

NationalJournal COMMUNICATIONS COUNCIL

Visual Strategy in the Information Age

A WASHINGTON IN THE
INFORMATION AGE PLAYBOOK

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Introduction

About this Playbook

National Journal's Communications Council created *Visual Strategy in the Information Age* as one of a series of companion resources to *Washington in the Information Age* (WIA), the annual study of media consumption habits of Washington's policy influentials. The data and insights uncovered in WIA each year answers the question of *what* communications and government affairs offices should be focusing their efforts on to reach a busy, distracted DC audience; these companion playbooks are meant to answer the questions of *how* to go about building and executing effective strategies. Each playbook is aligned with a trend or insight observed in the previous year's data, starting with the rise of the importance of visual communication in DC.

Throughout this playbook, you'll find an in-depth analysis of the state of visual media with insights tailored to associations, nonprofits and think tanks in the DC area. It contains suggested strategies and approaches derived from Communications Council research, including tools, case studies, and independent assessments, each easily scalable to organizations of varying sizes and budgets.

Methodology

In order to gather supplemental data on the state of visual media in DC, we selected our sample of 156 DC-based associations, nonprofits, and think tanks from a list of organizations with the highest annual revenue. We collected data from these organizations using application programming interfaces, also known as APIs, which are used to access public-facing data on online platforms. We used these APIs to gather data from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The primary account for each organization is included in the analysis. From those accounts, we pulled only the ten most recent posts containing a visual. This data set included only original content. It did not include posts with photos derived from external links or photos that had been retweeted, regrammed or shared by the organization. All data points were collected in the first quarter of 2016, and all amounts are a reflection of the data as it existed at that time.

Questions or Onsite Requests

If you have questions about this report or if you would like an onsite presentation of these materials, please contact your dedicated advisor for more information.

Chapter One: Making the Case for Visuals

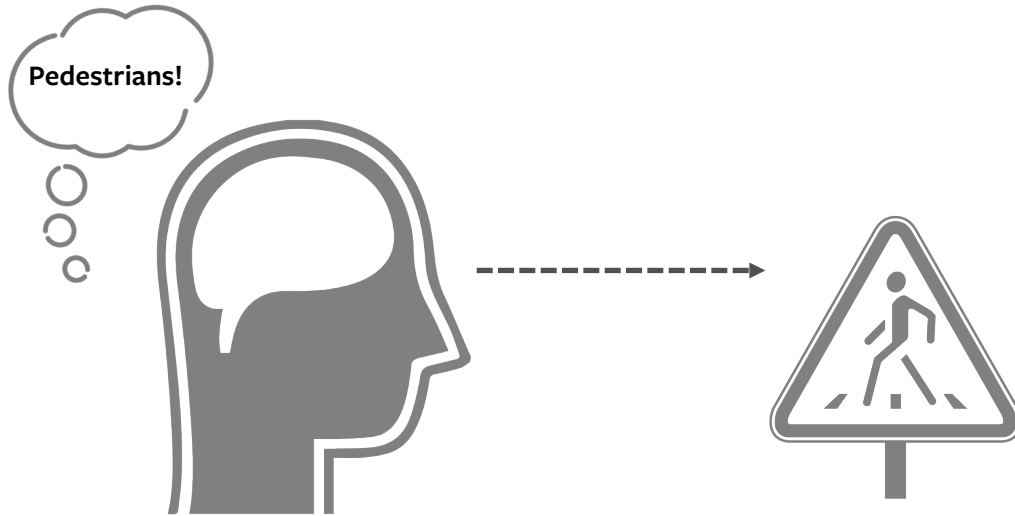
People have long known that images are a powerful tool for conveying information, but organizations have increasingly turned to more visual-based communication strategies as digital and social media platforms increase prioritization of and engagement with visual content. It's important to understand what makes a visual effective. In this chapter, we uncover the science and psychology of communicating with images, focusing especially on the roles images can play in informing and persuading DC audiences. We then discuss how organizations can incorporate these lessons into real-world communications strategies.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

1. **Images are more memorable, informative, and persuasive than text alone.** Research has shown that visuals can grab our attention, improve our memory for information, and change our understanding of an issue. When used effectively, they are also easier to process than text.
2. **Use of visual content in DC may increase as younger generations become a larger part of the workforce.** The percentage of Washington Insiders who seek out informative visual content is highest in younger age groups, with over half of Millennials seeking out charts and graphs, compared to 35% of Baby Boomers. It's possible more organizations will have to adopt visuals in order to reach these young professionals.
3. **Informational visuals are one of the most sought-after content formats for Millennials in the DC policy community.** Charts and infographics were ranked fourth overall in types of association and advocacy content sought by members of this group in 2015. This reflects other research, which shows that web users spend more time viewing visuals when they are relevant to other content on a website.

How do Images Improve Communication?

Many social platforms now prioritize posts that contain an image, but it's not only because these posts generate more clicks. Images affect our ability to learn and comprehend new information. Social platforms by their nature reward engaging content, and when we use images, we create memorable, enduring—and more highly engaging—campaigns. Below are some examples of the ways visuals change our attention and capacity for absorbing information.



- **Images are easier to process than text**

Text requires conscious interpretation (it's why libraries are quiet and well-lit) but with images, our eyes and our brain can absorb an enormous amount of information before we are even cognizant of what is happening. This is called “preattentive processing¹.” This means that even when someone does not stop to engage with your post, they may still have retained some of its message.

- **Images improve our memory for information**

In 2013, a Northwestern University² researcher found that images that were recognizable “at-a-glance” were more memorable than complex images. This included the text displayed in those images. Additional research has shown that text with illustrations not only improves memory for information but that memory for information lasts longer with an image than with text alone.³

- **Images attract our attention – but only if they're relevant**

The Nielsen Norman Group⁴ has used eye-tracking studies to see how users view webpages. They have found that diagrams, product detail shots, and biographical photos are focused on as much or more than text. When images contain relevant information, they can break the typical f-shaped pattern of eye movement across a page. However, stock photos and other “visual bloat” did not have the same effect.

1. <https://www.csc.ncsu.edu/faculty/healey/PP/>

2. <http://www.storybench.org/understanding-what-makes-a-visualization-memorable/>

3. <http://www.slideshare.net/hatchsteph/images-and-social-media-why>

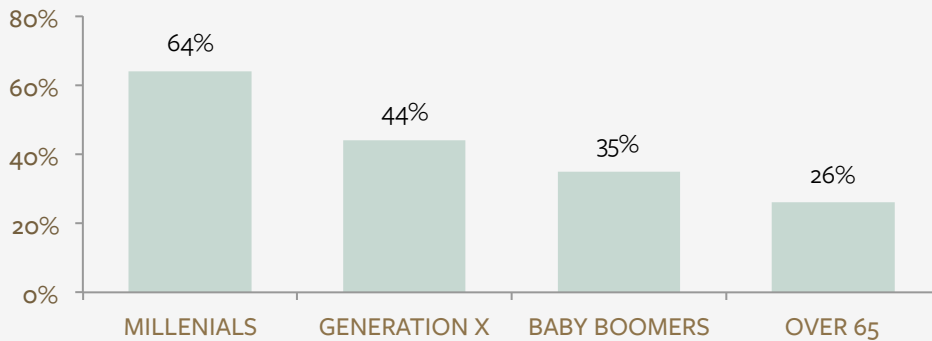
4. <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/photos-as-web-content/>

Why are Visuals Used in Washington?

2015 Washington in the Information Age data highlight how visual content—in the form of infographics or charts—are used in the decision-making process, and by whom. The format ranked fourth overall in types of association and advocacy content sought by Insiders, ahead of print publications, social media, and videos. Perhaps more importantly, it's a format that is expected to grow in importance in the future, as younger generations appear to have a much stronger affinity for visual content.

Washington Insiders Who Seek out Association Content in Chart or Graph Form

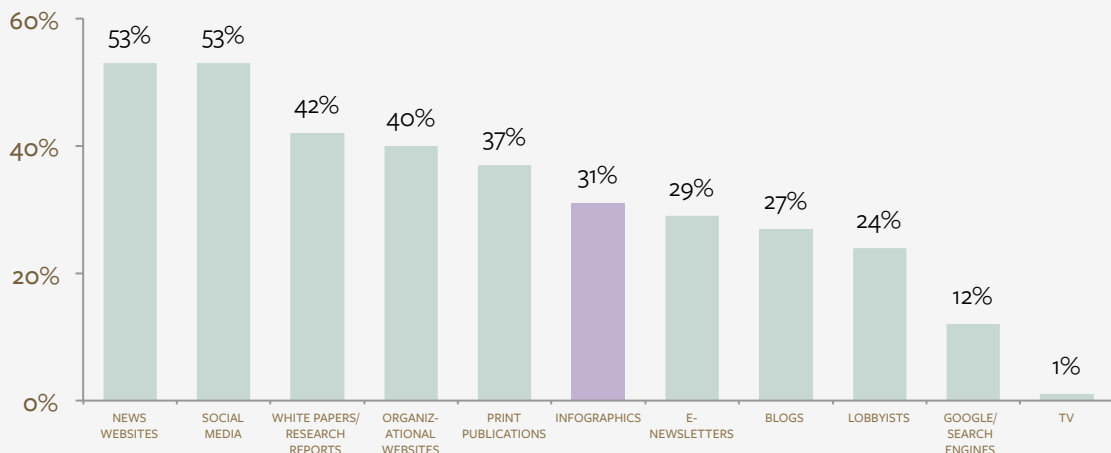
Percentage of Respondents by Generation



The generational inclination toward visual content extends to how infographics are used in the decision-making process. While infographics ranked relatively low when Insiders are looking to quickly get up-to-speed on an issue or to formulate their opinions, the format gains importance when it comes time to influence others. Nearly a third of Millennial Insiders rely on the format to influence others, placing it above e-newsletters, blogs, TV, and several other sources.

Channels Used to Influence Others' Decision-Making on a Critical Vote

Percentage of Millennial Respondents

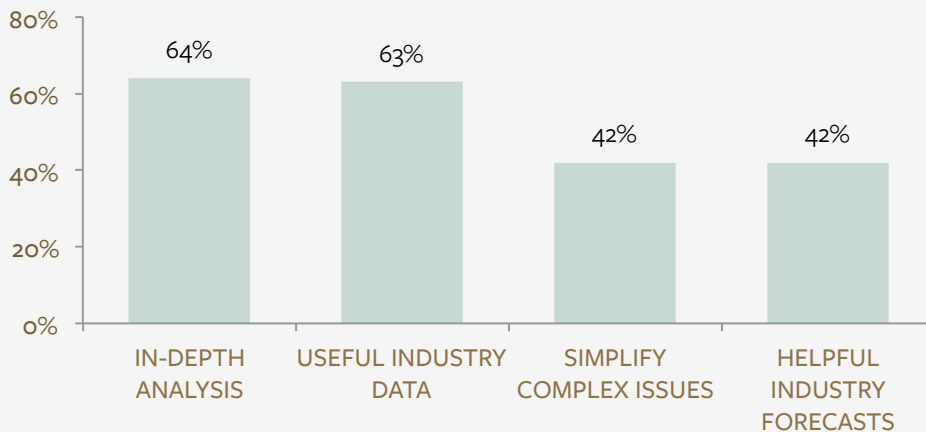


Why are Visuals Used in Washington? (cont'd)

The reasons why Washington Insiders seek content from organizations can provide guidance on what types of information to convey visually. In general, Insiders look for content that offers in-depth analysis, useful industry data, or simplification—all of which can be accomplished by smart, strategic visual content. It's worth noting, again, that Millennial Insiders desire simplification much more than their older counterparts, with 50 percent of respondents in that age group citing it as a reason to seek content from an organization.

Reasons Washington Insiders Seek Content from Associations, Think Tanks, and Nonprofits

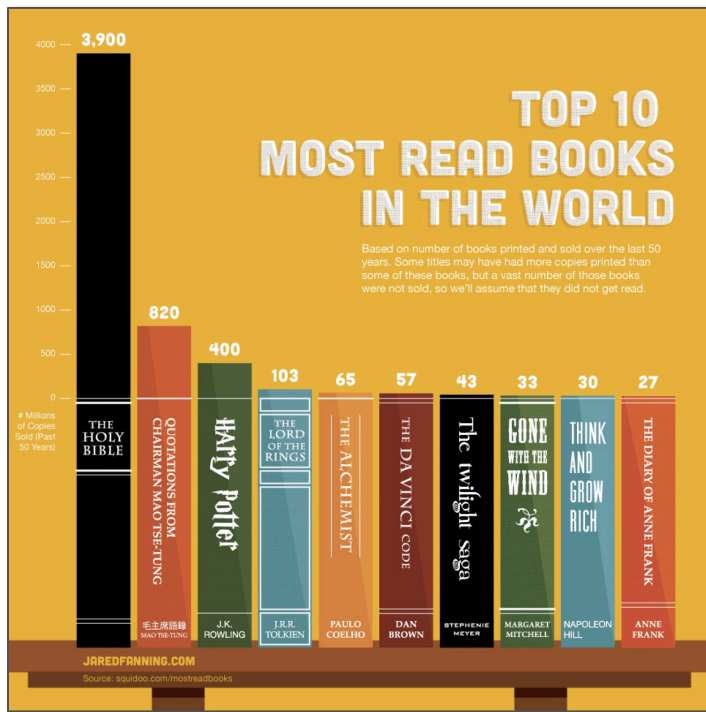
Percentage of Respondents by Generation



Simplification of complex issues is an especially important quality of visualizations because, as noted on p. 6, these visuals are easier to remember. On social media, organizations should hook viewers with simple visuals then provide a link to more complex images or in-depth information.

What Makes an Image Effective on Social Media?

It's possible for organizations to create images that satisfy a need for in-depth analysis while also providing useful industry data and simplifying an issue—all while being quickly engaged with on social media. The example below highlights how to combine diverse strategies to create a coherent visual.



1. Keep it simple.

Images should have one subject and tell a short story. In this case, the subject is the most read books, but at a glance, it's clear that one book is much more widely read than any other.

2. Create contrast.

Bring attention to the most important part of your image by using opposing colors, shapes, or other contrasting elements. Our eyes are trained to seek out the unique. The yellow of this background contrasts with the darker colors of the book spines, which contrast with the white labels on their spines. This is increasingly important as content is consumed via mobile.

3. Add value.

If the image does not add information or context to its surroundings, consider removing it. At best, it will be ignored. At worst, it will be a distraction from the actual message. By limiting this list to the top 10, viewers can get a clearer picture of readers' interests than if they had a list of the 100 most read books.

4. Be instantly recognizable.

A viewer should be able to understand the main purpose of an image in 10 seconds, preferably less. Images should be visually clear (no bad lighting or illustrations that are too abstract) and they should be part of an "environment" with context for their use. The book spines that double as a bar chart is a perfect example. Without reading the title of this graph, we can still guess what this chart is about.

<https://medium.com/digital-trends-index/how-to-build-a-memorable-data-snapshot-b4bcf6baa2e1#hcl89wgje>
<http://www.slideshare.net/hatchsteph/images-and-social-media-why>

Chapter Two: State of Visual Content in DC

How are organizations in DC responding to the increased need for visual content online? The following chapter highlights the broad visual activity within our research sample, covering how DC-based associations, nonprofits, and think tanks approach image sharing on the three major social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). More specific data and insights unique to each major type of visual content are detailed in the chapters that follow.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

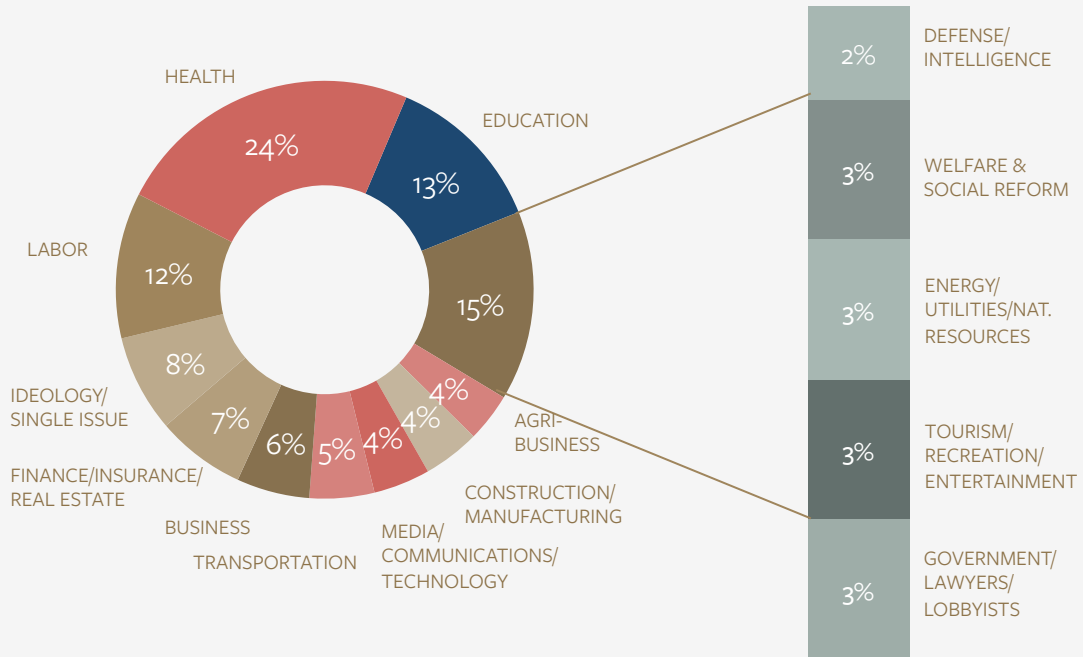
1. **Twitter is DC's most visual platform.** 63% of organizations post visual content to Twitter weekly or daily, compared to 51% on Facebook and 23% on Instagram.
2. **But Facebook is currently DC's most engaged visual platform.** The average engagement rate for a post on Facebook is five times higher than on Twitter. Facebook pages also tend to have more followers than accounts on Twitter and Instagram.
3. **Serious visual content has a below average engagement rate on Facebook.** Facebook and Twitter post serious content (e.g., news, factoids, conference content) at nearly equal rates, but Facebook has slightly below average engagement on such content.
4. **Few organizations are adopting Instagram.** Despite Instagram being the among the fastest growing social media platforms, both in DC and among the broader U.S. adult population, only 33% of organizations had an Instagram account. And, only 25% had posted content in the month before our analysis.

Wide Adoption of Social Media but Lacking Images

Our analysis included 156 organizations from 16 industry sectors, covering everything from energy to education. The majority of these organizations are active on social media, with most using a Facebook or Twitter account, often both. Despite this, the lower posting rate for original visual content suggests that organizations may lack visual resources.

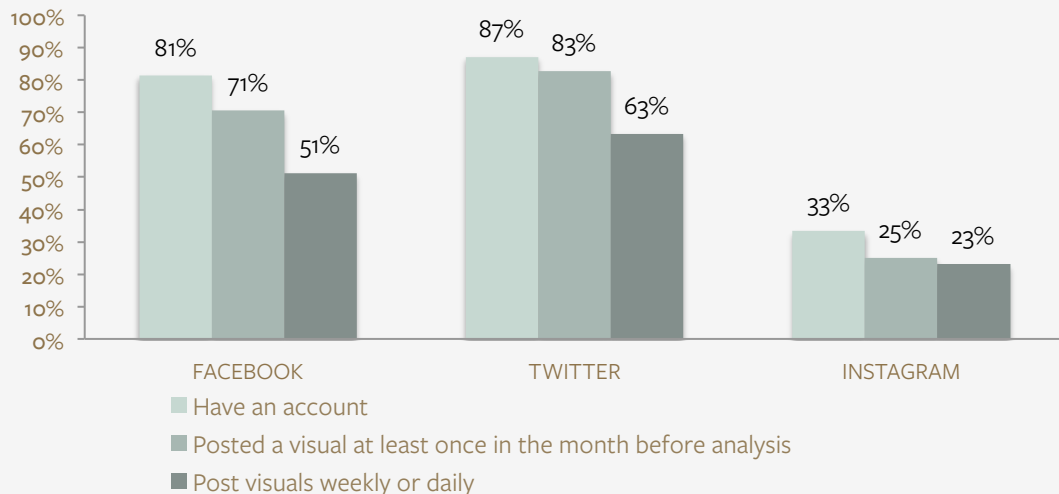
Industry Sectors Represented in Visual Analysis

Percentage of DC-based Associations, Nonprofits, and Think Tanks, n=156



Organizations Sharing Visual Content on Social Platforms

Percentage of DC-based Associations, Nonprofits, and Think Tanks, n=156





Facebook for Social, Twitter for News and Updates

Our sample's use of social media reflects larger public trends. Most DC-based organizations have higher followings and engagement rates on Facebook than on Twitter. However, Facebook may still be seen as more of an entertainment platform than a news platform.

Distribution of Followers on Social Media

*Number of Followers (Twitter)/Page Likes (Facebook) on Accounts**

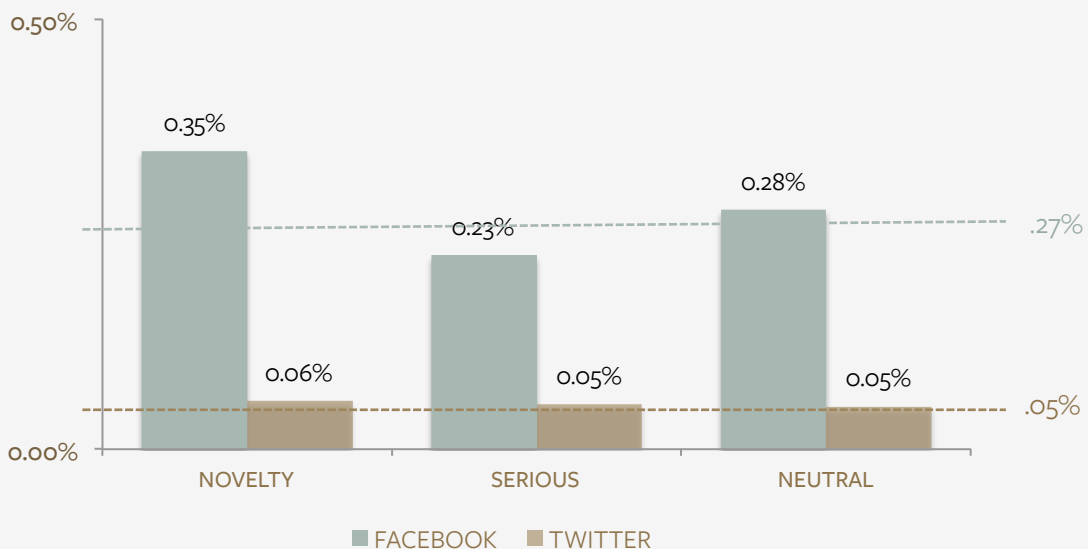
	Highest Followers	Median	Lowest Followers
Facebook, n=127 	4,766,424	11,567	9
Twitter, n=136 	433,135	8,424	18

**Instagram counts are excluded due to API permission limits*

Serious content, such as industry updates, had below average rates of engagement on Facebook while all types of content were engaged with equally on Twitter. This is despite the fact that serious, novelty, and neutral content were posted at equal rates on Facebook and Twitter.

