



Social Media

A Guide for Entrepreneurs



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Well worth the effort



Social media: A vital business tool

Long gone are the days when social media was just about posting your vacation photos or letting friends know what you were having for lunch. Today, social media has become a vital business tool that entrepreneurs can't afford to ignore.

Social media is everywhere. We use it to make buying decisions, to stay in touch with friends and family, and to develop new relationships—both personal and professional. However, many entrepreneurs still aren't taking a systematic approach to social media.

With the help of this guide, you will learn how to create a social media strategy, build your presence, produce engaging content and measure your impact.

Our goal is to help you find your place in the social media revolution.

1

Getting started

- What is social media?
- How to start using social media
- 5 social media strategy must-haves
- 10 do's and don'ts for social media
- Case study: Martell Custom Homes

You've decided your business should make the move into social media. But how do you get started?

The good news is that with the right planning, and a bit of effort and patience, you can learn to use social media to attract, engage and retain customers inexpensively.

Once you have established your presence and learned the fundamentals, you will find that using social media is both straightforward and rewarding.

What is social media?

Social media refers to a wide range of Internet and mobile services that allow users to participate in online conversations, contribute content or join online communities.

Here are a few of the benefits for your business

- A more direct relationship with new and potential customers
- Word-of-mouth referrals
- A higher public profile that puts you top of mind
- Brand promotion
- Better customer service
- A way to manage your reputation
- A way to attract qualified employees
- Interaction with other professionals in your field from around the world
- Page ranking improvement on web searches



How to start using social media

Monitoring social media is a critical starting point to help you understand where you should focus your efforts and how you should establish your social media strategy. If you've never used social media before, get started by following these five steps.



① Visit key social media platforms

Visit Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to get familiar with how they work.

② Create personal pages

This will help establish your presence and give you the access you need to understand how social media could be useful for your business.

③ Start searching

Use search tools to look for mentions of your business, products or brands.

④ Look at what your competitors are doing

Conduct simple market research within your industry to see whether you can adapt some of your competitors' practices to your own brand, and where you might have opportunities to fulfill unmet needs.

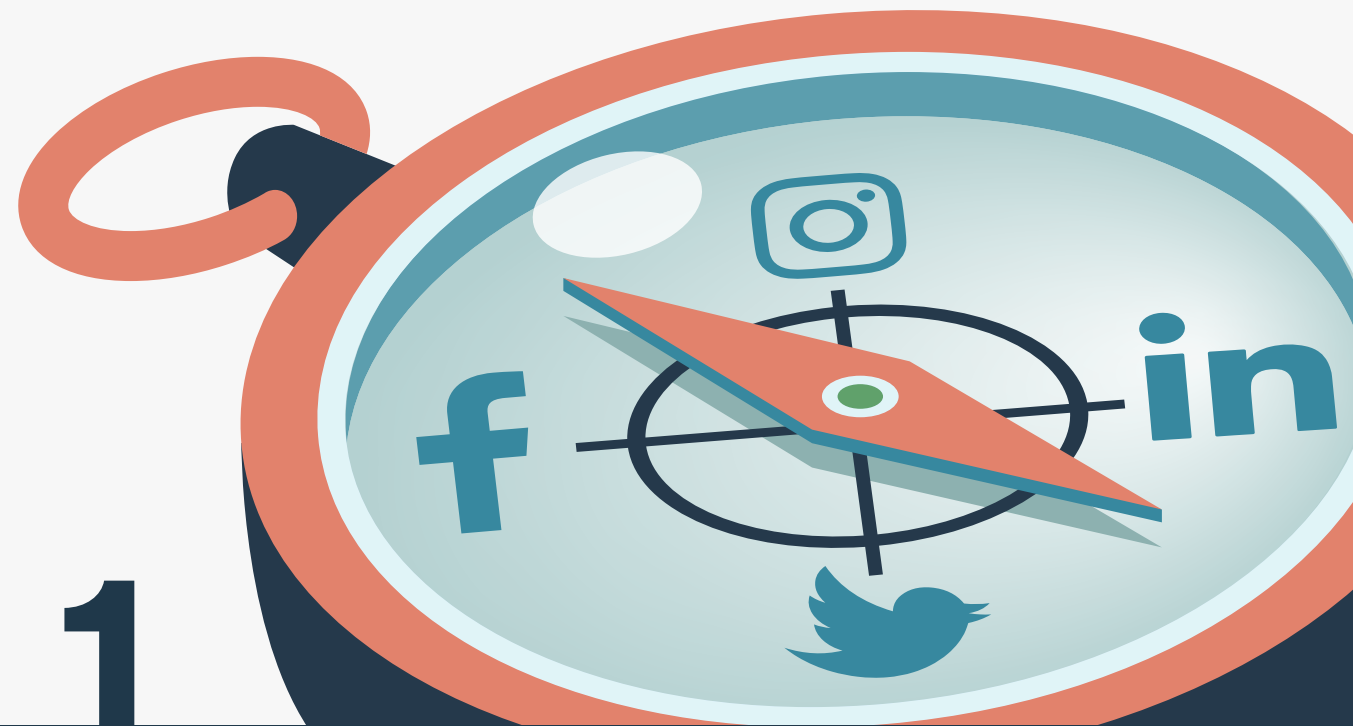
⑤ Create a social media strategy

Now that you've familiarized yourself with social media and know where your business stands in relation to others in your industry, you're ready to plan your social media strategy.

5 social media strategy must-haves

A social media strategy is a roadmap you can use to invest resources in social media. It also provides guidelines your employees can follow.

Here are five key elements you should include in your social media strategy.



Goals

Determine the main business objectives of your social media presence. These can be any of the following:

- Increase sales
- Improve customer service and boost loyalty
- Find new customers
- Increase brand awareness and engagement

Your goals will determine what metrics you measure and how you define success.

For example, if your goal is to increase brand engagement, you'll want to measure how many comments your social media posts are getting.

2

Audience

Next, define your target audience. This will, in turn, allow you to choose the best social media platform(s) to reach them.

Identifying your audience members will also help you develop content that speaks to their interests.

3

Key messages and content

When thinking about what key messages and content to share on social media, start by asking these questions:

- What key messages are at the core of my brand?
- What messages and types of content are relevant to my audience?
- Which channels will best serve my goals?

Frame your content around key messages aligned with your marketing strategy and overall business plan.

How do you develop your key messages?

- Use your market knowledge and research
- Organize a focus group
- Seek professional advice

4

Social media action plan

Now you're ready to create your action plan. It should answer the following questions.

