

How to Produce Visual Content

THAT WORKS FOR YOUR TEAM



OVERVIEW



ch 1 Plan



ch 2 Make



ch 3 Post



ch 4 Results

WHY QUALITY VISUAL CONTENT MATTERS

To put it frankly, the amount of content presented to us on a daily basis is completely insane.

Take a look at Facebook.

Every 60 seconds:



317,000

STATUSES ARE POSTED



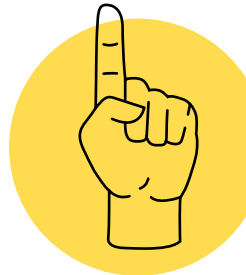
147,000

PHOTOS ARE UPLOADED



54,000

LINKS ARE SHARED



Combine that with the myriad of mediums that compete for your attention, devotion, and dollars, and you start to see why everyone is looking for little ways to stand out from the crowd.


One thing we (and the rest of the content marketing world) have found to be effective:

A COMMITMENT TO HIGH-QUALITY VISUALS.

Humans are visual creatures, after all: Studies show 83% of all learning is visual. As far as whether this notion extends to social media, the numbers speak for themselves.



 Tweets with images are 150% more likely to get retweets than text-only tweets

 LinkedIn posts with images receive 200% more engagement

Some teams see these numbers and assume boosting your numbers is as easy as slapping a stock image on your existing content. **Not so fast.** Relevant, high-quality visuals don't just do wonders for your brand—they've been *shown* to significantly affect content recall and consumer behavior.



Ready to give your content the visual support it deserves?

Read on for a host of tips and tricks that we at Lemonly have learned over thousands of projects.





PLAN

From full-on infographics to Instagram posts and every piece of content in between, there's plenty to consider before you put your pen to paper or mouse to pad.

PREP *Tips* FROM ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE EMILY



If you're reading this e-book, you might have been inspired by our beautiful *illustration work* and started dreaming about how awesome your next image is going to end up. But hold everything!

Before thinking about how your project is going to look, it's important to consider its purpose.

ASK YOUR TEAM THESE QUESTIONS:

- *Who are you talking to?*
- *What do you want them to take away from the visual?*
- *When, where, and how will it be posted?*
- *Is there a piece you'd like to draw inspiration from?*

Putting the purpose and goals of your project in front of all else will help your project take shape with the appropriate structure, length, and specs. Plus, asking yourself these questions tends to help you answer the next big one: What is your piece of content about? Don't let a wealth of topics get you stuck.

Whatever you create should fall into one of a few established categories that work for your brand and overall marketing goals. Having established buckets for your content ensures your content is relevant to your industry, target audience, or followers.

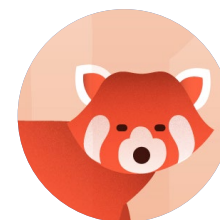


FINDING YOUR ANGLE: STAY ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW

When choosing a topic for your visual content, you should get **straight** to the point by covering a **narrow** topic.

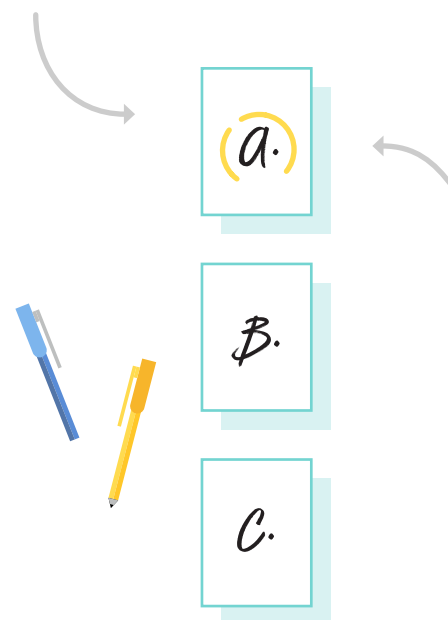
LET'S START WITH AN EASY EXAMPLE.

I'll say I'm writing an infographic about red pandas. I could use an infographic to explain why red pandas are endangered or show viewers the various adaptations red pandas have—but I'd rather use it to assert my firm belief that **red pandas are adorable**.



You might wonder why my infographic can't explain how adorable they are AND why they're endangered AND their adaptations. Simply put, visual content is best equipped to share information in an engaging and digestible format. If you try to cram too much information into yours, you could end up putting constraints on the design and losing your audience entirely. Cramming too much into a piece is an easy way to lose an audience quickly. (Remember, the human attention span is now shorter than that of a goldfish, clocking in at under eight seconds.)