Engagement Across Content Types on Social Media

Average Rate of Engagement Actions (likes, favorites, retweets, shares) to Followers



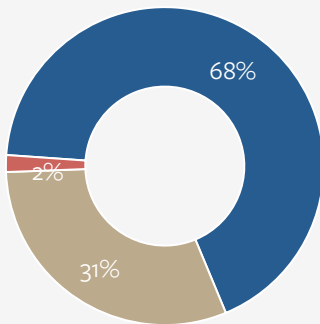
Photography is Most Popularly Posted Media

Photographs are organizations' preferred medium on all social platforms, comprising more than 70% of all visual content posted. The graph below illustrates the three primary categories of images defined in our analysis and how they are used on each platform. We'll explore each of these categories of visual content in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

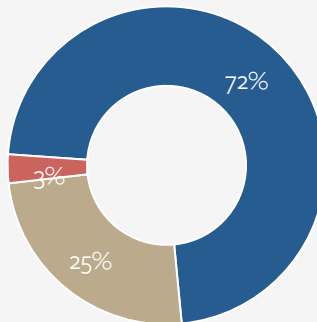
Types of Visuals Posted to Social Media

Percentage of Total Posts per Platform

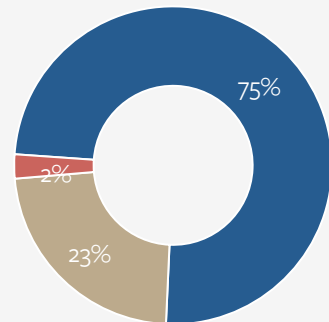
Facebook, n=1,053



Twitter, n=1,234



Instagram, n=449



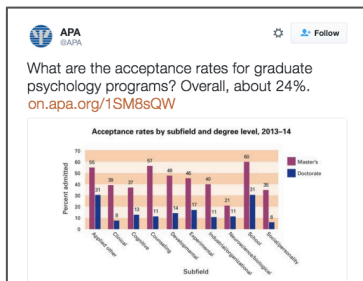
DATA VISUALIZATIONS

PHOTOS

GRAPHICS

Data Visualization

Chart, graph or map used to simplify numeric or geographic data



Photograph

Visual made using a camera, scanner or other image-capture technology



Graphic

Hand-drawn or computer-generated illustration



Chapter Three: Photography

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, photography is the preferred visual medium for most organizations. The format has been democratized and celebrated with the advent of smart phones and social media. Because of this prevalence, it's one of the strongest resources an organization can develop. This chapter breaks down simple strategies for taking better photos, selecting better stock photos, and improving your organization's visual library.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

1. **There is a gap between the types of photos organizations share and the types of photos audiences "like."** A high volume of the photographs organizations share is connected to serious content, but while we post industry news, our audiences are "liking" and sharing inspirational quotations.
2. **Live Update + Photo = Tweet Success.** Facebook Live may be trying to edge into the real-time content market, but for now, it's Twitter's turf. Live-tweeted conference events with visuals had the highest engagement of all photography posted to the platform.
3. **Interactive photography is rising; stock photos are declining.** Organizations at the vanguard of social image-sharing are inspiring audiences to create and share content. These interactive photography projects include custom filters, hand-held print-outs, and conference photo booths. Audiences expect to see real people in their social feed, and as a result, stock photos were among the lowest-ranked content in our engagement analysis.
4. **Are staff inflating our engagement numbers?** Organizational staff photos are the third most-engaged content type on Facebook and the fourth-most on Twitter. An examination of this engagement revealed a high number of staff likes and faves. While this inflation isn't harmful, organizations should be mindful of internal engagement when developing content strategies based on past success.

The State of Photography in DC

How Advocacy Organizations Create and Share Photos

Traditional Photography Overshadows Other Formats

There are several photography formats that can be shared today on social media, any of which can influence an organizations' ability to stand out in a timeline or affect engagement. While traditional photography still dominates the social feed, some groups are experimenting with other photography formats. These include:

Collage: Multiple photos combined into one image

Photograph with Text: Photo that includes a text overlay

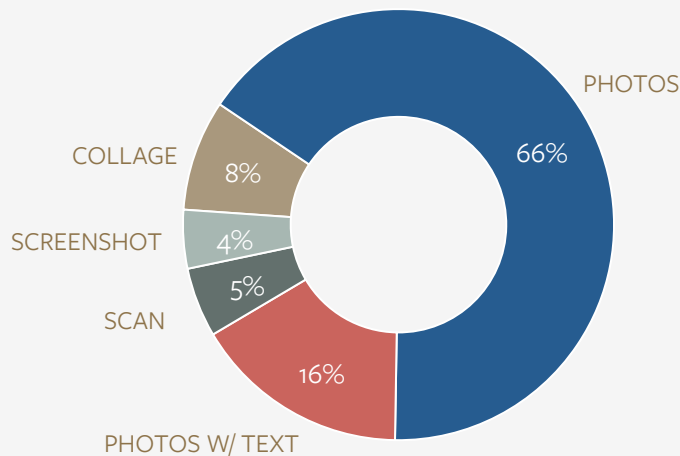
Scan: Image that came from a scanner or fax

Screenshot: Image captured from a computer or smartphone screen.

Slideshow*: Group of photos presented in a carousel viewer (*Not shown, below 1%)

Formats Within Photography

Percentage of Total Posts, $n = 1,950$



Collage



Screenshot



Lots of Options: The 21 Subjects in Photography

There are 21 topics or subjects commonly portrayed or featured in organizations' photos on social media, but most groups only post from a narrow range of these topics. The full breakdown of photo subjects and how they are used by DC organizations is included in the following pages.

Industry News/Research



Self-Promotion



Holiday



Historical/TBT/Flashback Friday



Charity



Symbol of the Industry

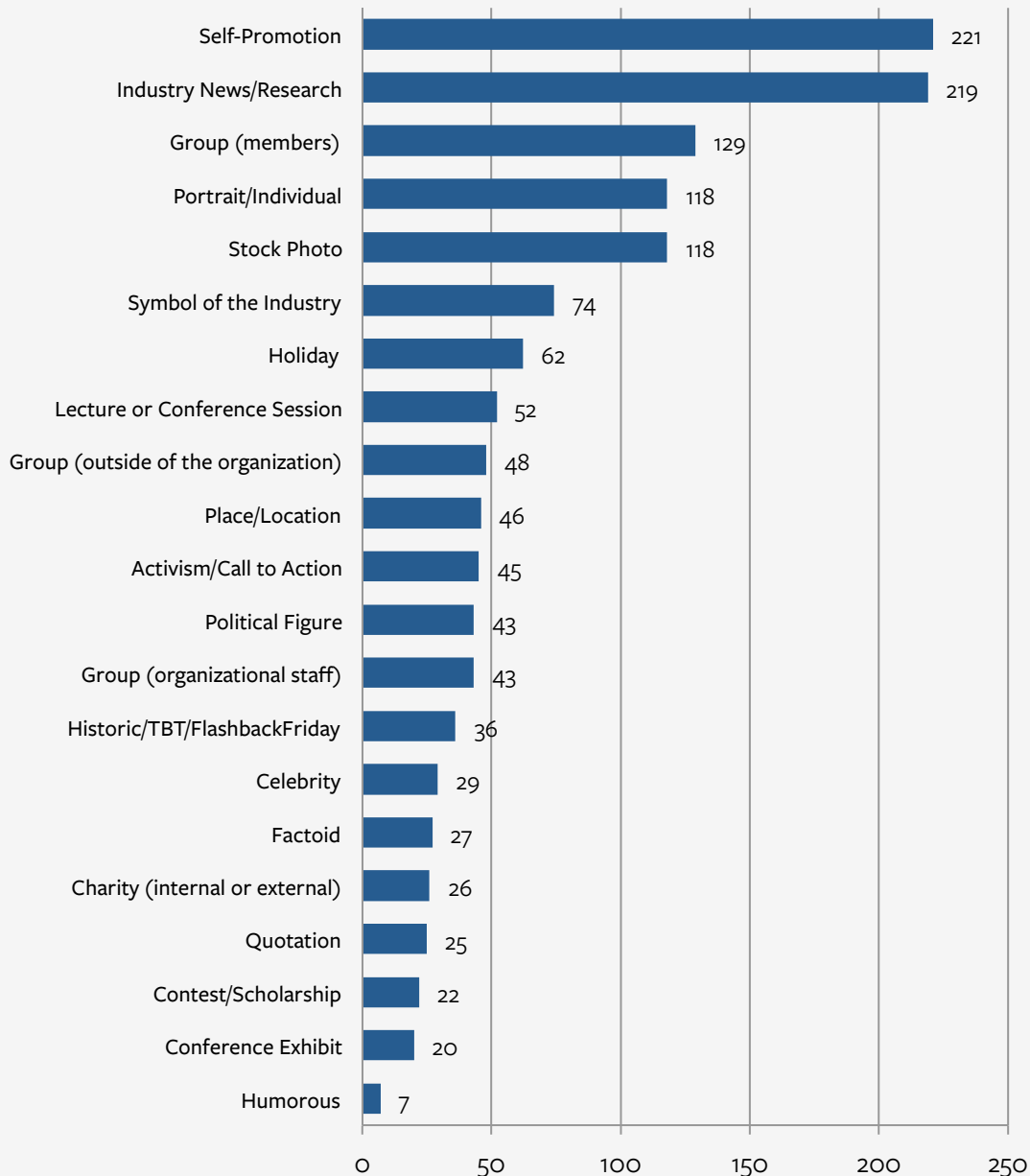


DC Uses Facebook For Self-Promotion and News

Organizations prioritize photo topics and subjects differently on Facebook and Twitter. On Facebook, photos are evenly split between self-promotion and industry news. However, it's helpful to consider that Facebook is first and foremost a platform for maintaining social connections. Thus, images that foster pride and connection, such as group photos and symbols of the industry, are more likely to be shared here than they are on Twitter.

Most Commonly Used Content in Photos Posted to Facebook

*Number of Images Relating to Subject Matter**



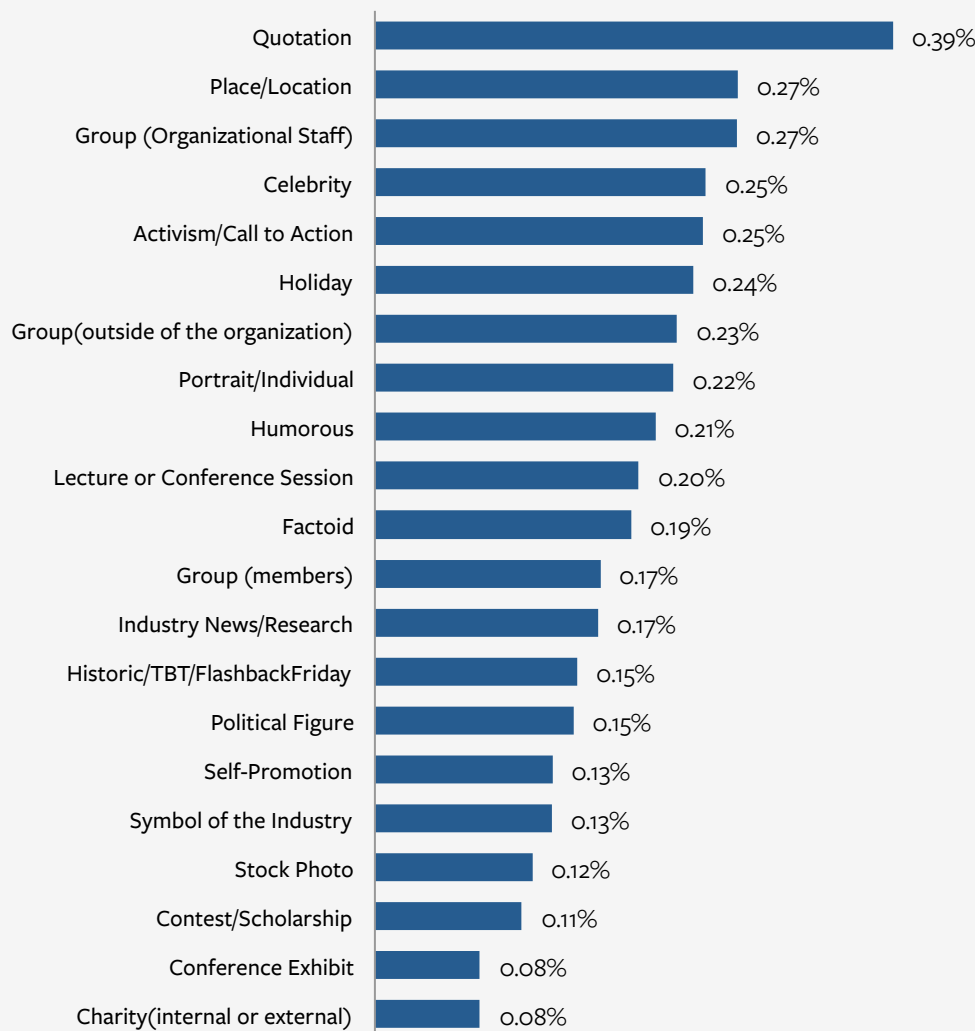
**Photos may have more than one subject, for example, a quotation overlaid on a portrait of a political figure*

Audiences Use Facebook for Inspirational Content

Audiences engage differently on Facebook and Twitter. Facebook followers are more likely to engage with photos containing inspirational content and calls to action. However, it's important to remember that shares aren't necessarily a request for more of the same. It's likely that followers want a balance of serious and novelty content.

Facebook Photo Subjects with Highest Engagement

Ratio of Engagement Actions (likes and shares) to Page Likes



How Important is a Like or Share?

Research conducted by Facebook for Business¹ found that a lack of engagement actions doesn't mean content wasn't seen or was irrelevant. In fact, Facebook found that some people are "engagers" and others aren't. To make up for this, Facebook will soon begin considering the amount of time spent viewing a post as an indicator of interest that affects News Feed placement.

1. <https://www.scribd.com/doc/210734144/Engagement-on-Facebook-When-It-Matters>

Opportunities for Improvement on Facebook

The table below shows the largest gaps between the most engaging content and the content most frequently posted by organizations on Facebook. The largest differences in engagement and posting rates (indicated in bold) are potential opportunities for improvement. A negative difference suggests audiences desire more of that type of content. A positive difference suggests a group could post less of that type of content.

Volume of Facebook Posts Compared to Rate of Engagement

*Ranked according to amount of engagement per post or number of posts per topic**

Content Type	Engagement Rank	Posting Frequency Rank	Difference
Activism/Call to Action	3	10	-7
Celebrity	3	13	-10
Charity(internal or external)	17	15	+2
Conference Exhibit	16	18	-2
Contest/Scholarship	15	17	-2
Factoid	9	14	-5
Group (members)	10	3	+7
Group (Organizational Staff)	2	11	-9
Group(outside of the organization)	5	8	-3
Historic/TBT/FlashbackFriday	11	12	-1
Holiday	4	6	-2
Humorous	7	19	-12
Industry News/Research	10	2	+8
Lecture or Conference Session	8	7	+1
Place/Location	2	9	-7
Political Figure	11	11	0
Portrait/Individual	6	4	+2
Quotation	1	16	-15
Self-Promotion	12	1	+11
Stock Photo	14	4	+10
Symbol of the Industry	13	5	+8

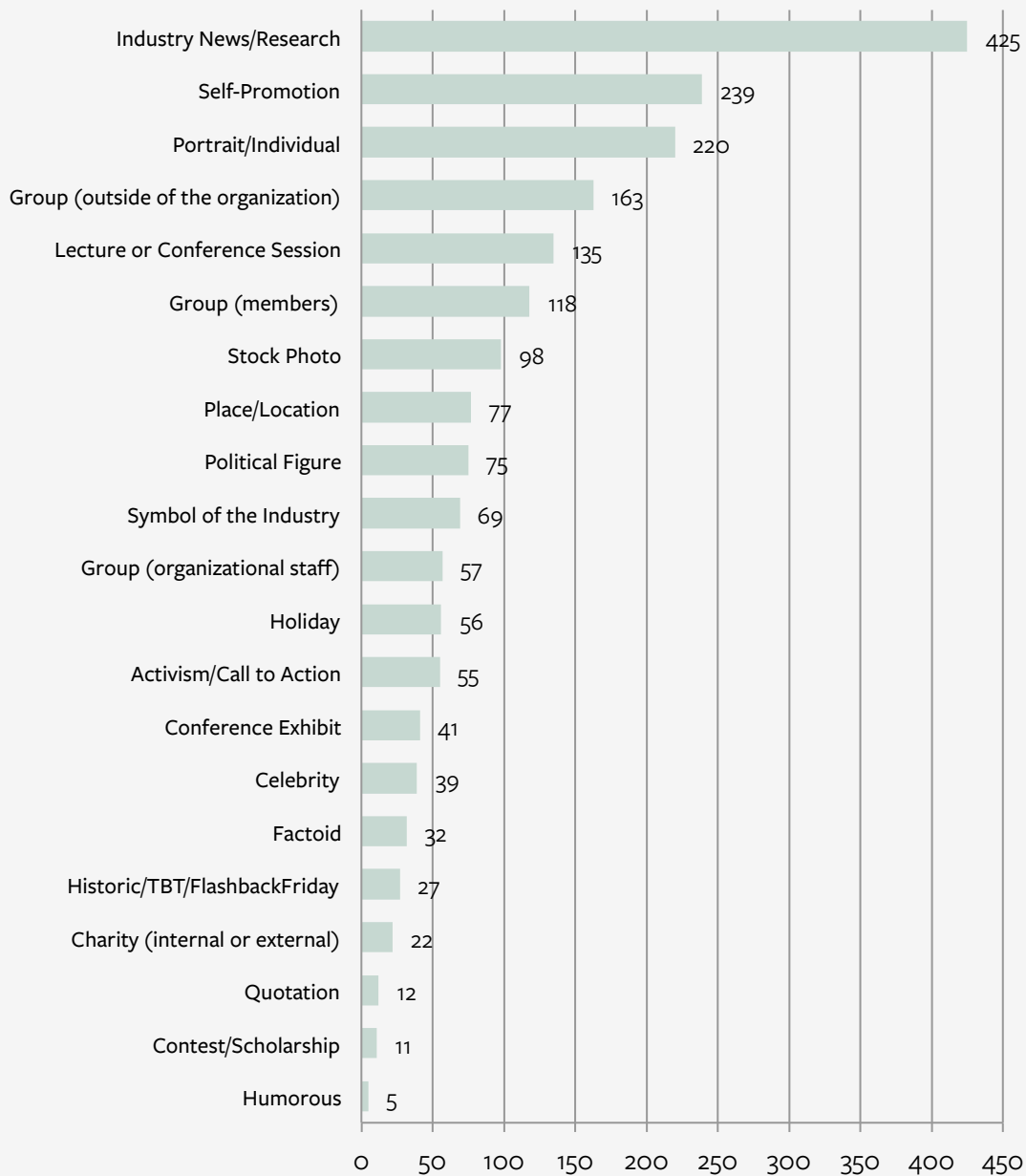
**Some groups are tied in the rankings*

Is Twitter a News Outlet or a Social Platform?

On Twitter, our analysis reflects a larger cultural question about the platform: is it a news outlet or is it a social network? For DC organizations, the most widely shared content on Twitter is industry news and research, by a large margin. Twitter also has a higher volume of time-sensitive content, such as live updates from conference sessions and meetings with politicians.

Most Commonly Used Content in Photos Posted to Twitter

*Number of Images Relating to Subject Matter**



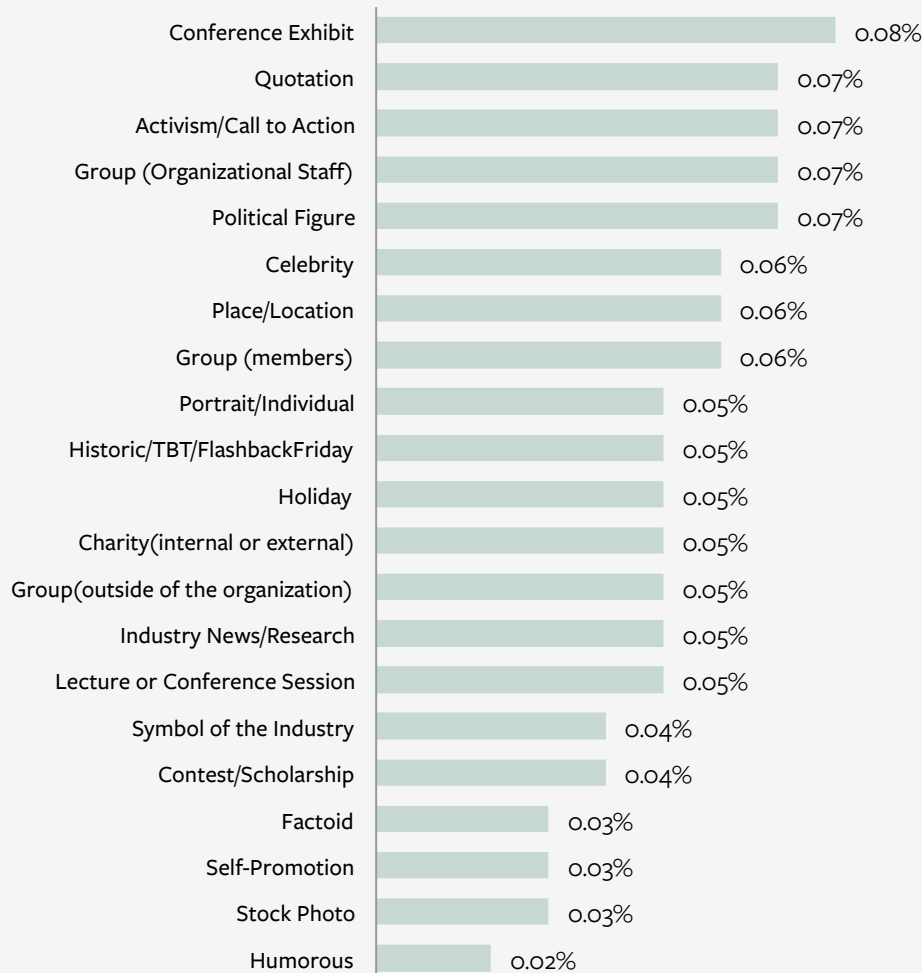
**Photos may have more than one subject, for example, a quotation overlaid on a portrait of a political figure*

Audiences Engage Most During Live Events

Like Facebook, some novelty content ranks highly on Twitter, but Twitter is largely a serious platform for organizations. Humor performs poorly while photos with political figures and calls to action perform well. High engagement on conference exhibits reflects organizations' sense that Twitter is a strong platform for capturing real-time events.