→ **Who will do what?**

Tasks to assign in your company include the following:

- Monitoring social media traffic
- Creating content
- Posting to social media sites

→ **What material will be shared and at what time?**

→ **How will you monitor results and adapt your actions?**

→ **What existing material can you reuse or rework on social media platforms?**

→ **What new material can you create and tailor to social media?**

5

Monitor

Use web and social analytics tools, such as Google Analytics, Facebook Insights and YouTube Insights, to assess the effectiveness of your strategy. Base your metrics on your strategic goals.

It's also important to monitor conversations about your company, brand and industry. These will provide valuable market insights as well as opportunities to see what other companies are doing.

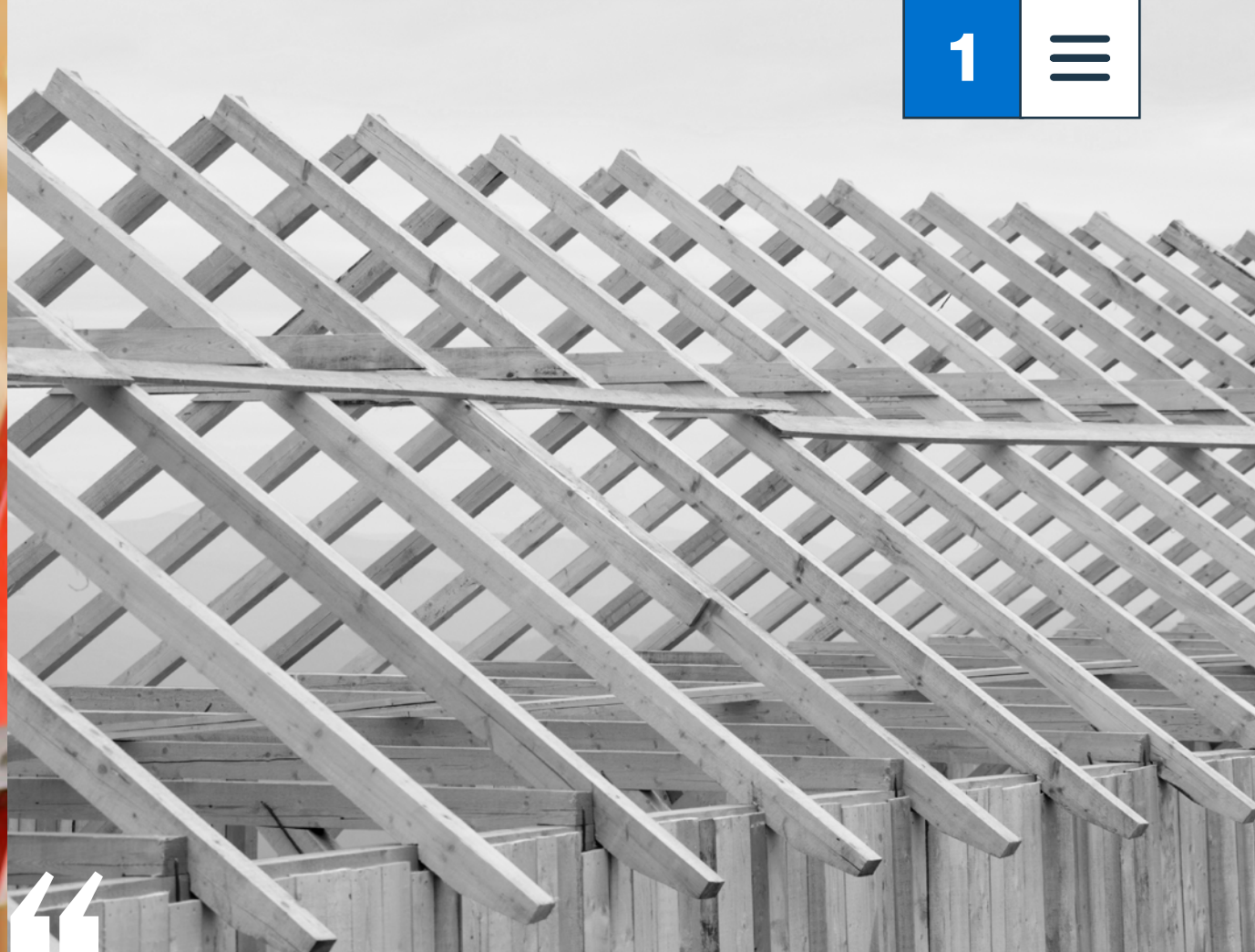


10 do's and don'ts



for social media

- ① Tailor your social media activities to your business goals and target audience.
- ② Grow your audience by offering helpful, value-added content.
- ③ Create social content that stands out from your competitors'.
- ④ Always maintain a polite and respectful tone when interacting with clients on social media.
- ⑤ Keep learning and listening to what's being said about you, your company and your industry.
- ⑥ Be patient. Like any relationship, social media success takes time.
- ⑦ Don't use a hard sell and avoid being pushy. Instead, allow people to come to you. An engaged follower is more likely to become a customer.
- ⑧ Don't take yourself too seriously. Instead, be likeable and authentic. Remember that social media is about building relationships.
- ⑦ Don't rush to create a Facebook page or Twitter account without proper planning. You might waste resources and achieve poor results.
- ⑩ Don't post material that's inappropriate or outside your area of expertise.



Case study Martell Custom Homes

Pierre Martell knew virtually nothing about social media when he got started, but he did know he needed a new way of promoting his home-building company in Moncton, New Brunswick.

You always want to be helping, adding value and giving information.”

— **Pierre Martell**
President
Martell Custom Homes
Moncton

Getting started

Martell decided to harness the low-cost power of social media. He created a YouTube channel and posted short interviews with contractors offering renovation tips. It was a soft sell, aimed at boosting his profile as an expert.

Martell also developed a robust presence on Twitter and Facebook. His social media efforts have contributed to rapid growth at Martell Custom Homes.

