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How to Transform Your Remote Communication With Images and Videos

Learn how you can effectively communicate with images and videos while working from home.

Transform your remote communication

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in remote work, our old way of communicating seemed so easy.

And with people searching "work from home" at a five-year high, there's no doubt we all need to shift how we're communicating with others.
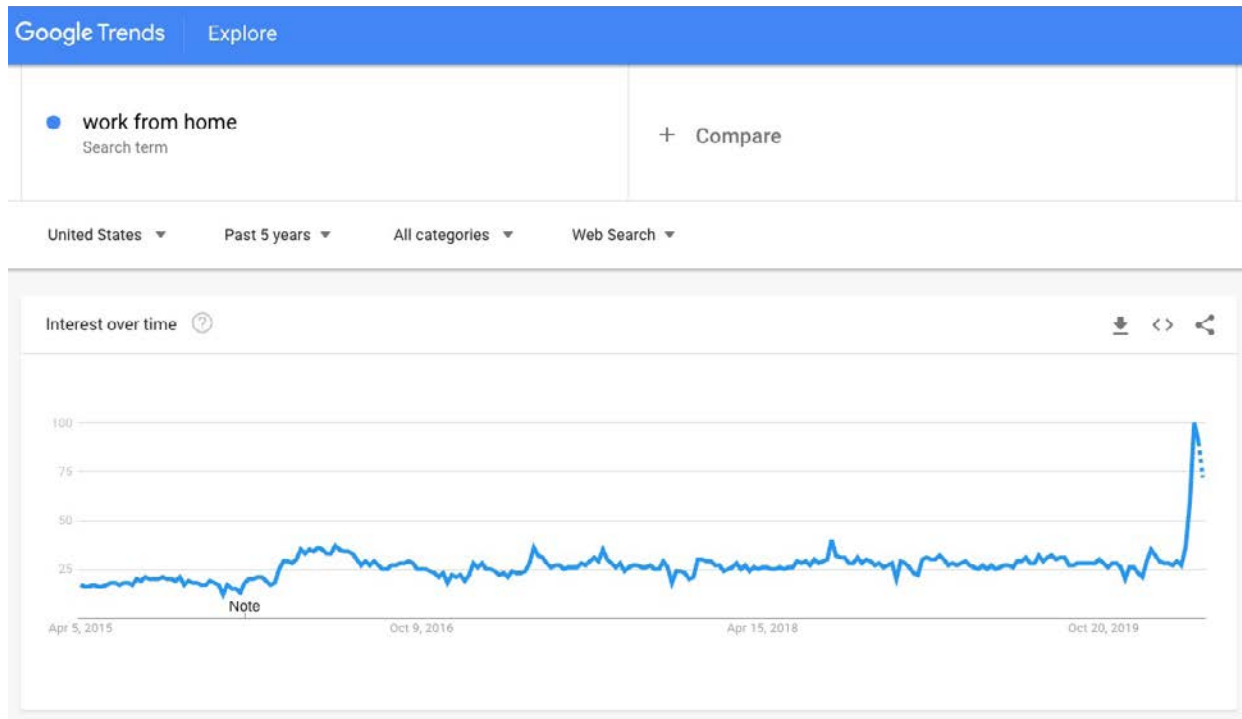
In this guide, we'll walk you through the current state of workplace communications and common misconceptions holding your company back from effectively communicating while working from home.

We'll also highlight easy changes you can make to start incorporating instructional videos, screencasts (a video recording of a screen), screenshots, and images in your communications, as well as best practices to transition to full-time remote work.

1   https://www.techsmith.com/blog/instructional-videos/
2   https://www.techsmith.com/blog/what-is-screencasting/
3   https://www.techsmith.com/blog/record-your-desktop/
4   https://www.techsmith.com/blog/screenshot/

Think back

We were going to our offices. In-person meetings were the norm, you could quickly pop into someone's office for a chat, and "working from home" was something you only did out of necessity.

Now, nearly everybody who is able to work remotely is staying home.

