

HOW TO GROW YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE



Discover how you—and your organization—can use social media to connect with your audience and drive results.

SUCCESS®



The importance of social media for entrepreneurs and their businesses is ever-increasing.

Yet, its dynamic nature can lead to unexpected challenges or mixed results. For example, posts with the highest engagement rates one year may not be as successful the next. Also, what drives engagement on one platform may not be as effective for another.

Despite these uncertainties, your online presence can be a powerful tool for success. This is especially true when it's powered by authenticity and adaptability. Here, you'll learn how to set up your social media accounts to gain trust and drive results.

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WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS SOCIAL MEDIA

Before dismissing its use, entrepreneurs should consider the potential benefits of social media. Here's a look at what these platforms can offer:

Exposure

Consumers use social media to discover new brands all the time. Two prime examples include Instagram's Explore section and TikTok's For You feature. Both share pages of recommended content that users can scroll and refresh on repeat.

So what distinguishes these pages from a collage of randomized ads? Data collection. Social media companies track the content that users like, search or post. This data is then used to push relevant, highly personalized content to the top of users' feeds.

For business owners, this means your products or services are targeted to those who have the greatest potential interest in them. Once a post catches their attention, they're just one tap away from your profile and contact information. This is an easy and free way for smaller businesses to advertise beyond their standard reach.

Humanization

Social media has always been about connection—B2C interactions included. Gone are the days when business was strictly business. Today consumers

care way more about authenticity, culture and ethics in the brands they shop with. Thankfully, social media leaves plenty of room for companies to be transparent.

It's an opportunity to share a glimpse of the CEO and staff, how a product is made or a behind-the-scenes clip of a day on the job. Seeing the faces behind a business humanizes it and fosters a deeper connection with your audience.

The moments that highlight the essence of your brand and customer dedication should be captured. They're ideal for showing that your company is more than a label. This leads to greater customer trust, which drives new business and repeat transactions.

Cost

Social media is mostly free to join and use. There are, however, some costs associated with marketing and paid advertising. Thankfully, you have the freedom to control how—and how often—you share your business.

Plus, it's common for certain types of posts to gain major traction. They typically offer content that's insightful, funny, uplifting or informational. Other users who appreciate these posts can share them with friends or on their own pages. Doing so increases brand exposure and can open the door to a previously untapped consumer market.



HOW TO BRING YOUR BUSINESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

If you're ready to harness the power social media provides to connect with existing and potential customers, here's how to get started:

FIND YOUR PLATFORM

According to Sarah Best, CEO of Sarah Best Strategy, a digital marketing agency headquartered in Wisconsin, there are certain social media platforms that work best for certain industries. "If you're a consumer-facing company, then the biggest platform size in terms of reach are Facebook and YouTube," she says. "Instagram is great for fashion and retail, travel and tourism—anything that's very highly visual in nature." TikTok tends to be more playful and may not be a great fit for more formal companies. But if your audience skews younger, Best suggests experimenting with the app and working with influencers "who are closely aligned with your business priorities."

LEARN THE MECHANICS

As with anything else in life, the best way to learn something is to practice. If your knowledge of social media is lacking, start familiarizing yourself with the platforms that fit your business or organization. Whether on a business or personal account, play around with the functions and features and observe what tactics are working for other accounts in your same industry. One way to do this is to visit different platforms' case studies pages to get examples and analytics for marketing campaigns that landed. (An internet search for the platform name and "success stories" should take you to the correct link.)

ENGAGE

Cultivating a relationship with your audience is a two-way street. Best recommends liking user comments, promptly answering their questions and sharing photos they've taken that relate to your business (with their permission). Engaging with customers and clients reinforces their inherent value to your company and encourages them to champion your brand. Says Best: "The beauty of social media is when people become excited about the work you're doing and start to share it online themselves."

CREATE CONTENT

"What are you hoping people do as a result of seeing your social media post?" Best poses. "That's going to help guide some of the content and activities you do on those platforms."

With these goals in mind, she advises businesses to create a content bucket list, or a checklist of regular talking points within your company, to map out on a calendar. "Having a checklist to work off of for planning content is a lot easier than just trying to come up with something in the moment," she explains. If you have a seasonal business, such as accounting during tax prep, plug any relevant events or announcements into your calendar too.

It also helps to listen to your audience.

"As companies, we feel a lot of pressure to promote our services and products," says Best. "But if you understand what the fit is like, what the customer is looking for, you'll be way more effective." You can craft content based on client conversations and the needs expressed by your social media followers.

When it comes to the type of post, both videos and photos work as long as they're easy for your audience to understand. Although creating videos can be intimidating, Best reiterates the value of authentic content that's created using a good quality smartphone and natural lighting.