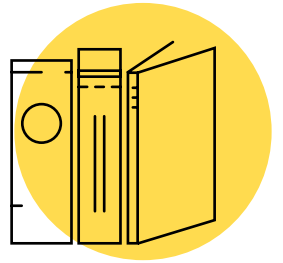
So, my infographic will argue that red pandas are adorable. Since I know what I want my audience to take away, I know what kind of facts to include. It's just like when your middle school English teacher had you outline your essay.



For example:

Thesis statement:

- ✓ RED PANDAS ARE ADORABLE.



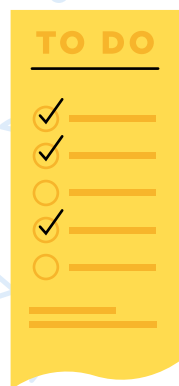
Supporting information:

- ✓ ADORABLE APPEARANCE
 - Small, slightly bigger than a housecat
 - Striking rust-colored coat that's furry as heck
 - Big head with small face and pointy ears
 - Cute facial expressions, including sticking their tongues out
- ✓ ADORABLE ANTICS
 - Good at escaping from zoos
 - Roughhouse with each other
 - Communicate with "twittering" noises
 - Wrap their tails around themselves like a blanket when they're cold

Choosing not to include certain points doesn't mean they aren't interesting and/or important—it only means they don't support my overall story in this visual piece. I don't need to tell my audience about the red panda's diet or average lifespan because food and survival aren't particularly adorable.

WHEN CONSIDERING YOUR TOPIC AND CONTENT, ASK YOURSELF:

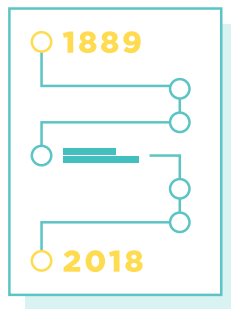
- *What is the "thesis" of my content?*
- *What main points support my thesis in a convincing and accurate way?*
- *Am I including information irrelevant to what I want the audience to take away?*
- *Is there a piece you'd like to draw inspiration from?*



yeah!

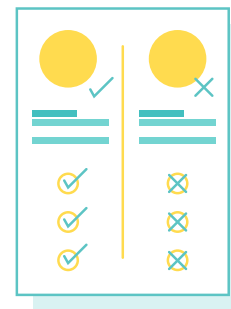
Once you've got the logistics determined and that topic narrowed down, spend some time considering the story you're trying to tell. It might seem showy to attach a word like storytelling to your marketing tasks, but yours doesn't need to be melodramatic—there's plenty of room for narration and promotion to live in harmony. After all, stories form connections. People gravitate toward things they believe in and agree with, and **“telling, not selling”** can go a lot further than a banner ad for your next flash sale.

Especially with infographics, we've found projects tend to fall within a handful of categories. A few story structures to consider:



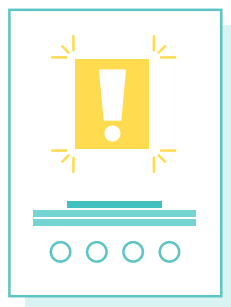
Timeline

Infographics, Lemonly's signature, are naturally equipped to fill their viewers in on the history of something. They have a definitive start and finishing point, a knack for guiding the viewer, and, traditionally, have a long, vertical layout that lends itself to illustrating a timeline with descriptions.



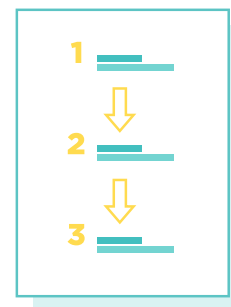
Comparison

The next time you Google "What's the difference between ___ and ___," cross your fingers and hope to your lucky stars an infographic is one of the top results. There's no better way to thoroughly explain two items or concepts than hitting key points with impactful visuals and concise copy quickly.



Innovation

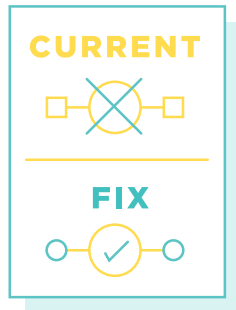
Eureka! Spread the news, answer FAQs, and let your audience know how to learn more about your latest discovery all in one sweet visual package.



How-To

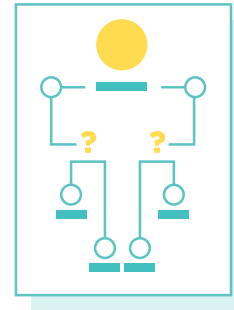
Life is full of unpredictable moments and learning experiences. Help viewers navigate stressful situations with poise, prepare for milestones, or tackle anything else the world throws their way with a visual step-by-step process.

INFOGRAPHIC STORY STRUCTURE EXAMPLES CONTINUED:



Problem/Solution/Action

Shed light, suggest a solution, and give viewers a course of action over the course of a single infographic or series of cohesive pieces. Visual storytelling allows you to open up a conversation, then steer participants toward a common goal.



