Building the Ultimate Toolbox for Visual Storytelling

Insights into the tools required for building a successful visual content strategy in a multiplatform world

Featuring a look inside AP’s toolbox!
Overview

Visual content is becoming an increasingly important way for companies of all kinds to reach their target audiences and achieve their business goals. Thanks to the technology of today’s digital age, audiences are viewing information in new ways, from smaller, more portable screens on mobile devices to third-party apps and discovery platforms. And as audiences make this shift, they rely more and more on information presented in a visual way. In response, businesses in every industry are pivoting to meet this demand for visual content.

Of course, as the visual content landscape expands, so does the number of tools available to creators to produce as much effective, high quality visual content as possible. Tech platforms are a necessary resource for companies to leverage their existing resources, from tech to talent, to successfully achieve multiplatform visual storytelling in a sustainable way.

That’s why we decided to investigate the resources that go into building the best toolbox for a successful visual content strategy. In this report from the Wibbitz Research Hub, we take a look at which types of visual content creation tools are most popular, in what ways those tools support business goals, and how visual content supports business success overall. We also reveal how the Associated Press is stocking their visual storytelling toolbox, provide insights from our own premium partners, and investigate the trends we predict will influence the visual content creation landscape over the coming year. This report will help storytellers understand how to equip their toolboxes to support a successful, scalable visual content strategy for the years to come.
The Role of Visual Content in Business Today

Visual content creation plays a role in every element of business success, although some companies use visual content to their advantage better than others, and not every industry has adapted to the push for a visual-first strategy at the same time. Overall, we found that visual content makes a noticeable impact on every major business goal, and influences website traffic and brand awareness most significantly. We also learned that most businesses that are producing enough visual content to meet their needs have been around for a longer period of time, and have introduced a greater number of tools to support the creation process.

How long has visual content creation played a major role in your business?

5-10 YEARS
- Advertising & Marketing
- Non-profit
- Finance & Financial Services

UNDER 5 YEARS
- Food & Beverage
- Telecommunications & Technology
- Education

How has visual content made an impact on your business’s success?

- WEBSITE TRAFFIC: 85%
- BRAND AWARENESS: 84%
- SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT: 81%
- LEAD GENERATION AND SALES: 71%

Is your team producing enough visual content to meet the needs of your business?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE NUMBER OF TOOLS USED FOR VISUAL CONTENT CREATION</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS COMPANY HAS EXISTED</td>
<td>11-20</td>
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</tbody>
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What types of visual content does your team produce?

- **PHOTOS**: 92%
- **VIDEOS**: 89%
- **INFOGRAPHICS**: 83%
- **ILLUSTRATIONS**: 81%
- **ANIMATIONS**: 68%

How many people are on your company’s visual content creation team?

- **1-5**: 35%
- **6-10**: 16%
- **11-15**: 15%
- **16-20**: 9%
- **21-30**: 9%
- **31-40**: 4%
- **41-50**: 4%

We’re in the travel and lifestyle business, so words can only go so far. Using our writers’ own photos and videos helps add to our authenticity and lets our audience connect on new levels. Our audience can choose to read or watch more and more of our content (or both). I’m a big believer in versatile storytelling and being nimble with format and medium.

Brandon Tucker
Managing Editor of Golf Advisor
The Visual Content Creation Tech Stack

In this section, we took a deeper look into the specific types of tools visual content creators use on a regular basis. Graphic design tools are the most popular category, so it’s no surprise then that photos are also the most popular type of visual content, with video and video editing tools coming in at a close second place. And specific tools aside, a more robust tech stack also supports business success overall. Almost every creator who reported using more than 20 total tools for visual content also said that they were meeting or exceeding their business needs.

How important are visual content creation tools to your business?

- Graphic Design Tools: 76% Crucial or Integral, 6% My Team Does Not Use
- Website Design Tools: 69% Crucial or Integral, 14% My Team Does Not Use
- Video Editing Tools: 67% Crucial or Integral, 15% My Team Does Not Use
- Automation Tools: 55% Crucial or Integral, 20% My Team Does Not Use

What is the total number of visual content creation tools that you use on a regular basis?

- 1-5 tools: 42%
- 6-10 tools: 27%
- 11-15 tools: 8%
- 16-20 tools: 10%
- 21-25 tools: 7%
- 26-50 tools: 4%
- 50+ tools: 2%

98% of respondents using over 20 tools say they are producing enough visual content for their business.

72% of respondents who say they are not producing enough visual content are using 1-5 tools.
2.1 Automation Tools for Visual Content Creation

Automation tools for visual content creation

Automation is a relatively new development in the creative professional field - and according to our findings, newer companies are more willing to adapt their workflows to include these newer technologies. We also found that most companies using automation tools for the creation of visual content are able to produce all five types of visual content - and those that are not leveraging automation are much less likely to do so. Almost half of creators that rely on automation tools work with small, intimate visual content creation teams, a result that may be supported by the power and efficacy of automation tools. Furthermore, people who rely on automation tools report better business success as a direct result of visual content creation.

**OF RESPONDENTS WHO USE AUTOMATION TOOLS FOR VISUAL CONTENT CREATION:**

**Number of years company has existed:**
- <10 years: 35%
- 11-20 years: 22%
- 21-40 years: 18%
- 41-80 years: 26%
- >80 years: 10%

**Number of employees on visual content creation team:**
- <10: 46%
- 11-20: 22%
- 21-30: 18%
- >30: 10%
- >80: 13%
What types of visual content does your team create?

Comparing usage of automation tools to team's ability to create visual content

How has visual content made an impact on your business's success?

