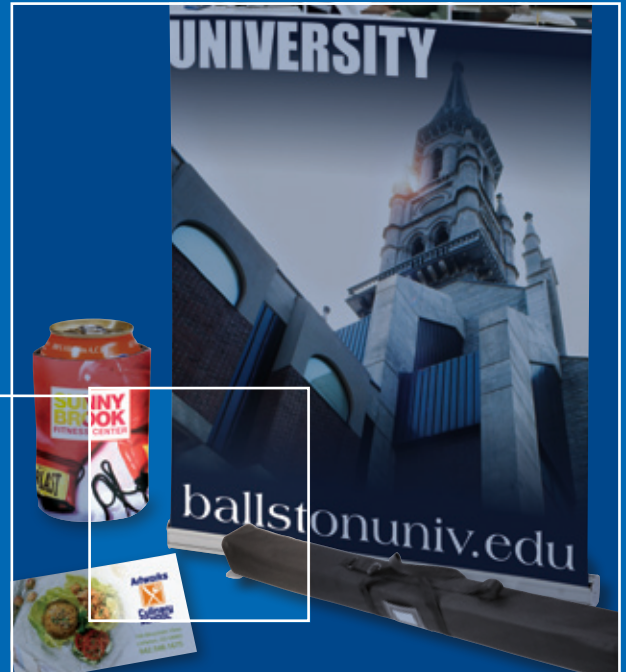


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The power of images

Most of us have heard it said that 'A picture is worth 1,000 words' and this truism is not confined just to pictures. It is often the image that truly defines the message, without the needs for words - think Nike swoosh or McDonalds golden arches. A carefully chosen image can reinforce a message or convey feelings or emotions that words sometimes cannot. Images draw people into a story, improve aesthetics of a layout and bring attention to a message's 'call to action'. The key to using images effectively is to understand what makes an image impactful. Then, images should be chosen with careful consideration to purpose: How & where it will be reproduced, rights and royalties, budget, size, optimisation and other factors in order to ensure that the use of images is strategic, cost efficient and successful.

The power of an image

There's more to the choice of an image than you might at first suppose. Indeed choosing an image that is most effective with your message and intended audience has a little to do with psychology and the way the mind interprets or relates to an image. Given a basic understanding of this psychology enables communicators to choose images that not only look good, but feel good and make sense with the message being delivered.

The ability to construct meaning from visual images in advertising and other communications is sometimes referred to as "visual literacy"¹ and the practice of using images to strategically assist messaging in communications is referred to as "visual communications."

Images make it possible for us to²:

Understand

Sometimes it's just easier to explain something in pictures than it is in words—like a colour or how to assemble a flat pack wardrobe. Additionally, as communication continues to become faster paced and global, people expect to gain information and knowledge quickly in a format they can easily understand. Too much text can overwhelm, confuse or bore the mind. Images help to break up text and illustrate a point or a product faster, and in less space, than can be explained in text. Images use understanding to reinforce a message; if an image conflicts with the understanding offered to the audience in text, a disconnect occurs. "Any image that people can't make sense of confuses the message," explains

¹ Bamford, Anne. "Visual Literacy." Adobe Systems Inc., Web. 12 Feb. 2010. <http://www.adobe.com/uk/education/pdf/adobe_visual_literacy_paper.pdf>.

² McClinnis, Debbie. "How to Use Imagery to Create a Memorable Message." MarketingProfs: Marketing Resources for Marketing Professionals. Web. 11 Feb. 2010. <<http://www.marketingprofs.com/tutorials/macinnis1.asp>>.



professional photographer and designer, [Annette Hartman](#).³

Remember that an image is a universal language. Images should hit on an emotion you wish to convey, focus on a product you sell, demonstrate directions, show the subject of your text or illustrate a service that you offer. They reinforce your message, either subliminally or overtly.

Recall

Research has suggested that 72 hours after seeing a message presented with images, 65% of people can recall the message, compared to only 10% recall in people who have seen the message presented with text alone.⁴ Perhaps it's not entirely important to your business or organisation that someone recall points made in a brochure or in an article, but from a marketing standpoint this tactic can be key. Help audiences remember your brand, Web site, product or message by choosing images that connect the dots between the written or spoken word and the message you are trying to convey.