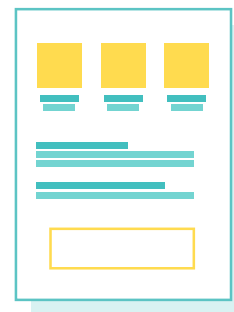
Flowchart

Find the food that'll strike your fancy, when a customer should use different products in your product line, or which person to contact with questions in an internal piece. Flowcharts are an attractive way to show off all the options a location or product offers—then help the reader decide which one to act on.



Data Visualization

Humans are visual creatures, and it's often much easier to understand a graph or chart than pages on a spreadsheet. What starts as an unsightly set of data, with the right touch, can become a simple, clear, and elegant representation of your central thesis.



Recap/Overview

Hit the highlights and tailor what you want your audience to take away—infographics make a great way to sum up a period of time, a career, a conference, or any event, really.



TOPIC



STORY



VOICE AND TONE

JUST A COUPLE QUICK TIPS BEFORE BUSTING OUT THE PROVERBIAL PAINTBRUSH.

Your visuals and copy should let the creator's personality shine through, but it's also important to hold each piece of content up to an established, consistent voice and tone. Need an example? Here's how we break it down at Lemonly:



WE ARE:

- *Approachable*
- *Self-assured*
- *Energetic*
- *Humble*
- *Eccentric*
- *Clever*

WE AREN'T:

- *Overbearing*
- *Brash*
- *Cocky*
- *Edgy*
- *Weird*
- *Cheesy*



COPYWRITING *tips* FROM ASSOC. DIRECTOR OF CONTENT MADDIE

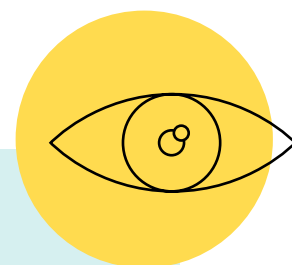
What began as an idea is starting to come to life! Now it's time to decide what your piece has to say in words.

Much like the project as a whole, writing copy for your content goes a lot more smoothly if you go in with a plan. If you're working on a piece of significant length, begin with an outline that covers your main thesis (remember that?) and each supporting section, subsection, and so forth. Filling in a template is a lot less intimidating than staring down a blank page. (Keep your audience and project purpose in mind at this point, too.)

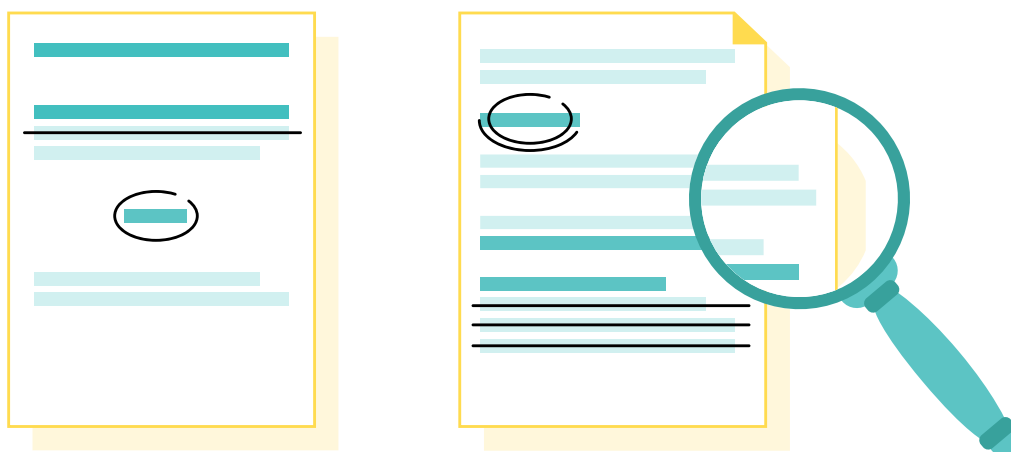
I know it's tempting to let your inner F. Scott Fitzgerald shine. But most often when writing copy for visual pieces, it's best to stick to the high-level stuff. Think by the bullet point.