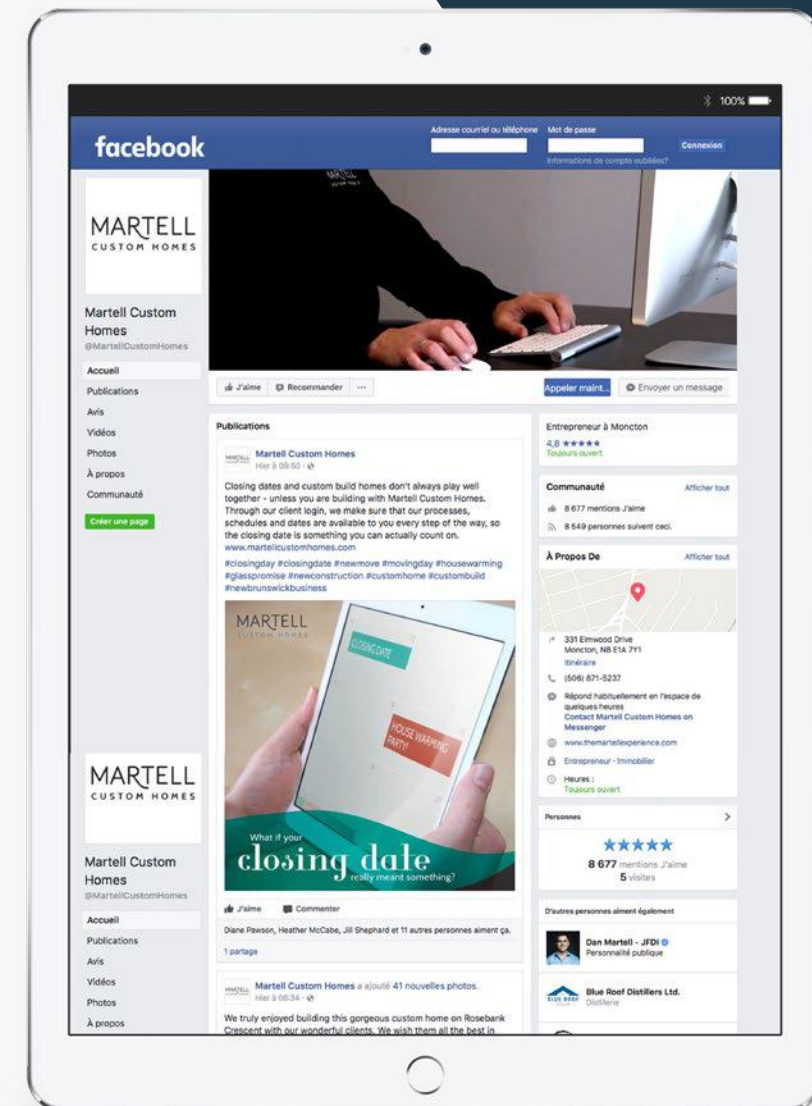
Martell's social media strategy focuses on directing traffic to his website. There, visitors can see a two-minute video about his business and read the company blog. Martell's social media efforts have been key to reducing his average sales conversion time (the time between first contact with a customer and a sale) from seven or eight hours to two hours.

“Social media has allowed people to get to know us and trust us before we physically meet them,” says Martell, who now has more than 11,000 Twitter followers.

“Figure out what you like to do and are good at, and do that. If you have a good presence, do YouTube videos. If you have no time or don't like to write, Twitter is a good option.”

→ [Read more](#)

→ Martell Custom Homes' Facebook page



2

Establishing your social media presence

- Choosing the right social network
- Other social media platforms
- Social media best practices
- Advertising on social media
- Case study: Gongshow Gear

This section offers an overview of the major social media sites, with tips on how to use them effectively.

It is generally a good idea for your business to have an account on every major social media site to reserve your place and protect your brand name. However, you should focus your efforts on one or two platforms.

Choosing the right social network

		Scale and reach*	Why should I use it?	Why should I advertise?	Top tip
f	Facebook	→ 2 billion active monthly users worldwide in 2017 → 23 million active monthly users in Canada in 2017	Communicate with consumers directly or use it as a basic company listing that customers can use to find and contact your business.	Reach and targeting Reach people on a global scale while carefully targeting ads to identify potential customers via their personal data.	Start using Offers Facebook's Offers feature allows you to send special deals to your fans and friends of fans. This is a great way to get new customers to follow you without having to spend too much money.
in	LinkedIn	→ 500 million users worldwide in 2017 → 12 million users in Canada in 2016	Probably the largest directory of potential business-to-business (B2B) buyers in the world, LinkedIn is a great place to network and get new sales leads.	B2B sales Target people according to their job title, industry, company size and so on. A business can, for example, create an ad targeted exclusively to chief financial officers at medium-sized Canadian businesses.	Start recruiting With <u>millions of professional profiles in a single place</u>, LinkedIn has become the world's most complete human resources database. The paid product allows you to confidentially look at profiles, search for specific skills and keep a file on people who interest you.

* All data come from the social network unless otherwise noted.

Establishing your social media presence

		Scale and reach*	Why should I use it?	Why should I advertise?	Top tip
	Twitter	→ 328 million active monthly users worldwide in 2017 → 37% of Canadians had an account in 2016**	<u>Twitter is the digital-age version of the water cooler</u>—a thriving meeting place where you can engage with customers, journalists, bloggers and industry personalities.	Events and followers You can pay to promote a Twitter trend. These are topics and hashtags that will be placed at the top of the trending topics list. This can give an event you're organizing more visibility, for example. You can also target users based on whom they follow.	Join the conversation Resist the urge to use Twitter as a broadcast platform only. The goal is to converse and engage with like-minded people or customers. Using Twitter only to push your brand messages and products will likely be ineffective.
	Pinterest	→ 175 million active monthly users worldwide in 2017 → 31% of Canadians had an account in 2016**	Users create pins (content) and virtual boards that function like visual bookmarks for pictures of delicious-looking foods, gorgeous products or funny cats. It's a great place to showcase your products.	Digital wish list People often use Pinterest to create a digital wish list—a place where they collect products they want to purchase. Promoting a pin will ensure more people see it and can be a great way to boost online sales.	Start using rich pins Rich pins are special pins that give users more information about the image being displayed. There are four types of rich pins: product pins, recipe pins, article pins and App pins.

* All data come from the social network unless otherwise noted.

** We Are Social, GlobalWebIndex, 2017.

Establishing your social media presence

		Scale and reach*	Why should I use it?	Why should I advertise?	Top tip
	Instagram	→ 700 million active monthly users worldwide in 2017 → 8.5 million active monthly users in Canada in 2017	Instagram is an interesting network for companies that can post beautiful pictures or videos that attract eyeballs and build their brand image—apparel, entertainment and travel businesses, for instance.	Facebook integration You can create Instagram ads through Facebook's Business Manager service. It gives you access to all of Facebook's ad creation tools, as well as its analytics and targeting options. This also means that you can use Facebook's user data to target Instagram users and vice versa.	Use hashtags Hashtags are an important part of sharing and discovering content on Instagram. The trick is to use popular hashtags that will get your images seen and your business discovered.
	YouTube	→ 1.5 billion active monthly users worldwide in 2017 → 75% of Canadians had an account in 2016**	A YouTube channel is an easy and inexpensive way to reach potential clients. Content that performs well tends to be funny, tell a story or provide useful information, such as a how-to video.	Target television ads TrueView ads play before or in the middle of a YouTube video. You only pay when a viewer watches your ad to the end or for at least 30 seconds, whichever time period is shorter. YouTube advertising allows you to target your audience according to demographic group, location and interest.	Answer customer questions Answer frequently asked questions or demonstrate how to install your products. Customers appreciate these types of videos, which position you as a helpful partner who can solve problems. They also give potential customers a better idea of what they will be purchasing.

