HOW VISUAL CONTENT CAN INCREASE WEBSITE TRAFFIC BY 400%
What do we mean by visual content?

Visual content refers to the photos and videos you see online. Anything that you don’t have to read in the form of text, can be considered visual content. There are many types of visual content available to integrate into your content marketing strategy, and developing a mix of them is ideal for most businesses. Social media platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram®, Pinterest®, and Tumblr® are all excellent vehicles for visual content marketing.

Infographics: Infographics are essentially pieces of visual content that contain information that would be boring, or difficult to get people to pay attention to in a traditional text format. They have a number of possibilities. You can tell a story; you can address major issues, and perhaps most commonly you can visualize data sets. It’s possible to attach infographics to other content assets, such as taking key facts and statistics from your company’s new white paper and making them into standalone infographics.

Infographics can be: static, motion, and interactive. Static infographics can be editorial content for blogs, and brand-centric content. Brand-centric infographics are much more targeted toward a specific niche or industry audience, but it is still shareable. These infographics are intended to provide information to the audience. Static infographics are the most common, because it is incredibly versatile. Motion infographics add sound and movement. Interactive infographics visualize multiple layers of data, showing information based on what the user does to the graphic.

This static infographic from SellYourBookBack.com gives their target audience an interesting way to see the money savings and benefits associated with buying used textbooks, and selling them back when they’re finished with a class.

This interactive infographic from TownCentreParks.com discusses why you shouldn’t drink and drive, by allowing users to choose their alcoholic beverage of choice and how many drinks they’ve had (or plan to have) to see whether or not they may be safe to drive. Then, as the user scrolls, he or she can read about drunk driving statistics.

Videos: Many people prefer watching video to reading a paper, whether it is a physical paper, or an article on a screen. There are nearly endless possibilities for video content, such as a quick introduction...
to your company and products, demonstrations, case studies, etc. Video can be expensive to produce, at a benchmark rate of up to $10,000 per minute, this is a barrier for many companies. However, it is possible to take other content, such as a webinar, and slice into in smaller videos, to use on video marketing platforms.

**Grasshopper.com**, a website that provides a toll-free number/virtual office environment for small entrepreneurs, did a parody song and music video of “The Empire State of Mind” by Jay-Z and Alicia Keys, called, “The New Dork.” The service lets entrepreneurs run their business from anywhere using their cell phone, while giving callers the impression they’re working from a large office somewhere. The video was released on YouTube© in March 2010 and has more than 1 million views. The song is also available for download on iTunes.

**Memes**: These are small graphics with images and text attached. They are often funny, and used to address larger issues. It’s also possible to promote products/webinars/services to customers. Instead of using words on the screen that can get lost in the shuffle, they can get the visual information they need in just a few seconds.

**Grumpy Cat®** is perhaps one of the most famous Internet memes of 2013. The original pictures posted online in 2012, have become the subject of many memes, such as the one above. These aren’t really tied to marketing, but the virality turned Grumpy Cat and its owner into “stars” in their own right. The cat has starred in a music video for Friskies, has its own odor eliminating product, and a variety of other merchandise.

**Hubspot** uses memes on Pinterest to be humorous while also giving a nod to their marketing services.

Memejacking, or using an existing meme that you know is already successful, as part of your marketing campaign works because:

- The meme has already gone viral
- They’re great for sharing on your social media websites
- It requires a minimal time investment to tweak it to work for you
- Memes will help attract more likes, shares, etc. of your material

**Comics**: This is an ideal choice for companies with longer sales cycles, who want a fun way to talk about complex problems. Comics are a great way to get attention, and then tie it to a larger issue. It’s a great way to bring in other marketing assets, like whitepapers. When someone sees your comic and finds it funny or entertaining, but understands the problem, you can point them to another asset that shares the solution to provide value for them.

Take for instance this comic Google used to launch its Chrome browser. **Now the most popular browser**, with 54.8% of users browsing the Internet in November 2013 using Chrome to connect, it used the comic to inject humor into an otherwise boring technical topic. Without the comic, the release of a new browser would have likely only excited those in the IT industry, but the comic obviously worked to make many others interested in it.
Photographs: Photographs are everywhere, and companies can use them to create graphics for use on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest, to promote products and services. It’s also a great way to promote your content, so you don’t always have to be “making the sale.”

Take for instance the Starbucks Instagram account. It uses a number of photos, like the one above, to quietly market their coffee products to users.