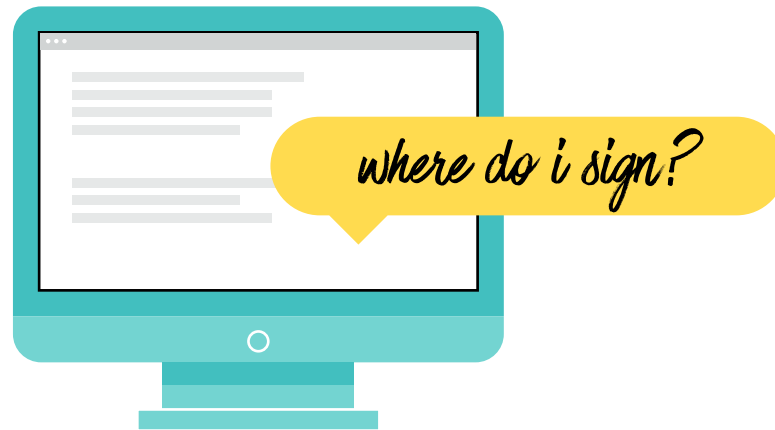


- *Short*
- *Specific*
- *Significant*



Write to keep readers focused and make your information crystal clear. When you think you're done, go back cut any extraneous details or flowery, overly descriptive language. Your job is to do the heavy lifting. Let the design wow 'em.





When it's time to wrap things up, include a call-to-action so your readers aren't left thinking "so what?" Learn more about the topic you introduced, sign a petition, schedule a demo for the product or service you explained, etc. Someone could think your content was the greatest thing they've ever seen, but its potential suffers if there's no next step within the piece or on the page it lives on.

Once you've gone through a few rounds of self-edits, let a friend or coworker run a fresh set of eyes over your document to catch any simple errors and make sure your story makes sense. Then, it's time for the fun part!

To recap.



1. Pick a personality



2. Create an outline based around your thesis



3. Trim the fat—only the most important copy stays



4. Wrap up with a call-to-action



5. Edit, then edit again



MAKE

Click that Adobe Illustrator icon, grab a cup of whatever gets your creative juices going, and get ready to make some kick-ass content.

MOODBOARDS AND WIREFRAMES

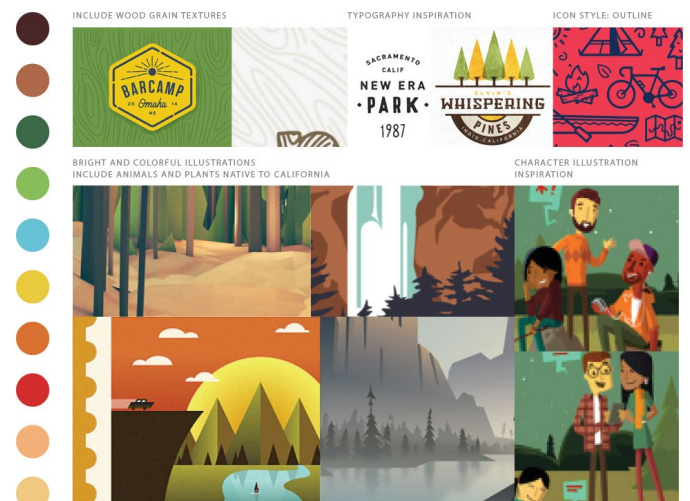
When the right moodboard meets the right wireframe, they lay the foundation for a blissful marriage of form and function. Together, they make a beautiful baby infographic (draft one), who grows up to be a charismatic, informative, and quite stunning grown-up piece of content (final draft).

WHAT'S A MOODBOARD?

Moodboards show each client the overall “feel” that their graphic will have in the design phase, with a color palette, examples of illustrations, and textures that fit the overall motif of the designed piece. In this particular moodboard, you see the childlike aesthetic is further enhanced by a bouncy, line-driven collection of animals, soft colors, and more handmade fonts that emote a friendly, warm feeling.

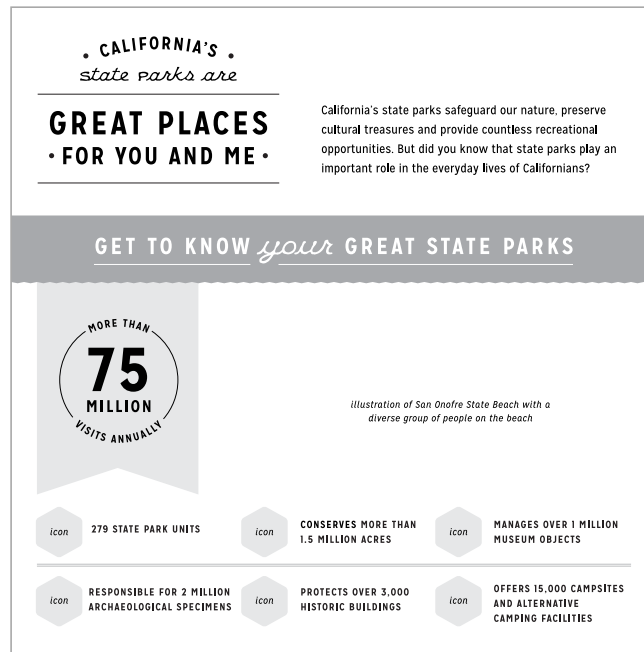
Moodboards can be used to make sure every member of your team is on the same page in three key areas of focus:

1. Subject matter
2. Planned design choices
3. Overall visual tone



WHAT'S A WIREFRAME?

