



DIALOGUEMARKETING



**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
OF VISUAL DESIGN**

**VISUALS THAT
ENGAGE IN
1.3 SECONDS**



THEGROWTHFACTORY

INTRODUCTION

Killer Visual Communication is more critical than ever. We get all of 1.3 seconds to catch someone's eye in today's connected world. We live in an age of information overload. "Every two days we create more information than we did from the dawn of civilization up until 2003. Winners in the blizzard of content are skilled professionals who understand the art of instant visual story telling

Humans can only consume so much at a given time. Our inboxes overflow with e-mail, several social networks flood our day with real time updates. Mobile devices buzz and beep irrelevant messages all day long. Our attention is shrinking. To cut through the clutter, it's never being more important to create content that's useful but more important ...aesthetically brilliant.

Today's consumer gravitates toward visual content. A picture is our short cut and needs to begin telling the story within 1.3 seconds. Photos generate 53% more likes on Facebook than the average post. Art Directors are skilled at creating quality photos, images, info graphics, and other visual representations to aid story telling the consumer actually wants to engage, consume and share. However, while in house marketing departments know how to operate the systems that deliver these interruptions, they fall way short in the art of design, intrigue and storytelling.



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CHAPTER 1

WHY CLIENTS DON'T CREATE KILLER VISUALS

Let's address reasons why creating images, snapping photos and banging out sticky presentations has become challenging for marketers.

Firstly, compelling visual content today has to be less about showcasing product features, and more about appealing to the viewer's lifestyle, values, and desires – especially if it's going to be shared on social media channels.

Photography needs to be less staged and more editorial in style. It needs to engender an emotional response. Don't believe us? Try sharing a stock photo on Facebook and see the lack of interaction you'll get. Post a photo of your customer service team in wellies and mud at a concert and you will get a reaction.

Unfortunately the task of creating visuals to permeate social channels falls onto the shoulders of non-designers on the internal client marketing team. More often than not, they're not designers or photographers. Yet they are required to work with a photo library populated with product, marketing campaigns, or free stock photos. The images that thrive in social networks – (get shared and commented on) – are the exact opposite of what companies have at their disposal. In today's real-time world, marketers have to be agile. They can't be waiting around for

resources to appear from thin air to get content created. Professional Art Directors know what works in that critical 1.3 second time frame. It's time for clients to take visual content creation out of internal hands and allow your creative agency manage the most important part of the content creation. The visual lure.





CHAPTER 2

VISUAL WINNERS

1. Video

Although the focus of this e-book is on imagery, we won't deny that great video is one of the most effective ways to tell a story. Take a look at our resource kit on [How to Use Online Video for Marketing](#) if you want more help with video creation. You might also find the information on Twitter's new short-form video creation app, Vine, useful. You can learn more about it in our recent e-book, [How to Attract Customers with Twitter & Vine](#).

2. Photos

Great photos evoke emotions and tell stories, and storytelling is crucial to the social success of your content. Think about how you can give your audience a behind-the-scenes look into your company's day to day, and how to translate what your brand represents visually. Do you have a picture of your first office? Do you have photos from when you upgraded from that first office to some swankier digs? You could show that before and after process in photos to tell the story of an important, bitter-sweet milestone in your company's history. Or maybe your staff does something fun together to unwind –capture that moment to help differentiate yourself as more than just any old company. Whatever you

decide to capture, be sure to care about quality photography. Focus on posting images with good production value for maximum impact. Take a look at the [Nasty Gal Pinterest page](#) for a glimpse of what high quality looks like.

3. Images

Although the focus of this e-book is on imagery, we won't deny that great video is one of the most effective ways to tell a story. Take a look at our resource kit on [How to Use Online Video for Marketing](#) if you want more help with video creation. You might also find the information on Twitter's new short-form video creation app, Vine, useful. You can learn more about it in our recent e-book, [How to Attract Customers with Twitter & Vine](#).

