



Owning the Visual Conversation:

Five tips and 30 tools to boost your PR results with multimedia



Visuals are the world's most used language.

While millions of people interact with visual content every day—from images to emojis to videos—the truth is, many companies aren't using it effectively in their messaging. Often, visual assets are created by the advertising or marketing teams to sell products. While effective in an advertising context, these sales-focused multimedia assets do not always work for PR's media audience, as the images tell a different story from the one the reporter is presenting and the audience is reading.

This disconnect between the content that organizations are sharing and the content that would enhance public relations work creates an opportunity for PR teams and agencies. To foster authentic communication, [organizations have to understand the needs and preferences of the specific groups](#) they are trying to reach and customize the message accordingly. Since PR professionals are already adept at highlighting different sides of the same story for different media outlets, it makes sense to extend this differentiation by customizing the accompanying multimedia, whether by repurposing existing pieces or creating custom content.

In a recent Business Wire webinar—held in conjunction with the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)—Serena Ehrlich, Director of Product Marketing for Business Wire, shared her insights and tips for how public relations teams can improve the visual fluency of their pitches and stories and easily create multimedia assets designed to engage PR audiences.

Five tips to boost your PR results with multimedia

- 1 **AUDIT YOUR VISUAL CONTENT**
- 2 **TAKE CONTROL OF THE CONTENT LANDSCAPE**
- 3 **MAXIMIZE YOUR CONTENT WITH INTERACTIVITY**
- 4 **AMPLIFY YOUR VISUAL CONTENT**
- 5 **MEASURE A WIDE RANGE OF METRICS**

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1 Audit your visual content

The first step is to gather the entirety of your visual content and categorize every piece of multimedia and supporting content from every team across the organization—including images from decks and landing pages, as well as the content produced by the advertising and marketing teams. Often, organizations will invest in some kind of Digital Asset Management software to ensure that the assets are labeled consistently and made available to every team.

The key to effectively assessing and categorizing existing visual content is to map it to the organization's content goals, audiences and delivery methods to provide insight into its usefulness. Ehrlich noted this can be a substantial project, providing an excellent opportunity for an agency to offer it as a service to their clients, or for an in-house team to work cross-functionally with colleagues from marketing, sales, advertising and communications.

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2 Take control of the content landscape

Ensuring that an organization has assets that work well for a PR audience—and not just for advertising or marketing goals—requires a commitment to developing and maintaining the right assets. Hiring a content creator or agency is often worthwhile; however, where budget is more limited, Ehrlich advises that PR professionals learn how to create multimedia assets using some of the many tools available for everything from ideation to the creation of ready-to-go video assets.

“One of the biggest benefits of using image creation and editing tools is that it allows you to modify your assets and personalize them for each of your intended audiences and their place in your journey map,” says Ehrlich. “You want to think hard about what each of your audiences wants to see and hear from your company. Don’t simply repurpose content; aim to rebuild media pieces with new audiences in mind.”

It’s also essential to be selective about which tools to include. “Don’t bring on tools that are too complicated or too big or that have products and features you’re not going to use,” says Ehrlich. When assessing content creation tools, she recommends several considerations: Which one has the best set of images to represent your business? Which provides the right format? Which ones work on mobile, desktop? In practice, people will often require several different services to meet specific needs, so creating a shared tool testing budget for your team will help maximize the value to the organization.

CREATING IMAGES THAT MEDIA OUTLETS WILL USE

With the ability to select and edit their images, PR teams can focus on creating visuals that appeal to a media audience. “Media outlets want images that tell a complete story, but without the spin,” Ehrlich says, referencing Jeff Shulman’s recent blog post on [multimedia and public relations](#). “Products in action are fantastic as long as they’re not covered with logos. Consider adding props to stage scenes, to increase the natural connectivity with your product or your service, or to humanize the people in the scene.”

Ehrlich also recommends that PR professionals be sensitive to the broader context of images. “When you’re creating content now, you have to remember that COVID-19 has happened, and this has changed the rules of engagement,” says Ehrlich. “Images of large crowds, shaking hands, hugging may trigger reactions that you do not want.”

ENGAGING PR VIDEO

In the past, creating a video was time consuming and expensive, but today, new drop-and-drag tools allow PR people to quickly develop videos that enhance a media pitch. “Many companies are still creating brand videos to describe products or services that are being sold. They’re not discussing the impact of the news from an outside perspective,” says Ehrlich. “Media outlets want objective videos. They want a product overview, not a sales pitch. They want a soundbite that tells why it matters, not a soundbite that sells the product.”

Whether creating still or moving images, gifs or videos, Ehrlich recommends that all multimedia assets are named with a complete title. “This is probably the biggest mistake content creators make—by far. Most people don’t name their assets with actual usable terms, forgetting that when this goes out on the web, the title of the asset is the searchability title. So, if you want the content to appear in search, you’ve got to make sure that you name it as well.”