* All data come from the social network unless otherwise noted.

** We Are Social, GlobalWebIndex, 2017.

Other social media platforms

The social media universe includes an ever-growing collection of platforms with varying features, audiences and uses.

Here's an overview of other platforms you might want to consider for your business.



→ Snapchat

Snapchat is primarily a private messaging service that uses short videos and photos that can be edited with the use of filters, captions and drawings. These messages—known as snaps—disappear after a defined period of time. You might want to consider Snapchat if the majority of your customers are under 25 years old.

→ Reddit

Reddit is a community of online bulletin boards where users can submit content and discuss topics. Businesses have successfully used Reddit to create buzz for products or brands. However, make sure you understand the culture of this online community before you start using it. A badly designed campaign could easily backfire.

→ Groupon

Groupon and similar sites provide deep discounts on products and services, with coupons offered on the site and via email. They can be good ways to reach new clients.

→ Yelp

Yelp is a crowd-sourced review site that awards one- to five-star ratings to local businesses. Users can write reviews and give a “thumbs up” to a review they find useful. As a business owner, you're able to respond to these reviewers privately or publicly on your profile page. Yelp is a great way to learn from customers about what works and what doesn't in regard to your products and services.

Social media best practices

→ Introduce your brand

Your social media pages give you a chance to tell your story. Be sure to include branded visuals, such as your logo and company colours.

→ Use your social media pages as a company listing

Social media will be one of the first things that comes up in online search results. Display your website address, location, phone number and hours of operation so people can easily go from social media to doing business with you.

→ Give your page a human face

Try to feature pictures and stories of your team, clients and business partners as much as possible, while being careful to comply with privacy restrictions. Featuring people who work with you is a great way to create engagement and strengthen your network online.

→ Choose a custom URL

Most social media platforms allow you to choose a custom URL (Internet address) when you create your account. Choose one that looks professional and will be easy to promote.

→ Build a following

Prominently display links to your social media pages on your website, on business cards and in your emails. The more people who follow you, the greater your reach and impact.

→ Find the right voice for the right platform

Each platform has its own characteristics. You'll want to find out which sites your customers prefer. Remember to adapt your content to each platform. Your Facebook followers will have different needs than those on Twitter or Pinterest.

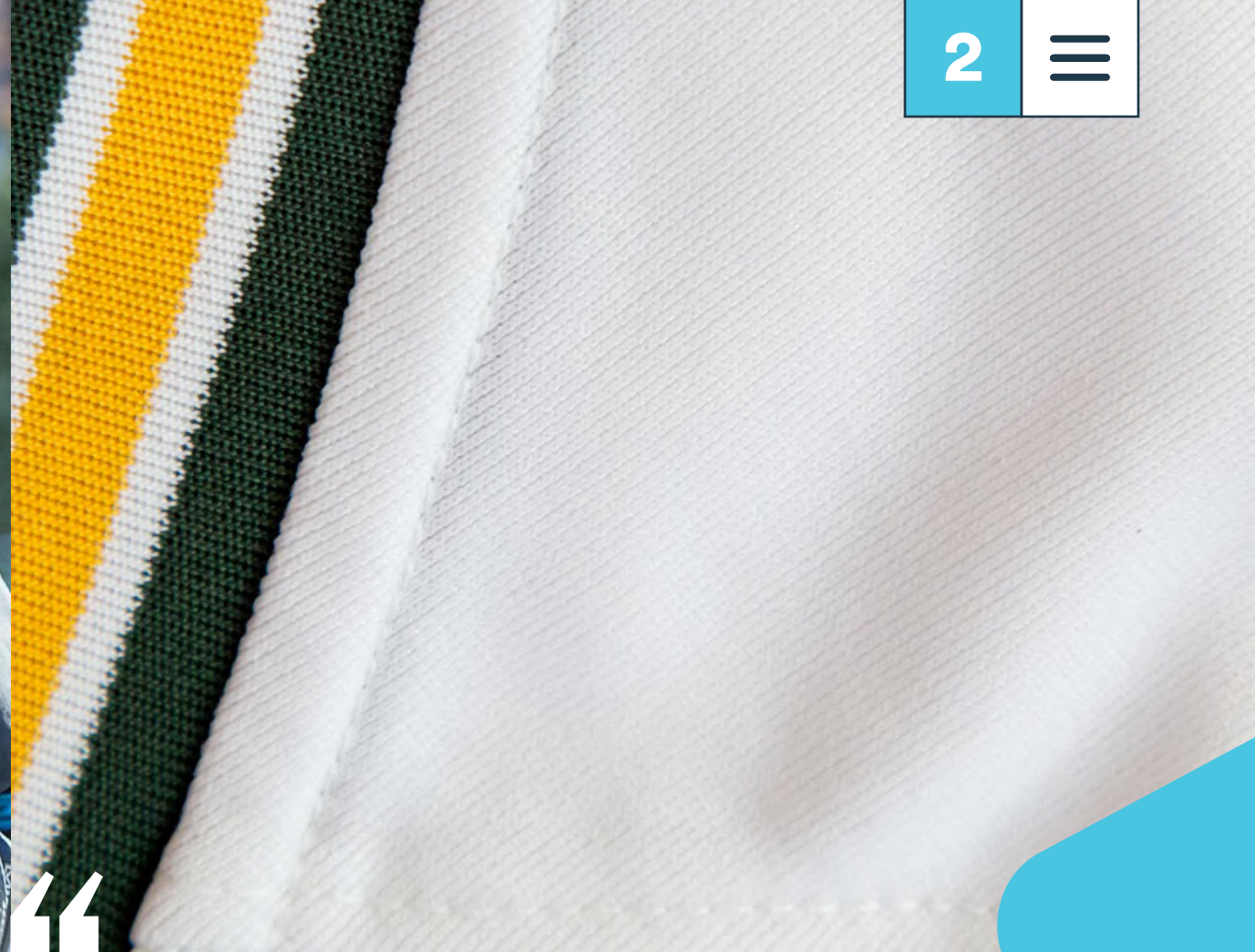
Advertising on social media

As social media platforms have grown, they have limited the ability of businesses to reach their followers through organic (unpaid) posts. As a result, business owners often have to buy advertising to reach their target audience.



