

getting started on social media

A B E G I N N E R ' S G U I D E

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Strategy

First ask yourself: what are your brand objectives? Think outside the realm of social media here because ideally your strategy ladders up to brand bigger picture. Here are a few to get your creative juices flowing: increase sales, establish expertise, recruit new hires, launch a product or build community.

Whatever your objectives may be, decide on where you want to make an impact for your business. Ask yourself: what do I already know about my business, my audience and my industry? Who is my target audience? What am I an expert in? How can I provide value and meet my audience's needs?

From here, create strategies. Strategies are the steps you'll take to meet your objectives that we discussed earlier. They are specific, measurable and you should decide on a date of completion for each one.

Platforms

Each platform plays a different role in the social media space and it's important to know their attributes and features before implementing them into your strategy. Choose where to post strategically and meet your audience where they're at. Here's an overview of the major platforms and their features:

Facebook: Whether it be organic content or paid ads, Facebook allows businesses to engage users and build community.

Twitter: It's all about engaging in conversation and short, to-the-point updates that are relevant to a business or individual's area of expertise.

Instagram: A highly visual platform that provides a great opportunity to drive website traffic, promote products and build a brand personality.

LinkedIn: A space for content aimed at a more professional market. LinkedIn is a great place to establish expertise and share knowledge.

Content

Write and schedule unique content for each platform that will provide value for current and potential new audiences. Create content pillars to make sure you're focused on your objectives. Remember: cater your content for each platform. Here's an example:

Facebook: I like pizza.

Twitter: What's your favorite #pizza topping?

Instagram: Here's a filtered picture of my pizza from my local pizza joint.

LinkedIn: My skills include pizza eating.

Audience Engagement

It's important to find a balance of staying on brand while remaining human and relatable. Remember: social media is meant to be just that, social. Know what your brand voice and tone are and how they differ by channel. You'll see more rapid audience growth and a spike in engagement if there's a consistent human element to your brand.

From there, make time on a regular basis to engage with your audience to create a network in which you can connect, share and grow. It's not one-sided.

Examples of engagement include commenting on and liking posts, engaging with relevant hashtags and location tags, responding to stories, supporting fellow businesses in your industry and engaging with Instagram story elements. Another tip: watch for trending topics and create real-time content.

Hashtags

Create a list of engaging hashtags that you can include on each post for simplicity and ease. Then, create smaller, more niche lists of hashtags that align with each of your content pillars. For example, a gym could include these hashtags on every post:

#gym #fitness #wellness #workout

And these hashtags on just their posts that promote group classes:

#groupfitness #groupfitnessclasses #groupworkout

Reporting

Take the time to check in on the effectiveness on your strategy on a regular basis. It's as simple as pulling together a report with high-level metrics to gauge the effectiveness of your content cadence, hashtag strategy, audience engagement practices and overall strategy in terms of helping you reach your objectives.

Examples of relevant social media KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) include engagement rate, website traffic, sales, impressions, audience growth, shares, saves, comments and mentions.

Monitor these numbers over time and refer back to your strategy to evaluate what's been working and what might need rethinking.