

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

How to build interaction and deepen relationships with your customers and followers on social media



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Introduction: Choose Your Social Media for Maximum Engagement

"Content is like a campfire. Engagement is what happens around the campfire."

- Miriam Brosseau, Director of Engagement, ELI Talks: Inspired Jewish Ideas

Social media is an extraordinarily powerful marketing tool. Through social media, you can interact directly with your connections and build strong bonds with them. You can drive traffic and gain exposure with new audiences. You can harness the power of social media to generate leads and sales, or to position yourself as a thought leader in your industry.

The only trouble is that the social media landscape is constantly changing. New social media sites spring up, new tools and features are added to platforms, and new ways of interacting become available. In order to harness the power of social media effectively, whatever your aim, you need to stay on top of the changes and continuously look for ways to engage people.

In the past, it was enough to simply create a social media profile. That's no longer the case. Social media platforms are free, but now businesses must invest a great deal of time developing content, driving engagement, and monitoring performance.

How do you know whether your content is effective and engaging? How do you know if what you're currently doing is working? Are there better or more efficient methods? How could you improve your social media presence?

If you've found yourself asking these questions before, you are not alone. Small business owners, entrepreneurs, and professional marketers constantly struggle with these concerns.

The focus of this report is on the best ways to engage your social media followers. One thing that all social media platforms have in common, and that won't change over time, is that engagement is vital to social media marketing. Strong engagement offers a competitive advantage that helps you build and maintain a strong customer base, which can then lead to purchases, referrals, new business, new audience members, and other business goals.

By the time you complete this course, you will be able to:

- Select the best social media platforms and features to incorporate into your social media strategy to maximize audience engagement
- Maximize your social media profile settings to drive engagement, whether you're just getting started or brushing up your existing account
- Incorporate top strategies to increase engagement - including proven ways to engage followers, crafting the best voice and tone for your social media content, and how to make that content engaging
- Put it all together by building a social media strategy that will save you time and increase engagement.
- Plus, learn tips to measure the success of your social media program so that you know what's working and where to focus your energy.

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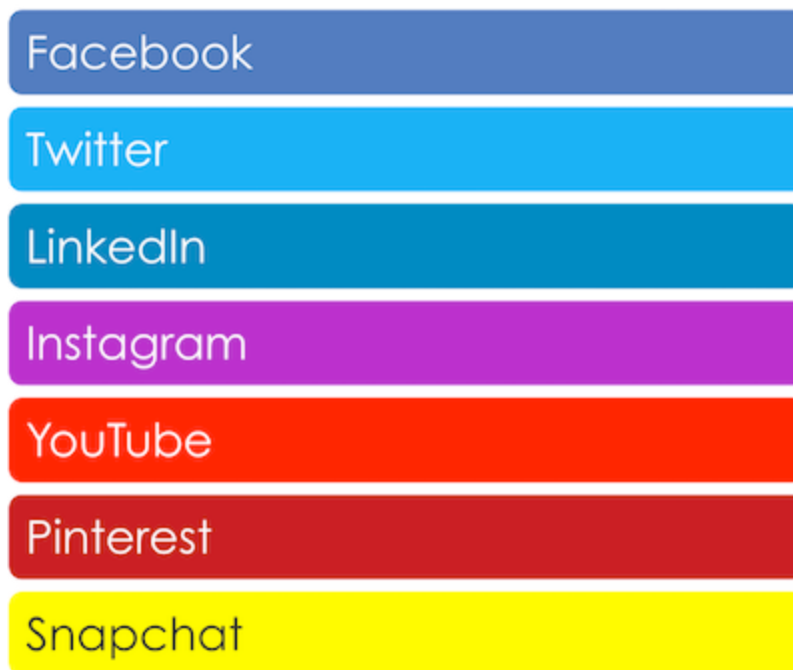
<https://www.WebsiteTransformationWorkshop.com>



Choosing the Most Effective Social Media Platforms for Your Business

The first step is to understand which social media platforms are the right ones for you to use. Each is slightly different in its audience and functionality.

The Social Media Examiner surveyed more than 5,700 marketers and published the results in its 2017 report on social media insights. It found that the top 7 social media platforms are currently:

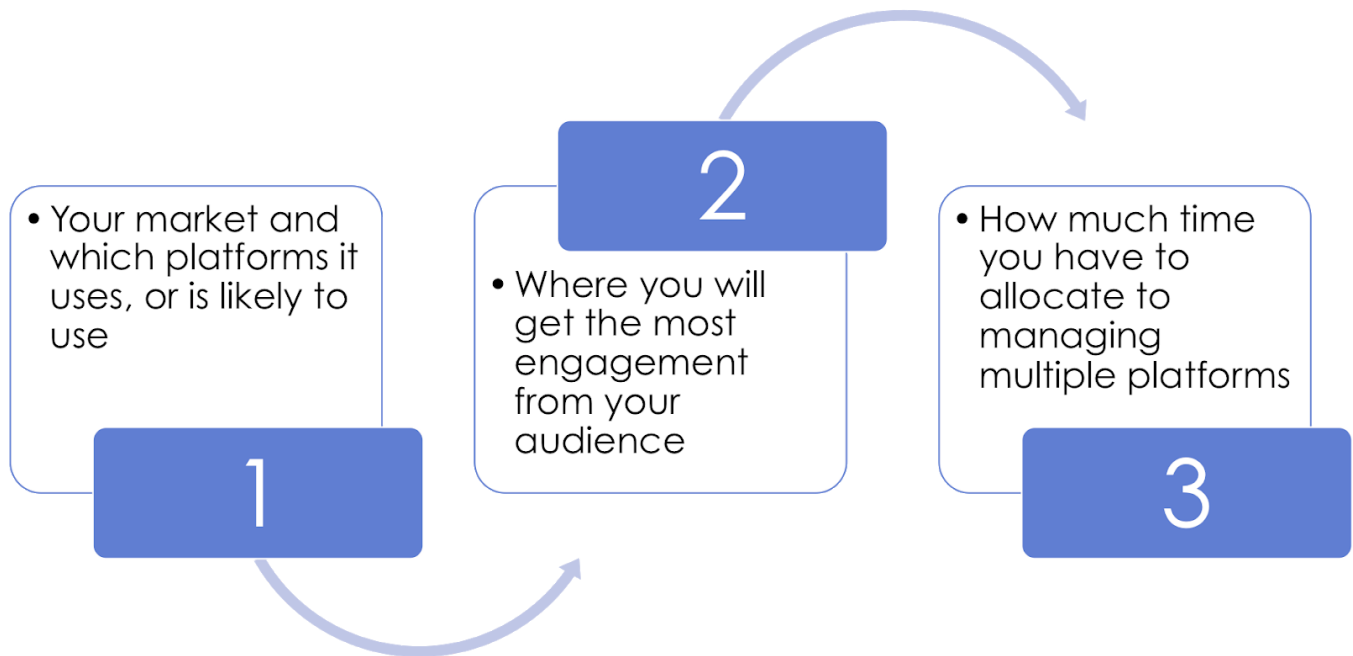


1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. LinkedIn
4. Instagram
5. YouTube
6. Pinterest
7. Snapchat

According to the survey, as of 2017, 94% of marketers use top social media site Facebook. There are many other social media platforms, but no matter who your audience is, it's highly likely that you will use one of the above.