Visual Notetaking: This is used at many industry events to discuss what’s going on at live events, but to bring them online in a visually interesting and engaging way. It involves drawing out things that are being said, using images and words together. It also helps with memory retention for those in attendance, while helping tell the story, somewhat like an infographic, for people who weren’t there.

Industry conference South by Southwest used visual notetaking for their sessions at their 2013 conference. With the help of ad agency Ogilvy, their product Ogilvy Notes, and six of their artists, they visualized much of their conference, both for attendees, and for people who were unable to attend. Attendees were given free 11x17 prints, and the illustrations were released online.
To address the psychology of visual content, we need to take a look at human motivation: what motivates us to do the things we do? Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs provides great insight behind what drives us.

Maslow maintained we all possess a set of motivations that are unrelated to a reward system and our unconscious desires. The original hierarchy includes:

- **Biological and Physiological**: air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.
- **Safety**: protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, freedom from fear.
- **Social**: belongingness, affection and love - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.
- **Esteem**: achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect from others.
- **Self-Actualization**: realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the pyramid was edited to include:

- **Cognitive**: to learn, and to obtain knowledge
- **Aesthetic**: to seek, find, appreciate beauty, form, etc.
- **Transcendence**: to help others find self-actualization

By actively working to apply principles to content creation, we can make sure we’re meeting the needs of users. This means:

Understanding our basic needs allows us to understand more about what makes content go viral.
• Creating easily accessible and navigable websites

• Producing articles and material that will not be too demanding of the users time and abilities

• Valuing reader privacy (no SPAM)

• Promoting a sense of community/ belonging with our readers

• Providing readers with a platform to express their opinions

• Providing a way for our readers to learn from and respond to our content

These things will address the: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, cognitive, and self-actualization needs.

When we create accessible websites, and focus on creating material that will help our readers learn something and provide something they need, we address both physiological and cognitive needs. When we value our reader’s privacy and protect their data, we address their safety need. When we promote a sense of community, we address the love and belonging need. When we provide our readers with a way to express their thoughts and opinions, such as the ability to leave a comment on our blog posts, or to share our content on their social media platforms, we address the esteem need. When we provide a way for our readers to learn from and respond to our content, we provide them with their self-actualization needs.

Understanding our basic needs allows us to understand more about what makes content go viral.

Research from Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman takes a closer look at what makes content go viral, and determines content that evokes emotion elicits 2.9 additional hours spent on the content. According to their study, “Content that evokes high-arousal positive (awe) or negative (anger or anxiety) emotions is more viral. Content that evokes low-arousal, or deactivating, emotions (e.g., sadness) is less viral.”

Emotional arousal is only a key factor of virality. Visual appeal is another. It is important to remember that while simply making something pretty will not make it viral, something that could otherwise be viral because of emotional triggers, topic, and timeliness, may not reach its full potential if it is not visually appealing.

When designing visual content, it is important to guide the eye to ensure the user sees what you want them to see.

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According to 3M Corporation, 90% of the information sent to the brain is visual.

Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text.

According to Mind Tools, 65% of the population are visual learners.

According to Simply Measured, less than a month after the introduction of Facebook timeline, centered around visual content such as photos and video, businesses saw a 65% increase in engagement.

According to Shareaholic, visual-centric social media website Pinterest drives more referral traffic for businesses than, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Google+ combined.

Color also plays an important role in evoking emotion in your content. Using the right color scheme will enhance the visual appeal, and the wrong color scheme can detract from it. Use color to your advantage to ensure customers feel, even at the subconscious level, what you want them to feel.

As if the human mind weren’t fascinating enough, these statistics show visual content is truly powerful.
Key Advantages of Visual Content

Visual content isn’t a trend or a fad that will go away. Over the years, it has changed the face of content marketing and online sales, because it has several key advantages.

**Give your brand an identity:** Visual content draws the audience in, and helps them to understand your brand identity. Many brands use the new Facebook timeline format to allow customers to delve more into the company history.

Other brands, such as Starbucks, are out there showing users what goes on behind the scenes, rather than simply telling their followers about it. This helps them to strengthen their image as a charitable brand.
Opportunity for user generated content:
Increase fan engagement and get content by promoting your fans taking photos with your product and sharing them online with hashtags. Evian gave away a pair of VIP tickets to Wimbledon, in exchange for contest entrants sending in a video of themselves doing the “Wimbledon Wiggle”—the dance tennis players do before they receive a serve.