The entire situation has not only changed the way we communicate with other people right now, but quite possibly forever.

Thankfully, some changes might be for the better.

What if there is a different way to approach this situation?

We're just over a decade into the iPhone revolution. Tablets and laptops have started to replace desktop PCs. Fax machines are an ancient relic. And millennials are now the largest generation in the U.S. labor force.

Millennials became the largest generation in the labor force in 2016

U.S. labor force, in millions
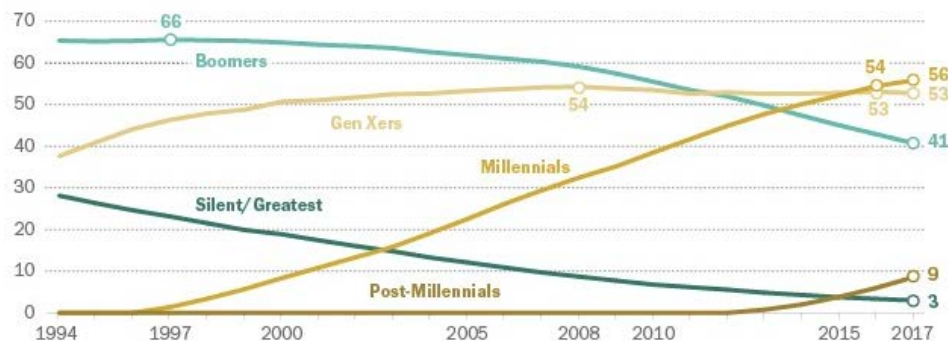
Note: Labor force includes those ages 16 and older who are working or looking for work. Annual averages shown.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of monthly 1994-2017 Current Population Survey (IPUMS).

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Today the average person spends more than four hours on their phone daily, and screen time overall is only going up as more people stay home.

The way we consume information and communicate has fundamentally changed in the last decade. Now, with the majority of the workforce working from home, we're re-learning what it means to communicate remotely.

1   https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/
2   https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/technology/coronavirus-screen-time.html

Break out of digital monotone

Too many companies can fall into a habit of communicating in digital monotone.

Email is a valuable tool, but it falls short when it's used to communicate with just a block of text.

In a world where we are isolated from our coworkers, we need to push our internal communication to the same level we would typically communicate outside of the office.

We need to stop relying on plain-text emails and chats for the majority of our interactions.
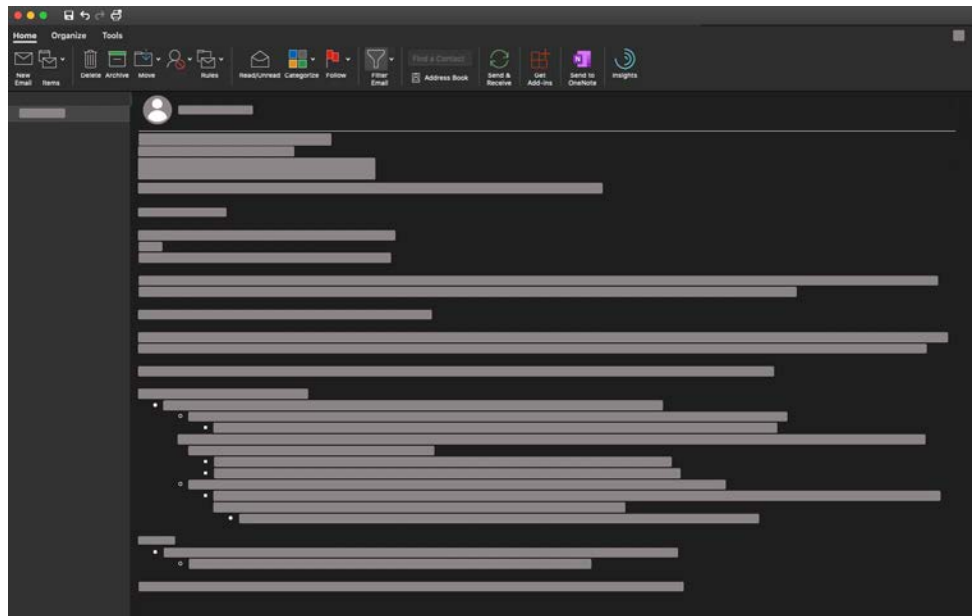
Because nobody wants to read through all that text.