In terms of the top platforms to use, there are some key differences between B2B (business to business) and B2C (business to customer). The top 5 B2C platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. For B2B, they are Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

There are three key things to consider when choosing your social media platforms:



1. Your market and which platforms it uses, or is likely to use
2. Where you will get the most engagement from your audience
3. How much time you have to allocate to managing multiple platforms

You can discover the information above through a number of methods. One is to survey your customers. You can also use Google Analytics or other analytic tools to see where your customers most actively engage with your content.

Another idea is to sign up for several of the major platforms and see if you can find your audience actively using them. In the end, you'll want to stick to two or

three platforms at most. It's better to do a few channels really well than many badly, plus splitting your focus on many may not get you any results. But, in the research stages, you can try out several platforms and narrow it down.

You can also research your competitors. Which social media platforms are they active on? This will give you some idea of where you can find your audience too.

When looking at which platforms to use, here are a few things to consider:

- **Does the platform relate to your business needs and goals?** For example, if your primary goal is to sell directly through the social media site, you'll need a platform where that's possible or one that has ecommerce features built-in. You'll also need to consider the audience and choose a platform where people are shopping and buying.
- **Which audiences does the platform serve?** For example, there may be differences in preferences between retirees and millennials. You need to identify your target audience and make sure they're engaging with relevant content on the site.

To help you decide which social media platforms to try, here are some of the key characteristics of each of the major ones. The data is from 2017 and trends in social media can change quite rapidly, so keep this in mind as you read on.

Facebook

Facebook

- The largest network at the time of writing
- 2 billion monthly active users
- Primary age group is 18 – 29
- Over 60 million businesses have Facebook page
- Great for building brand loyalty and reputation
- Offers advertising
- Interact with your audience and use analytics tools
- Plenty of opportunities for sharing content and communicating
- The site is constantly adding new features

Facebook is the largest social media network at the time of writing and it's used by virtually everyone in every demographic. It has 2 billion monthly active users and although it's used by people of all ages, the most prevalent age group is 18 to 29. 83% of women use Facebook compared to 75% of men. Over 60 million businesses use Facebook page to engage with their customers.

Facebook is great for building brand loyalty and reputation. It allows you to create a page for your business. It offers advertising to help you expand your audience base. You can interact with your audience, and there are excellent back-end analytics tools. There are plenty of opportunities on Facebook for sharing content, telling your story, and communicating with your audience.

The site is constantly adding new features, especially for business, and it has an ads network that is effective and flexible.

Twitter

Twitter

- 330 million active monthly users
- Average age is from 18 to 29 years old
- Breaking news, quick updates and link sharing are popular
- Interact with prospects, answer questions, share news
- Limit of 280 characters for tweets
- Twitter pioneered the use of the hashtag

Twitter has 330 million active monthly users. The average age is from 18 to 29 years old and users are split fairly evenly between male and female.

On Twitter, breaking news, quick updates, and link sharing are popular content. You can use Twitter to interact with prospects, answer questions, share news, and gain new followers. It's great for growing your network rapidly outside of your immediate network.

At the time of writing, the limit for "tweets" is 280 characters, expanded from 140 in 2017. Twitter is the social media platform that first pioneered hashtags which are used heavily on it. It's a great platform for PR.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn

- Top site for professional networking and job seekers
- Focused on B2B business
- More than 450 million accounts and under-utilized by small business
- More serious and focused on business-related content
- Great for building relationships with people in similar industries and networking
- Establish themselves through thought leadership and lead nurturing
- Good for web traffic, sending four times more visitors to websites than Twitter and Facebook

LinkedIn is the top site for professional networking and job seekers. It's focused on B2B businesses. It has 450 million accounts and is under-utilized by small business. It's more serious than other platforms, focusing on business-related content rather than casual use among friends.

This platform is great for building relationships with people in similar industries, networking, and displaying business-related data and statistics. Businesses can use LinkedIn to establish themselves through thought leadership and the nurturing of leads. It's especially good for web traffic, sending four times more visitors to websites than Twitter and Facebook.

Instagram

Instagram

- Owned by Facebook
- 800 million active monthly users
- 68% of users are females
- Photo-sharing platform with built in filters for editing
- Useful for visually oriented businesses
- Most usage is via smartphone
- Good for branding
- Use images to tell stories

Instagram is owned by Facebook. It has 800 million monthly active users and 500 million who report using it daily. Around 68% of users are females. 17% of teens say Instagram is the most important social media site.

Instagram is a photo-sharing platform with built-in filters for editing and beautifying images. It's especially useful for businesses that are visually-oriented. Most Instagram usage is via smartphone, as the platform is for mobile users rather than desktop. You can use Instagram to show products, staff pics, office events, and so on, making it great for adding a human element to your business.

One of Instagram's strengths is that it's good for branding. Visuals are important for branding and some businesses use certain filters, design features, or color themes for the photos they share to achieve a unique look. Businesses often use images to tell stories. Cake shops post creative cakes, hairdressers share hairstyles, fitness coaches post inspiring quotes, and so on.

YouTube

YouTube

- 1.57 billion monthly active users / 30+ million daily active users
- 80% of views are from outside the U.S.
- Millennials prefer YouTube to traditional television
- 5 billion videos watched per day
- 500 million mobile views per day
- 9% of small businesses are on YouTube
- Produce various types of videos or video blogs
- Share on other social media sites
- YouTube is owned by Google so offers better SEO benefits

YouTube has 1.3 billion users and 80% of YouTube views come from outside the United States. It reaches more people in the 18-34 and 18-49 demographics than any cable network. It gets an average of 1 billion views per day and half of these views are on mobile devices. The number of hours people watch YouTube per day has been increasing 60% year over year. Only around 9% of US-based small businesses use YouTube, which means it still has a lot of marketing potential.

Video is growing in popularity and there is little competition, so YouTube is a great social media channel for small businesses to use. You can produce various types of videos or simple video blogs. Videos can be shared on other social media networks like Twitter and Facebook, and also used for live streaming.

One last advantage of YouTube is that it's owned by Google, offering better SEO (search engine optimization) benefits compared to other video sharing networks.

Pinterest

Pinterest

- About 175 million monthly users and 81% are women
- Millennials use Pinterest as much as Instagram
- Image based
- Quality of images is a major concern

Pinterest has about 175 million users and 81% of them are women. Like Instagram, Pinterest is image-based. It's good for retail businesses, photographers, ecommerce and anything else with a visual aspect. You can also share checklists, infographics, guides, quotes and other text-based content in image form.

Since quality of images is a major concern on Pinterest, you need to make sure that you are capable of producing these images if you're going to use the site effectively.

Other platforms to consider are Tumblr, Foursquare, and Yelp. Again, these are popular social media platforms at the time of writing (2017). If you're taking this course in the future, there will undoubtedly be new platforms that are popular.

Snapchat

Snapchat

- 300 million active users per month
- 71% of Snapchat users are under 34 years old
- Roughly 70% of Snapchat users are female
- 30% of US Millennial Internet Users use Snapchat regularly

Snapchat has more than 300 million active monthly users (187 million active daily users). People under the age of 25 use Snapchat for about 40 minutes on a daily basis, which is more than Instagram for some demographic.

Snapchat is known to have higher engagement rates than other similar platforms. Hence, it's a great platform to use to create interest.