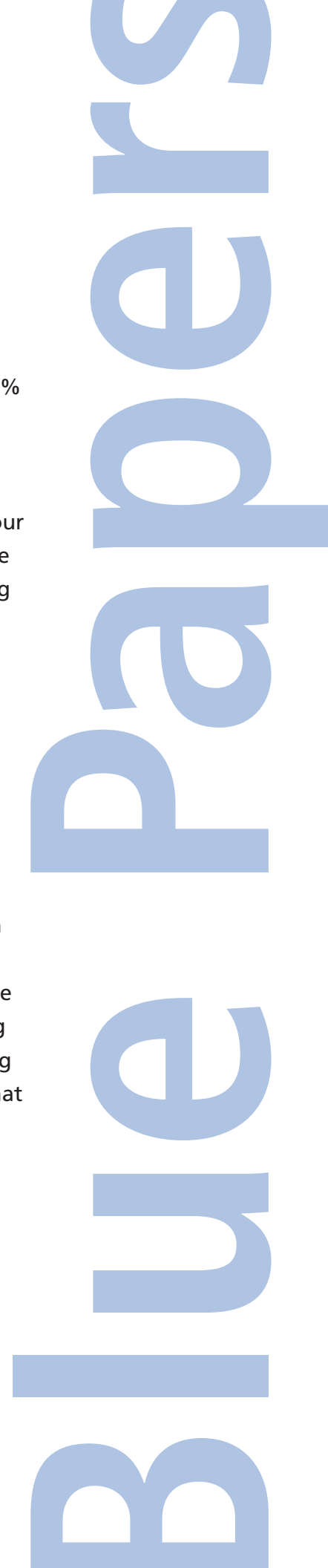
Experience

Especially online, it would be difficult to sell a product to a consumer without showcasing photos of the product. Photos set expectations and allow consumers to feel more informed about the purchases they are making by letting them experience or interact with a product in a small but important way prior to the point of sale. Images also have the ability to spark our imagination in ways that text sometimes can't. For instance, a photo of a happy child better conveys the experience of that child than text ever could. In seeing the experiences of others, the mind is better able to envision itself in these same experiences. Visualizations from these experiences can increase the emotional impact of text or prompt a strong desire to become the subject of the advert with the belief that purchasing a product or service is all that a person needs to do in order to achieve that experience.

These three psychological factors - understanding, recall, experience - work together in the minds of audiences to make sense of the messages they encounter. For a business or organisation these factors can mean the difference between a browser, a buyer, a bystander or a brand champion.

³ Hartman, Annette. "Interview with Annette Hartman." Telephone interview. 17 Feb. 2010.

⁴ "The Importance of Pictures." *The lawyering survival guide | Lawyerist*. 14 Jan. 2010. Web. 12 Feb. 2010. <http://lawyerist.com/the-importance-of-pictures/>.



Strategically selecting an image

Beyond psychology, the strategy of selecting images for use in any medium goes much further than addressing whether or not an image makes sense for your audience and message. Selecting images also requires knowledge of what makes an image great.

Hartman suggests that the best images follow the most basic guidelines of photography. "Images should be framed in some way, something should be in the image to draw the eye to the subject of the photo," says Hartman. "Leading lines also help in creating aesthetically appealing guides for the eye while other guidelines can convey different meanings or emotions as can the overall composition."⁵

Specifically, the guidelines Hartman refers to that make for the best image include⁶:

Point of interest

Every good image has a specific idea, topic or subject to which a viewer's eyes are attracted. Other elements in the image should support and focus attention on the point of interest so it alone is emphasized. Images that lack a point of interest or contain multiple points of interest are confusing to the viewer.



