![Foremost logo] FOREMOST®
A Farmers Insurance® Company

SOCIAL MEDIA CARRY-ON

A Guide for Independent Agents Ready to Take Flight with Digital Marketing

Presented by Foremost® – A Farmers Insurance® Company

INTRODUCTION

Social Media Marketing for On-the-Go Independent Agents

> At Foremost, we're committed to the success of independent agents. We're excited to share this digital marketing guide to help you thrive, find new success and continue delivering A Better Insurance Experience®.

– Bob Sadler, Senior Vice President and Head of Independent Agency Distribution at Foremost

Welcome! The Foremost Marketing Team created this guide specifically for agents like you.

We know you're extremely busy, and learning social media marketing skills may seem overwhelming and time-consuming. We also know that many agents want to connect with consumers on social media. Based on studies from the Big "I" and Future One[1], social media has ranked among the top agent marketing activities for many years now. With all this in mind, **our goal is to help make social media marketing easier for you.**

Everyone has different comfort levels with social media. No matter your current skills, this guide has something for everyone. You'll find tips for getting started, ideas to help you create engaging content, insights for refining your strategies and more.

Before we take off, think of your agency's brand and how you want to build upon it. Know that – when done well – social media can add value to your agency's brand by:

- Raising awareness for your agency.
- Building credibility and a stronger reputation.
- Creating a space for open conversation.
- Driving traffic to your website.

Digital marketing can be challenging. It's especially difficult when you're offering something intangible like insurance. Instead of focusing on accumulating thousands of followers or fixating on return on investment (ROI), it's better to reframe social media as an effective tool for brand awareness, community connection and customer service. In the insurance industry, social media marketing is about playing the long game. And we're here to help you do just that!

Get ready for departure! The ideas in this guide will help you take flight with digital marketing so you can reach new customers, build your brand and boost your business.

[1] Agency Universe Study: https://bit.ly/35Rq6kk

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WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO CONSIDER

Getting Started: Building a Foundation with One Platform

If you've never used social media before, it's helpful to begin with one platform, learn to use it effectively and build your foundation. Consider starting with **Facebook**.

Facebook has the most users and the widest ranges in age and other demographics. It's also versatile, with posts that can be photos, videos, links to articles and other websites, or just text.

Overall, a Facebook business page can make for a great social home base that goes hand-in-hand with your agency's website.

Next Steps: Expanding Your Social Channels

If you already have an agency Facebook page and are ready to take on more platforms, consider other channels. Think about your strengths and interests: Do you like connecting with consumers by posting photos or videos? Do you enjoy sharing articles? Are you hoping to reach more consumers or connect with other professionals in your industry? The answers to these questions will help you determine which platform is a good fit for you.

Instagram: A visually exciting, mobile-focused platform centered on photos and short videos. Instagram can be a great place to connect with consumers who are interested in visually exciting products, like motorcycles, boats, RVs and other recreational products.

Twitter: A fast-moving, informative site where users share thoughts – known as "tweets" – in 280 characters or less. Photos and videos can be shared on this platform too, but it's best suited for industry insights, local news, quick tips and other snackable content.

LinkedIn: A space for people seeking employment, connecting with other professionals and businesses, and sharing industry insights. You may not find many consumer outreach opportunities here, but it's a great place to share agency updates, attract new talent and make connections with others in the insurance industry.

Feeling adventurous? Consider one of these powerful platforms:

YouTube: A wide-reaching platform that's all about video. If you feel inspired by creating videos or find you have lots of ideas to share, creating a YouTube channel for your agency may be the way to go. It's an excellent place to host video content and go live, and you can share video links on your website, other social media channels and via email.

TikTok[SM]**:** An extremely popular platform for those who want to be early adopters. It can be challenging to find a niche audience and keep up with the trends, but this platform is filled with unexplored potential in the insurance industry. If you're interested in trying something new, we recommend creating a personal account first so you can learn the ins and outs of TikTok before going all in on a new account for your agency.
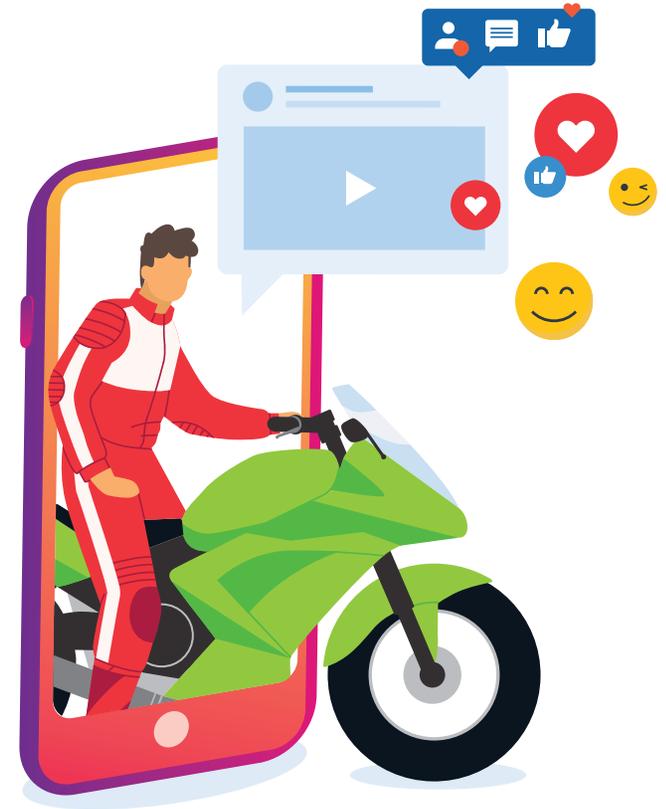
GETTING STARTED WITH A NEW SOCIAL MEDIA PAGE

If you're setting up a new social media account for your agency, there are several steps to take to help ensure your profile is professional and effective in letting visitors learn more about you. On almost all social media platforms, begin by adding or updating the following:

- **Profile picture:** We recommend using your agency's logo or submark.
- **Cover photo:** Changing your cover photo quarterly will help keep your page fresh, and you can highlight different insurance products. If your agency has a motto or tagline, this could be a great place to use it!
- **Agency location and contact information:** It's extremely important to keep your agency's **name**, **address** and **phone number** consistent across all channels; adding an **email address** is helpful, too.
- **Link to your website**
- **Short bio:** Let viewers know what you're offering them; share who you are, how you can help and the areas you serve.

*Note: On most social media platforms, you can edit this information by clicking the **About** or **Edit Profile** buttons on your agency's page.*

Overview of Profile Pictures

Profile pictures are important on all social media channels. Your agency's profile picture is often the first image a user sees when they look for your agency on social media, so it's crucial that it's an on-brand, high-quality image. We recommend using your agency's logo or submark as your profile picture on all your social media channels. This will build consistency, and help users recognize and identify your brand.

A FEW NOTES ON LOGOS:

- A symbol, icon, or even a font-type can make for impressionable logos.
- A logo is an important investment in your agency's brand. If you don't have one or need a refresh, get creative and reach out to graphic designers in your area, or perhaps even to students at a local design school for help developing an appealing logo.
- When your agency logo is updated, be sure to request that it's formatted to fit in the dimensions for each social media platform and get multiple file types (.JPG, .PNG). We've listed the current dimensions at the end of this section – if you're working on a logo with a graphic designer, share this information with them!

Want to learn more about creating and using engaging imagery on your social media pages?
Visit the **Social Media Suitcase**® site and review our job aid titled **Choosing Engaging Digital Imagery**.

Overview of Cover Photos

A cover photo (sometimes referred to as a banner or header image) is the headlining photo on your agency's social page. Cover photos are featured on most major social media platforms (excluding Instagram).

Great cover photos tell a story. For example, if your agency writes mostly auto insurance, consider using a photo of a car on the road, a family road trip or a teen getting keys to their first vehicle. If you write multiple products, you can focus on one at a time and consider changing the image every few months. Selecting a photo that matches your agency's story and vision will reinforce your brand image.

Remember that you are responsible for ensuring that you have proper rights and licenses before using any images on your social media accounts.

Profile Picture and Cover Photo Image Sizes

As of May 2022, here are several recommended dimensions and file sizes for profile pictures and cover photos[1]. Dimensions are noted in pixels (px) and width x height.

Facebook
Profile image: 180 x 180
Cover image: 820 x 312
(min 400 x 150)

Instagram
Profile image: 110 x 110

LinkedIn
Company logo: 300 x 300
Company cover: 1,128 x 191

Twitter
Profile image: 400 x 400
Header image: 1,500 x 500

YouTube
Profile picture: 800 x 800
Banner: 2,048 x 1,152

Stock Photography

Many companies purchase subscriptions with stock photography services like **Shutterstock®** or **Pond5®**. If you're looking for free-to-use stock imagery for cover photos and other social media content, check out **Unsplash.com**. (Be sure to learn more about their licensing before moving forward.)

UNDERSTANDING CONTENT MARKETING

Content is Key for Connecting with Customers

Without a doubt, there's space for promoting your agency on social media. But most people don't log on to Facebook to catch up on the latest advertisements. At its core, social media is about being social and making connections with others.

Creating content is a chance to humanize your agency's brand and make connections with people on social media. Before you create a post, think about your target audience. Who are your customers? What are they interested in? What questions can you answer for them? Consider this and then craft content that your customers would find value in seeing.

Remember – social media content is effective when it's:

- **Educational**
- **Entertaining**
- **Engaging**

What is Content Marketing?

You'll hear about "content" and "content marketing" a lot when learning more about social media. Content marketing involves creating posts that your customers find relevant, shareable and conversational. Content creation is a tactic for playing the social media marketing long game because it helps you build strong connections with potential customers. The goal is that they will get to know your agency's brand. And – when the time's right – they'll know who to reach out to when it comes to finding an insurance policy.

> Content marketing helps agents put the 'social' in social media. Instead of talking at people, content marketing talks with them and brings value to the conversation.
>
> – Noelle Kimble, Director of Marketing and Communications at Foremost
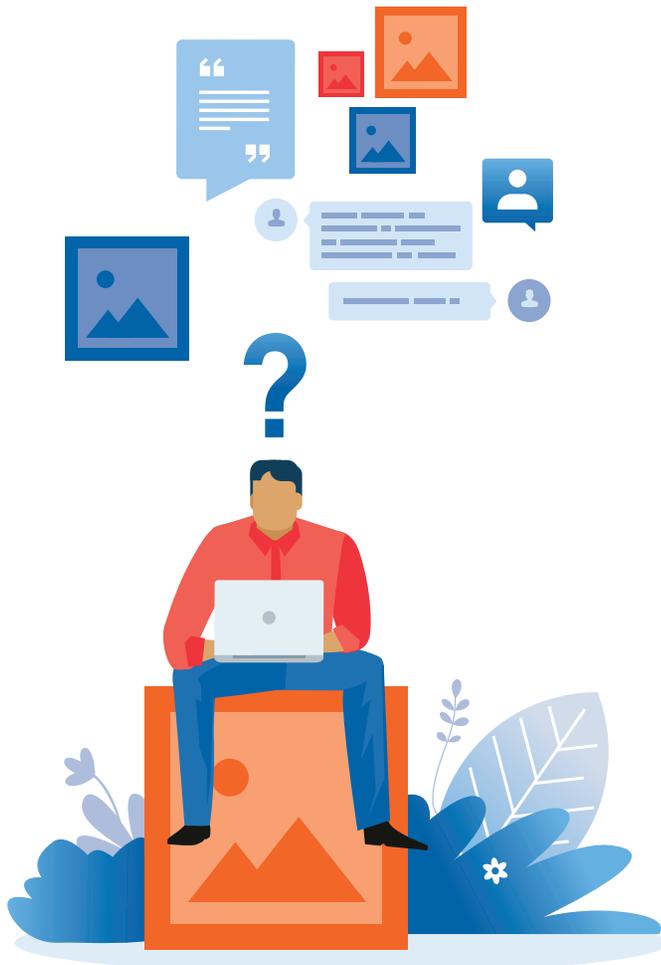
Content Marketing Versus Traditional Marketing

Quality content strengthens your social presence and your brand because it shows you know a thing or two about your customers' interests. Instead of only talking about the technicalities of insurance, talk about the things that people get insured. Discuss topics related to being a homeowner, boat lover, motorcycle enthusiast or an active RV traveler.

Though it seems indirect, relevant content is more likely to be shared than advertising messages, meaning it can be an effective way to organically spread the word about your agency. People might see their friends discussing your content and visit your page so they can join the conversation, too.

Traditional marketing messages are still useful on social media. These posts encourage people to get a quote, give your agency a call or visit your website for more information. Promoting your agency like this can be effective, but if you do it too much, people may begin to avoid your page.

To find a good rhythm, consider the **80-20 Rule:** Employ **content marketing 80%** of the time and reserve **20% of your posts for traditional marketing** messages.

For example: If you post on Facebook five times a week, adjust your weekly schedule to feature four content posts and one traditional marketing post.

Traditional Marketing

20%

80%

Content Marketing
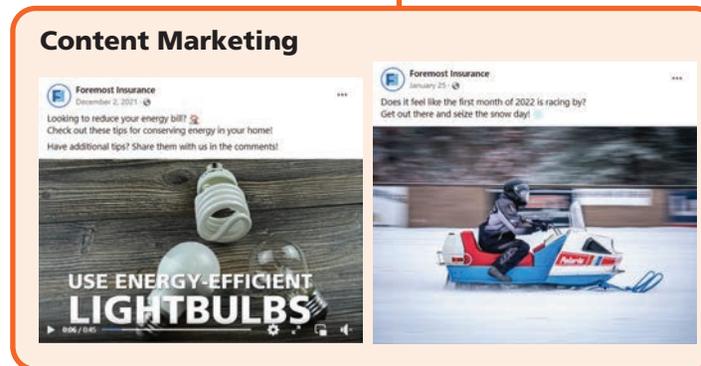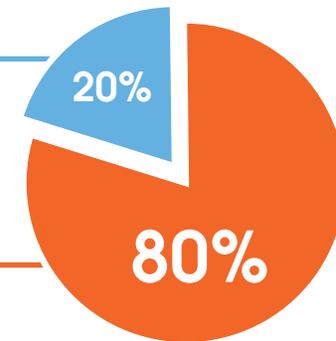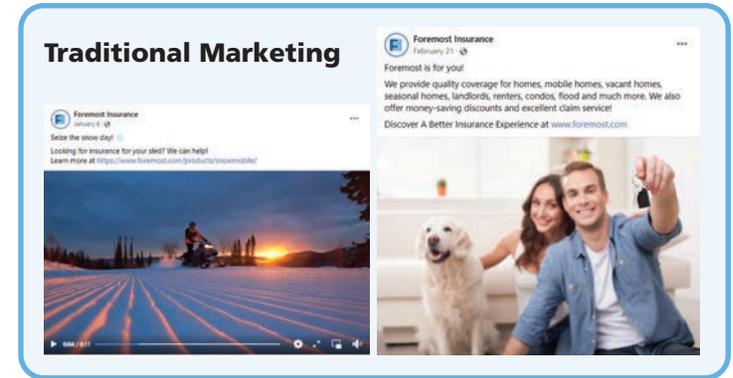
CREATING CONTENT

Standing Out and Finding Your Brand Voice

There are many, many voices on social media. How can you cut through the noise to reach people?