Twitter Photo Subjects with Highest Engagement

Ratio of Engagement Actions (favorites and retweets) to Followers



What's in a Retweet?

Remember that when a user retweets content, they are mindful of their own followers. Because of this, content that appeals to a wide audience is more likely to be shared. However, researchers have also found that Twitter users are likely to retweet content that they believe is unique, informative, or breaking¹. Organizations have an insiders' advantage when it comes to creating and sharing this type of content.

1. <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1772751>

Opportunities for Improvement on Twitter

The table below shows the largest gaps between the most engaging content and the content most frequently posted by organizations on Twitter. The largest differences in engagement and posting rates (indicated in bold) are potential opportunities for improvement. A negative difference suggests audiences desire more of that type of content. A positive difference suggests a group could post less of that type of content.

Volume of Twitter Posts Compared to Rate of Engagement

*Ranked according to amount of engagement per post or number of posts per topic**

Content Type	Engagement Rank	Posting Frequency Rank	Difference
Activism/Call to Action	2	13	-11
Celebrity	3	15	-12
Charity(internal or external)	4	18	-14
Conference Exhibit	1	14	-13
Contest/Scholarship	5	20	-15
Factoid	6	16	-10
Group (members)	3	6	-3
Group (Organizational Staff)	2	11	-9
Group(outside of the organization)	4	4	0
Historic/TBT/FlashbackFriday	4	17	-13
Holiday	4	12	-8
Humorous	7	21	-14
Industry News/Research	4	1	+3
Lecture or Conference Session	4	5	-1
Place/Location	3	8	-5
Political Figure	2	9	-7
Portrait/Individual	4	3	+1
Quotation	2	19	-17
Self-Promotion	6	2	+4
Stock Photo	6	7	-1
Symbol of the Industry	5	10	-5

**Some groups are tied in the rankings*

Stock Photos Can't Replace Authentic Content

Twitter and Facebook share a few categories of underperforming photos when it comes to engagement: stock photos and contest/scholarship posts. The low engagement on contest and scholarship photos may reflect an unfortunate reality of social media and competitive psychology: the fewer people who enroll in a contest, the higher your chances of winning—thus, people aren't as willing to engage and share. The lesson for organizations? Consider paid promotion.

The low engagement rate for stock photos is a reflection of research findings first mentioned in Chapter One: stock photos are ignored unless they provide valuable information. Organizations that want to get noticed should try posting more original content or should go with a graphic. For those that can't hire a professional, tips for taking better photos are detailed later in this chapter.

Twitter Photo Subjects with Lowest Engagement

Ratio of Engagement Actions (favorites and retweets) to Followers

Type of Content	Average Engagement Rate
Humorous	0.02%
Stock Photo	0.03%
Self-Promotion	0.03%
Factoid	0.03%
Contest/Scholarship	0.04%

Facebook Photo Subjects with Lowest Engagement

Ratio of Engagement Actions (likes and shares) to Group Likes

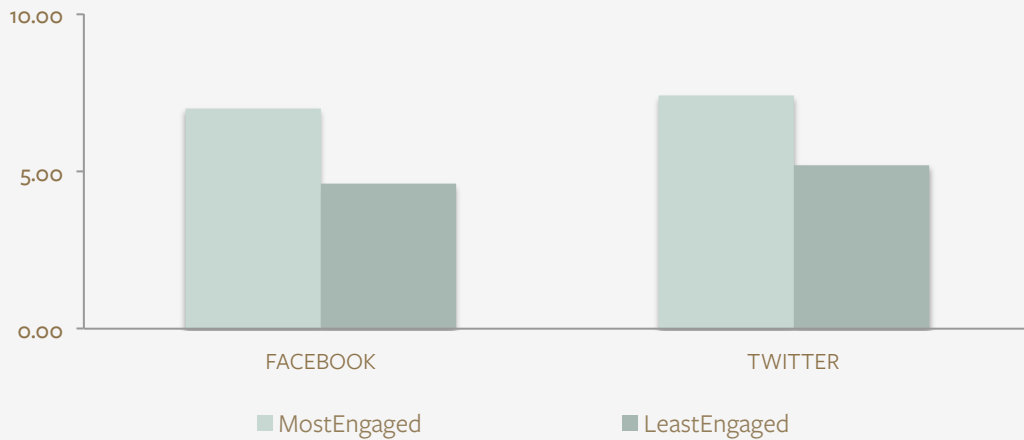
Type of Content	Average Engagement Rate
Charity(internal or external)	0.08%
Conference Exhibit	0.08%
Contest/Scholarship	0.11%
Stock Photo	0.12%
Symbol of the Industry	0.13%

Content Diversity & Levity Impacts Engagement

Finally, on both Twitter and Facebook, image diversity improves engagement. On average, groups posted on just six of the 21 different topics during our analysis. Groups with the highest engagement posted slightly more diverse content, averaging 7 subjects during the course of our analysis. Groups with the lowest engagement averaged 5 subjects.

Image Diversity on Social Media

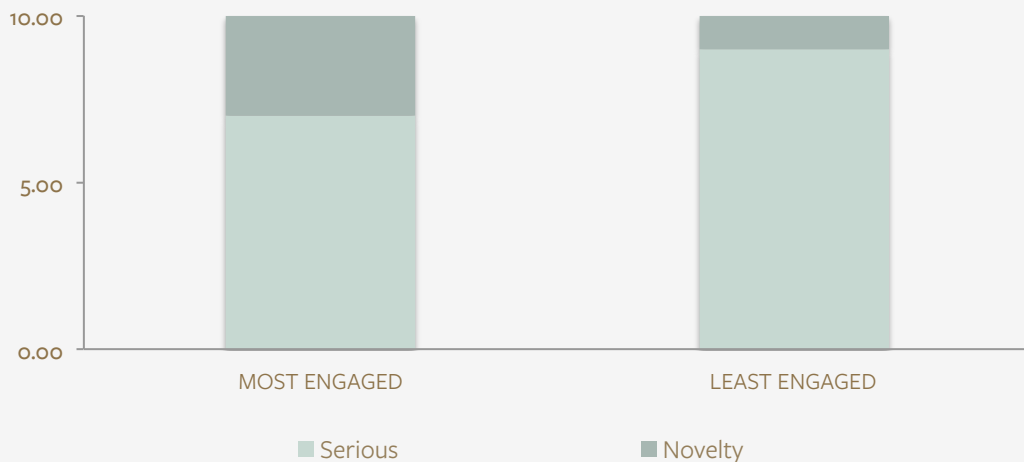
Number of Image Subjects Posted During Analysis



Perhaps more importantly, organizations that were more willing to mix in “lighter,” less serious content saw higher engagement. These high engagement groups still posted a high volume of serious content, but they had a more even division between serious and novelty content overall. Low engagement groups relied more heavily on serious content.

Novelty and Serious Content Shares on Social Media

Average Number of Posts Per Organization



Creating and Selecting Standout Photography

**The Three Types of Photos You
Should be Using More Often**

Three Photos to Use More Often

Photographs are distinct from graphics and data visualizations in that they capture the real world. Often in DC we rely on posed photos, which are easy to capture, but often the best photographs are candid. They make the viewer feel as if they have been dropped in to the setting as the photo was being taken. Even if you're not a photographer, there are three types of photos that you can capture that create a much stronger impact than a posed portrait or staged photo-op.

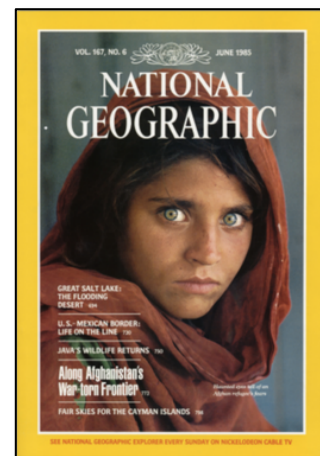
1. The Moment Photo

Henri Cartier-Bresson was a French photographer who is famous for capturing beautiful moments in everyday life. He called this the “decisive moment,” saying, “There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you...” Moment photos capture a slice of life that tells a unique story about its subjects.



2. The Impact Photo

Most of us have encountered impact photos in the pages of National Geographic or Time. These are images like the tanks rolling towards a man in Tiananmen Square or the haunting portrait of an Afghan girl whose family became trapped in a war zone. These photos remove us from our everyday surroundings in a way that is simultaneously surprising and relatable. As advocacy organizations, we try to encourage audiences to think about an issue. Impact photos challenge our assumptions or contradict our everyday experiences by revealing unfamiliar truths.



3. The Mood Photo

Photos of smiling people are abundant, but over time their impact is limited. It's possible to evoke other emotions in photos simply by deviating from the expected. Changes in color, exposure, framing, and other details can create a new feeling. For inspiration, scan national newspapers' photography sections.



Creating an Effective Moment Photo

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Captures A Unique Moment at March on the Hill

Many associations and nonprofits host advocacy days in DC. Advocates are usually excited to be involved in an important democratic process, but these feelings can be difficult to capture. Organizations are often limited to showing people sitting in meetings with their representative. Photographers in these situations have to be prepared to capture the unexpected.



An effective moment photo:

- **Pauses the action:** This photo feels candid. Both women's actions capture how they are feeling as they hover in midair. One woman's shoe is even flying off.
- **Shows genuine emotion:** Any viewer can see by the women's faces and actions that they feel elated and accomplished.
- **Tells a story:** Without any description, we already know that the women in the photo made an impact in Congress. We know this because they are in professional wear, they are in front of the Capitol, and they're celebrating.

Creating an Effective Impact Photo

Habitat for Humanity's Solid Ground Campaign Demonstrates Potential for Impact

Many people in developing countries lack adequate shelter, but it's difficult for first world donors and activists to imagine what that looks like. To demonstrate, Solid Ground posts photos of the hardships faced by shelter-less families in other countries.



An effective impact photo:

- **Has one subject:** The child is the solitary focal point, which means the viewer is able to focus on his experience, rather than feel overwhelmed by the enormity of a larger problem.
- **Stays neutral:** This photo doesn't have any visual cues to suggest to the viewer how they should feel. The photographer was an observer of an everyday experience, therefore the viewer is allowed to project her or her own emotions onto the scene.

Creating an Effective Mood Photo

Association of National Park Rangers Celebrates the Intangible Benefits of Park Ranger Service

It can be hard to photograph emotions beyond those that can be elicited with a simple “Say cheese!” Sometimes, you have to let other elements do the talking. The Association of National Park Rangers’ mood photos are more artistic than most. They let plants, animals, the environment, and natural lighting say more than a simple portrait might.



An effective mood photo:

- **Experiments with lighting, exposure, and focus:** What was once the realm of professional photographers is now open to anyone with a smart phone. Change the brightness with the swipe of a finger. Select an area to bring it in or out of focus. Use app filters to change a photo from color to black and white.
- **Plays with perspective:** Most photos are shot at eye-level, and they capture events on a human scale. If you want someone to have a new experience, shoot from the ground, the sky, or from the perspective of an object within the setting.

Steps for Taking or Selecting Photos

You don't have to be a professional photographer to take a great photo. Here are a few tricks that anyone can follow when they're behind the camera. If you're searching through stock photos or member submissions, focus on the guidelines in numbers two and three or skip to p. 32.

1. Pay attention to lighting



Avoid backlighting

It will obscure your subject and create unflattering shadows.



Rearrange the furniture

When indoors, position table lamps near the walls, so they will reflect more light into the space.



White Balance

If your camera has an auto white balance, use it. This will correct for bad lighting.

2. Practice Variety



Take Hundreds of Photos

You are more likely to get a good photo if you've taken several.



Experiment

Don't take the same photo 7 ways. Try new angles, go wider or tighter, or adjust your light.



Wide-Medium-Tight

To get a full photo story, capture the setting, the subject, and details.

3. Follow the Rule of Thirds



Use Your Gridlines

Most phones and cameras have gridlines to help you frame your photo. Turn them on, and snap away.



Subjects Along Intersections

An object near one of the inner corners will be a focal point, i.e. the kicker in the lower left intersection.

Horizons Parallel to Gridlines

Horizons and vertical lines should run parallel to the gridlines. In this case, the goal lines are parallel to the grid.

Tool #1: Photo Quality & Composition Checklist

Whether you're selecting stock photos or editing photos of your own, you can make images more professional and visually-engaging by focusing their composition. Use the example and checklist below to rate the quality of an image.



Photo Quality:

- ☐ **Brightness and contrast:** The photo is well-lit. Nothing is obscured by shadow.
- ☐ **Clarity:** Everything is in focus. There isn't any blurring (unless it's an action shot).
- ☐ **Resolution:** There is no noise from poor lighting or pixelation from resizing.

Photo Composition:

- ☐ **Rule of Thirds:** If you imagine a 3x3 grid evenly dividing your image, the focal point of your photo will be near the intersection of two of those lines. Any lines within your photo, such as the horizon, will overlap with or run parallel to one of the grid lines.
- ☐ **Balance:** There are portions of the image that draw your attention and there are portions of the image that don't. In the example above, the bright color of the boy's shirt contrasts with the muted colors of the surroundings.
- ☐ **Cohesion:** The elements of the photo work together. There is nothing extraneous. The path stretching to the corner of this image guides our eyes towards the center while the borders of the pond frame the outside edges of the image.

Recommendations for 2016

**On the Horizon: Interaction,
Animation and Commercial
Trends**

Recommendations for 2016: Dos and Don'ts

Organizations have to balance their needs with the needs of their audience and the demands of ever-changing social platforms. As your organization increases its visual communication, consider the following:

Do:

1. Take your own photos. Authenticity is as valuable as quality, and on social media, stock photos stick out like a sore thumb.
2. Share industry news, but make sure the image adds value to the headline. Users, especially on Twitter, will share industry news if it feels exciting or relevant.
3. Mix novelty with news. Groups that seized on social trends like #TBT and Motivational Mondays created content that was relevant, interesting, and engaging.

Don't

1. Measure success solely by engagement metrics. Not only is it a poor predictor of what audiences care about, but the high engagement rates for organizational group photos suggests that numbers may be superficially inflated by internal staff or their friends and family.
2. Ignore the potential of combining visuals with calls to action on social media. Images asking users to join advocacy actions, vote, or show support for an organization or issue were among some of the top performing posts when it came to engagement. This was especially amplified when the images or captions reminded users to share or retweet the call.
3. Be a repeat offender. Out of the hundreds of images we analyzed, there were a few constants: straight-on portraits, wide-angle events shots, and solitary conference booths. Try tapping into your creativity and ask, "How can I make this unique?"

Repeat Offenders



Posed Group Portrait



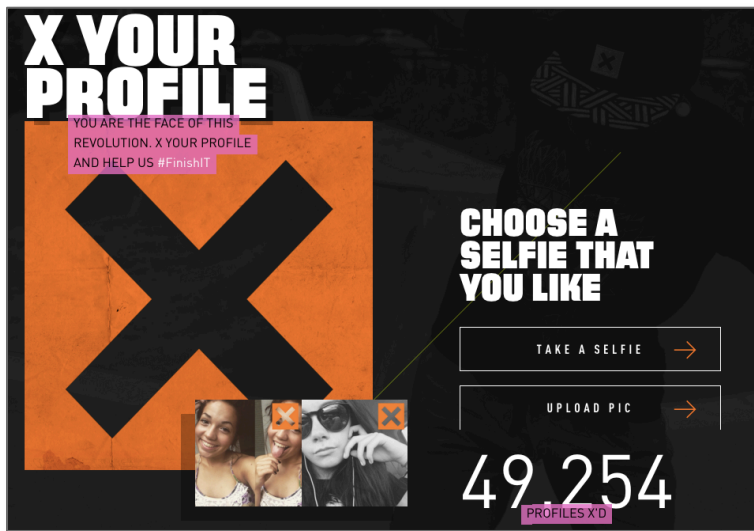
Wide-angle Event Shot



Solitary Conference Booths

Recommendations for 2016: Custom Photo Filters

With the rising popularity of apps like Instagram and Snapchat, some groups are creating their own photo filters. The Truth Initiative, which is trying to capture the attention of a younger, visually-driven audience, has created two such filters.

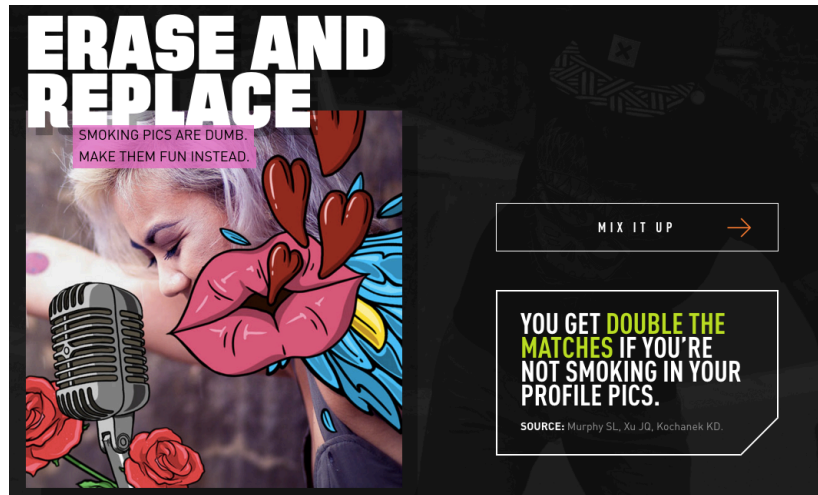


1. X Your Profile

“X Your Profile” is an online photo editor that allows you to take or upload a photo, add the Truth Initiative’s X to the corner, and then share the post on social media. The goal is to show support for discouraging youth from tobacco product use.

2. Erase and Replace

The Truth Initiative’s second photo editor gives creative and artistic license to users, who can place stickers over uploaded photos to censor cigarettes. It’s based on the premise that smokers’ photos get fewer hits on dating sites.

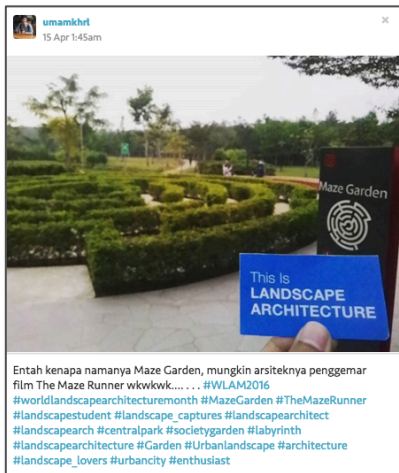


Try this At Home:

Online design app Canva has created a shortcut route to designing custom graphics and filters. You can embed their Canva button onto your site and set options for users to create their own social media posts using designs you’ve pre-selected: <https://marketing.canva.com/button/>

Recommendations for 2016: Sharable Printouts

With a printer and a smartphone, members can be included in the content creation process for your visual communications. The American Society of Landscape Architects and the Council for Independent Colleges have both recently printed graphics for members to use when they share photos on social media. Organizations can then collect these photos to reuse at a later date.

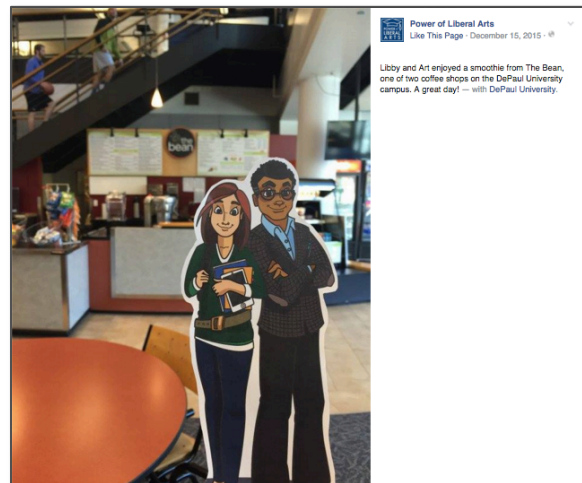


“This is Landscape Architecture” Opts for Portable Sizing

ASLA’s printout is business card-sized, so participants can carry it in their wallet and use it anytime they see inspiring landscape architecture.

Council of Independent Colleges’ Personal Approach

The CIC created two avatars, Libby and Art, to speak for the “Power of Liberal Arts” campaign. In addition to running the campaign’s Twitter account, the avatars have also been printed and shared with member colleges, who use them to promote their facilities. The personality and perspectives of the characters has increased CIC’s reach at a low cost to members and has been so successful that even non-member colleges have tried to participate.



Recommendations for 2016: Commercial Trends

Getty Images releases an annual report on visual trends each year called *Creative In Focus*. The publication originally captured what was popular in professional and commercial photography, but as social media becomes more visual, these trends have spilled over into social media. If your goal is to tap into popular culture, it's worthwhile to take a look at these guidelines.

Immersion



Immersion is when cameras are used to tap “extreme points of view” using either macro lenses or “hyper-wide compositions that capture the expanse and majesty of the world around us.” **Alzheimer’s Association** posts photos of their bracelets both up-close and hyper-wide.

Inclusivity and Imperfection



“Showing people of varied backgrounds and experiences is no longer an option,” according to Getty. This means fewer models and more real people. It also means a greater diversity of people, from a variety of backgrounds. **Disabled American Veterans’** Instagram highlights people of different ages, races, and sexes.

Transparency

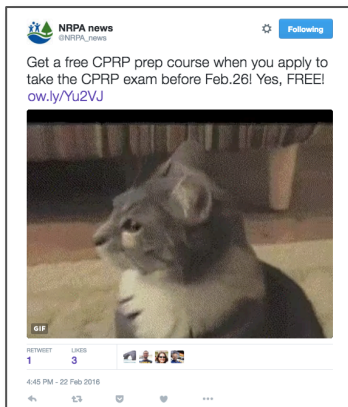


People want to know that they’re working with positive, honest organizations. They’re also used to having more access to information in an age where anyone can look up anything on their phone. **Golf Course Superintendents Association of America** showcased many behind-the-scenes photos at their last conference, from turf inspections and sand clean-up to the latest go-cart innovations.