4. Info graphics

One of the best ways to help your audience absorb a lot of data points at once is to present them all in a graphic that more easily guides the eye than a giant block of text. National Geographic were the first publication to leverage the info graphic with amazing maps and wall charts that their readers ate up. USA today become a hit for





the American reader who was time starved and in some cases entirely illiterate. Only recently with the surge of content the infographic has made a return as it allows a short cut to tell a great story. Take a peek at this data-packed infographic about The Shift to Visual Social Media. And if you want to make your own, make sure you choose a topic that your target audience would find valuable, and make sure the final product encompasses these ten traits.

Ever wonder why info graphics and data visualization have become so popular over the last year or two?

Short Attention Spans: With the constant hustle and bussle of modern life, people have short attention spans. This is demonstrated by the fact that most people will decide to leave a website or continue exploring it in the first 2-4 seconds of seeing the page. With very little time to convince people to stick around, infographics and visualizations are a more effective way to literally catch peoples' eye.

Information Overload: With the world's information currently doubling every two years, it is no wonder people experience information overload. With smartphones, tablets and the ubiquity of the internet, people are constantly receiving, analyzing, sharing and

creating new information. Due to this overload you need to stick out to get people's attention. Creating a compelling visualization of data or information can make it really stick out from all of the other noise of day-to-day life.

Easy to Understand: As humans, we are very visual creatures. Our ability to quickly interpret visual information is far greater than that of written words. By creating visualizations you can make complex information easier to understand.

Reading Retention : People have horrible retention rates for the information they read. According to the data sited in the info graphic on data visualization below, people only remember about 20% of what they read.

More Engaging: With such a large volume of new content published every day, people are inundated. By creating something that is visually compelling, people are more likely to be engaged.

People Love Sharing Info graphics: The visual nature of the human species is highlighted by just how much people love sharing info graphics and interesting data visualisations. This is demonstrated by the widespread adoption of info graphics for link building and viral



marketing. If people have a choice between something that is visually compelling and easy to digest they are going to choose that over other forms such as written word that takes longer and more energy to digest.

5. Presentations or Slideshows:

Remarkable presentations convey educational information succinctly, so if your company is trying to establish itself as an industry thought leader, presentations shouldn't be overlooked. Presentations are also another great way to break away from heavy text found in e-books and whitepapers. Quick tips, examples, images and data can easily and effectively be formatted into a series of slides that become even easier to share. Upload a PowerPoint presentation to a site like SlideShare, and consider embedding it into a blog post for additional exposure.

Want to know someone who's done SlideShare well? Martin Weigel from Wieden + Kennedy. Check out the presentation he put together to "drop bombs on marketing BS."





CHAPTER 3

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF KILLER DESIGN

1. Thou Shalt Understand Thy Content's Purpose

Content creation and design is first and foremost a job of solving problems. Designers identify a need, use their training to fill that gap, create the content to satisfy that need, and then send it out into the world for others to enjoy. So, to think like a designer, get good at identifying and understanding the core problem or need. Take the time to carefully consider the need, ask the relevant questions, creating content that blows viewers and readers away.

2. Thou Shalt Establish a Hierarchy

Once you understand what you are trying to achieve, and have brainstormed some solutions, you can begin considering exactly how you are going to go about putting it all together. Understanding the importance of your pieces of content – both in and of themselves and in relation to one another – will not only build the framework from which you can begin to make design decisions, but will also ensure that you present your information in an easily digestible manner – which is exactly what good design is all about.

You do this by creating an information hierarchy, which involves determining the relative importance of your written and visual elements in order to prioritize them. Begin this process by looking at your content at a macro level; consider all of the required copy, calls-to-action, links, and any other written or visual elements that need to be included in the final deliverable. Evaluate how they each compare in terms of their importance and ability to help you accomplish your goal. Then, let your information hierarchy be your guide to simple, elegant and more effective design.