There's not a secret formula or a skeleton key strategy that will work for everyone. Finding success on social media is different depending on who you are, your target audience and your agency's goals.

To develop a content marketing strategy that will help you connect with consumers, first think about these questions and your agency:

- What are your values and passions?
- What are your agency's goals?
- How can you help make customers' lives better?
- How do you want consumers to perceive your agency's brand?
- In what ways do you want your agency to participate in or represent your local community?

Reflect on these questions. The answers are the foundation of your agency's brand identity. Lean into your strengths and focus on the area(s) you serve. Investing in quality connections with people in your community is more important than amassing a large quantity of unengaged followers.

Being confident in your strengths, grounded in your community and committed to telling your agency's brand story can help you create excellent content that brings value to customers and keeps them coming back for more.

In the next few sections, we'll share tools that can help you find content online and make it compelling with your unique brand voice.

Finding Content in the Social Media Suitcase

If you're completely new to social media marketing or just not sure what to share on your agency pages, the **Social Media Suitcase** site is a fantastic place to find fresh content.

We recommend exploring our **Social Media Content** library. It's filled with ready-made posts that you can quickly share on Facebook and Twitter with a couple clicks. You'll find an array of helpful articles that cover topics customers may find relevant and interesting.

Our goal is to help simplify your content marketing process and save you time. Instead of searching the internet for useful articles, you can find them quickly in the Social Media Suitcase. New content is added frequently, and all the posts are categorized by product.

> Your agency's brand is powerful. Leverage your unique personality, energy and voice to make strong impressions and create consistent experiences.

– Jeff Bair, The Foremost Insurance Guy®
and Head of Marketing at Foremost

> **The Foremost Social Media Suitcase website is fantastic! I love the Social Media Calendar content provided to share with our customers on a daily basis. This is such an easy website to navigate and utilize!**
>
> – Andrea Mountain,
> Foremost Agent, A. Kilbride Insurance
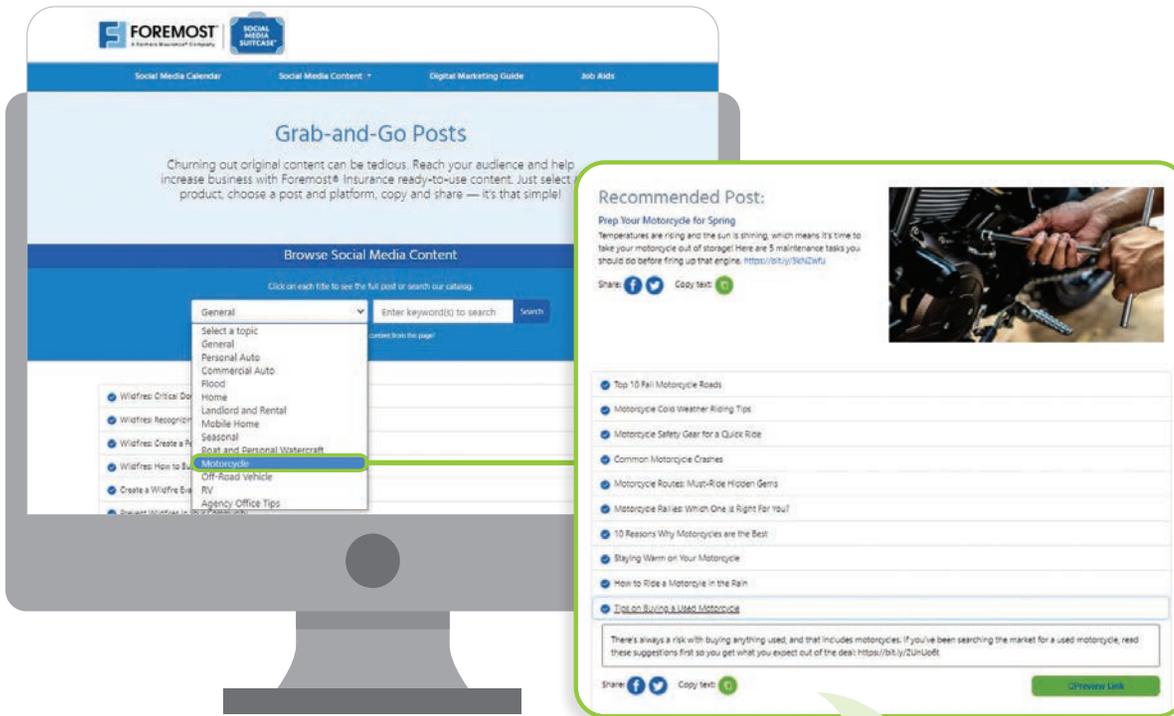
Here's an example: If you want to engage with motorcycle enthusiasts on Facebook, select the **"Motorcycle"** category. From there you'll find various articles to choose from, like "Tips on Buying a Used Motorcycle" or "Motorcycle Safety Gear for a Quick Ride."

Our **Social Media Calendars** are also extremely useful tools. Here, you'll find easy-to-share ideas for every day of the month! Our calendar content highlights popular products and seasonally relevant activities. You can share a couple of our posts or schedule an entire month's worth of content in advance – it's all up to you!

CREATING CONTENT (continued)

Brainstorm Boldly

Crafting content is important work – but it can also be fun! Once you're confident in your agency's brand voice, start brainstorming and create a list of content ideas. It's time to boldly go where only your agency can go – in terms of creating exciting social media content, that is!

If you don't know where to start, consider these ideas:

- **Talk about what's seasonally relevant.** If it's June, consider creating content with tips for motorcycle rides, boating and RV road trips. In December, it may make more sense to discuss winter home maintenance and and pointers for driving for driving in snowy conditions.

  It's also a great idea to highlight holidays.Of course, major national holidays are good to cover, but you can also use websites like **NationalToday.com** to find other fun days to celebrate – like International Dog Day and National Doughnut Day!

> " Crafting content for social media often seems overwhelming. But practice makes progress. If you dive in and try new things, little by little you will find your rhythm. You may be surprised by how creative you truly are! "

> – Ryker Huizinga,
> Digital Marketing Manager at Foremost

- **Think local.** What's going on in your community? If there are exciting local events that you're attending, try sharing photos and videos from your experience. This will show locals that you're an active community member and a go-to for learning more about what's happening around town.

You can also try shouting out local businesses, restaurants and other organizations that you enjoy supporting. This can help you attract attention from other community staples and build your agency's local network.

- **Experiment with video.** All you really need to create an effective social media video is a good idea and a camera (which can be a smart phone). Check out the next chapter to learn more.

- **Celebrate your team.** Share photos of fun moments from your office, highlight birthdays, note volunteer outings and illustrate why your agency is a great place to work. Show your followers that there are real, awesome people at your agency. It will be humanizing for your brand and help customers get to know you and your staff.

Bonus idea: You may have noticed that people love sharing pet photos on social media. If your team members have pets, consider sharing photos from office events like *Bring Your Pet to Work Day* … it can lead to engaging content and be a good time for everyone involved!

- **Look for inspiration.** Visit social media pages of other insurance agencies and brands you like outside of the industry. Take note of what they're sharing and see if it sparks new ideas.

- **Create a list of go-to sources.** If there are blogs and other informative websites that consistently produce content you find value in sharing, save them to your favorites and check back often. Some insurance groups have blogs with easy-to-share content (like *Foremost.com/Learning-Center*).

- **Review what's already worked.** Take a look at what you've posted so far and see which types of content have generated the most likes, comments and shares. See what's making an impact and try producing additional content that's similar.

- **Open the Social Media Suitcase.** You know the drill! Check back often for new social media calendars, fresh content and exciting ideas.

CREATING CONTENT (continued)

As you brainstorm, you may find it helpful to keep an organized list of your ideas for articles, images and videos. This practice may be helpful for arranging your ideas into a content calendar (which we will cover in more detail). Here are a few examples:

ARTICLES

- How to Add Teen Drivers to an Auto Insurance Policy
- Tips on Preparing for Hurricane Season
- Exploring the Benefits of Umbrella Policies

Note: If you feel particularly inspired by your article ideas or find you enjoy writing them, creating an agency blog could be an excellent next step.

IMAGES

- Exciting photos of people riding motorcycles, boats and off-road vehicles with insurance tips in the caption.
- Images of homes with short winter maintenance tips, like "Seal Windows and Doors."
- Photos of your team at a volunteer outing or a local event (like a parade, arts festival or boat show).

Note: If you find that you enjoy creating content with engaging photos and designs, consider creating an Instagram account for your agency.

VIDEOS

- How-to videos highlighting simple DIY maintenance tasks for cars or motorcycles.
- A video series with insurance, moving or maintenance tips for new homeowners.
- A video series in which you explain various insurance terms.

Note: Love producing video? Consider starting a YouTube channel for your agency!

When Concocting Content, Be Open to Experimentation!

If you come up with a great idea, try creating several different types of content with it. For example, let's say you wrote down tips for creating a home inventory list to help when filing a claim. Use those tips to write a blog article, design an image (or a series of images) and film a short video. Then, experiment with posting each one on your social media platforms to see what resonates with your audience. If you find the article performs notably well on Twitter and the video scores excellent engagement on Instagram, adjust your strategy to begin sharing more articles on Twitter and more videos on Instagram!
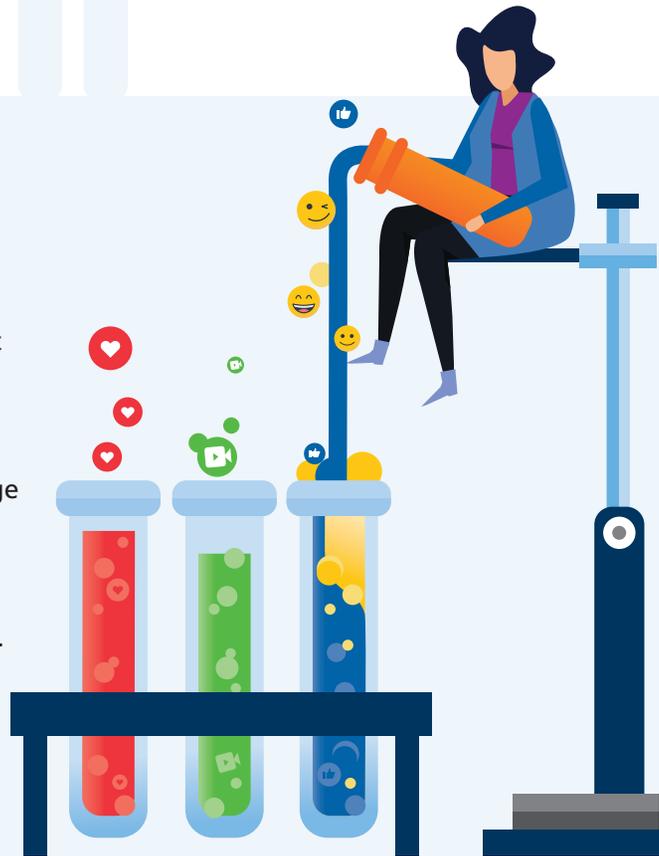
Tools of the Trade: CREATING CONTENT

Looking for free or inexpensive tools to help you create next-level content? Consider these options:

Canva: This platform offers user-friendly design tools and templates for all social channels. There are also templates for videos and printed materials. You can access free resources or pay a monthly fee for tons of extra stock photos and graphics.

Stock Photos: Find free stock photos to use on **Pexels**, **Pixabay** and **Unsplash**.

Movavi: An easy-to-use video editing tool. Get started with basic features for free. *(See the next chapter for more video resources).*

Linktree: Share multiple links from one link in your Instagram bio and anywhere else you want. Get started for free or upgrade to custom branding and analytics for a small monthly fee.

CREATING CONTENT (continued)

Creating a Content Calendar

One way to keep your social media marketing strategy organized, intentional and effective is to create a content calendar!

Content calendars are an outline of your planned posts throughout each month or the year. They're an excellent tool for staying on track and connecting your social media endeavors to your overall marketing strategy. There are many ways to craft a quality content calendar, so experiment and find what works best for you. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started:

- **Highlight seasonally relevant insurance products.** From winter driving to autumn RV road trips, the seasons impact which products customers are focused on. Think of the trends and popular activities in each month and plan to post about them a few times a week.

- **Note holidays.** Posting about holidays can be an easy way to connect and celebrate with customers. You can cover mainstream holidays (like Thanksgiving), safety observance holidays (like Distracted Driving Awareness Month – visit *NSC.org/Events/Safety-Observance-Calendar* for more ideas), insurance-related holidays (like Insurance Awareness Day) and other fun highlights (like International Coffee Day – visit websites like *NationalToday.com* to find more.)

- **Plan for local events.** Volunteer outings, parades, car or boat shows, conferences, tradeshows … keep your audience up to date with what you're doing in the community!

- **Think ahead for video.** Sometimes video takes more effort than other types of content. Create a posting cadence and stick to it – like deciding to share three videos a month or planning a weekly video series that will run throughout the first quarter of the year.

- **Show off your passions.** Which insurance products excite you the most? Are you an avid boater, a rambling road trip lover, or a home DIY project extraordinaire? Think about how your hobbies and interests – and your customers' – connect to products you help insure and brainstorm content you can create about it. Short videos or photos displaying your summer motorcycle adventures can go a long way in showing bikers why they should come to you for insurance coverage for their ride.

- **Open the Social Media Suitcase.** Even if you create a content calendar, sometimes you may find yourself out of ideas, which is why we keep the Suitcase packed with fresh content to help make posting much easier. Check our social media calendars frequently for easy-to-share content and consider sharing several of our posts per week.