Learning Activity:

1. What platforms are you currently using for social media and how happy are you with the level of engagement?
2. Based on the platform information in this report, what are 3 top platforms that you can use to help support increased engagement with your market? The goal is not to add 3 on top of what you are already using, but to focus on 3 that you'd really like to hone your skills on from a content and engagement perspective. Use the tips about platform selection to guide you.

Set up Your Social Media Profiles to Encourage Engagement

Whether you're just getting started with social media or brushing up your social media presence, it's a good idea to start with the basics of how to create a profile that is optimized for engagement.

How you setup your account plays a major role in how you're perceived by your audience. Just like in-person meetings, first impressions are very important with social media. Users will see your profile and quickly form an opinion about you, and this will determine whether they want to engage with you at all. If you have an account already, it may be due for a brush-up.

Personal vs. Business Pages

Some social media platforms make a distinction between personal and business pages, and others don't. This is something you'll need to think about if the option is available. On many social networks, people use their personal profiles for their businesses. In this case, you would use your actual name but tell visitors to your profile about your business in your headline. In the experience section, you would tell people what it is that your business does.

When there is a distinction between personal and business pages, you should use a business page. Business pages offer various advantages such as analytics.

Two sites that distinguish between personal and business pages are Facebook and LinkedIn. On Facebook, you definitely don't want to use your personal profile for your business. Create a separate page for your business. You can always share your business page's posts on your personal profile.

On LinkedIn, you have the option of either setting up a company page or using your personal profile for your business. Both options are fine. If you are a solo

entrepreneur or you are the core of your business, it might be better to simply use a personal profile. If you want to focus more on the brand and not on the individual behind it a business page would be better. You can also create a company page and use it as a supplement to your personal profile that focuses more on your business.

If you already use LinkedIn and want to change your personal page to include your business, be sure to turn off "notify your network" before you start working on it. Otherwise, every single change you make will be broadcast to all of your contacts.

Google+ and Pinterest also have the option of choosing a business page rather than a personal profile. Aside from special business-specific features, another advantage of Google+ is that you can separate the content you share so that you're not sharing business-related content with your personal contacts who may not be interested.

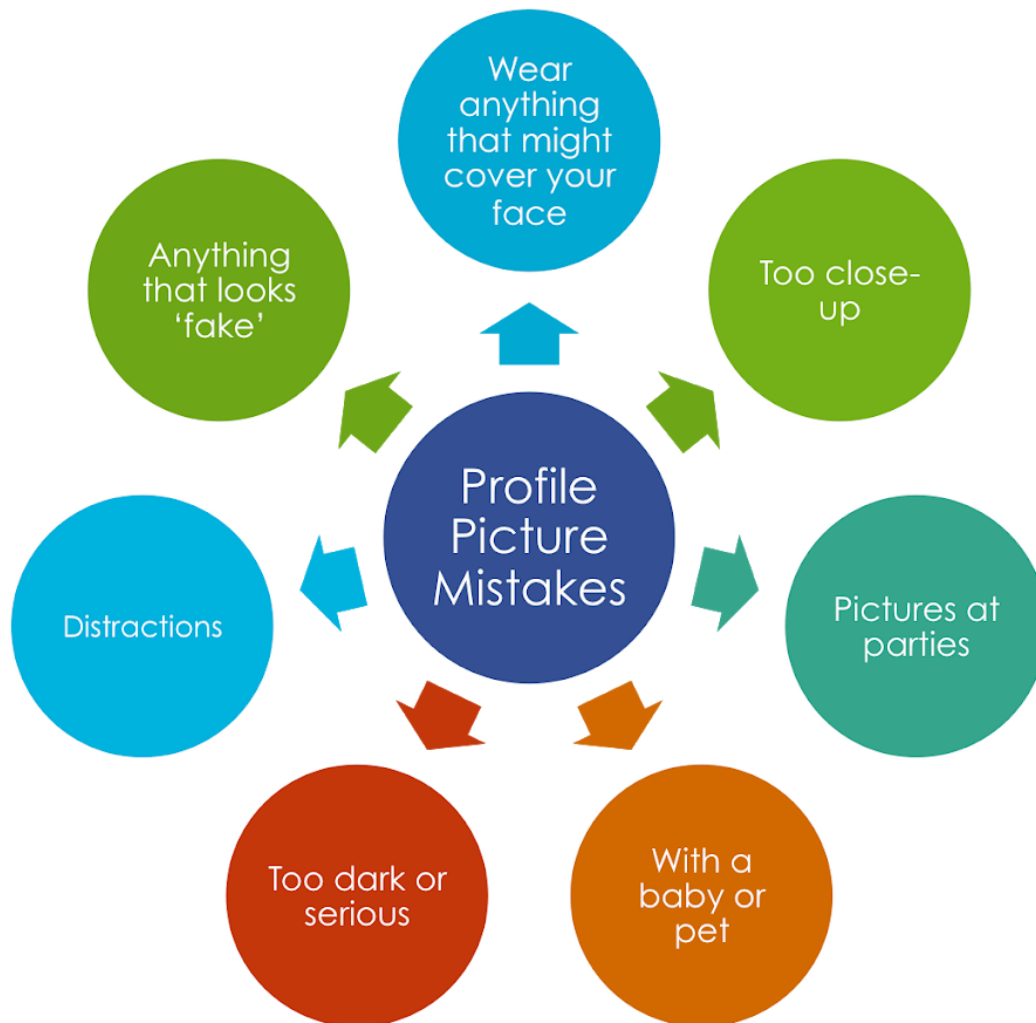
Your Profile Photo

Probably the most important part of your profile is your picture. This is what people will see every time you interact with them on the social media network. It's the part of your social media presence that others will notice first.

People like to know who you are as a person. It's always better for small businesses to use a picture of the owner as their profile image, rather than a logo or related image. This puts a face to your business, which is important in the social media world. People want to engage with other people, not with a logo.

The photo should be professional looking and not a selfie. It should show just one person who is the figurehead of your organization, not a group of people. It is best to take a picture of your face and crop it somewhere around the chest rather than a full body image. You should be smiling and the image should showcase your personality.

It's often instructive to consider what NOT to do rather than what to do, and here are some things you should avoid in your pictures:



- Wearing sunglasses, an intrusive hat or anything else that might cover your face
- Pictures that are too close-up so that your face seems huge
- Pictures at weddings or parties where you look inebriated or otherwise chemically altered
- You with a baby or pet
- Pictures that appear dark or serious, or have shadows in bad places
- Be careful with pictures where you're indulging in your favorite hobby; it's best to use a picture where you're just smiling and giving the camera your full attention
- Your modeling headshot or anything else that screams "fake"

Banners and Cover Photos

Most platforms give you a banner image (Facebook calls it a "cover photo") to go along with your profile picture. Users will see this only when they visit your profile. Sitting prominently at the top of your profile, it offers prime online real estate so you need to make it count.

Choose a banner image that shows what your company or brand is about. It's perfectly fine to use your logo here. The best banners tell the visitor exactly what industry and business you're in at first glance. Focus on conveying personality.

Each platform has its own size specifications so choose your banner image accordingly. After uploading it, always check to see that it looks the way you expected it to look.

Profile Headline

Another important piece of internet real estate is your headline. This is a bit of text that is displayed at the top of your profile near your images. This text should state clearly and concisely whatever you feel people should know about your business. Don't simply put your job title.

