# ‘A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words’
# The Importance of the Visual within Social Media

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# 1) WHY?

There is a noticeable trend in the progression of social media. We started off with 1000 word blog posts, a time consuming but detailed way to get your message across to the Internet. These blog posts became Facebook statuses and posts, announcing our actions to the world, which in turn led to Twitter's bite-sized micro-blogging.

A final change has occurred: text based social media is making way for visual communication. Image based social sharing sites such as Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest are gaining traction, and their popularity reminds us of the importance of illustration within online marketing.

A desire for the visual is caused by a change in the habits of technology users. More and more people connect to social media 'on the go', using their smartphones and tablets. This adjustment creates a change of context: users dedicate less time and attention to catching up on their social media, and therefore engage more with pictures rather than long texts.

Great images therefore create traffic, but what makes a great image? A good picture can be compared to a film trailer when it comes to written content. It should represent what the brand is trying to articulate in a digestible and entertaining way, by grabbing the audience's attention.

We will firstly examine how best to add images to the more traditional forms of business social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. These websites have been around long enough for us to appreciate their value when it comes to B2B marketing, but if not used properly they do more harm than good. We will then go on to describe how best to utilize the image sharing sites such as Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat. These may seem unusual at first but ignoring them means missing out on a potentially very powerful resource.

Within social media, it is certainly true that a picture is worth a thousand words. Following these suggestions will allow you to make the most of social networking in the rushed world of today.

## *2)* FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND LINKEDIN: THE TRADITIONAL ONES

Social media is now accepted as an intrinsic tool for B2B marketers and has been around long enough for people to understand how to use it. There are still, however, a few details which should not be forgotten when trying to represent your company effectively on these more traditional forms of social media. When using text on these websites, less is more.

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**Facebook** offers so many opportunities to use images to deepen the impact on the audience. Our first piece of advice is to make the most of your cover photo. It may sound obvious, but your cover photo is the largest, most eye catching element of your profile. A good photo is something that engages the viewer; a photo of a product is appropriate but a photo that relates to the customer is more effective**.** In other words, an image that represents your customers' desires or their 'story' will have more impact than a simple portrayal of a product.

Redbull's choice for a cover photo works well because it represents adventure, the idea that makes up the brand image.

Furthermore, the post that tells your friends that you are changing this banner photo takes up more space on a newsfeed than a typical photo post. Cover photos equate to valuable Facebook real estate and are a great way to draw instant attention to your page.




http://socialenterprise.com/wp-content/plugins/rss-poster/cache/f7287_redbull.jpeg

Facebook also offers the 'important life event' feature which, when used effectively, can help an audience form a more personal relationship with your

company. A good example of using this feature, and in fact using Facebook to its full potential in general, is Volkswagen. They use events such as the year their company was founded and the release of famous cars as life events, illustrating them with emotive pictures. Using milestones images gives this enormous international company a far more personal feel.



(http://sociallysorted.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Screen-shot-2012-08-03-at-4.28.08-PM.png)

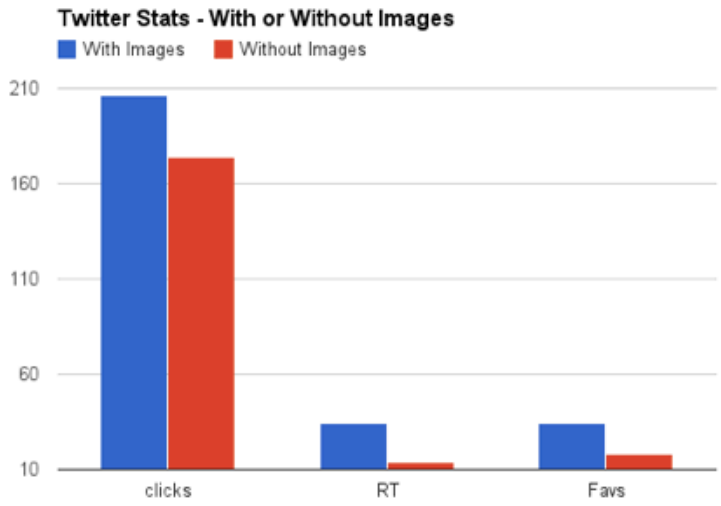
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**Twitter** is becoming noisier and noisier and this means that it is becoming harder to have an impact on its community.