A constant stream of emails often inundates employees and can be overwhelming.

And despite evidence that visuals, like videos and screenshots, are easier to digest and increase productivity and engagement, businesses are twice as likely to increase their use of plain-text email over any other type of communication.

And that feels especially true with the majority of the current workforce working from home.

1   https://www.techsmith.com/blog/show-your-results-with-a-screencast/
2   https://www.techsmith.com/visual-communication-research.html

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A report from The Economist Intelligence Unit highlighting communication barriers in the workplace found that:

- 60% of respondents use email every day. Yet only 40% said it is a very effective means of communication.

- 44% of survey respondents said communication barriers led to a delay or failure to complete projects, 31% cited low morale, 25% missed performance goals, and 18% lost sales.

- 31% of millenials use instant messaging at work every day, compared to only 12% of baby boomers.

1   https://eiuperspectives.economist.com/strategy-leadership/communication-barriers-modern-workplace
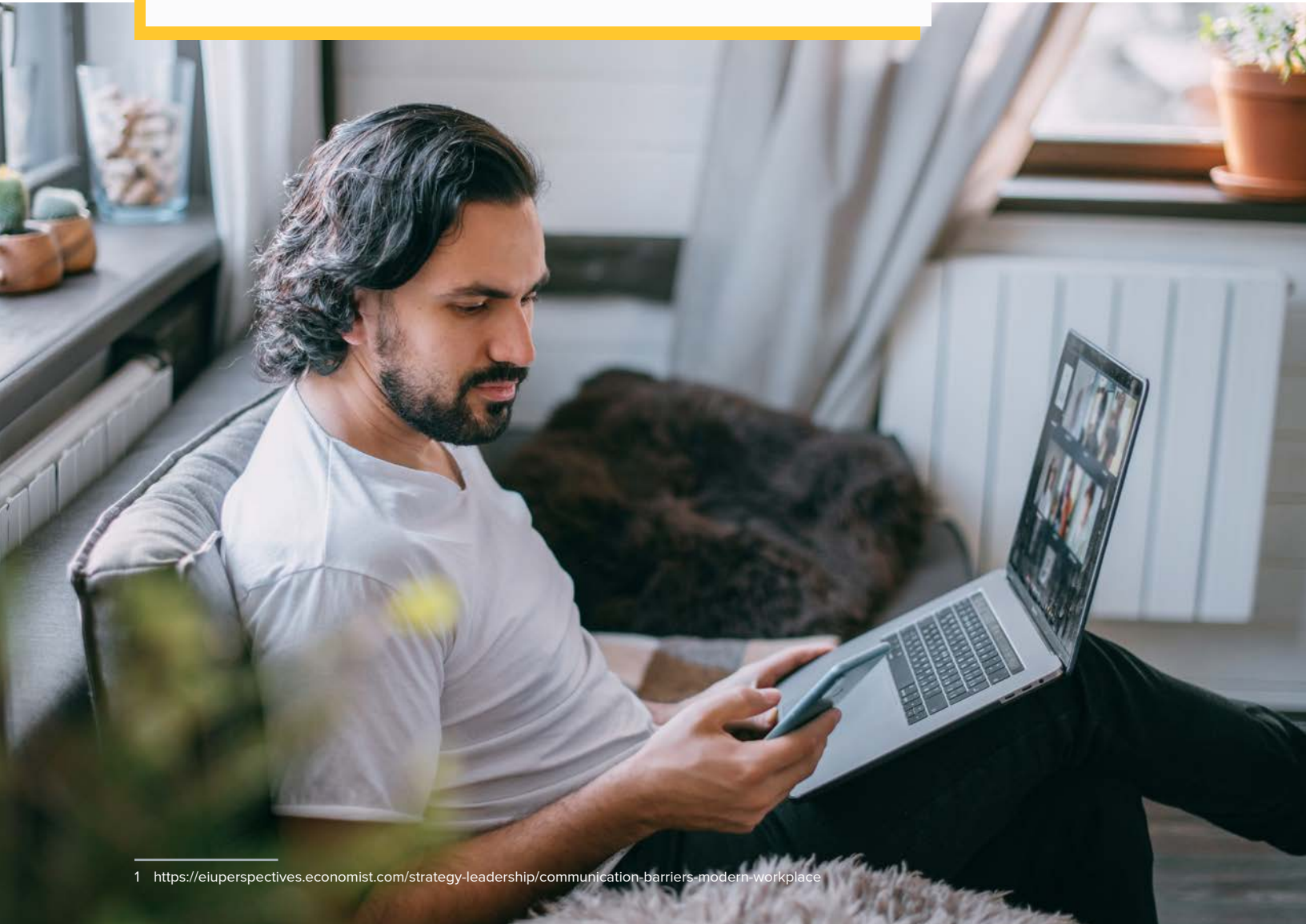
Communication in the era of remote work and global workforces