The best headlines describe what a business does in terms of the benefits it offers its customers. For example, rather than writing "SEO Expert," you might say something like, "Helping customers find you online." The latter focuses on the real results the client gets by hiring you.

Don't be afraid to talk yourself up in your headline. Many businesses hold back and try to be humble because they want to come across as approachable. But one purpose of the headline is to sell your brand to visitors. Make bold claims and show your expertise.

For example, rather than using a headline like, "Father, coffee enthusiast, and writer with a passion for technology," it's better to use something like, "Award-winning tech blogger and consultant, proud father, and coffee enthusiast."

Use the words here at the top of your profile to show your value. Be someone your visitor would want to meet and talk to.

Vanity URLs

Most social media platforms allow you to create a vanity URL. Instead of the random series of letters or numbers that the site gives you, you can choose the name of your company or brand instead. Each site is different so follow the instructions for creating your vanity URL and choose something that you can easily reference and share.

Be aware that there also could be some restrictions for using a vanity URL. For example, using one might impose a limit on your number of followers. Many platforms require a minimum number of followers or subscribers in order to qualify for a vanity URL.

Website Links

Make sure that any website links you have for your business are prominently displayed on your social media profiles. Each platform has its own rules about where links can be placed, but try to put them in your general summary, even if they aren't clickable. Facebook, YouTube, and Google+ all give you places where you can put your links.

In-Platform Features to Help with Engagement

Facebook Groups

In addition to your business page, there are also groups that you can set up for your customers or followers. There are exclusive communities and other types of groups. Your page is for the public, but groups provide interaction that is more exclusive. Typically, you'll selectively approve members, so it is a great opportunity for engagement.

For example, a coach who mentors new coaches might have a Facebook page to promote their business, but also groups for coaches-in-training. Once a person finds you through your business page, they can then begin training through a group you've created for them.

Groups on Facebook can be open, closed, or private. Open groups can be viewed by anyone and the content in the group will show up on search engine results. Members must be added to closed groups by administrators and the content is viewable only to members. For private groups, all content including who the members are is viewable only by members.

When deciding whether to create an open, closed, or private group, consider the needs of your customers and your overall purpose. Is the content of the group something that would be of interest to non-members? For example, if you're a data consultant and you create a group for your clients, the content would be technical and specific, and thus not of interest to non-members. Confidentiality is also something to consider.

On the other hand, if you're a retail store offering special offers and deals through the group, this might be something you'd like non-members to see as well.

Facebook allows you to create paid groups where members are automatically added as they pay for a service and officially become your customer. Exclusive membership is a bonus for buying from you. Like an email newsletter, you can then use your group to offer exclusive offers and deals to your customers.

In general, you can get fuller and more authentic interactions with closed groups because members feel safer. It creates a closed environment where not everyone on the internet can see what's going on.

LinkedIn Groups

On LinkedIn, you can create your own group, or you can join groups that have already been set-up in order to meet people outside of your regular network.

The groups you join are visible to your connections, so this is a good way to showcase your brand and values. You can join groups from various areas of your life, such as your professional life or education, as well as your interests, local groups, social causes, and groups that show your thought leadership.

Select your groups carefully since you can't be actively involved in many. Choose groups that have strong memberships with members who are in your target audience. Make sure the group is active. Check out the group to make sure that the tone and ideas expressed in it are what you expected and reflect your brand's values.

Once you've joined a group, become an active member. The more you post in your groups, the more other members will see you. This will increase the likeliness that they will check out your profile, which will lead to more traffic and new leads.

With any kind of groups, you will need to check-in frequently and act as moderator. As moderator, your job is to make sure no one is violating the rules you've set down, but also to keep the conversation flowing when it dries up. You may need to stimulate some interaction.

LinkedIn Posts

LinkedIn Posts is a relatively underutilized feature of LinkedIn. It allows you to blog through LinkedIn. This is different from the "updates" feature, which allows you to post a quick update similarly to Facebook. Posts allow you to write longer-form content.

Since LinkedIn is a platform that can drive traffic to your website, you can establish yourself as an expert or thought leader by posting high-value content here. Posts are shared with your connections and followers, and members outside your network can also see them and start following you. You can synchronize your social media platforms so that you update all social media platforms at the same time, thus expanding your reach.

With Posts, be careful about selling. Your content shouldn't be promotional but should be used to establish yourself as an expert. Provide helpful, insightful information for your audience, along with links to further information to lead readers to your sites or other profiles.

Some small businesses post the same content to their regular blog and their LinkedIn Posts. This works well when you have a new audience on LinkedIn that is not your regular blog readership. If you have the capability, it's best to produce original content on each. Otherwise, another good strategy is to post on your blog first and then wait a few days before posting on LinkedIn so that Google will index your blog post first.

Learning Activity

1. The basics: Review your existing social media profiles and update per the strategies outlined in this report. If you are starting a new account, follow the tips in this report.
2. Additional engagement options for Facebook and LinkedIn:
 - a. Spend some time reviewing Facebook groups that you belong to. What features are common among the groups that you like and that you find engaging? Can creating a Group benefit your own social media engagement and your business? If so, what kind of Group would you create and why?
 - b. LinkedIn Groups - If you are using LinkedIn as part of your social media strategy, spend some time researching and joining groups. You can join up to 50 groups.
 - c. LinkedIn Posts - If you are using LinkedIn as part of your social media strategy, spend some time reading posts by your network. Are you already blogging? Could you re-post your content through the Post feature?

Create Content that Encourages Engagement

There is one simple key to communicating with your audience in a way that increases engagement. That key is to shift the focus away from yourself and to your audience. Go from a monologue to a multi-directional audience-focused dialogue.

The same philosophy has been applied in many different fields. In education, it is known as the shift from the "sage on the stage" to "guide by the side." In public speaking, it is the shift from "presenting" to "facilitating." You can see the same shift in modern marketing from company-focused, top-down, one-way messaging to collaborative, story-based, two-way conversations.

This two-way dialogue is important, especially on social media. Users expect it and you need to use dialogue if you're going to engage them.

Here are some key differences between the old way and the new way of engaging:

Old way of engaging	New way of engaging
Main philosophy: Gain followers, get likes, get sales	Main philosophy: Communicate, listen to, and have a conversation with your audience.
Contrived or forced growth	Organic growth
Driver: Talk at your audience	Driver: Listen first; then respond or post
Quantity of likes and followers	Quality of likes and followers Less is more Focus on building a smaller set of loyal fans
Focus: Me (what am I doing? How can I show that I am smart, an expert, etc.?)	Focus: You (the audience) What does my audience want to know about? How can I add value to their busy days?
What's in it for ME	What's in it for THEM

Top Strategies for Engaging Your Audience

Conversations	Recognition	Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage comments and engagement• Get to know them so you know what will get them talking• What problems or concerns do they have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay attention to your audience• Comment on and share their content• Praise and recognize to encourage engagement elsewhere too	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn to handle feedback well• Encourage positive feedback• Handle negative feedback diplomatically

Conversations. Focus on multi-person dialogue rather than simply trying to be heard. Your posts should encourage comments and engagement from your audience.

Before you start, get to know your audience so that you know what kinds of topics will get them talking. What are their common interests? What do they like talking about? What problems, questions, or concerns do they have? Once you know this, you can start posting content to get them talking.

Recognition. Pay attention to your audience and recognize them. Comment on their blogs and content, share their content, and tag them whenever appropriate.

