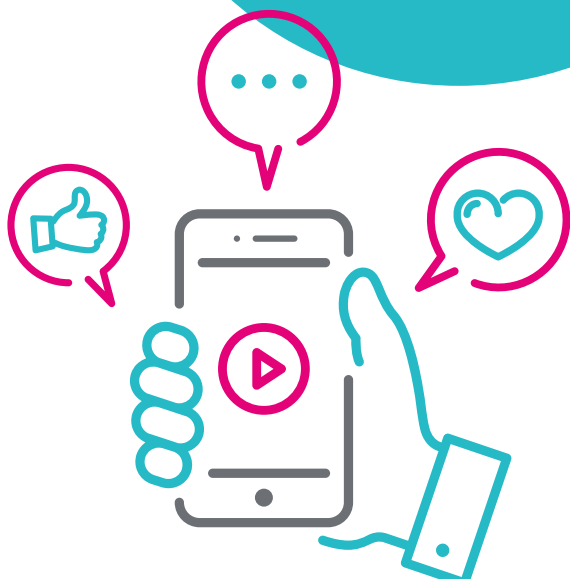# The 12 golden rules of social media

With around a third of the world's population using social media, there's no doubt that it's here to stay.

No longer 'just' Facebook, social media now comes in many forms including blogs, forums, business networks, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming, microblogs, chat apps and social networks.

Get it right, and it can be a powerful tool for your business.

You can grow communities, raise your profile and awareness, reach new audiences and even generate sales.

The following Golden Rules of social media will show you how to get the best out of social media and use it effectively.

#TIP 1

Pick 1-2 Social Media channels to focus on

It's easy to feel like you need to belong to every social media channel. The truth is, it's better to be excellent with a couple. Too many, and you spread yourself too thinly and dilute the impact of your efforts as a result.

There are three questions you need to ask to determine your core channels:

Q1 What do I want to achieve with social media? If it's brand awareness, pick channels with high followings and reach. If it's sales, then Facebook is a good place to start.

Q2 What is our target audience and where are they spending their time? Go there.

**Q3** What channels are our competitors using? Be there.

Here's a handy little table of the main social media channels out there.

CHANNEL	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF UK USERS	BEST FOR
Facebook	The 'social home' for most brands and a place to post images, videos, comment and participate in Facebook Groups.	39 million	Advertising to targeted audiences, video and creating communities around shared interests.
Instagram	Social network made for sharing photos & short videos and where users can follow brands and people of interest from all over the world.	16.7 million	Image first posts & stories. Great for targeting 16 - 34 year olds especially.
Twitter	A micro-blogging site where users can post short 'tweets'.	12.6 million	Live news, trending topics, interacting with journalists & influencers.
Pinterest	A place where people go to research, discover new ideas or find inspiration.	5.2 million	Categories such as fashion, homewares, wedding, DIY, cooking and other product-based retailers.
LinkedIn	A professional social network where users can message or post.	20 million	Thought leadership, sharing opinions and recruiting talent.
YouTube	Video sharing network where any user can upload videos of a certain length.	37.1 million	Videos that have some entertainment or educational value.

#TIP 2
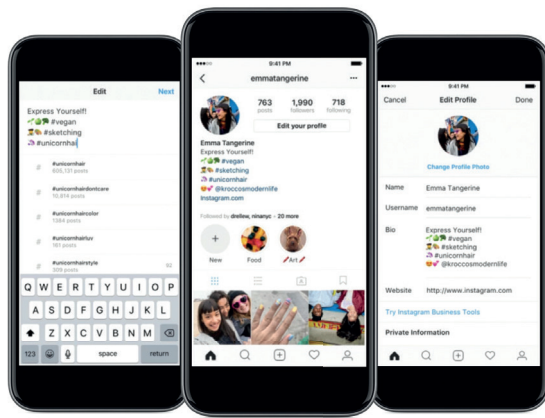
Polish up those Social Media profiles

Having a clear and consistent social media profile across all channels is important for customers to recognise you and to be found more easily.

Consider:

Your name: enter the name you want to be found under. Make it as easy as possible.

Your username: this should be as closely linked to your name as possible. Think about how people will search for you.

Your profile pic: if you're a brand, use a recognised logo. Use this across all your social media profiles. Name it with your brand when you upload it to be found in Google more easily e.g. {yourbrandname}.jpg

Your link: add your website link to your profiles so people can click quickly to your website.

Your bio: this is a sentence or two about your business; the elevator pitch. Use the suggested hashtags feature in Instagram to increase your exposure. Make sure to include the location and customer service hours on Instagram and fill out all these fields on Facebook & Twitter.