Put simply, a wireframe is a blueprint for what the graphic will become. It's an outline kept in grayscale, without many design elements, so that your focus is on the overall structure of your visual story, flow of the sections of copy, and the layout of where both text and graphics will be placed.



Lemonly makes wireframes for projects big and small, from full-blown infographics and microsites to Instagram posts and simple animations.

Tip

Wireframes align the images in every team member's mind, meaning no surprises—and more efficient editing.

Skipping the wireframe and going straight to design without thinking about placement and flow of your copy and content tends to lead to A LOT more reworking than you probably want to do. Because wireframes aren't yet filled with design elements, it's easy to move things around, cut copy, or decide to feature this chart or that statistic more prominently. This is the perfect step to share with your coworkers so they can see how the project is taking shape before getting too deep and having to completely redo something.

DESIGN *Tips* FROM ART DIRECTOR BRETT



The finish line is in sight! After your wireframe and moodboard passes the test with your team, it's on to the design phase.

We couldn't possibly keep this e-book at a reasonable length if we included every shortcut our designers have uncovered over the past six years, so we're just going to assume you've got at least a basic handle on how to use Adobe's Creative Cloud or similar tools. (Like we hinted at previously, we typically use Adobe Illustrator to build out most visual content.)

Some websites will allow you to create illustrations with varying degrees of control, but if you want your content to look top-notch, it's best to avoid the easy way out and instead create your pieces from scratch. Otherwise, we're back to square one with creating "stock-looking" visuals.

You've probably heard the whole "a picture is worth 1,000 words" thing, right? Definitely something to keep in mind while you design visual content. If an idea can be expressed visually rather than using a chunk of copy, do it!



Always keep in mind, though: All pieces of the infographic—from story to copy to design—are there to serve one thing: the goal of the project. You may be the best designer in the world, but if you're only creating with aesthetics in mind, you aren't creating successful infographics.

Remember to practice, practice, practice, and use online tutorials to expand your skills in specific programs. If you're visualizing data, Illustrator has a few nice chart features to get you started. And be sure to follow other designers and companies that make visual content you enjoy. It's easy to become inspired by combing sites like Behance, Dribbble, and even Pinterest!





POST

So your visual is designed to your liking. Congrats! Your content may be complete, but the process for getting the most out of it isn't quite over yet. Between image sizing, posting best practices, and analysis, you shouldn't turn your brain off as soon as you export your piece.

WHERE WILL YOUR VISUAL LIVE?

This detail is often overlooked, but it's one of the most important. Don't make the mistake of creating something beautiful that doesn't even work where you wanted to post it. Time = wasted.



Tip

Before your design has even started, work with your web team on uploading a sample piece that's sized similarly—pixel-wise and megabyte-wise—to what you plan on creating. That helps ensure your reader is able to view your content with ease.



So where should your visual live? Most content marketers place their larger visuals, like infographics, within a blog post or on a landing page. When posting on your website, try to put your visual on a page with share buttons, some copy explaining the piece, and perhaps some links below your visual with additional resources for your audience, if needed. Your goal is to keep them on your site after reading and looking at your piece, so give them some next steps!

ANATOMY OF A GOOD INFOGRAPHIC BLOG POST



You should also create an attention-grabbing preview image for the blog post your piece will live on. This will help drive traffic to the post from your main blog page. Creating that preview image seems to be put on the back burner compared to the others in this process, but since it's the first thing people will see, you should put just as much effort into it as your piece itself.

Adapting an existing image from within your infographic is usually a solid choice. Clean up some text, remove distracting elements to accommodate dimensions, make sure it looks decent on desktop and mobile, and voila! You've got an awesome image in just a few minutes. That small visual can also be reformatted slightly to work as a preview image on social media. Speaking of which...

SHARING YOUR VISUALS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Small visuals (a.k.a. microcontent) look great on social media.
Large visuals like infographics typically do not.

If you read nothing else in this chapter, read this:

DO NOT UPLOAD YOUR FULL INFOGRAPHIC
AS A PHOTO DIRECTLY TO FACEBOOK.

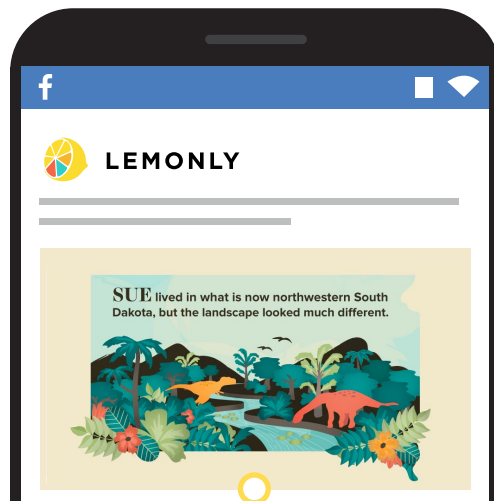


Instead, you should be sharing only a portion of your infographic. Its home should not be only on the social media channel. Facebook scales the image vertically, making it too small to read on social media alone.