To kick-start your brainstorming and calendar-crafting session, here are monthly content examples to draw ideas from:

JANUARY

- ☐ Product Focus: Auto
- ☐ Notable Dates: News Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- ☐ Other Ideas: Winter maintenance and safety tips for vehicles, snowmobile safety tips

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Product Focus: Landlord and Vacant Homes
- ☐ Notable Dates: Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day, Black History Month, Heart Health Month
- ☐ Other Ideas: Securing vacant homes, tips for insuring jewelry and other personal property, creating a personal property inventory list

MARCH

- ☐ Product Focus: Motorcycle
- ☐ Notable Dates: St. Patrick's Day, First Day of Spring, Daylight Saving Time Begins
- ☐ Other Ideas: De-winterizing motorcycles, tornado safety tips

APRIL

- ☐ Product Focus: Marine
- ☐ Notable Dates: Distracted Driving Awareness Month, National Window Safety Week, Tax Day
- ☐ Other Ideas: De-winterizing boats, spring cleaning tips

MAY

- ☐ Product Focus: Flood
- ☐ Notable Dates: Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Graduation Season
- ☐ Other Ideas: Flood safety and awareness tips, DIY home project ideas

JUNE

- ☐ Product Focus: Mobile Home
- ☐ Notable Dates: First Day of Summer, Father's Day, Juneteenth, Insurance Awareness Day
- ☐ Other Ideas: Mobile home maintenance tips, home pool safety, hurricane preparation

JULY

- ☐ Product Focus: RV
- ☐ Notable Dates: Independence Day, Vehicle Theft Prevention Month
- ☐ Other Ideas: RV road trip ideas, summer boating safety tips

AUGUST

- ☐ Product Focus: Off-Road Vehicle
- ☐ Notable Dates: Back to School, Stop on Red Week
- ☐ Other Ideas: Off-road vehicle safety tips, motorcycle road trip ideas

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Product Focus: Property
- ☐ Notable Dates: Labor Day, First Day of Fall, National Preparedness Month
- ☐ Other Ideas: Fall home maintenance tips, tips for new drivers, severe weather safety tips

OCTOBER

- ☐ Product Focus: Recreational Casualty
- ☐ Notable Dates: Halloween, Small Business Month, National Crime Prevention Month, Fire Prevention Week
- ☐ Other Ideas: Winterizing motorcycles, winterizing boats

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Product Focus: Snowmobile
- ☐ Notable Dates: Thanksgiving, Día de los Muertos, Giving Tuesday, Small Business Saturday, Daylight Saving Time Ends
- ☐ Other Ideas: Snowmobile safety gear ideas, kitchen safety tips

DECEMBER

- ☐ Product Focus: Homeowners
- ☐ Notable Dates: Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, First Day of Winter, New Year's Eve
- ☐ Other Ideas: Tips for holiday get-togethers, winter home maintenance

CREATING CONTENT (continued)

Content Marketing Case Studies

Content marketing is a creative practice through which your agency can identify unique opportunities to shine and connect with consumers online. To help you in your quest to discover top-notch marketing ideas, here are a couple case studies from other folks in the insurance industry to learn from:

Motorcycle Madness: Creating Engaging Online Experiences

For over a decade now, the Foremost Marketing Team has attended motorcycle rallies throughout the country – Sturgis, South Dakota; Daytona Beach, Florida; Laconia, New Hampshire; and more!

We go on these extraordinary adventures to raise awareness for the Foremost brand. We love meeting bikers and connecting them with local independent agents like you! But these events provide value beyond in-person interactions. It gives us the opportunity to share exciting event coverage on our social media channels!

By sharing action-packed videos and photos from motorcycle rallies, we've cultivated a large audience of motorcycle enthusiasts on social media. These bikers engage with our content and share it with their friends. For many, it's a great way to experience the rallies and meet new people online if they can't attend in person. And it helps make Foremost the first brand they think of when it's time to get motorcycle insurance!

Here's the takeaway: Events in your community that people are passionate about can help you connect with customers in powerful ways. Look for local motorcycle events, boat shows, RV expos and other activities that you can connect to the insurance products you sell.

Thank You, Firefighters:
Engaging Your Community with Thoughtful Campaigns

On November 20, 2019, Agency Revolution released an episode of The Connected Insurance Podcast titled, "How I Got 20,000 Social Media Followers." It details the story of an independent insurance agency in a small, rural town that created a highly successful campaign that earned them thousands of new, engaged followers – all while supporting their community!

How did they do it? By working with their local volunteer fire department. Tactics in the campaign included using social media to:

- Spotlight each firefighter and thank them for protecting their community.
- Organize donations and other opportunities to support the fire department.
- Utilize the firefighters' expertise by sharing home fire safety tips.

This is a stellar example of focusing on the community to build a local network of engaged followers. It also illustrates that there are many unique ways to talk about insurance online. One might not immediately associate supporting firefighters with an insurance agency, but when it comes to content marketing and brand storytelling, it fits exceptionally well. Both the fire department and the insurance agency are active community members that value keeping their town safe.

Learn more and listen to the Connected Insurance Podcast here: *AgencyRevolution.com/blog/series/connectedinsurancepodcast/*
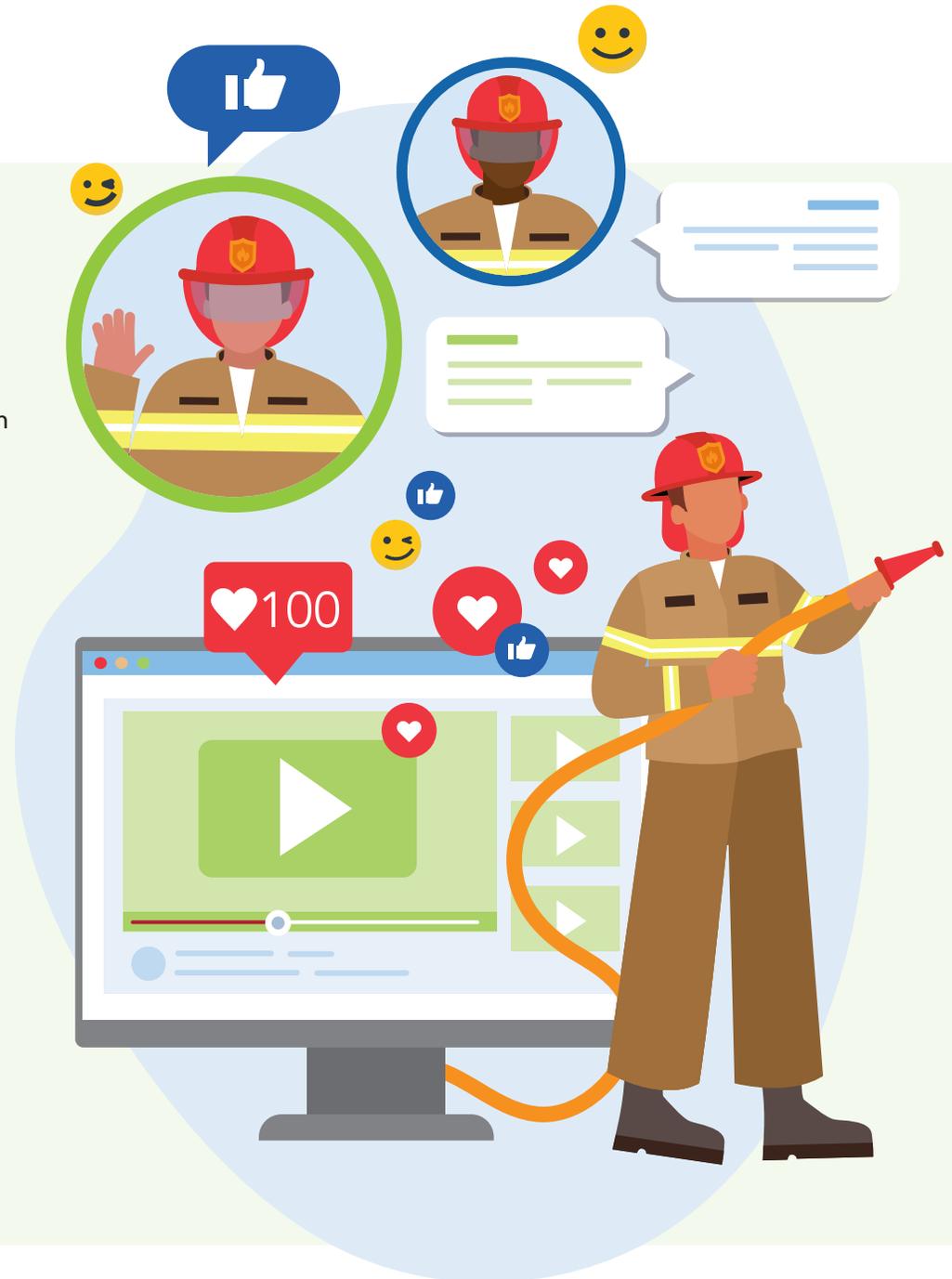
PRODUCING VIDEO

The Power of Video

Video is present on nearly every social media platform, and it's a powerful tool for scoring more engagement. Consider these stats:

More than
500 MILLION HOURS
of video are watched on YouTube each day.[1]

82%
of users watch video content on Twitter.[1]

Videos on Facebook pages increase user engagement by **33%**.[1]

Users view an average of **8 BILLION** videos on Facebook daily.[2]

82%
of Instagram users have taken action after viewing a brand's video.[2]

75 MILLION
people in the U.S. watch videos online every day.[1]

Viewers retain **95%** of a message when they watch it in a video compared to **10%** when reading it in text.[1]

Social video has generated **1,200% more shares** than text and images combined.[1]

Creating video is often an excellent way to elevate your content marketing plan, and you don't need to break the bank to make it happen. On social media, content value beats production quality. High-quality, professionally filmed videos are always nice – but you can make authentic connections simply with a smart phone and a good idea.

> " Video is constantly evolving but consistently engaging. There will always be power in combining images and audio to tell compelling stories and connect with others in meaningful ways. "
>
> – Will Schultz, Videographer and Editor at Foremost

Before we move on, let's continue to brainstorm content ideas, but this time with video specifically in mind. Here are several ideas to help you get started:

1. **Discuss Insurance Products**

   Make videos about the products you help insure but also enjoy or value – consumers may enjoy hearing about motorcycles, RVs, off-road vehicles … even home and lifestyle topics, like DIY projects and home gardens. Find creative ways to strike up good conversations about the products you can help them with.

2. **Cover Local Events**

   Topic ideas: Go to a community festival, boat show, snowmobile race or another event and capture some footage. You'd be surprised how 30 seconds of video highlighting an exciting moment at a parade or shouting out a local organization can engage the active members of your community online.

3. **Team Interviews**

   Topic idea: Come up with three fun questions to ask one of your team members and film their responses. This could be an interesting way to introduce customers to the various members of your team!

Co-Branded Videos from Foremost

Looking for an easy way to add more video to your marketing mix? Take advantage of our co-branded videos! You can easily request free video content at *ForemostAgent.com/Videos*.

We offer a variety of videos that can be co-branded with your agency's logo and contact information. Our video options cover both the Foremost and Bristol West® brands, and many of them are available in Spanish.

You can share our co-branded videos in any way you'd like: Publish them on your YouTube channel, share them with customers via email, post them on social media, add them to your website or play them in your office!
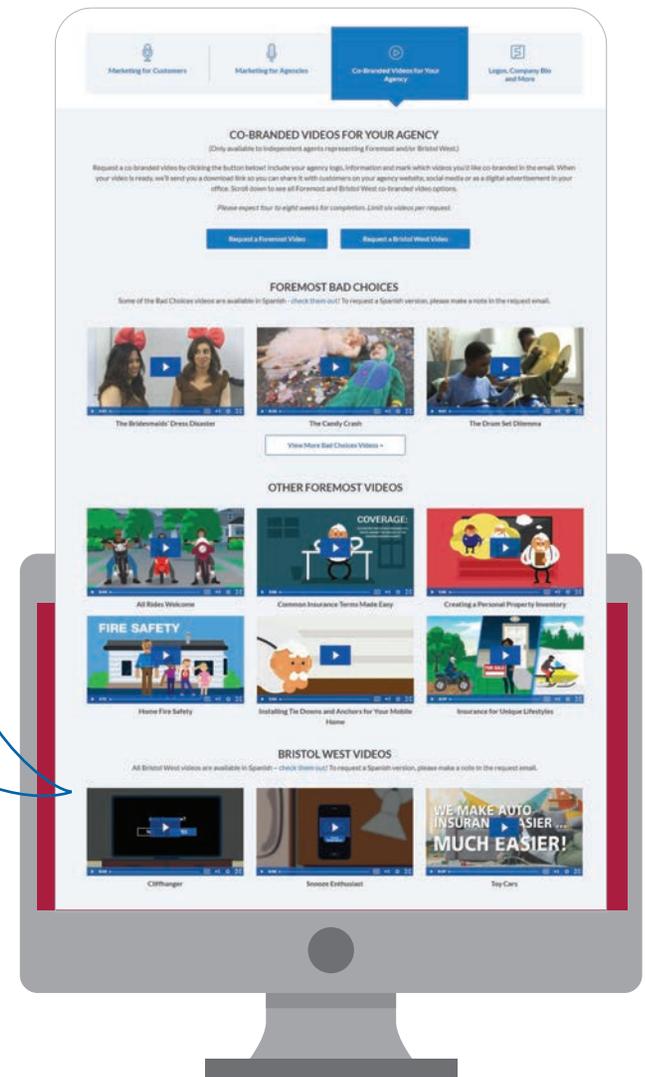
PRODUCING VIDEO (continued)

Creating Quality Smart Phone Videos

Not everyone has access to professional videographers, but that doesn't have to stop you from posting video. In fact, you can create quality smart phone videos to help drive engagement on your social media platforms. The following tips can help you get started!

BE PREPARED

Think about the message you want to get across, what content to share and where to shoot the video, and practice taking video beforehand. Write a script or a set of points to follow in the video. If you're aiming to get certain scenery or actions, write a list to make sure you get all the shots you'll need. This will help you get the right message in the video.

Tip: Try to limit your video to two minutes. This length of video often gets the most engagement on Facebook because, on average, 60% of viewers will stop watching after the two-minute mark.[1]

Once you have your message and content put together, **find a good location** to shoot the video. This may be a blank wall, outdoor scenery, etc. – just somewhere that fits the tone of voice.

