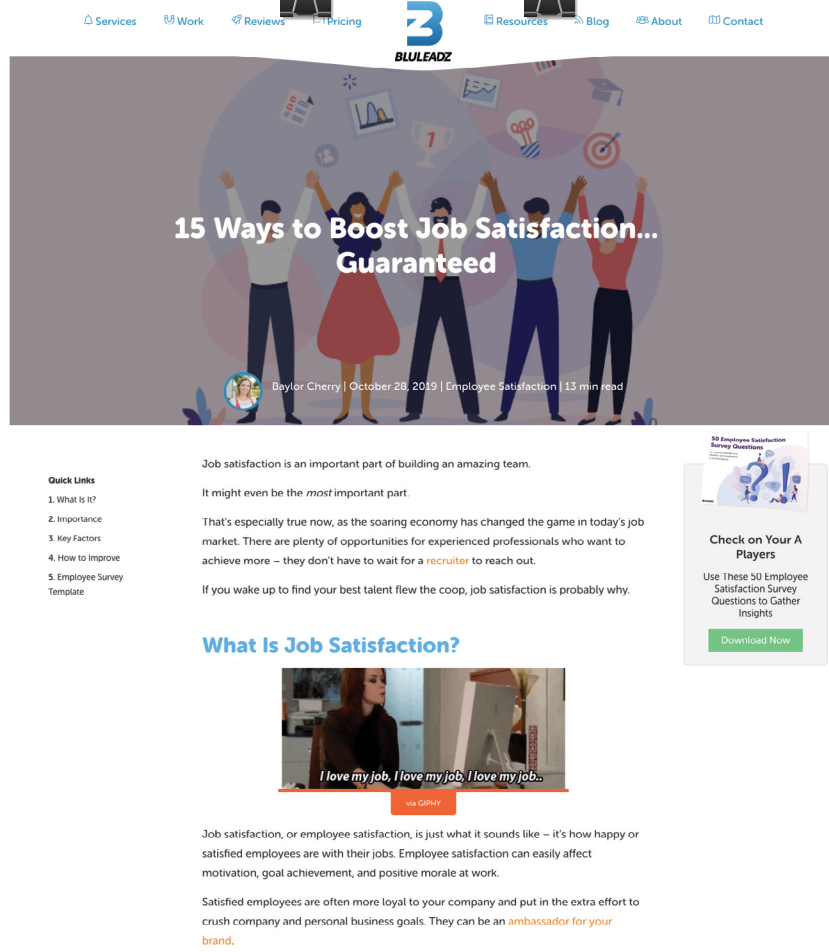
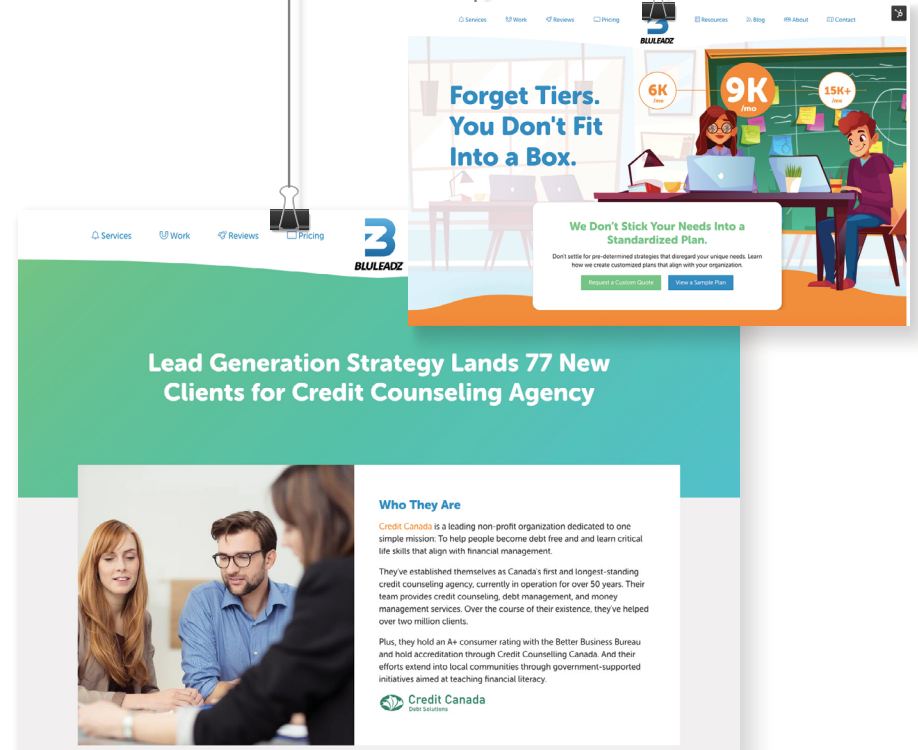


How to Make the Most of Stock Images:

Your Ultimate Tipsheet



At Bluleadz, we utilize stock photos all across our website, from our blog featured images to our case studies and pricing page designs.



