

# Gary Nightingale

C R E A T I V E

## Transform Your Visual Content

Hello!

Thanks for taking the time to read this. I hope it helps you transform the way you think about visual content and, more importantly, the way you use it. I'm sure that, if you follow these simple suggestions, you will really start to notice a positive difference in how your audience engages with you.

I'll start by answering my own three questions that I always ask people when they first get in touch with me:

- Who are you?
- What do you do?
- Who does it help?

My name is Gary Nightingale and I live in south Devon with my dog, a neurotic, high maintenance, but very loyal staffy called Beau.



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(If anyone tells you that you can't use photos of your pets in your visual content, they're wrong.)

Anyway, some time ago, my whole life collapsed. I won't go into details, but it was all very unpleasant.

Eventually, I woke up and decided I was going to make a living as an artist. I didn't know what kind of artist I was, although I had been drawing cartoon people since I was old enough to hold a crayon.

And, other than what I had learned in my old life – selling expensive software to large companies – I didn't know a whole lot about business.

So, I started finding out.

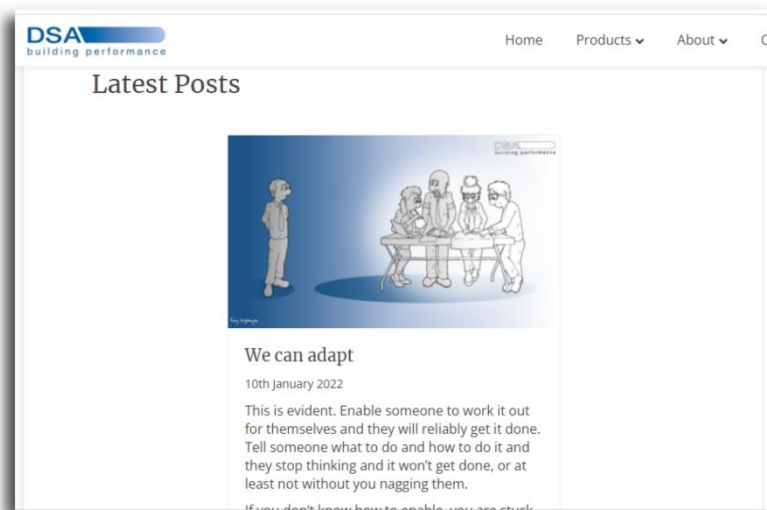
And I gradually began to find my place in the world again.

A new place and, in many ways, a much better place than before the storm.

So, now I create illustrations and animated videos to support coaches and therapists in getting their message across to their audience.

My work can be used in:

## Blogs and social media content



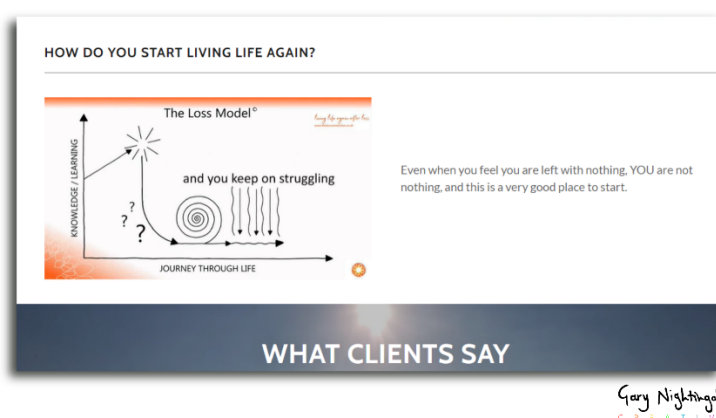
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## Webinars and presentations



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## Workshops and training material



To put it simply, I listen to people, find out who they are and what they're all about, then take their ideas and turn them into visuals that help their audience "get it".

And that's me.

## What are you talking about today?

Again, I will answer three more questions I always ask people:

- What do you want to say?
- Who do you want to say it to?
- What do you want them to do?

So, I want to talk to you about how you can transform your visual content and, over time, make it an **original**, **relevant**, and **consistent** part of your brand and your message.

I will suggest a simple and enjoyable plan to follow for six months that will go a long way towards achieving that transformation.

You are all coaches – experts in your chosen fields. You have a successful business supporting the people you have been drawn to, perhaps because of your previous career or life experience.