Tips for advertising successfully on social media

- ✓ Find out which platform is right for you, compare prices and decide how much you're willing to invest before you start.
- ✓ Use paid posts as part of a strategy to find customers. Promote contests, webinars or eBooks to get fans on your email lists and create a relationship with them.
- ✓ Are you getting good bang for your buck? Make sure you measure your results with solid goals and metrics.
- ✓ Change the content you're promoting every couple of days to ensure your audience doesn't see the same ad or promoted post over and over again. You may also want to tweak your ad design, content and targeting to optimize your investment.
- ✓ Managing advertising campaigns on social media can be very technical. It's often a good idea to get help from an external advisor.



Case study

Gongshow Gear

Ger McNamee and Craig Kennedy decided early on that their company, Gongshow Gear, would be more than just a hockey apparel company. Their brand would be hockey itself—the excitement, the camaraderie, the memories of playing shinny on a frozen pond.

You sometimes have to think outside the box to get in front of your customers. You have to inspire people with your brand and reach them where they are living and breathing.”

— Ger McNamee
Owner
Gongshow Gear

Establishing your social media presence

→ Gongshow Gear's YouTube page

“We wanted to take all those warm, fuzzy feelings people have about Canada’s favourite sport and infuse them into our products,” McNamee says. “We wanted people to say, ‘Hey, these guys get me.’”

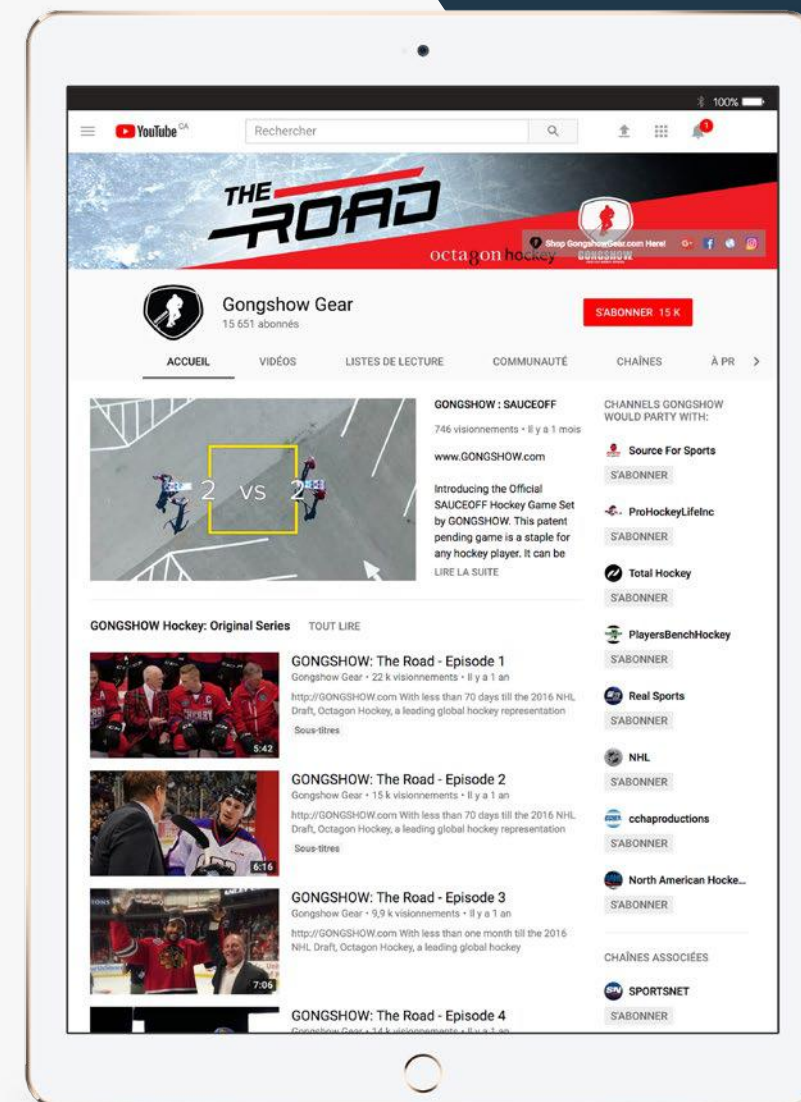
But they didn’t hit their branding sweet spot right away. Their first efforts flopped when they tried to market their product through ads in newspapers and magazines, and on billboards.

They soon realized conventional ads didn’t resonate with their customers. Their marketing wasn’t consistent with their products, and the company wasn’t building a community.

McNamee quickly switched gears, targeting social media and trying unconventional approaches to reach their core market.

Gongshow’s YouTube channel shows fun hockey-related videos. For example, a friendly shooting match between NHL players Bobby Ryan and Claude Giroux attracted more than 200,000 views.

On Twitter, where the brand’s account has more than 75,000 followers, they tweet about hockey and give merchandise away to their fans. The company went so far as to trademark the Twitter hashtag #BeautyService to highlight its customer service and Canadian hoser charm.



3

Creating content for social media

- 4 steps to creating great content for any social media platform
- Case study: Hillberg & Berk
- Blogging for social media
- Creating video for social media
- Creating visuals for social media

Regularly posting on your business's social media pages can be the hardest part of creating a social media strategy. What do you say? Where do you say it? And how?

Social media is about engaging *with* people to build relationships. It can be a powerful tool to sway followers toward your goals—but not without the right content.

A good place to start is to think about the questions your customers ask you every day. How do you respond? What solutions can you provide? These can be the basis for blog posts, how-to videos or an infographic (a graphic representation of information, data or knowledge).

4 steps to creating great content for any social media platform

1

Get informed

- Look at the social media efforts and initiatives of successful companies within your industry to see what works and where you can fill the gap with fresh content.
- Review posts and comments to learn how businesses engage their community and what their fans are interested in.
- Try to find out what types of content your customers like to share online, whom they follow and what they like, so you can address their needs and interests.

2

Focus on content that builds a connection

- Find ways to be of service to your community. For example, an auto dealership could blog and post videos about car care tips.
- Create a good mix of content. Include how-to blog posts, links to useful articles, educational videos, Q&A sessions with knowledgeable employees, announcements of live events and industry news.
- Put a human face on your business by highlighting the work of your employees and your impact on clients.
- Guard against plagiarism. Don't post someone's article or other material without ensuring it's in the public domain and acknowledging the source.