Your background or cover photo: choose something that fits the right specifications and that is consistent across all channels.

#TIP 3

Use correct image sizes for each channel to look professional

Each social media channel has different image sizes for profile pics, cover photos, the photos you post and the copy you write. To avoid image stretching or strange image cropping, use these image guidelines:

CHANNEL	PROFILE PHOTO	COVER/HEADER PHOTO SIZE	POST IMAGE SIZE	ADVERTISING SPECS
Facebook	170x170px	Page cover: 1200x675px Facebook Group Cover: 1640x 859px Event Cover: 1200x675px	1000x1000px	Recommended image dimensions are 1000x1000px Recommended image formats are JPG and PNG. Images with 20% text or more could increase chances of failed delivery.
Instagram	400x400px	1500x1500px	1200x675px	
Twitter	110x110px minimum		Minimum 1080 width for best quality	
Pinterest	400x400px	Board cover: 600x60px	1200x630px Minimum 1080 width for best quality Rectangular (optimal) 600x900px	

#TIP 4

Invest in imagery to improve engagement

You don't need to spend thousands of pounds on photos and videos however, good quality imagery is important to catch your audience's eye as they scroll down their feed.

Do:

- Avoid overly staged or clichéd images
- Try to get a consistent 'feel' of your imagery so that users identify that it's you straight away
- Use stock imagery sites to source photos if you don't have any
- Make use of the interactive editing features such as text overlays, stickers and polls
- Use images in as many of your posts as possible


#TIP 5

Share other people's content to grow your own following

The good news is, there is loads of social media content out there you can 'borrow' and re-post on your own feeds to grow your own following. When you re-post, be sure to add your own take on it, add your own comment, question or opinion rather than just re-posting and re-sharing for the sake of it.

The rule of thumb is: for every one bit of original content you make, you should borrow and re-post four pieces of content from other sources. Be sure to credit them and tag them in your post though, and make sure it's relevant to what you want to talk about. Not only will you grow your own following but you'll also reach new audiences if you tag your sources with an '@' correctly.

A few places to start:

- Daily Viral Stories on Facebook
- Set up Google Alerts to let you know when relevant news in your industry pops up
- Blog posts from others
- Customer content (e.g. customer photos or testimonials)
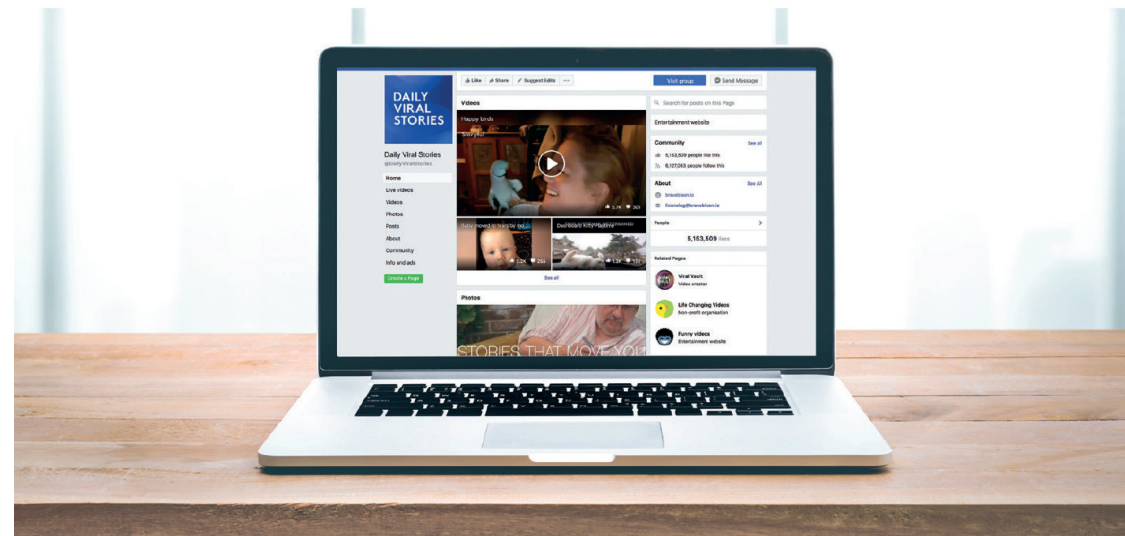
#TIP 6

