



CRACKING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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reating a presence for your brand on social media is no longer an “if.” It’s a, “which one(s)?” When a company doesn’t have an online presence – an outdated website, non-existent or defunct social media profiles – it reflects poorly on the brand and can make



consumers question the legitimacy of the business. Around one in every three minutes spent online is devoted to social networking and messaging (that’s about two hours a day), according to GlobalWebIndex. Almost every Internet user can now be reached through social media, as 94 percent of digital consumers between the ages of 16 and 64 have an account on at least one social media platform, and 98 percent have used or visited one within the last month.

Your business is probably on at least one platform already. But with limited time and resources, here are some things to consider to make the most impact from your social media efforts.

Which platforms make sense for your business?

You know that “everyone” is on Facebook (and it continues to dominate, with 88 percent of Internet users having an account), and that Twitter is a great tool to get short, newsworthy items to your audience with the benefit of brevity. Instagram is a powerful tool if your business is visually focused (design studios, photography, and food, for example) and some brands have been using Pinterest to help with visual storytelling in meaningful ways. With the domination of video content, YouTube topped Facebook in number of visitors in the first quarter of 2017. Lastly, LinkedIn remains the go-to business social media platform, helping to connect professionals to new job opportunities, meaningful content, and as a lead source and research tool. But what about Snapchat, Periscope, and other emerging platforms?

Much like your business doesn’t need to be all things to all people, you shouldn’t stretch yourself (or your staff) to maintain active profiles on five or six social media platforms. Pick a few to start, and go where your audiences are. Select one or two with which you feel comfortable, and choose one that may challenge you a bit.

PLATFORM	NUMBER OF GLOBAL USERS MONTHLY	PERCENTAGE OF ONLINE ADULTS WHO USE...	ONLINE ADULT USER DATA (self-reported)	FUN FACT
 Facebook	1.9 billion	79%	75% - Men 83% - Women AGE: 18-29: 88% 30-49: 84% 50-64: 72% 65+: 62%	Posting just once or twice per day on Facebook yields an average of 40 percent more engagement than posting three or more times per day.
 Twitter	328 million	24%	24% - Men 25% - Women AGE: 18-29: 36% 30-49: 33% 50-64: 21% 65+: 10%	More than 80 percent of the world's leaders maintain Twitter accounts.
 LinkedIn	500 million + (registered users)	29%	31% - Men 27% - Women AGE: 18-29: 34% 30-49: 33% 50-64: 24% 65+: 20%	There are more than 40 million students and recent college graduates on LinkedIn. They are LinkedIn's fastest-growing demographic.
 Instagram	700 million	32%	26% - Men 38% - Women AGE: 18-29: 59% 30-49: 33% 50-64: 18% 65+: 8%	95 million photos and videos are shared on Instagram per day.
 Pinterest	150 million	31%	17% - Men 45% - Women AGE: 18-29: 36% 30-49: 34% 50-64: 28% 65+: 16%	2 million people pin product pins per day.

Source: Pew Research Center, Statista, Sprout Social

It should be noted that YouTube surpassed Facebook in number of visitors and has 1.3 billion global users. 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute, and video has surpassed photos, GIFs, and other content types to become the most popular and likely to be shared on social media.

Keep your content coming.

Step One: Share and retweet from sources you know and trust. This could be reputable news sources, blogs, industry-specific articles, or a feel-good story to help build your brand identity online. Sharing content from users within your networks (like vendors, clients, and others who know you or your business personally) helps establish a friendly two-way street, where they may be more likely to share your content. Develop a few go-to sources for sharing and see where they frequent for sharable content, as well.

Step Two: If you have a blog on your website already, then social media is a great place to push and repurpose that content. Creating original content regularly helps establish you and your business as subject matter experts in a field. It can also help your website traffic and drive engagement. Be sure to have a call-to-action at the end that doesn't revolve around a purchasing behavior. If you know of a market influencer with a large audience that would be sympathetic to your cause or with whom you have a personal connection, consider reaching out to him or her to share your content (think of it as product placement for your content).