People love to get a "shout out" from the brands or people they follow. If you praise and recognize others, this will encourage more engagement from your audience.

Feedback. Learn how to handle feedback well. Encourage positive feedback and listen to what your audience tells you.

When you get negative feedback, handle it appropriately. Be diplomatic and not defensive. Ask negative commenters to clarify and show that you're listening to their criticism.

Social Media Voice and Tone – Best Practices for Engagement

Positivity. Always be positive in your interactions online. Negative posts will turn people off and cause followers to unfollow you. A study using Twitter found that those with higher follower counts had less negativity in their tweets.

Even though you keep your business and personal pages separate, you should be mindful of this on your personal page as well. People will look you up, so make sure that your communications are positive across all channels that are connected to your business page.

If you're negative on your personal page but positive on your business page, this will cause a disconnect that can seriously hurt your branding. People will wonder whether you are genuine or not.

A positive social media post:



- Uses positive expressive punctuation like "!"
- Uses positive language, terms, and words
- References community members using @ or directly by their name
- Asks the community questions
- Uses bright, colorful, and cheerful images

Here are some examples of sample tweets that show positivity done well:

"Here is an excellent list from @geekytroy on @marketingwhizzkid of social media tools. Very helpful!"

"Insightful post on @socialmediatipsandtricks on how they improved their support dramatically. You'll especially like the examples (scroll down)."

"What could you do to improve your productivity? I'd love your comments! Also, check out this article on my blog for more productivity boosting ideas..."

Authenticity. Share content that you're excited about and let your natural excitement come through. Use a tone for your posts that is really yours. Make it genuine and authentic.

Many small businesses outsource their social media management because it's a task that requires constant attention, but this can cause authenticity issues. It's better to manage your own social media, at least until your brand has a clear, widely-recognized voice of its own that your content writer can imitate.

Emotions. Connect to powerful emotions like curiosity, humor, wonder, and interest. Research has shown that powerful positive emotions in Facebook posts lead to much more engagement.

You can share images and videos that connect to these emotions, rather than simple news stories or other content. A good example would be an image with an inspirational quote on it.

Here too, avoid negative emotions. Although you can connect to people through anger or fear, this means negativity in your social media feeds.

Etiquette to Maximize Engagement

Personalize Your Posts – Make your posts personal. Post milestones for your business. You can also post content about your personal life as well, as long as it's something you think your audience would enjoy. Personal posts are especially good if they tie-in somehow with your business. Try to post content that humanizes your brand.

Respond to Comments – Monitor your social media activity and respond to people who comment on your posts or mention you in their posts. If it takes time to answer a particular question, tell the commenter that you're working on it. It's important to respond in a timely manner to social media activity.

The faster you respond, the more likely you'll keep the dialogue going. Try to respond within an hour, especially to negative posts. You can sign up for updates

or push notifications so that you're notified as soon as you have a like or comment.

Content for Your Posts

Now that you have some ideas on how to engage and manage your social media, what kind of content should you actually post? Here are some ideas on common types of content that businesses share:

Visual Content

Images are very important on social media. Research indicates that posts with images get far more views and engagement than those that are just text. Visual content could be photographs, illustrations, charts or other data, infographics, or screenshots. You can also take text and make visual content out of it, such as a meme or an inspirational quote graphic. The only rule for visuals is that they should be interesting and beautiful.

Tools help a great deal in creating, editing and posting images. A few highly-recommended tools include:

- [Canva](#) for creating free images
- [PicMonkey](#) for editing photos
- [iPiccy](#) for editing photos
- [Jing](#) for capturing screenshots
- [Pixle](#) for enhancing images
- [Google Drawings](#) for creative visual content creation
- [PowerPoint](#) for creating graphics; slide content can also be saved as an IMG or JPEG and shared

Video and Live Video

Video is also particularly popular on social media and most platforms have a way to publish or stream video. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter have native video tools within their platforms.

You can also upload your own videos from a PC or mobile device to your posts. For training sessions, tutorials or other how-to content, you can use video screencasts that film your computer screen as you work.

Excellent tools for video production and sharing include:

- [SnagIt](#) for screen capture
- [Camtasia](#) for recording your screen and editing videos
- [Screenflow](#) for screen-casting and video editing
- [Screencast-O-Matic](#) for creating and sharing recordings

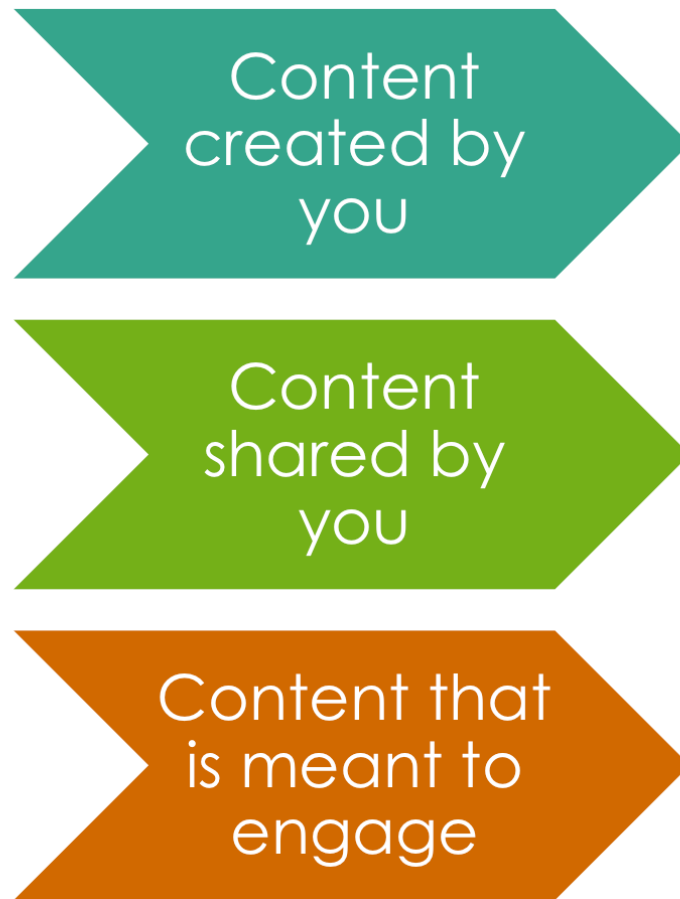
GIFs are also popular on social media. GIF stands for "graphics interchangeable format." These are graphic images that move, like very short videos.

GIFs are often emotional responses, such as someone laughing, expressing surprise, or doing a "happy dance." GIFs are eye-catching and easy to understand. You can use them as an interesting alternative to emojis. They are light and fun, and most social media platforms allow you to share them easily.

You can choose stock GIFs or create your own with tools like [Giphy](#) or [Free GIF Maker](#).