Recommendations for 2016: Gifs & Cinemagraphs

Adding movement to photos is surprisingly popular, with some messaging apps even including gif keyboards. You can join in on the action by adding gifs or cinemagraphs to your tweets and posts. Gifs are short animations that play on repeat. Cinemagraphs are photos with partial animation on selections of a photo. Below, the National Recreation and Parks Association uses a gif of a surprised cat to bring attention to their free prep course offering. The ad for Burnett's Vodka uses a swirling snowglobe and blazing fire to bring life to an otherwise still photo.

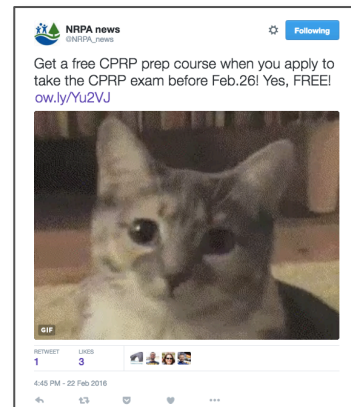
Frame 1



Frame 2



Frame 3



Frame 1



Frame 2



Try this At Home:

Gifs are easy to create from any video clip. Online, you can use free web app Giphy (<http://giphy.com/create/gifmaker>) with uploaded videos or with links to videos that are already online. On desktop, software like Photoshop or Gimp can be used to save video from MP4 format to .gif format. More gif creation resources are listed on p. 68.

Cinemagraphs can be made online with Flixel (<https://flixel.com/>). It's free to demo and paid after that. If you are familiar with more advanced techniques in Photoshop or Gimp, then try Photojojo's online tutorial:

<http://content.photojojo.com/tutorials/how-to-make-cinemagraphs-photos-that-move/>.

Photo Editing Resources

The following websites and apps are useful for taking and editing photos.

Free Web App/Mobile App/Software Combinations:

Fotor: Easy to use combination online service/downloadable software for desktop and mobile. Offers basic photo edits, collage settings, and social media sizing templates. (Free demo with ads; sliding scale pricing for ad free and additional features) <http://www.fotor.com/>

Pixlr: Two versions of editing applications, available online, as a desktop download, or as a mobile app. There's an Express version for quick edits and an Editor version for photoshop-eque functionality. <https://pixlr.com/>

Google Photos: A web app or mobile app with basic photo storage and editing capabilities. <https://photos.google.com/>

Canva: Photo editor and design suite available as a web app or as a download for iPad. <https://about.canva.com/>

Landscape from SproutSocial: Automatically resizes imported photos for social media <http://sproutsocial.com/landscape>

Free Desktop Editors:

Gimp: Downloadable, free, open source software, an alternative to Photoshop. Available for Mac or PC. <https://www.gimp.org/>

Free Smartphone Editors:

VSCO: App for iPhone and Andoid devices. Extends camera controls while taking photos and includes filters and other basic editing. <http://vSCO.co/store/app>

SKRWT: Corrects smartphone lens and perspective distortion. Available for iPhone and Android. <http://skrwt.com/>

Quick: Fast and easy text overlay for photos. Available for iPhone and Android. <http://www.overquick.com/>

Paid Smartphone Editors:

Afterlight: Windows, iPhone, and Android app for simple photo editing and filters. <http://afterlight.us/> (\$0.99 cents)

Chapter Four: Data Visualization

According to Edward Tufte, author of four books on data visualization, “Graphical excellence is that which gives to the viewer the greatest number of ideas in the shortest time with the least ink in the smallest space.” Data visualization is one way organizations in DC can simply and quickly share the often complex issues surfaced in research or reports. Many of us have data to share, but few of us are visualizing it for social media. This chapter will demonstrate effective data visualization practices, how to begin visualizing your organization’s data, and ways to avoid common errors.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

1. **Data visualizations are rarely used despite their high engagement rates.** Only 2% of the organizations in our analysis were using data visualizations, but the average engagement rate for these visuals is much higher than the rates of other visuals.
2. **Data visualizations don’t have to be scientific or clinical.** Many groups use data visualizations for other reasons, such as tracking progress towards a goal, like donations to charity, or making jokes about common industry issues. Don’t be afraid to get creative.
3. **There are many free, easy-to-use web apps for creating data viz. No prior experience required.** Excel isn’t the only tool for chart creation. Many free services offer well-designed, easy-to-embed templates. All you need is data.
4. **Facebook may be the best platform for sharing data visualizations.** Twitter is typically the platform to share serious content, but data visualization may be the exception. Visualizations’ share rates were 19 times higher than the typical rate for a post on Facebook.

The State of Data Visualization in DC

How Advocacy Organizations Create and Share Data Visualizations

Examples of Data Visuals, From Research to Fun

Although few organizations in DC are using data visualizations, the groups that are deploy visualizations to accomplish a variety of communications objectives. In the examples below, visuals track goals and donations, show training locations, and even illustrate industry jokes. These organizations have realized that if there's a number or a location, it can be plotted.

Charts

National Corn Growers Association
January 5 · @

USDA provides a good look at the prevalence of family farms.
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/.../eib-economic-informa.../eib-146.aspx>

Distribution of farms, value of production, and land operated by farm type, 2014

Percent of U.S. farms, acres operated, or value of production

Farm Type	Number of farms (%)	Land operated (%)	Value of production (%)
Small family farms	89.6	45.7	21.8
Midsize family farms	6.0	27.2	47.2
Large-scale family farms	3.3	23.3	20.6
Nonfamily farms	1.1	3.8	10.4

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service, 2014 Agricultural Resource Management Survey.

Maps



Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

February 19 · 🌐

Our study found these states have the highest rates of heart attack among women. Are you at risk? <http://bcbsa.co/brXtJ>



STATES WITH HIGHEST RATES OF HEART ATTACK AMONG WOMEN

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD | THE HEALTH OF AMERICA

15 Likes 2 Shares

The image shows the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) logo at the top left, which includes the text "United Cerebral Palsy" and "Supporting the lives of people with disabilities". To the right of the logo is the date "December 21, 2015" and a small globe icon. Below this is a paragraph of text: "We're almost there! Join UCP in our Year End goal to reach \$25,000! Your support will help people with disabilities and their families for the upcoming year. Don't forget, you still have time to make a donation in honor of someone as a holiday gift. <http://ow.ly/W5QRm>". At the bottom of the image is a thermometer graphic titled "Thermometer Chart". The thermometer has a scale with markings at \$0, \$8,333, \$16,667, and \$25,000. The red liquid in the thermometer reaches the \$18,554 mark. The number \$18,554 is also printed at the bottom left of the thermometer graphic.

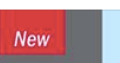
New

AT

Education Offerings
in your area

FHA
Appraising for
Valuation Professionals:

FHA
Single Family Housing
Appraisal Requirements



A map of the United States with red pins indicating seminar locations in various states including Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Hawaii.

HOW A WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER SPENDS TIME AT A GIG:

- ANTICIPATING WEATHER
- SHADOWING BRIDAL PARTY
- SHOOTING ON/OFF-CAMERA/ENTERTAINING THE BRIDE
- MANAGING TIME
- KEEPING AWAY THE CRAZIES
- RUNNING ERRANDS FOR BRIDE/COMES/UNCLEAUNT/GRANDMA/OF THE BRIDE
- HANDLING DRESSES/SUIVERS
- TAKING PICTURES

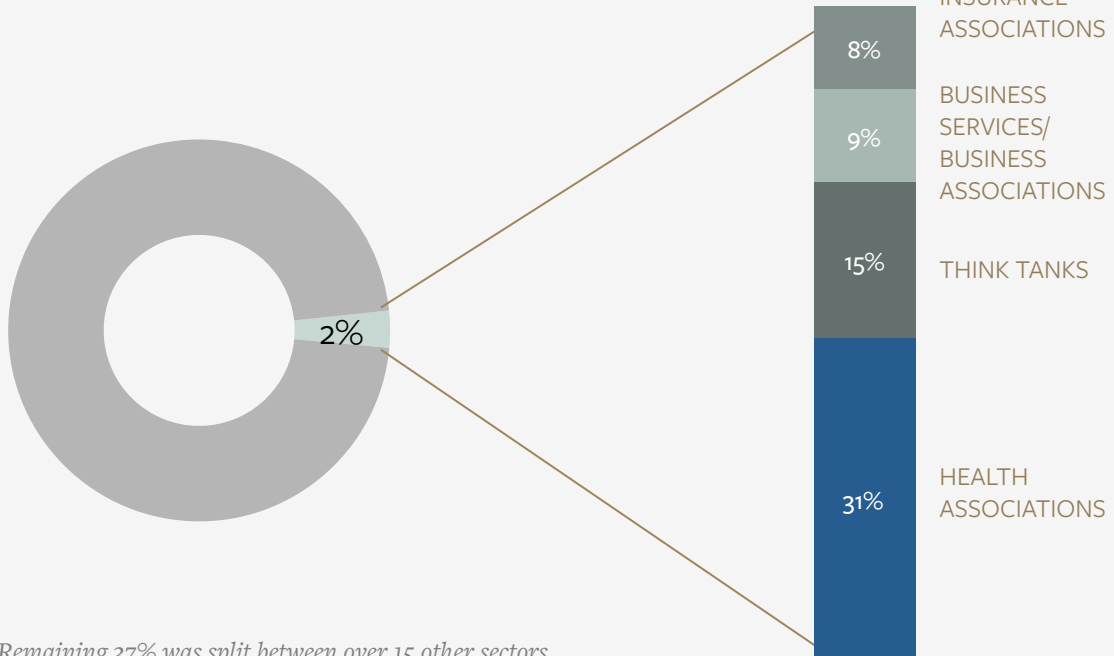
PPA.COM

Data Visualization: the Overlooked Engager

Data visualizations have higher than average engagement rates on Facebook and Twitter, but they make up only 2% of all visual posts. Health organizations and think tanks posted the majority of these visualizations, but all organizations have something to visualize. It doesn't always have to be proprietary research; for example, many groups visualize existing federal data. Resources on the following pages may help you take the data visualization plunge.

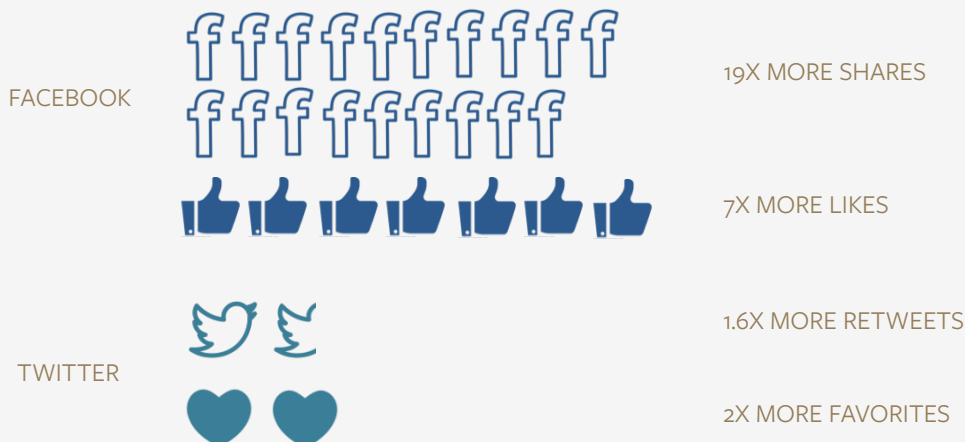
Use of Data Visualizations on Social Media

Percentage of All Visual Posts, $n=2,736^*$



Rate of Engagement Compared to Median Engagement

For All Groups Posting Data Visualizations to Social Media, $n=65$



Charts Overtake Maps in Data Visualizations

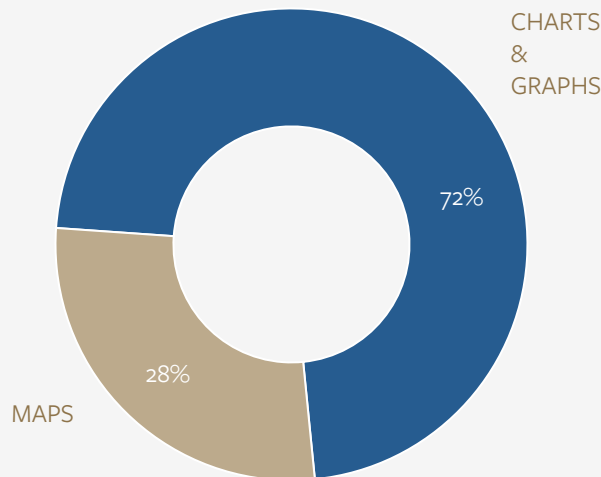
There were only 65 data visualizations in the 2,000+ images included in our analysis. The majority of these visualizations were charts. Definitions for the types of images included in the data visualization category are included below.

Charts & Graphs: Visual depictions of numerical data

Maps: Geographic representations of location-based data

Formats Within Data Visualization

Percentage of Total Posts, n=65



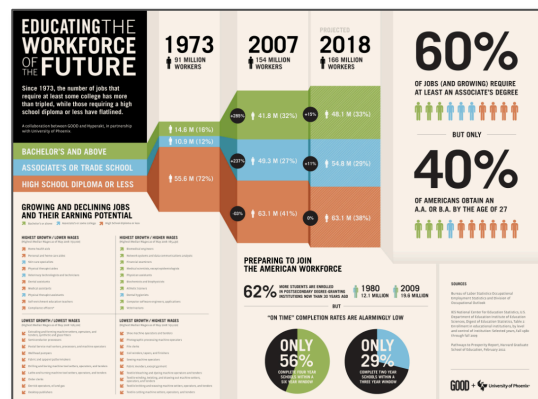
Infographics vs. Data Visualization

In our analysis, we distinguish data visualizations from infographics. A data visualization illustrates a data story in one graphic, whereas infographics contain many data visualizations related to a single topic.

Data Visualization



Infographic



http://infographic.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/educating-the-workforce-of-the-future_50290b5ce420d.jpg

Creating Effective Data Visualizations

Examples from the Media and Organizations

Four Ways to Use Data Visualizations

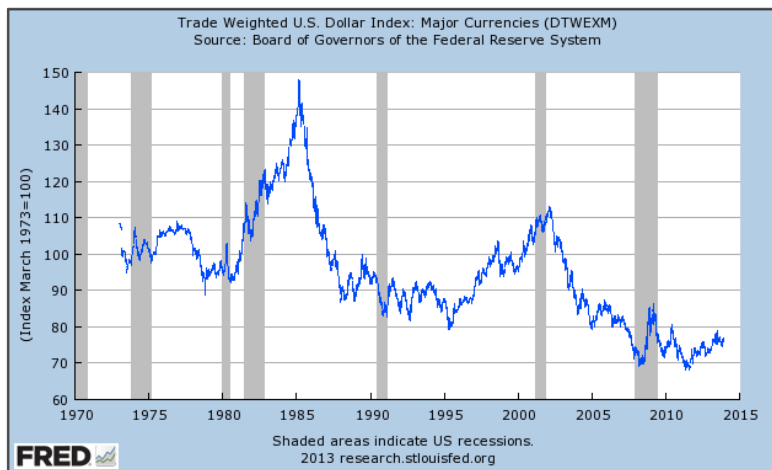
Associations, nonprofits and think tanks should be natural users of data visualizations. Research reports lend themselves well to visualizing findings, and audiences are becoming more acquainted with data through contemporary media coverage. Unfortunately, these opportunities are overlooked or are tucked away somewhere on most organizations' websites. It may not be valuable to visualize all of the findings in a report, but it's worthwhile to polish and share a few visuals with a wider audience. The following pages offer examples of each use case and how original datasets can translate into more compelling visuals.



<http://drive.preprod.dcm.com/Images/2014/fall14/fall14-redwoods/fall14-redwoods-ii.aspx?width=475&height=326>

1. Simplify Complex Amounts

People struggle to contextualize very large or very small amounts. You can help by visualizing these numbers in proportions that people can understand. For example, you're told that the tallest redwood tree is 380 feet tall, your brain likely begins to think of a size that's more familiar to you and then imagining how many times larger a redwood is. It's easier if that work is done for you.

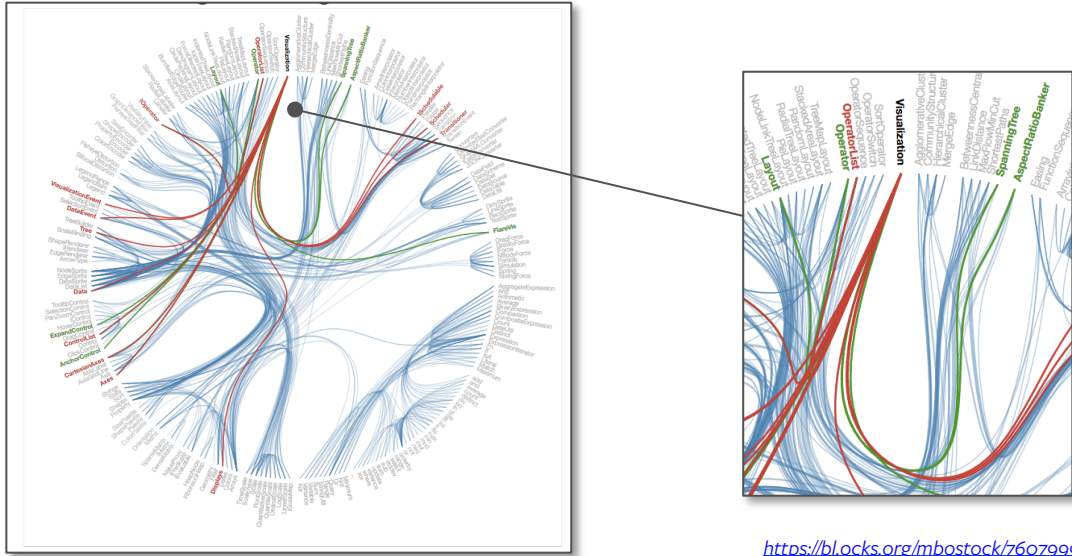


<http://www.mybudget360.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/us-dollar.png>

2. Show Changes Over Time

A rate of change is rarely constant, but it is often easier to state, “The value of the U.S. dollar has decreased over time,” than to provide details about the subtle changes within an overall trend via text.

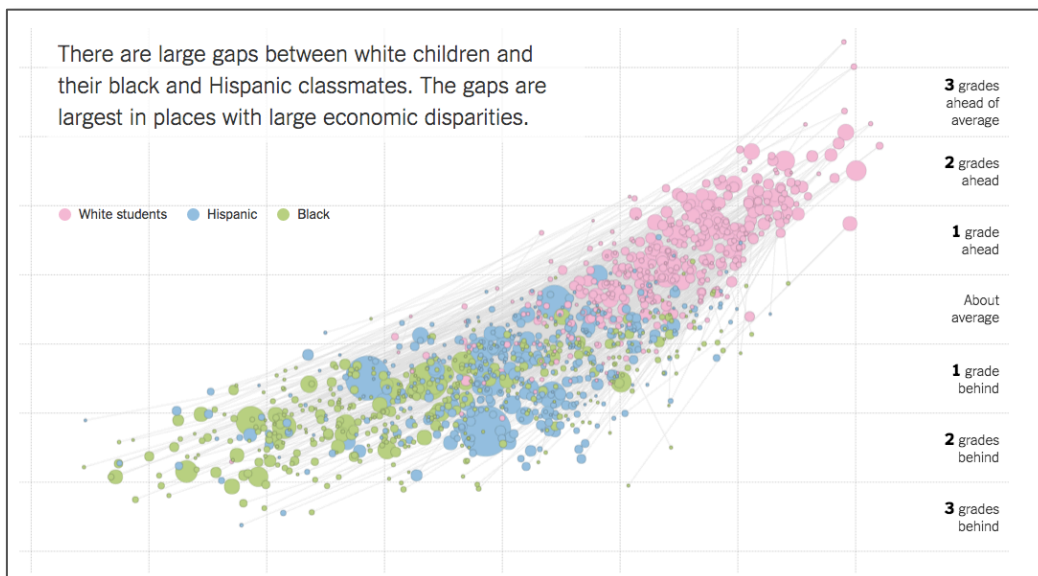
Four Ways to Use Data Visualizations



<https://bl.ocks.org/mbostock/z607999>

3. Illustrate Processes or Relationships

Some relationships are linear and easy to understand, but others can be more complex. If you have multiple ongoing processes or relationships, then it may make more sense to illustrate them. The visuals above show the connections between one word in a computing language. Red and green lines signify different commands that can be used with it.



http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/04/29/upshot/money-race-and-success-how-your-school-district-compares.html?_r=0

4. Compare Relationships Between Two or More Things

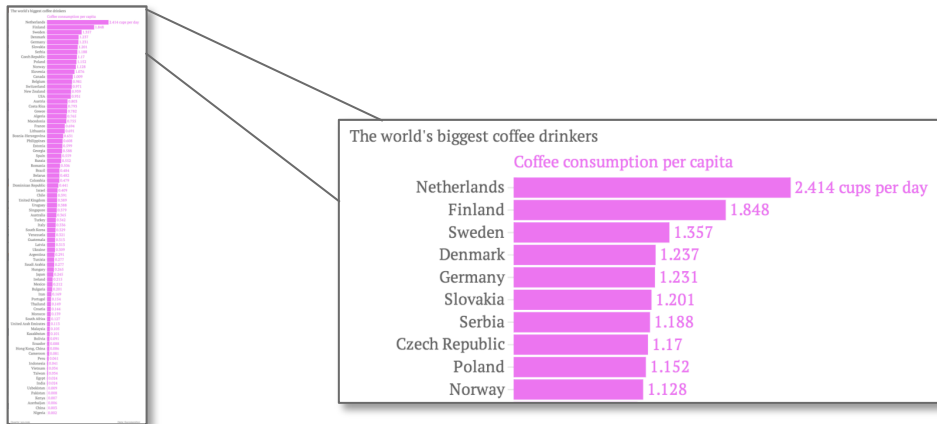
If you suspect that there is a relationship between two or more values, it can be useful to visualize this relationship to test your theory. In this case, race is compared to school performance.