Step Three: Get into a pattern of posting regularly and pay attention to what's trending and join the conversation. It can be as easy as hashtagging #tbt (Throwback Thursday) and sharing a photo of the first day you opened your business. Mix in relevant news and timely stories from your industry with original content, testimonials and stories, and use a variety of media: short video clips, photos, memes, and text that keeps your profile pages fresh and relevant.

The Newbies...

Facebook and LinkedIn may be the "tried and true" of social media platforms, but new technologies and platforms are constantly introduced. Before dismissing Snapchat, Reddit, augmented reality, different filters, and lenses, consider how they may be creatively applied to your business. For example, Snapchat offers geofilters - special overlays that help communicate the where and when of a Snap in an engaging or funny way - for

events and locations you choose. A special event, such as a grand opening or a fundraiser, may be a great opportunity to test out a geofilter and see how your audiences react.

Reddit, a social news aggregation, web content rating, and discussion website, is emerging for business use now. You can ask for feedback on a new logo or campaign, ask questions about what your audiences want and need, or how they feel about a specific topic. Sub-Reddits are mini-communities within Reddit that bring people with similar interests or who want to discuss similar topics together. You can also use your sub-Reddit for customer service and how-to's, and conduct your own Ask Me Anything (AMA) session or interviews. Allow your audience to submit questions and participate in real time.

With many of these tools once regarded as cost prohibitive now available with an app download and with a simple update, businesses with limited staff time or resources can harness the power of the latest technology without investing in expensive hardware or infrastructure. Case in point? The rise of video and the quality of smart phone cameras (as well as the ability to purchase a decent microphone for your smart phone for less than \$20) has given rise to the prevalence of video content across all social media platforms.

Resources, Tools, and Free Stuff to Help

Because social media is just about everywhere, there are plenty of examples of what to do and what not to do out there, as well as templates to help you manage your social media content, software to help you schedule and plan your social media, and ROI tools to help you figure out what's working and what's not. Here are just a few to consider:

- Hootsuite - Schedule posts, pull reports on engagement and growth, and see which posts perform better than others. You can also download free social media plan and audit templates. Visit hootsuite.com.
- ThriveHive - Through a new partnership with the Metro Chamber, small business owners can take advantage of an easy-to-use dashboard for handling emails, contacts, social media posts, and other lead generation tools - all for a low monthly price. For more information, visit LVChamber.com.



- **DIY Marketers** - This popular blog invites guest authors to contribute content, making it a great site for fellow small business owners and others who "DIY" their marketing efforts to share best practices, success stories, tools, and technology to help make your marketing efforts a bit easier. Visit diymarketers.com.
- **Chamber University** - The Metro Chamber's Chamber University webinar series has several sessions dedicated to social media, including dedicated webinars on Twitter and Snapchat, available on the Chamber's YouTube channel or through the Members Only portal.

Five Social Media Content Ideas To Try Right Now

No time like the present, and no time like real time. Try a few of these out as you continue to navigate through the ever-changing world of social media:

- Join the conversation on a topic that's trending. Take a look on any social media platform, and see which hashtags are generating buzz. Select one that

- makes sense for your business and comment, offer your thoughts, or try something witty.
- Comment on your audience's posts. Take 15 minutes and like, comment, retweet, and otherwise engage with your audience. Sharing the love helps inspire others to do the same.
- The next time you have a loyal customer in your business, take a short video testimonial of why they love your business and why they recommend a specific product or service. Post to your social media channels and be sure to tag your customer.
- Publish a blog post or an article on your website. It doesn't have to be long (in fact, it shouldn't be more than 300-400 words) and push it to your social media accounts.
- Don't be afraid to get inspirational or funny. Sometimes, a piece of content that's unexpected performs better than you think it might. Search for (or create) a fun meme about your business or industry, or post an inspirational quote to get your workday started.