5 Tips for Rapid Social Media Growth

Now more than ever, you need a social media plan. Get started today with six tips for rapid social media growth.



1 Start with just one platform.

The first rule of social media dominance is to focus. You can't be on every platform at once—at least not at first. Connecting with people in one place is better than splitting your attention between several apps. Rather than targeting the most downloaded app, aim for the space where you can easily find your target audience.

2 Find your niche.

Spend time identifying which community you belong to, whether that's dads looking for trail running shoes or teens who love mobile gaming. When you find the right niche, stick to it. Social growth gets easier with focused content that continually speaks to your audience.

3 Get comfortable telling stories—lots of them.

Good marketing is essentially good storytelling. People connect through sharing stories and seeing themselves represented in a positive light.

4 Leverage the power of influencer marketing.

If there's an influencer in your niche area who you see driving engagement, reach out to inquire about their rates and whether they'll market some of your products to their audience.

5 Build your social media team.

Lastly, don't try to go it alone on social media. It's like New York City: loud, crowded and up all night. You need help navigating those 24/7 spaces.



5 TIPS TO SET UP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SUCCESS

Madison Pieper, founder of MadPie Designs, shared the following simple tips for maximizing the impact of your social media channels.



1. Find your fit

If you are looking to develop your brand identity, you cannot try to do everything and be everywhere at once, Pieper says. You will become a jack of all trades and a master of none.

Instead, you need to find your fit. What is your brand's personality and where will it resonate most deeply? Who is your target audience and where do they spend most of their time? What keeps your audience up at night as they scroll through their feed?

Do not throw out a cluster of content that makes no sense. Identify where your brand fits and make that content and platform your priority. You can go on to repurpose that content for other platforms, but you should prioritize the site where you are getting the most engagement.



2. Build relationships

Pieper put it bluntly: "If you don't build a relationship with your audience, there is no point

to your social media presence." And you can't build a relationship with your audience if you don't talk to them. Use available tools such as Instagram polls, question boxes and quizzes to ask them what they would like to see more or less of. Bring something to the table beyond the product or brand you are trying to sell and actually start an ongoing conversation.

People don't buy from a company, they buy from a person. And the beauty of social media is that we can now put a face to our company and create relationships in ways we never could before. But it only works if it is a two-way street. Take the time to engage with your audience and make them feel heard—otherwise you might as well not post anything at all.



3. Make a plan

In order to show up on social media consistently (a key component to developing your brand identity), you need to take the time to plan your content. And you should plan it for the entire next year. Think through what you want your audience to take away from your content and use it to strategically plan and schedule your year.

Adaptability within your plan will be key—the life of an entrepreneur is anything but predictable. "Write your plans in pencil," Pieper suggests.



4. Repurpose your content

Good news: You don't need to create unique content for each platform. You can use the content that you do well and then repurpose that content for other platforms.

For example, if your passion project is your podcast, there are a variety of ways to reuse it:

- Transcribe the podcast into a blog post
- Record video of the conversation for YouTube
- Take the best 30 seconds of video and post it on Reels and TikTok
- Turn a quote from the conversation into a post on Instagram

Now you've hit every single platform with only one content piece. Your message stays exactly the same, but you've tailored the method of delivery to each unique platform. Remember, you don't have to do everything. Take what you're best at and repurpose it for everything else.



5. Stay open

Finally, stay open. Do not close yourself to opportunity because of assumptions you've made or because you are comfortable where you are.

If we know one thing to be true about social media it is that it is always changing. The newest thing is forever yet to come, and you never know when one of your most popular platforms will end entirely. Stay agile, pay attention and be open to the changes, trends and disruptions that might come your way over the coming years.



What You Really Need to Know to Become an Influencer

Influencers are internet ballerinas. They have to impress audiences with a beautiful performance without revealing the years of hard work and choreography it took to get there.

That's why becoming an influencer isn't as easy as people think. And it's why aspiring influencers seek out guidance from Christina Galbato, who teaches people (especially women) how to build their online brands. It's not just influencers who can benefit from her insights: A personal touch can help every brand connect with its audience. "No matter your business, you have to weave in that personal branding with selling," Galbato says. Galbato shares tips that are helpful for influencers—or anyone interested in developing a strong and successful social media presence.

Curate your content

Contrary to popular belief, top influencers don't publish whatever they feel like in the moment. They carefully plan every post, creating an experience that is consistent and relevant to their brand.

