

How do you know where to use your images? Offline, online, local and mobile are all areas you should be using images. Of course you can't just throw an image out there and hope it lands where it will do the most good. Here are some great areas to use images.

Of course, your professional website should have good quality images. This is the place online where you send your prospects. Every blog post should have relevant images to draw in the viewer.

Use good quality images in your sales letters and landing pages. Videos work well in these types of pages as well as photographs of your product.

Use images in your email newsletter to bring interest to it.

Include images, infographics and other types of visual images in your print newsletter.

Your product brochures need images of your products and services.

Add a slide presentation to your website and social sharing sites like slideshare.com.

A fun new type of image is the infographic. Use it on your website, newsletter, social media sites, in presentations offline and sales letters.

Any offline advertising you do such as fliers, newspapers, television should include images.

Your Facebook cover needs good quality images of your business and brand. Share images on your Facebook postings as well.

Other social sites, like LinkedIn Company pages and posts and Twitter tweets benefit from images.

Your Google Plus cover, posts and local / places business listings should have images.

Use videos in your blog posts and on social channels.

Share images related to your business on all your social channels.

Use images in your direct mail pieces. Postcards, sales fliers and thank you cards keep you in front of your customer. Make sure to include images that fit in with your brand consistency.

Use images in contests, on print coupons, and surveys you send out to your customers.

Images play an important role in every type of communication you have with your market. But they must be appropriate to your audience and the message you want them to see. Images can help you build up your communications and marketing efforts.

Create your Own Images

Creating your own images can be fun and creative. It's never been easier to take and share images quickly. Every mobile device and smartphone has a camera built in. And with all the smartphone apps available for snapping pictures you can snap, edit and share instantly.

Some of the more popular apps include Instagram, a user friendly app that makes it easy to edit and upload images to Facebook. Hipstamatic offers a wide variety of artistic features and Cinegram has cool animation features.

Tips for taking great photos for the web.

A photo can do a lot to improve your marketing materials. But the reverse is true as well. A poor image can damage your credibility and lose customers or sales. The tips that follow will help you get the best photos for your needs.

- Photos of people and animals are very popular on web pages. Make sure the eyes are easily visible. People look at the eyes when they look at photographs. If your image shows the eyes in shadow or are hard to see, your image is less effective in capturing your visitors attention.

- Zoom in on the faces. Faces are the most interesting part of the body in most cases.

- Get close on your subject. Get as much of the subject in the frame as you can. If you have a picture of a group of people doing different things, zoom in on the ones that are relevant to your subject.

- Take photographs of people and animals in action.

- When taking photos of products for your website, make sure they are well lit, clear and they stand out. Your customer depends on the images to make their decisions on whether to buy or not so make the product photo good.

- Get in close on the product. At the very least, crop the photo so that only the product is highlighted.

- Give your viewer multiple angles of your product. Take photographs from different sides so you can provide as much information about the product as possible.

- Take the photograph in good lighting. Use a spotlight, natural light or whatever kind of light necessary to make your product look it's best. People want to be able to see the details.

- Lighting is often what makes the difference between a professional photograph and a novice's. Always be aware of where the sun is if you are shooting outside. Try to keep the sun to the side of your subjects. If they are facing the sun they will most likely be squinting, which isn't a good look for your website.

- Diffused light is best for most human and animal shots.

- Even when you zoom in on the subject, sometimes the background still has too much clutter or noise. This can make the photo difficult to view. It might be necessary to move your subjects to an area with a clear background.

- It's not just clutter that can ruin a photo. Take a look around the subject or take a test shot first. Does the background seem messy? Is there something else in the frame taking the focus from your subject? Be aware of where any mirrors are so you're not photographing yourself.

- If at all possible, photograph your product with a white background. This will make your product really stand out. The shadows will be more effective as well. If you do use a colored background, it should be a solid color.

- If your background isn't solid or needs cleaning up, use photo editing software to slightly blur the background. It's not the most ideal background, but your images will stand out better than with a printed or messy background.

- Take advantage of fill flash. Fill flash is a useful tool that allows you to photograph your subjects with the light source behind them. This way their faces won't be in shadow. On cloudy days, the fill flash works to highlight everything.

These tips will help you create good quality photographs of your products and subjects so you can create positive impressions within your market.

Tools for Creating Graphics

You can create your own graphics with some of the excellent graphics programs available. Many of these come with a high price tag though. There are many tools available online that are free or low cost to use. Here is a list of some of the more popular ones.