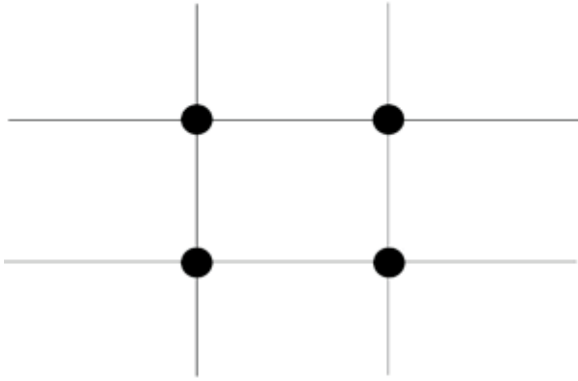
Subject placement

Amateur photographers often assume that the subject of a photo should be in the centre of a photo. While this may hold true for headshots and close-up images of a products, it's not necessarily true of all images. In photography, the basic rule of subject placement is called the principle of thirds. This rule is based on the fact that the human eye is naturally drawn to a point about two-thirds up a page. Good images include the point of

⁵ Hartman, Annette. "Interview with Annette Hartman." Telephone interview. 17 Feb. 2010.

⁶ "Basic Photography Techniques - Photographic Composition, Center of interest, Subject placement, Simplicity, Viewpoint and camera angle, Balance." Photography Composition Articles Library. Web. 20 Feb. 2010. <http://photoinf.com/General/NAVY/Photographic_composition_Balance.htm>.

interest located around one of the intersection points, rather than in the centre of the image, as illustrated here:



Perspective

Perspective is essentially the way real three-dimensional objects are represented in an image that has a two-dimensional plane. Perspective can serve to give viewers a sense of relationship of objects to one another and is also used to create the illusion of lines—known as leading lines—that use subjects to draw the eye to the point of interest in an image, like this image below. The city skyline draws the eye to the woman:



Balance

Balance in image composition is what makes images appear harmonious. Each element of an image has a certain amount of value in respect to all the other elements. For example, objects in the upper part of an image can seem heavier than objects of the same size in the lower part of an image, or intensely interesting objects can seem to have more compositional weight.



Contrast of colours, tones and textures in imagery can emphasise certain parts of an image or direct a viewer's attention to the point of interest. In black and white images, contrast is considered the difference in subject tones from white to grey to black or from the lightest tone to the darkest tone. In colour photography, the use of different colours creates contrast. The below example shows how a photo's focus can be used to create contrast with colour:



Framing

Framing is also a guideline used to direct the viewer's attention to the primary subject of a picture. Positioned around the subject, a tree or an archway, for example, can create a frame within the picture area. Subjects enclosed by a frame become separated from the rest of the picture and are emphasised. It should be noted that an element used as a frame should not draw attention to itself, or serve as the subject of interest in and of itself. Ideally, the frame should relate to the theme of the picture. As an example, the picture below shows two trees framing the sun on a snowy day:



Bottom line, not only is there psychology behind imagery there's science behind it too. In understanding what makes a good image, your business or organisation is supplied with the knowledge to use images in ways that work the best for your message and audience.

Types of images

The use of images is not limited to photographs. The term⁷ also includes logos, icons, illustrations and other graphics—some of which are referred to as vector graphics or images. Technically speaking, the difference between a photograph and a vector image is the shape. Photographs are comprised of tiny dots called pixels. When photographic images are altered incorrectly or displayed at an inappropriate size, these pixels can become more evident and the actual image less clear to the eye; in other words, the pixels are responsible for the overall resolution of an image. Vector images are comprised of solid lines and curves, and generally speaking, can be reproduced multiple times in all different sizes with limited deterioration in the quality of the image. Consideration should be given when producing logos and icons to cultural differences and the potential for different interpretations as to the meaning/emotion invoked by the image in different parts of the world. The Red Cross for example is the Red Crescent in Islamic states.