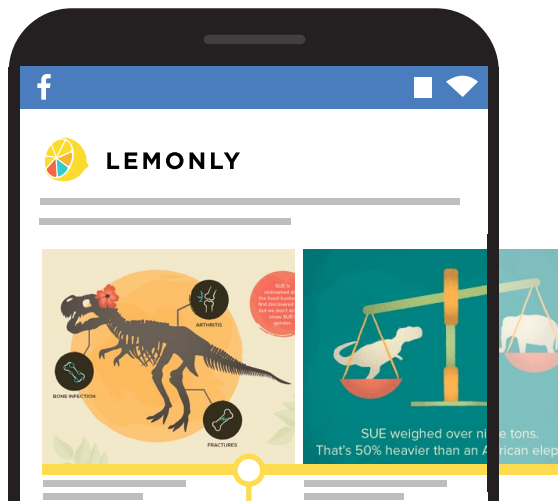
FACEBOOK

DO Link your Facebook post to a blog post or landing page with your full piece of content.
DON'T Lead people to a PDF or simply an image hosted on your site. A page without navigation is a dead end for readers and an invitation for them to leave quickly.



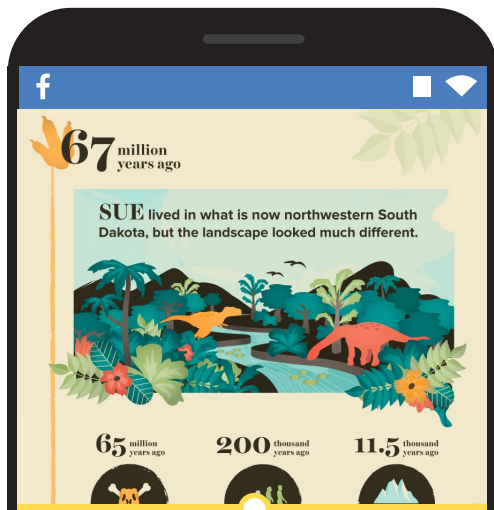
CUSTOM THUMBNAIL

for post link



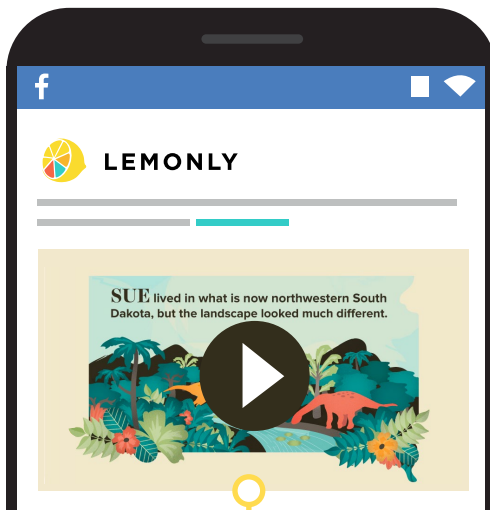
CAROUSEL

with up to 5 images
(up to 10 if made in ads manager)



INSTANT EXPERIENCE

full infographics can be placed here—only viewable on mobile



PREVIEW ANIMATION

with link to infographic in copy

LINKEDIN



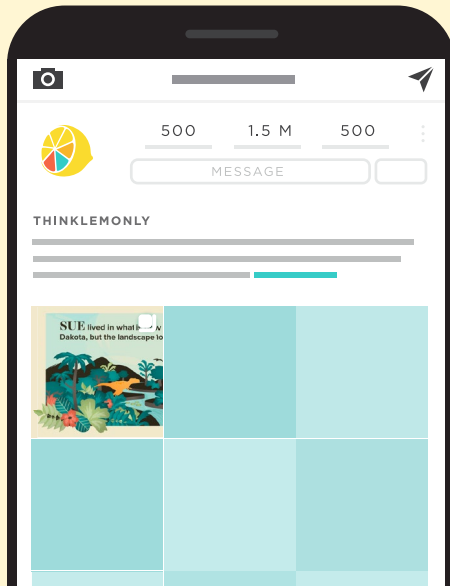
CUSTOM THUMBNAIL FOR POST LINK

LINK TO INFOGRAPHIC BLOG IN POST COPY

INSTAGRAM



CAROUSEL
Link to infographic in bio



PREVIEW ANIMATION OR STATIC IMAGE
Link to infographic in bio



INSTAGRAM STORY
Link to infographic in bio



PINS WITH AN ASPECT RATIO GREATER THAN 1:3.5 will be truncated in the feed, cropped from the bottom up

FEEL FREE TO SHARE ON GROUP BOARDS RELATED TO THE TOPIC AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BOARDS.

