



3-MINUTE

CHEAT
SHEET

TO...

**CREATING
THE CONTENT**
YOUR AUDIENCE
WANTS TO SEE

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MARKETERS KNOW EFFECTIVE CONTENT WHEN THEY SEE IT

It makes headlines, dominates social feeds and lifts the boat of the genius who created it. Typically, the visual elements—illustrations, photos, vectors or videos—are what make it stand out.

Choosing eye-catching visuals shouldn't be hard, right? Creating visual content that's aligned with your brand's identity, tailored to individual channels and representative of your audience takes preparation and dedication to the details.

The fact that consumers' appetites for digital content is endless doesn't make it any easier. In 2018, people in the U.S. spent four hours a day consuming digital content,

according to Nielsen. It's no wonder marketers are struggling to keep up. When asked by ClearVoice, marketers in the U.S. said that creating and scaling content were the top two challenges they faced with content production.

Not only are marketers being asked to create more content, faster, they need to create it for channels that have vastly different needs. You have to have expertise in short blog posts, long-form articles, email pitches, thought leadership, Instagram influencer engagement and on and on. Video is a common denominator across channels with spend set to hit \$40.13 billion by 2020, per eMarketer. If you're struggling to gather the resources to meet the volume of footage needed, you're not alone.

Although it might not seem like it, producing eye-catching visual content that drives business outcomes at scale is possible, and it doesn't need to be stressful. From figuring out what messages you want to communicate, to grabbing attention, to strategizing for different channels, there are realistic ways to solve even your biggest content challenges. The tips on the following pages will help you dig into the content creation process and answer the questions you need to launch visual content that gets your consumers excited and drives action.

WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

If you don't know what you're trying to say, you won't be able to say it. Before you start thinking about design execution, you need to figure out the point of your content. This requires a hard look in the mirror—marketers need to decide what brand values and aspects of their mission they want their visual content to communicate. Areas of focus will depend on the specifics of the brand, but overall, authenticity, diversity and understanding trends are key parts of communicating your purpose.

BE AUTHENTIC

Much of the content on social media is made by real people, and branded visual content that feels fake or staged stands out like a sore thumb. The key to creating authentic content is to focus on what your audience wants from you, not what products you want to promote. This comes down to tapping into who your audience is and what drives them as humans. If your audience is mostly a millennial bunch, consider visual content that showcases the social causes you actively support, user-generated images or profiles of on-brand influencers. Conversely, if you are focused on baby-boomers, try reworking your content to make it more informational.

BE DIVERSE

Consumers pay close attention to the people marketers choose to showcase in their visual content. They are quick to call out brands that don't represent modern society in their visuals. Be diverse with gender, ethnicity, age, relationships and abilities. Watch out for clichés. For example, when depicting relationships, take all sexual orientations into consideration. Don't shy away from using people with disabilities, and ensure that your visuals work to promote inclusivity for marginalized groups. No matter who you choose to showcase, pay close attention to tone and copy and make sure that a diverse set of people review it. Sometimes, the biggest disasters happen when homogenous groups overlook nuances.

STAY ON TOP OF TRENDS

It's always important to understand what's important to your target audience. What do they care about? Why do they care about it? As a brand, you want to be part of these conversations. But the danger is sounding like a tone-deaf outsider. For example, it's well known that younger consumers want the brands they frequent to support the social causes they care about. This can be a tricky space to operate in, as the most well-intended efforts can end up sending the wrong message. To avoid public relations disasters like these, spend some time researching the issues and the conversations happening around them.



HOW DO YOU GRAB ATTENTION?

There are many ways to get people to stop scrolling and click the like, comment and share buttons, but some are more effective than others. There's no magic formula for creating content that gains traction and spreads organically. Sometimes, consumers will pick up on the smallest details. Take advantage of social media and pay attention to details such as time of day and what other events are going on. No matter how eye-catching your visuals are or how sharp the copy is, it can be hard to get attention when people are paying attention to something else.

