How To Use Canva To Create Your Own Infograph

by Jan Gordon Leave a Comment

By Mike Allton

Have you ever tried to create an infograph? I'm sure you've seen many in the wild, amazingly and dynamically delivering statistics and information… and getting incredible amounts of social signals from an increasingly visual online landscape.

But if you're like me, lacking the ability to so much as draw a circle in PhotoShop, you might have dismissed the idea of creating infographs yourself as a bad job and moved on.

Yet the allure is still there, is it not? Log into Pinterest for just 5 minutes a day and see graphic after graphic, delivering a wealth of information, each one cleverly branded and anointed by your peers and competitors.

Fortunately, as the title of this article suggests, it's not to late to get in the game! Canva is an extremely simple to use graphic design tool (that's also free if you choose not to use any of their stock imagery), and I'm going to walk you step-by-step through the method I used to create one of my most popular infographs, and blog posts, ever.

1. Determine Your Topic

Certainly the first and most important part of creating any great graphic is deciding what it is you want to communicate. Infographs are particularly well suited for communicating data in the form of statistics, measurements, summaries and so on. But more importantly, whatever you decide to talk about needs to be both interesting and related to your business and industry. If it can also be entertaining, that will help tremendously.

Also, for the purposes of this technique, you'll want to choose a topic that you can break down into a series of bite-size chunks. This style of assembling content isn't unlike the 5 paragraph blog post format that I often teach blogging clients. You will have an introduction (header) to start, and a conclusion (footer) to end with, and in between will be a series of paragraphs addressing specific points.

In the case of my example, I wanted to illustrate the relative sizes of some of the major social networks, so those were my sections.

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Google+
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Vine

This is the finished graphic, from http://www.thesocialmediahat.com/active-users:

Social Media 2015
ACTIVE USERS

facebook

1.39 Billion
monthly active users
Dec., 2014

youtube

1 Billion
monthly active users
March, 2013

google+

540 Million
monthly active users
October, 2013

instagram

300 Million

2. Assemble Your Content

Once you've settled on an idea for a topic, begin to assemble the content and data that you plan to present.

This is a particularly tricky part.

First, any actual data that you offer must be from a reputable source. Save links to every source and plan to include them in your footer.

Second, do not force the content. If you can't find or extrapolate enough content or data to make for an interesting Infograph, consider coming up with a different topic. Perhaps your first topic and the content you have so far would make for an interesting blog post or other form of content.

In this case, I spent a significant amount of time reviewing all of the publicly available member data for those social networks. As I compiled the data, I began to take notes of the discrepancies and omissions… how old the user data was, whether it was total members or active users… and determined that I was satisfied with the differences and margin of error, and proceeded to the next step.

3. Organize Your Content

Once you've gathered all of the content for your Infograph, organize it into a number of specific sections. For flow and consistency, try to massage your content so that each section contains roughly the same amount of information and points.

For my own infograph, the organization of sections obviously corresponded to each network, but I also needed to determine what was going to be included on each slide. I decided to display active users and the date of the data, but also noted interesting details, like when the network was launched, to include within the blog post.

4. Create Individual Sections

Once you've organized all of your content, it's time to start creating your individual sections. What you will be doing is creating one section at a time within Canva, resulting in a number of individual graphics which you can then upload and insert into one large graphic.

Start by deciding the width of your Infograph. I chose 700 because that's the width of my blog content area. You can choose to go wider if you'd like. You'll likely then make each individual section that same width.

Next, determine a consistent height for your sections. You may need to play around with the display of your content before you can know this for sure. For mine, I decided to start with a height of 200 and that ended up working perfectly.

Use Canva's Custom Dimensions to start a new graphic. This of course is where your creativity needs to kick in. You need to present your information in a way that's both attractive and effective. Do resist the urge to add unnecessary frills and filigree. Concentrate on communicating your content with a minimum of complication, but with consistent graphical elements and color scheme. Also, limit yourself to no more than two or three fonts.

When creating my social network sections, I chose a rich texture as a background graphic that I could adjust the color to match each network. I added a consistent version of each network's logo along with a subtle "user" graphic placed behind the network name and information. Like this:

Once I had created and was pleased with the first section, I copied it and made appropriate adjustments for the next network, repeating until I was through all eight. (Go back to your Canva account home page and you'll see this and any other graphics you've created. Hover over the new graphic, click on the arrow menu, and select Copy.)

5. Create Your Header

I waited until I was finished with the individual sections to work on the header so that I could make sure there was a consistent element for the header. While I chose to duplicate some of the graphic elements, the important points are to use a consistent color scheme and font choice.