#1: Use Locational Data to Map Regional Trends

Quartz's Choropleth Map Simplifies Complex Values, Translates High Volume of Data Points

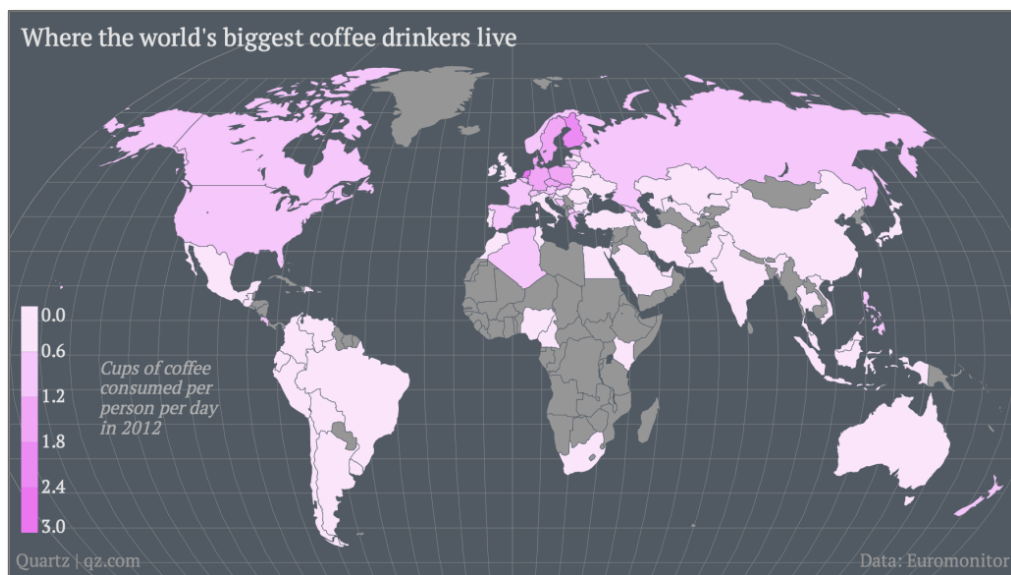
Problem:

Euromonitor, a global marketing firm, released a list of the world's largest coffee consumers in 2014. The list includes hundreds of countries, and the original data was given in liters. Quartz converted the amounts to cups, but the final values measured down to the thousandth of a cup.



Solution:

Quartz created a map to show relationships between coffee drinking regions. It's now easier for the user to draw conclusions about coffee-drinkers (they live in the Northern hemisphere, biggest drinkers are in cold climates, etc.). The color scale simplifies the differences into nearly half a cup, a simpler measurement.



#2: Show Change Over Time with Longitudinal Data

College Board Visualizes Longitudinal Data To Show Variations in Student Aid Over Time

Problem:

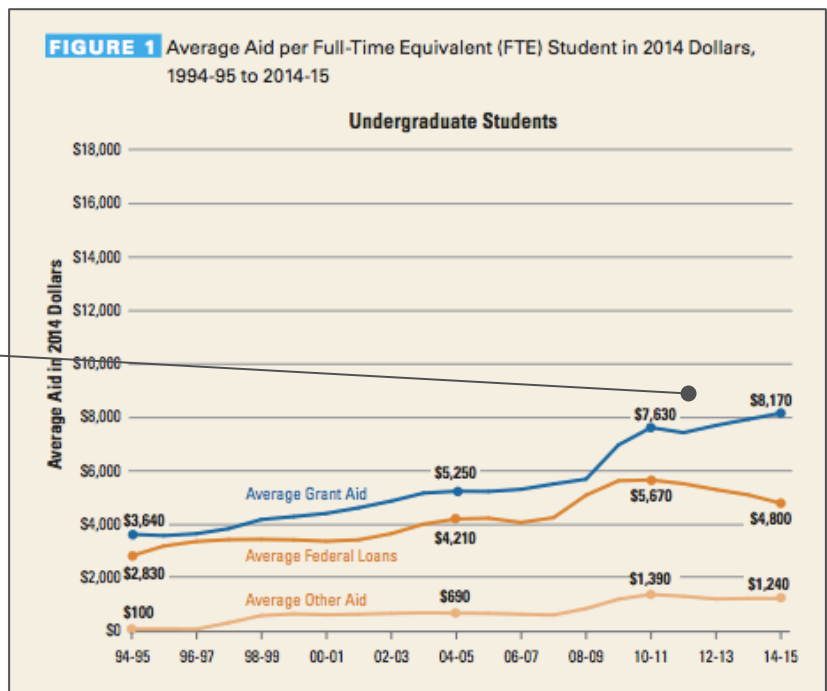
To demonstrate the importance of higher education, College Board studies trends in student aid and college pricing. They can summarize longitudinal data trends with a percent change statistic, but it doesn't provide detail, such as whether the change was steady or whether it jumped rapidly in one year.

TABLE 1 Student Aid and Nonfederal Loans in 2014 Dollars (in Millions), 2004-05 to 2014-15

	Academic Year											Preliminary 14-15	10-Year % Change
	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15		
Federal Aid Grants													
Pell Grants	\$16,542	\$15,477	\$15,006	\$16,787	\$19,812	\$33,182	\$38,989	\$35,407	\$33,341	\$32,104	\$36,293		83%
FSEOG	\$989	\$949	\$902	\$882	\$820	\$814	\$828	\$726	\$762	\$747	\$729		-25%
LEAP	\$83	\$79	\$75	\$74	\$69	\$76	\$57	—	—	—	—		
Academic Competitiveness Grants	—	—	\$283	\$264	\$268	\$530	\$505	—	—	—	—		
SMART Grants	—	—	\$240	\$234	\$216	\$397	\$473	—	—	—	—		
Veterans and Military	\$4,424	\$4,403	\$4,557	\$4,686	\$5,156	\$9,042	\$12,118	\$11,904	\$13,481	\$13,530	\$15,160		243%
Total Federal Grants	\$22,017	\$20,998	\$21,064	\$23,016	\$26,442	\$44,935	\$53,879	\$48,087	\$47,584	\$46,382	\$48,180		110%
Loans													
Perkins Loans	\$2,078	\$1,943	\$1,895	\$1,582	\$1,941	\$905	\$936	\$1,026	\$1,195	\$1,195	\$1,215		-42%
Subsidized Stafford	\$29,971	\$29,799	\$29,285	\$33,282	\$35,774	\$42,118	\$44,382	\$42,789	\$28,911	\$26,970	\$24,674		-18%
Unsubsidized Stafford	\$27,479	\$28,786	\$28,507	\$31,329	\$43,785	\$51,519	\$51,561	\$49,520	\$58,749	\$56,431	\$51,737		88%
Parent PLUS	\$9,262	\$9,979	\$9,519	\$9,801	\$8,327	\$9,849	\$11,575	\$11,681	\$10,213	\$10,488	\$10,564		14%
Grad PLUS	—	—	\$2,448	\$3,522	\$4,685	\$6,289	\$7,505	\$7,888	\$7,307	\$8,268	\$7,768		
Total Federal Loans	\$68,790	\$70,507	\$71,853	\$78,515	\$93,614	\$110,681	\$116,059	\$112,877	\$106,831	\$103,353	\$95,959		39%
Federal Work-Study	\$1,250	\$1,200	\$1,140	\$1,114	\$1,955	\$1,078	\$1,065	\$1,025	\$1,004	\$1,000	\$960		-23%
Education Tax Benefits	\$7,711	\$7,800	\$7,708	\$7,637	\$11,803	\$18,161	\$21,652	\$20,508	\$18,404	\$18,505	\$18,215		136%
Total Federal Aid	\$99,768	\$100,505	\$101,556	\$110,282	\$132,714	\$174,852	\$191,855	\$182,498	\$173,822	\$169,240	\$161,314		62%
State Grants	\$8,408	\$8,588	\$8,948	\$9,295	\$9,172	\$9,818	\$10,100	\$9,912	\$9,974	\$10,136	\$10,136		21%
Institutional Grants	\$27,209	\$28,031	\$30,827	\$32,644	\$34,314	\$38,777	\$41,888	\$43,933	\$46,360	\$48,659	\$50,660		86%
Private and Employer Grants	\$10,717	\$11,498	\$12,223	\$13,176	\$13,463	\$13,763	\$14,524	\$14,859	\$15,162	\$16,370	\$16,800		57%
Total Federal, State, Institutional, and Other Aid	\$146,103	\$149,622	\$153,364	\$165,307	\$189,663	\$237,209	\$258,367	\$251,202	\$245,318	\$244,304	\$238,910		64%
Nonfederal Loans	\$17,674	\$20,838	\$23,885	\$25,564	\$12,532	\$9,861	\$7,934	\$7,973	\$9,453	\$9,710	\$10,120		-43%
State- and Institution-Sponsored	\$1,321	\$1,329	\$1,440	\$1,430	\$1,376	\$1,438	\$1,344	\$1,276	\$1,196	\$1,163	\$1,120		-15%
Private Sector	\$16,353	\$19,509	\$22,444	\$24,134	\$11,156	\$7,523	\$6,590	\$6,697	\$8,257	\$8,547	\$9,000		-46%
Total Student Aid and Nonfederal Loans	\$163,776	\$170,460	\$177,048	\$190,871	\$202,195	\$246,171	\$266,301	\$259,175	\$254,771	\$254,014	\$249,030		52%

Solution:

The graph to the right illustrates the rate of change for undergraduate grant aid, federal loans, and other aid. The user can see that there was a jump in grant aid between 2004 and 2010, but it was followed by a slight decline after 2010 when Pell grants were affected by a federal budget resolution. A percent change would only indicate these fluctuations as an overall increase.

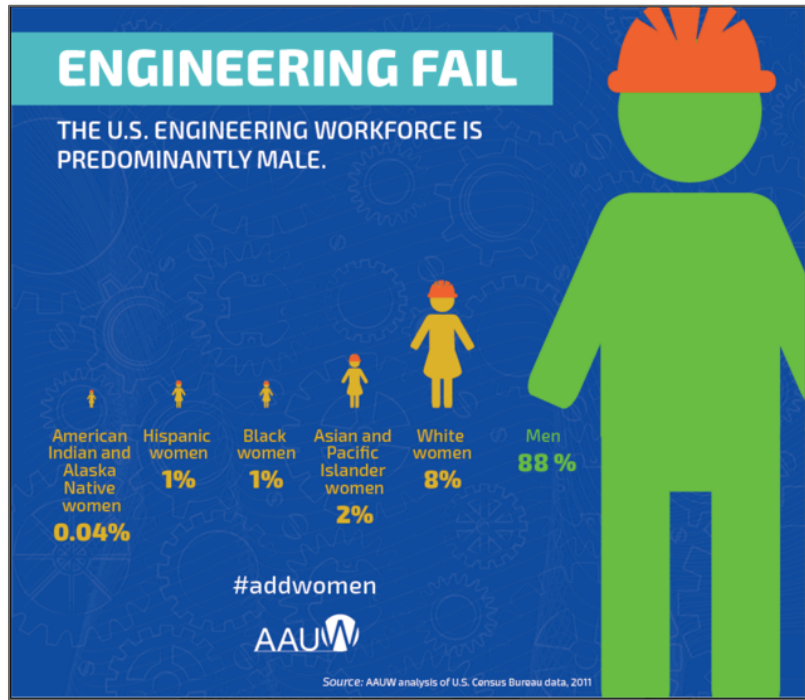


#3: Represent Scale with Symbols

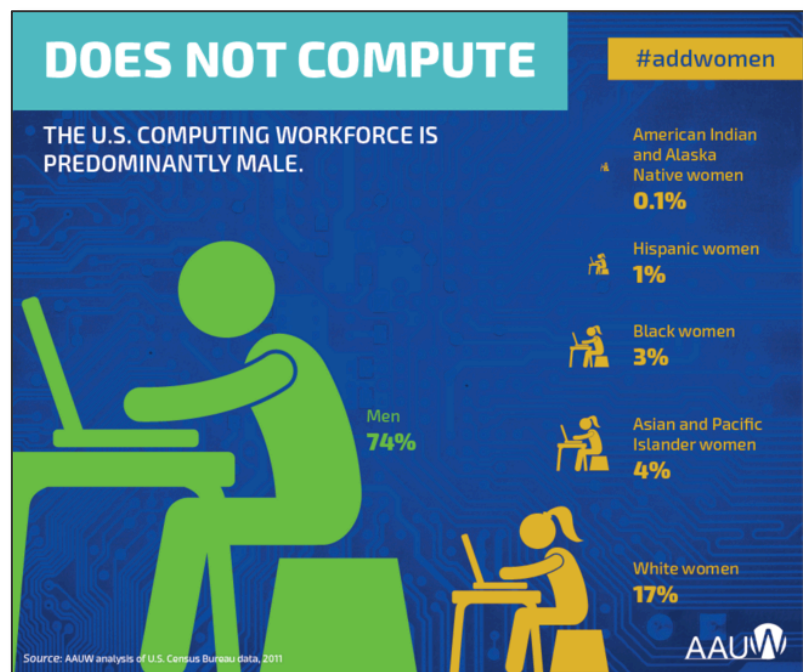
American Association of University Women Scales Data for Visual Impact

The Problem:

Sometimes a number fails to encompass the complexity of an issue. The American Association of University Women wanted to highlight employment differences in STEM fields, but the extreme differences in representation between the sexes are compounded when considering race and ethnicity.



The Solution: Typical data visualizations like pie charts would have made the small amounts indistinguishable. The use of iconography shows the scale of the workforce gap and reminds the audience that there are people behind these numbers. It's persuasive, and easier to read.



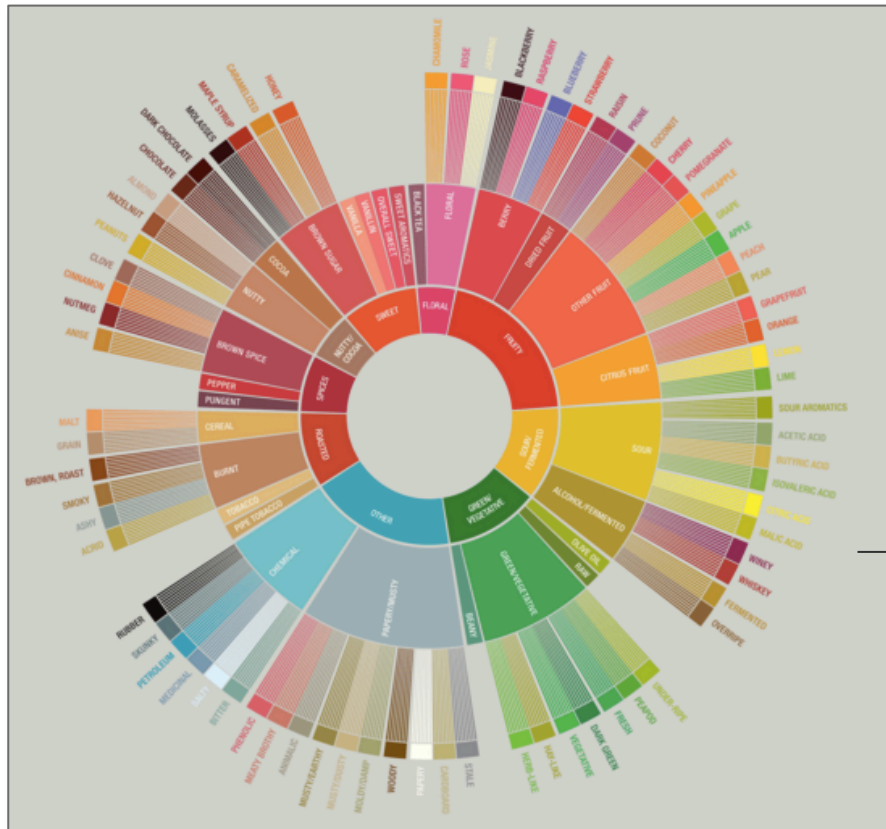
#4: Relate Connections via Colors and Shapes

A Chart to Show Process and Hierarchy, Created by the Specialty Coffee Association of America

The Problem:

The Specialty Coffee Association of America wanted to create industry standards for describing coffee flavor.

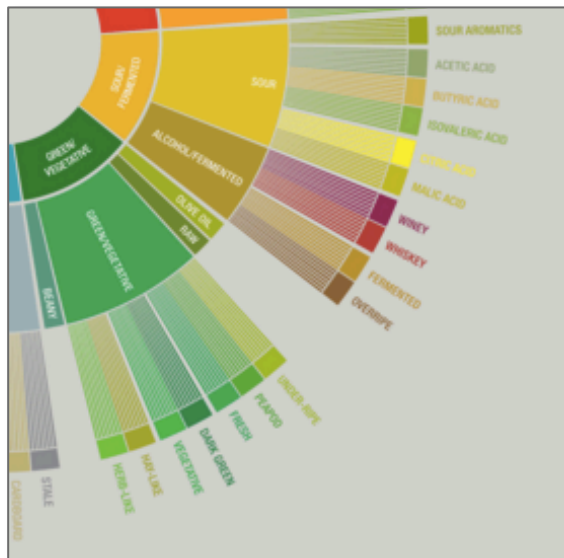
In 1995, they conducted research to narrow down the types of flavors found in all coffees. The results were thorough, but they needed to be easy for buyers and roasters to understand.



The Solution: The association partnered with a design firm to create a graphic that illustrates the relationships between coffee flavors.

The wheel walks tasters through the identification process, going from 9 broad categories to more specific aromas and notes.

<http://www.scaa.org/?page=resources&d=scaa-flavor-wheel>





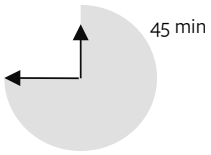
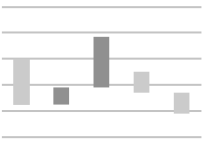

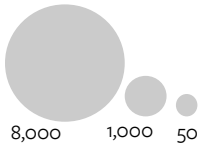



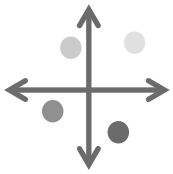



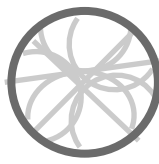
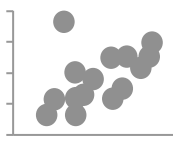

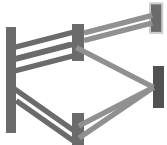
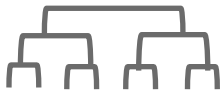
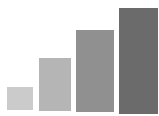
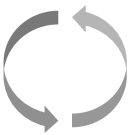
The Data Visualization Process

You have a data set, but should it be visualized? One of the most difficult parts of the visualization process is knowing when to visualize and how. The following diagram breaks down the process of creating a data visualization into five steps.

1. Selecting Data	<p>Choosing the data source that fits your skill level and abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy: Data from a report • Medium: Data table • Hard: Data set or database
2. Cleaning Data	<p>Checking for accuracy of the information. Preparing the data for visualization software. You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the amounts. Be sure all values make sense. • Filter and sort large data sets to search for any anomalies • Save as CSV or other exportable format
3. Asking the Right Questions	<p>Search for stories in the data. Look for interesting trends, comparisons, or key points in the data set. Ask questions and search for answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has the most/least? (outliers, ratios) • What's normal? (average, median) • How does this change over time? (difference)
4. Selecting Simple Stories	<p>Focus on one or two data points, rather than visualizing everything. Try filling in one of the following sentences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X is rising/falling over time • X is greater/less than Y • This is where X happens frequently/rarely
5. Drafting the final graphic	<p>Start playing with different visuals. Try a few before settling on the final draft. See the examples on p. 53 to get started.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple programs like Excel • Start by drawing on graph paper • Experiment with colors, icons, or maps

Finding the Right Visualization for Your Data

Not all datasets should be represented by a bar graph or pie chart. The table below contains examples of diverse types of visualizations. The field on the left-hand side explains which themes and stories the samples best illustrate. For instance, graphs listed under the “Time” category are useful for visualizing schedules, changes over time, or duration of events. Text descriptions of each chart can be found on the following pages.

Time	Timeline	Line chart	Clock face	Gantt Chart
				
Amount	Bar Chart	Bubble Chart	Isotype	Area Chart
				
Hierarchy	Concentric Diagram	X-Y Value Graph	Sunburst Chart	Pyramid
				
Relationship	Arc diagram	Chord Chart	Scatter Plot	Radar Chart
				
Process	Sankey Chart	Tree Chart	Staircase	Cycle Wheel
				

Finding the Right Visualization for Your Data

Time

Timeline: Shows events in the order in which they occur, from start to finish. Great for showing sequences or causes and effects.

Line Graph: Depicts a value's rate of change over time. Requires a longitudinal data set.

Clock face: Shows the duration of one event. Effective for time comparisons.

Gantt Chart: Visualizes spans of time for separate events. May also show relationships between these time frames. Often used for schedules or calendar events.

Amount

Bar Chart: At its simplest, this is used to make value comparisons for a single variable, but there are also stacked bar charts and grouped bar charts for comparing multiple related variables.

Bubble Chart: Shows magnitudes of difference between two or more variables when there are large discrepancies that wouldn't display well in a bar chart. Useful when you want to show that something is X times bigger than Y.

Isotype: Symbols are used to represent a variable. The number of symbols used expresses the quantity or size of the represented variable. The symbols give context cues to viewers about the subject of a visual.

Area Chart: Highlights the gap between two or more variables by coloring in the difference between the two.

Hierarchy

Concentric Diagram: Places the most important information at the center, with less important information radiating outwards. Note that the size of the circles does not correlate with the size of the sample.

X-Y Value Graph: A scale for displaying the positive and negative value traits for a data point. Points placed in the top right corner are most positive. Points placed in the lower left corner are most negative.

Finding the Right Visualization for Your Data

Sunburst Chart: This chart is used to show percentages of a whole and their proximity to another variable. The outward radiating sections of the graph represent the percentages while the circle in the center of the graph represents the secondary variable. The segments' proximity to the center of the graph represents their nearness to that variable. For example, if your office spends 50% of the budget on marketing but rates marketing as unimportant, the segment representing your marketing budget would take up half of the circle but would lie near the outer edge of the chart, with more important segments being closer to the center.

Pyramid: Can be used to illustrate order, importance, or process. Either the largest section of your data, the first part of a process, or the most important part of a process will make up the base of your chart, with values decreasing as they near the top.

Relationship

Arc Diagram: This chart is useful for showing one-to-one links. The circles in the center represent different values while the arcs show the connections between them.

Chord Chart: This chart is useful for showing one-to-many links. The circle's outer edge represents your sample, with different segments of the circle divided into each value. The lines crossing through the center of the circle show how these different values are linked.