There are therefore some protocols that need to be met, such as making sure that you are using hashtags appropriately and not ‘over-tweeting’. It is also useful to combine the tweet with effective imagery.

You can, for example, tweet Instagram or Pinterest posts. This not only makes it more likely for someone to click on your link, as long as you have combined the photo with a catchy text line, but it also brings all your forms of social media together.

Twitter’s recent addition of inline pictures mean that images are taking up more room on your newsfeed. In other words, pictures are automatically expanded as a preview and are enlarged when clicked on. Research has shown that tweets with these images received up to 18% more clicks, 89% more retweets and, most importantly, 150% more retweets. If that doesn’t prove the importance of pictures within social media, then nothing will.




http://bufferblog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/chart_1.png

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The most obvious social platform to use for professional networking is undoubtedly **LinkedIn**, but unlike Facebook it is predominantly a text-based website. You are allowed one picture on your profile, one that is expected to represent you as a professional.

LinkedIn's Career Expert, Nicole Williams, directly discusses the importance of having a photo for your profile. She states that it is seven times more likely that your profile is viewed if you have a profile picture, because it is "like a house that's on sale, the assumption is that if there's no photo, something's wrong." This may sound harsh and shallow but it is true. Not having a profile picture is sloppy and gives the wrong first impression.

Williams goes on to discuss what makes a good profile picture. In brief: "No dog, no husband, no baby!" Because LinkedIn is purely a business social network and is the least image based website of all those mentioned in this paper, making the right choice for your one picture is of paramount importance. It needs to give off a professional impression, not a personal one.

Research has found that 19% of LinkedIn recruiters only look at your profile picture when scanning the website, so you better make it a good one!

## 3) INSTAGRAM, PINTEREST AND SNAPCHAT: THE PICTURE BASED ONES

Social networks such as Snapchat may seem alien to marketing strategy, but they are an untapped resource. Being able to use them productively will take you and your company a long way.

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Facebook's multimillion-dollar purchase of **Instagram** is solid proof of the impact of the image-sharing app.

Using Instagram is particularly productive if your company has original visual content that benefits from being displayed creatively. 'Sharpie', for example, successfully show off their product and what can be done with it on their account.




http://instagram.com/p/bzKcxbCtfH/

Nevertheless, the image-sharing app is not limited to these types of companies. It can also be used to create a 'behind the scenes' feel to involve the customer. For example, a photo of a company event in which staff are getting together and having fun gives off a personal impression to the audience.



http://instagram.com/p/nKzOOVwuHs/

Condor Airlines' Instagram account is a perfect example because they use the social networking platform to give their customers insight into what it is like to work for one of Europe's key airlines. In this photo, the CEO of Condor flight services is celebrating Condor Airline's millionth customer with fellow staff.

It is also important not to forget the words when using image based social sharing. An image has the potential to tell a story, but sometimes that story is not clear enough. Without an image, an idea can be lost in a sea of words, but without words, a graphic can be lost in ambiguity. Layer texts and captions on top of well-chosen pictures to get the most out of Instagram.