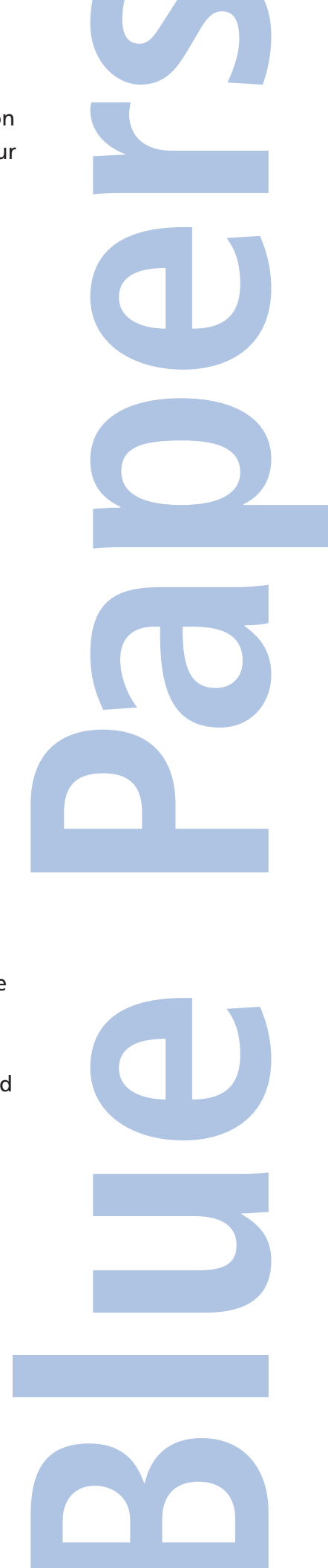
Obtaining images

Once upon a time, the only way to obtain an image was to hire a photographer or purchase stock photos. Today, with opportunities made possible through the Internet there are more options for finding images than ever before. When seeking images for your business's communications, there are four primary options: In-house imagery, professional photography, stock imagery and creative commons imagery. Depending on your budget or needs, one or more of these options may be a good fit. Each option also has very specific approaches to licensing and rights that should be considered prior to purchase in order to avoid legal liability for using images that are not owned by the user.

In-house imagery

This refers to photographs captured, or illustrations created or drawn by employees within your business or organisation. In-house imagery is a good option in that the photographer or illustrator is more likely than an outside source to have a solid grasp of the brand and culture of an organization and is more readily available on the spot to capture organic moments as they happen. Another attribute of in-house imagery relates to image rights—they belong to your organisation and no additional royalties will have to be paid or rules

⁷ Hartman, Annette. "Interview with Annette Hartman." Telephone interview. 17 Feb. 2010.



followed each time an image is used or reproduced unless of course you have photographed or drawn someone else's image. Photographing a Coca Cola can does not give you the right to reproduce that image and care must be taken to avoid inadvertently misusing or representing another organisation's image. Product placement is a huge industry and permission should be sought from the copyright holder if in doubt.

However, many businesses and organizations make the mistake of assuming that this is the cheapest way to go. In reality, in order to create quality images your business will need to invest in camera equipment, lighting and photo or image editing software like Adobe® Photoshop or Illustrator. These items alone can run up an initial bill of several thousand pounds easily, without factoring in the time staff costs to attend events or edit images. What's more, unless the employee charged with taking photographs is experienced, quality can be compromised - taking great photos of a quality that can be reproduced is not as easy as it looks.

Sam Ogden, staff photographer for Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Massachusetts, shares a few pointers for avoiding amateur looking pictures⁸:

1. Consider angles—it's the easiest way to bring interest to a potentially boring photo. Avoid standing two people side by side; instead have people angle towards one another.
2. Add objects—it can frame a photo and bring context to it in one fell swoop. For example, if photographing lab technicians, make sure there are test tubes or lab equipment in the photo somewhere too.
3. Get the emotion in action—use photos that were taken candidly or illustrate who is being affected by your organization.
4. Take your time—photography requires patience.

If you are willing to make an investment in the proper equipment and professional training of staff, in-house imagery is a viable option especially for small businesses and not for profit organisations.

Professional photography

In this option, a business gets an experienced professional to capture or create images. Like the in-house option, hiring a professional offers the ability to customise images by capturing the actual individuals, products or equipment specific to that business or organisation. If you intend to use images of your own products, services or facilities, professional photography is often necessary.

⁸ Miller, Lindsey. "4 techniques for spicing up corporate photos." Ragan.com. 11 Feb. 2010. Web. <<http://www.ragan.com/ME2Idirmod.asp?sid=&type=gen&mod=Core+Pages&gid=EA21BB8C2E90424ABA40CB8581A9E05D>>.