- **Condense and explain a lot of information:** Infographics can take a lot of text heavy data and organize it in a way that will capture reader attention. They will be able to get the information they need in a fraction of the time, compared to reading a data heavy report or study.

- **Drive purchases and referrals:** Social networks provide your customers with a way to your actual website. By interacting with more visual methods on social media, the next logical step for the customer is your official website. Early information suggests Pinterest is driving sales, as 21% of people with Pinterest accounts surveyed say they have purchased items after seeing them on Pinterest.

- **Shareable:** Visual content is highly sharable. In fact, more than 350 million photos are shared on Facebook every day! An average of 55 million photos per day are added to Instagram, with 1.2 billion “likes” every day.
Key Tenets of Successful Visual Content

Simply “throwing together” any piece of visual content will not be worth the time and money you invest. In order to be successful, the content must be well planned and executed as part of an overall content marketing strategy.

INFOGRAPHICS

Infographics are becoming increasingly popular because of their ability to cover nearly anything you want, and the fact that they are so sharable. But, you can’t just throw pictures and text together on a graphic and expect it to work to bring in tons of traffic and engagement.

For infographics to be successful, before you start anything, you’ll need to consider:

- **The concept:** Your idea needs to be something that’s not already been done a million times. Find concepts that are hard to explain in just text, and look around to see what else has been published online to see how you can make your end infographic different from everything else that’s out there.

- **The data:** What data is available to support your concept? Are you starting with a long, boring, intense study and chipping it away to take the most interesting takeaways, or are you starting with an abstract concept where you’ll need to really dig for the data? What data is there, and how can you manipulate it to strengthen your concept?

- **The story:** Your story matters, because it is what will hold your reader’s attention. Think about creative ways you can mold the concept together with the data to create something that doesn’t only educate your reader, but keeps them interested, too.

- **The designer:** The person or the group of people you hire to design your infographic are critical to the final result. You want to work with a team of talented individuals who understand how infographics work, and can take your
concept, data, and story and turn them into something that is amazing. The right designer will create something that’s not only visually appealing, but emotionally appealing, and memorable.

- **Timeliness:** The timeliness of an infographic can have a lot to do with its success. In late 2012/early 2013 when Hostess announced Twinkies would be pulled from the shelves, Macy’s jumped on the chance to promote their kitchen products and developed an infographic with a homemade Twinkies recipe. They sponsored the development of the infographic, and then had it promoted to various food blogs, to help drive traffic back to their website. Being timely means working quickly, but if you can catch a hot button issue right off the bat, you’ll see great success.

- **Emotional appeal:** We’ve talked about how emotions drive engagement and sharability already. Make sure your infographic touches on at least one emotion. Have several people read the content and look at the finished design and think about how they feel after reading it and seeing it. Think about ways you can adjust it to evoke more emotion.

- **Promotional channels and partnerships:** If no one sees or shares the infographic, it won’t matter. It’s the same concept as “if you build it, they will come.” It’s not true for websites, and it won’t be true for infographics either. When you first come up with a concept, think about how you will promote it, and reach out to contacts to see where and how you can get it distributed.

**VIDEOS**

Video marketing isn’t for the faint of heart, but when implemented correctly, it can do wonders for your business. *Entrepreneur Magazine* shares qualities of successful online videos:

- **Content:** Plan your videos to provide valuable content. What is your objective? Plan content options around this objective. Successful videos can be: product reviews and demonstrations, customer testimonials and endorsements, about the benefits of your product, educational, etc. Consider making multiple versions of your video so you can test what works best with your audience.

- **Quality:** Successful videos don’t skimp on quality, but at the same time, don’t have to cost millions, or even thousands of dollars to produce. If you don’t have the knowledge and equipment, hire someone who does. Poor quality does not make your video more personal.

- **Distribution:** Beyond distributing to your social media channels, blog, etc. consider purchasing advertising to promote your videos. Use video syndication services to get your video spread as far and wide as possible with minimum time investment.

- **Interactivity:** Add interactivity to the video in the post-production stage. Ideas include: interactive links that display during key parts of the video, text overlay calls to action, clickable screens, live chats, etc.

- **Sharability:** Make it easy for others to share your video. Have a mobile version of the video available. Enable embedding on your videos so people can use them and share them for you.