"You want to make sure that every single piece of content you put out there is purposeful," Galbato says. "It adds value in some way—it teaches people something—or it's storytelling that connects with your audience... building that connection with them." Here's more on how exactly to get started curating your content:

- **Build loyalty.** The key here is creating a constant flow of compelling content. An audience that knows what to expect and when is more likely to keep coming back.
- **Identify your niche within your niche.** You've chosen the area you want to build influence in, for example travel, business or food. Now identify your unique angle. Ask yourself, "What perspective do I bring to this niche that no one else can?" Once you understand your angle, make sure all the content you create ties into it. That's how you build a distinctive brand in a competitive space.
- **Divide your content into pillars.** Identify three to five types of content you want to create. Galbato calls these "pillars." For example, a travel blogger might focus on destination tips, hotel reviews and airport hacks. Everything you create needs to fit under one of these pillars. Galbato recommends assigning each pillar to a different day of the week. For example, every Wednesday you publish a video or blog post that fits into the destination tips pillar. This helps support that consistency that audiences value so much.

Connect with your audience across 3 types of platforms

There's a myth that to be a top influencer, you have to be active on every single platform. In reality, this just uses up time and energy you could put toward making monetizable content. It also spreads you so thin that you can't get the most out of those engagement opportunities. Instead, Galbato recommends building a presence on three types of platform:

- **Evergreen:** Content that will be just as helpful to your audience in five years as it is when you posted it, hosted on a platform designed for longevity and searching. For example, blog posts, podcasts and even YouTube videos. Make sure the subject matter you cover on this platform is evergreen too. For example, instead of "The Most Popular Places to Get Engaged in 2025," go for something like "The Most Popular Proposal Spots in the World."
- **Email list:** Influencers are often ranked in terms of their social media follower counts—but Galbato says that your email newsletter is the most powerful platform to communicate with followers. "You're able to get direct access to your audience: It's not dependent on an algorithm," she says.
- **Social media:** Social media is most effective for building close relationships with your audience in real time, which makes them want to follow your brand and consume your content. You don't have to master every platform: Choose the one you're most comfortable with. For example, Galbato has a lot of success with Instagram Reels, but isn't on TikTok as much because she didn't click with the platform in the same way.

HOW TO CONNECT WITH A LARGE AUDIENCE WITHOUT SACRIFICING AUTHENTICITY

It's a noisy world out there. There is a perpetual barrage of distractions all battling for our attention. Having your business or personal brand noticed is more difficult than ever these days.

So, how do you stand out? How do you "stop the scroll" and get your mission, message, product or your method noticed?

The key to breaking through to your audience is to convey your message from a place of power, vulnerability and authenticity. You need to speak in a way that makes your audience realize that you understand them and their struggles and that you are there to help.

Start by identifying your ideal client

This will help you shift your entire mindset from communicating to everyone and instead focusing on addressing one person. Whether it's on video, in writing or large presentations, communication should feel interpersonal. Rather than try to appeal to a larger crowd with more diverse interests, start by connecting at the individual level.

Communicate from the heart

Aim to market your brand and its offerings in a deeply personal way. Speak to, write to, communicate to and create products and services for the person you used to be. Reach back and help someone solve the problem that you once had. Provide for another the answers to questions you previously had. Share your story of how you conquered the challenge they are currently facing.



3 Ways to Drive Sales via Social Media

1. **Create fans first, customers later.** You can't think about online marketing as a way to reach into people's pockets and steal their credit card—people can sense that, and it doesn't work. You need to think of it as building trust and growing your fanbase rather than building customers. People need to know, like and trust you before they will ever buy anything from you. The wonderful thing about digital tools is that they are scalable—they allow you to automate trust as your business grows. But the only way to gain trust is to root your social media in adding value first.
2. **Get people off the platforms and into your database.** The goal of social media is not to move people from platform to platform to platform. Instead, bring them into your database and a more intense experience with you—a one-hour training, a video series, etc. Once that happens, you can focus on providing more value faster, thus accelerating trust and accelerating an eventual sale. Once they're in your database, you are in control and are no longer at the mercy of a mysterious algorithm.
3. **The dollars are in the DMs.** Selling on social media is just like dating in real life. You wouldn't walk up to a stranger and say, "Hey let's get married!" But on social media, people think they can show up and immediately ask their followers to buy things from them. What you need to do instead is engage with people who comment on your posts and start building a relationship there. Then, move that conversation to the DMs where you can get to know them more intimately. Ask them, "What are your goals? What are you struggling with? What have you tried?" That then opens the door for you to offer to help them: "Did you know I help people with that? Would you like a free call to see if I can add value to your life and if we might be a fit to work together?" This is where the sale begins.





BOTTOM LINE

SOCIAL MEDIA IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL

We get it—not everyone enjoys social media. But regardless of how you feel about it, there's no denying the reality: It's far and away the best tool to disseminate your content to a larger audience. For entrepreneurs, that kind of exposure can't be beat.

With the tips shared throughout this e-book, you'll be able to wield social media effectively and efficiently, narrowing in on the platforms and messages that'll resonate the most with your audience. When your content is original and compelling—and when it provides value—you'll attract and nurture your target followers.