Comparing usage of automation tools to visual content's impact on a business

### Brand Awareness

- **Very Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 96%
  - All Respondents: 63%

- **Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 97%
  - All Respondents: 31%

- **Slightly Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 49%
  - All Respondents: 32%

- **Not At All Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 78%
  - All Respondents: 14%

### Website Traffic

- **Very Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 86%
  - All Respondents: 57%

- **Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 78%
  - All Respondents: 49%

- **Slightly Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 24%
  - All Respondents: 36%

- **Not At All Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 46%
  - All Respondents: 14%

### Social Media Engagement

- **Very Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 51%
  - All Respondents: 51%

- **Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 40%
  - All Respondents: 30%

- **Slightly Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 15%
  - All Respondents: 23%

- **Not At All Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 4%
  - All Respondents: 7%

### Lead Generation and Sales

- **Very Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 63%
  - All Respondents: 63%

- **Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 52%
  - All Respondents: 29%

- **Slightly Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 29%
  - All Respondents: 29%

- **Not At All Impactful**
  - Uses Automation Tools: 7%
  - All Respondents: 16%

### Automation Tools For Visual Content Creation

- Photos: 96%
- Videos: 97%
- Illustrations: 86%
- Animations: 78%
- Infographics: 89%

### Comparing usage of automation tools to team's ability to create visual content

- Photos: Uses Automation Tools: 96%
- Videos: Uses Automation Tools: 97%
- Illustrations: Uses Automation Tools: 86%
- Animations: Uses Automation Tools: 78%
- Infographics: Uses Automation Tools: 89%

### Comparing usage of automation tools to visual content's impact on a business

- Brand Awareness: Uses Automation Tools: 96%
- Website Traffic: Uses Automation Tools: 86%
- Social Media Engagement: Uses Automation Tools: 51%
- Lead Generation and Sales: Uses Automation Tools: 63%
The symbiosis between two worlds — journalism and technology — that have historically had different cultures and business models, is creating both tension and opportunity. To respond to audience's increasing demand for visually engaging content, news organizations are increasingly behaving like startups and journalists are expanding their skills beyond just reporting. They are leveraging new tools for visual journalism, building products and exploring new platforms to distribute content and grow audiences.

With shrinking budgets and revenue pressures, many newsrooms are being encouraged to think innovatively and deploy new tools to enable visual storytelling at scale. The training of journalists is quickly becoming similar to that of computer science engineers, who must learn new programming languages every year. As news consumption patterns change, journalists at AP are actively exploring new storytelling models and deploying new reporting tools in their daily workflow.

In addition to building some of our tools in-house - from a “before and after” photo slider, a quote cardkit maker and even a timeline generator – AP is also using and experimenting with these external emerging tools:

**Videos & Photos**

- **DroneBase** - capturing aerial footage
- **Wibbitz** - video automation
- **Premier** - professional video editing
- **Trint** - automating video transcription
- **Live U** - broadcast quality video streaming
- **Iris (formely Bambuser)** - mobile live streaming
- **SamDesk** - UGC photos and videos
- **Clarifai** - automatic photo tagging

**Graphics & Data Visualizations**

- **Graffiti** - mobile data visualizations
- **Power BI** - interactive data visualizations
- **Illustrator** - custom graphic creation

**Animations & 3D/VR/AR**

- **GifToaster** - GIF creation of newsworthy moments
- **Cinema 4D** - 3D modeling and animation in VR/AR
- **Unity** - 3D environment building for immersive media
The Future of Visual Content Creation

Our findings show that more than three quarters of our respondents are planning to expand their visual content creation efforts in the coming year. That’s most likely because audience’s demand for visual content is steadily increasing, so increased effort will be necessary in the future to ensure continued success. What’s the most popular way creators plan to accomplish this expansion? By introducing new tools to support visual content creation, of course - and we can expect all four types of tools to be implemented by over half of these respondents. And as for the types of visual content that will get more TLC in the coming year, it’s no surprise that video tends to be the most popular.

TV Guide’s social audience has more than tripled YoY and reached record highs in 2017 in large part from increased visual content creation. The team will be exploring more data tools to empower actionable business decisions as it relates to video. This isn’t just from a content creation standpoint but also from a strategy point of view. The landscape is changing so rapidly that TV Guide wants to ensure we have data backing up all business decisions.

Gina Mascia
Senior Audience Development Manager, Head of Growth & Engagement at CBS Interactive
Takeaways for your Toolbox

Regardless of industry, company size, or amount of visual content already being produced, companies will need to continue adapting their visual technology toolboxes in order to satisfy audiences on every new platform and device. It's clear from our findings that the need for visual content and tools that support its creation has been growing exponentially in recent years, and that in the coming year, that expansion will only continue on its current trajectory. Whether companies are hiring fresh talent, introducing innovative tech tools, trying out new content types, or just expanding their investment in visual content overall, the shift towards a multiplatform, visual-first business strategy is well on its way and will continue for the foreseeable future.

While there's no doubt that visual content creation is an important part of any successful business strategy today, there are so many ways to execute visual content creation that it's easy for companies to get lost. Our findings in this report show that building a robust toolbox of visual content creation resources makes production easier and distribution more effective to boost your business's bottom line. Whether you're looking to build brand awareness, drive traffic to your website, boost engagement on social media, or increase lead generation and pack your sales pipeline, it's clear that visual content plays a key role in long-term, sustainable business success.
Wibbitz is a text-to-video creation platform built for publishers. The platform uses advanced technology to automatically produce premium branded videos in seconds. Wibbitz supports production for thousands of videos every day, allowing partners like Forbes, USA TODAY Sports, and Time Inc. to better engage their audience and increase monetization with video. The platform enables publishers to produce videos more efficiently, using intuitive editing tools and top-quality licensed content from partners including Reuters and Getty Images.

Are you looking to ramp up your video production? Request a demo to find out how Wibbitz can support your team’s visual content strategy!