

21 IDEAS BLUEPRINT SEVEN WAYS TO MAKE YOUR BLOG MORE VISUALLY APPEALING

Brought to you by: Lisa M Cope

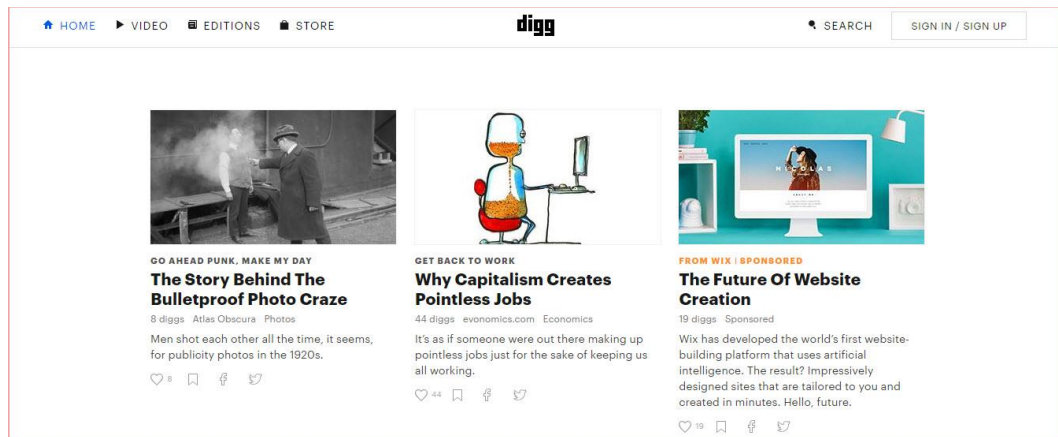
Seven Ways to Make Your Blog More Visually Appealing

Before there were words, our primitive ancestors made sense of the world through observing and seeing. The result is that 20% of our brain is dedicated to visual processing—something that is as natural to us as breathing.

Make the most of that instinctive and deep response in your readers by taking every opportunity to reinforce your messages with visual content.

Here are 21 ideas to help you make your blog more visually appealing.

1. Curate Other People's Visual Content



You don't have to create every graphic from scratch. Keep your eye out for visual content that really speaks to you, and build a blog post about it.

The correct way to curate content: Take a graphic, video or post that really speaks to you and, in your own words, tell people why (i.e. your own take on the topic). Provide a link to the original content, and credit the creator—but include a short summary and graphic from that content as the focal point of your post.

(Check out the 'big' aggregator sites like [DIGG](#)—they curate content so expertly half the time you'll forget they did!)

2. Capture Them with Motion

Remember that motion catches our attention somewhat akin to the way a laser toy catches the attention of a cat! Motion also feels interactive—we are participating just by watching a video, whereas photographs and illustrations are static: One glance, and we're done. We know what it was about and—unlike with a video—we don't have to wait to find out. (Go to DIGG's [video section](#) and note how the livestreaming videos compare with the static video covers.)

Use this principle whenever you have an extra-important message to impart.

3. Use the Principle of Repetition to Give Your Graphics Even More Impact

A love of repetition is hardwired into human DNA (that's how we first learned how to learn). Just think of your three-year-old, wanting the same story, night after night. It isn't the surprise ending that delights her so: It's the same words, said in the same way. It's the same scenario repeated multiple times (think "Goldilocks and the Three Bears").

We carry that early imprinting over into adult life. That's why audiences respond to repetition in movie memes; why we read what is basically the same cozy mystery plot told in seven different ways. Why we trust people we know more than people we don't know.

Use that bit of basic psychology in your blog. Always include repeating graphic elements in the same spot—for example, a logo in your resource box; a cartoon 'mascot' for a particular newsletter column; the same template for your newsletter every month; the same graphic placement and size in your posts.