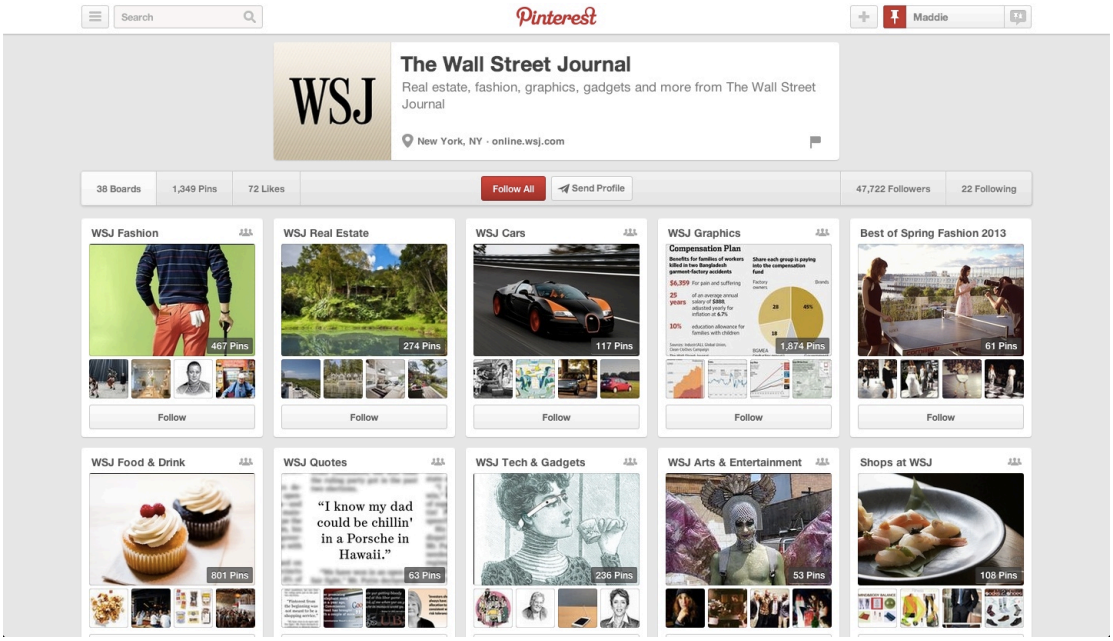
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Brands are therefore using visual content to inspire their Internet followers to be engaged and share what they see. This is the idea that lies behind **Pinterest**, a site known as 'the world's biggest collection of everybody's favourite things'.

It is important to make sure your company's Pinterest page is classed as a business for you to be able to utilize all the features. If you started it as a personal page it is easily converted to a business format.

With this in mind, to get the most out of this aesthetically pleasing website you need to create your own original content. Creating unique images creates traffic, but remember the maximum size is 554 pixels wide X 5000 pixels high. Over 80% of pins on Pinterest are reposted images, so be one of the 20%!

It is also beneficial to post other people's pictures as well as your own because it helps build a wider following. Find some related images and content on Pinterest and bring them together on your own profile to give the viewer something more than just product viewing. It is important to make sure these images are well organised. Choose them carefully and group them together in a well-named pin board. *The Wall Street Journal* regularly update each entertaining section of their page with images not directly linked to their newspaper, but which readers would find interesting.



http://www.pinterest.com/wsj/

Finally, it is also a good idea to create unique images as Pin offers. You can either post these solely on your Pinterest page, or pin to an official website. The *Wall Street Journal* also does this. They have a board that specifically posts promotional Pins, containing an image of the product and the deal that goes with it.

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With **Snapchat** users viewing over 700 million photos and videos a day, the app's success is incredible. It may not seem like a source of genuine online awareness, but it has many benefits that make it an excellent marketing tool. The images never last more than ten seconds, which means that it panders to our dislike of time wasting, and can only be viewed once, which means that viewers give Snaps their full attention when opening them. This contrasts greatly to the majority of other forms of social media, which we often scan distractedly instead of doing what we are actually meant to be doing.



https://www.viralheat.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/snapchat_large-540x200.jpg

You can, for example, use Snapchat to reward current and loyal customers with information about deals and giveaways, after having asked them to add you on a different form of social networking.

Similarly to Instagram, Snapchat is also an excellent way to take your audience behind the scenes. By posting a short video on your Snapchat account using the ‘stories’ feature, audiences can catch a glimpse of what your company is really like. Again, this creates a more personal relationship between the two.

Finally, Snapchat is an excellent way to preview new products in an exciting manner. The American fast food chain ‘Taco Bell’ sent out a quick Snap of their new taco to customers in an attempt to create some hype surrounding the product. This was particularly effective because Snapchat is very popular with its target audience, but the app is becoming more and more popular throughout all ages.

[See image below]




**Example of Taco Bell using Snapchat**

http://rack.3.mshcdn.com/media/ZgkyMDEzLzEwLzEwL2IwL0lNR18wMjkyLmYzYTgxLnBuZwpwCXRodW1iCTEyMDB4OTYwMD4/273856d0/d5f/IMG_0292.png