*Social Media Examiner* provides this advice for creating successful video marketing campaigns:

- Choose the right person or team of people to be in front of the camera. Successful videos are driven by personality, so look for someone who won’t be camera shy. The person on cam-
era needs to be: clear, concise, and an expert on the subject of the video. This does not have to be the same person who is publishing and marketing the videos online. It is possible you’ll need a team of people to handle starring in videos, production, and distribution.

• Don’t just seek to get as much video out there as possible, as quickly as possible. While video is good, it’s only good if it’s done with quality in mind. Focus on the quality first, and quantity second. Create a production schedule that factors in the type of equipment you have on hand, where you will do the shoot, etc.

• Create a plan that allows you to provide consistent content, for at least three months. Consider how much content you’ll produce around current events and industry news, where there is opportunity to promote your business, etc.

• Encourage audience participation. If you’re an established brand looking to break into video marketing, ask your audience what they want to see. Use their suggestions in your production calendar.

• Leverage your social media following. Share the videos on your LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc. in addition to uploading them on YouTube.

• Focus on your video title. It’s what people will see that will make them want to click, so make it count.

• Keep your videos short. It won’t matter how awesome the video is if it can’t hold the user’s attention. Respect the fact most people live a fast-paced lifestyle, and won’t likely give more than five minutes of their time.

• Use video editing tools to include your URL in the video. It will help people remember it.

• Brand your videos with your logo.

• Always include a direct link to where you want users to go on your website in the YouTube video description. This is a key opportunity to grab people and get them right where you want them.

• Don’t stop at YouTube. Embed the videos in blog posts on your own website. This helps your view count, which helps with optimization. Use other video publishing platforms, too.

MEMES
According to research from the Free University of Belgium, in order to be successful, a meme must pass through four stages: assimilation, retention, expression, and transmission, before it can become successful.

• **Assimilation:** Successful memes must be able to “infect” a new host, that is, enter into its memory. It doesn’t matter how a person discovers a meme, but it must be noticed, understood, and accepted by a person before it can move forward. If people see it, but don’t do anything with it, it cannot be successful.

• **Retention:** In order for it to continue to spread, it must be remembered for a certain period of time. The longer someone remembers the meme, the further it will spread, as there is a greater chance an individual will speak to others about it, or will remember to share it with his or her social media followers.

• **Expression:** The meme must be expressed in some shape or form that allows it to spread. The most common meme used in marketing is a photo, like the ones shown in the beginning of this report.

• **Transmission:** The meme must be transmitted, in this case, online via any number of social media platforms, email, etc. in order for people to see it.

Memejacking is a great way to test your memes. You can use a photo that is used often with memes, to capture the assimilation and retention factors. People have likely seen the image before, and will remember it. Adding your own text allows you to address the expression aspect, because you’re adjusting it for your purpose. Simply marketing the meme on your own social media platforms to all of your fans can promote the transmission of your meme.
PHOTOGRAPHS
While good photography is important for any print media you use to market your business, the guidelines are slightly different for social media photography. Different guidelines, however, doesn’t mean you need to completely ignore tips for good photography. If you don’t feel up to the task, hire someone to handle all your photography for you.

• **Composition**: Pay attention to the “rule of thirds”. This encourages you to divide the photo into thirds, and then put the subject in the left or right third. Some cameras may have an overlay option to outline the thirds for you as you take the photo. Keep in mind the online format, especially the Facebook Timeline Cover photo, lends itself to a “widescreen” format. Profile images are square and won’t work with the rule of thirds.

• **Lighting**: You’re not always going to have bright and sunny days to shoot your photos in, so experiment with your camera’s white balance and ISO settings to help with how much light you capture in your images. Even the most basic point-and-shoot cameras have these settings to tinker with. Most cameras will have an “auto” setting, but they may not always get it right.

• **Background**: Your background and style matter, too, especially if you’re taking images for a corporate purpose. If there’s a style guide available, make sure you review it to familiarize yourself with it before you take any photos. If there isn’t one, consider creating one for consistency across all photos and other brand images. This one from Clemson University can help you get started. Remember, candid shots are great—you don’t always have to position someone and take their photo against a white (or other solid color) background to get a social media worthy photo.

• **Angles**: You don’t always have to be in front of the subject to get a good shot. Experiment with varying camera angles, such as above or below your subject to get some creative shots to work with.