Content Mix and Sources

It's good to offer a variety of different types of content and sources in your social media content. Broadly speaking, content can be divided into three categories:



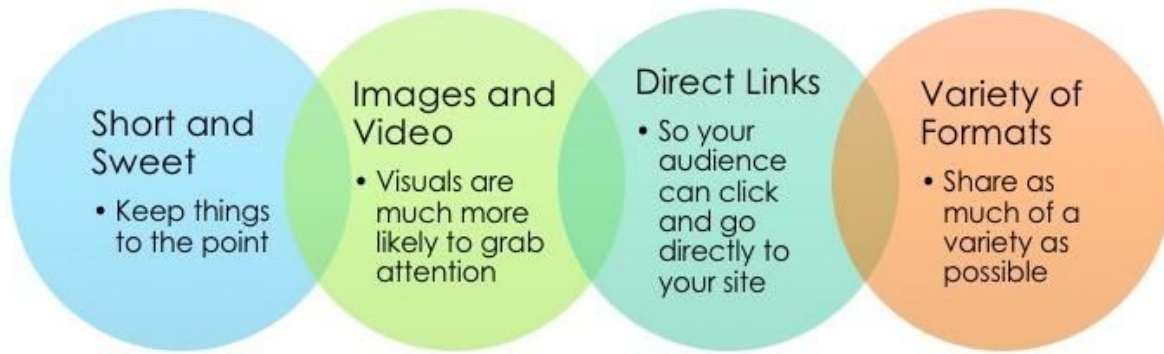
1. Content created by you
2. Content shared by you
3. Content that is meant to engage

Let's take a look at some examples of each.

1. **Content that is created by you** can come in many different forms, including:
 - Links to other content you've created, like blog posts, articles, or videos
 - Promotional offers
 - Ideas or spur-of-the-moment thoughts that you have
 - Image banners
 - Posts that you're re-posting from other social media sites (sharing your Tweets on Facebook, etc.)

Again, it's best to provide a mix of content and not just post the same type.

The most engaging social media content is:



Short and Sweet. Your audience is scanning their news feed, casually looking for something that catches their attention. They're likely to ignore a huge block of text or a long video. Keep your posts short and to the point.

Images and Videos. Posts with images or videos are much more likely to grab the attention of your audience.

Direct Links. Make sure that whenever you share a link, it is a direct link. For example, when you add a link to your post on Facebook, it will create an image showing a preview of the website that is clickable. You can then add your own custom headline or comments. Your audience can click the link and go directly to the website.

Variety of Formats. Try to share as much of a variety of content as possible. Get into a schedule where you combine text, photos, links, and video to stimulate your audience.

2. **Content shared by you** can be found through natural search as well as automation.

You will find content to share from others naturally by reading the feeds of other users and thought leaders in your field.

But the best and most efficient way to find high quality content to share regularly is to sign up for news subscriptions. You can have top news stories and other content delivered directly to your email inbox, which takes some work out of the process for you.

3. **Content created through efforts to engage** with your audience includes

- Replies
- Likes
- Mentions
- Questions to your community
- ...and so on

All content is intended to engage, but this third type of content is more direct, like asking your audience for their opinion on an idea or piece of short content.

A good way to present a mix of these three types of content is to think in terms of 33%/33%/33% and then adjust according to your tastes. You might prefer, for instance, to emphasize your own content and give it more than 33%. On the other hand, you may feel that efforts to engage with questions and mentions get the most results, in which case you'd put more effort there.

Once you start sharing content, monitor the results and see which your audience responds to most. Choose a ratio accordingly, also taking into account your own capabilities. For example, it might be difficult to produce 40% of your own original content.

Learning Activity:

1. Social Media Voice and Tone:

Review your most recent posts. Could you improve your tone and voice based on the tips in this report? If you outsource your social media, is there a consistent voice and tone across the various platforms?

2. Etiquette:

- a) Personalized - To what degree do you currently include personal content about your business, life, family, and key professional/personal milestones? Answer the questions in the workbook.
- b) Based on your score, could you improve how you are personalizing your posts? Write down some ideas that are current or usable in the future (for example, personal or professional milestones that you can share)
- c) How often do you currently check your posts? What is the time delay between people's comments and your response? How much actual dialogue is happening in terms of the length of your comments back and forth? How could you improve your responsiveness?

3. Content Sources:

Make a list of the top content sources you subscribe to, the quality of the feeds, and when you receive those feeds.

Take a look through your feeds and create 1 - 2 quality social media posts to share right now.

Look for at least 5 leading industry magazines or news sites and sign up to receive news feeds from them to expand your source of engaging content to share.

4. From the various tools presented in this report, spend some time looking at each and decide on some tools you can commit to using.
5. **Content mix:** Select an appropriate % mix of content that you'll use for your Social Media content strategy.

Create Your Social Media Engagement Plan

Now that you have learned the basics of engagement and identified how you're going to engage your audience on different platforms with a mix of content, it's time to put it all together.

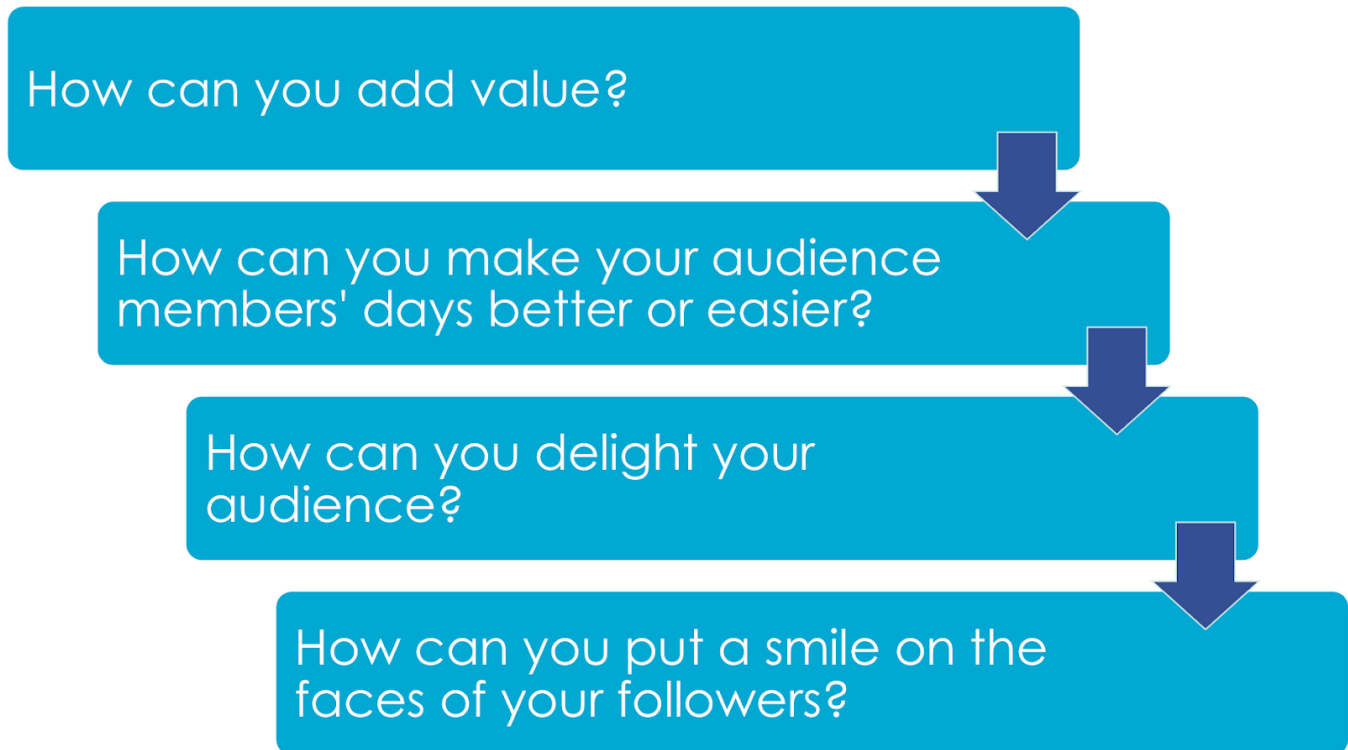
The first step to building your social media engagement plan is to consider your audience. Your audience's preferences and tastes will determine everything you do on social media. This is the secret to engagement.