(I'll be updating the date on this graphic, as soon as one of the networks releases new user data this year.)

Use the header to communicate the title of your Infograph, of course, along with any other introductory content you want to communicate. You may also want to include your business name or logo here for additional branding.

6. Create Your Footer

The footer should certainly continue the same graphical style as the rest of your Infograph.

Within the footer, be sure to include your business name and website, and then list all of your sources for the data you presented. If you have any closing information to share, do so here.
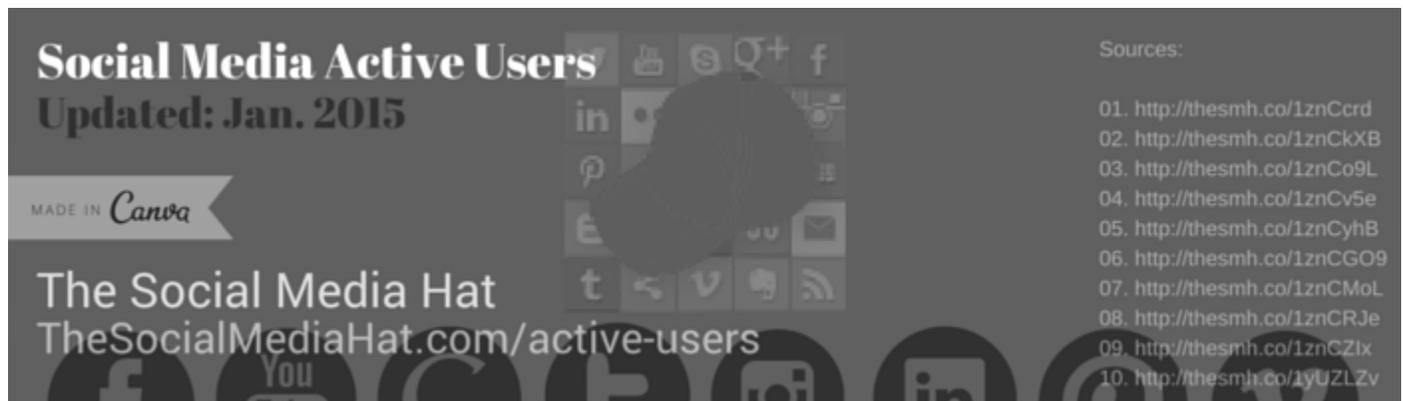
This was definitely more busy than I'd wanted, but I had a lot of information to convey. The next time I update this graphic, one thing I'm going to change is to use branded shortlinks instead of the full reference links. They'll be more legible, and consume less space, as well as be a consistent length.

Note that I also decided in advance what the URL was going to be for the blog and included that in the foot graphic for reference.

7. Assemble Your Infograph

Now that you have all of your sections, it's time to build your Infograph.

Begin a new graphic within Canva using custom dimensions that match your graphic's width and total height. Consider whether or not you want to build in space / borders between sections, or if they should touch each other, and calculate accordingly. For mine, the width was 700 and I added ten sections with 200 height plus spacing of 10 between each, for a total height of 2090.

If you decide to use a border or space, simply set your graphic's background to be whatever you want that border to be, whether it's a solid color or a texture or whatever you'd like.

Download each of your individual sections to your computer and then upload them all to Canva. You can then easily drop them into your Infograph layout and adjust them to fit as needed.

Note that if you're interested in building an infograph that doesn't look quite so structured, use more whitespace and omit elements like borders and dividers.

8. Publish Your Infograph

Once you're happy with your entire Infograph, download it to your computer and prepare to share it.

- Blog about your infograph
- Create a blog image or truncated version for social sharing
- Set up embed code for your image
- Embed the full image into your blog post
- Publish and **Promote**
- Pin the full infograph to Pinterest first, then pin the blog image later on

9. Update Your Infograph

One of the beauties of this style of graphics creation is the fact that, within Canva, you can easily update any one of the various elements you created, and then slide the updated piece into your infograph and re-publish. Every month since creating this graphic, I've reviewed the noted sources (and a few others), watching for updates and new data.

Make sure that you replace the graphic on your website with the new infograph using the same file name so that your embed code in unaffected, and any instances of the embed on other sites are automatically updated. And of course, use the update as a new set of social media shares.

Your Turn

I hope this has enlightened and inspired you to work on your first infograph! With some practice, you'll be able to use this technique to create even more and more creative and free-flowing graphics.

Good luck!

Originally titled "How To Create Your Own Infograph Using Canva" and published on The Social Media Hat. It is republished here with permission.

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