Tip

You can upload your full infographic here! YAY!





FINAL SHARING TO-DOS

Remember to share your content multiple times. You spent a lot of time creating it, so be sure your audience sees it!

- *Your audience may be in different time zones*
- *New followers may find months-old content valuable*
- *Getting your content in front of more eyes means more traffic*

Recirculating a blog post gets about 75% of the engagement as the previous post.



Try a couple of different image options for sharing your full piece. One type may be more successful in gathering pageviews than the next, so this is a great way to A/B test certain projects while fine-tuning your process for the future.

Finally, it's time to sit back and watch the engagement roll in.

Tip

Establish a platform for monitoring your posts, a benchmark for success, and a process for tweaking and re-posting. Use tools like Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Hubspot, etc. to help you understand more about your content's performance.



so informative



love it!

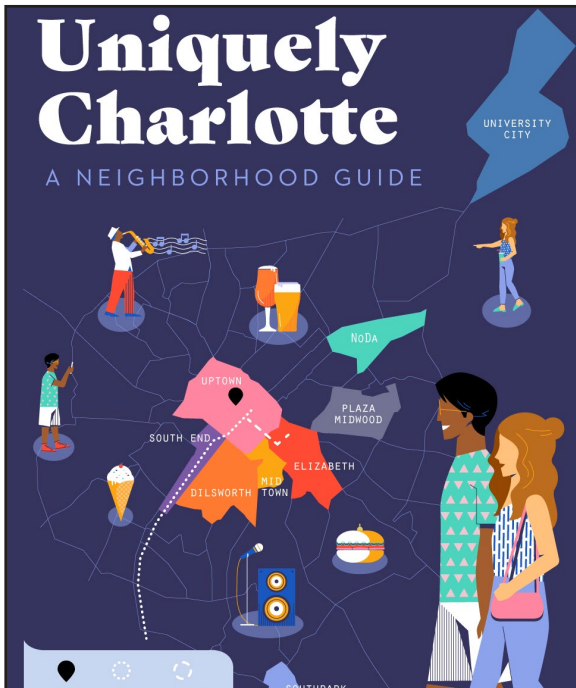


RESULTS

A commitment to strong content can have amazing results. For instance, here's a look at some of the successes our clients have enjoyed:

Marriott®

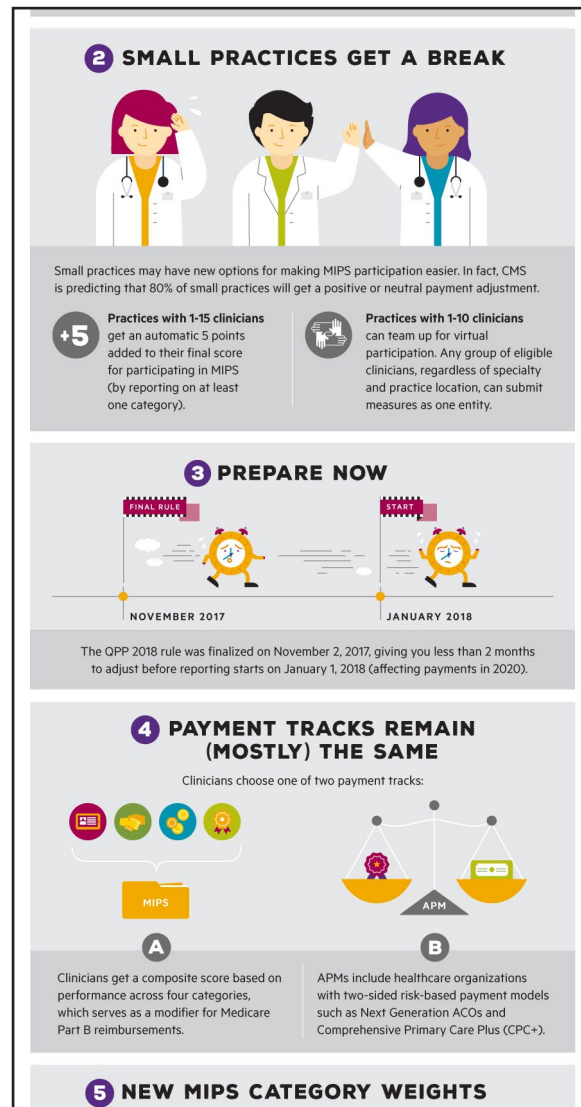
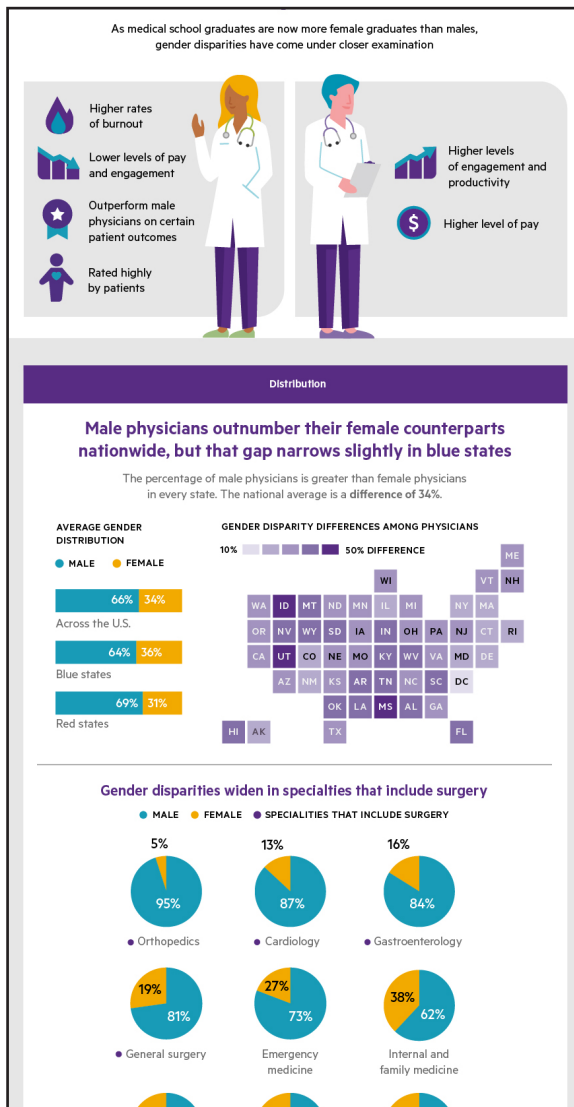
By creating 300+ unique pieces of visual content including city guides, videos with tips for certain destinations, animated GIFs focused on landmarks, and more, Marriott Hotels increased their page rank and established themselves as a top resource for today's travelers.





By educating their audience with infographics on ever-changing healthcare regulations, the AthenaHealth Insights team used visual stories to generate strong results.

One infographic attracted 457% more users than an average piece of content on their blog, as well as increasing attention time by 46%.





We were tasked with creating a multi-channel visual campaign to educate Midco® customers on DIY solutions customers could take to optimize their wireless connection at home.

The infographics surpassed all set benchmarks for social ads and pre-roll. Compared to another canvas ad within the same timeframe, Midco's piece was viewed for a duration of 255% longer.

Make the most of your Midco® internet connection.

[Click here for tips!](#)

MIDCO

DIY

to boost your streaming speed

[Click here for tips!](#)

MIDCO

MIDCO

Teamwork Makes Xstream Work

It happens at the worst times - movies buffering just as the bad guy shows up, downloads stuck motionless when you're on a deadline. *Yikes.*

We're bringing you faster-than-ever internet connections with Midco Xstream®, but did you know that you can help optimize your connection? Let's get streaming with these quick tips.

Modem Placement

- Place in open, central location.
- Keep elevated on table or stand.

Wireless Interference

- Be aware of potential wireless interference (Wi-Fi enabled scales, Bluetooth speakers and more).

Technology Updates

- Clear internet history and cookies often.
- Update operating system when prompted.
- Remove older devices connected to your network, as they can slow down speeds for all devices.

Internet Equipment

- Make sure equipment is up-to-date and Midco-compatible.
- Regularly check cables for damage.
- Connection issues? Disconnect and reconnect modem cables one at a time.
- Change router channel if connection lags.

Get more in-depth help at Midco.com/Speed.

MIDCO
PO Box 5010, Sioux Falls, SD 57117-5010

VALUED CUSTOMER
STREET ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE
XXXXXXX

You + Midco® = Internet Speed Home Run

You'll notice in this month's statement that we're giving you an internet speed boost! You're now on Midco Xstream (25/75/120) after we increased your top speeds!

Enjoy your faster-than-ever internet connections!

*Actual internet speeds may vary depending on your wireless modem/router capacity, your computer/mobile device technology, the number of devices accessing the Wi-Fi network, and web traffic.

Questions? We want to hear from you! Live chat on our website, find us on social media, or call 1.800.888.1300.

If your wheels are turning and you want to chat about your content ideas, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Book a friendly call to talk about your visual content strategy with Jade today!

i'd be happy to help!



Jade Delaney

Click here to book a call with
Jade, Director of Business Development



lemonly.com

