



Social media for small business

A beginner's guide



A beginner's guide to social media for small business

Building a visible, active presence on major social platforms is no longer a nice-to-have — it's a necessity.

In its early days, social media platforms were about sharing travel blogs and photos, exchanging advice in chat rooms or forums, and looking up old classmates in between high school reunions.

Today, social platforms have evolved to become full-blown distribution and engagement channels, and are now an essential part of digital marketing strategy for small businesses. One of the most attractive qualities of social media marketing is it doesn't require the multi-gazillion dollar budgets that some of the traditional channels command to be successful. Online, a little budget, creativity and genuine engagement can go a long way in nurturing customers and prospecting new ones, too.

From Facebook and Twitter to Vine and Snapchat, businesses are leveraging a dizzying number of social platforms to not only boost brand awareness and engage with customers, but to grow their site traffic and ultimately generate more sales.

Are you ready to dip your toe into the action? Here are the first three steps to take when setting up your business' social media presence:

1. Figure out the best social media platforms for your business

As a small business owner, chief marketing officer is only one of the many, many hats you wear on a day-to-day basis. With more platforms appearing on the scene all the time, the task of setting up and managing a social media profile (or more than one!) for your business can feel intimidating.

But don't worry: it's not an effective use of your time to build a presence on every social platform. Not every platform is right for every business — each platform has a different focus, different requirements, and different users. For example, LinkedIn



is tailored to a more professional B2B audience while Snapchat is dominated by Millennials sharing quirky and personalized videos and pictures with friends.

Four of the main social platforms in the US are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. Here are some characteristics of each platform to help you decide which network is the right one for your business:

- **Facebook**
Facebook is currently the largest active social community with over 1.7 billion active users, and is also the most diverse in terms of audience demographics – age, gender, and interests vary wildly among this group of users. Facebook users tend to dislike messages that are too commercial or overly branded, so stick to authentic messages. Share content that is personal, but professional. Pictures of your office or store, stories about your company culture, and other company insights generally resonate well.
- **Twitter**
A tweet is 140 characters. This platform is best for sharing content that is quickly digestible (like contests, giveaways, or sales) or links to interesting and useful industry news or media coverage of your business. If you want to communicate long, complex, or visual messages, Twitter is probably not the best choice for your business. If your main selling proposal is around the aesthetics of your products, for example, turn to other platforms such as Pinterest or Instagram.
- **Pinterest**
Pinterest is all about visual content, inspirations, do-it-yourself lifestyles, and the majority of users are women. Pinterest revolves around pictures that convey the value of your product or evoke your brand style, helping users to create their own vision boards, inspirations, and visual lists. If you have beautiful or eye-catching products, you should give Pinterest a try.
- **Instagram**
Instagram is a visual way for businesses and brands to connect with people. Instagrammers tend to be creative, fond of visual messages, influenced by bloggers, and are likely browsing on their smartphone.

2. Creating your profile

Once you've defined your target audience and know where to reach them, it's time to set up your business' profile. No matter what platform (or platforms!) you decide to use, it's critical to provide an accurate and compelling picture of your business. Here are three quick tips for getting started:



Pro tip: Make your your bio discoverable for search engines by including one or two of your main keywords. This will help make your page easier to find by potential customers!

- **Link to your website in your social profiles.** Adding your business' website and contact details turns any social network bio into a potential source of traffic. On the flip side, consider adding social widgets to your website, so your visitors can easily discover and subscribe to your social channels after browsing your core site.
- **Make your company bio compelling.** In most cases, you will be prompted to write a quick description of your business. Though your business name or handle should be consistent across all networks, you should tailor your bio to each specific platform and its unique audience. Take advantage of this opportunity to deliver your best elevator pitch: tell potential customers who you are, what products or services you provide, and why you're an excellent choice for their needs.
- **Leverage powerful imagery in your profile.** Most profile photos are square and should, in most cases, be your logo. Simple is usually better. Many platforms also prompt you to include a larger header image on your page to represent your business, products, or services. This photo should be eye-catching and reflect the personality of your brand. While you should use the same profile image across all of your platforms to help with discoverability, different platforms have different dimension requirements. To avoid a pixilated or distorted profile photo, be sure to check the exact dimensions each platform requires. Not a pro photo editor? Don't worry, there are plenty of easy-to-use and free editing tools online like [PicMonkey](#).

3. Start the conversation

Growing an online community with a large following won't happen overnight. For any relationship to work in the long-term, trust and credibility must be built steadily over time. When you're thinking about content strategy, it's important you share genuinely interesting content that customers will enjoy reading – without feeling like an engagement with your brand is always a hard sell. Some experts recommend following the one-in-seven rule: only one of every seven posts overtly promotes your business.

The type of content and frequency of posts will vary according to what platform you choose and what your audience is interested in, but here are a few thought-starters:

- **Share your expertise.** Post advice or little known facts for your customers, interesting news from your field or industry, or promote local events relevant to your audience.
- **Give a glimpse into the human side of your business.** Tell a customer success story, interview a team member, or send seasonal wishes to customers.
- **Share news and events.** Update your customers on recent updates like a new blog post, infographic, study, relevant event, press release, or interview.



- **Reward your followers.** Run exclusive contests and giveaways or promote sales and other special offers.
- **Take advantage of photography.** Images tend to get more engagement so get creative when it comes to sharing visual content of your product, team, customers, or office pet.

Still need some inspiration? Take a sneak peek at how similar companies are interacting and engaging with customers on their social channels. Identify what type of content is getting the highest levels of engagement (likes, comments, shares, retweets, etc.) and consider if there is a way to adapt their approach in a way that feels authentic to your own products or services. The goal isn't to copy other pages, but to learn from their successes and mistakes.

Important takeaways

You're well on your way to a solid social media presence! If you ever start feeling overwhelmed, remember these key takeaways:

1. **You don't need to do everything all at once.** Start with one or two platforms, and build foundations for your brand and community there. Channel your resources, and then build additional social profiles if you feel they're necessary.
2. You should **provide a link to your website** and ways to contact you in all your social channels. Include your hours of business (if applicable) and where to find you.
3. **Add social widgets to your website**, so your visitors can visit and subscribe to your social channels after finding your website. Bonus: adding social sharing widgets to your web pages allows visitors to share your content easily on their own social media pages, which is an excellent way to get more word-of-mouth exposure and attract new customers.
4. **Post content regularly.** From new product releases to positive customer reviews, or blog posts to industry news, make sure you provide customers with fresh, up-to-date content on a regular basis.

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We hope this guide has been useful!

If you have any questions, please get in touch.

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