3. Thou Shalt Respect Simplicity

More often than not, less is more. You've heard it a million times: keep it simple, stupid. Cliché or not, this couldn't hold more true for design. Unfortunately, there is a terrible misconception that good design is flashy, ornate, loud or otherwise "eye-catching." Don't believe it for a second. Design is not art. Yes, you can appreciate and respect it in the same way you do works of art (perhaps even more). In the end, though, design serves a very different and distinct role. Rather than focusing primarily on form or expression (as is often the case with art), the primary function of design is the exact opposite – to support function.





When making your design decisions, always keep in mind that the goal of design is to support the function or purpose of your content with form. The best way to ensure that you do this is to simply try not to do too much. Avoid actively trying to make your design unnecessarily ornamental. The content should always be the focus, not the design. Good design shouldn't be obvious. In fact, it's often completely invisible.

This Facebook page cover photo for Mad Men is a great example of keeping things simple. The black and white photos of the characters give you a glimpse into their personalities, while the red text breaks the monochromatic colour scheme to make the only three words in the image stand out.

This Facebook page cover photo, on the other hand, is luckily not a real one (thank goodness). But it's nevertheless a perfect example of visual chaos. There are too many arrows, too many images, and too many calls-to-action competing for your attention.

4. Thou Shalt Keep it Legible

By now, you should be noticing a common theme among these commandments; i.e. simplicity and clarity are key – whether creating an

image for a Facebook post or laying out an entire ebook. One thing that is commonly overlooked when thinking about design, though, is the fact that your text itself can create its own visual noise. If it can't or won't be read, then why bother including it at all? To avoid confusion among readers or viewers, there are common sense (and commonly ignored) solutions to increasing legibility, such as avoiding placing light text on a light background or dark text on a dark background. However, the real pitfalls of using text incorrectly don't deal with the placement at all, but rather the amount of it. Marketers and content creators love their words, and for good reason; they're the tools they most use to communicate. But when it comes to creating well designed content, this is a bad thing. Take a moment to consider if there are unnecessary words you can delete.

Writing concisely reduces the visual noise of your content and ensures that only the critical or most important content remains. Finally, don't worry if you start feeling too delete-happy. Just remember Steve Krug's Third Law of Usability: Get rid of half the words on each page and then get rid of half of what's left.





5. Thou Shalt Provide Adequate Spacing.

Allow the visual and written elements in your design to have a little personal space. Call it “margins,” “padding,” or “proximity” – we mean the same thing here. Whether designer or non-designer, it’s easy to tell when spacing isn’t quite right.

Negative space (space not occupied by any visual or written elements) is okay. In fact, it can be great. By allowing yourself a bit more breathing room, you ensure that the design appears clean and clear. More importantly, you increase the impact of your most important bits of information, such as headlines or CTAs. Follow these steps to ensure you have enough space: first, arrange your content according to the information hierarchy you established earlier. Then, consider how the spacing should complement that hierarchy. Most importantly, make sure your spacing is consistent. Margins should be the same width and height, and leading (the amount of space between two lines of text) should be the same for all similar types of text. Finally, if the volume of text in your ebook or presentation requires you to reduce your spacing to the point that everything feels cramped, either move some of the information or remove it altogether. Take a PowerPoint presentation, for example. It is better to have 50 slides – each with one important bit of

information – than it is to have five slides, each packed with 10 equally important bits of information

6. Thou Shalt Align Thy Elements.

Similar to spacing, alignment is a concept that everyone understands and – once pointed out – is rarely ever a problem again. When laying out your visual and written information, make sure that all of the elements are positioned in a balanced relation to one another. Always position your design elements to sit on the same line. Although there are exceptions, it’s better to err on the side of caution with alignment as a non-designer. Alignment will ensure your design is clean, without creating any unnecessary tension or focal points. There are times when more advanced designers will consciously arrange certain elements so that they sit outside of the standard grid system. The purpose of this is to create a tension point, calling attention to the visual element that is disrupting the linear alignment. For non-designers, this should be resisted, or at the most employed rarely. Non-designers who focus on aligning their written and visual elements in a very simple, clean way will vastly improve the quality of their content.