No matter what kind of content you're creating for your business, you're going to need to add visual elements.

Blog posts. Email campaigns. Sales documents. Case studies.

You name it – each piece of content will improve if you add the right visual components.

But you shouldn't just grab any stock photo and use it without any thought. To make the most out of the visuals you have at your disposal, you need to follow these tips:

1. Identify Opportunities for Using Stock Images.

Learn where and how to use stock images in all the areas of your business where you will see the most impact. Some of the best areas to add attention grabbing, enticing photos include the following:

- Blog posts
- Pillar pages
- Social media posts
- Case studies
- Ebooks
- Webpages
- CTA buttons

2. Avoid the Cringe Factor.

There are so many stock images that give the concept of stock photos a bad rap. Lots of cheesy, overenthusiastic grins or baffling situations that tend to make no sense.

To the right are a few of the best cringey stock images you shouldn't use, for obvious reasons.

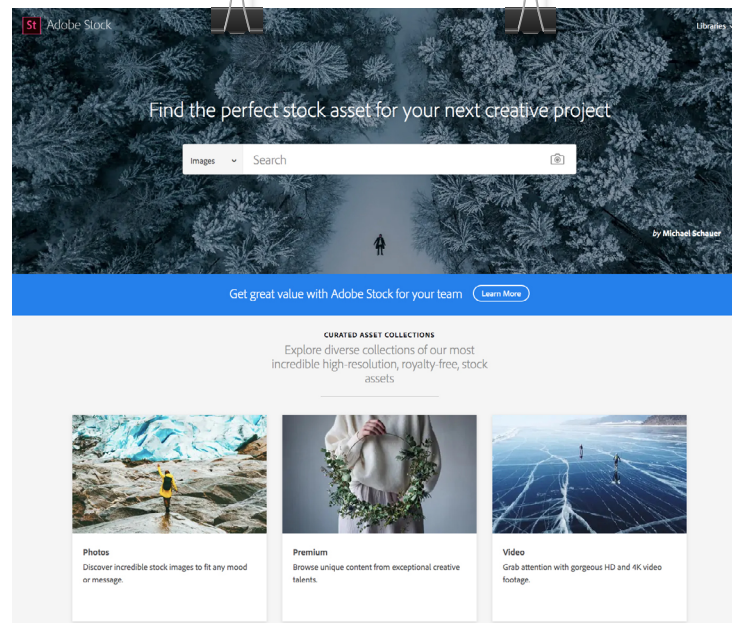
Needless to say, these are distractingly bad and will not create a positive reader experience.



These images licensed from Adobe Stock are cheesy and can make your business or brand feel unprofessional and unserious if used.



Getty Images is one of the best stock image websites in the world with a library consisting of millions of stock photos, illustrations, images, and videos.



Adobe Stock is our go-to stock image website here at Blueleadz, and it features tons of high-quality images, videos, and illustrations.

3. Find the Right Stock Photo Sites.

There are so many online resources for great stock photos. But not all are equally good. To find the right stock photo websites, look at the following elements:

- Strong search capabilities – You need a site that offers a lot of filter options so you can narrow down results and find the most specific, niche photos in minimal time.
- No requirements for attribution – Adding caption text underneath images can disrupt the reading.
- Clear licensing information – You want clear information on licenses to avoid potential legal issues, which we cover in the next tip.

4. Ensure You're Not Stealing Images.

You don't want to roll the dice when it comes to licensing and copyright issues. Here are the terms you need to know and understand:

- Rights managed – These images are protected by copyrights and are purchased for one-time use.
- Creative Commons zero (CC0) – These are free after being purchased and can be used and modified in unlimited ways.
- Royalty free – After purchasing a royalty free image, you can use it as many times as you want.
- Attributing – This calls for you to list the creator's name and provide a source link as a caption.

5. Context Is Your #1 Priority.

If you're adding photos that stick out to your readers as confusing or misplaced, you're going to hurt the quality of your content. Before searching for a stock photo, ask yourself a few questions.

- What is the message you're conveying?
- What is the ultimate goal for that specific type of content?
- What do you want to express through imagery?

Make sure the image aligns with the messaging and elicits the reaction you want to create.