You have an online presence – a website with a regular blog, and social media. You write posts and articles for LinkedIn, and perhaps other online platforms for coaches, possibly including the Trusted Coach Directory.

That's a lot of work to maintain.

Where does visual content fit in with all that?

Chances are, it doesn't. Much.

Why not?

- It's hard enough finding time to write, never mind coming up with images to go with your written content, let alone video clips or GIFs – those are for kids anyway
- You might think, 'I'm not creative'
- It may not seem important
- It's an unnecessary burden on your workload

If this is you, then you could be missing out on an aspect of marketing yourself and your brand that you come to find deeply rewarding and enjoyable, as well as discovering what an impact it has on your content and how it is received by your audience.

## **Why is visual content important?**

Visuals are an integral part of your brand. An image on a post is almost always the first thing people see when they scroll through social media. (Although one of my connections recently told me she always reads my

posts first, before looking at the image – there’s an exception to every rule!)

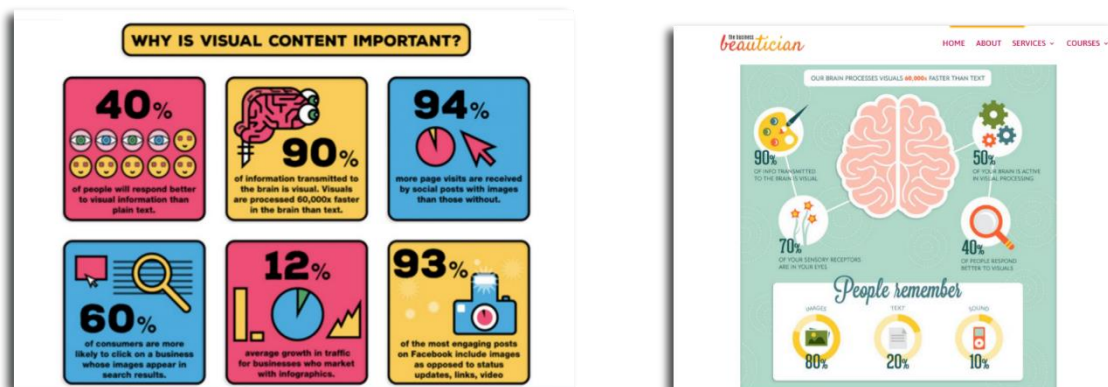
According to the experts,

“90% of the information received by the human brain is in visual form. We are 60,000 times faster at processing visual information than we are the written word. In the increasingly fast-paced, technology-driven climate of modern business, that is the power of visual content; the ability to convey your message as quickly and clearly as possible is everything.”

- [www.WK360.com](http://www.WK360.com)

I don’t know if there is actually a definitive set of numbers to support these assertions, or who’s checking them, but the general consensus seems to be that visuals work faster and longer than text alone.

Here are a couple of infographics (not mine) on the subject:



Visuals that are **original**, **relevant**, and **consistent** say something about you. They show your attention to detail. They show that you have invested time and effort (and perhaps money, but not necessarily) in every aspect of how you present yourself online.

Also, visual content is a way of introducing a more personal element to your business. Your blog or social media post may be strictly “work-

related”, but its image could come from an interest of yours outside of work. And that gives people the opportunity to get to know you better as a whole person. And that builds connection and trust.

So, three main themes:

- **Originality**
- **Relevance**
- **Consistency**

## **Originality**

There’s nothing wrong with stock images – photos and clip-art. The problem is that, when such images are used randomly rather than as part of a plan, they can look a bit last-minute (which they probably are).

And the same images tend to be over-used. We’ve all seen the smartly-dressed business people shaking hands over a laptop, the silhouette woman leaping into the air, and that tower of pebbles on the beach!



What do those images say about you and your brand?

Nothing.

The thing about being original is, you can't *not* be original. You already are, and your visual content ought to reflect that originality and celebrate it rather than neglect it.

Outside of work, what are your interests?

- Birdwatching?
- Restoring a classic car?
- Climbing mountains?

Obviously that list could go on and on.

Whatever your interests, do you keep them separate from your work? Do you ever write about them?

Maybe not, because your outside-work interests aren't relevant to your inside-work world.

But they could be, from a visual content point of view.

Example:

You enjoy walking. While you're out, you take loads of photos. You post them on personal social media accounts. Maybe even in a Facebook or Whatsapp group for walkers. You've got hundreds of photos, from years of walks, all in folders on your laptop.