Now you should **practice using and setting up the camera** and adjusting any equipment you plan to use. If someone will be in the video, have them practice what they will say. Always test the microphone beforehand: Take a sample recording and then play the video back so you can hear what the audio will sound like at different distances from the phone's microphone.

SET UP THE SHOT

Hold the phone horizontally. This will make the video more accessible and easier to view on different platforms. You should also consider where you'll be posting the video. If you're going to post an Instagram Story, shoot vertically. If you're going to post on YouTube, shoot horizontally. And if you're not sure which platforms you'll be posting on, it's best to shoot horizontally with extra room on the sides so you can crop it to fit vertically if you'd like.

Lighting is a key factor, so check the lighting at the location beforehand if you can. If your object of focus in the video will be a person, place them where you'd like to see them in the video. Then look at the smart phone and move around to see what the lighting looks like at different angles. Natural lighting is great but not always the best option.

Tip: Make sure your main object is in focus by pressing your finger on that object/person on the smart phone screen.

The background helps set the tone of the video, so choose wisely. If you have a more serious concept, shooting the video inside will likely help create a serious, professional tone. If your video is about something fun and energetic, outdoor scenery may be a better option.

If you can, avoid a bunch of items or clutter next to your main object so the camera doesn't select those elements to focus on instead. Too many objects or a busy background can take the focus away from your main subject.

Framing is another step for setting up the shot, so **remember the rule of thirds**. When objects are always in the center of the shot, it can get boring. Switch it up by pretending

An example of using the rule of thirds.

your frame is divided into three equal sections and then move around so your object is in the left lower corner, or maybe the upper right corner.

WHILE FILMING

Put your phone on Do Not Disturb Mode to prevent the video from stopping or catching the noise of vibrations if you receive a notification while recording.

Keep the phone as still and level as you can unless you're shooting something where you'll be moving. Try to keep the video from shaking so it's easier to focus on the main object and so the image doesn't appear to be low quality or unprofessional. If you're worried about keeping the phone still or were hoping to film yourself speaking, there are **smart phone tripods** you can purchase online.

It may be tempting, but **don't use the zoom tool** on smart phones while creating videos. This will lower the quality of the video. Instead, just move closer to the object. If you're moving toward the object during the video, move slowly so the image stays clear.

AFTER FILMING

Make sure the video is saved on your phone. You don't want to get home after you put everything away and realize you don't have the video, and then have to set everything up again. Although you may just be uploading the video straight from your phone to your social media pages, it's a good idea to save the video on your computer as well.

[1]Impact: https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/new-video-marketing-statistics

PRODUCING VIDEO (continued)

Going Live on Facebook

Facebook Live videos can be a fun way to get more engagement with your audience. They also can help with event promotion. Plus, these videos don't just disappear after the video is over, or after 24 hours like some platforms. Instead, you can choose to save it as a post so the video will permanently stay on your page for future visitors to see.

Ways to Prepare

PLAN

Think about what you want your video to be about, where to shoot, when to shoot and if you want other people to be in it. Put togethera list of topics you want to cover, shots to grab or questions you want to ask your audience.

Tip: Add a video description before you start filming. Write it down so you can copy it into the description line later.

If you're able to, go to the location beforehand and test the connection. A bad connection will either result in a low-quality video or no video at all. Test the audio, lighting and different angles that may work. For Facebook Live videos, it's okay to shoot your video vertical or horizontal, so try both to see which best fits the situation. Even doing this just a half hour or an hour before will lower the chances of errors or delays during filming.

Another planning tip is to get ready to communicate and entertain. Don't be shy to answer questions in the comments during the video. This will show that you're paying attention to what people are saying and you may learn valuable information about your audience.

PROMOTE

If you'll be running a Facebook Live video at an event, promote the event and the live video before it happens. Create posts announcing to (and reminding) your followers when you're planning on going live. Whether it's a day, a week or a month before, you can use that time to build up your followers, gain new ones and potentially get more viewers on the video the day it airs.

Another plus of promoting is that you can do it on your other channels! You don't have to talk about Facebook only on Facebook. This will reach your followers on other platforms and possibly gain their likes and follows on Facebook as well.

Put together a list of topics you want to cover, shots to grab or questions you want to ask your audience.

Steps for Filming

These steps are for filming a Facebook Live video on a phone, but you can also take these steps to film on your laptop with a webcam!

1. On your agency's Facebook page, click **Create a post** or **Publish**.

2. Then select **Live video**, which will open your camera.

3. Make adjustments and get familiar with your options.

   a. In the upper right corner, the **camera** icon will switch your camera view (front or back side).

   b. The **lightning bolt** will change the flash settings.

   c. In the upper left corner, you can select different effects with the **wand tool** to jazz up your video (use these sparingly — they may be distracting).

   d. **Tap to add a description** if you'd like one. (We highly recommend this — it will help viewers know what they're watching. It's also a good place to include a call-to-action).

   e. Use the bottom portion to **Check In**, **Feature a Link**, change the video **settings** and more!

4. When you're ready to begin filming, click **Go Live**.

5. Once you're finished filming, click **Finish** in the bottom right corner to end the broadcast. Then you can choose to publish the video and check out the viewing results!
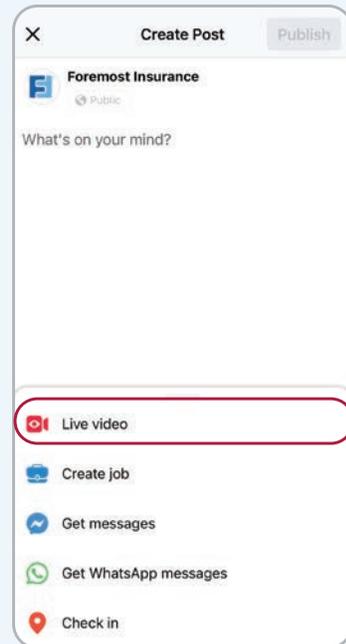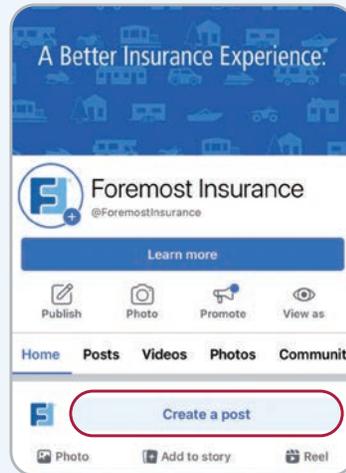
Note: You can go live on other platforms like Instagram and TikTok, too! The tips shared in this section work well for going live in any setting, but don't be afraid to experiment and see what resonates with your customers.
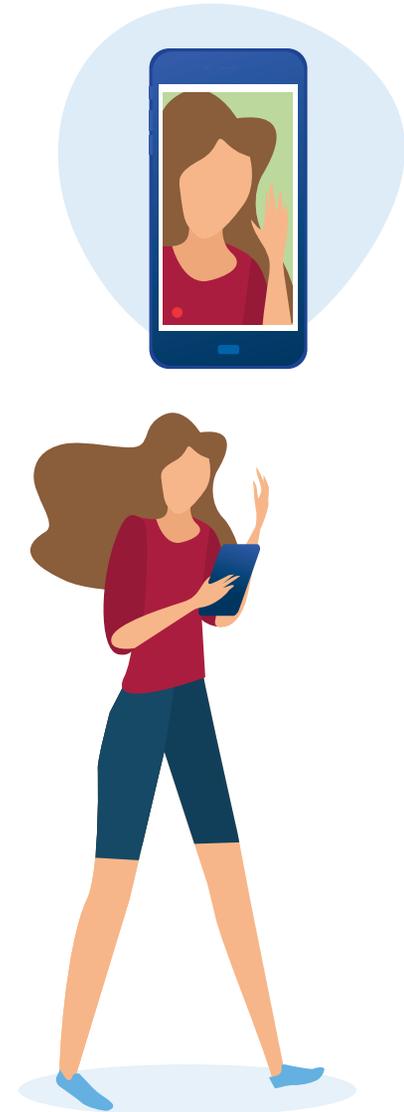
POSTING: TIMING, SCHEDULING AND MORE

When to Post (Learning to Review Insights and Analytics)

A frequently asked question is, "When should I post on social media?" It's a good question but unfortunately, there's not a magical answer like posting at 6 p.m. on Thursday will always ensure all your followers will see your content.

In reality, the best times to post are different for each social media page. Your unique audience will have specific social media usage habits – and these habits will constantly change. That's why it's important to review the Insights and Analytics sections of the social media platforms your agency is on.

Most platforms provide helpful statistics on the dates and times your followers are most active. Review these insights and analytics frequently, and choose days and times to post based on the data. Experiment and over time you'll figure out the most effective posting cadence for your pages.

Here's how you can access the insights and analytics data:

FACEBOOK

1. While on your agency's Facebook page, click the **Insights** button on the left column.

2. There are many helpful statistics to review, so take time to explore each section. We recommend visiting the **Posts** section, where you can learn more about the days and times your followers are the most active on Facebook.
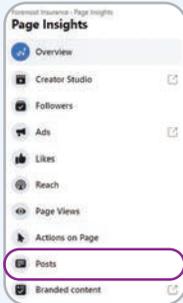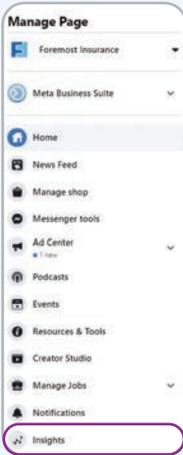
TWITTER

1. While on your agency's Twitter homepage, click the **More** button on the left column.

2. Select **Analytics**. Here you can review your reach and engagement rates, top tweets, and top followers.
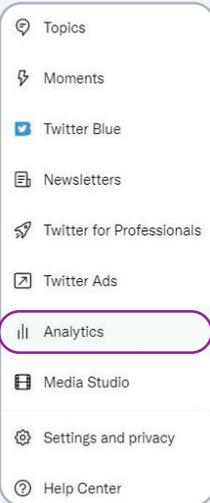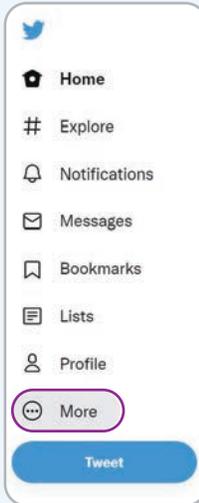
INSTAGRAM

1. On your agency's Instagram page, click the **Insights** button (it's below the "Edit Profile" button under your bio).

2. There's a lot to review in the "Insights Overview" section that opens. We recommend clicking **Total followers**. This will lead you to the **Followers** section, where you can find your followers' most active days of the week and times.
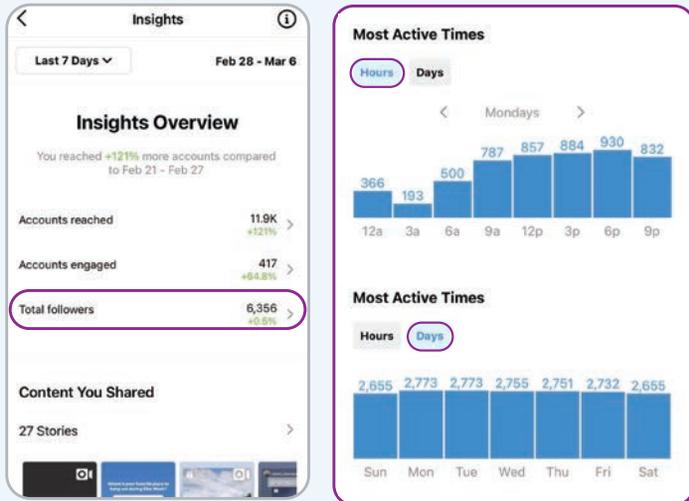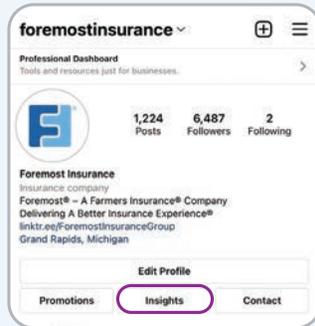
LINKEDIN

1. At the top of your agency's LinkedIn page, click **Analytics**.

2. Learn more about your audience by clicking **Visitors** and **Followers**.
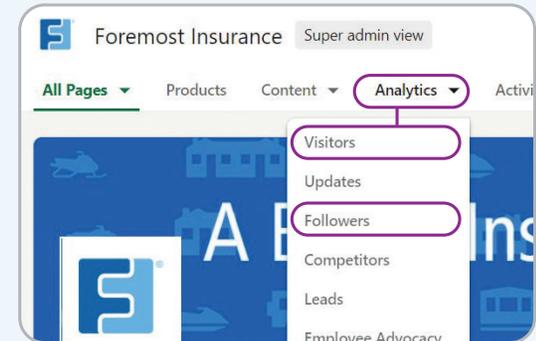
YOUTUBE

1. YouTube allows you to review the analytics on individual videos. First, make sure you're on **YouTube Studio™**, click **Content** and then **choose a video** you'd like to review.

2. Click the **Analytics** button by the video to learn more about the video's reach, engagement and audiences.
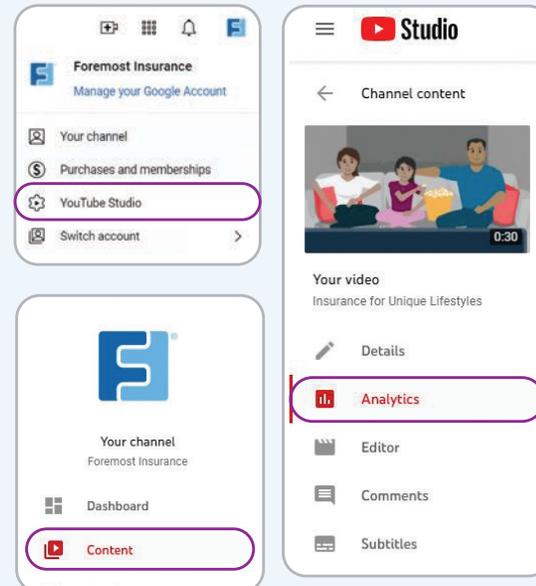
POSTING: TIMING, SCHEDULING AND MORE (continued)

Posting Recommendations

Another common question is, "How often should I post?" Again, our answer is, "Find what works best for you!" But this time around, we do have frequency suggestions to start with. It's important to keep your social media pages active. Posting consistently can grow engagement over time and helps keep your agency top of mind for potential customers. Having recent posts also helps make a good first impression. If a newcomer finds your social media page and sees you haven't posted in months, they might wonder if your agency is still open and active!