3

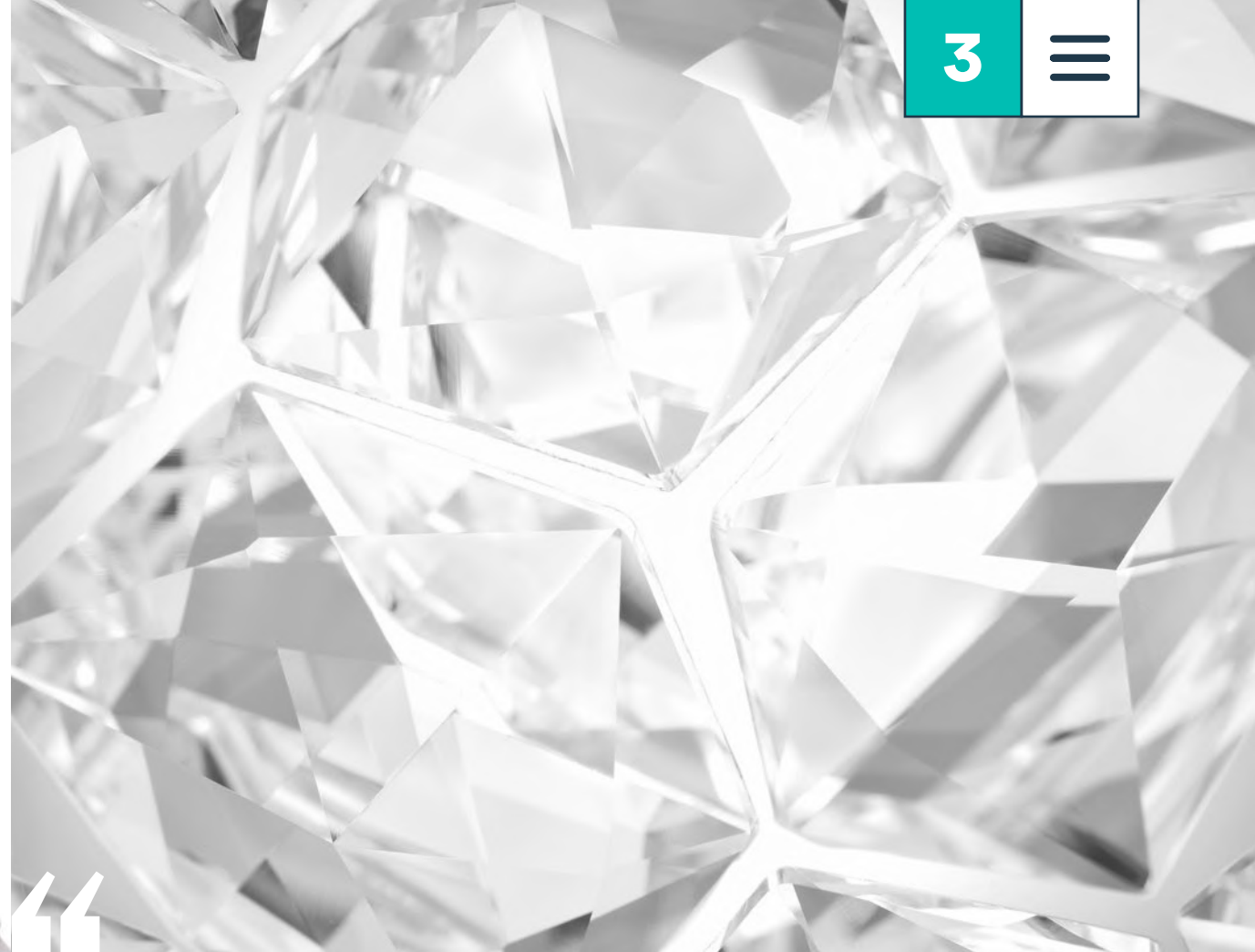
Build a following

- Kick-start a following by inviting people on your personal and business email lists to subscribe to your new social media page.
- Prominently display links to your social media pages on your website's home page, and in your email signature and marketing campaigns.
- Consider spending money to promote your content. You can use the ads to home in on your target audience without wasting precious ad dollars on anyone else. You can optimize your advertising based on data you collect as you progress.

4

Engage with your audience

- Respond promptly (generally aim for less than six hours) to those who interact with you. Be sure to thank those who contribute, and respond to any customer issues.
- Hold contests where you offer discounts or prizes. Tie your contest to your products, brand or business goals (by, for example, collecting customer email addresses).
- Survey your audience. This is a good way to solicit customer feedback and engage with your audience.
- Post regularly. Social media pages quickly lose fan attention if they're not updated regularly.



Case study

Hillberg & Berk

Rachel Mielke started making jewellery as a hobby in high school. Little by little, her hobby grew until she started Hillberg & Berk in her native Regina in 2007.

“It’s so much easier to reach out to your target customer through social media.”