• **Resolution**: Many social media platforms, especially Facebook, tend to downgrade the resolution of photos once they are uploaded to the platform. This results in a photo that looks grainy and unpleasant on the viewer’s screen. Circumvent this by investing in a camera that will take higher resolution photos, so that once they are degraded, they still look great on the screen.

When taking photos for use on your social media websites, it’s critical to know the right sizes. When possible, opt for a lossless format, such as .PNG. This will keep a full copy of each pixel in the image, but

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How visual content can increase website traffic by 400%
How visual content can increase website traffic by 400%

LinkedIn image dimensions

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LinkedIn cover photo
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Google+ image dimensions

Google+ profile photo
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Google+ cover photo
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max: 2120 x 1192px
rec: 1080 x 608px
COMICS

Comics aren’t right for all web content strategies. Consider these factors to determine whether or not to use comics as part of yours:

- Will your message benefit from the comic delivery format? They are especially good for boring, complex, or “unsexy” ideas and products. They don’t have to be directly connected to the real world like videos and photos. Artists can use comics to explain anything from the purpose of your web browser to how to use punctuation in writing.

- Will a comic strike a chord with your audience? Comics have a reputation for being immature, but it is important to be open-minded. Never assume you know how your audience will react. Do some social media experiments and see what happens.

- What kind of comics could work for your brand? Just like movies and TV have their own genres, so do comics. While humor will certainly help increase the sharability of your comic, it may not always be appropriate. Using a more serious approach may work better, depending on your brand, what you’re talking about, and the image you want to put out to the public.

- What style will best represent you? You can create comics in a number of styles: cartoon, realistic, simple, hand-drawn, etc. The style you use will have a connotation of its own. Hand drawn comics signal approachability. Slick vectors signal professionalism, but risks coming off as impersonal. Cartoon style comics may make a complex message more fun, but also give off the impression you’re dumbing the message down a bit.

If comics are indeed a good fit for your content strategy, here are some tips to make sure they are a hit with your audience:

- Give them a plot/plan them. Plan each comic and what you want to do or explain. If you are using them to tell a story, make sure it follows a logical plot.

- Create a backlog of comics. If you plan on making comics a regular part of your strategy, your audience may come to expect them. As such, make sure you have a backlog of completed comics ready to go, so that if something happens in production, you don’t have to stop releasing comics according to your schedule.

- Get criticism. Find out what others think. Use the feedback to make improvements on your future comics.

VISUAL NOTETAKING

Visual note taking is a wonderful way to communicate ideas with a combination of words and images. It’s a great way to promote your events and get them online, even though the events take place in person off-line. These images are sharable, and tell a story in a way that’s similar to an infographic. These can be used in conjunction with written content on your blog, to help bring the audience in, and connect it to your social media platforms.
Key Tools to Use

Having the right tools to use before you even get started makes your job a lot easier. There are tons of tools out there for visual content, so we’re highlighting a few options for you to choose what works best for you.

INFOGRAPHICS TOOLS

- Notable App is a great tool when you’re working with a team of writers and designers. You can take the text a writer has provided, and create notes for designers. Then, the entire project team can comment and collaborate on the design of a graphic. With plans starting at just $19/month, this an affordable way to communicate. No app is required, as everything is stored in the cloud.

- Piktochart is a do-it-yourself infographic design platform. No design experience is required, as you can plug your data into one of the premade themes. This is a great tool for someone who’s just learning the ropes; however, it doesn’t provide the same “zing” as a custom designed graphic from a team of experienced designers. A Pro membership will unlock additional themes.

VIDEO TOOLS

You don’t need to invest in thousands of dollars of Hollywood studio worthy equipment in order to make killer videos for YouTube and other online video hosting platforms. Aside from the camera you use, here are some tools to make the job easier.

- AVS Video Editor: This Windows only software includes more than 670 transitions and effects, 46 text options,
and 34 template options for menus. It even includes screen casting abilities, so you can record screen and audio activity from your computer. Cost is $59/license.

• **iMovie**: iMovie is for Mac users, and comes pre-installed on many newer Mac systems. There are plenty of templates built in, with menus, transitions, and more. It’s a simple drag-and-drop interface, and though it may not have the bells and whistles in other programs, it’s great for many video projects. If your Mac didn’t have this installed, it’s $79 for a single license.