Technology enables businesses of any size to operate on a global scale. And adopting regional workforces or allowing employees to work remotely has many benefits. It also adds complexity to how we communicate, especially when you take into account different time zones and language barriers.

A two-year study by Stanford found that, despite the complexities, remote workers got more done. This boost in productivity among remote workers was equivalent to an extra full day of work each week, or 13% more output from the work-from-home-group.

Of the 13% increased output, 9% was attributed to working more per shift, while the remaining 4% was due to fewer distractions at home. Not only did the participants take fewer breaks and sick days, but attrition halved.

13% more output from the working-from-home group

9% was attributed to working more per shift

4% was due to fewer distractions at home

And yet, after the study concluded, half of the participants opted to stop working from home.

The reason? They felt too isolated.

The reality today is much different than it was even just a few months ago. Not only are more people working from home, but they don't have much of a choice either. That puts even more stress on effective communication.

It's harder to set up meetings. It's stressful to be on a call with others running around your house. It's difficult to read body language and stay truly connected to the people around you.

When we work in a world where we can't physically see the majority of people we work with, we need to find new ways to communicate with our coworkers.

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1   https://www.inc.com/scott-mautz/a-2-year-stanford-study-shows-astonishing-productivity-boost-of-working-from-home.html

The current state of internal communications

We didn't need a mass remote workforce to experience breakdowns in internal communication. For many businesses, interdepartmental collaboration or interactions between managers and employees can be challenging in a traditional office setup.

Even if you approach each other with similar language and common goals, nuances can lead to misunderstandings and confusion. Additionally, many organizations miss out on opportunities to get knowledge from subject matter experts within different departments.
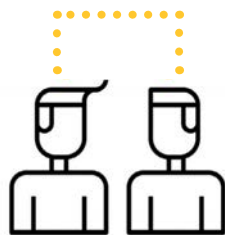
Even if you're approaching each other with similar language and common goals, nuances can lead to misunderstandings and confusion.

Why is visual communication important for my business?

All businesses are unique in terms of size, goals, industries, and operations. Regardless, every organization can benefit from increasing knowledge and information sharing internally. This includes giving your employees the tools they need to succeed, as well as adequately set the stage for a shift in the way you communicate.

Visuals: The key to effective communication

Videos, screenshots, and screencasts are powerful because not only are the messages shared visually better retained (after three days, people remember 10% of what they hear. If paired with a relevant image, the retention increases to 65%), but they're also versatile.

Three simple ways to use visuals for remote communication

1. Onboard employees

2. Give internal training

3. Provide feedback

There are multiple places and times when visual content can be used internally. Examples include new employee onboarding, internal training, providing feedback, and much more.

Visual content also saves time since it's processed by our brains faster. More importantly, it ensures messages are clear and concise so that everyone has a shared and consistent experience.

