

Product Photography Best Practices to Drive Online Sales

Introduction

By Katy De Leon, Vice President of Marketing, Snap36

A recent [study from Forrester](#) found that 60 percent of B2B buyers prefer to get product information from someone other than a sales rep. What's more, 68 percent conduct online research before buying, and 62 percent say they can develop a vendor list and purchase criteria *solely* from looking at online content.

Those numbers can stop you in your tracks if you haven't updated your website with compelling product images in the last few years. After all, if more than half of business buyers are doing their own research without talking to your sales team, your website - and the digital tools you arm your sales team with once that buyer is ready - should be doing a lot of the heavy lifting.

Background: We Weren't Even Looking for 360°

By Becky Donner, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Design and Engineering, TricorBraun

One way to make sure an ecommerce website is equipped for the job of nurturing B2B buyers is to invest in 360-degree photography – my company did exactly that two years ago, and we haven't looked back.

In 2017, there was an internal push at TricorBraun to enhance our ecommerce platform, [Packaging Options Direct](#). We wanted to increase sales and also engage more strongly with our customers.

We knew that meant creating a more experiential website, so that visitors could somehow know, from visiting us online, exactly what they'd get when they ordered any of our products. A friend pointed me to Snap36, a company that specializes in capturing enough images of products to create 360-degree spinning images, which customers can manipulate to see a product from every angle.

I was intrigued: an interactive 360-degree view certainly checked the "better engagement" box. Could 360-degree images really help us grow our sales? Yes.

Explain Products Better, Reduce Returns

Maybe the most compelling reason to add 360-degree images to a website is that they communicate more clearly than any product description can.

Customers can manipulate images to see what they look like from every angle, which means there are no surprises when they open their order shipment. The differences between similar packages are subtle (round jars and oblong jars, for example); with 360-degree images, customers can see that difference and understand our products in a way that just wasn't possible with traditional two-dimensional images.

Using 360-degree images lets customers know what to expect when they receive a shipment from us – no surprises. Crucially, this can help us reduce product returns as well as drive customer satisfaction.

Demonstrate Experience and Expertise

Given that the majority of B2B buyers lean heavily on web-based content during the research process, brands that want to win buyers over must have content that communicates their products' quality, illustrates their function, and offers insight into potential applications.

Working with Snap36 gave us such content: our marketing team can lean on both interactive spinning images and the many stills used to create those spins to create everything from compelling web content to engaging social media posts to emails that drive conversions.

In other words, armed with 360-degree spins, we were able to ensure we were portraying a professional, sophisticated product experience even when customers encountered us unmediated by a sales rep.

And while B2B buyers may be engaging with web content more than ever, there's no evidence that sales reps are becoming obsolete. In fact, what we've discovered is that having 360-degree images lets our salespeople be more effective by making them better able to demonstrate our capabilities and illustrate our success stories.

Instead of the time-consuming process of shipping samples to prospective customers, our sales reps can now share 360-degree images of our products, which gives customers an instant understanding of a product's look and feel.

It also lets our salespeople send the message loud and clear that this is not their (or TricorBraun's) first rodeo. When customers ask about various configurations and capabilities, our sales team can not only lean on our deep experience to provide answers; they can also

quickly and easily show examples of what our past work has looked like through our iSales Toolkit.

Again, this means no surprises for customers: from the very beginning of their engagement with us, they know exactly what our products look like and how those products can enable their success.

Increase Web Traffic & Conversions

Since adding 360-degree images to our website, we've seen a significant increase in web traffic and online sales. That's likely because about [27 percent of all Google searches](#) in 2017 were specifically for image results.

More recently, Google has started [serving more image results for all kinds of searches](#).

In the future, many analysts expect that “visual search” – searching based on an image you capture with your phone's camera – [will become much more popular](#). That means that, in order to be found, your website must contain multiple images of the product people are searching for.

Because someone can snap an image of your product at any angle, having 360-degree photographs on your site uniquely positions you to succeed as search engines and search behavior continue to evolve.

What's more, the technology needed to showcase 360-degree spins is lightweight and relatively easy to install and use on various platforms. This means it won't affect page load speed, which is crucial for keeping the interest of mobile visitors.

Helpful Tips for Using 360° Images

So how can you enjoy similar results? Here are some considerations:

- **Choose a partner, not a vendor.** New technology like 360-degree images is exciting. Your team will have lots of ideas about how to use it. Choose a photography partner that will help you brainstorm and find ways to achieve what you want to achieve, rather than one that simply offers a capability or product and plans to execute on your orders.
- **Compare the costs.** Compared with traditional still photos, 360-degree photography is incredibly cost-effective. The ROI for 360s is especially high when you consider the multitude of assets, differing use cases, and increased customer satisfaction. Even more important, 360-degree images are the future of ecommerce; if you want to lead your space, you must use them. Otherwise, you become a follower.
- **Consider applications around the business.** Part of that ROI calculation should involve considering input from various stakeholders. Product photography may be

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handled primarily by your content team, but I recommend including leaders from product, sales, marketing, and elsewhere in the company as well. You may find many applications you never thought of that will significantly improve your ability to serve customers and sell products (and further increase your ROI), including push, pull, digital, social, and more.

And as you consider your 360-degree image investment, here's a final thought: More than ever before, we have the ability to create experiences for our customers that not only solve their immediate problems but also leave them feeling delighted by the process.

We have that ability, but not all retailers are yet creating delightful and highly engaging shopping experiences. So this is a moment of opportunity. This is the time when retailers get to choose whether they will lead or follow in their industry. Whether they will set the standard for an excellent customer experience – which involves interactive digital shopping and zero surprises upon delivery – or struggle, down the road, to catch up with their competitors.

We can either define what our space will look like moving forward or let someone else do it and end up adapting to their vision. Those of us who choose to lead by creating the kind of immersive, engaging experiences 360-degree images allow can enjoy much higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty, resulting in stronger sales.