— **Rachel Mielke**
Founder and CEO
Hillberg & Berk

Creating content for social media

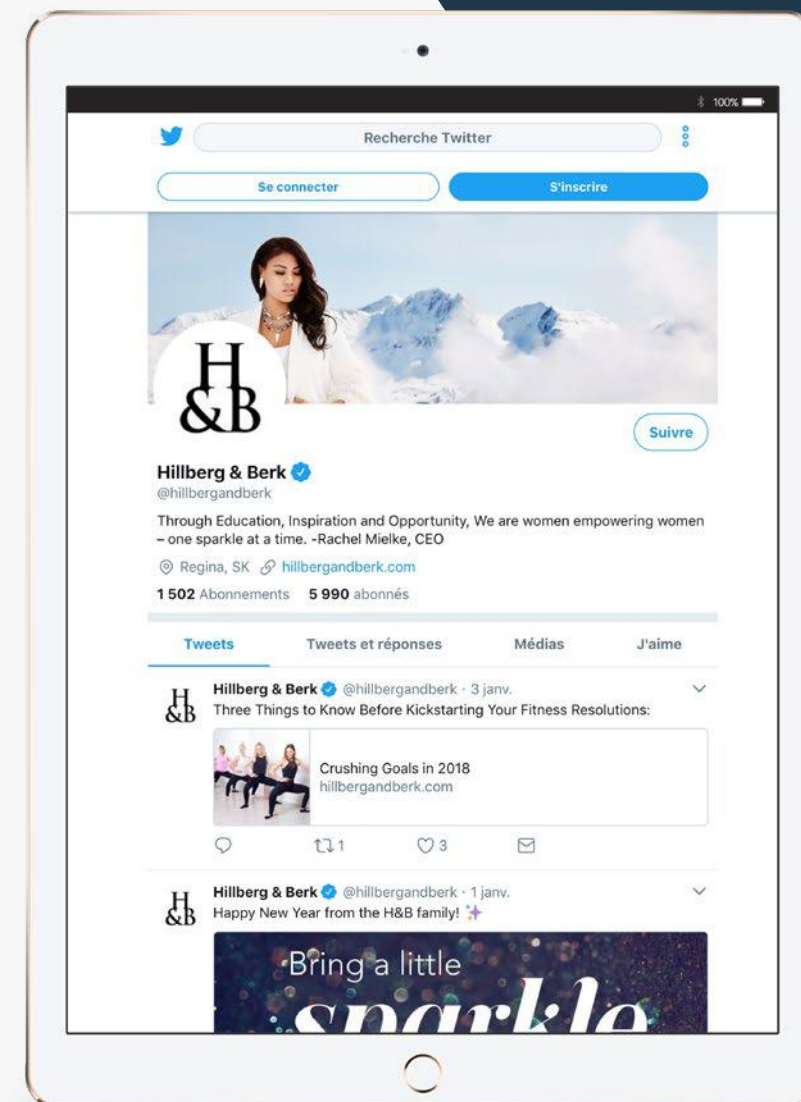
→ Hillberg & Berk's Twitter page

Close to a decade after its founding, Hillberg & Berk is now known for its handmade products, created using sterling silver, vermeil, semi-precious stones and Swarovski crystals. Mielke has had pieces showcased on the Academy Awards and she got a big publicity boost when Queen Elizabeth wore a custom-designed brooch Mielke created. She also landed venture capital investment after appearing on CBC's "Dragons' Den."

Social media has been a key part of Mielke's success story. "It's so much easier to reach out to your target customer through social media," she says. "It has really allowed us to build a better relationship with customers."

Mielke uses monthly contests on Facebook and Twitter to build her social media following. For example, she's asked fans to post their favourite piece of Hillberg & Berk jewellery on Facebook for a chance to win \$1,000 worth of prizes.

She advises other entrepreneurs to start by creating a social media strategy. "Decide what you want out of it and how much time you are willing to dedicate to it. Then track the results."



Blogging for social media

A business blog is one of the most cost-effective ways of creating quality content to promote your website on social media. Since blogs first rose to prominence in the early 2000s, many businesses have adopted them as a versatile online tool to promote their thought leadership.

Social media and blogging are complementary activities. Blog posts can be shared on social media to gain more followers, while your social media efforts may draw more readers to your blog.

If you don't yet have a blog, creating one isn't difficult. Blogging platforms such as WordPress, Medium, Blogger and Quora are easy to use and offer a variety of templates.

You can also host a blog on your own website, but be aware that this will take more time and technical savvy.



Top tips when blogging for social media

- **Create a content plan and stick to it**
Take time to decide what you want to write about over the next few months and set a publishing schedule to stay on track.
- **Write for your customers**
Think about the needs and challenges of your customers, and find ways to help them solve their problems.
- **Invite guests**
Lighten your writing load and broaden your appeal by using guest bloggers who don't necessarily work for your company.
- **Look up keywords**
You can use Google's AdWords Keyword Tool to find words and phrases your customers are searching for online. Use them to create titles and to help you find blog topics to write about.
- **Share your documents**
A blog can be a good place to share longer electronic documents, such as guidebooks, studies and white papers.

Creating video for social media

If you're aiming for true viral fame, there's no better way to do it than with video. Even if your video doesn't reach millions of eyeballs, videos will tend to get more shares than other types of content, and visitors will spend more time on your website.

Uploading your video to YouTube allows you to share it on your social media sites and embed it on your blog or website. If you plan on sharing your video on Facebook, it's also a good idea to upload it directly to Facebook's video platform, since Facebook's algorithm gives preference to its own video content.



Top tips for creating video for social media

- **Find testimonials**
Consider asking customers to contribute video testimonials to post on your social media pages or arrange to shoot them yourself.
- **Solve problems**
How-to videos demonstrating your products or services, and answering common questions, can have great success online.
- **Promote your events**
Planning an event? Consider creating videos to promote it and show what happened afterward.
- **Give an office tour**
Show off your cool office space or your new machines by recording a tour of your business.
- **Keep it light**
It's generally a good idea to make fun, concise videos that get straight to the point. Light-hearted videos, as well as those telling a story, often work well online.

Creating visuals for social media

Articles with a picture or infographic get 94% more views than those without, according to content marketing company Skyword. Another study, conducted by Buffer, found that Twitter posts with images receive 150% more retweets.

Images tend to grab a person's attention and can often convey information more clearly than text. Posting images on social media, adding pictures to your blog posts or creating infographics can help tell your story and reach a wider audience.

As a bonus, visuals can be made cheaply or even for free. It can be as simple as sharing beautiful pictures of your products, or publishing pictures of you and your team having a good time at a company event.



Top tips for creating visuals for social media

- **Take action shots**
If you are speaking at an event, providing training in a seminar or visiting a unique location, remember to take pictures so you can share them on social media.
- **Create original content**
Be the one whose content gets shared rather than the one who shares others' work. If you can't afford professional graphic design, there are many free and low-cost online tools you can use, such as [Easel.ly](https://www.easel.ly/), [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com/), [PicMonkey.com](https://www.picmonkey.com/), [Pablo.Buffer.com](https://pablo.buffer.com/), [Slide.ly](https://www.slide.ly/) and [VSCO.co](https://www.vSCO.co).
- **Share visual step-by-step instructions**
Using a series of pictures to demonstrate how to install a product or carry out a process is a great way to help your customers while promoting your business.
- **Use free stock photos**
There are hundreds of stock photo websites offering free pictures on the Web. Just make sure they are under the Creative Commons licence. For example, you can visit [StockSnap.io](https://stocksnap.io/), [Pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com/) or [Burst.Shopify.com](https://burst.shopify.com/).
- **Make your own GIFs**
These short animations are easy to make and perfectly suited to social media. You can make GIFs using software such as Photoshop or use one of many free online tools, such as [Giphy.com](https://www.giphy.com/) and [Imgflip.com](https://imgflip.com/).

4

Monitoring and measuring your social media success

- › 3 steps for monitoring social media
- › Automating your monitoring
- › Best practices for interacting with social review sites
- › Dealing with negative comments
- › 4 types of results to measure



How do you find out what customers are saying about you? And what do you do when a dissatisfied customer criticizes your business in an online forum?

Monitoring is your first step to solving this problem. You need to gather all your customer feedback and respond promptly to deal with issues before they harm your reputation.

But your work isn't done there. To maximize the impact of your online presence you also need to track and analyze your online efforts.



3 steps for monitoring social media

Create a monitoring routine

1

Every day, check your social media pages for new comments and other contributions from readers.

Engage with your followers as appropriate. For instance, thank them for their feedback, answer questions and address customer concerns. Also, take note of feedback and save it. This can be important business intelligence.

2

Check for new fans or followers, and see how people are interacting with your content and pages.