4. Use Fonts to Reinforce Your Message



Take a tip from movie makers and book cover designers—use fonts to reinforce your message. For example, you will often see fantasy novel book covers with titles in 'medieval' or 'Celtic' fonts. Or you will see a movie title whose font and font effects reinforce both the actual meaning of the title and its mood. For example, see how "The Shining" is written in text that seems to glow ... but the peaceful scene it is overlaid upon and the very blurriness of the text seem

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incongruous, hinting that in this case, ‘shining’ might not be a positive attribute. (The immense, grey masses of mountain underscore this.)

You can find this example plus several more on the [Videomaker](#).

5. Remember ‘Less is More’

And now that we’ve given you tips for enhancing your graphics, remember that too many special effects and too much repetition within a graphic is kind of like melodrama in a soap opera or a romance novel. By the third time you read that “tears poured down Lucretia’s face” you’re ready to throw her a towel (as you close the book) ... and by the fourth time she “trembles visibly”, you’re confused whether you’re reading about Lucretia or Bambi.

The ‘less is more’ principle is ESPECIALLY important for graphics most of your audience will view on mobiles. Too many elements in a picture detract from the message.

Use graphic elements wisely. Once your visual has made its point—you’re done!

6. Keep Your Slides Simple

If you are going to use slides during webinars, videos or seminar presentations, keep them simple. Only put a limited number of points on each slide—and give your audience time to assimilate the information. Use lots of white space to emphasize the important information in your text. And do give your slide a heading that states, simply, what that particular slide is about.

Remember, the more complex the information, the less text there should be on each slide.

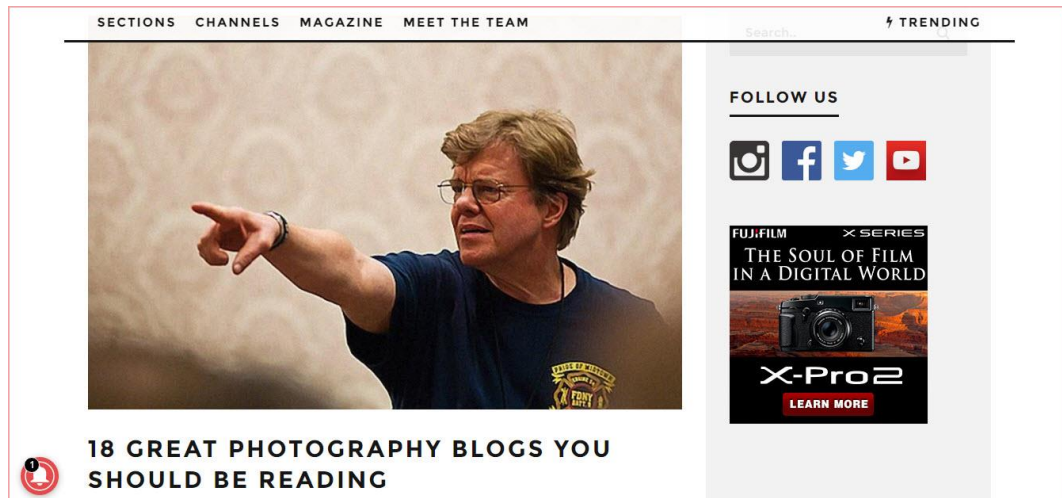
7. Make Sure Your Images are Relevant

For a graphic to be effective in your blog, it has to not only catch attention, it has to be relevant. It should repel people who won’t benefit from your message and speak emotionally to people who *are* your ideal reader.

You will increase your chances of achieving this if you ask yourself three questions before using any particular graphic:

1. “Is this graphic the best one I could use to illustrate this point/post?”
2. “Why is it the best graphic?”
3. “Is there anything in this graphic that contradicts my message?”

8. Try Placing Your Headlines UNDER your Graphic



Graphic designers and magazines such as [Resource](#) magazine know this trick: Putting a post headline UNDER the graphic that illustrates it.