• **Corel VideoStudio Pro X6**: Another option for Windows users, this is another drag-and-drop style movie editor, with a $59 price tag. If you plan to create 4K super high definition videos, or interactive HTML5 videos, this is the only option on the market right now.

If you don’t plan on getting in front of the camera yourself, these screencasting tools can make it easier for you to produce high quality videos to promote your business.

• **ScreenFlow**: This is a commercial software for Mac systems, that allows you to record all screen activity and activity on your computer. You can export for private sharing, or you can share to a number of platforms including: YouTube, Dropbox, Facebook, and Google Drive. A free trial is available, though a full license will cost $99.

• **CamStudio**: This is a free software for Windows and Linux machines, that records all screen and audio activity on your computer, and then allows you to export it into a web friendly format. You can even use picture-in-picture to include webcam shots of yourself. You can take the resulting video and use it in video editing programs to add effects before sharing it online.

• **Wink**: This is a free software for Windows and Linux machines, that allows you to record all screen and audio activity. It also allows for annotations, which makes it perfect for tutorials.

• **AllCapture**: Windows only commercial software that allows you to record all screen and audio activity. You can also add audio after the project is complete. It will export to a number of formats including: Flash, EXE, ASF, DVD, SVCD and VCD. A free trial is available, though a full license will cost $199.

**MEME TOOLS**

Making memes isn’t as painstaking as it sounds. Here are a few tools to help you get the job done.

• **Imgur**: You can choose from a wide collection of images and customize the text. If you’d rather not use a premade image, you can upload your own background to start with.

• **LiveMeme**: This allows you to customize your own meme using a large library of images, or to create your own meme with your own image.

• **QuickMeme**: Like the others, this has a large library of well known viral images you can use to share your images. You can customize the text and share among your own social media profiles.

**PHOTOGRAPH TOOLS**

You’ll need a good, quality camera to get the shots you want, but after the shots are taken, you’ll need good photo editing software to help you put the finishing touches on your image...and you don’t have to spend hundreds of dollars on Photoshop to get it done!

• **Picasa**: Google’s photo editing software, this is a simple and easy to use editor, but you must download it to your computer, rather than using it online.

• **GIMP**: This is an open source version of Photoshop. Though like with Photoshop there is a steep learning curve, it is a completely free, highly robust alternative.

• **FotoFlexer**: This is a free online photo editor with tons of options to help you improve the image.

**COMICS TOOLS**

While we recommend you leave the comic creation to professional artists, there are a number of tools available to help you create your own.

• **BitStrips**: The popular Facebook app
that allows you to create funny credits starring you and your friends, can also be used to make strips. Depending on what your end goal is, this may or may not be the best tool for the job.

- **Pixton**: This is a good platform to create your own comics, as well as share them and see what other designers are doing.

**VISUAL NOTETAKING TOOLS**

Short of hiring a professional artist to get killer visuals, Apple’s got Android beat when it comes to options.

- **Paper**: This is a great iPad app for sketching, diagramming, and drawing, that you can easily use for visual notetaking. You’ll need some artistic skills if you want the end result to work well for marketing purposes.

- **Adobe Ideas**: This is another good choice for drawing on your iPad.

- **Sketchbook**: Yet another option for drawing on your iPad.

If you must use an Android device, you’ve got a slew of options for digital notetaking, but that’s just handwriting, not drawing. **Skitch** is the best app out there for snapping images and annotating them, but it doesn’t quite have the same effect compared to the professionally produced visuals from the South by Southwest conference. Android does have other drawing apps for their tablets, but it’s not quite the same.
Successful Use Cases

INFOGRAPHICS

Social Media Today decided to take a look at their return on investment on infographics, and then took the results and created an infographic. The above infographic was published in August 2012, based on their success with a Sensible Social Media Checklist for Business infographic. They published two versions of the infographic: one on June 15th, including a checklist for Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Because the graphic was so popular, they decided to publish another version of the graphic to include Pinterest, Google+, and YouTube. The second version was published slightly more than a month later, on July 19th.

In the two months between the time the infographics were released and their case study was published: hundreds of bloggers posted the infographics on their own blogs, and more than 2,000 people downloaded the checklist for referencing purposes.

The results:

• Increased website traffic by more than 400%.

• Increased leads by almost 4500%.

• Increased the number of new visitors to their site to almost 78%.

Not every infographic will reach this level of popularity and provide such a great ROI, because that is in part based on how well they are promoted and...
how well the infographic resonates with your audience (topic/triggers, etc.). However, it does provide enough compelling evidence to demonstrate why you should be using infographics as part of your content marketing strategy.