If you don't have time to post every day, don't fret! Many social media platforms have built-in scheduling features. So, when you have time to prepare social content, you can schedule your posts to be published days, weeks or even months in advance.

Here are suggested frequencies for posting and notes on built-in scheduling for various social platforms:

FACEBOOK

- **Suggested Frequency:** 3-5 posts/week
- **Built-In Scheduling:** Yes

1. On your Facebook page, click **Create post in Creator Studio**.

2. After preparing your post, click the **downward arrow button** to the right of "Publish."

3. Select **Schedule Post**.

4. Set the **date** and **time** you'd like your post to be published. Then click **Save**.

5. Lastly, click the blue **Schedule post** button.
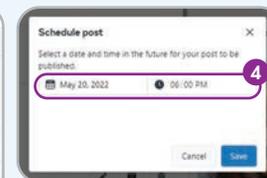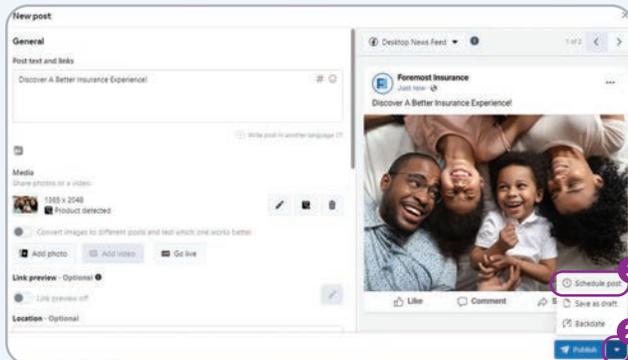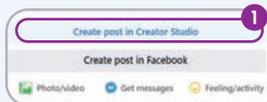
YOUTUBE

- **Suggested Frequency:** Upload whenever you have a new video – follow your content plan!
- **Built-In Scheduling:** Yes

When uploading a new video, you'll find a schedule option under "Visibility." Simply select the date and time you'd like your video to be published and click the **Schedule** button.

INSTAGRAM

- **Suggested Frequency:** 1-3 posts/week
- **Built-In Scheduling:** No (review the scheduling platforms on the right for third-party options)

TWITTER

- **Suggested Frequency:** 5-10 tweets/week
- **Built-In Scheduling:** Yes

Twitter provides a tool for scheduling tweets called **TweetDeck**. Learn more at *TweetDeck.Twitter.com/*

LINKEDIN

- **Suggested Frequency:** 1 post/week
- **Built-In Scheduling:** No (review the scheduling platforms on the right for third-party options)
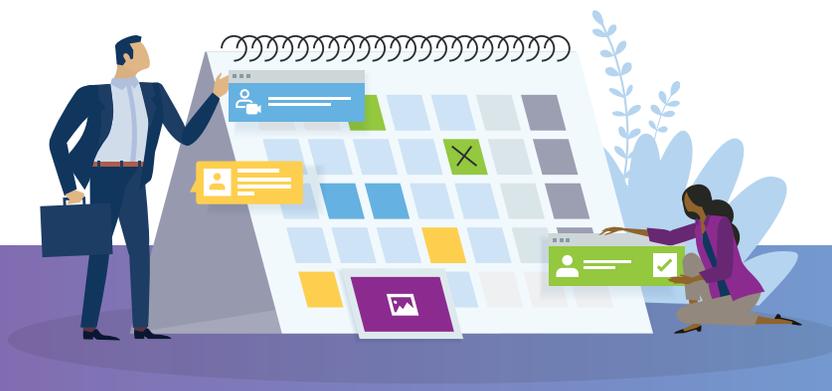
Tools of the Trade: SCHEDULING

We noted in the previous section that some social media platforms offer built-in scheduling tools, but others do not. If you're managing multiple social media pages, you may want to consider a platform that helps you manage and schedule posts for all your social media pages. Here are a few examples:

Platforms for Managing Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn

- Buffer
- Crowdfire
- Hootsuite®
- Sprout Social®

Instagram-Focused Platforms

- Later
- Planoly®

POSTING: TIMING, SCHEDULING AND MORE (continued)

Tagging Other Accounts

Tagging is a helpful feature on almost all social media platforms. When you tag people or organizations in a post or photos, you are essentially giving them a shoutout and linking them to your post. Tagging someone will send them a notification – which will potentially bring them to visit your page. A thoughtful tag may also bring that person or organization's followers over to visit you as well!

To tag, simply type the "@" symbol and start writing the person or organization's username or page name. The name should pop up as an option for you to click – linking to that person or organization's profile. For example, to tag Foremost on Facebook, type "@ForemostInsurance" in the post copy. Our profile name will pop up as an option to tag. Once you click our name, " @ForemostInsurance" will now show up as the entire account name – "Foremost Insurance" – and be highlighted in blue.

Tagging can be a great way to give shoutouts, build bridges between others in your network and notify people of relevant or useful information you're sharing.

Utilizing Hashtags

Hashtags (written with a "#" symbol) are used to index keywords or topics on most social media platforms. It allows people to easily follow topics they're interested in. For example, if you're sharing a post about motorcycle insurance, try including the hashtag: #Motorcycle. This will get your post in front of motorcycle enthusiasts who follow the #Motorcycle feed, potentially expanding your reach.

Motorcycle

@

#
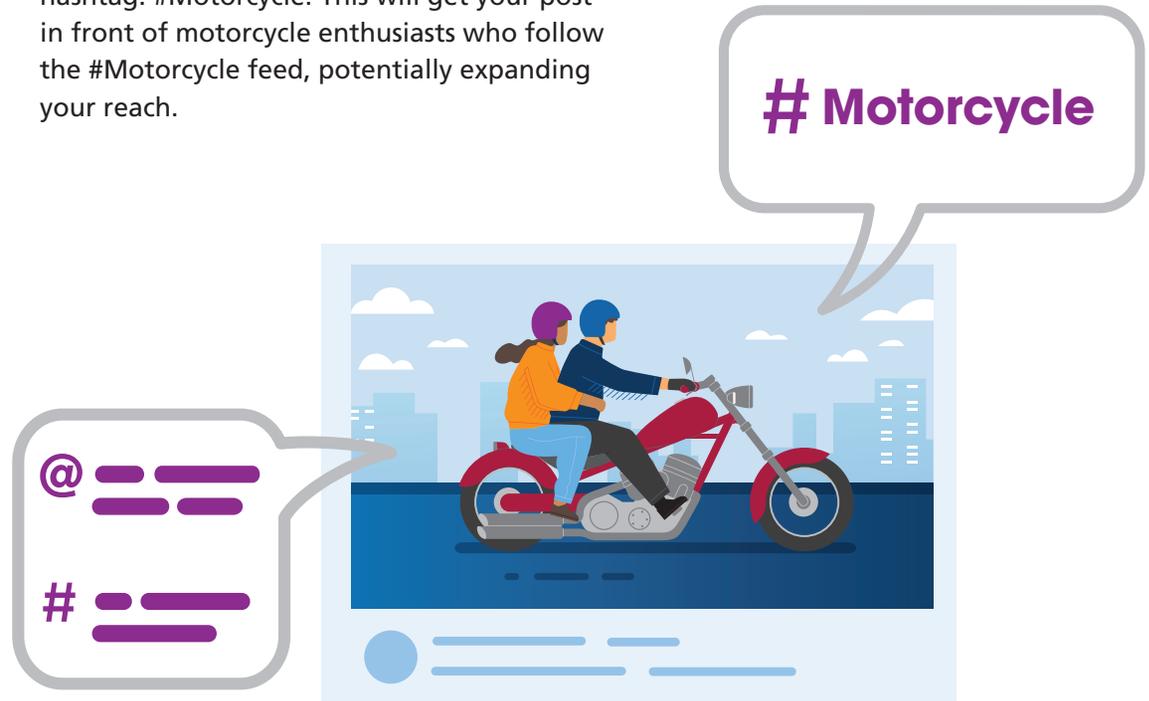
HASHTAG ETIQUETTE

FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND LINKEDIN

Hashtag use on these platforms is helpful but optional. Don't go overboard – pick one or two hashtags that best represent your post.

INSTAGRAM

Hashtag use on Instagram is recommended. You're able to share 30 hashtags per post. If you're able to come up with 30, go for it! We recommend commenting on your post with your list of hashtags instead of including them in the post description. This tactic works just as well and makes your post look more organized and professional.

POSTING: TIMING, SCHEDULING AND MORE (continued)

Navigating Instagram and Increasing Engagement

Although you can access Instagram on a computer, it's a platform that's crafted to be experienced on mobile. This makes managing an Instagram account notably different than the tactics you'd use on other platforms, like Facebook. To help you navigate this, we've compiled several quick tips to help you increase engagement and reach more customers on Instagram.

First, let's break down different types of Instagram content: Posts, Reels and Stories. (There are more than three types, but these are the most notable.)

POSTS are the foundation of Instagram. They're the photos or videos that you share directly to your Instagram feed – which is essentially your home base and what users first see when they view your profile.
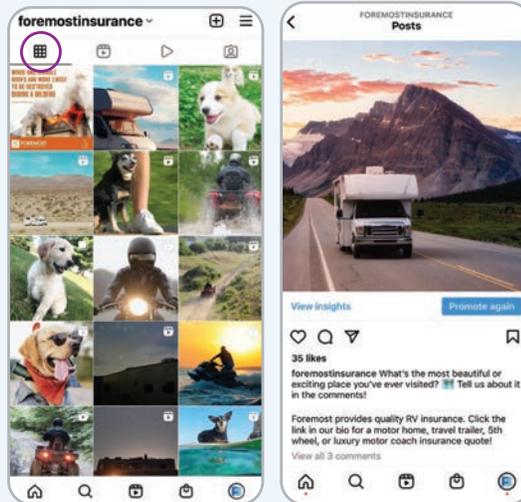
REELS are a specific type of short-form Instagram video. They're ideally vertical; often short but can be up to 60 seconds long; and you can add music, on-screen text, closed captions and visual effects in-app before posting. Reels appear in the tab that's to the right of your main feed. They're similar to the videos shared on TikTok. In fact, many people share their TikTok videos to Instagram as reels.
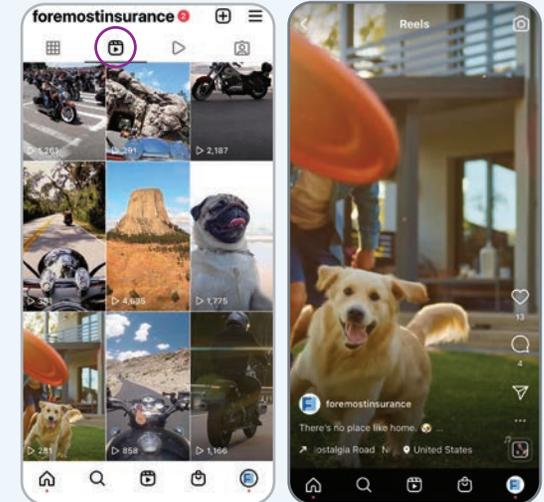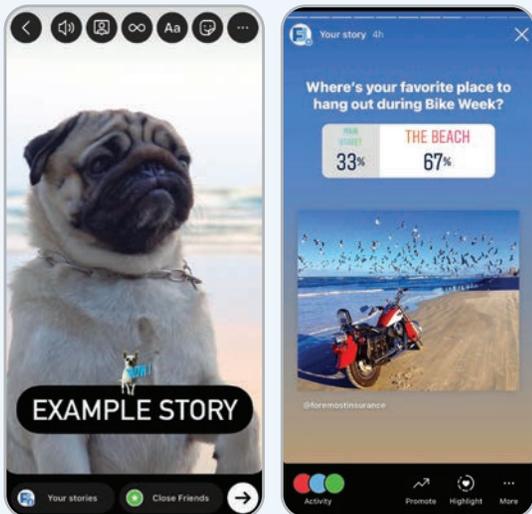
STORIES are content (photos, videos or other graphics) that show up for 24 hours – after that, they disappear. Ephemeral posts like this are excellent for sharing quick updates, daily moments from your office, announcing new posts or reels on your feed, running interactive content (like polls), sharing other people's posts or reels, and giving shoutouts to other accounts.

When you share a story, a circle will appear around your profile picture. Anyone who clicks on your profile picture (including you) will be able to view your story. On your Instagram newsfeed, you'll notice a row of other accounts with circles at the top – click these to view others' stories.

If you'd like to save your story so others can view it later, you can do so in the Story Highlight section of your feed. Highlights will be pinned at the top of your feed. This is a great way to distinguish stories that are especially interesting or feature helpful content that your customers would benefit from viewing again later.

WHAT DOES INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Likes: When a user reacts to a post by "liking" it.

Comments: When a user takes time to write a comment on a post.

Shares: When a user sends a post to other users via a direct message or shares a post to their stories.

Saves: When a user puts your post in a special "saved" folder so it's easier to find and revisit later.

Followers: When a user clicks the "Follow" button to ensure they'll see more of that account's content in the future.

Mentions: When a user "tags" an account using the "@" symbol and an account's username. Mentions are clickable and will send users to view that account.

Direct Messages: Also known as "DMs" – when a user sends a message to one's private inbox.

Link Clicks: Every Instagram user has space to share one link in their bio – link clicks occur when a user clicks this link.

POSTING: TIMING, SCHEDULING AND MORE (continued)

The general best practices for creating engaging content shared throughout this guide apply to most social media platforms – including Instagram. But here are a few Instagram-specific tips that can help you go the extra mile:

- **Post consistently and when your audience is most engaged**. Posting one to three times a week can be an effective way to keep your page active and at the forefront of your followers' newsfeeds. (However, don't post to your feed multiple times a day. The Instagram algorithm doesn't like this and won't show as many of your posts to your followers.[1])

  If you don't have new posts or reels to share, stay active by sharing stories. (You can post multiple stories a day – the Instagram algorithm doesn't mind this at all!)

  On your homepage, click the **"Insights"** button to learn more about your followers – like what days and times they're the most active. Experiment with posting at those times to see what days and hours score higher engagement.

- **Stay active with stories.** Sixty-two percent of users said they've become more interestedin a brand or product after seeing it in stories.[1] Try sharing photos or short videos with tips, fun moments from your office, or activities you're doing in your community. When relevant, tag other accounts and locations, and experiment with polls, questions, stickers, GIFs and Instagram's other built-in features.