Scatter Plot: Scatter plots are useful for showing data points that fall outside of a trend. The dots represent the many data points in your sample. When most of these points follow a trend, they cluster. When they don't, they "scatter." Best when you want to focus on outliers.

Radar Chart: A radar chart represents the relationships between variables that make up a whole. The radar contains spokes, which represent the values being measured. When all values are equally represented, the radius of the chart crosses each line at an equal distance from the center. When there is more or less of a value, the radius will fall nearer or farther from the center. This type of chart is useful for representing balance. It's commonly used to illustrate personality traits.

Process

Sankey Chart: Sankey charts illustrate how parts of a whole diverge from one another either over time or as they reach certain milestones. The starting point of a Sankey chart represents the beginning of a process and includes all values. Each step in the process is represented by another bar and the volume of the original sample that progresses to each step is reflected in the width of the branch that leads into that bar.

Finding the Right Visualization for Your Data

Tree Chart: This is a type of flow chart with a central starting point, all processes then “branch” off the central starting point, reflecting how far into the process one has to be to reach that point.

Staircase: This chart is useful for showing a gradual increase in a value as your progress through a process. Each “step” in a process is sized proportionate to the increase in value experienced at that point.

Cycle Wheel: Useful for showing continuous processes. Each segment of the cycle represents a point in the process, and each one of these points flows into the next.

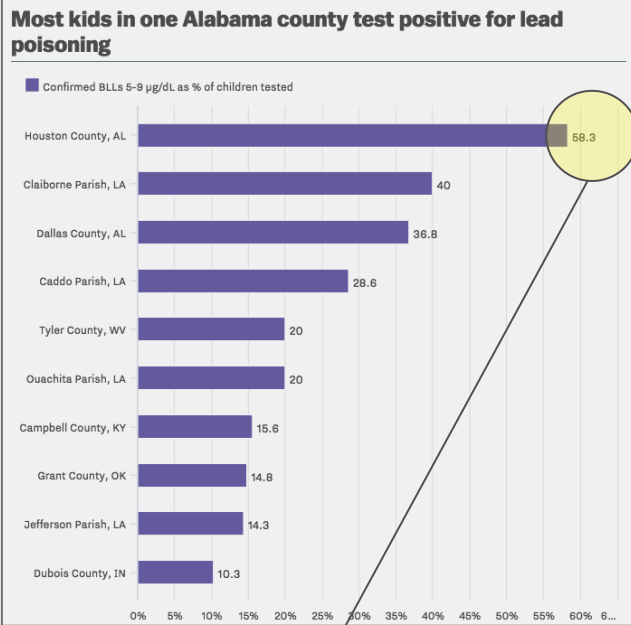
For more chart types, more information about each of these definitions, or working examples of these charts, visit How To Think Visually:

<http://anna.vc/post/112863438962/how-to-think-using-visual-analogies>

Avoiding Common Errors

Data visualizations include values which, if misrepresented, could be false or misleading. The examples in the following pages offer examples of common errors and tips for avoiding them.

Don't take Data out of Context: A High Percentage of Kids Testing Positive for Lead Poisoning is Big News...Unless that Percentage is Only 7 Kids



Be Aware of Sample Size

58.3% of kids in one county had elevated lead levels. How many kids is that? Seven kids. Only 12 kids were tested in a county of at least 39,000 households. Of the 7 kids, 3 lived at the same address. So, does the entire county have a problem? Or is this misleading?

Compare Like with Like

Alabama's county data is compared to Louisiana's and West Virginia's. Although the states are neighbors, each state has its own method for collecting and analyzing data. The chart makes no mention of this discrepancy.

County Name	# of Children Tested	Total # Children Tested 5-9 µg/dL	Total Confirmed BLL ≥10 µg/dL	
			Total #	Total %
Hale County	23	1	0	0.0%
Houston County	12	2	7	58.3%
Jackson County	60	0	0	0.0%
Jefferson County	3,543	105	17	0.5%
Lamar County	31	3	0	0.0%
Lauderdale Coun	211	4	3	1.4%
Lawrence County	129	1	0	0.0%
Lee County	508	4	2	0.4%

Read the Data Documentation

All of these errors could have been avoided if someone had read the documentation for the data. This data came from the Centers for Disease Control which, like many government agencies, explains how data was collected and how other groups can use it.

Other Common Problems:

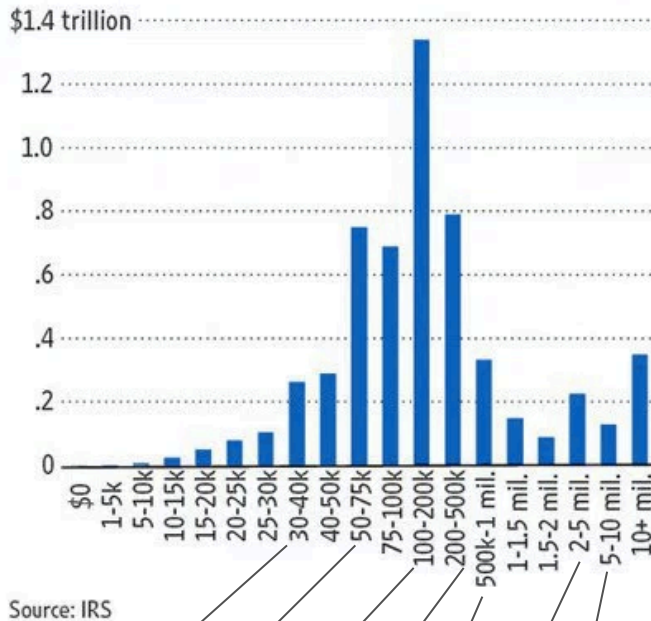
- Ignoring margin of error
- Using unverified data sources
- Failing to "interview" the data before drawing conclusions
- Using the data correctly in the visualization but misrepresenting its findings in the title

Avoiding Common Errors

Don't Alter an Axis Unless It's Necessary: Misleading with Axis or Scale Makes the "Middle" All Relative

The Middle Class Tax Target

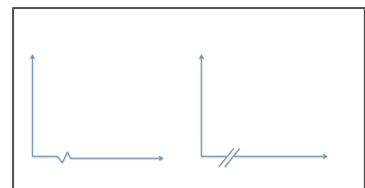
The amount of total taxable income (left scale) for all filers by adjusted gross income level for 2008



Include Notation to Reflect the Shift in Increments

While you can shift increments along the x and y-axes, it's standard practice to represent this visually. Failure to do this is at best unprofessional and at worst unethical.

Examples of correct notation are below.



Be Cautious When Using Unequal Axis Increments

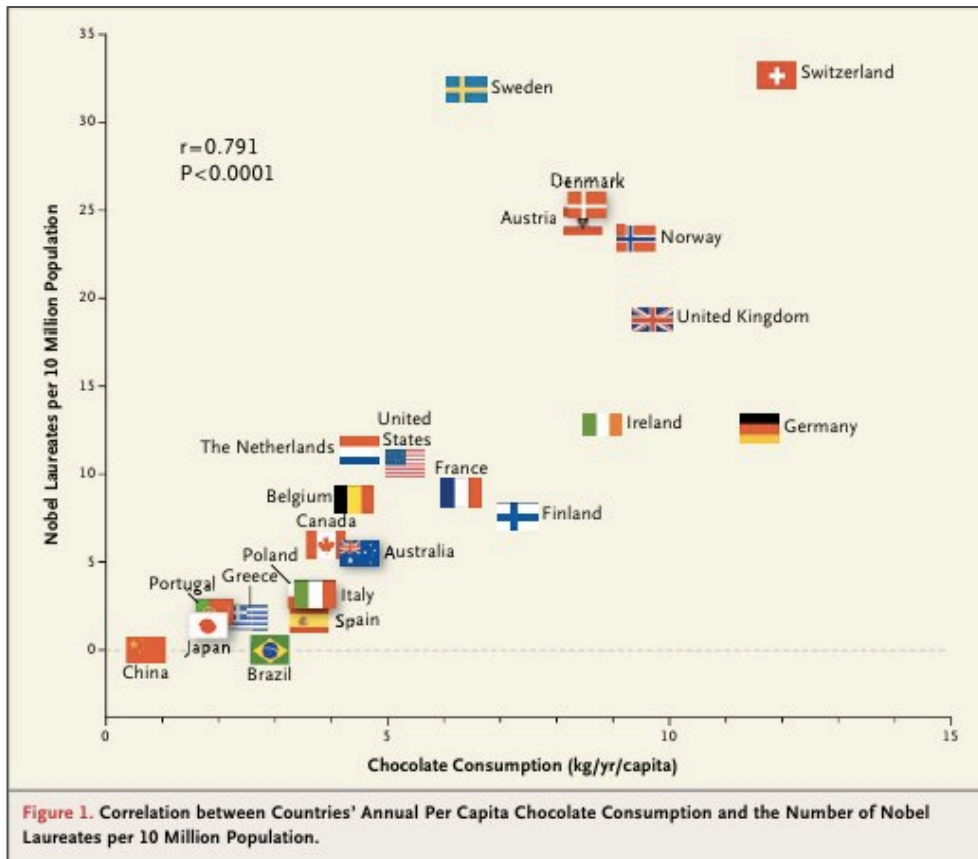
The x-axis starts with \$5k increments and shifts 7 times to reach a \$10 million increment. Without this manipulation, the x-axis would be very long. However, this manipulation also creates the illusion that the "middle" of the chart has the largest share of total taxable income.

A Manipulated Axis Can Cause Users to Reach Erroneous Conclusions.

This graph was used to support claims that taxes should be highest on the middle class, however, the middle of the chart might not represent the middle class. The US Census Bureau does not define "middle class" but the median income for Americans is closer to \$42,000.

Avoiding Common Errors

Correlation Does Not Equal Causation: Chocolate Consumption Does Not Predict Likelihood of Winning a Nobel Prize



Use Discretion When Comparing Two Data Sets

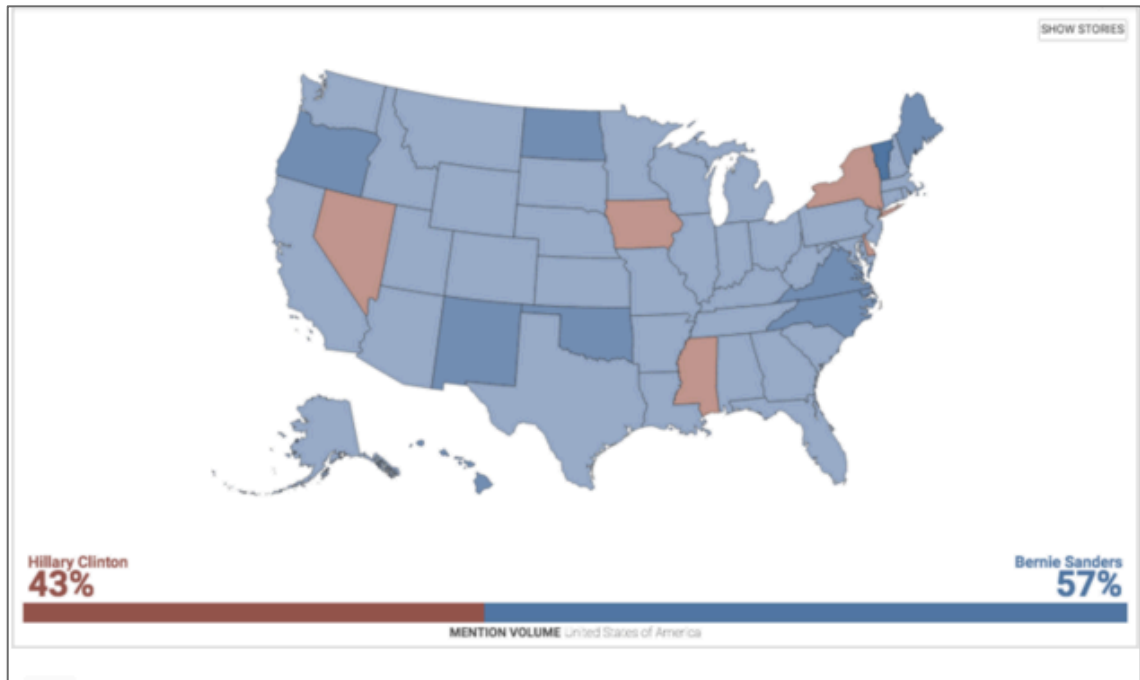
While you can compare any two things, it's important to have evidence supporting the comparison. For example, the chart above suggests there is a link between a nation's rate of chocolate consumption and its number of Nobel laureates. Why did the authors compare these two things? It's unclear since there is no evidence suggesting chocolate consumption increases success in chemistry, literature, or peace making.

Correlation Does Not Equal Causation

Even if there seems to be a relationship between two things, avoid saying that one thing is connected to the other. It's possible this chart is measuring something else, like that the Nobel committees are based in Scandinavian countries, populations that also happen to consume a lot of chocolate.

Avoiding Common Errors

Follow Design Principles: The Wrong Color Selections and Gradations can be Deceiving



One Side Had Fewer Social Media Mentions in February 2016, but Which Side and How Many More?

Redefining “Red State” and “Blue State”

Since 2008, a U.S. map divided into red states and blue states typically represents conservatives/Republicans in red and liberals/Democrats in blue. However, in this case, it is representing two Democratic candidates. The use of red for Hillary Clinton, who has been labeled as less progressive than Bernie Sanders, could be seen as problematic.

Misusing Color Gradients

According to the publishers of this map, “The bluer the state, the higher the percentage of Sanders tweets. The redder the state, the greater the percentage of Clinton tweets.” As the scale along the bottom of the map shows, the conversation is somewhat evenly split, but the map suggests Sanders is clearly dominant. A more nuanced scale might have included shades of purple, to show the evenness of this split.

Tool #2: Proofreading Data Visualizations Checklist

Use the questions below to evaluate the quality and accuracy of your data visualization. For each question, check yes or no. Any “no” response indicates a potential flaw in your data visualization that should be re-examined before publication. Resources on the following page may help you evaluate any errors.

Standard of Quality	Yes	No
Data Source		
• Is your data from a reputable source, like a government agency or research organization? Or can you review the methodology to confirm it meets an acceptable standard of quality and is free of bias?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you confirmed acceptable use cases for the data, either by reviewing the source documentation or by sending a request to the organization? This includes not only permissions to reuse the data for visualization but also verification that any conclusions you have drawn are accurate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you examined the data with a critical eye, checking for errors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visual Design		
• Is your graphic saved in a web-friendly format, such as PNG?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you used a color scheme that can be seen by those with vision impairments such as color blindness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Does your graphic simplify the data? Could the average person look at it and understand its conclusions in 10 seconds or less?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you cited the source of your data near the bottom of your graphic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Does the graphic's color scheme promote neutral interpretation of the data and/or adhere to cultural color norms, such as not using warm colors, like red and orange, to represent cold events like snowfall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• If you are using a color scale, map or iconography, is there a symbol key or explanation of value representations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you denoted any incremental shifts on the x- or y-axis? Is there a valid reason for making these shifts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are your visuals proportionate to the values they represent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Calculations & Conclusions		
• Have all calculations been double checked by another person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tool #2: Proofreading Data Visualizations Checklist

Standard of Quality	Yes	No
Calculations & Conclusions		
• If you are showing percentages/ratios of a whole, do all the pieces added together equal the total value of the whole?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are all decimal points and commas in the right place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• If you are using your visualization to illustrate a theory, are all of your statements supported by the data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• If you are using your visualization to draw conclusions, are these conclusions supported by other evidence? Have you eliminated any confounding variables?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources for Improvement

Data Source

- How to Identify Good Data: <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/find-good-data>
- Reliable Data Sources: <http://flowingdata.com/2009/10/01/30-resources-to-find-the-data-you-need/>
- Interviewing Data to Find Stories, to Avoid Errors: <http://mediashift.org/2014/07/take-an-interviewing-approach-to-find-stories-in-data/>
- Dataproofer, a free application for proofreading and cleaning data files: <http://dataproofer.org/>
- Quartz Guide to Bad Data: <https://github.com/Quartz/bad-data-guide>

Visual Design

- Web-friendly file types: <http://blog.hubspot.com/insiders/different-types-of-image-files>
- Disability-friendly & printer-friendly color schemes: <http://colorbrewer2.org/> (use the check box) or Sim Daltonism for Mac & iOS <https://michelf.ca/projects/sim-daltonism/> or ColorOracle for Windows, Mac & Linux <http://colororacle.org/>
- Color Choice Dos and Don'ts: <http://www.dundas.com/resource/getarticle?articleName=02-11-2014-Color-Do%27s-and-Don%27ts%2FDundas-Article-Color-Dos-and-Donts.pdf>

Calculations & Conclusions

- Advice for Double Checking Math: <http://www.collegetestinghelps.com/83/act-test-tips-practice-double-checking-your-math-answers/>

General Tips

- <http://www.improving-visualisation.org/case-studies>
- <http://flowingdata.com/category/guides/>

Data Visualization Resources

Ready Made:

Atlas: Quartz's repository of readymade data visualizations. All you need to do is enter a topic in the search bar, and the website will surface any related charts. From there, you can download the data, the image, or get an embed code. <https://atlas.qz.com>

Data 360: A repository of global and regional datasets and simple visualizations that cover common issue areas, such as energy, housing, education, and employment. <http://www.data360.org/index.aspx>

Axis: National Journal now provides pre-made charts and data for Membership organizations. The graphics cover popular topics such as budget, trade, housing and health care. For more, visit: <https://www.nationaljournal.com/data-charts>

Presentation Center: A National Journal Membership product that includes visual slide decks on popular issues that can be repurposed for social media. <https://www.nationaljournal.com/presentations>

Free Customizable Templates:

Chart Chooser from Juicebox: Excel and Powerpoint templates to download and customize with the dataset of your choice. <http://labs.juiceanalytics.com/chartchooser/index.html>

Chartbuilder: Create simple, customizable x-y charts or grids from JSON data. <https://quartz.github.io/Chartbuilder/>

Google Fusion Table: Use Google's existing data or upload your own to create maps and charts. <https://tables.googlelabs.com>

Downloadable Software:

Tableau Public: Downloadable app for creating a variety of professional data visualizations. Greater variety and complexity than other templates. Works with Mac or PC. (Free, but upgradeable. Account required.) <https://public.tableau.com/s/>

Limited Free Trial, Paid After:

Datahero: Upload Excel or CSV files to create custom graphics. (Free unlimited uploads up to 2 GB each. Account required) <https://datahero.com/>

Infogr.am: Upload data to create professional graphics you can embed on the web. (Limited free trial. Single User \$19/mo., Business Account \$67/mo.) <https://infogr.am/>

Data Visualization Resources

Silk: Upload data or pair with Google Sheets, Mail Chimp, Salesforce, or other data source to create desktop and mobile-friendly visualizations or build a microsite with a listing of all your visualizations. (Single user is free up to 3000 pages. Prices scale for teams.) <https://www.silk.co/>

Vida.io: Standard data uploads with customizable templates (Free up to 5 documents. \$10/mo. for Standard Account with up to 10 team members) <https://vida.io/>

Plot.ly: Upload Excel, XLM, CSV files to create charts or maps. (Free for 1 chart. \$19/mo. for Professional Account) <https://plot.ly/>

Recommendations for 2016

**On the Horizon: Mobile
Adaptations, Media
Repositories and Animations**

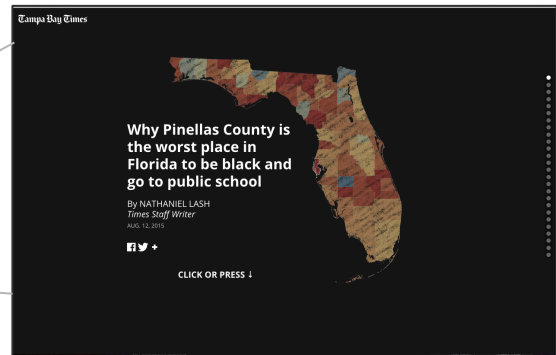
Recommendations for 2016: Mobile Adaptations

“Scrollytelling,” an Adaptation for the Mobile Age

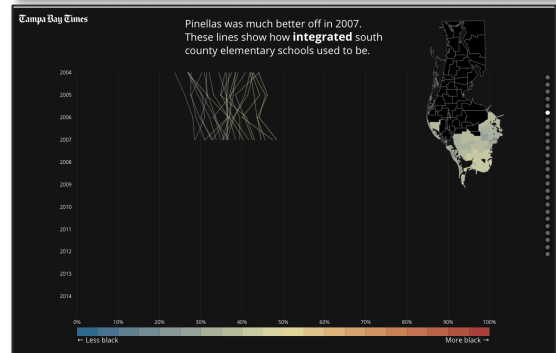
The radio buttons, filters, and sliders that once let users manipulate data on the web are too difficult to use on tiny mobile screens.



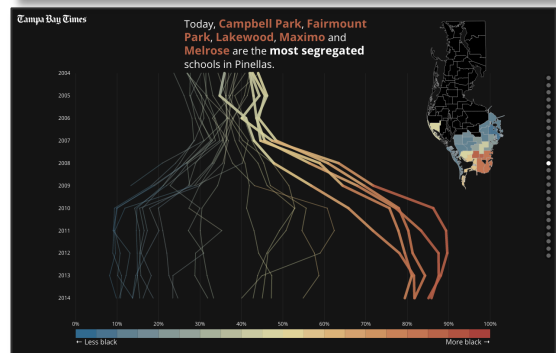
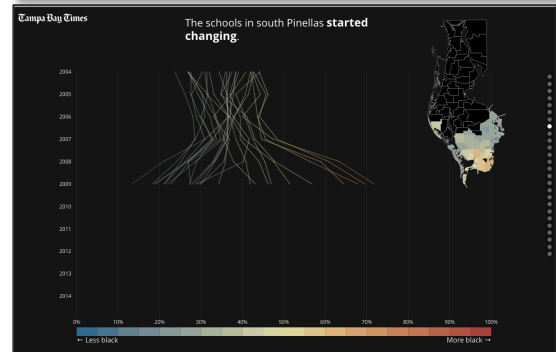
1.



2.



3.



To adapt, news organizations like the Tampa Bay Times have written stories as if they were data walk-throughs, guiding the user through animated transitions as they scroll down the page.



The story loads quickly, and users can watch the data unfold in real time. In 2016, expect more organizations to adapt “scrollytelling” for data stories.