Before we get into the specifics of how you can transform your internal communications, let's break down why updating your business communications has become so important.

In our report The Value of Visuals, we found businesses are missing out on opportunities to increase productivity and improve employee satisfaction.

Why communicating with videos, screencasts, and screenshots is critical to your business:

- Ensures what you're trying to convey is clear and concise

- Everyone has a shared and consistent experience

- It saves time by relaying messages faster

- Allows information to be delivered or captured once, and then reused and viewed multiple times

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1   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82X2rX4hx7g

Common myths that prevent visual remote collaboration and knowledge sharing

Three common pitfalls prevent collaboration or employees sharing what they know with others, especially remotely. Don't let these misconceptions hold your business back from adopting more efficient communication practices.

Common myths that prevent visual remote collaboration & knowledge sharing (you need to forget about!)

1. It takes too long

2. I need special skills

3. I won't know where to start

Let's dig deeper into each and how you can solve them.

Myth #1: It takes too long

The perceived time it takes to create a video or screencast or to markup an image is almost always linked to quality expectations. Especially in a time where nearly one billion hours of videos are watched on YouTube each day, it's easy to believe every piece of content needs to be perfect.

But every video or image doesn't require the same level of quality. If you find yourself in a cycle of perfection, take a step back and think about your audience. These two factors will help you determine how polished your content needs to be.

Boost your team's confidence by explicitly outlining what content is higher-priority and needs more polish, such as external-facing or containing high-value messages, and the lower-priority content they can create.

Myth #2: You need special skill sets

Switching to anything new can make some people feel uneasy. Whether it's nerves around being a first-time creator or uncertainty around the execution, many people have no idea how easy it is to create visuals.

Technology has shifted how people — especially younger generations — communicate. Visual communication software like Camtasia and Snagit and Video Review make it quick and easy to create and share high-quality images and video that deliver messages more quickly and better than text alone.
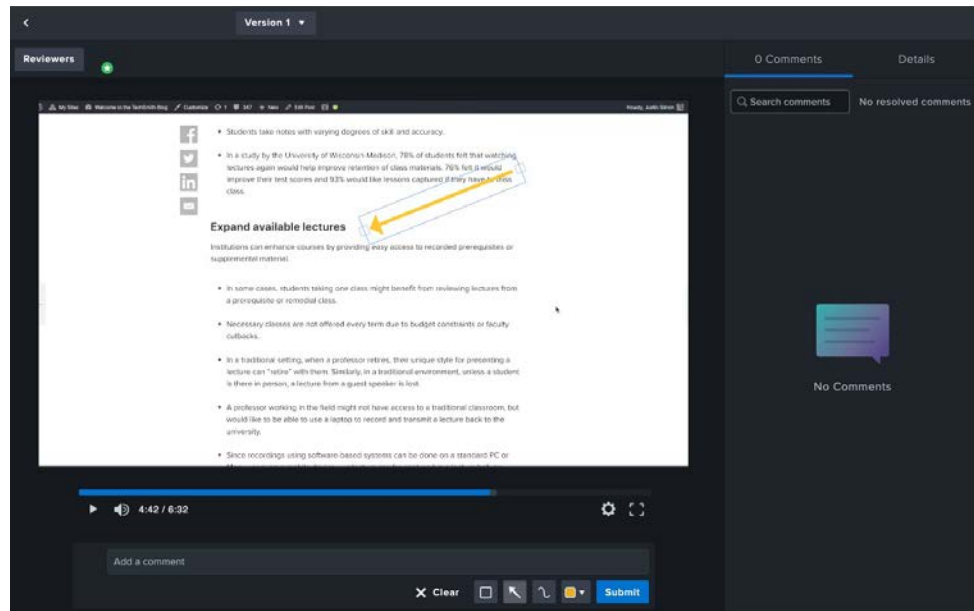
In this example, we recorded a video and uploaded it to Video Review so other folks on our team could review the information and provide feedback on the topics.

This allowed us to replace an entire meeting just by creating a six-minute video.