- **Interact with other accounts for 10 minutes before and after posting to your feed**. Engage with others by liking posts, commenting and reacting to stories. These interactions will send notifications to those users – making your account top of mind and increasing the chances that they'll spend time with the content you shared in return.

- **Share other people's content to your story.** This is a great way to engage with other accounts and to share engaging content without having to create it all on your own. When you see a post you'd like to share, click the "Share" button and then click "Add post to your story."

- **Engage with your local community**. Search for and follow relevant accounts in your area. Here are a few examples:
  - Local businesses and organizations you enjoy supporting.
  - Community influencers that have a wide reach. For instance, if your agency was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, it would be strategic to follow accounts like Experience Grand Rapids and Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. Both accounts highlight local businesses, events and opportunities in the local community.
  - Accounts connected to products you sell. Consider this: If you write motorcycle policies, follow and engage with your local motorcycle dealer.

  Engage by liking and commenting on their posts. Try tagging them or sharing their posts to your stories when relevant. Your comments can be quick and encouraging: "So cool," "Exciting news," and even emoji comments like "❤️❤️❤️" or "👏👏👏" can go a long way. Engaging with local accounts can

help you build a stronger Instagram network. Members of your community and potential customers will be able to find your account more easily and may eventually see your page as a go-to for connecting with what's happening locally, and connecting with their local insurance professionals, of course!

- **Respond to questions and comments.** Acknowledging your commenters and participating in conversations helps to make followers feel seen, heard and excited to chat with you again in the future.

- **Send direct messages (DMs).** On Instagram, DMs are a great way to connect with others and raise awareness for your agency. One of the best ways to do this is by using the "Quick Reactions" feature when viewing stories. If someone posts a story you're interested in, tap "Send Message." A couple rows of "Quick Reactions" emojis will appear – select one and it will automatically send to the user's inbox.

- **Include hashtags when you post on your feed.** On Instagram, you can share thirty hashtags per post. As a reminder, you create hashtags by adding a "#" symbol before a word, essentially noting relevant topics or keywords associated with your post. Hashtags are searchable, so any hashtag you use will add your post to additional feeds. For example, if you make a post about boat insurance and add #Boat, boating enthusiasts who follow the #Boat hashtag feed may see your post. It's a useful way to cast more nets to reel in higher engagement rates.

Try creating a note in your phone with a list of hashtags you use often. That way you can simply copy and paste them to your post to save time. On Instagram, you can add your hashtags directly to the post's description or you can share your hashtags in the post's comments – whatever you prefer!

One last note about hashtags: Try finding and using localized tags. There may be hashtags that are commonly used by local businesses in your area, like #[Insert City Name]Businesses. Using Grand Rapids as an example again, this hashtag would be #GrandRapidsBusinesses.

- **Post carousels.** Carousels are Instagram feed posts that include multiple images. Instagram currently allows you to share ten photos or videos per post. When you share a carousel, users swipe right to see your additional content.

Carousels are a great way to share collections of photos or to tell a visual story, and they tend to score high engagement rates. In fact, carousels have the highest average engagement rate of all types of Instagram posts.[2]

- **Post videos.** Specifically, try posting more reels! We've already covered this in the "Producing Video" chapter, so take what you've learned and see what you can create.

Boating
Springfield

[1] Later: https://later.com/blog/instagram-fails/
[2] Hootsuite: https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-engagement/

CUSTOMER SERVICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Prioritizing Communication and Customer Care

Social media can help build a strong reputation and more channels of customer communication for your agency. In fact, 63% of customers have shared that they expect companies to offer customer service via their social media channels, and 90% of users have already used social media to communicate with a brand or business.[1]

Social media can be (and often is expected to be) a space where customer service carries over into the digital world. If you cultivate this space in a way that impresses customers with excellent communication, your brand will stand out!

If someone reaches out to you on social media, it shows that they're willing to engage with you, and you've successfully created a social space where productive conversation can happen. This is a great opportunity for you to take control of the narrative and show your customers that you truly care.

Creating a Social Media Customer Service Plan

You never know when a customer may reach out with a question, so it's helpful to develop a plan or process for managing these touchpoints. Here are a few best practices from the Foremost team's social media playbook:

SET A CONSISTENT TONE

Maintain a consistent voice that is reflective of your agency's brand. This will help you build a reputation for reliability and stability, which are both important keywords in the insurance industry!
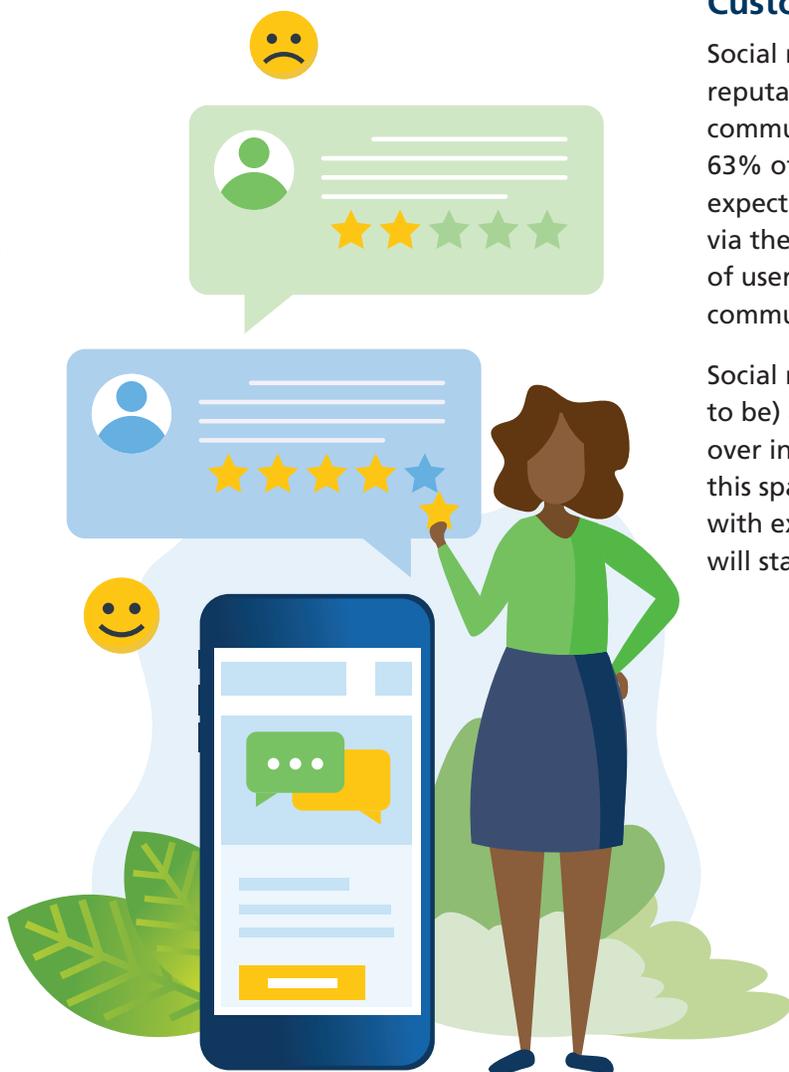
Social media can help build a strong reputation and more channels of customer communication for your agency.

EXPRESS GENUINE CONCERN AND APPRECIATION

Be consistent … but not robotic! If a customer has a concern, show them that you really care, and practice patience and understanding. Let them know a real human is listening and responding.

ACTIVELY MONITOR DIRECT MESSAGES, COMMENTS AND PAGE POSTS

There are several ways customers may reach out to you on social media. Most customers will likely try reaching you through your direct message inbox. They may also comment on one of your posts, and on Facebook, customers may post their question directly to your page. In most cases, the social media platform will send you a notification when you've received a new message, comment or post, but it helps to make frequently checking these channels part of your routine.

THANK CUSTOMERS FOR POSITIVE COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

Remember to respond to positive messages! This can help you build an even stronger relationship with your happy customers and let them know you value their feedback.

CHANGE THE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL WHEN NECESSARY

If a customer has a question that would be easier or more appropriate to discuss over the phone, send them a private message asking for their number. Then follow up with a call. Moving from a public to a private channel is also important when a customer needs to share sensitive information, like their policy number. Remember not to discuss the specifics of insurance-related matters or a person's policy or coverages in a public medium.

Quick Tip: On Facebook, you can easily send a private, direct message to someone who comments on your post. Just click the "Send Message" button under their comment. However, you only have seven days after the comment has been posted to use this feature – that's another reason why it's important to monitor your comments frequently.

Note: It's critical to remember that confidential information cannot be shared publicly. Take any communications about policy or customer-spe-cific matters offline, or make sure any such communications are happening only through direct messaging that is not visible to third parties.

CUSTOMER SERVICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA (continued)

Responding to Negative Comments

If someone posts something negative on your page, embrace it as an opportunity. Acknowledge the issue and offer to fix it if you can. Then redirect the conversation to a secure, private channel so you can get the details. People will often return to your page and thank you for helping them. This will publicly demonstrate how good your customer service is.

Here are a few examples that will give you a feel for the best way to respond to negative reviews:

1
Customer comment: I had a terrible experience filing a claim. Please help!

Sample Response: Hi, [Name]. Sorry you're frustrated — I'm here to help. Can you please send an email with the details of your experience? Thanks.

2
Customer comment: The coverage I wound up with is not at all what I thought I was buying! I will report you to the insurance commissioner!

Sample Response: That's not the kind of experience we want for our customers. Please send an email to me at [Email] with your information and any details — I'd be happy to help you.

3
Customer comment: Why haven't I heard back from you?

Sample Response: You should always get a call back. Please send me an email with your information and any details. I'll work to get answers to your questions.

Online Reviews and Referrals

To generate more online positivity for your brand, you might consider asking your customers via email or on the phone to leave reviews for your agency on Facebook, Google and other platforms that permit it.* Customer reviews can be very helpful to a business as indicated by these stats:

- Seventy-one percent of consumers who had a good social media service experience with a brand said they were likely to recommend it to others.[1]

- Ninety-three percent of consumers surveyed said that online reviews impact their purchasing decisions.[2]

Remember, if you are going to ask directly for reviews, you should not pay or give any incentive for a positive review. And you should not discourage or prohibit negative reviews or solicit only positive reviews.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Considering Social Media Advertising

Spending money on advertising isn't required to find success on social media. Advertising is an option to consider on almost all social platforms, but it doesn't replace the power of creating engaging content and offering excellent online customer service.

If you're feeling confident with your current social media marketing efforts and want to consider advertising, review your options with these informative guides:

- **Facebook:** *Facebook.com/business/ads-guide/*
- **Instagram:** *Business.Instagram.com/Advertising*
- **LinkedIn:** *Business.LinkedIn.com/marketing-solutions*
- **TikTok:** *TikTok.com/business/*
- **Twitter:** *Business.Twitter.com/en/advertising/ get-started-with-twitter-ads.html*
- **YouTube:** *YouTube.com/intl/en_us/ads/*

VOCABULARY

It's also important to know some basic social media advertising vocabulary:

Impressions: The number of times your content is delivered to someone's feed.

Reach: The number of unique people who actually see your content.

Organic Reach: The number of people who see your content through unpaid means.

Paid Reach: The number of people who see your content because you paid for it to appear in their feed.

Engagement: The number of interactions your content received from users (likes, comments, shares, saves, etc.).

Boosting Posts

Boosting is a straightforward method of social media advertising that increases the reach of your posts. Social media posts that are boosted are often seen and engaged with by more people. Here's how it's done:

FACEBOOK

1. Pick an existing post on your Facebook page that you want to boost.

2. Click **Boost Post** on the bottom right corner of your Facebook post.

3. Choose your audience. If you want to make sure your post is seen by people who are already following you, you can select "People who like your Page and people similar to them." If you want more people in your local community to see your post and learn about your agency, you can select "People in your local area." You can also create a custom audience using location and other demographics.

4. Set your boosted post's budget and duration. Facebook will estimate how many people your post will reach based on what you select.

5. Complete the process by clicking the **Boost post now** button.
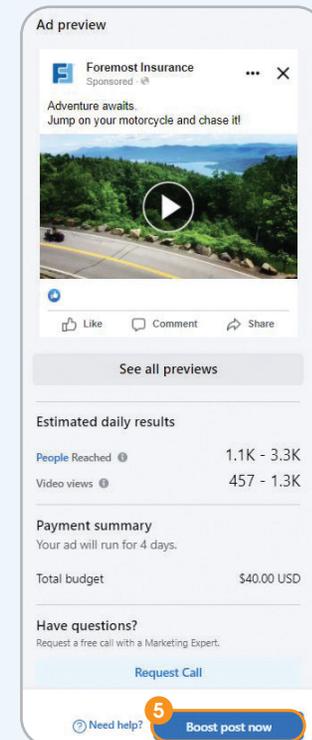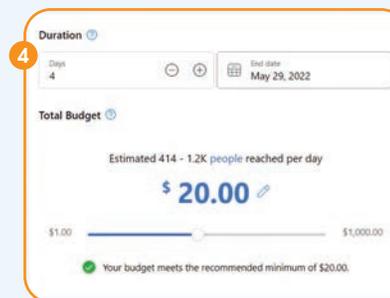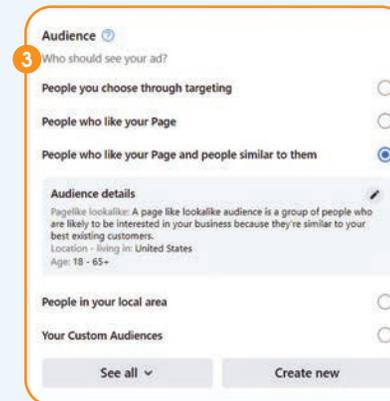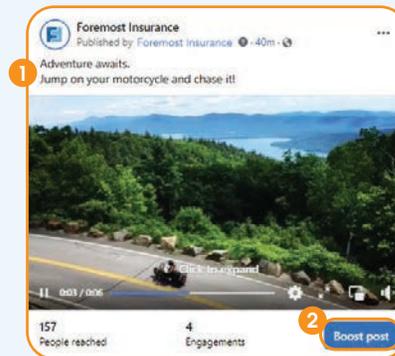
SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING (continued)

INSTAGRAM

1. Pick an existing post on your Instagram page that you want to boost.

2. Click **Boost Post** on the bottom right corner of your Instagram post.

3. Select a goal by determining whether you want more profile visits, website visits or messages.

4. Choose an audience. After choosing your goal, you can pick from three different targeting options: Automatic, Local and Manual. Automatic tells Instagram to target people who are just like your followers, Local lets you target people in a specific location, and Manual lets you create a custom audience based on age, location and interests.