<http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/pinellas-failure-factories/chart-failing-black-students/>

Recommendations for 2016: Media Repositories

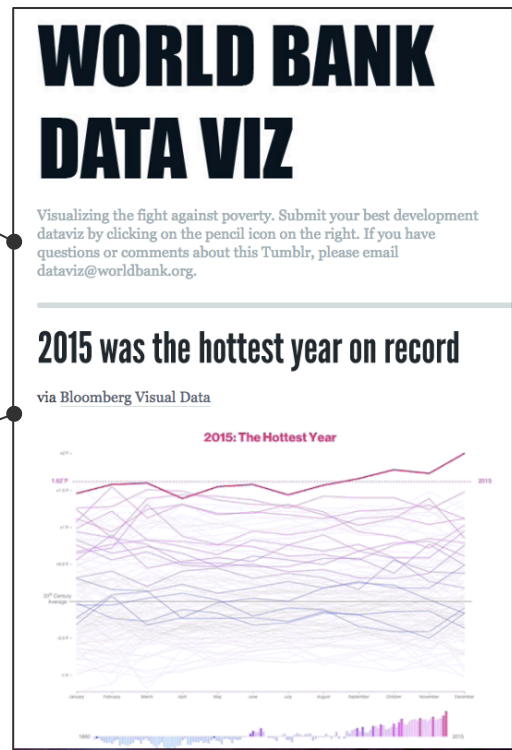
Dedicated Repositories for Data Visualizations

Host Your Own Data Visualization Library

Many media organizations and think tanks are creating web pages dedicated to resizable and embeddable data visualizations. These sites become one stop shops for anyone interested in sharing visuals on their website or on social media.

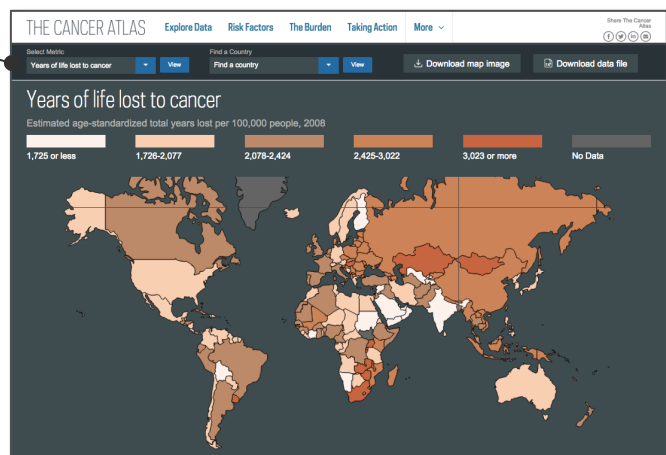
Include Great Work From Other Sources

World Bank's data viz site is hosted on Tumblr. The site hosts all of the data visualizations across World Bank's various topic blogs, but it's also a valuable repository of work from other organizations. Plus, anyone can submit a suggestion or ask a question.



Make Visualizations Easy to Customize and Share

Some groups have taken shared data analysis even further. For example, the American Cancer Society has created the Cancer Atlas, a map with filters that the user can interact with in the browser. When the user is finished, they can download the map and share it.



<http://worldbank.tumblr.com/>
<http://canceratlas.cancer.org/>

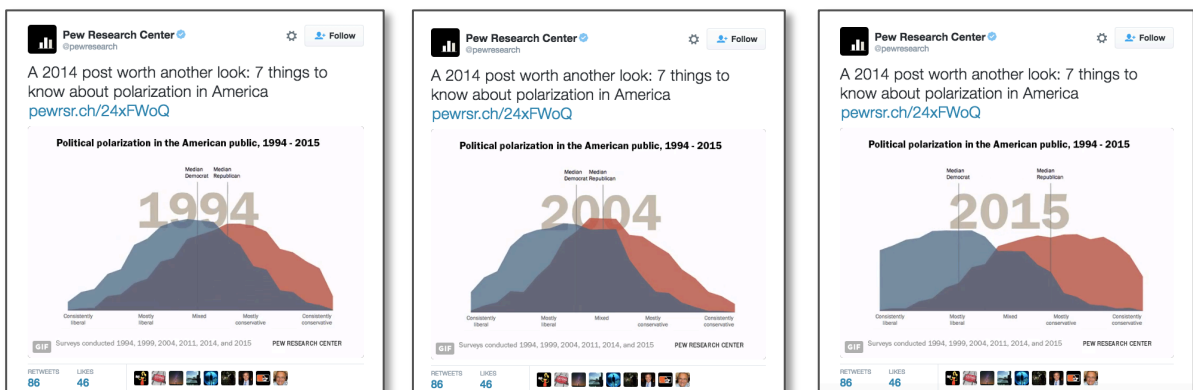
Recommendations for 2016: Gifs & Animations

Animated Data Visualizations

Embedding gifs in images doesn't have to feel gimmicky. When animating data visualization, it's possible to keep the visual simple but increase the amount of information imparted to the viewer. Early research has shown that animations help viewers interpret data and may make it easier for them to draw conclusions¹.

Pew Animates Ten Years of Polarization Polls to Show Change Over Time

Pew animated a series of graphs illustrating how Republicans and Democrats have changed their ideological identification over the last ten years. When smoothly animated, the change feels more rapid and dramatic than it would have in a static visual. Pew has adopted similar techniques to show changes in U.S. population over time.



A Word of Caution

Data animations were highly ranked for meeting the immediate needs of viewers, but they were ranked lower on their ability to create a “whole picture” of a data set.¹ While animated visualizations might be great for social media, audiences should still have access to static graphs, tables, and textual explanations.

More Gif Resources

A few tutorials and tool suggestions for gif creation can be found on p. 38, but animating data is different than converting video to gif. To get clean animations, consider using some of the tools below.

- **For Excel:** E2D3 is a free Excel add-on that lets users select a template for animating data. Users will then have to follow an additional method for capturing and converting to gif <http://e2d3.org/>
- **For PowerPoint:** You can import an Excel graph and use PowerPoint animations to animate selections of the graph by opening Effects Options and choosing “By Elements in Category” or “By Elements in Series” to animate portions of a graph at one time. You can then use screengrab software to capture and save as a gif.
- **Screen Grab to Gifs:** ScreenToGif is software that records your active desktop and saves it as a gif. <https://screentogif.codeplex.com/>

1.

<https://medium.com/@EvanSinar/use-animation-to-supercharge-data-visualization-cd905a882ad4#g8qyd2whp>

Chapter Five: Graphics

Organizations in DC are not using graphics as frequently as photographs, but in many cases, graphics may be easier to create. For organizations without graphic designers, PowerPoint and pre-made templates are a useful resource for graphic design. In this chapter, we explore graphics that anyone can create, regardless of artistic ability, using tools you're already familiar with.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

1. **No visuals? Say it with stylized text.** Only 3% of graphics were text-based, but this is one of the simplest visuals to create. It's also a great way to draw attention to text content.
2. **Graphic templates mean you can design once, reuse often.** Organizations with graphic templates can create quality images often and easily. The consistency of the visual style helps audiences recognize the organization on any platform.
3. **A sense of humor is engaging.** We may hesitate to post humorous content, but when we do, we can use industry humor to strengthen our bond with audiences. Comics and memes had high engagement rates, particularly when they seized on the type of insider jokes unique to a profession or interest-area.

The State of Graphics in DC

How Advocacy Organizations Create and Share Graphics

Graphics are Versatile, Easy to Create

Graphics are the most versatile form of visual used by DC organizations. They are also, despite their visual nature, heavily text-based. The examples below are representative of our research sample, but they also illustrate the relative ease of creating graphics. Most of these examples could be re-created in PowerPoint.

Quotation



Factoid



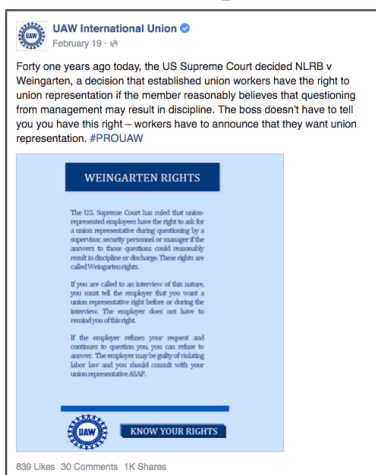
Call to Action



Plain Text



Content Excerpt



Illustration

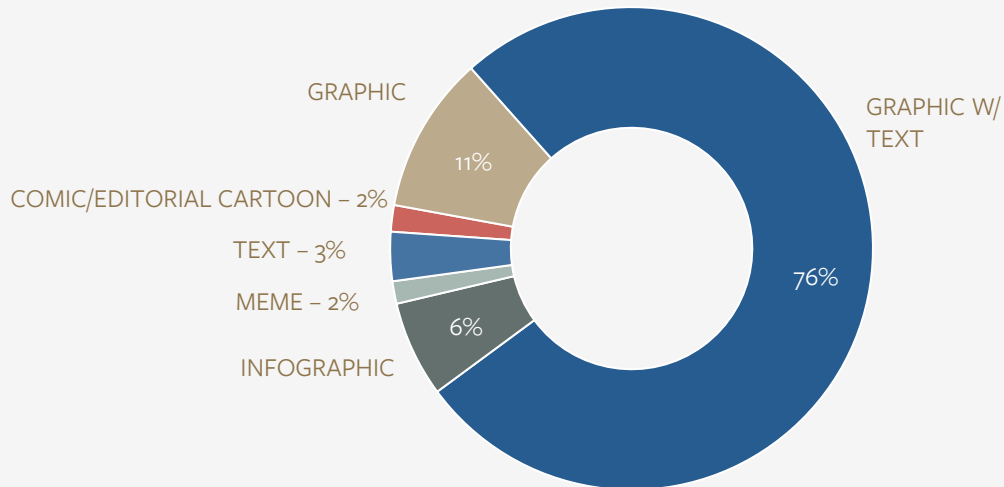


Graphics Provide Context, Capture Attention

Graphics are also the most flexible form of visual. For example, they can be used seriously, like infographics, or humorously, like editorial cartoons. The definitions and tutorials for the most frequently used graphics are included in the following pages.

Formats Within Graphics

Percentage of Total Posts, n=731



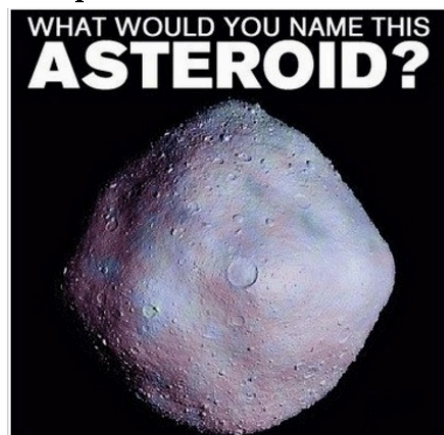
The Importance of Graphics with Text

“Sometimes you may have an image you want to use, but it doesn’t tell a story by itself,” says Stephanie Hatch, a member of MIT’s Communication Production Services team. Using text overlay is important because it provides context. It also stands out more than text in a status update. Consider the before and after examples below. Which would make more sense in a timeline or news feed?

Graphic Without Text



Graphic With Text



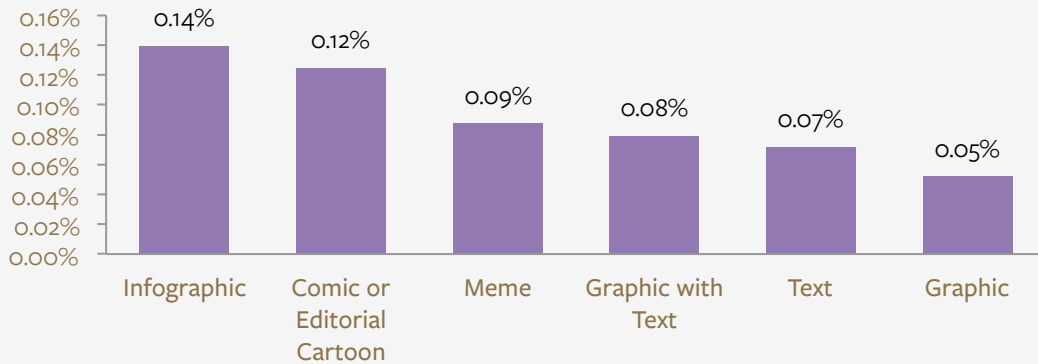
<http://news.mit.edu/2013/the-big-picture-using-images-in-social-media>

Infographics on the Rise

In 2015, *Washington in the Information Age* found that younger generations were more likely to seek out infographics for news and information, and audience demand for other informational graphics, such as factoids, may also be on the rise. Audiences on social media are slightly more likely to share infographics than other content. This value will likely increase over time as younger generations make up a larger share of these organizations' followers.

Graphics' Rate of Shares/Retweets on Social Media

*Ratio of Engagement Actions (Shares on Facebook, Retweets on Twitter) to Followers**

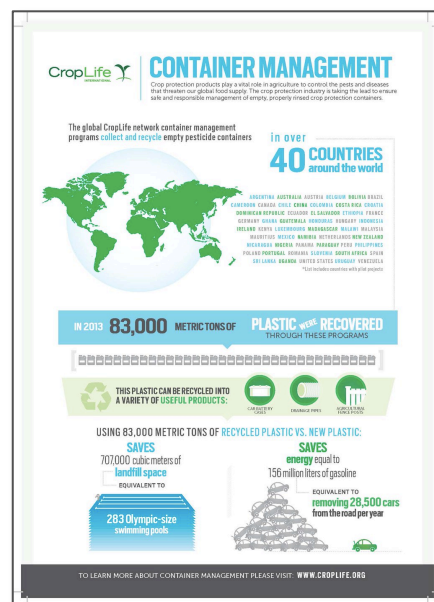


**Instagram counts are excluded due to API permission limits*

National Fire Protection Association



CropLife America

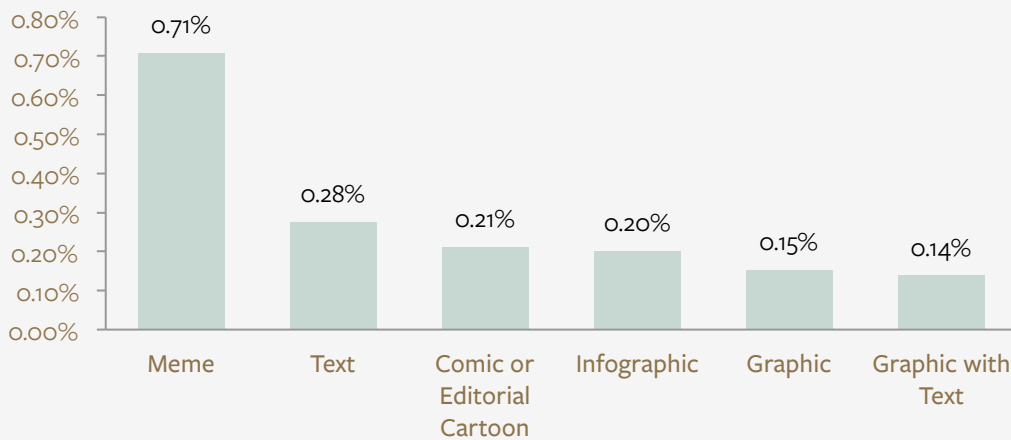


Everyone “Likes” a Good Joke

Is it worth it to crack an occasional joke on social media? The answer may depend on your audience. If you're trying to improve member engagement on a platform, a little industry-humor could do the trick. Memes and comics have high rates of “liking” and “faving” on social, and somewhat lower rates of sharing (although still within the top three). On Facebook, the humorous graphics we analyzed were typically inside jokes relating to members' day-to-day work. On Twitter, political humor and editorial cartoons were more common. Some examples are included below.

Graphics' Rate of Favorites/Likes on Social Media

*Ratio of Engagement Actions (likes on Facebook, favorites on Twitter) to Followers**

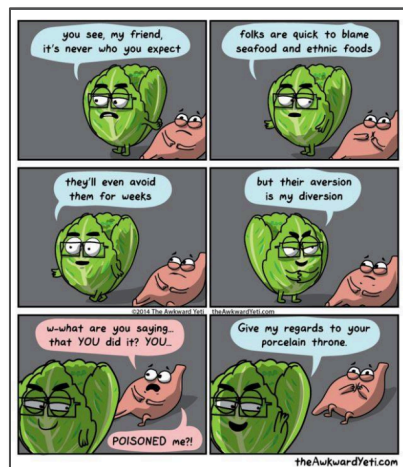


**Instagram counts are excluded due to API permission limits*

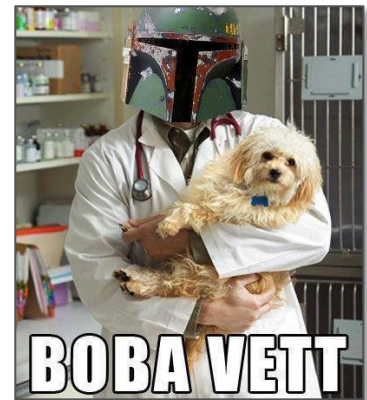
American Occupational Therapy Association



Association of Public Health Laboratories



American Veterinary Medical Association



Creating Effective Graphics

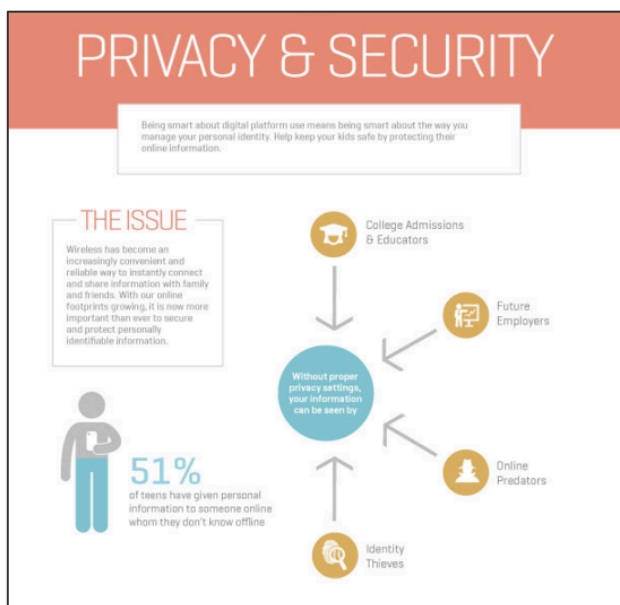
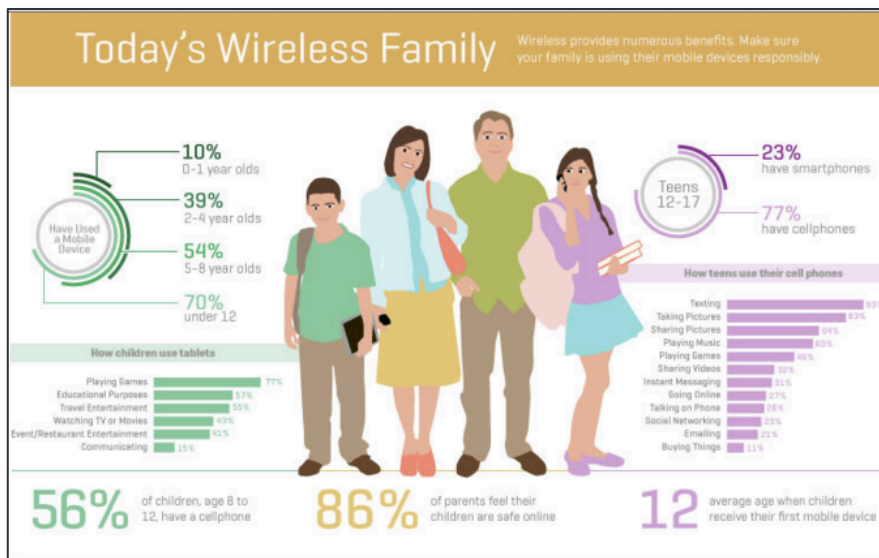
Tools For Designing and Building Sharable Graphics

1. Infographics: Definition and Examples

Defined: A series of charts, graphs, data points and facts presented in one space to give a viewer a quick and easy overview of an issue

CTIA – The Wireless Association Creates Shareable Parent’s Guides for Smartphone Topics

Parents may feel like there’s a steep learning curve when it comes to understanding how their children use smartphones. CTIA’s infographics demystify topics such as cyberbullying and sexting without sensationalizing them. Each is a one-stop resource for understanding and managing families’ wireless plans.



Are Infographics More Persuasive than Articles?

According to NiemanLab, research conducted in Georgia State in 2011 found that, “graphical presentation of corrections (and of controversial information in general) can be more powerful than their textual counterparts in terms of convincing people to amend their misperceptions.”

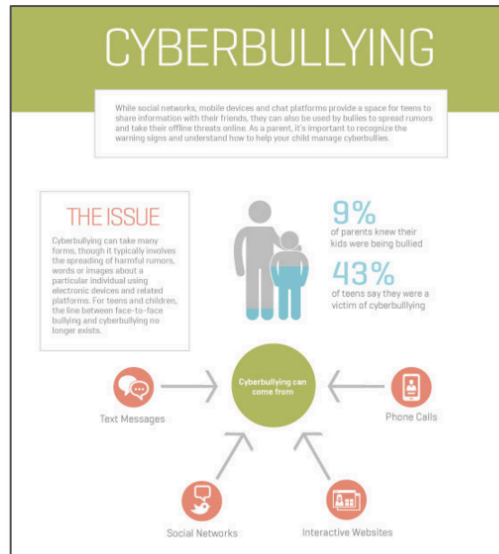
1. Infographics: Create Your Own

Recipe for Success

A successful infographic is made up of the following parts:

1. **A complicated or controversial topic:** In this case, cyberbullying.

2. **A point of view on that topic:** Parents are unaware of cyberbullying's prevalence and can do more to help their teens.



3. **At least 3 facts or data points:** For example, that 43% of teens have been cyberbullied.
4. **Visuals that illustrate this data:** This can be data viz, such as the parent/child example here, or it can be graphics that illustrate the topic.

Use An Online Infographic Generator

<http://www.easel.ly>: A selection of infographic templates ready for customization. Includes charts and graphs, icons, and the option to upload your own images. Basic functionality is free with the option to upgrade later.

<http://piktochart.com>: Similar functionality to Easel.ly, but with over 500 templates for infographics, posters, or other visual reports. Basic functionality is free with the option to upgrade for more storage.

<https://infogr.am>: Infographic generator that is better for data-heavy functions, such as charts and graphs, word clouds, and maps. Fewer illustrations and graphics available. Starts at \$19 a month and goes up to \$350 a month for unlimited use for 3 people.