Drawing, paint and graphics programs:

Gimp. Gimp is great for retouching photos as well as creating your own images.

GimpShopdotnet. A modified version of Gimp, this one is designed to feel and work more like Adobe Photoshop.

InkScape. This is the free alternative to Adobe Illustrator or CorelDraw. InkScape is a full featured graphics editor.

Paint.net. This free image and photo software is for Windows based PC's. Its tools are top of the line allowing for layers and special effects. It can be compared to Photoshop.

Ultimate paint. This is also built for Windows. The fast running image creation and manipulation graphics program is packed with features.

Pixia. This is a good paint tool supports full layers. The support is limited for the English version, however.

Brush Strokes. This free graphics editor supports the most common mage formats. This one is good for light users.

SmoothDraw NX. This tool is designed to be used with tablets. The freehand drawing tool has several choices in brush and pencil strokes that let your create realistic drawings.

ImageMagicK. This program is good for editing and creating images with features such as shearing and transforming, flip, mirror and rotate images.

ImageForge. A Windows system image editing and creation program that lets you create 3D text, remove red-eye and create Windows screen savers.

Karbon14. This is a full featured vector based drawing program released under the GNU license.

ArtWeaver. A paint and drawing program designed to simulate the natural brush strokes and effects for artists who work on canvas.

3D and Animation programs:

Google SketchUp. This powerful 3D software lets you quickly create 3D models. The program is easy to use. You can use it to design and build everything from a house to an elaborate skyscrapers.

Graphix. This graphics editor lets you build and edit raster and vector images.

Blender. This top of the line 3D graphics tool is powerful but may be difficult to learn to use.

3D Canvas. This animation tool allows you to easily create 3D scenes using drag-and-drop.

Terragen. This program lets you create beautiful scenery and photorealistic images.

Tips for creating product packaging

Your product packaging is the first thing a customer sees. The colors, labels and images represent the feeling you want portray. Getting all the elements right can be tough. Here are some tips for creating good product packaging.

Color

The color should suit the product. Use pleasing combinations and contrasts for the text color. You want your text to be readable and clear. For example, a red background with orange text is too difficult to see. The font should represent the product to the best advantage.

Labels

Any labels on your products need to be legible. Consumers often read the labels before making the choice to buy. The right size font and font style will be easy to read

Use images

Go ahead and include images on your product packaging. Cartoons, a picture of the actual product or a picture of the model are all good choices. You should also include your brand image or logo on your packaging to keep it consistent with your brand.

Layout

The layout and design needs to flow. The design needs to communicate clearly and quickly to the reader. That means the visual elements should be organized to work in harmony with each other.

Relevance

The right image, color, font style, layout and design must be chosen to suit the product. Don't use images of something inappropriate to the product. Your font color and style should be compatible to what the product is.

Your Audience

Your product packaging should fit with who you are selling to. Is your market a woman, 35+ who loves to cook or a man, 55+ who is an avid golfer? Knowing who your main audience is makes the design decision easier.

Display Benefits Prominently

Your eBook cover or packaging should focus on the benefits to the customer.

Design

The title or product name needs to be in the right style, size and position to grab attention. Type and images should be organized in the order of importance. Make the more important elements stand out more than other elements.

Simplicity

Often, a simple but well-designed image or illustration works best. Reduce the image to the size of a thumbnail to see how well it stands up at that size. Sometimes details get lost at that size.

Visual effect

For a dramatic effect, run the image and color off the boundaries of the packaging or book covers edge. This expands the visual space.

Focal Point

Create a focal point to pull your audience in. This can be in the form of placing your image at a dramatic perspective or angle, a visual burst of color or a single area that draws the eye.

Your product packaging or book covers are one of the most important elements in your visual marketing plan. It's the first thing your customer sees when considering your product. Make it stand out with good design, well placed relevant images and a pleasing layout.

Using Unconventional Images

There are times when an unconventional image is appropriate. This could be when you have a unique product, blog post or need something different to get your point across.

For example, a shot within a shot shows the image of one thing within another. This could work for showing the changes you made in a previous product.

Mirrors can be used to create reflections. This presents your ordinary image in a new way.

Another example is to frame your image using a unique frame.

Finally, shooting your subject from an unconventional perspective creates a unique image. Shoot the image from the floor, from above for any way that will change the normal perspective.

