



SOCIAL MEDIA

BEST PRACTICES

In just the same way—every business is different—and what’s good for the goose isn’t always good for the gander. As you can easily imagine, the social media best practices for schools will be vastly different for those of high-end lawyers, or nightclubs, or landscape gardeners.

There are, however, plenty of crossovers. In this guide, we’re going to try and introduce as many insights as possible, providing social media best practice examples that work right across the board.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GIVE YOURSELF THE BEST CHANCES OF SUCCESS

1. HAVE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES





This is a big one and one that so many fail to appreciate. The goal isn't to be 'on social media'. Your goal is to get something out of being on social media. Is it to drive new sales? To create awareness? To launch a product into the public eye?

Know what you want to achieve and work out how you're going to get it. That means setting specific targets and consistently monitoring your performance.

2. PLAN A SCHEDULE

Keeping a social media diary is essential to your success. Meticulous planning will make sure you meet schedules and deadlines, structure your discipline, and keep all team members connected.

You'll also be able to create strategies you may have overlooked for specific seasons, and avoid any last-minute rushes.

				
Profile photo:	320 x 320	170 x 170	400 x 400	400 x 400
Landscape:	1080 x 566	1200 x 630	1024 x 512	1200 x 627
Portrait:	1080 x 1350	630 x 1200	N/A	627 x 1200
Square:	1080 x 1080	1200 x 1200	N/A	N/A
Stories:	1080 x 1920	1080 x 1920	1080 x 1920	1080 x 1920
Cover photo:	N/A	851 x 315	1500 x 1500	1128 x 191

3. STICK TO EACH NETWORK'S GUIDELINES FOR IMAGE SIZES AND SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEO BEST PRACTICES

Your designer will already know what a nightmare this one is. Each network has specific sizes to stick to, including safe areas and parts of images that disappear, or are covered, when displayed on different platforms.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. To make the most of your post, make sure to stay within the rules for both images and video.

4. BE SPECIFIC TO EACH NETWORK

Each network is very different, so be sure to have a different strategy for each one. Various networks are each suited to different types of content and how you approach them.

5. IS THERE A PREFERRED NETWORK FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

In some instances, it's far better to excel on one platform than to be an average Joe over them all. Only testing and real data will show where you perform the best and achieve the most from each strategy.

There's a world of difference between Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest—make sure you know which will manifest the results you want.

6. KNOW YOUR BRAND VOICE AND USE IT

When it comes to best practices for social media writing, your customers should already have a feel for your brand voice, values, and tone. Ideally, your brand voice should be in line with who your audience is and their vocabulary.

Compare selling children's toys to life assurance, and you'll find very different tones and messages. Be sure you know how to speak to your customers and leads to get the best from them.

7. BE GRACEFUL AND POLITE WHEN THINGS DON'T GO TO PLAN

Here's one of our favourite social media customer service best practices. At some point, you're going to experience negative reactions and responses. But don't despair! You can turn this to your advantage by resolving those situations with professionalism and politeness.

Both your disgruntled customer and the rest of your audience will get a first-hand experience of how helpful and understanding you are when things go wrong. Keep a cool head, and you'll come up smelling of roses every time.

8. RESEARCH YOUR BEST POST TIMES

Each network is very different, so be sure to have a different strategy for each one. Various networks are each suited to different types of content and how you approach them.

There are tools available to show you the most popular times to post, ideally, when the majority of your followers are online. Are there studies you can look into to find out ideal posting times for your industry? Depending on whether your product relates to business or pleasure can make the difference in when your ideal customer is online.

9. DETERMINE AN IDEAL FREQUENCY FOR POSTING

How often do you think your followers want to hear from you? Posting too much can annoy customers and drive them away; posting too little can lose you interest and momentum. Finding the right balance, along with the preferred type of content, is essential.

Even on the platforms that demand regular posting (Twitter, for example), make sure to deliver quality over quantity. Try imagining that someone else delivered your latest post—would you approve or reject it?

10. AUTOMATE TASKS WHEREVER YOU CAN

Batch-creating posts is a great way to save time—scheduling their delivery is even better. Automating the numerous deliveries of a complete campaign allows you the freedom to forget about it for a while, and engage in the next important task—until it's time to check and analyze the results, of course.

11. MIX UP YOUR MESSAGES

Followers soon get bored with constant product plugs and promotions that don't appeal to them. Determine the things you can talk about that create interest for them and create a schedule that mixes between them to keep content fresh and compelling.

12. BIN THE BAD LANGUAGE

Unless it really is part of your brand strategy, ditch any level of unprofessionalism; that means slang, swearing, and aggressive or judgemental talk. Put yourself in your customers' shoes before you deliver anything even the slightest bit edgy, that you think might be 'cool'. There's a good chance they won't, and that's a lead lost that you could have cultivated.

13. MONITOR YOUR COMPETITORS

It might seem underhanded, but businesses succeed and fail on the strength of being able to adapt to the best trends and practices of their competitors.

It could be worth setting up an extra account just to watch what everyone else is doing; noting who stands out, who's getting the most engagement, and what for.

14. CLAIM YOUR USERNAME ON EVERY NETWORK

This is two-fold. First, even if you're not active on a particular network, that doesn't mean you won't be one day, and if someone else has your username, you've broken your continuity. Second, you can prevent anyone else piggybacking your brand successes.

15. RESPOND TO THOSE WHO WANT TO ENGAGE WITH YOU

It's called 'social' for a reason. People want to be noticed and feel recognized. Wherever you can—and wherever it's relevant—reply to your followers. In doing so, you could be cultivating a sales lead (but don't be pushy!). Alternatively, you could use the opportunity to find out what they really want from you and if that can help your business model moving forward.

16. TRACK YOUR DATA

Don't just assume that your posts are doing their job. You should have set out objectives and goals, so follow your data trail to see if it's working. Are you getting conversions from Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter? Are followers getting involved but not buying from you? Data is your best friend in every marketing strategy.

17. COULD A SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEST OR GIVEAWAY BE GOOD FOR YOU?

People love free stuff. Big prizes, small prizes—it doesn't matter.

If you're going to invest your time and money into either of these promotional techniques, make sure you get the highest return from your efforts.

To gain followers or customers, choose a prize in line with your typical products or services. That way, you already know they want what you have.

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18. BE CAREFUL WITH YOUR HASHTAGS

There have been some real horror stories with hashtags that, when combining words without the spaces between them, offer an entirely different message. Until such a misnomer is pointed out to you, you might never see it, but it's all everyone else will see on their first view.

There are also plenty of pre-existing campaigns with specific hashtags that you will never have heard of. Be sure you're not associating yourself or your business to a cause that isn't in line with your views and values.

19. KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON WHO YOU LET LOOSE WITH YOUR ACCOUNTS

There are plenty of disaster cases where ex-employees have used the business social media account for revenge and make a very public point when they've been unhappy.

If you sense a disaster looming, restrict that access immediately with a change of password.

20. OPTIMISE, OPTIMISE, OPTIMISE

Every social media profile allows you to fuel your potential customers with information. Make sure your information is accurate, up-to-date, and bursting with details and options.

It goes without saying—you should have every possible point of contact available. Further still, you should provide links to each area of your website where engagement could happen, or make sales.

WRAPPING THINGS UP

We've barely skimmed the surface of what's involved in running successful social media accounts here. Social media offers massive opportunities to drive success, as well as being a minefield for potential disasters.