Our products are easy to use by people who are not content creation experts. We know creating digital content to teach, train, and explain concepts can be time-consuming. And learning new software can be intimidating.

That is why we are focused on creating easy-to-use software that anyone can quickly pick up and learn.

1   https://www.techsmith.com/video-editor.html
2   https://www.techsmith.com/screen-capture.html
3   https://www.techsmith.com/video-review.html
4   https://www.techsmith.com/blog/video-based-discussions/

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Myth #3: You won't know where to start

Finding new ways to incorporate visual content into your organization doesn't have to be overly elaborate or complicated — it's meant to simplify. There are lots of ways to use visuals to make communication easier and help get the point across.

First, determine what you are trying to achieve and how visuals can help with that. Then empower your employees and guide them to make sure it actually gets done.

6 ways you can start using visuals right now

There are several ways that visuals can enhance your communications, allowing consistent messages across your organization while you work remotely. While each department and team will have different needs and uses, here are some common scenarios to help get you started:

1. On-boarding and training videos

It's challenging to train new employees when working remotely. It's also overwhelming to be a new employee with so much to learn from the start.

Make onboarding easier by creating narrated screencasts that show how to use your organization's standard programs.
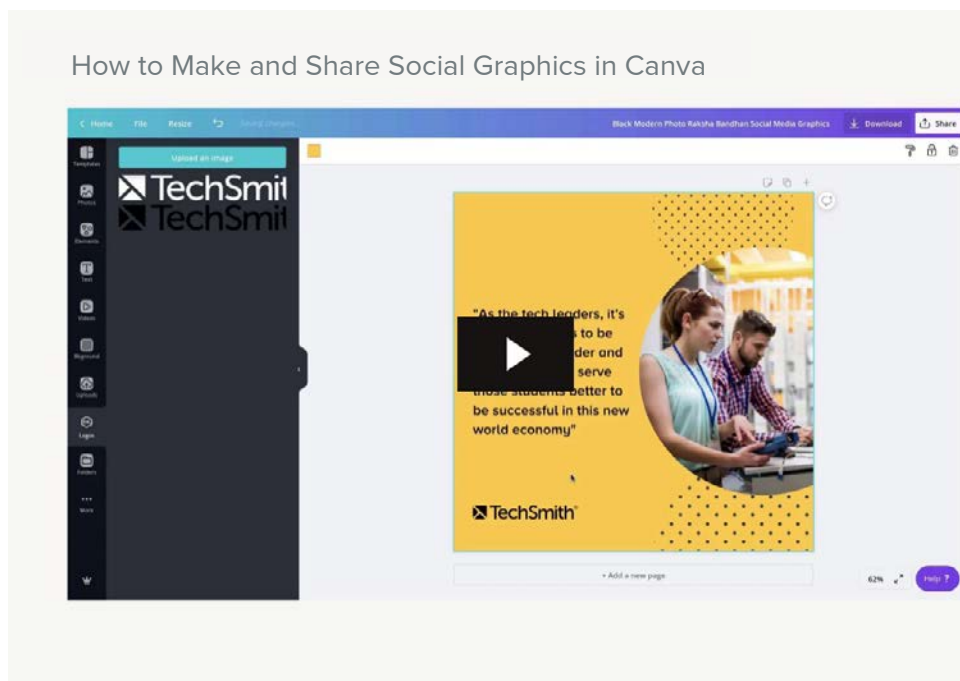
Your employees will be able to re-watch it when they need a refresher, and you'll save time by avoiding conference call training sessions.

2. Software rollout and training

Use screenshots and screencasts to show your employees how to use new programs or software during an internal rollout. Teams also can provide answers to questions that are frequently asked, creating easy, repeatable responses for staff.

3. Recorded webinars and live events

If your marketing or product teams are hosting a webinar or live event for customers, internally sharing the recordings will help keep all employees informed on updates. Those teams are already creating the content, so try to repurpose it.