Using unconventional images can be appropriate in certain situations. It can add pop to your posts or a book cover when a normal image won't work.

Types of Image

There are many types of images. You aren't limited to photographs and illustrations in your search for the perfect visual. Here are a few of the more popular ones and the roles they play in marketing.

- Photographs show the real world. Photos are important to marketing. They showcase the originality of your product. Showing the real thing is very important to your audience. It connects them with the message and the image. You can use stock photography, for generic type posts, or take professional looking photographs of subjects relevant to your market.

- Screenshots are perfect for showing how to do something, especially online. A screen shot is the act of taking a picture of your computer screen. Screenshots are helpful when you are trying to demonstrate something that is hard to explain. For example, a shot of a technical process, to show how to perform the process

or a shot of a software or app review to show what it looks like. Screenshots give you snippets of your screen you can save for later if needed.

- Infographics are a graphic image with text data. They are visual representations of complex data or knowledge presented in an easy and clear way. Infographics are useful in your visual marketing strategy because they are shared all over the web and across social sharing channel more often than most other content. They are easy to understand for the reader. They are a powerful viral marketing tool for marketers to use to spread the news about your products or services.

- Cartoons: Cartoons have been used in marketing for years. The political cartoon in your local newspaper. Snoopy in met life commercials. Cartoons can instantly make your blog post, tips sheet or other marketing material more fun and be more memorable than most any other visual form. Cartoons will more often be read and passed on to others.

- Videos   Posts with videos attract 3 times more inbound links than plain text posts. Videos show your personality easily. Videos can be used to communicate in ways text or other marketing tools don't. Video is a way to connect emotionally with your customers. They give you the opportunity to use sight and sound in your storytelling. A good video entertains while it influences the viewer by connecting their heart and brain with your service or product.

- Clip art are simple drawings often used in sales letters. For example, a clip art of a curved arrow pointing to one of your benefits. Clip art is the answer to spicing ups fliers, brochures, newsletters and other simple projects. Clip art covers a variety of types of images. They can be professional illustrations, simple line drawings or fonts.

- Internet memes are images combined with witty comments or quotations.

This is just a short list of the many different types of images you can use. And as technology grows and change the types of images will also continue to grow. Your job, as the marketer, is to find creative ways to use images.

Finding Good images

There are a lot of places online to find good images. One thing to remember is to always follow the license rules. Some sources need attribution, others will require you source the photographer. Some sources allow you to make changes to the image while others won't. Be sure that any image you do use, can be used for business use if it will be on anything you are selling.

Here is a list of sources for finding good images.

1. MorgueFile.com has thousands of images in their database. Most don't require attribution, but they are not public domain either.

2 .OpenClipart.org is one of the best sources of public domain clipart.

3. Public-Domain-Photos.com has over 5,000 public domain photos. You can also find thousands more with copyright-free images.

4. PDPhoto.org has public domain photos. Their database has a huge selection to choose from, with a large group of travel photos.

5. http://www.clker.com/ carries public domain clipart. This one you have to be careful with. Some of the images are good but some are bad.

6. http://images.google.com/hosted/life is Life magazine's black and white collection of photos from the 1860s to 1970s. These are free to use.

7. http://www.fromoldbooks.org/ is exactly what it says. Pictures from Old Books is a consortium of pictures from old books. Most of them are in the public domain.

8. http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Graphics.shtml. FirstGov links to most of the government's pages where many have public domain works. Be sure to read the disclaimers before using the images.

9. Professional photographers. You can often buy images from professional photographers. Just be sure to get any legal rights to use the images in writing.

10. Art students will often create images or take photographs for a small fee and as part of their learning process. Again be sure to get any legal rights in writing.

There are a lot of places online and offline to find good images to use in your visual marketing. Always follow any license and attribution rules when using an image.

Make Stock Images Unique

Stock photos aren't really bad. They serve a purpose when your budget is low or time is short. But stock photos can be made unique with a little creativity. Consider these tips:

1. Resize the image or crop the image. Often you don't need the whole photo you download. Focus on the most relevant and attractive part by cropping or cutting the photo to that section. This highlights what you want to say and makes your photo stand out from all the others using the same image. Use some of other features to add even more changes. For example try using the blur tool to blur the background.

2. Combine elements of two or more images to make one unique one. Combine photos with line drawings or vector art. Create talk bubbles on images of faces. Clip several elements from different images and combine into one mish-mash collage.