Hartman also suggests that brands with a unique style should opt for this route.⁹

Usually professional photographers are brought in to do one of two things: Photograph a staged photo shoot of a person, object or place, or to photograph an event. In general, staged photo shoots can be labour intensive and have additional costs, such as experts to assist with hair, makeup, display, food, transportation or clothing. Event photography can be more straightforward as it lends itself to a “photo journalistic style” or more natural images. That being said, each shoot is unique and elements like lighting, models or even weather will ultimately impact price, timing and product. So, keep in mind you’ll want to ensure you’ve considered all the costs affiliated with the shoot and understand the rates and deliverables provided by the professional photographer.

The major difference between a professional photographer and an in-house photographer usually comes down to copyright license, skill and equipment. The rights to photos are usually dependent upon the rate or package and many professional photographers require attribution or watermarks on any images used, even though your business paid for them, unless otherwise specified in a contract. Skill and equipment are often of a higher calibre than an in-house photographer. The initial fee paid to the photographer may be for one time use of the image or, for example, ‘print only’ meaning that you cannot put this image on a web site.

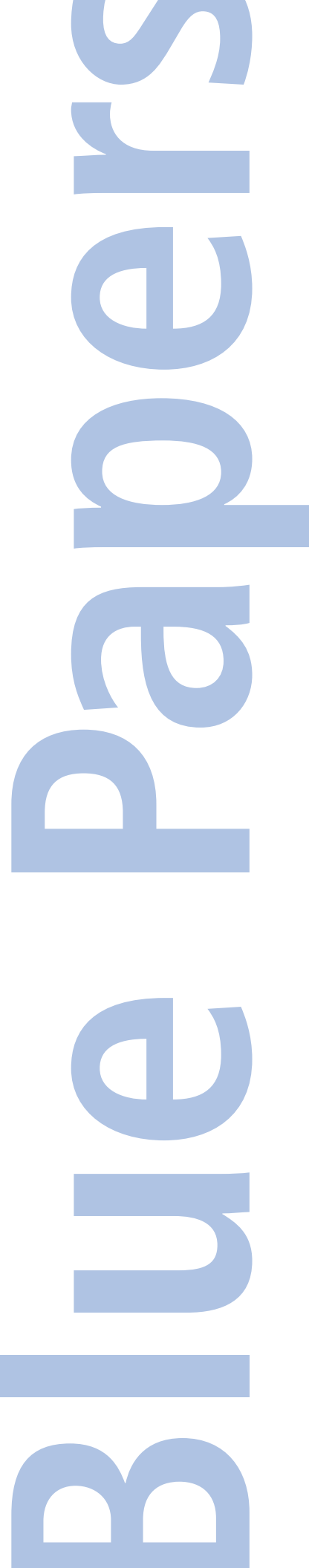
And finally, when seeking professional photographers ensure that they have experience photographing within your industry or in a purpose similar to your overall image objectives. Ask for recommendations, speak to current clients and be sure to look at recent samples of their work.

Stock imagery

Stock images are generic photographs or illustrations that have been created for purchase by businesses and organizations to use for marketing and communication purposes. Hardcopy photographs from stock houses like [Getty Images®](#) can be just as expensive as hiring a professional photographer. However, there are stock image sites, like www.iStockPhoto.com and www.Shutterstock.com, that offer a seemingly endless variety of digital files for fees ranging from £1 to £400 and include photos, vector images, animations and more.

Hartman, although a professional photographer by trade, explains, “It’s just more cost effective to buy stock. It’s cheaper, it’s faster and the rights and royalty fees

⁹ Hartman, Annette. “Interview with Annette Hartman.” Telephone interview. 17 Feb. 2010.



are clearcut.”¹⁰

Hartman goes on to explain that most stock photo sites offer better deals for purchasing in larger quantities—something traditional stock houses don’t usually offer. Additionally, payment for images includes limited rights to use the image for business use and reprint. Purchase is considered agreement. There’s no additional paperwork or monitoring after the initial terms have been read.