Post at optimal times on each social media channel

Timing matters in social media. Each social media channel has different times when your content has a better chance of being seen.
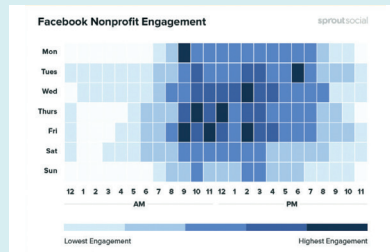
ON FACEBOOK

Best Times
• The best times to post on are Wednesday and Friday at 2pm

• But any time from 9am to 4pm on weekdays should work well

High engagement times
• Other notably high engagement times include Monday at 9am, Tuesday at 6pm, Thursday at 10am and noon and Friday at 9 and 11am

Least amount of engagement
• Sunday has the least amount of engagement for non-profits on Facebook

• Weekends and Mondays see less engagement for non-profits on Facebook

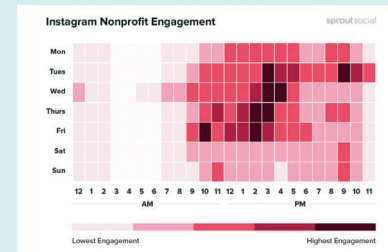Facebook Nonprofit Engagement

ON INSTAGRAM

Best Times
• The best times to post on are Wednesday and Friday at 2pm

• But any time from 9am to 4pm on weekdays should work well

High engagement times
• Other notably high engagement times include Monday at 9am, Tuesday at 6pm, Thursday at 10am and noon and Friday at 9 and 11am

Least amount of engagement
• Sunday has the least amount of engagement for non-profits on Facebook

• Weekends and Mondays see less engagement in the week for non-profits on Facebook

Instagram Nonprofit Engagement

ON TWITTER

Best Times
• The best times to post on Twitter for non-profits are Thursday at noon and Friday 11am to noon

• But any time from 10am to 4pm on weekdays should work well

High engagement times
• Other notably high engagement times include 10am to 2pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

Least amount of engagement
• Sunday has the least amount of engagement for non-profits on Twitter


Twitter Nonprofit Engagement
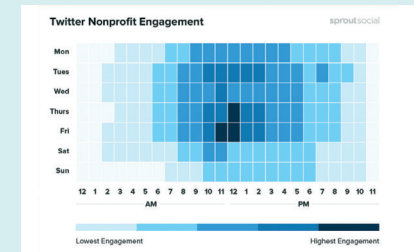
#TIP 7

Be creative with the types of social media content you create

Writers block? Struggling to come up with ideas about what to post? Pick from our list of creative ideas for good social media content as a starting point. Don't forget to add your own twist to these!

- Turn a blog post into a video
- Behind-the-scenes
- Create a how-to video
- Do a live video
- Interview someone (live)
- Attach a gif
- Use user-generated content
- Share a useful infographic
- Post an interesting chart
- Post a photo and story (people love stories!)

- Organise a competition
- Pull an interesting stat from a blog post
- Ask a question or run a poll to get opinions
- Share or re-tweet your followers' posts
- Pull a meaningful quote from Pinterest
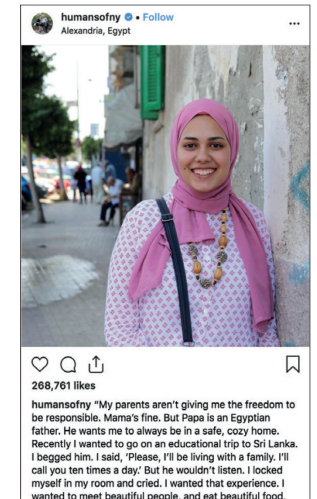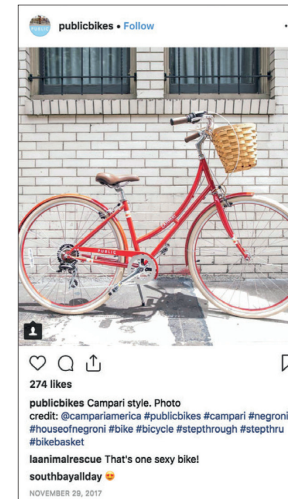
#TIP 8

Write compelling captions through storytelling

Writing captions can be hard. There's pressure to make it profound, witty, deep and interesting that sometimes we get stuck.

Your copy needs to be the handshake, the invitation, the "hello"... not the sales pitch. It needs to inspire action – a click, a like, a view.

The good news is, there's no hard-or-fast rule on how much copy to write. Some posts are better short, some are better long.

The key is, your captions need to be about telling stories. Give the viewer something to feel more connected to and care about.