7. Thou Shalt Coordinate Thy Colours.

One of the first things we learn as children are the colours of the rainbow. You'd think spending our entire lives living in a world of colour would make colour easy to understand, even for non-designers. Wrong. The tendency is to try to do too much to make a design more eye-catching, resulting in nothing more than an eyesore. To avoid this, the first thing you should consider is the kind of feeling you want your content to elicit. If you're aiming to present a more humanist or energetic tone, you should choose a warm colour, such as orange, yellow, or red. If you want your content to give off a calmer, more professional feel, choose a cool colour, such as purple, blue, or green. Choosing colours that align with the tone you're going for will create a sense of harmony in your design. Likewise, an excessive use of both warm and cool colours will create a muddled, confusing appearance. Additionally, be mindful of the connotation associated with certain colours. Typically, red has a negative connotation. It's usually associated with cancellation or error. In contrast, green has a very positive connotation, often associated with success or progression. Aligning the purpose of your content with a colour having a similar connotation can be a great way to choose which colours to include in your design. Lastly, don't forget

any images you use contain their own colour, all of which need to be considered when deciding which colour to use.

8. Thou Shalt Not Overuse Drop Shadows.

It would be impossible to write a helpful DIY guide to design without including at least some mention of the infamous drop shadow – oft overused shadows added to text or images to add depth or distinction. The same way non-photographers add a filter such as Sepia to make their photograph “look better,” non-designers love to add drop shadows to their designs. The fact is, though, drop shadows don't make every design better. If that was the case, professional designers would use them everywhere. However, they don't. Rather, successful designers understand that every effect serves a particular purpose and should only be used when that specific purpose is beneficial. The purpose of a drop shadow is to add distinction to visual or written information by creating depth and bringing the affected information to the forefront. This is a great result, and often exactly what you want or need to do to certain elements from time to time. However, overusing the effect has the exact opposite effect. If you think back to our second Commandment regarding creating a hierarchy, you'll





recall that we need to prioritize which bits of information need to hold the most weight. If you're adding an effect such as the drop shadow to every written or visual element, then you're actually accomplishing the exact opposite goal, i.e. give distinction to no one particular bit of information. The takeaway; effects are great when used with purpose, but don't use them just for the sake of using them.

9. Thou Shalt Strive for Consistency.

Simply put, if two or more design elements serve the same function, make sure they look and act the same. On a very high level, the same aesthetic, tone, and messaging should permeate all facets of the brand. On a more granular level, all visual or written elements within an e-book serving the same function should have the same look and feel. When it comes to designing specific content, consistency involves using the same fonts and font sizes for text of the same kind. Make sure that actionable items, such as links or calls-to-action, all share a similar colour and appearance; align your margins so that are all the same width and height; etc.

The important thing about consistency is that you consider it at all. Remember, good design tends to disappear. If you pay close attention and focus on maintaining consistency, there is a greater chance of this happening since everything will just seem to "fit."

10. Thou Shalt Harmonize Visual and Verbal.

The last Commandment for do-it-yourself design involves synthesizing both written and visual elements. For most non-designers, content creation typically revolves almost entirely around writing copy. Naturally, then, added visual elements are more of an afterthought, seeking simply break up the monotony of text or page layout. The best content, though, is created when both text and visuals are combined to tell the story and present the information in a more powerful, more engaging, and ultimately more successful way than either visual or verbal could do alone.

Avoid this by planning ahead. Whether writing ebooks, checklists, tweets or emails, copywriters should already be considering how they can express that information visually. This doesn't mean identifying the concepts worthy of bold or enlarged lettering; it means identifying





where visual elements could completely replace large selections of copy to tell the same story in a significantly more memorable, less time consuming way. By finding the sweet spot between visual and verbal storytelling and being cognizant of the 9 previous commandments of DIY design, even non-designers can create designs that are memorable, impactful, and most of all, successful.





SUMMARY

Now that you've learned the 10 Commandments of DIY Design and have a toolset to put those commandments into good use, you should feel both inspired and prepared to go take your own visual designs to the next level.