A good place to start is by following key influencers in your industry. Seek out the people that other people listen to. These are individuals with rich social media followings who everyone goes to for their news and information. Identify influencers and look closely at how they engage their audience. What can you learn from their engagement strategy and techniques?

Next, get into the habit of listening to your audience with the aim of understanding their values, feelings, and tastes. Put your audience at the center of what you do with your business page.

Many businesses make the mistake of applying their personal social media strategy to their business. The problem with this is that your personal account's content is all about you. You are at the center of it. You need the opposite approach for your business, where you put your audience and customer at the center.

Your posts should be responsive to what your clients and prospects are struggling with. Ask yourself:



- How can you add value?
- How can you make your audience members' days better or easier?
- How can you delight your audience?
- How can you put a smile on the faces of your followers?

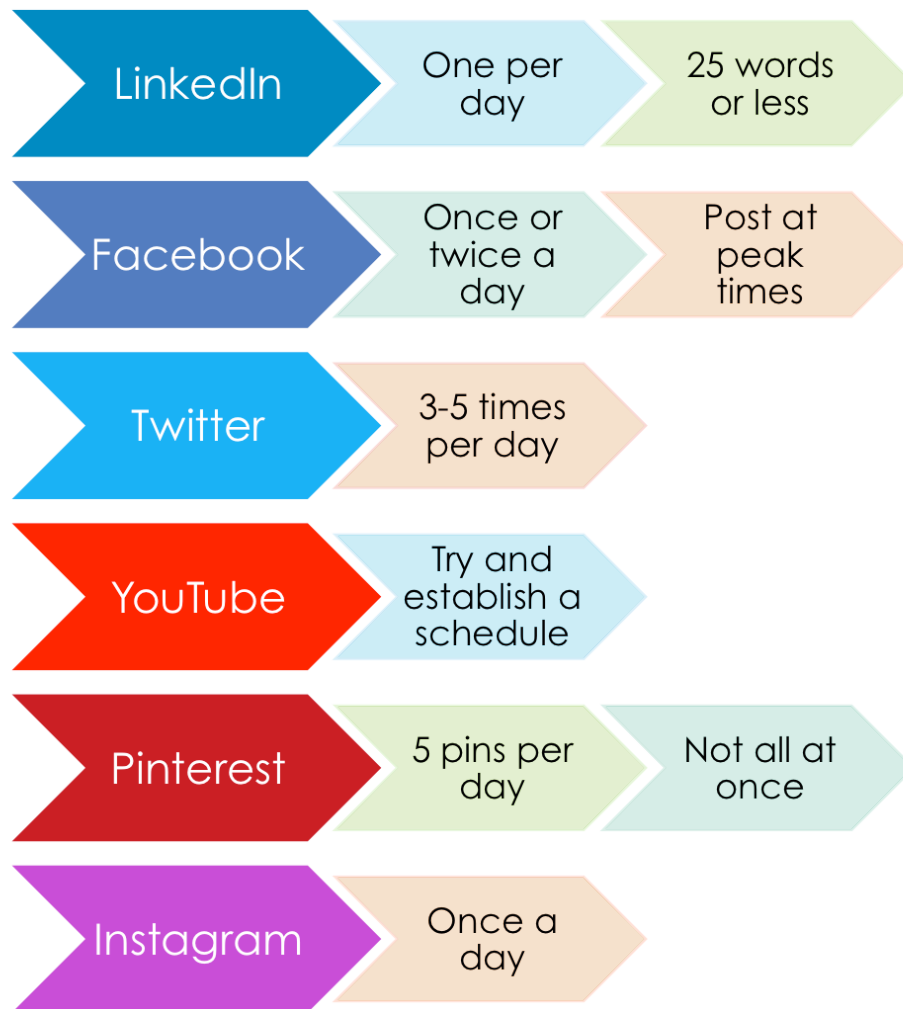
The way you do all of the above is by knowing your audience well, and you get to know them by listening. When and where are they online? What are they interested in? What are they talking about? What content are they reading, liking, sharing, commenting on, or hashtagging?

Timing and Frequency

Timing is an important aspect of social media engagement. You should be posting content at optimal times when your audience is actively engaged with social media. You can discover the best time to post by trying different days and times and seeing when you get the best reaction by viewing your analytics. Downtimes such as lunch breaks, commutes, evenings and weekends are generally the times when people are most active on social media.

How often should you post? This depends on your audience's tastes and the way to discover it is through trial and error. If you post too infrequently, you'll be off the radar for your audience. However, constant social media posts can seem excessive and annoy your audience.

It also depends on the social media platform. Here are some general guidelines for each:



LinkedIn: Plan to post once per day or twenty times per month. A good post length is 25 words or less.

Facebook: Focus more on quality than quantity. You can post once or twice a day and try posting at peak times when there is a great deal of activity.

Twitter: The best frequency is 3-5 times per day, although some users post more often.

YouTube: It doesn't matter how often you post on YouTube because your content is there for people to see at any time, but try to get into a schedule of posting links to your videos through your other platforms using the guidelines above.

Pinterest: You can post up to 5 pins per day, but spread them out over the course of the day. Don't post them all at once.

Instagram: Try to post once per day.

Pay attention to peak traffic times and post during these times. As mentioned above, all social media platforms tend to be busier during work downtime. Each platform has its own peak times and each audience does as well, so start by monitoring when your audience is most active.

Also remember to take into account the extent of your global audience and different time zones. If half your audience is on the other side of the world, stagger your posts so that some are at the peak time in each zone.

Here are some general guidelines for each platform, but remember that your audience may be different. This data comes from research conducted by CoSchedule and pulled from various sources.

Facebook

The busiest times are 12-1pm on weekends; 3-4pm on Wednesdays; and 1-4pm on Thursdays and Fridays. Posts at 1pm get the most shares and posts at 3pm get the most likes. Early morning posts are also good as many people check their Facebook account first thing in the morning.

Twitter

Twitter is most-used at home and at work. The top times are 12-3pm on weekdays. B2B users are most active during weekdays and B2C users are more likely to be on Twitter on weekends and Wednesdays.

Instagram

Since Instagram is accessed using mobile devices and not PCs, users tend to be active 24/7.

YouTube

Videos can be accessed at any time, so YouTube is in its own category. The key here is to post your content on YouTube whenever it's finished, but get into the routine of promoting your videos on other social media platforms.

Pinterest

Activity is generally higher on weekday evenings. There is also high usage 2-4am; around 5pm on Fridays, and 8-11pm Saturdays.

LinkedIn

Since LinkedIn is geared toward businesses, it's most likely to see engagement during the workday, Monday through Friday, and during morning commuting times and lunch times. It is less likely to be checked in the evenings or on weekends.

Time Saving Strategies

Social media platforms are free and easy to use, but many businesses have trouble finding the time and managing their schedules effectively for social media. It takes a great deal of regular work. Here are some tips to help you manage your time effectively.

