

3 Free or Almost-Free Digital DESIGN TOOLS

By Kristen Farrell, Manager of
Marketing & Public Relations

In the article, "Web Content that Sticks: 5 Tactics to Stand Out in the Noise" on page 18, Stuart Hochwert of Prime Publishing LLC discusses the web being a "visual medium" and how it is important for businesses to communicate in a visual way to establish credibility and engage users. You may already know this or you'll learn more as you read this issue of Gradient. However, your business may not have the budget to invest in staffing a graphic designer or in design software.

Good news! There are free or almost-free tools on the internet that are all you need to produce high-quality, visual content that can be used on your website, in your emails, and on social media. Here are three of the many options out there that I tried and recommend.

Canva canva.com

Canva is an online design tool that provides everything you need to create professional-looking presentations, posters, social media graphics, web banners, infographics, and more.

Upon creating a free account, Canva asked me about my business and needs in order to suggest a design template. As the Manager of Marketing & Public Relations here at AFCL, I selected "marketing & communications" and "web banner". Canva then quickly directed me to a Facebook cover photo layout and a 23-second interactive guide to help me design it myself. It took

three simple steps – choose, drag, and publish – for me to design the web banner below.

The Canva "Free Forever" plan includes 8,000 templates, 1GB of storage, two folders to organize your designs, and access to a selection of free stock images or the ability to upload your own. For \$12.95 a month, you can purchase the "Canva for Work" plan, which gives you additional features, including more photos and priority support.

Animoto animoto.com

Animoto turns your photos and video clips into shareworthy marketing videos and slideshows.



Visit the Satin Ice
Edible Arts Shoppe
for a free workshop!



Here at AFCL, we use the Animoto "Professional" package for \$22 per month. This plan allows you to: brand videos with your logo and colors instead of the Animoto watermark; create square videos, which tend to receive more engagement on social media and are ideal for sharing on Instagram; use prebuilt templates to help guide your story; add music tracks to your video; and so much more.

You can try Animoto for free for 14-days and see if it's worth the price. Watch videos that we created using this tool by visiting CreativationShow.org/videos.

Pixlr pixlr.com

Pixlr is a browser-based photo editor that makes it easy to edit images by cropping, rotating, and enhancing through filters.

To use Pixlr, you have to have Adobe Flash Player installed and enabled. Then, you can visit the website and launch the web application. Pixlr prompts you to select the image you want to edit from your computer file, a URL, or

a photo library, such as Facebook. If you're familiar with Adobe Photoshop, the toolbar icons should be familiar (i.e. crop, lasso, brush, gradient, text, and etc). If not, you can visit the Help menu to access tutorials and tip articles and learn how to use them.

I used Pixlr to resize, add text to, and sharpen the image on the left.

Pixlr is a free alternative to Adobe Photoshop. There's also a free app available for download from the Apple App Store and Google Play.

StyleTechCraft.com™

Check out our newest products...

You don't want to miss us! Come say "hi" at Booth #1416.

We're hosting **FREE** "Make & Takes" each day, 10am-3pm

And, meet some of our VIP designers every day!

TAPE TECHNOLOGIES, INC.™
CRAFT YOUR WORLD