But, when you write your blog, you go looking on Google for a stock image to go with it.

Instead of doing that, have a browse through your photos. Is there anything in there that captures the spirit of what you've just written?

Say, your blog is talking to industry leaders about the barriers to change they face in their organisation. And, look at this! You've got a photo of a pathway leading up a steep hill and a big pile of rocks has fallen onto the path.



There you go. An instant visual analogy for your writing. It's original, because no one else has that photo (so, no copyright to worry about). It's a blend of professional and personal. And it's relevant but not literal.

Here's one of my photos, from a cliff walk around the south Devon coast. That's Start Point lighthouse you can see at the end.



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Now, if I wanted to write something encouraging about coaching as a light on your path whilst you make progress towards your goal, this image would fit perfectly.

And that leads nicely onto the next theme.

## **Relevance**

Your visual content ought to be relevant to your written content and relevant to your audience. That doesn't mean it has to be literal or direct. As in the example just given, a visual analogy can enhance your writing,

adding another dimension to its meaning. It also helps your reader visualise the theme of your writing.

But it shouldn't be too cryptic. Nor should it be so far removed from your written content that it seems out of place. For example, if you are writing about the changing nature of the workplace as the result of the pandemic, a stock photo of a board meeting isn't going to add anything meaningful to your message. It will look like an afterthought.

However, a photograph of the view through the window in your own workspace may fit exactly. Again, it's original and it blends the personal and professional in a way that will bring you closer to your audience.

And if this is the kind of image you use regularly, then your reader will be more attuned to what you are writing about.

And that leads to the final theme.

## **Consistency**

Whatever kind of visual content you want to use, keep it consistent. If you like to draw simple diagrams to support your writing, stick with those. If you use your own photographs, choose those images that would look good together in a photo album (remember them?).

You might have a brand style guide, created for you by a designer or agency. In there, you'll have a colour palette and fonts that you use in all your marketing. If so, you can incorporate that into your visual content, keeping the visuals original and at the same time, staying consistent with your brand visual style.

Here's an extreme example of brand consistency!



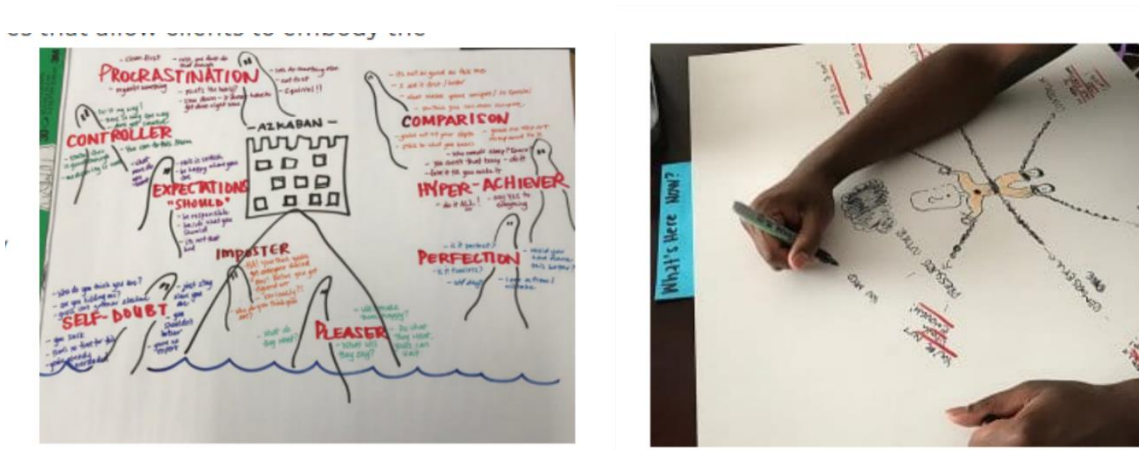
Image Source: [Astaamiya](#)

If you had all that going on, you would want to make pretty sure your visual content fitted in with it.