Try it—and see if you notice an increase in conversions.

9. If You Do Your Own Photography—Learn How!

The graphic above is a good reminder of this principle: If you take your own photographs, get into the habit of reading photography books, blogs and print magazine—or take a digital photography course, so you can take your photographs from good to “WOW!”

10. Use Images that Tell a Story

The most mesmerizing images are ones that tell a story. They make your reader wonder things like, “Why is he doing that? What’s going to happen next? What is she crying about?”

(And make sure it’s the same story your text is telling!)

11. Use Images that Show What to Do

The only exception to the “tell a story” rule is an image that shows someone what you are talking about—literally. So if you are writing, “Click on the blue button under the ‘Finances’ tab” then a screenshot of a mouse clicking on that spot would be effective reinforcement for your reader’s learning process.

12. Add a 'Pin it!' Button to Your Own Original Images



If you provide original images on your blog, consider allowing people to pin these images to their Pinterest accounts without having to ask you for permission. Every time they use the 'Pin it!' button, you will end up getting the credit you deserve automatically on Pinterest.

Use a handy WordPress plugin like the [Pinterest Pin It Button for Images](#) to make the process easy for you too!

13. Keep Background Images Understated

Make sure they enhance your blog's mood and message—but never, ever get in the way of your headlines and posts.

14. Invest in Images that Trigger Emotions

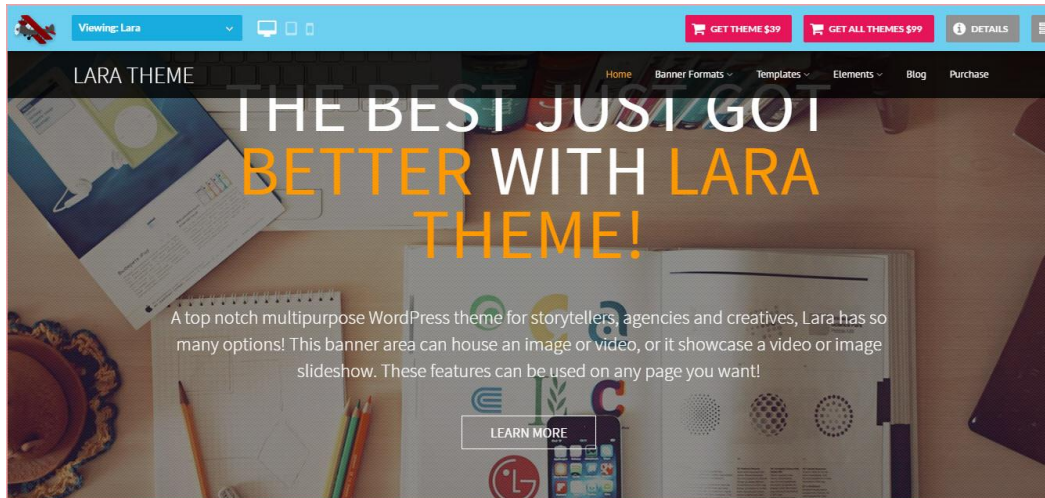
Nothing will make your blog post more irresistible to your ideal reader than an image that triggers the correct emotion. So don't be afraid to use highly-charged photographs ... and do remember that positive emotions trigger more shares than negative ones.

15. Don't Use the First Image You See

When choosing images from a stock site, don't go for the first image you find—especially if you have actually seen the image before on someone else's site. Keep searching until you find the perfect image.

Overused stock images can actually detract from your blog's value, making you seem slick, insincere and 'the same as all those others'.

16. Consider Using a Video Header Theme



Instead of having a static photo for your blog cover photo, consider a repeating-loop video in your header area instead. Choose one that creates a positive feeling and tells a story—one that’s emotionally relevant to your blog focus, your brand and your ideal reader/viewer. (Try NimbusThemes.com popular [Lara Theme](#).)

