

Picture this, Image Success with Social Media

Countless studies have shown that images are central to success on social media. Yes, video is increasingly popular, but non-moving pictures are still more commonplace and easier to obtain. How important are images? Search Engine Journal reported the following statistics in November 2017

- 94% more views for articles with images
- 150% more retweets if the tweet has an image
- 3-4x higher level of engagement on Facebook for posts with images

In addition, other studies have shown that there is better recall for visual content, up to 65% recall even 3 days after the content is originally viewed. Think of the different ways that you have seen companies use images on social media...

- illustrated quotes that motivate, educate, inspire or simply make people laugh
- pictures of products or places of business
- pictures of staff members and teams
- snapshots highlighting business achievements, anniversaries or special events
- Infographics to make content quickly scannable and easily understood
- Customer pictures
- Behind the scenes pictures
- Candid and action shots

Keeping It Real vs Stock Images and Photos

Realistically most business use a mixture of stock images and locally sourced pictures. Stock images seem easier since you can do a quick search and find an image that relates to your next post or tweet. Here is a short list of stock image sites.

- Paid sources: Getty, Shutterstock, Big Stock, iStock, 123rf
- Free sites like PixelBay, Pexel, Canva, Unsplash, PicJumbo

The question to ask is does that stock image truly reflect your company? Authenticity and uniqueness, are frequent casualties in our rush for beautiful, easy stock pictures. Moreover, customers know it because they may have already seen that stock image. A Shutterstock image of a woman enjoying the sunshine has been used over 20,000 times! There is actually a service called TinEye (<https://www.tineye.com/>) that can show you many of the places that an image has been used. We once had to use stock photos for a dental office and were somewhat amused when one showed up as an illustration on CNN in addition to at least 508 other places.



What are the alternatives? For most business/organizations locally-sourced images will come from a variety of sources including staff, customers, social media specialists and professional photographers. It

is important to note that the last two group's skills do not necessarily overlap. Ask for samples of a social media specialist's pictures or a photographer's social media posts.

Professional Pictures

Even though mobile devices have cameras, so everyone can take pictures any time; there are times when a professional photographer is the best option. For example:



- Products. Pictures of products often require special lighting and backdrops.
- Staff. Taking good pictures of people is hard. Professionals know how to select/create a good backdrop, pose people, and capture their best side. Even though it is expensive, Headshots can be reused in so many ways that they are a great investment.
- Events. You need to be a good host, not preoccupied with taking photos. Having a roving photographer can also lend a certain cachet to your event.

If you need images for social media (or your website) and can't take them, there are firms that come in and do photoshoots at your business to capture your business/organization's work. Make sure you know what you are getting and what additional charges may occur. Most photographers offer packages based on time, the number of pictures, and/or the types of images delivered. Additional professional services like retouching, sizing of photographs, lighting, etc, will incur extra charges.

Taking Your Own Pictures

With a little work and planning business people can get pictures, even if they are just using their mobile phone or a regular camera. Listed below are some guidelines for taking pictures for use on social media.

Images Guidelines

1. Keep backgrounds as simple as possible. Whenever you can, remove extraneous items from the picture.
2. Rely on natural lighting as much as possible.
3. Make a list of pictures that you want so you don't miss anything when you get busy.
4. When you plan to take pictures, have staff wear simple clothes so the focus is on your business and/or products. If you don't have them, consider getting logo-ed apparel, because it reinforces your brand and professionalism.
5. For a long time, professionals believed that images with people, particularly faces, had higher rates of engagement. There is some research (1) that suggests that isn't entirely correct.
 - a. If you want to get "shares" you don't need to have a person in your image, pictures with out any human element were shared more often.
 - b. If you want to get "likes" include a partial shot of a person, i.e. just a hand or ankle. Pictures with partial body images were "liked" more often than a picture with a person or no human element.
6. Resist the urge to clean up, e.g. edit every image. Pictures that look too perfect look less authentic.

7. Take images a little bigger than you think is needed. It is much easier to crop or shrink an image! Many photo requirements for social media are not the same proportion as a standard photo.