Design in Powerpoint

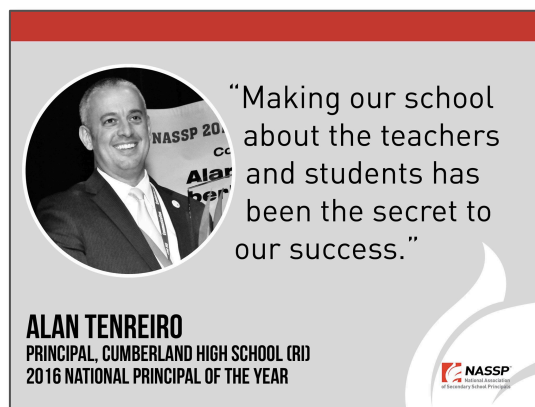
1. **Adjust the Page Ratio** Select 'File' then 'Page Setup' to choose the page size that will fit your text and graphics. Remember to consider how it will resize for social media.
2. **Import Data and Design the Layout** Use charts, text boxes, and shapes to create the content.
3. **Save as PNG or JPEG** Select 'File' then 'Save As' to export the file in a format you can resize and use anywhere.

2. Custom Templates: Definition and Examples

Defined: A simple visual with a clean structure that can easily be modified to fit a variety of content.

National Association of Secondary School Principals – One Template, Many Functions

NASSP uses a simple format that works for everything from testimonials to quotations and thank you notes. All it takes is a few color changes or a text edit and the standard template can be repurposed and ready to post on any social platform.



When to Use Custom Templates

National Public Radio's Social Media Desk analyzed common graphics and found that successful templates follow a few guidelines:

1. They are self-contained. Their message can stand alone in the social media feed without being confusing or misleading.
2. They perform best when they have a brief message or data point that attracts the viewer.
3. They should be bold and legible. A bright graphic will grab attention on social media, but only if viewers can read it.

<http://socialmediadesk.tumblr.com/post/136328417707/social-graphics>

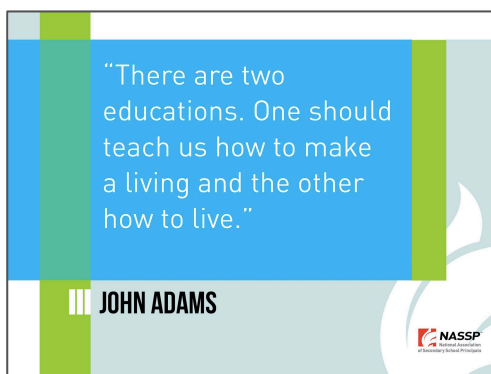
2. Custom Templates: Create Your Own

Recipe for Success

A successful illustration is made up of the following parts:

1. Pre-sized formats for social media:

NASSP's template is a pale blue background with custom content placed in a bold blue rectangle. The size and shape fit Twitter and Facebook guidelines.



2. Fill-in-the-blank style:

The prepared template is fast and user-friendly. Anyone can copy-paste content without having to redesign any elements.

3. Branding:

The NASSP logo and watermark ensure that the organization is recognized when media is shared.

Create Your Own Using a Web App

<https://pablo.buffer.com/app>: Pablo was created specifically for pre-formatted social media templates. Few modifications need to be made to the layout, but you can play with filters, image uploads, text-editing and logo-insertion. It even has an auto-generated inspirational quotation feature.

<http://www.canva.com>: A free web app for creating graphics. Use their pre-sized social media templates then add simple shapes, custom backgrounds, text, and your logo.

Design in Powerpoint

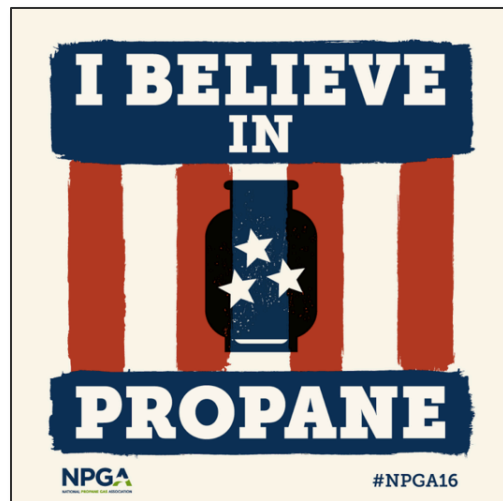
1. **Adjust the Page Ratio** Select 'File' then 'Page Setup' to alter the page size to pre-fit social media standards.
2. **Customize the page** Change the background color, import your logo, and create pre-formatted text boxes.
3. **Save as a Powerpoint file to share internally**
4. **Save as a JPEG or PNG when you're ready to share on social media**

3. Illustrations: Definition and Examples

Defined: A drawn or computer-generated graphic, comic, or editorial cartoon

National Propane Gas Association's Signature Propane Tanks Keep Social Feeds Fun, Festive

It may not be easy to represent an invisible gas, but the NPGA's propane tank has become a successful symbol of the natural gas industry. The propane tank is a blank canvas that inspires a variety of social content, from holiday posts to awareness campaigns.



Simple Graphics Satisfy Member Needs, Too

The minimal branding on these illustrations makes them easy for members to repurpose and share. NPGA's VP of Communications Mollie O'Dell estimates that they receive a few requests for personalized illustrations each month.

3. Illustrations: Create Your Own

Recipe for Success

A successful illustration is made up of the following parts:

- 1. Object or character that represents the industry/issue:**
For example, NPGA's propane tank
- 2. Signature style or color palette:**
NPGA graphics are square-shaped, in muted colors, accompanied by the NPGA logo



- 3. Repetitive use:** The propane tank visual is used at least once a month or more.
- 4. Unique voice or tone:** The tank is often personified in humorous ways, but it also symbolizes the convenience and reliability of propane.

Create Your Own Using Software or a Web App

<http://www.canva.com>: A free web app for creating graphics. Use simple shapes or the illustrator tool to create an icon you can reuse again and again. If you're not an artist, set a photo as the background, trace over it with the illustrator, then use the tracing as a template.

<https://inkscape.org/en/>: A free software that mimics Adobe Illustrator. It requires more skill and training to use well.

Hire a One-Time, Freelance Designer

<https://www.fiverr.com/>: A service for hiring designers for one-off projects. Cheap, but results can be hit or miss.

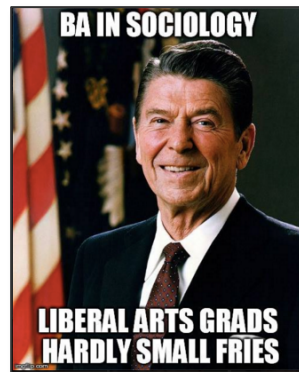
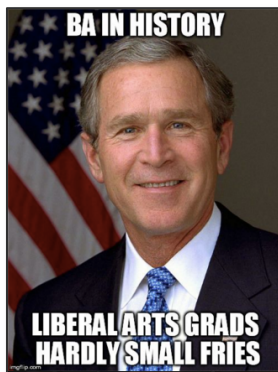
<http://99designs.com/>: Build a design brief and scale services to meet your needs. Prices and designs will vary.

4. Memes: Definition and Examples

Defined: A visual that has entered the cultural lexicon and has been widely adapted and readapted by many.

The Council for Independent Colleges' Power of Liberal Arts Campaign Starts Its Own Meme Project

Liberal Arts majors have gotten bad press lately, but who better to combat that negativity than the millions of successful graduates already out there? The CIC released a few examples in the hopes their idea would catch on with proud alumni.



Meanwhile the North Texas Gas Industry Repurposes Existing Memes

North Texans for Natural Gas have created FrackFeed, a website where users can create fracking shareables with a meme generator, share memes created by others, and learn more about natural gas extraction in the process. It's a clever way to disarm fracking critics while inserting pro-fracking messages into already popular content.



To Avoid Alienation or Bad Publicity, be Amusing but Honest

Mememes are wildly popular, but when done poorly, they can lead to anger or negative publicity. FrackFeed has faced backlash from the *Dallas Observer* for using memes to avoid proper source citation and thereby mislead the public.

4. Memes: Create Your Own

Recipe for Success

A successful meme is made up of the following parts:

1. **Photo of a person or animal:** In this case, a well-used photo known as the “yes baby.”

2. **Signature black and white text:** Nearly all memes use Impact font with a white fill and black outline.



3. **The set up (top of image):** The joke is introduced.
4. **The twist (foot of image):** The punch line follows, typically along the bottom of the image.

Use An Online Meme Generator

[Makeameme.org](http://makeameme.org): Select an image from existing popular memes or upload your own image. Then write header and footer text. The app will generate a link to your meme.

<http://imgur.com/memegen>: See the most popular memes. Select and edit then save the link to your meme or download it. You can also upload your own images for editing.

<https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>: Create memes from templates or open an account to design your own meme templates.

Design in Powerpoint

1. **Select the Impact Font:** Create a text box over the image of your choice and use Impact as your font.
2. **Change the Text Fill and Line:** Fill text with white and outline in black. Add a lower left drop shadow if the text doesn't stand out.
3. **Save as PNG or JPEG:** Export the file to use anywhere.

Chapter Six: Developing a Visual Strategy

As social platforms become more visual, organizations are adapting their content strategies. This final chapter highlights steps organizations can take to gradually improve their visual communications and align their internal teams around the importance of visual strategy.

Key Chapter Takeaways:

1. **A consistent visual style will reinforce an organization's message and improve the brand's recognition.** Audiences connect with organizations on social media, the website, e-newsletters, and other platforms. Organizations' messages are more recognizable and memorable if they adhere to a similar set of colors and fonts.
2. **Visual strategy should be a part of content strategy.** Organizations that incorporate visuals into their content planning have more time to be creative and to create higher-quality visuals.
3. **Visuals are a shared resource.** Strong visuals can be reused and repurposed across the organization. The photo shot for an online campaign can be edited for social media, shared in a brochure, and reprinted as a poster or calendar. Be open to opportunities.

Planning Content for Your Platform

Organizations with strong visuals aren't necessarily those with expensive graphics resources or those representing highly visual issue areas. Often, they have communications teams with strong planners who work collaboratively to conceptualize and execute materials. Below, we've synthesized strategies from interviews and analysis.

Be Resourceful

- 1. Use stock photos wisely:** When searching for the right image, scroll past the first example in the search results. Look for less-used photos. Bookmark or tag images you like as you search to save time in the future.
- 2. Create your own stock photos:** Build an internal image catalog. You can fill it by requesting members and staff submit photos, hold a photo contest, or keep a backlog of images from past events.
- 3. Maximize your investment:** Consider ways to boost your return on each project. For example, one organization paid for a social photo booth at an event that also auto-tweeted photos. Another group repurposed popular graphics as posters, which they printed and sold.

Oncology Nursing Society
"Stock Photo"



American Public Works
Association Poster



Be Prepared

- 1. Seize on your most visual moments, but don't overdo it:** Many groups in our research seized on an event to maximize social momentum, but sometimes that meant posting all 200 photos to Facebook at one time. Instead, post the most time-sensitive images in the moment and space the rest out.
- 2. Create re-purposable graphics:** If you know you have a reoccurring visual opportunity, such as a research report or weekly quiz, create a template you can reuse again and again.
- 3. Size images for social:** In the image editor you use, save pre-sized blank templates (artboards in Photoshop, Page Setup in PowerPoint, etc.) for cropping and resizing images on the fly. See p. 90 for resources on social media image sizes.

Be Organized

- 1. Make visuals a part of your editorial calendar:** Most of us plan to release a visual for major holidays or annual conferences, but consider seizing on lesser-known issue-oriented holidays. You should also plan content around weekly hashtags like #TBT (Throwback Thursday), #MotivationalMonday, or #FlashbackFriday.
- 2. Introduce visual planning into your regular content meetings:** Some comms teams work with other departments to plan visuals. This type of collaboration can boost funding for visual projects, particularly if the final product can be used in other organizational materials.

National Recreation and
Parks Association's Digital
Wallpaper/Calendar



Implementing a Visual Calendar & Content Tracker

Most organizations are familiar with editorial calendars for content. Integrating images into an existing calendar (or creating a separate visual calendar) can boost your image diversity and originality. Consider updating information on desired outcomes after posting to target the images that work best for your organization. An example combined visual calendar and tracker is included below.

Suggested Calendar Fields:

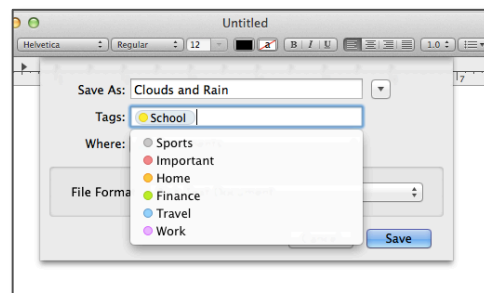
- Image Source
- Type (Photo, graphic, data visualization)
- Content (news, promotion, humor)
- Engagement (clicks, shares, follows)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	Publication Date	Platform	Poster	Topic	Content	Image Source	Image Type	Caption/Text	Click Throughs	Shares/RTs	Likes/Faves	New Followers
1	Mon, 12:50 pm	Twitter	Harold	heart, health, diet	News	Shutterstock (http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-247045993/stock-vector-Graphic	Graphic	"5 Foods for a Strong Heart" (link to post forthcoming)	5	1	0	
2	Tues, 9:30 am	Facebook	Jane	health, exercise	Member Feature	Member Submission (see Google Drive folder "Submissions", photo #12; Photo	Photo	"Member Maria Jones shows how she 'kicks' back a TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	
3	Tues, 2:20 pm	Twitter	Bob	health, exercise	Member Feature	Member Submission (see Google Drive folder "Submissions", photo #12; Photo	Photo	"Check out member Maria Jones! How do you relate TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	

Manage visual content across teams by storing images in a shared drive, either in the cloud or on a shared server. Consider the following tips for making images easier to find in Windows or OS X. Cloud services' options will vary, but most include similar features.

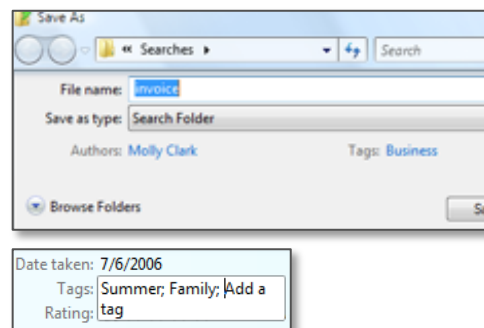
OS X:

When you go to the File menu to save an image, click "Save As" and then use the "Tags" section to save content by common uses. When you want to access content by tag later, open Finder and under the File menu, select the tag you want to search.



Windows:

When you go to the File menu to save an image, click "Save As" and then use the "Tags" section to save content by common uses. In existing files, you can go to the Details menu to edit existing Tags. When you want to access this content later, you can search by typing "Tag:" plus the tag you're interested in.



Establishing a Visual Style

A strong visual style makes your content instantly recognizable to audiences and easy to implement on-the-fly. Organizations with a defined visual style can more easily design visuals internally or can quickly outsource the work to another firm. Consider the elements of Nuclear Energy Institute's visual style, demonstrated below.



Color Scheme

Choose 3 to 4 key colors to use as your base. You can play with the colors' saturation, hue and contrast to broaden your pallet while staying true to your style theme.



Branding

Integrating the logo or another organizational symbol into each image reinforces your message. NEI also includes campaign hashtags to encourage sharing.



Fonts

Fonts give personality to your text. The clear, bold Titillium Web font used by NEI is easy-to-read, modern, and stands out on a variety of backgrounds.

Promotional Content



Quotations and Testimonials



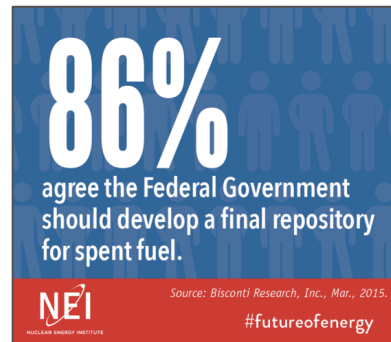
Holiday Themes



Advocacy



Factoids and Infographics



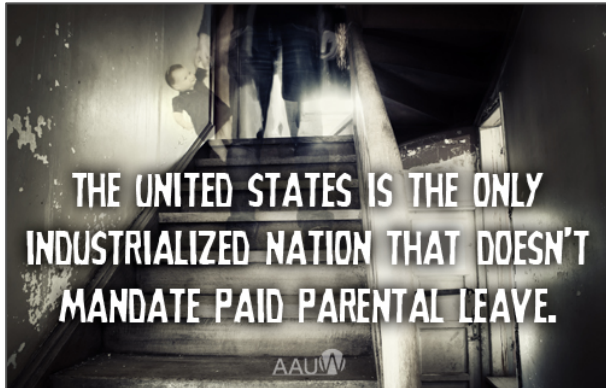
Creating a Signature Voice

Images “speak” in ways that plain text cannot. An organizational report needs to be authoritative and professional, but when sharing that information on social media, you can use colors, fonts, or captions to add context. The Association of American University Women pairs facts with witty commentary to create shareable advocacy images.

Gal-entine’s Day Cards that Double as Advocacy Sharables for Gender Equality and Sexual Harrassment Prevention



“Truly Scary Thoughts” for Halloween



“The Stuff of Sci Fi”



How to Balance Reputation & Voice

Visuals like these walk the fine line between serious and silly, but AAUW’s team sees that as a good way to generate conversation, both internally and externally. In the Mars visual above, the comms and research teams wanted to publicize three different estimates for achieving equal pay without confusing their followers. The “before Mars” analogy simplified the data accurately enough to satisfy the research team and led to high engagement on social media as viewers added their own puns to the original tweet: “Houston, we have a problem.”

Creating A Content Plan

Tools and Resources For Implementation

Visual Strategy Resources

Image Sizing and Content Strategy for Social Media:

How to Keep Your Social Media Images Looking Fresh (Even If You're Posting Every Day):

<https://blog.bufferapp.com/how-to-keep-your-social-media-images-looking-fresh-even-if-youre-posting-every-day>

53+ Free Image Sources for Your Blog and Social Media Posts:

<https://blog.bufferapp.com/free-image-sources-list>

2016 Social Media Image Sizes: <http://blogs.constantcontact.com/social-media-image-sizes-2016/>

Landscape: A free web app for resizing images for social. <http://sproutsocial.com/landscape>

Tools for Creating a Style Guide:

DeGraeve Color Palette Generator: Upload an image, such as your logo, and this free tool will create a custom palette based on the colors used in the image

<http://www.degraeve.com/color-palette/> **Also try:** color.adobe.com for greater freedom in creating your palette or <https://colors.co/> for pre-generated color palettes

Five Principals for Choosing and Using Typefaces: This article is a through overview of selecting fonts, from the tone linked with font families to how to combine fonts for style and legibility.

<https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/12/what-font-should-i-use-five-principles-for-choosing-and-using-typefaces/>

13 Magically Meticulous Design Style Guides: Examples of style guides from diverse groups, such as media organizations and NASA. As the title states, many of these guides are meticulous. Most groups will only need to include a few elements, like the 1 to 2 pages included in the Boy Scouts of America brand book.

<http://www.creativebloq.com/branding/great-examples-design-style-guides-3132070>

Tools for Image Sharing & Editing:

Hightail: Paid service for communal sharing and editing of media files. Includes a comment overlay for images, so you can make suggestions on the image itself, rather than in a separate text file. <https://www.hightail.com/>

Lingo: A cloud service for organizing, storing, and tagging campaign images. Integrates with Noun Project for Creative Commons icons. Easy to search visually. <https://www.lingoapp.com/>

Tool #3: Visual Strategy Audit

Rate each practice, either individually or as a team, according to the quality and consistency of your adherence to the stated standard of quality (0-3). Tally up the totals for each sub-section (e.g., 1.1 Photography, 1.2 Graphics); then, add these together to get the section total (e.g., 1.0 Image Types). Compare your scores to the ideals for each to identify potential opportunities for improvement.

0 = We don't do this

1 = Ad hoc; we do this, but not particularly well, and not consistently

2 = Routinized; we do this fairly well, most of the time

3 = Optimized; we've got this down to a science

Function ID	Standard of Quality	Rating
1.0	Image Types (for definitions, see p. 13)	/39
1.1	Photography	/15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We use stock photography. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We solicit photos from our members. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have an in-house photographer or photo team. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have hired a professional photographer for special events. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have photos catalogued for easy search and repurposing. 	
1.2	Graphics	/12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We use stock graphics. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have have the ability to create custom graphics in-house. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have hired a graphic designer for past projects. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have graphics catalogued for easy search and repurposing. 	
1.3	Data Visualization	/12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We use stock data visualizations or use a service such as Atlas (see p. 63). 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have the ability to create data visualizations in-house. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have repurposed research findings to create data visualizations. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have hired a researcher or designer to create custom data visualizations. 	

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Function ID	Standard of Quality	Rating
2.0	Visual Strategy	/27
2.1	Frequency	/6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least once a week, we post images we have created or commissioned. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When we post an outside organization's link, we typically include a stock image or thumbnail. 	
2.2	Platform Customization	/9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We resize images for social platforms. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Images' captions or accompanying text are tailored to fit each social platform. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We tag individuals, geotag locations, or use hashtags and engagement strategies appropriate to each platform. 	
2.3	Organizational Style and Alignment	/12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have written policies for posting images to social media or other assets. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a visual style guide and adhere to its recommendations. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization implements a singular visual style; compliance is not fragmented across teams. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have an editorial calendar or asset management system in place for tracking visual posts across social media. 	

Tool #3: Visual Strategy Audit

Rate each practice, either individually or as a team, according to the quality and consistency of your adherence to the stated standard of quality (0-3). Tally up the totals for each sub-section (e.g., 1.1 Photography, 1.2 Graphics); then, add these together to get the section total (e.g., 1.0 Image Types). Compare your scores to the ideals for each to identify potential opportunities for improvement.

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Function ID	Standard of Quality	Rating
3.0	Content Diversity	/35
3.1	Serious	/12
	• We post images related to industry news or research.	
	• We post images related to advocacy or calls to action.	
	• We post images related to conference content or lectures.	
	• We post images related to charitable giving, scholarships, or grants.	
3.2	Neutral	/9
	• We post images of organizational staff, members, or the public.	
	• We post images related to self-promotional content.	
	• We post images of industry symbols or locations, including conference locations.	
3.3	Novelty	/12
	• We post quotations or motivational content.	
	• We post images of celebrities or politicians.	
	• We post images with giveaways, contests, or quizzes.	
	• We post images with content related to social trends, such as holidays or memes.	