Using this type of theme won’t work for everyone—but at least consider it, and ask ... “would this theme work for me?”

17. Use a Hashtag with Your Social Media Graphic

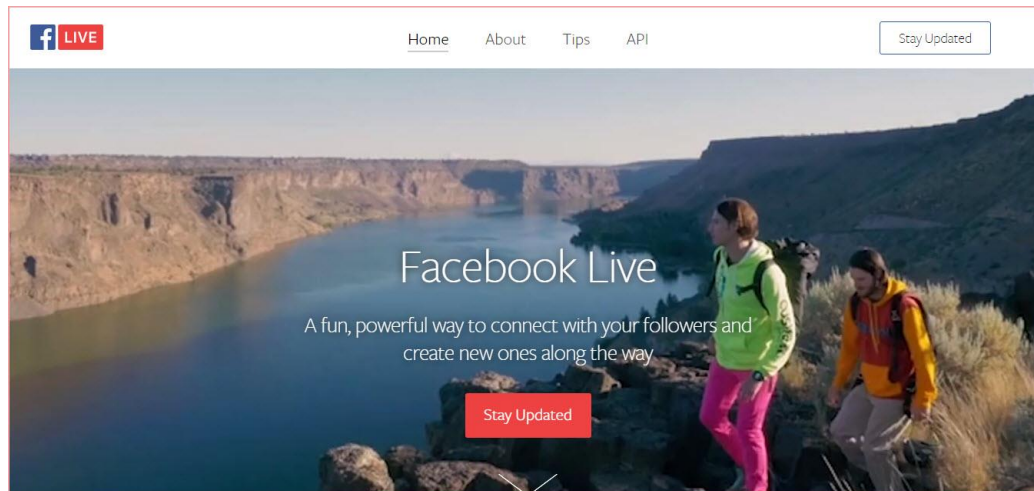
According to [Buffer Social](#), photos and image quotes posted to social media with a hashtag show an increase of 16% in shares. Find relevant hashtags, ALWAYS check them in Twitter Search to make sure you’re not using one that doesn’t mean what you think it means (or belongs strictly to someone’s brand)—and ask people to share.

18. Track Your Results

Just because the experts say a certain type of graphic or a particular hashtag create a certain increase in shares doesn’t mean that will necessarily work for your blog. (Use your website dashboard stats and your social media insights sections.)

ALWAYS track your hashtags and visual posts, to see whether or not they really do increase reader engagement—and be prepared for surprises. You may find a certain visual type you’ve been dismissing is actually your most popular—and vice versa.

19. Check Out Facebook Live



Different types of video sometimes work better than other types, so experiment and see which ones your visitors respond to the best. A good rule of thumb: If something is happening in the moment, raw footage and livestream usually adds to the excitement. You can achieve this feeling and draw your visitors into experiencing exciting moments or momentous events with you by posting Instagram or Snapchat photos, using looping Vine videos ... or going livestream with [Facebook Live](#).

But don't stop there: Get creative, and figure out other relevant ways to use Facebook Live (for example, creating a weekly video event).

See what other people are using Facebook Live for by visiting the [Facebook Live Map](#) and clicking on any node ... anywhere in the world!

20. Try Vine for Twitter

Speaking of Twitter's [Vine app](#), try making these short, less-than-six-second looping videos for yourself. (To see Vine in action—and get ideas—check out Mashable's [The Beginner's Guide to Vine](#).)

21. Add Video to Your Slideshare Presentations

Get into the habit of thinking outside the box when dealing with visuals. For example, don't just create the traditional Slideshare slides: [Add your videos](#) to your Slideshare presentations.

These are just 21 ways to make your blog more visually appealing ... but your best results will come when you get into the habit of looking for your own ways to maximize your blog's visual content.

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I hope that you found the tips in this short report helpful. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. You can reach me through my help desk at <http://www.lisamcope.com>

Best wishes for your success,
Lisa M Cope