5. Set your budget and duration. Instagram will estimate the expected reach and clicks that your post will attract based on your selections.

6. Complete the process by clicking the **Create promotion** button.
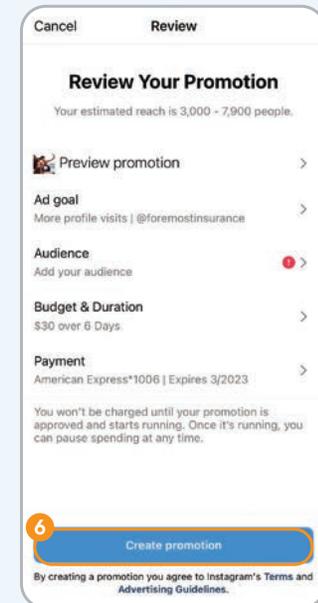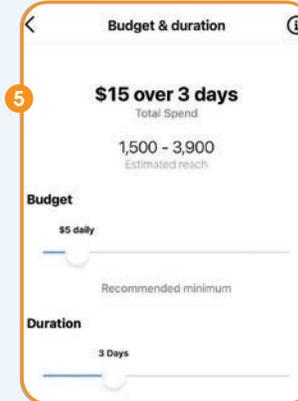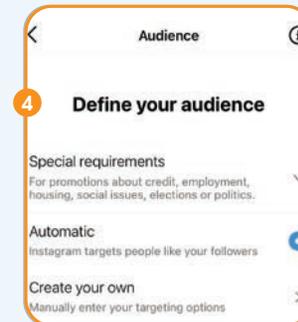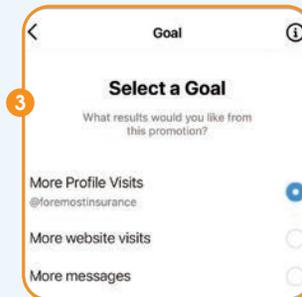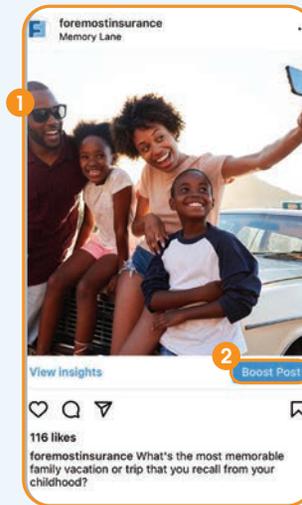
Facebook Advertising: Traffic Campaigns

There are many types of Facebook ads, but the primary ad objective we recommend is Traffic. Traffic ad campaigns focus on reaching your target audience on Facebook and Instagram and sending them to your website, where they can learn more and get in touch with you.

Here's how to create a Traffic ad campaign on **Facebook**:

1. Log in to **Facebook Business Manager** at *Business.Facebook.com.*

2. Select **Ads Manager** in the left column.

3. Click the **Create** button.

4. In the "Choose a Campaign Objective" section, select **Traffic** under the "Consideration" section.

5. Facebook will walk you through the steps:

   • Name your campaign.

   • Toggle on "Campaign Budget Optimization" and enter your lifetime budget for the campaign.

   • Toggle on "Dynamic creative."

   • Choose the start and end dates of your ad campaign schedule.

   • Create a target audience using Facebook's location, age and demographic features.
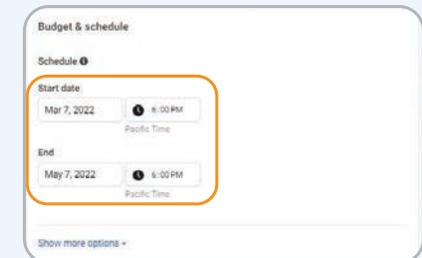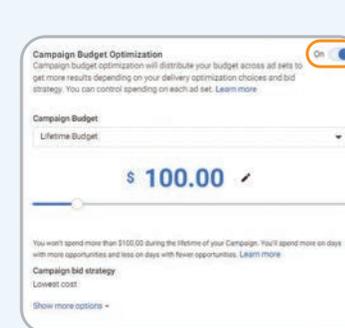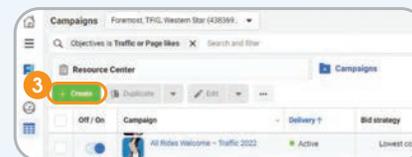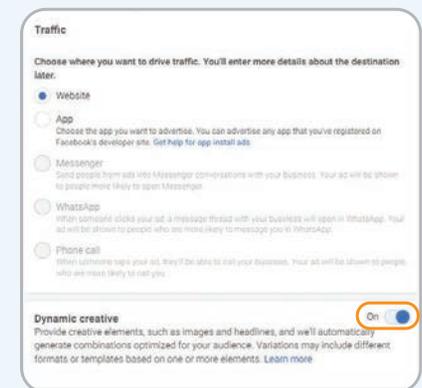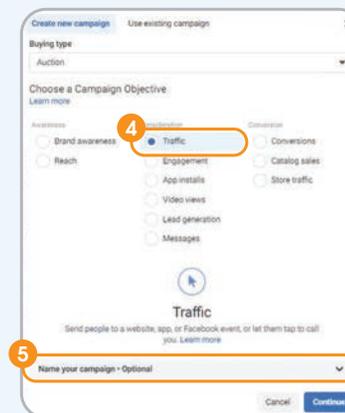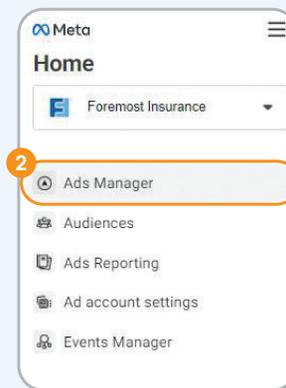
(Continued)

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING (continued)

Create a Traffic ad campaign on **Facebook** (continued):

- Select **Automatic placements**.
- Select **Landing Page Views** in the **Optimization and delivery** section.
- Upload your ad image or video and write your ad copy (including primary post text, a headline, a link description for your website and a call to action; also, enter your website's URL).

6. When finished, click the **Publish** button in the bottom-right corner.

Your ad will begin running on its scheduled start date. Return to Facebook Business Manager frequently to check its progress, review the results and make adjustments as needed.

AD CREATIVE

Here are a few tips on ad creative:

- Upload a short brand awareness video or an image of people enjoying one of the products you help insure. For example, if you offer auto insurance, try making your ad image a photo of someone smiling as they're driving a car.

- You can enter up to five options for primary text, headlines and link descriptions. We recommend utilizing all five because Facebook will test each copy option and optimize your ad for the best performance.

- Try using the "Learn more" or "Get quote" call to action buttons.

BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA: SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Exploring Digital Marketing

In this chapter, we're venturing out of the social media realm to learn about other online spaces. We'll discuss websites and search engines (like Google), and focus on best practices for enhancing your digital marketing efforts in these areas – namely, improving search engine optimization (SEO).

It may be helpful to think of your agency's website as your virtual storefront; each digital space your agency is present on (such as Google, Yelp, Bing, etc.) is a door leading to that storefront. Your website is your primary plot of land in the digital ecosystem, where people can find your business and enter to learn more. According to Safari Digital, 62% of consumers disregarded a business they could not find online.[1] Therefore, if you don't already have a website, we highly recommend creating one!

People near you may be searching for insurance – but when they look, are they able to find you? And if they do find you, does your virtual storefront make it easy for them to contact you or make a purchase? These are the questions we'll explore in the next few sections.

> Your website anchors your digital marketing efforts. It's your virtual storefront. Is it easy for customers to find you and are you ready for them to visit?
>
> – Niki King, Online and Social Marketing Specialist at Foremost

SEO 101

WHAT IS SEO AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

SEO is the increasing of web visibility and traffic through organic search engine results. Essentially, strong SEO makes you easier to find on the internet. **Local SEO** is the same thing, but for local businesses looking to connect with consumers in their communities – and this applies to insurance agencies like yours!

Local queries account for almost half of Google's two trillion searches per year.[1] What do we mean by "local searches?" If a customer is looking for an insurance agency, they can search for "insurance agency near me" on search engines. A list of nearby insurance agencies will then be listed.

You're probably wondering how you can get your agency to appear in more of these local searches. The best answer to that is by being accurate and consistent.

WHY ARE ACCURACY AND CONSISTENCY SO IMPORTANT?

The search phrase "near me" doubled in 2020.[2] So, when people are searching for "insurance agencies near me," they're going to want to see your important information right away. What's the most important information? Your agency name, address and phone number (NAP).

- **N**ame
- **A**ddress
- **P**hone Number

Keeping NAP and your other business information up to date will increase your search engine visibility online. When all your information is exactly the same on each platform (your social media, website, business listings, etc.), you come off as more reliable to customers and are easier to contact.

We recommend creating a document with your business information. Whenever you need to provide this information, you can copy and paste it from the document, and it'll be the same each time.

The more accurate your information and the more business listings you've claimed, the more likely you are to be suggested as a local option, which can drive traffic to your website.
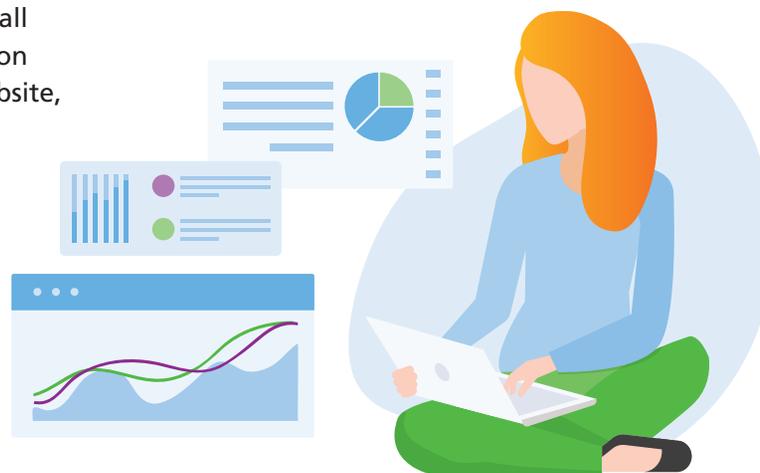
BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA:
SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (continued)

WHAT ARE BUSINESS LISTINGS?

On Google, Yelp, Bing, Yahoo and other sites, you can claim your business listings. When you search for your business on these platforms, you'll find a listing for your agency. You can claim, or take ownership, of these listings, and you'll be able to get verified and keep them updated.

For Google, it's located on the right side of the search page. Out of all the search engines, Google is by far the most-used search engine, which is why we recommend creating a free **Google Business Profile** first by going to *Google.com/business*.

Note: If you don't have a website for your agency, you can easily create one through your Google Business Profile!

Your agency information is probably on numerous sites, so how do you make sure the information is correct on all of them? Unfortunately, you can't, but you can get close. The best thing you can do is update the most popular listings; the search engines will work together to cross-reference the information to check that it's correct. This won't be an overnight transformation – it'll be an ongoing process – this is where consistency comes into play.

To track down some of these listings, you can enter your business name on sites like *Verizon.com/Business/Small-Business-Essentials/Local*. You'll be able to see what listings have inaccuracies (NAP errors) and how you compare to similar businesses in reviews.

Adding, Claiming and Updating Your Agency's Google Business Listing

By claiming your business listing on Google — and keeping it current — consumers will likely see your agency as more reputable and reliable. It makes you much easier to find and contact. Best of all, it's a free resource!

In today's digital landscape, maintaining an up-to-date Google listing is vital for your agency. People in your community are searching for "insurance near me" on Google, and some may be searching for your agency specifically. If you're not fully there online, consumers might choose someone else who is, and you may miss out on a customer!

If you don't claim and update your listing, Google and other people may try to manage your listing for you. This could lead to incorrect or inaccurate information about your agency, possibly confusing potential customers. In this way, maintaining your Google listing isn't just about marketing — it's about customer service! It could be one's first impression of your agency; if done well, it communicates to customers that you truly care about their insurance journey, every step of the way.

[1]Moz: https://moz.com/the-state-of-local-seo-industry-report-2020
[2]Google Trends: https://bit.ly/34rmplh

Here's a step-by-step walkthrough on how to add, claim and update your agency's Google business listing:

ADDING AND CLAIMING YOUR AGENCY'S GOOGLE BUSINESS LISTING

1. Visit *Google.com/business* and click **Mange now** or **Sign in**.

2. Click **Create account** on Google using your business email domain (if you don't have one).

3. Search for your business. If it doesn't appear in the search, click **Add your business to Google**.

4. Add your agency name and search for "Insurance agency" in the business category, then click **Next**.

5. Toggle **Yes** if you would like to add your agency's address, and then click **Next**.

6. Enter your agency's address and hit **Next**.

7. The next screen will ask if you provide deliveries or home and office visits. Toggle **No** and then click **Next**.

8. Enter your agency's phone number and website URL (if you have one), and then click **Next**.

9. Click **Finish**.
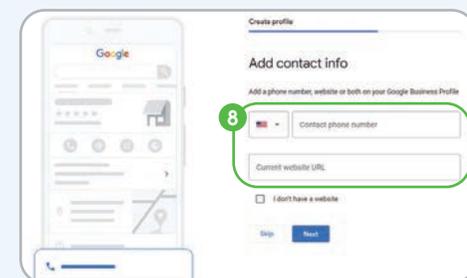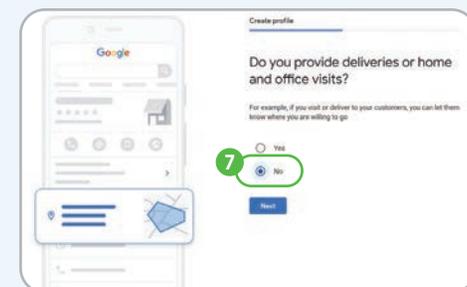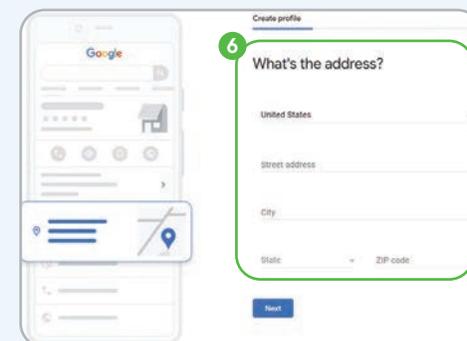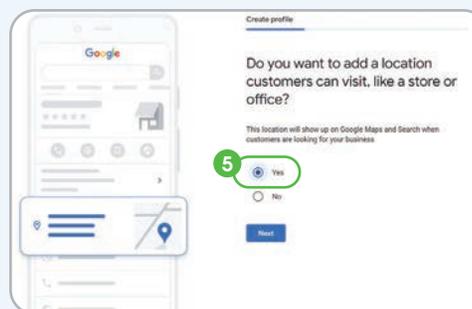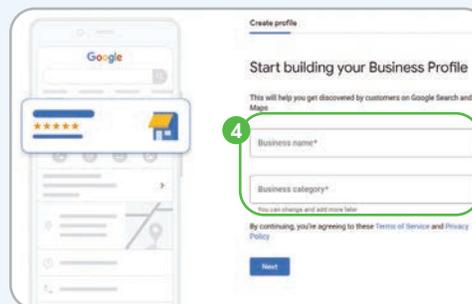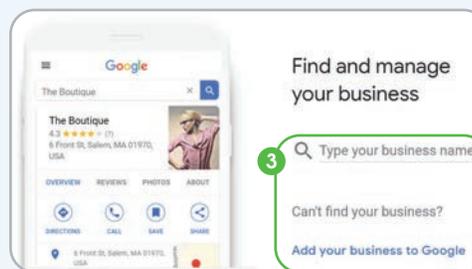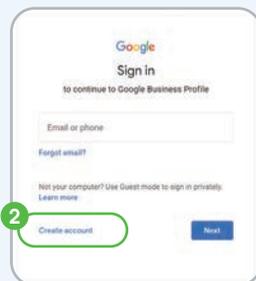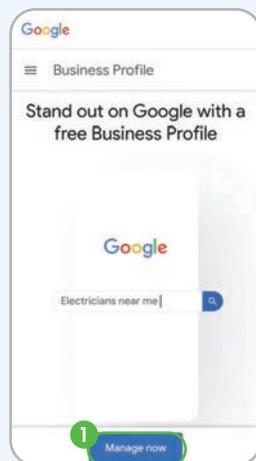
BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA:
SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (continued)

UPDATING YOUR AGENCY'S GOOGLE BUSINESS LISTING

1. Go to your **Google Business Profile** homepage, where you can view your Google performance, reviews and more.

2. To edit your information, click on the **Info** tab on the left.

3. Mark the days your agency is open and provide hours.

4. Double check your agency's name, address and phone number.

5. You can also write a brief description of your business.

After that, you're all set! There's a lot more you can do on Google's platform (like upload photos of your agency), so try using the different features to create a robust listing. Remember to check in often to keep everything up to date and to reply to reviews.

5 Ways to Improve Your SEO

Be Consistent | **Correct Technical Errors** | **Supply Valuable Content** | **Include Internal and External Links** | **Use Social Media**

Five Ways to Improve Your SEO

Improving your SEO doesn't necessarily mean spending a ton of money. It's as simple as correcting technical errors and providing correct information, valuable content and links. Spending more money to spruce it up can come into the picture (if you want) after these foundational points are correct.

[1] BE CONSISTENT

Here are a few common consistency errors to look out for:

Incorrect Information. Online business listings that feature your agency's NAP should all have the exact same information. Whether it's a change in phone number, address or other data within a listing, mixed information confuses search engines. This can lead to your agency being ranked lower than businesses who have consistent information. Plus, customers may find the incorrect listing and contact the wrong number.

Duplicate Business Listings on the Same Directory. When duplicate listings are present within the same directory, search engines don't know which of the listings to trust or rank. Users experience a similar confusion when they don't know which information is correct or where to leave their reviews.

Unclaimed or Unfinished Listings. To ensure that search engines have the most accurate information, be sure to add or claim your listings, and complete every field available. If you've already added or claimed your listings, make sure you update the information as needed.

[2] CORRECT TECHNICAL ERRORS

Correct all technical errors on your website. If you're feeling ambitious, go to *Search. Google.com/search-console/welcome*. Enter your website URL into the Google Search Console, and Google will analyze your website and provide information on opportunities for improvement.

Here are a few examples to look out for:

Broken Links. If you have links that aren't directing to the intended destinations, correct them right away. Imagine a customer clicking on a link that won't work, so they get frustrated and leave instead. You definitely want to avoid that!

Typos and Incorrect Information. Before publishing anything new to your website, be sure to have everything thoroughly reviewed. If you can avoid typographical errors and incorrect information on your website ahead of time, it'll save you time in the long run.

File Errors. Review all photos, videos and other files (like PDFs) on your website. Make sure they're showing up, have alternative (alt) text, don't look too grainy or take a long time to load. If they don't look right or are loading incorrectly, try uploading a higher quality image, a smaller file or a different file type.

BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA:
SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (continued)

There are more advanced items to check on, but they often require the assistance of a professional. If you hire a vendor to help build your website or perform an SEO audit, here are some items to have them check:

- JavaScript
- XML Sitemaps
- Site Architecture
- URL Structure
- Structured Data
- Plugins
- Content Quality
- Duplicate Content
- Outdated Content
- Hreflang Tags
- Canonical Tags
- 404 Pages
- 301 Redirects
- Robots.txt Files

[3] SUPPLY VALUABLE CONTENT

Concise Writing. Providing valuable content means customers should be able to find nearly everything they're looking for on your website. And the site should be easy to navigate, so label each tab with clear text (such as, "Claims," "Pay Bill" or "Get a Quote" instead of just "Click Here").

Agency Blog. You can also create a blog section on your website with articles relating to your products or other general topics (as we mentioned in the Creating Content section). If this is something you're interested in, consider publishing an article at least once every three months. Blog articles are easy to share on social media and via email, and they may bring more visitors to your website. Check out *Foremost.com/Learning-Center/* for inspiration!

Keywords. Consider brainstorming a list of keywords that customers might search to find you online. Examples could be "Mobile Home Insurance" or "Insurance Agent in Grand Rapids, MI." Try naturally implementing these keywords throughout your website. Consider experimenting with tools like Answer the Public, Yoast Suggest or Google Trends™ to get a better understanding of what your customers are searching online.

[4] INCLUDE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LINKS

The more links you have on your website, both internal and external, the better your SEO. When it comes to links, the more the merrier – as long as they're relevant!

Internal links are links on your website that direct you to other places within your website. For example, on your website homepage, you could have a section that says, "File a Claim," with a link that takes users to your "Claims" page.

[File a Claim]

External links are links that take you to different websites. Examples of external links are links to your social media pages (which you should definitely include), blog or the websites of insurance carriers or accounts you work with (like *Foremost.com*).

[5] USE SOCIAL MEDIA

SEO is also associated with your social media – so keep your NAP the same on these platforms too! How can you utilize your social media pages to improve your SEO? We suggest:

Posting Frequently. To make your social media accounts more authoritative, stay active. We recommend posting about topics your customers will find relevant, interesting and informative.

Foremost Insurance Group
Just now · 🌐

Looking for home insurance? We can help! Get a quote and connect with us at www.foremost.com/products/home/

INSURE YOUR HOME WITH FOREMOST®

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↗ Share
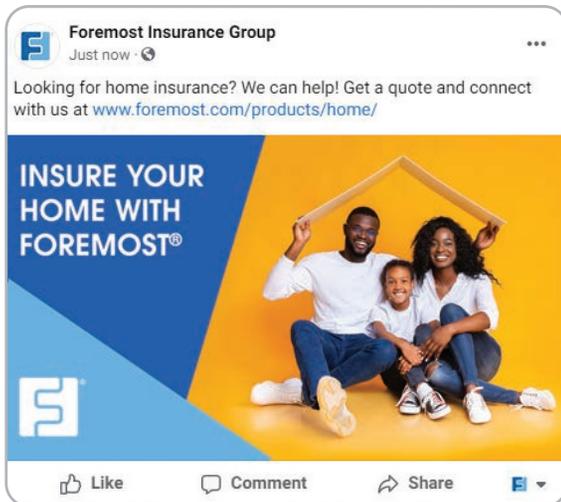
Links to Website. When you post, you should also link to your website. You can say things like, "Looking for home insurance? We can help! Get a quote and connect with us at [Insert URL]." This will act as an external link which can get more people visiting your site.

One Social Account Per Platform. Lastly, if you have duplicate social media accounts – like two Facebook pages for your agency, one that's active and another that's inactive – delete the inactive accounts. It's important to have one page on each platform. And if you only have a personal Facebook page, we highly recommend creating a Business Facebook page for your agency. This will make things less confusing for SEO algorithms and people who are hoping to connect with your agency!
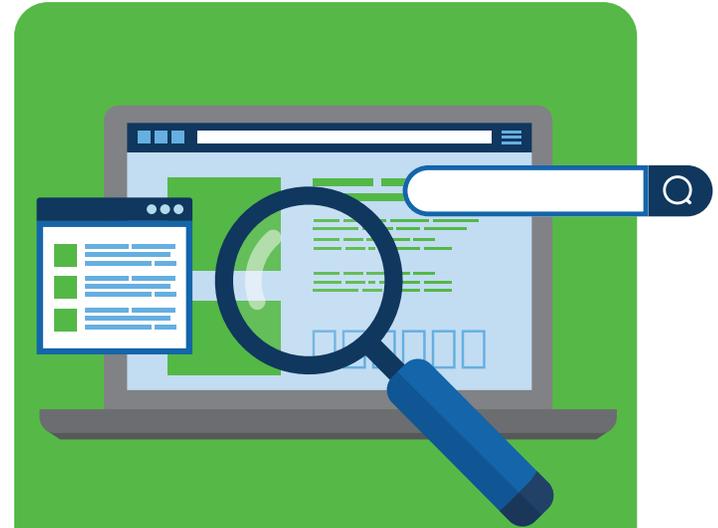
Other Digital Marketing Resources

To learn more about improving your web presence and leveraging the power of search engines to help bring in new customers, check out the digital marketing job aids in the Social Media Suitcase. We recommend reading **"Adding, Claiming and Updating Your Agency's Yelp® Listing"** and **"What to Know about Creating a Google Ad Campaign."**

If you want to make major changes to your website or would like additional support, consider contacting BrightFire® at *BrightFire.com*. They specialize in website design and digital marketing – and they focus on assisting insurance agencies specifically!

DIGITAL MARKETING: THE ONGOING JOURNEY

Social media marketing is a moving target. It's always changing and evolving. To excel with digital marketing, you'll have to make adjustments and embrace new ideas. It's an ongoing journey, and it may be challenging sometimes, but it's worth it when you make real connections with others.

We've packed the Social Media Carry-On full of helpful resources to help you along the way. Here are some final takeaways for the road ahead:

FOCUS ON YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY

Your community and local consumers are your North Star. Social media tools and trends change, but as long as you're focused on creating a space for your community to connect with you, you will be on the right track.

FIND YOUR RHYTHM

Managing social media and other digital marketing channels looks a little different for everyone. Your mission, vision, target audience and brand voice are unique. Find a way forward that works for you and stay consistent as you pursue your goals.

EXPERIMENT AND EVALUATE

While you keep your rhythm, make space for creative ideas. Try new things to see what inspires you and resonates with customers. When you find something that works, fold it into your strategy.

BE A LIFELONG LEARNER

The digital landscape changes quickly, so prioritize learning new things and stay up to date with new trends and tools from Foremost. Be adaptable and adjust as you go.
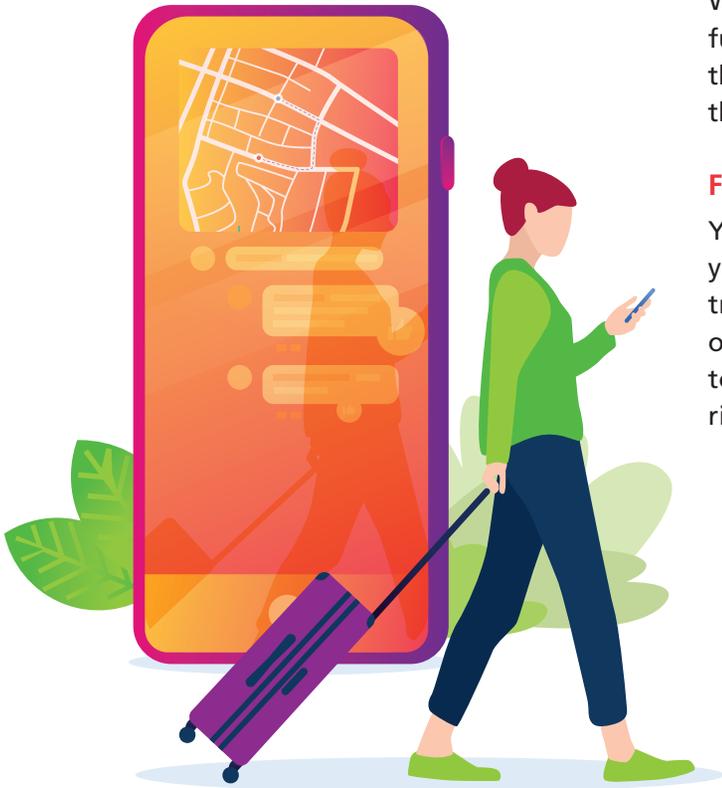
Look to Foremost for Support

We're here to deliver **A Better Insurance Experience** – and that includes helping to make digital marketing easier and more effective for you. We're with you on this journey. Together, let's reach new heights!

Follow us on social media for inspiration, updates and excellent content you can share with customers.

Facebook
Foremost Insurance | *Facebook.com/ForemostInsurance*
The Foremost Insurance Guy | *Facebook.com/TheForemostInsuranceGuy*

Instagram
@ForemostInsurance | *Instagram.com/ForemostInsurance*

Twitter
@Foremost | *Twitter.com/Foremost*

YouTube
Foremost Insurance | *YouTube.com/ForemostInsurance*

LinkedIn
Foremost Insurance | *LinkedIn.com/company/foremost-insurance*

Find helpful articles to share by visiting the **Foremost Learning Center**: *Foremost.com/Learning-Center*

Explore the **Social Media Suitcase** for more excellent, completely free resources: *SocialMediaSuitcase.com*

And finally, reach out to your Foremost marketing representative whenever you have questions.
You can find them at *ForemostAgent.com/Contact*

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