Monitor Your Time. When you get started, monitor the time you spend on social media and try to keep detailed records on exactly how you use your time (for example, how much time each platform takes). After a few weeks, look at your records and you'll get a good idea of the time investment involved. You can also find some places where you can scale back or make changes to save time.

Schedule Your Social Media Time. Decide exactly when during each day you're going to spend time on social media. Create "time slots" according to your audience's peak times; for example, you could spend ten minutes first thing in the morning reading and sharing content on Facebook.

Write Posts in Bulk. To save time, create posts beforehand and then post them according to your schedule. Sit down for an afternoon or so and create a stock of posts for each social media channel. Then, during your social media time slots, you can just copy and paste and post. You can supplement these pre-written posts by spontaneously writing more timely content as well.

Create a time in your schedule on a regular basis for social media content creation. When you get an idea or see something that you'd like to create something similar to, save it in an "idea file." You can refer to this file when it's time to create content so that you don't suffer from writer's block. A good place for your idea file is Google Docs or Evernote, which allow you to store GIFs, images, embed codes, tweets, videos and hashtags.

Use Tools. There are tools available, such as Hootsuite and Buffer, that can help you manage your social media content and monitoring. Using a 3rd party tool to schedule your posts and to post across platforms can save you a tremendous amount of time.

Analytics and Engagement Metrics

You'll also need to set up a process and create a schedule for monitoring your social media efforts. This involves tracking and measuring engagement. This can be built right into your social media strategy.

Google Analytics is a free solution that's great for tracking engagement, click-throughs, traffic, and other data to help you make informed decisions about your efforts.

Most social media platforms also have their own native tracking features. These are ideal because they're designed by the platform themselves for the purpose of monitoring engagement.

- Facebook has the most robust tracking features with its Insights.
- LinkedIn offers stats for posts. You can also check out "Who's viewed your profile" under Profile.
- Twitter offers tracking with Notifications and Mentions.
- Instagram has a heart icon that allows you to see who has started following you or interacted with your posts.
- YouTube offers a wide range of monitoring features. Go to your Analytics tab in your Creator Studio and you can view data such as Views, Watch Time, Average View Duration, likes, dislikes, comments, top videos, and more.
- Pinterest's Analytics tab on the top left menu bar shows who has viewed your profile, monthly views, engagement, top pins, clicks, saves, impressions, likes, and more.

Other social media engagement tracking tools include:

[Klout](#) – Klout gives you an overall social media score that measures your engagement and recognition. It gives you a score from 1 to 100 and it pulls data from various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google+.

[TrueSocialMetrics](#) – This tool allows you to easily see various data in one simple interface and it also tracks the same analytics of your competitors. It's good for a "big picture" view.

[HootSuite](#) – Hootsuite offers weekly reports that measure engagement on Facebook, Twitter, FourSquare, LinkedIn, WordPress, and Google+.

[Commun.It](#) – This is a tool that's designed for Twitter. The free version offers for only three days of engagement reporting but an upgrade of \$8.99 per month offers full reporting.

[Keyhole](#) – Keyhole offers reporting for Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. It also has an Influencers feature which helps you identify and interact with influential users.

[Social Mention](#) – Social Mention is a free tool that offers reporting on a very wide range of social media platforms. It's easy to use but offers in-depth analytics.

Monitoring Your Success

Tools aren't enough to successfully measure your success. You need to define "success" first. What does engagement look like to you? For most businesses, it is the number of comments, likes, shares, and other activity. You have to define exactly what metrics would show you that engagement is happening, and focus on those metrics. Metrics to watch could include:

Metrics to Watch

Brand mentions

- Shares of your company's content on social media

- Traffic from social media to your website

- Social media activity such as comments, direct messages, likes, shares

- Brand mentions
- Shares of your company's content on social media
- Traffic from social media to your website
- Social media activity such as comments, direct messages, likes, shares

As you go about posting content and interacting with your audience, pay close attention to what is working and what isn't. When analytics show that your content is working, repeat. Ditch efforts that aren't bringing you any results.

Learning Activity:

1. **Audience** - Research your audience. What are they talking about? What matters most to them? How can you help them in your social media content strategy?
2. **Influencers** – Research influencers in your field and add them as friends or follow them. This will help you see what’s trending so you always have a list of good topics/content

Who are the top 5 influencers on social media for your field?

3. **Best times to post**

- Look at your audience and find out when the best times to post are (when your audience is most active on social media)

4. **Time saving strategies**

- Track how much time you are spending on social media. Keep a journal for a day or even a week to understand how much time you allocating
- Next, look for efficiencies. Go into your calendar and schedule time in your day to review social media channels
- Organize time to write and schedule your posts- set aside an hour a week to write your content and schedule it. You can look at 1 week intervals to start. If you run out of time, add an additional hour to wrap this up
- Schedule time to review your social media campaigns to track the effectiveness

5. **Content**

Don't forget to subscribe to the news sources you identified in this report.

6. **Start your idea generator worksheet** in Google Docs, Evernote, or a platform of your choice. Or use the Idea Generator spreadsheet provided. Generate some ideas for content you can create and post in

the next weeks, based on different types of engaging content and the topic areas that will help your audience most.

As you review your social media results moving forward, you can add ideas to your document, saving you time in future post planning.

7. **Create your social media content plan**

Put it all together. Use the provided social media content plan spreadsheet to plan and track your posts for maximum engagement.

- a. First, create a big picture for yourself of the types of content you'll post each day for a month and the topics you'll cover. This way, you can make sure you have a good mix of different formats of engaging content. You can draw ideas from your Idea Generator worksheet to fill this in.
- b. Next, fill in the details for each week and each day of the month. For each day, you'll need to specify what content you'll post to each of your main social media platforms.

This should include the day, posting times, topic, the format of the content, Copy and/or Call to Action to include, any links/attachments/uploads to add, and a place to track the actual engagement that occurs after posting.

What you track in that last section should be based on what is most important to you for engagement. That could be clicks, likes, shares, comments, etc.

Conclusion and Next Steps

You've worked through the course and created your social media engagement strategy, so it's time to put it into action.

Now you have:

- Identified and chosen the best social media platforms to help you successfully engage your audience and maximize the results
- Learned how to optimize your social media profiles in order to drive engagement, whether through creating new accounts or tweaking old ones
- Incorporated the top strategies to boost engagement through the content you share and the way you interact with your connections
- Put all of this together to create an integrated social media strategy including planning, monitoring, and tracking results.



As you go about engaging your audience and monitoring your results, pay attention to what works and what doesn't. Use data from your analytics to choose the right strategies for engaging your audience.

The key to engagement is to always remain focused on your audience, not yourself. Rather than thinking about what's in it for you, try to find ways to help or entertain your audience. If you focus on your audience, your efforts will be more authentic and effective.

In addition to constantly monitoring your efforts, you should also keep an eye on changes in the social media world. New platforms emerge and become popular, and old platforms disappear. Once you're actively using the major social media sites and maintaining a presence there, you may also consider branching out into smaller, niche-oriented social media sites.

Like the world of social media, your engagement plan should be fluid. Monitor over time and make changes whenever necessary.

Now, create some next steps and add a deadline to each.

Learning Activity:

1. Review your social media plan in this report.
2. Next, schedule tasks or a list of the actions to implement your strategy.
3. Set deadlines for each of the tasks you identified. Build these into your calendar.

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