Tell them why you're doing this, give them more background about the people involved, share something interesting that happened.

#TIP 9

Include a call to action or engagement booster in your posts

Every post should encourage an action of some sort — whether that's a comment, a like, a share, a view, a click, a tag.

There are a couple of tactics you can use to get people doing something: an engagement booster or a call to action.

An engagement booster is designed to get your audience interacting with your content. Since engagement is the name of the game, ASK your audience to get involved. It can even be as simple as asking your audience questions.

For example:
"Double tap if…" (Instagram only)
"Tag someone who needs to hear this story"
"Share something you've done for your community lately"
"What is something happening in your community you want to tell us about"
"Tell me what cause you're most passionate about"

Alternatively, use a call to action. They can be small or big asks but having a call to action is what leads to action.

For example:
"Head to the link in my profile to see more/sign up/join"
"Head over to @_____ to check out what they've been up to recently"
"Click the link to join in and help your community"
"Tag yourself below to enter yourself in the competition"

A good question to ask before you post is: would people care and would they share?

#TIP 10

Make use of hashtags

Hashtags allow you to categorise and label your images and posts so that they will show up in basic searches. They enable you to connect with content that falls under those categories and seek out other users sharing content aligned with that topic.

They are most commonly used on Instagram and Twitter (and sparingly on Facebook).

Think of Instagram and Twitter as huge filing cabinets and a hashtag is a file folder.

When you tag it with #_____, you're filing that post into that category.

On Instagram, you can use up to 30 hashtags in your posts. On Twitter, you only have 280 characters so use no more than two hashtags.

Instagram posts with 11 or more hashtags get the highest engagement.

How do you know what hashtags to use?

On Instagram, when you start typing a hashtag, you'll be given a list of other suggested hashtags you can use. You can also research your competitors and see what hashtags they are using in their posts or use certain free tools to get suggestions. Make sure you use different hashtags

on all your Instagram posts otherwise Instagram will see it as spam.

On Twitter, use the search functionality to search for keywords and see what hashtags are being used or check out the Twitter trending topics daily and get involved.
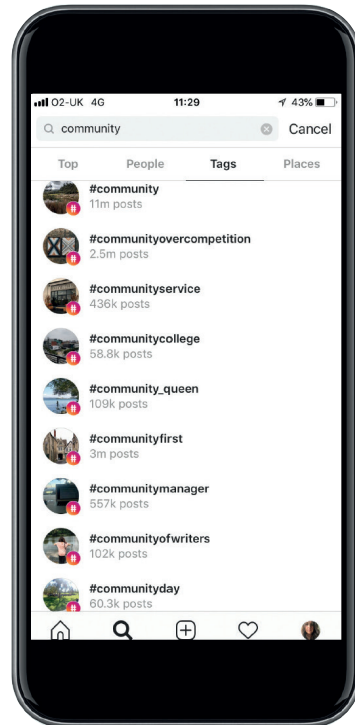
#TIP 11

Tag brands and customers using the @ to increase exposure

17Using an @____ in your posts allows you to tag a user in that channel and get their attention. That user then gets notified that you've tagged them and act accordingly.

It's a great way to get attention and get access to new audiences. They should be used whenever:

- You are answering a customer service query
- You are saying 'thanks' to people or businesses who have helped
- You want to credit someone for their input or work
- You want to let someone know of something that might be of interest to them

#TIP 12

Put money behind your social media posts to get Them seen

There's a lot of competition in the news feeds these days. All social media platforms use a fancy algorithm to determine what we see, and who from. Less than 2% of social media posts on Facebook are seen by your audience without some form of paid advertising.

Putting money behind some of your posts via the Facebook Ads Manager is a really useful way of guaranteeing that your target audience sees your post. You can start from as little as £10 per day per post!

You can advertise on Facebook & Instagram through the Facebook Ads Manager tool, on Twitter on Twitter Ads, on Pinterest via Pinterest Business and on LinkedIn via LinkedIn campaign manager.

You can narrow down your audiences and target people by:

- Interests – people specifically interested in a subject related to your brand
- Location
- Behaviour-based targeting – allows you to target people by purchase history, engagements on your posts etc
- Job title / Company Size
- Twitter profiles

And much, much more!

Useful tools

Learn how to use Facebook Advertising
facebook.com/blueprint

Create social media posts easily
canva.com

Get free images for social media
unsplash.com
pexels.com

Automatic check spelling & grammar
grammarly.com

Automatic post scheduling
buffer.com
planoly.com

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