Look at who those fans are. Who has retweeted your Twitter posts? Who has looked at [your LinkedIn profile](#)? How many people have viewed your YouTube videos and subscribed to your channel? This will tell you how your audience is engaging with various types of content.

3

Search your company's name on Google to see what comes up.

Do this daily or several times per week, depending on the volume of material you find. Look for mentions of your company, brands and products; consumer questions and complaints; content to share in your social posts; and industry news. You should also monitor relevant hashtags on Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

Automating your monitoring

Social media monitoring tools automatically help you follow what people are saying about your brand, products or services. They can help you quickly address customer complaints, spot trends, analyze the effects of your initiatives and consider how social media activity is affecting your firm.

The key is to set clear goals, isolate which metrics matter to your company and find the tools that will present that information to you simply.

While social media platforms have their own monitoring tools, standalone software includes more powerful features.

→ Google Analytics

Google Analytics allows you to see where visitors come from and how they use your website. For example, you can track users as they go from your Facebook or Twitter page to your website and see how they interact with your web content.

→ HootSuite

HootSuite can help you manage all your social media activities from a single dashboard with powerful monitoring and analytics tools that can track trends and keywords. The free version is quite powerful and might be all you need to get started.

→ Salesforce

While Salesforce is primarily known for its customer relationship management software, since purchasing Canadian social media monitoring company Radian6, it has also been offering very powerful social media analytics products.

→ SocialMention

SocialMention is a social media search engine that helps you track collective opinions about brands or topics across social media networks. It also lists top keywords and lets you set daily alerts.

→ Go deeper

Consult this thorough list of [free and low-cost social media monitoring tools](#).

Best practices for interacting with social review sites

Social review sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp offer reviews on a wide range of businesses. These sites are especially important to monitor, because consumers will often check them before making a purchase. While you can't control what's said about your business on review sites, you can take steps to ensure you respond well.

Follow these best practices to ensure that social review sites help rather than hinder your business.

- ✓ **Be sure you're listed**
Make sure you're listed on the site, with a link to your website. You can also insert a link to this listing on your website and social media pages.
- ✓ **Monitor regularly**
Look not just for mentions of your company and products, but also at what customers are saying about your competitors. This is valuable intelligence.
- ✓ **Ask before you post**
Never post customers' positive feedback without first getting their permission, and don't post fake reviews. Instead, invite customers to contribute testimonials.
- ✓ **Don't panic**
Be aware that a bad review isn't always bad news for your business. Consumers are suspicious of consistently positive reviews and find it more credible when there's a variety of comments upon which to base their decision.

Dealing with negative comments

Most mentions of your business on social media will be positive or basic questions. When you see such mentions, respond promptly, beginning with a thank you. You can deepen your relationship by taking the time to give a full answer, and perhaps offer a link to a useful article or web resource.

For negative comments, the key is to be polite, truthful and transparent. Here are some best practices for dealing with negative social media posts.

- **Respond to negative reviews respectfully and quickly**
Try to remain polite, calm and neutral in tone, regardless of the language used by the other person

Invite the person to work out any differences offline, if necessary, and do your best to resolve the issue.
- **Create a customer service script for staff**
Include a standard approach for resolving issues or moving them up the ladder to a superior.
- **Resolve any issues as promptly as possible**
Customers often feel very grateful to a company that admits its mistakes and acts quickly to correct them.
- **Look into problems and fix them**
Negative feedback can be a great opportunity to improve your business. Take advantage of it by fixing issues identified by unsatisfied customers.

4 types of results to measure

Once you've begun tweeting, posting how-to videos or interacting on Facebook, you'll want to track how well you're doing.

The simplest way to measure your results is by watching the number of fans you get on your social media pages. However, that's not always a good indicator of effectiveness. What's more important is that you measure indicators that are connected to your goals. For example, if your goal is lead generation, your metric is likely to be how many leads you got and how much they cost you.

Here are four types of results you will likely want to measure.



1

Online traffic

This is the simplest metric for measuring the success of your social media strategy. You can get traffic data using free tools available on most social sites and blogging platforms. You can also use Google Analytics to get detailed data on traffic to your website. Monitor the following information.

→ **Traffic volume**

Measure the number of visits, page views and fans on your social media pages. Measure how much traffic to your website is generated by social media.

→ **Engagement**

Measure the number of comments, liked shared posts versus your page's total number of fans.

→ **Lead generation**

Track how many people download your content; sign up for your email list, blog or newsletter; fill out your contact form; enter contests; and/or respond to surveys.

→ **Cost of engagement**

Compare your social media budget and time spent on social media efforts to the number of interactions you get, such as comments, liked posts, retweets and leads. Break down your cost per lead generated for each site, and compare it with results from other advertising activities.

→ **Sales conversion rates**

Compare your conversion rates for social media followers with those for leads generated via other sources.

2

Return on investment

Determining your return on social media efforts can be difficult, because it may be hard to establish what role social media played in your customers' purchase decisions. However, you can still get an indication of your return using proxies.

→ Track sales leads

You can create a dedicated Internet landing page or promotional code available only to followers of your social media pages, and then track those sales.

You can also track and compare the number of leads you get per dollar spent on various platforms to determine which platform is the most effective for your business.

→ Track your effort through time

An alternative metric is correlation. Create a timeline where you plot your social media activity and sales results. Look for possible correlations, keeping in mind that a correlation doesn't necessarily mean causality (i.e., other factors may have influenced sales fluctuations).

3

Sales lead generation

The key for this metric is to track the source of your leads.

- Include a field in your contact form asking how customers found you.
- Track your website traffic from social media sites.
- Determine what percentage of total leads come from social media, and break this data down for each social media page.
- Track and compare how many leads you get per follower on your various pages to determine where you're being the most effective.

4

Customer service

To measure the effectiveness of your customer service on social media, follow these steps.

- Calculate how much you're spending on it.
- Determine your daily cost per issue resolved.
- Track this figure for your social media sites versus your other channels, such as phone, email and web support.
- Factor in peer-resolved issues in social media discussion forums that didn't need in-house attention.

Well worth the effort

Successfully using social media takes time and patience. You shouldn't expect overnight results, but it's well worth the effort. Consistently listen, engage, measure and learn, then adjust your strategy on the basis of what's working best. It's a continuous cycle.



As an entrepreneur, you are already close to your customers and business partners. Social media is about making those relationships deeper and building new ones.

If you don't have the knowledge and expertise you need, BDC is here to help. Our team of independent and objective professionals can offer the advice you need to get started with social media or take your existing social media efforts to the next level.





BDC is here to help.

We provide business loans to finance social media marketing campaigns and advice to help focus your online sales and marketing efforts.

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