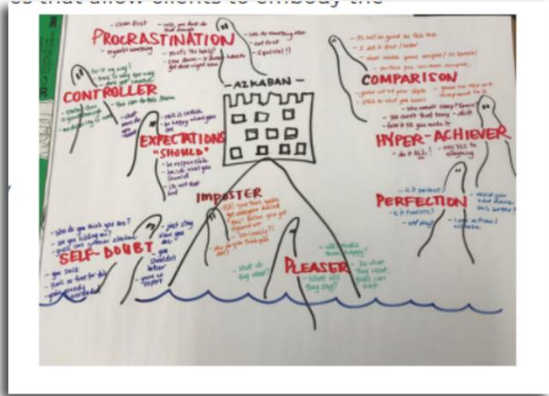
You may have a logo you use in your marketing. Again, you can include that with your visual content (as I've been doing here).

Also, you might sketch a diagram to illustrate a particular coaching model. Or you might draw it out on a whiteboard and take a photo of it.

There might be images that you use in your coaching practice, like these.



You don't need to be digital artist to turn these into images that reflect your style guide. Many programmes and platforms can help you do that, in a way that is simple to use and either free or low cost. You can probably do it on an iPhone!



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If you don't have such a style guide, why not make one? Do it yourself. Think about your home. What colours have you chosen? Why do you like them? You could use those colours in your visual content.

And fonts. Which do you like? Or have you never really thought about it?

Remember that photo of the cliff walk? By now, you will have noticed that all the images I've included here have plenty of white space around them, with a drop-shadow on the image and, with most of them, my logo in the bottom right.

That's consistency.

This is that same photo with no frills. It's still a good image, and it would work, but those small touches give it that extra edge of consistency.



Whatever style you decide on for your visual content, stick with it. Over time, your audience will come to recognise this style and associate it with you. Remember that your visuals are usually what people see first. Recognising that an image is one of yours could make the difference between someone scrolling past or stopping to read. And then to comment. If they do that regularly then, at some point, they might message you and ask for a chat.

So now your visual content has attracted people to your written content and helped you get a lead.

(A word about LinkedIn and the dreaded “algorithm”. Now, I’m no expert – far from it. Anything I know is the result of trial and error. In my experience, the algorithm is a capricious animal and things work out best for me when I ignore it.

If you try to follow what it wants, you’ll run around in circles, tearing your hair out.

Instead, just do your thing for your people. If the algorithm wants to come along for the ride, then it’s very welcome, but you’re not going to go chasing it. Don’t follow it; let it follow you.)

## **The Plan**

If all this has got you interested and you want to try and do something new with your visual content, here’s something you can follow.

Try it for six months, then look back and see what a difference it has made.

## **1. Look at the visual content you have been using up until now.**

- a. Do you want to keep any of it?
- b. Does it interest you?
- c. Do you find it exciting?
- d. Apply the three themes mentioned here, and ask:
  - i. Is it original?
  - ii. Is it relevant?
  - iii. Is it consistent?

If not, ditch it all and start afresh. That'll feel good!

## **2. Think about what you want to do with your visual content for the next six months.**

- a. Do you want to use your own photographs?
- b. Do you want to use your own sketches or diagrams?
- c. Do you want to use a combination of the two?
- d. Do you have a brand style guide you can incorporate into your visual content?
- e. If not, do you want to create one?

Write down your ideas and decide which one you want to go with.

## **3. Stick with it!**

Make a commitment not to change this plan for six months. Whether you're posting a blog on your website, a Tweet, or a LinkedIn article, keep to your visual content plan.

That's not to say you can't be flexible. As you follow your plan, over time you will start to notice new things, to see things differently, whether you're at home or out and about.

This is how creativity works. You point it in the direction you want it to go, set it running, then follow where it leads.

You may find yourself becoming interested in taking photos of things and have no idea why. Say, roadworks or derelict buildings! Go with your intuition, even if you don't rationally understand it yet. Further along this path, you'll be writing about, say, trauma awareness in the workplace, and you'll suddenly realise that those photos fit what you're saying perfectly.

I don't know why that happens – I'm not a neuroscientist – but it does. Trust it!

The plan you start out with provides the discipline and structure in which your creativity can grow and develop.

## **Review**

At the end of six months, look back over what you have done. Scroll through your blogs and your social media content.

***Can you see the difference?***

Original, relevant, consistent – for six months!

Look at your engagement. Did anyone comment on your visual content as well as on your writing? Did you make any connections because of your visual content?

***Did anything surprise you?***

***What did you learn?***

And perhaps most importantly:

***Will you keep doing it?***

If you decide to follow this, I would love to know how you're getting on. Keep in touch and if you have any questions, please feel free to message me.



And that's it. Thanks for reading!



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