The risk organisations run when using stock imagery is that it almost certainly won’t be unique and millions of other people have equal access and rights to the same images. This could include competitors within your industry and other organisations that you might not wish to be associated with. Also, while the licensing and rights issues are often less stringent, the rights vary by stock provider and by photographer. So, reading the fine print and using the photo purchased specifically for its intended use is important to avoid the risk of legal action.

Creative Commons® imagery

[Creative Commons](#) is a nonprofit corporation based in San Francisco, California, that is dedicated to making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others while respecting copyright. It does this by providing free licenses and other legal tools to mark creative work with the freedom a creator wants to carry so others can share images, use them commercially or use them to create something new.¹¹

Creative Commons images are free and most often obtained from photo sharing sites like [Flickr™](#). The benefit of choosing images from Creative Commons is that there really is no cost incurred in obtaining them.

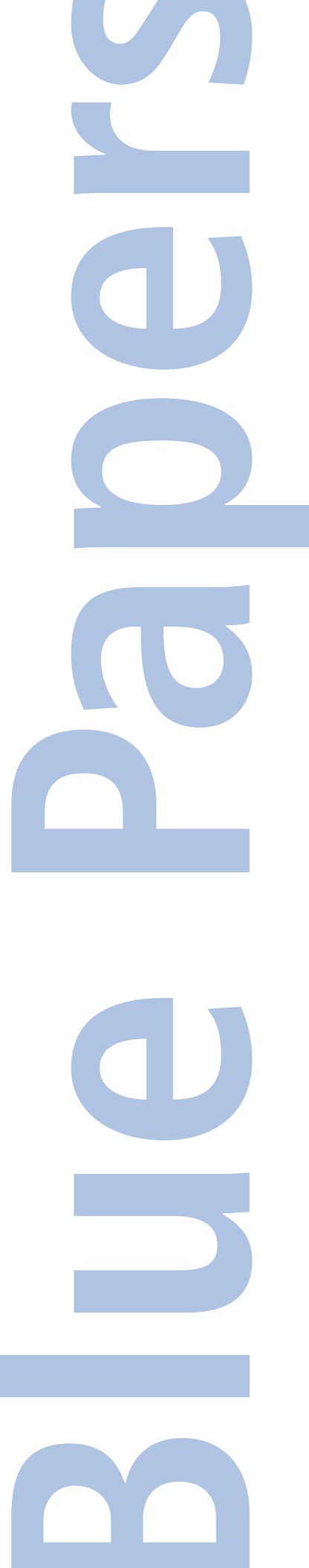
If your business or organisation would like to consider this option, start by going to [www.flickr.com](#) and conduct an advanced search of keywords potentially relating to the desired image and mark the box “Only search within Creative Commons-licensed content.” Then, choose an image that strategically meets your objectives and has the appropriate licensing.

Images from Internet search engines

This way of finding imagery is only included in this paper to say “Don’t do it.” It’s not surprising that due to limited resources or inexperience with copyright law searching the Internet for images is a path often taken. However, not only is this

¹⁰ Hartman, Annette. “Interview with Annette Hartman.” Telephone interview. 17 Feb. 2010.

¹¹ “About-.” Creative Commons. Web. 12 Feb. 2010. <<http://creativecommons.org/about/>>.



practice unethical, the potential legal costs could put you out of business.

No matter which option your business or organisation ends up pursuing, two things should now be clear:

- Images should be chosen with purpose and consideration.
- Every time an image is used, it should be used legally in a way that either pays up front for usage rights or royalties, or credits the photographer.

In abiding by these basic guidelines, your business or organisation will be well on its way to effective imagery in print or online.

Editing images

Images often require editing that may range from simple touch ups, cropping or resizing to extensive colour alterations, layering or special effects. While most computers and some digital cameras come with very basic photo editing software, any business that intend to use images online or in print will probably need a more robust application. Consider outsourcing photo editing to a graphic artist or bringing that work in-house using a high-powered and versatile editing software package like Adobe Photoshop and training staff to use it.

File formats

Just a word about file types. There are numerous different file formats but basically the most common image files are JPG, GIF, TIFF, RAW and PNG files.