Here's an example of a recent webinar we did for TechSmith:

4. Information delivery

Information delivery might consist of giving an update, providing context, sharing results, or delivering additional background. If the information is coming out of a specific department, they may be able to explain the information quicker and easier, taking the burden off your team.

Even a simple image can go can a long way to clearly explaining something to the larger group.
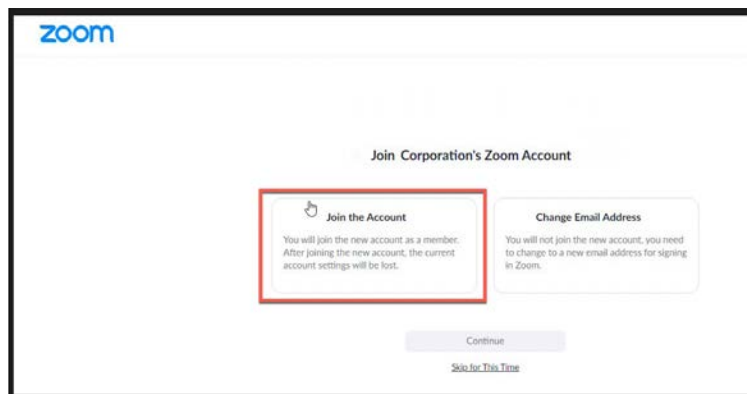
1   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fBPV_nI55Q

5. Build buzz

Use high-energy videos to get your staff excited about an event, new opportunities, or company milestones. And the best people to build a buzz around these scenarios are the teams involved.

For instance, if your social media team creates monthly reports, why not create a video and share the news with the rest of the organization?

6. Provide feedback

Giving and receiving feedback on content or projects can be challenging. Teams are often left waiting for input on projects. And sometimes that feedback is in paragraphs of text, leaving it open to interpretation.

Using visuals to show specific feedback can reduce the time spent sending emails back and forth and helps everyone get on the same page. It also makes the approval process go much faster and smoother.

For success, start small

For our customers, we recommend starting small. Begin by finding a couple of champions who are excited or are already sharing information visually and give them the tools they need to do it successfully. When a few people start communicating with videos, screencasts, or screenshots, it usually has an influential effect on everyone else.

You'll begin to see more people watching and engaging. Their colleagues will start inquiring about how they created the content, and more people will want to communicate visually too. From there, you can improve and optimize to create standardized processes.

Step 1: Don't assume

Talk to your employees; ask them how they'd prefer to communicate and any challenges they've experienced. This will help you narrow down your organization's specific goals and needs.

Step 2: Find champions

Identify a handful of internal champions who have expressed a desire to communicate in the past or do a lot of knowledge sharing.

Step 3: Set expectations

Communicate to employees the value of why they should use visuals: what's in it for them, how much time it will save, and the ways it will improve their workflow.

Step 4: Create an internal communications portal

This will act as a learning page where all of the tools and resources, like instructions and templates, are housed.

Step 5: Nurture your new way of communicating

Infuse your new way of communicating throughout the company. Make it a habit by encouraging employees to create a new image, video, or screencast once a month.

So, how in the world am I going to do this?

Maybe you're asking yourself this question as well.

Since we started to work remotely a fair amount has changed. And a lot of it has to do with how we communicate with other people.

Instead of trying to shove our old way of communicating into a new world, we've adapted.

We have more video conferences with our coworkers just to see how they're doing. Since we're not in the office anymore, we started recording videos that show others how to do things. We take screenshots of our monthly dashboards and share those with the team.

Learning a new way to communicate doesn't have to be difficult. Like most new things, it's hard to start, but it's not an impossible problem to overcome. There are many ways, a lot of them discussed in this guide, to get started.

Now, it's just up to you to do it.

Who is TechSmith?

TechSmith screen capture software and solutions are perfect for anyone who wants to create and share images and videos for better training, tutorials, lessons, and everyday communication.

Our flagship products Snagit and Camtasia are easy for anyone to learn. And with expert help content and support, you can quickly create visuals to show what you know.

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Show What You Know

S TechSmith Snagit™   C TechSmith Camtasia™

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