VIDEOS
Zagg, a company behind scratch protection and mobile device accessories used YouTube videos and ads to promote their business. With their campaign, they were able to generate a higher volume of targeted leads, increase conversions by 65% to 75%, and reach 13 million views on a single product video alone.

Revzilla, a motorcycle enthusiast shop that helps motorcyclists learn more about products, launched a dedicated channel full of reviews and advice to help people who wanted to learn more about motorcycling accessories. With YouTube videos and advertising, they were able to reach 7 million views on their branded channel. By cross-promoting their YouTube channel on their website, they tripled their subscriber base in a few months. They’ve also seen a 50% or higher growth in revenue for the past three years.

Very Pink Knitting used a branded channel full of knitting instructional videos and YouTube’s TrueView advertising to generate a cost effective three cents per view rate, got 10,000 new subscribers from all over the world, and got a 10% view through rate.

PHOTOS
(Pinterest and Instagram)
Adding the “Pin It” button to all the recipes on AllRecipes.com produced 139 million Pinterest impressions, as more than 50,000 recipes were pinned. Clicks on Allrecipes’ Pinterest content increased more than 900%.

Nordstrom has utilized Pinterest to connect with 4.4 million customers, pinning top purchased items, gift suggestions, etc. Nordstrom says each month customers engage with their pins hundreds of thousands of times, resulting in millions of impressions, and a significant increase in website traffic. They also include Pinterest in their emails.

A report released in May 2013 indicates 67% of the world’s top brands, including: Nike, Starbucks, MTV, and Red Bull are using Instagram as part of their marketing strategy. Nike used it to launch the Nike PhotoID project that allowed users to select their background photo, their favorite Nike shoe, and upload it to share with friends across social media. Nike has more than one million followers on the network.

COMICS
Perhaps the most well known web comic on the Internet today is The Oatmeal. In an interview with Mixergy, says his site receives anywhere from 3 to 5 million unique visits a month, and it was all built without using search engine optimization (SEO). As a former SEO specialist, he was tired of the work, and started out making comics for fun.

His comic, “How to Use a Semicolon” (pictured in part above) has him ranking number one in Google for the search term “semicolon” but he says that wasn’t his intention. His success with comics comes from the fact that people find them funny and entertaining. Social Site Explorer reveals the comic has received:

- 66,338 Facebook shares, 70,390 likes, 69,206 comments
- 8,135 tweets
- 1,600 Google +1’s
- 341,328 StumbleUpon views
- 87,885 pins

He’s been able to monetize the comics, averaging $1,000 a day in sales, by offering printed versions, but he gets a lot of success through social media shares. His other comics include: “The State of the Music Industry”, “How to Get Me to Watch a Movie”, “Why Working from Home is Both Awesome and Horrible”, and “Beer vs. Coffee” to name a few. Though not always appropriate for all audiences, his comics are proof that when designed correctly, they can promote business and increase revenue.
Summary

Visual content is more appealing than text because: 90% of the information absorbed by the brain is visual, and 65% of people are visual learners. Visual information gets to the brain 60,000 times faster than textual information.

There are multiple types of visual content that can be used online as part of your marketing strategy: infographics, videos, memes, photos, comics, and visual notetaking. Each of these types of content has its place in marketing, with its own set of “best practices” you should employ in your project to ensure its success.

In order to be successful, your content must:

- Evoke emotion to connect with your audience. This will encourage them to share it with their friends and family.
- Have an aesthetically pleasing design. If people don’t like what they see, the chance of them sharing it is greatly reduced.
- Provide something useful to the user. Our recent study found that 31% would describe the number 1 reason they share a piece of content socially is if it is useful.
- Be timely.
- Be easy to share. If people have to work to share it, they’re not going to be as likely to share it. Make it easy for them by including share buttons, or the HTML code to embed your infographic on their website.

There are a number of tools out there to help you get the job done, whether you’re creating infographics, videos, memes, photographs, or comics. Whenever you do not feel you do the project justice, reach out to a team of professionals to do it for you. Though each project will be an investment, when implemented correctly, all visual content projects can provide a great return on that investment. You can: see an increase in fan following and engagement, see an increase in your conversion rate, increased website traffic and more qualified leads, and ultimately, all of this can work together to produce more sales.