- **JPG**
Best for: Photographs; Web
- **GIF**
Best for: Graphics; Web
- **TIFF**
Best for: Photographs; print
- **RAW**
Best for: Photos
- **PNG**
Best for: Graphics; photos

Business

Cropping and resizing

Editing images by cropping and resizing ensures that a good image becomes a great one. These actions make it possible to save space, focus on the most critical portion of an image and abide by certain best practices.

Generally speaking when cropping, images should be cropped to show or frame the most critical or sensible aspect of an image. After cropping images, they should be saved to the exact size required for use via editing software. If you simply resize your image in your Web editing software or with HTML, for example, the image may appear distorted or impact the HTML code.

The standard resolution for images used online is 72 dots per inch or (dpi) while the standard resolution for print is 300 dpi. These measurements have nothing to do with the size of an image in terms of width and height and everything to do with the resolution and overall file size.

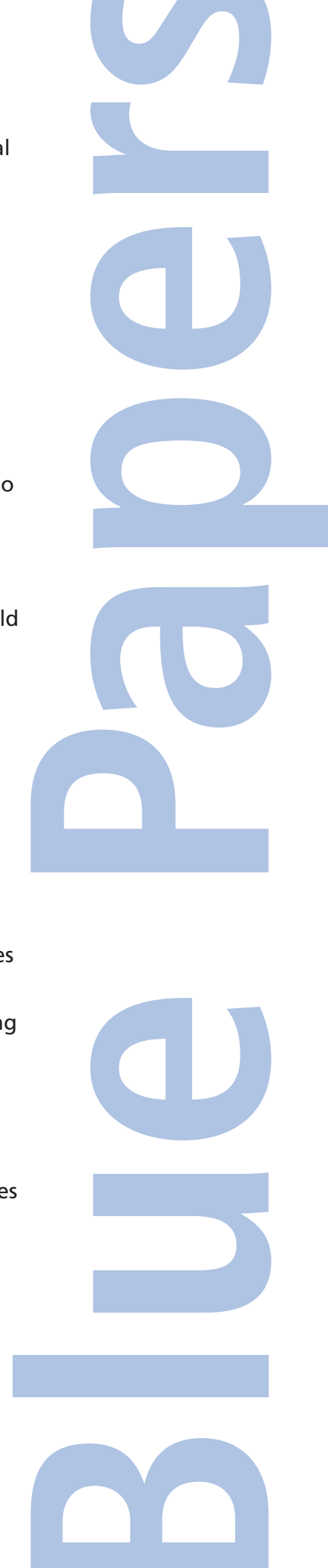
As you are required to change the size of an image, keep in mind that you should never scale photographs—this makes images prone to pixilation or distortion. Instead, resize. Also, for digital use of hardcopy images, scan the hardcopies at 600 dpi to ensure resizing is feasible with the least pixilation. The dpi option is usually found under the file menu category—resolution. Always save as a TIFF before saving as a JPEG to ensure little data loss during compression.

Additional notes on Web images

- Use the ALT attribute. Sometimes known as ALT tags, this is short descriptive text in the code of a Web page that describes what a viewer will see in an image. Not only does this assist search engines in identifying your image, it helps those accessing your page or e-mail in browsers or readers that can't download images by telling them what they would otherwise be seeing.
- When placing images online, keep in mind how the human eye tends to approach the Web: Eyes usually start in the upper right-hand corner of a Web site and scan down the page in 'F' pattern. Place images in ways that compliment this habit and guide the eyes through the text.
- Make file names descriptive and keyword rich.
- Use image captions.

Additional notes on images for print

- There's no rule that says images need to be square—play with the text as a way to frame an image or remove the background of an image using photo editing software and place wherever you



- choose.
- Print mediums often offer much more flexibility in terms of the space you have to work within when placing images and text. Use images appropriately to tell a story and to break up large blocks of text to prevent information overload.

Additional notes regardless of the medium

- If you are taking your own photographs with a digital camera, select the camera setting that offers the highest resolution possible and direct the camera to store photos in an uncompressed format.
- Place images within text in a visually appealing way. Think of multiple images as storytellers—include them in logical progression in reference to the text or other content shared.