3. Remove or change the color. A colored photo can be turned into a black and white or sepia-toned image using effects tools. Use an overlay to create a company color on top of a grayscale image.

4. Create a custom collage of stock photos by choosing a group of related images and paste into a new page. Crop, highlight and add text overlays to change up the collage. Make individual images stand out with drop shadows or other creative elements.

5. Highlight certain areas of the photo. Use the filter effects in your drawing program to create fun effects to highlight a focal point. Try blurring out parts of the image to focus on one single element, like the eyes.

6. Create a text overlay by creating a text message over the image. Text overlays are often famous quotes, current events, jokes or the title of your article.

7. Rotate images and add 3-D effects. Play with the photo editing tools to turn a scene into an oil painting, an ink sketch or a pixelated image.

Here are few sites to use for making stock images unique

picmonkey: Super easy to use and great for making creative & fun changes to your images.

pinstamatic: Love Pinterest? This site is perfect for creating images you can pin on Pinterest

someecards: This one lets you make funny images related to your brand or niche.

wordle: This one makes interesting or inspiring word clouds.

animoto: Use this one create your own videos or slide shows

visual.ly: This one is for creating your own infographics

mural.ly: this one lets you build an online mural.

You can make stock photos stand out from everyone else. With a little creative fun you can turn a plain image into something original.

Create Powerful Infographics

Infographics are fun ways to share information in a visual way. When well done, an infographic is a powerful marketing tool that gets your brand in front of others. Infographics are some of the best performing types of content online today. With the popularity of sites like Pinterest and Instagram, visuals are important part of marketing. You can create your own infographics using tools online.

Step 1: brainstorm

What do you want your infographic to portray? Do some audience research to understand what your target audience wants. Who are they? What topics are they interested in.

Step 2: Design Plan

Your infographic needs to flow. Try to keep the information from becoming cluttered. Keep it simple and straightforward. Use a good text-to-visual ratio. Try to use as little text as possible. Short headline or blurb style bits of text work best.

Create and use graphics that convey your ideas.

Your infographic should tell a story. There should be a beginning spot, usually at the top of the graphic, and an ending at the bottom. Put together a skeleton drawing of words and arrows showing where you need to group relevant data and create a flowchart of the information you need to add.

Step 3: Choose a Color Scheme.

Your color scheme is very important. It conveys the message you want your readers to get. Colors send out ideas to those who are reading your content. Use complementary colors to keep your graphic visually appealing. This encourages people to stop and read your infographic and want to share it with others.

Step 4: Choose your Font Size

It's a common mistake for infographics creators to use too small a font size. For some reason they believe more information can be shared with the small font size. But in reality, a larger font is a better option. Small print combined with information overload can turn readers away since they think they don't have the time to read it. Larger fonts make facts seem more important. You can use a stylish font that is easily recognizable, something like Arial that easy to read.

Step 5: Graphics

Most infographics have two kinds of graphics. Theme graphics and reference graphics.

Theme graphic are the main visual of your design. The right theme graphic should instantly tell your reader what you are wanting to share.

Reference graphics are usually visual icons.

Step 6: Information and Knowledge

The last step in creating a powerful infographic is to add facts, information and short quotes. Do your research to add true information to your graphic.

Tips:

Keep it simple. Your infographic should be easily understood through pictures and words.

Make it beautiful to look at.

Make it easily shareable.

Put it everywhere.

Promote it.

Finally, an infographic can be simple or as complicated as you want it to be. Just remember a compelling infographic doesn't confuse the reader and make them feel like an idiot. Take the time to know who you are creating the infographic for, the design style you want to use and how you will be sharing it.

Using Social Images to Engage

Using images in your social media channels can improve retweet rates, clicks and comments. We are a social world but we are also a visual world. We love to share things we see. Images work to keep our audience engaged.

In fact, Images increase engagement on Facebook by 40%. They work best when you upload them directly to your fan page. According to Kissmetrics, photos receive 53% more Likes, 104% more comments and a whopping 84% more click-throughs on links.

One of the reasons images work better than text links is it is favored in the newsfeed on Facebook. Images are bigger than text links.

Another fact: Twenty percent of online purchases are made after surfing through social media sites. This means people are sharing, retweeting, commenting and clicking on your products before they make a buying decision. And those social media blurbs that include images are more likely to be shared.