- Get your social media and content teams ramped up on the basics of DIY design.
- Go turn existing pieces of written content into presentations. Break up text with meaningful visuals.
- Make sure your social media content calendar always has a healthy dose of visuals lined up, and start creating images specifically for your audiences on Facebook, Pinterest and other social channels.
- Experiment with letting just your visuals do the talking (ex: post a photo with overlaid text to your company Facebook page and monitor interaction rates).
- Work with your team to designate a shared folder to use as your company's ever-growing image library.
- And, of course, track your results.

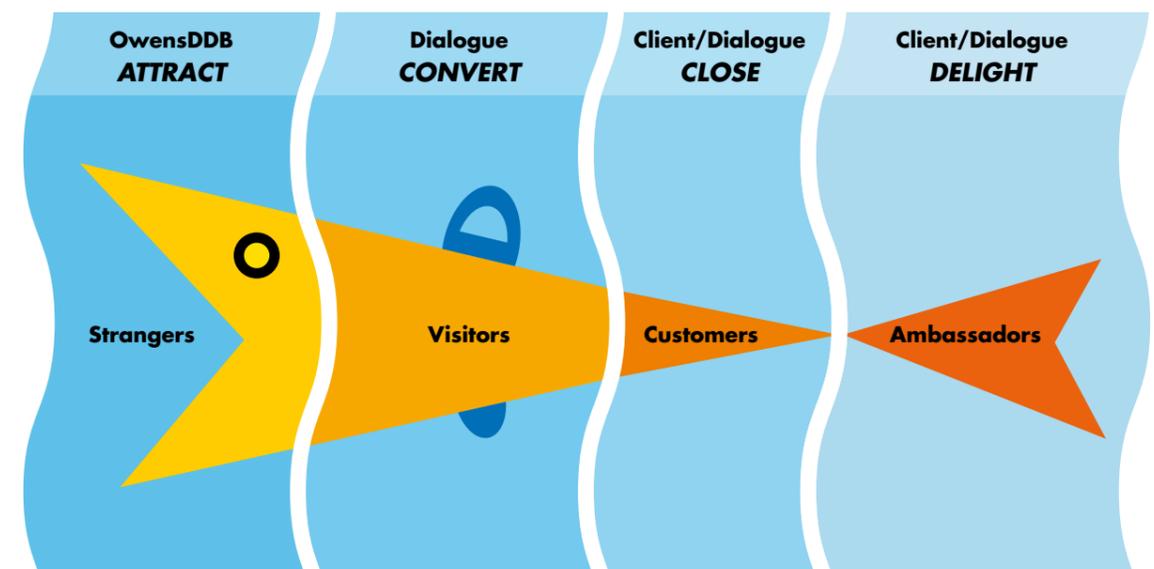


TURNING STRANGERS INTO CUSTOMERS AND PROMOTERS OF YOUR BUSINESS

We believe that consumers don't trust businesses the way they used to. In today's connected world our most trusted sources are family, friends, colleagues or influencers whose unbiased opinions we respect. Our creative marketing content must be blindingly brilliant and relevant so that consumer's will want to engage with it and share it.

Dialogue and OwensDDB have developed a new process called '**Tidal Marketing**[®]'. It leverages the best of Inbound and Outbound Marketing lead generation strategies to deliver authentic messaging that today's consumers engage with across their preferred channels **at just the right time they need it.**

Tidal Marketing



We will help you turn your prospects into customers and promoters of your business. Click on our Tidal Marketing **fish** above to set up a face-to-face meeting that will show you the new way to market in the connected world.



ABOUT DIALOGUE

Dialogue and Owens DDB set up a joint venture 20 years ago. We created internationally acclaimed work for some of the largest brands across the Globe. In October 2013, Dialogue and Owens DDB, two of the most decorated strategic and creative agencies in Ireland, **reunited under one roof** to provide a new Advertising and CRM offering to the market.

LET'S TALK

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