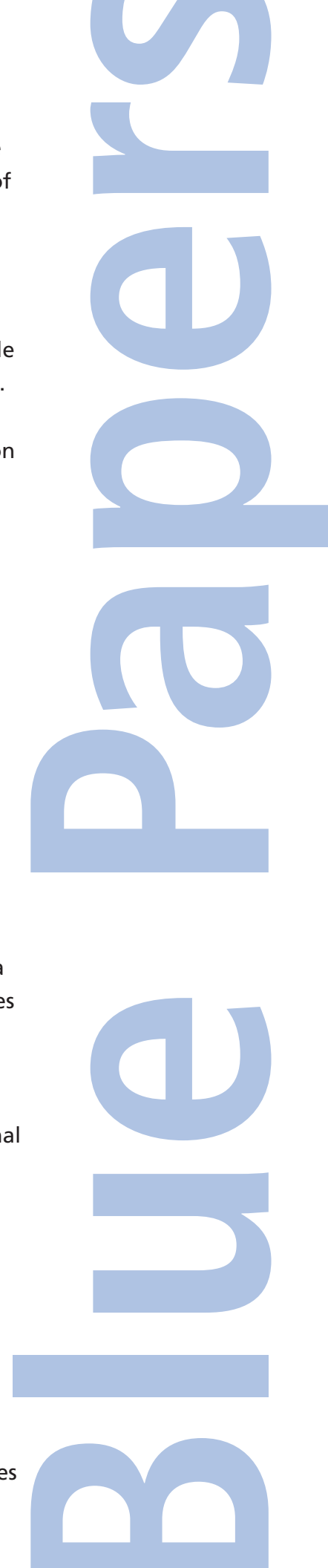
Storing images

Holding on to images for future use is a great example of why you should consider establishing a photo library. Photo libraries can help manage the organisation of images to track which images have been used, how and what licensing rights pertain, along with images on file that may not have been used yet. What's more, photo libraries allow a consistent storage system and a centralised location for easy access, and they hopefully prevent employees from saving outdated, overused or replicated images in multiple locations, or worse, purchasing the same photo from stock sites over and over.

Depending on how large a collection of photographed, purchased, and downloaded photos is, a system of establishing a library will vary. Smaller collections may do well in a simple folder structure stored (and backed up!) on a computer or server. Larger collections will require more intricate folder structures and potentially even the purchase of specific photo library software.

While creating folder structures, keep the following tips in mind:

- Begin with an empty folder for all images and then build additional folders within this folder to house images based on categories. In the early stages of building image libraries, categories should be very broad. For example, a nonprofit organisation may start with categories of events or programmes and an advertising agency may start categorising by client or campaign. Then, create categories within the categories—getting slightly more specific as you go along¹².
- You know you've chosen optimal categories when each photo fits only within a single category. The folders must represent categories



that don't overlap. Additionally, make sure that these categories are obvious and intuitive enough so that everyone would make the same judgement about where images belong¹².

- As photos are saved, tag each photo with keywords, found in the property settings of a file or integrated with the use of Adobe® Bridge, for ease of searching. For example, an image of a product used in a campaign would first be stored under the client or campaign folder, then perhaps a generic product folder with the product name in the image itself, but tagged with descriptors like the name of the product, the predominate colour depicted in the photo, the photographer or source, the location, licensing, etc. Keywords ultimately serve to search and sort by very specific terms and create a less static way of looking for photos.
- Also be sure to save photos in their original uncompressed format, in addition to all variations of uses, so that images may be used and optimised in other ways in the future.

Enjoy the results

Images that have been chosen with care and knowledge are not only more likely to improve your communications material online and in print, they are also more likely to draw attention to the works in which they are featured. "A picture is worth 1,000 words" holds true, especially in today's fast-paced society packed full of visual learners. Enhance your brand, enhance your writing, enhance your Web presence - use images strategically today.

¹² "CreativeTechs Tips: Creating an In-House Stock Photo Library." CreativeTechs » Seattle Mac Support for Graphic Design, Advertising, and Photography. Web. 20 Feb. 2010.
<http://www.creativetechs.com/liq/creating_an_inhouse_stock_photo_library.html>.

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