Over 70% of social network users shop online. They are computer savvy, older and use their computers to make online purchases. They view images of images of products before they buy.

Since Twitter has introduced the new function some users have noticed a significant increase in engagement. Images on Twitter can means more retweets, favorites, mentions and sharing.

In fact to following impact was discovered by Buffer:

Tweets with images received 89% more favorites

Tweets with images received 18% more clicks than those without

Tweets with images received 150% more retweets

Not every social share should include images. But the ones you do include images on can boost your engagement with your followers.

How to Make the Most of Visual Sharing Sites

Visual content marketing really isn't a new concept. We've been sharing images and videos for many years. YouTube, founded in 2005, is one of the first video sharing sites. You Tube isn't the only cannel available for marketers to share their visual content.

Here are some of the more popular ones.

Instagram

Most likely you've already heard of this one. It's an online sharing app that lets the user capture pictures, add a frame and filter and post them across the social media channels. Instagram, though is just as useful to marketers as it is for personal use. In fact, brands that use Instagram have access to more than 100 million active users with over 40 million photos snapped daily and up to 1,000 comments being posted every

second. That's a lot of viewers to have access to in one place. They also have a new video tool for sharing videos.

The photo feature lets users take photos directly from the app. Or you can upload photos from your smartphone's camera roll. Videos can only be taken with the application.

Instagram video is a 15 second video recording with the ability to delete a segment if you need to.

There are several filters included on Instagram that work for both photo and video. These filters let you add visual appeal or help cover up some photography mistakes.

One advantage Instagram videos have over Vine and Twitter videos is that they can be played in-line on Facebook for desktop users. Vine and Twitter videos require users to click out to view videos.

Tips

Your profile should be complete. Add your company logo or other profile image. Include a company bio with links to your website and other social media channels.

Learn the lingo. Hashtagging is the process of tagging your photos and videos with your brand industry specific terms (like #visualmarketing). Learn to leverage popular specific hashtags to expand your content's reach (like #throwbackthursday).

Choose a relevant cover frame. Instagram lets you choose a still shot for the cover your video. Select a great one that arouses the curiosity of viewers who will want to watch.

Take the time to build relationships with your audience. Use the hashtagging content to search for and engage other users who share images and videos relevant to your brand or industry. Respond to negative posts as well.

Vine

Vine is the mobile app owned by Twitter. This app lets users create and share short video clips online. Vine has over 13 million users uploading more than 1 million videos every day.

Vine videos are short with a maximum length of six seconds.

You cannot edit Vine videos. That means they have to be either deleted or left the way they are if you don't like them.

You can embed codes in the video clips, so they are easy to share on social sites like Twitter or Facebook.

Tips

You only have 6 seconds so make everyone count. That means you have to cut directly to your message. Plan out what you want to say for a successful video.

Vine appeals to short attention spans. These short videos let you create concise but meaningful messages.

Play around with the stop motion feature. You can break your video down in to 6 consecutive videos each a second long. Splice together bits nonconsecutive content to create a successful montage video.

Hashtags work in Vine, as well. The same rules apply for Vine as they do for Instagram.

Extend the life of your existing videos. Create six-second short videos as previews for longer content.

Snapchat

Snapchat allows users to upload photos and videos to send to friends through its mobile application. The thing that makes Snapchat unique, is that the message is deleted from the phone, app and Spapchat's servers once the image or video is opened by the receiver.

Snapchat has become known for less-than-G-rated uses recently. Don't let that deter you though. Snapchat has over 5 million daily users sending over 200 million snaps a day.

Snapchat allows users to take photos, record videos, add text or drawings and then send the snaps to a list of recipients. Users can set a time limit on the length of time a recipient is allowed to view the Snap, usually from 1 to 10 seconds.

Tips

Use Snapchat to create content that is Snappable. These are the ones that communicate what you want to say in a single photo or video.

Experiment with the limited-time discounts, special offers or sneak peeks of new items.

Experiment with segmentation since each chat can be sent to a chosen list of recipients. This works well for marketers trying to reach a specific segment of their market.

Pinterest

Pinterest is often thought of as the women's social board. But more and more people, male and female are finding how powerful Pinterest can be. This pinboard-style photo sharing site allows you to create and manage images into collections called boards. Other users can then browse your boards and repin or like the images.

Pinterest isn't limited to crafts, home decorating and cooking enthusiasts. It has over 27 million unique visitors and 220 million page views every day. A report by Simply Measured found that 69 of the world's top 100 brands have Pinterest accounts. Pinterest drives more traffic to websites than Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, or YouTube.