BE LOCAL

Cultural nuances—global, national and local—make a difference. Do your orange is a positive, warm color in Western cultures, but in the Middle East, it's associated with loss. You also need to pay close attention to small things like climate, street signs and dress. For example, If you're targeting people in the Southwestern U.S. with YouTube ads that depicts dense streets and skyscrapers, it won't be as effective. When marketing to a different country or culture from your own, make sure that even the smallest elements align with the place itself.

USE MOTION

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth the Iliad. Motion grabs attention and keeps it. In this day and age, video is easier than ever to execute. Turn the camera and find the footage or stock footage that works for your execution. Even adding animation or motion to your photos and graphics (think animated GIF) can attract eyeballs. Tap into your emotional side too. Choose shots that evoke a certain feeling, and then tie that emotion back to whatever action you're trying to drive. For example, tie a video of a marriage proposal to a call-to-action to create a wedding registry at your retail location.

SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY

Consumers don't want to feel like they are buying from corporations (even if they are) so make sure that your visual content and written text showcase your brand's personality. Are you fun-loving? Silly? Or serious and to the point? Whatever your personality is, incorporating it into your visual and text content is a sure-fire way to create a positive conversation around your brand.



HOW MUCH CONTENT DO YOU NEED AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO PUT IT?

To set yourself up for success, plan as far in advance as possible. Timing is of the essence, so once you know the launch date of an asset, start planning. Content creation often takes longer than you think it will, and if you don't leave enough time, you'll end up with subpar content. Many content marketers develop an editorial calendar, a master plan of the topics content will cover, the times it will launch and the channels it will be distributed on. This kind of planning is essential to visual marketing success.

CREATE A CHANNEL STRATEGY

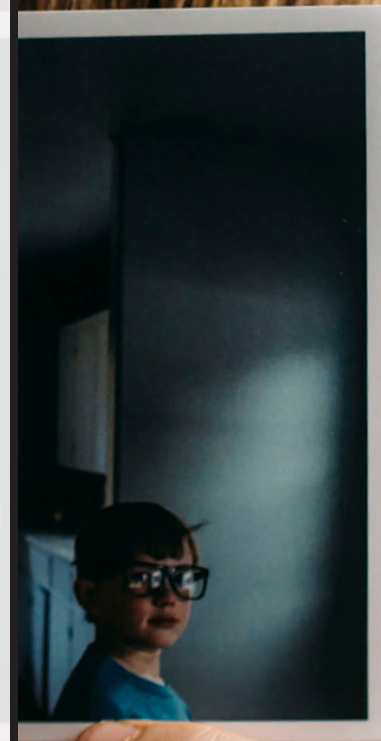
Visual content on Facebook will look different than it does on Instagram than it does on Twitter than it does on Pinterest. You need to know exactly what channels you want a visual to appear on. Different channels have different purposes, so consider what action you're trying to drive. Also think about where your audience searches for certain things and what that search entails. Where do they look for information? Where do they look to find inspiration? Make sure the action you want to drive aligns with the channel you want to run it in. Consider frequency too. You don't want to overwhelm your audience, but you also don't want to fall off their radar, so create a detailed calendar on when things will run.

ALLOCATE YOUR ASSETS

Once you have your strategy in place, figure out what you have and what you need to create. If you don't already have it, consider creating a visual library that holds all logos, colors, photography and video footage. This way your creative team will be able to quickly find core elements and spend more time on the difficult creative aspects. For seasonal content, make sure you leave ample time for creative and production. Be careful not to reuse photos or text that appears in evergreen content. It'll look sloppy and confuse your audience.

ALIGN YOUR RESOURCES

Big ideas are great, but before you get too excited about one, make sure you have the budget, time, expertise, tools and rights to execute it. Does your team have the skills? If not what training is necessary? Are there outside resources you need to leverage? Also, copyright and creative licensing are frequently forgotten. Failing to check your boxes during the permission process could result in headaches. Always double check that all images and other visual elements are being used within the parameters of your license.





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