This image downloaded from [Unsplash](#) would be great for travel and exploration websites or blogs, as it shows a person walking a nature trail surrounded by greenery.



These photos are all great examples of simple illustrations and photos that can be used in blogs, on website pages, in emails, and in other branding material. Look for simple stock photos!

6. Stick to Simplicity.

It's tempting to want to cram a lot of elements into an image, but doing so will be disruptive. Readers will get overwhelmed by cluttered photos that are trying to accomplish too much.

Opt for simple visuals instead. If you're modifying stock photos, keep the design clean and visually appealing.

Ultimately, you want to align photos and modification designs with the intended emotion you're trying to evoke.



This image from Unsplash would be great for a medical company or hospital if they were ever talking about/trying to represent a doctor at work.

7. Look for Authenticity.

There are so many stock photos that include cartoonish, overexaggerated imagery. For example, the photo that shows smoke coming out of a man's ears (shown at the bottom of page 3) is supposed to convey anger and frustration.

But as a reader, if you saw that in a blog post, you wouldn't connect at all with that photo. You would cringe (beware the cringe factor) and probably laugh at the ridiculous image.

Instead, select photos that demonstrate genuine emotions.

8. Use Human Images to Create Emotional Connections.

Speaking of humans, if you're looking to encourage emotional reactions, look for images of humans acting naturally and expressing genuine feelings.

Stock photos that include painfully obvious poses can come off as cheesy and disingenuous.

But the ones that show people in natural settings, engaging in candid moments, are far more impactful in creating emotional connections and in adding a human element that feels real.



9. Make Modifications.

You can use stock photos in many ways, depending on the intent of the photo. For example, if you're creating a header for a seasonal email, you can download a stock photo of a pumpkin patch, then add a text box saying "Fall 2020 Newsletter."

There are so many ways to modify stock photos, like the following:

- Add text
- Crop
- Create color overlay
- Use blurring effects
- Add contrast

Whatever modifications you make, be sure that they're simple and that they make sense to the content.

THE CONTENT MARKETER'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION



Take this ebook cover image, for example. To the left is the original photo which we licensed from Adobe Stock. To fit the look and feel of the ebook, our designer chose to crop in on the people and add a slight blue-ish green color overlay.

10. Align Images With Your Buyer Personas.

If you're a marketer working for an outdoor clothing company and you're targeting hiking enthusiasts, you are probably not adding photos of businesspeople sitting in a meeting.

Your audience wants to see themselves in your content. So when you're researching potential images, step into your buyer personas' shoes. Determine how they can see themselves in your content.

This will help them connect with your content and your brand because they will feel seen and understood.

11. Conduct A/B Tests for Images in CTAs.

If you're using images in CTA buttons on your site or ads or wherever else you're including a conversion element, you have a great opportunity to test and optimize the use of your images.

For A/B testing, you simply use the same elements (like copy and the call to action phrase), but then you change one aspect. In this case, that would be the stock image.

Run this test for a specified timeframe, then see which one performs better. Then, you can see which images resonate the most with your target audience.



This image downloaded from [Unsplash](#) would be great for travel and exploration websites or blogs, as it shows a person walking a nature trail surrounded by greenery.



The alt text for this image would probably read something like, "Electrician using screwdriver to repair electrical box."



The alt text for this spooky image would read something along the lines of, "A pumpkin bucket spilling Halloween candy and spooky toys."

12. Optimize All Your Visuals for Search.

For every photo you're adding to website content, make sure you're following SEO best practices.

The most impactful way to optimize visual components is by writing alt text, which is written copy that appears in place of the image if it fails to load on the screen. This text helps in many ways.

First of all, it is crawled by search engine bots, so that helps you rank in keyword-specific searches.

Second, this text is picked up by screen-reading tools that visually impaired readers use. So your alt text has a direct impact on reader experiences and on SEO.

In short, [write detailed alt text](#) for your stock photos that is specific and descriptive.



13. Try Newer Images Instead of Settling for the Most Common Ones.

Some stock sites are used by thousands (if not hundreds of thousands or millions) of webmasters, marketers, and bloggers. So naturally, there are specific stock photos and models within those photos that appear practically everywhere within your industry.

Sometimes, you have to settle for these commonly used ones. But not all the time.

Those generic stock photos you've seen a million times get boring and don't make an impact on your readers. Instead of settling, do some digging.

With these tips in mind, you're prepared to make the most out of stock photos and images to create engaging content and drive results.

These images, downloaded for free on Unsplash, are all great examples of showing common things in a unique way. Look for more creative, fresher angles and approaches to give your look an edge over your competition.