Ehrlich also recommends streamlining the approval process so that it supports the rapid creation of multimedia content by the PR team. “If you decide you’re going to create your content, but it takes a year or three months to get anything approved internally, you’re going to be wasting your time.”

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Maximize your content with interactivity

The battle for an audience's attention is fierce. Given how difficult it is to engage readers with multiple pieces of content, Ehrlich suggests that interactive media is a solution that can find readers consuming three to four times as much content as they usually would. "Interactive assets are the fastest way to attract, educate and convert audiences," says Ehrlich, "and they're a great way to repurpose existing content." With an interactive story arc and visual path people can follow, "You're not pushing content out, you're pulling audiences in."

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Amplify your visual content

As with all content, amplification is vital. What's more, companies must promote new content to ensure visibility. "The success of content is a blend of the content, the context of the content, where the audience is when they receive it and the reach," says Ehrlich. "Amplification without targeting is a fail—but so is targeting without amplification." Ehrlich recommends that PR teams partner internally to maximize the reach of content and to share earned coverage with marketing and advertising colleagues to further amplify the effectiveness.



5 Measure a wide range of metrics

Research shows that adding appropriate multimedia assets to content will increase views and engagement. Beyond simply tracking views, however, Ehrlich recommends measuring a variety of results, including visibility, ease of access via search engines and how different formats appeal to the PR audience.

Once people engage with the content, Ehrlich's key questions include whether it shortened the customer education time, created new discussions or decreased customer churn. From a media perspective, she considers how outlets pick up and use different kinds of content. The goal is to keep iterating and improving your results. "You want to measure everything and use your data to assess your new work, its effectiveness and how it can be used again moving forward," says Ehrlich.

Visual fluency programming is a journey, and the effectiveness of content can't be judged after a single use. "This is why owning the content from assessment and audit to creation is so important," Ehrlich says. "Because once you own this process, you can easily create a test, measure, assess and reuse." Today's audiences are skipping over advertisements at a faster rate than ever. They are opting to engage with the authentic stories PR teams are generating every day. With the range of easy-to-use tools at hand, it's the perfect time for PR people to step up and deliver authentic stories with tailored multimedia assets.

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30 Innovative Content Creation Tools*

Business Wire has found a number of useful online creation tools that can help companies create relevant content. Here are 30 of them:



CONTENT IDEATION

Is your content theme relevant? The tools below are designed to help you identify topics and keywords that are relevant to a business's present situation, and others that are more evergreen:

1. [HubSpot blog generator](#) – suggests blog topics based on the words you include
2. [BuzzSumo](#) – provides insights into topics and engagement levels
3. [SEMrush](#) – provides SEO analytics and data

Google owns many tools designed to help you target audiences, including:

4. [Think With Google](#) – allows you to input industry, business size and region for insight into the various marketing channels your customers are likely to use
5. [Keywords Everywhere](#) – helps identify key terms being used by your audiences right now

Google search – autosuggests topics that are most searched in relation to your business

Google Analytics Acquisition data – lets you see which audiences come at the start, middle or end of their journey



TEXT CREATION AND HEADLINE TESTING

These tools are designed to improve the quality of written content and sharpen headlines by focusing on clarity and more engaging word choices:

6. [Hemingway app](#) – reduce words and say what you mean clearly
7. [Grammarly](#) – correct grammatical errors and typos and improve readability
8. [Just Not Sorry app](#) – remove apologetic language
9. [AMI's Headline Analyzer](#) – determine the Emotional Marketing Value (EMV) score
10. [Coschedule](#) – improve conversions and engagement
11. [Sharethrough](#) – create engagement and impressions score with suggestions on how to improve

Google the headline to make sure there is not competing content appearing under the same title

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CONTENT CREATION*

These tools are designed to help designers and non-designers create and develop customized images and videos, including overlay texts, subtitles and animation, quickly and professionally:

Images

12. [Canva](#) – create templates, edit and share images
13. [Pablo](#) – create engaging social media quote images
14. [Adobe](#) – a range of visual design tools
15. [Be Funky](#) – apply photo effects, edit photos and create collages
16. [Venngage](#) – create infographics from templates
17. [Remove.bg](#) – remove the background from photos
18. [Pixaloop](#) – motion image tool that adds motion to still images
19. [Image Quote](#) – add text to graphics
20. [MIT's image popularity demo](#) – upload your images and see how popular that image can be
21. [Gratisography](#) – interesting stock photos
22. [Startup Stock Photos](#) – stock photos of well-done business scenes

Video

23. [Vidyard](#) – a platform to create, host and share video
24. [Animaker](#) – a platform for live-action and animated video
25. [Lumen5](#) – fast, on-demand video with full editing tools
26. [Wibbitz](#) – online short-form video
27. [Wochit](#) – an array of video creation and editing tools
28. [Kapwing](#) – providing subtitles, vital for the massive amount of video consumption on mute on social channels
29. [TubeChop](#) – editing tool to repurpose existing longer videos
30. [Giphy](#) – create animated gifs

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