Pinterest users upload, organize, and share images and other media content (like video) through their Pinboards.

Content can be shared to Pinterest via a Pin It tool.

Boards are organized by topics and themes. Users browse pins from their home page or by using the search of the main sections that include everything, videos, popular, and gifts.

Pins are liked or re-pinned or can be followed.

Pinterest let's businesses create business accounts with features not available to personal accounts.

Tips

If you plan to use Pinterest in your marketing set it up as a business account. It doesn't look any different than a personal account but you will have access to commerce, advertising, and analytics features.

Optimize your account. So that your audience can find you take the steps needed to optimize your account and your pins. Verify your website, add a Pinterest Icon and Pin It button to your website and use the right keywords to optimize your pins.

Leverage the free analytics. Pinterest features access to the freeanalytics for marketers. This tool lets you track activity and changing trends so you get insight into how your audience is interacting with your brand.

Make purchasing quick and easy. Pinterest has changed the app so that it is an e-commerce powerhouse. Comscore reports that Pinterest buyers spend more money, more often and on more items than any of the other top five social media sites. Take advantage of this by including a "Buy Now" button with detailed product information.

Pinterest is a great source for inspiration. You want your pins to inspire and engage your audience but at the same time you can become inspired from other pins on Pinterest. Browse other popular pins to get ideas for your own content marketing strategy.

Tumblr

Tumblr is simply an image blogging site. On it users post interesting videos, photos and other types of media to their followers. Their followers can then share with their

followers. It's heavy emphasis on visual media and with very few obstacles to sharing content is perfect for consumer based businesses.

Tumblr is similar to Twitter, Instagram and traditional blogs. Users subscribe to followers that interest them. The home page is a cross between a timeline and a newsfeed. Any content that is produced or shared by followers is automatically sent to the user's homepage.

Tumblr is very image focused. There are no maximum word limits when you post.

Text should be used to compliment your images or a series of images.

Tips

Personalize your URL and page. Change the generic URL title to something that relates to what your blogging about. Change the theme as well.

Find blogs using spotlight. You'll want to find other blogs that are interest or relevant to yours. Use the Spotlight feature to find them.

Have your posts automatically published on Twitter and Facebook. Use the get social feature located underneath the services tab to increase your audience.

Creating captivating visual content is a powerful way to connect with your audience. You can share videos and images. As long as you are using the right tools and using your social media to engage and build relationships, you can generate tangible business results. You can learn to use the tools to effective engage new audiences who will watch and share your visual content.

Conclusion

We do live in a very visual world. We use our eyes to see the things that influence our reactions, our behavior and even our decisions. Visual marketing is an important part of any business' marketing plan. As the saying goes a picture is worth a thousand words and this is true, especially in marketing. We can tell our audience all we want, but once you place the appropriate image in your marketing campaign, you grab their attention.

Images play many important roles in a visual marketing plan. They draw in customers, give your market a way to remember you and can portray your story. They should be used in all your marketing both online and offline. Use them in newsletters, blogs, fliers, websites, social media, anywhere you are marketing.

Visual images come in a variety of forms. Videos, photographs, infographics, clipart and illustrations. These can be found in many places online and offline. They can be altered to make them unique and to fit your purpose. No matter what type of image you use,

make sure you have the rights to use it in the way you are planning. Check for copyright and publishing rights.

Creating a well-designed website, product packaging and book covers is necessary for keeping your audience's attention. Using the right size and style of font, complimentary colors and a pleasing layout draws buyers in.

And finally, using images in your social media channels is a great way to engage and build relationships and grow with your market. Images have a place in all your marketing strategies and will only continue to be an important part of your business.

Internet Marketing Info Products

Kindle Money Mastery - Amazon Kindle Program

Amazon Treasure Chest - Over 3 Million Amazon Keywords Plus Amazon Site Setup Tutorials For Amazon Affiliates. This Is The Proven Step By Step System To Build Profitable Amazon Affiliate Sites.

Brad Callen's New Ak Elite Ranking Software - Get #1 Amazon Kindle Store Rankings For Your Kindle Books. Ak Elite Is The Ultimate Kindle Book Money Maker.

Free Lifetime PLR Membership in Resell Rights Weekly – Top Resell Rights Membership. Once You look over the value provided you'll know why.