Photos in all Shapes and Sizes

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges is figuring out what size and shape image you need for the various social media platforms, they vary widely. For example, this list shows the sizes need for Facebook's various cover photos and posts:

<u>Pixel Size</u>	<u>Facebook Cover Photo Location</u>
360 x 360	Profile Photo
851 x 310	Cover photo Profile
820 x 312	Cover photo fan page
820 x 428	Cover photo group
500 x 262	Event
1200 x 630	Share image and share link
487 x 255	timeline image
1200 x1800	Highlighted post

Find out what size/shape image you need before you takes pictures, it will save you time and frustration.

Pictures of Customers and Kids

Remember that taking pictures for personal use is different than pictures for business use. Pictures displayed on the internet tend to have a life of their own and are very difficult to control once they uploaded on the internet. Be careful and learn about the concepts of "fair use" and reasonable expectation of privacy". Keep in mind:

- Some kids and adults don't like having their pictures taken. In particular, some parents do not permit pictures of their children for any reason.
- If permission and privacy are a concern, make sure that you have permission to take and use photos. You can use an online form or written form to get permission Having an event? Include a photo release as part of the signup form.
- Remember that kids, in particular, can be unpredictable, go with it and enjoy the energy and don't try to force perfection.
- Encourage adults to have relax and have fun. Most of the time, stuffy, tense looking photos won't engage users much less represent your brand in a positive light.

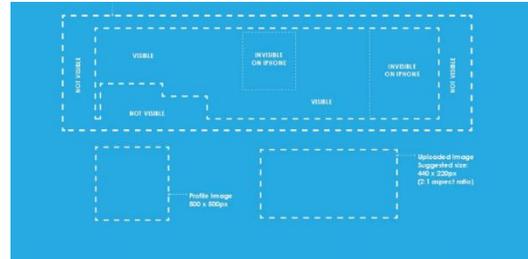
Since photos of real customers are known to be successful, there are great ways to get photos of your business and customers in action. Here are two easy ways to engage users and obtain some images for social media:

- Consider having a photo contest where customers upload images about your business and its products/services on to social media platforms.
- Create an item that customers can have their picture taken with and tag the location.

Final Thoughts

If you want more information about social media images google is a powerful tool. A quick search can pull up sites with resources such as:

- templates and sizing information so you create images that fit the requirements of social media
- tips for taking better photos with your mobile device or camera
- mobile apps (and reviews) if you want to tweak images with filters and effects
- infographic creation tools such as BeFunky, Visme, Snappa, Canva



Social Media Blueprint for Twitter from visual.ly

It is worth noting that as the importance of video continues to grow, many get started with still photography and then expand into video. This transition makes complete sense since you can take your knowledge lighting and composition and expand your efforts to include key videography elements such as sound, movement (camera and subject), and pacing. When you are ready to expand your imaging repertoire, look on the net for guidance.

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- (1) Kelley, Mark. New Research: Do Pictures of People Increase Facebook Engagement?.
<http://www.convinceandconvert.com/social-media-research/new-research-do-pictures-of-people-increase-facebook-engagement/>



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About Link to Visibility, LLC

Our mission is to provide strategic marketing planning and internet design consulting services to businesses and non-profit organizations who understand the value and need for these tools. Planning and execution must go together to ensure your:

- target audience is properly identified
- messages are client-relevant and consistent
- corporate identity/brand is presented correctly
- marketing tools are appropriate and trackable

Our clients have great ideas the world needs to hear about. At Link to Visibility we take the time to learn about your company and its products/services. By learning what you do we will be able to select the right tools to connect with your target audience. Services we provide directly include:

- Web site design, SEO, analytics, database structure and design
- Social media support and advertising
- Print materials design
- Branding development and support
- Marketing plan strategy and execution

For related services such as graphic design, multi-media production, and printing, we have selected partners with whom we work.

About Elizabeth Blakely

Elizabeth Blakely is the founder of Link to Visibility, LLC. She believes in using her experience in marketing, web development, information organization and project management to help clients meet their organizational goals and grow. Over the course of her career she has worked with a wide variety of clients in both the profit and non-profit sectors. Elizabeth is an active member of the North Pittsburgh Regional Chamber of Commerce's marketing committee.

Elizabeth holds a master's degree in Information and Library Sciences from the University of Michigan and bachelor's degree in American History from the University of Pennsylvania. She also minored in Art History. She has lived in Cranberry Township with her husband, two kids and assorted pets since 2007. She has too many hobbies and not enough time to enjoy them.