

Social Media Field Guide

for businesses & nonprofits

The world is on social media. But how do you leverage social media to engage people on behalf of your business or organization? Have no fear – this fun, colorful guide will help you determine the best platforms and practices for you.

Let's get started!



What counts as **social media**?

TechTarget.com defines **social media** as: “websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration”.

Simply put, **social media** is any digital platform that facilitates some sort of public communication.

Wow, **that seems like a big category.**

You’ve got that right. But it isn’t as daunting as it seems. No doubt you already know some of the big names in social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter spring to mind.

Each of these three platforms boast millions of users from a variety of different demographics, making them ideal tools for anyone trying to get a message out.

Or does it?



Cut to the chase. **Which are the best?**

There's not a quick, catch-all answer to that question. It all depends on what kind of message you're trying to communicate and who you're trying to talk to.

A funeral home probably wouldn't hire a sign spinner to advertise their embalming services on a sidewalk corner. You probably also won't find an ad for an old-fashioned barbeque restaurant in a magazine for vegans. Social media platforms are just like any other communication or marketing platform – they're targeted to different people with varied preferences and interests.

How to choose a social media platform:

- **Think about your audience(s)** – Who are you trying to reach? Whose attention do you want to attract?
- **Write your message** – Once you know who you want to talk to, decide what you want to say.



Got it. **Let's pick our platforms.**

Let's do it. With your audience and message in mind, we'll look at some of the major social media platforms and decide which ones are the best fit for your needs.

Facebook

One of the most widely-used social media platforms, Facebook boasts a huge array of features and tools for businesses and organizations. Here are some of its most useful features:

- Accommodates images, text, and video content.
- Users are from many different demographics.
- Facebook Live allows live video streaming.
- Collect client reviews on your Facebook page.
- Facebook Messenger (Facebook's direct messaging function) is great for managing client communications.
- Following other users in related fields is great for networking.



Twitter

Best known for quippy posts (called “Tweets”), Twitter is also a hub of communication for many businesses and organizations trying to connect with their client bases, and vice-versa.

- A text-driven platform. Images and videos are still popular post components, but most content is written.
- Users are from many different demographics.
- The 280-character Tweet is great for sharing brief updates and news with followers. You can also create a “thread” by adding comments to your original Tweet for longer messages.
- Twitter Chat can be used to host topical webinar-style conversations.
- Hashtags are used to label content and make it searchable, helping people find you and also allowing you to join relevant conversations.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the go-to social media platform for professional networking in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. It also features a job search feature, meaning your LinkedIn profile may also attract future employees.

- Accommodates a wide variety of media. Videos and articles are especially popular post types. Share what's happening in your field, or highlight your work and expertise.
- The userbase is mostly comprised of working professionals (college age+)
- Use the follow and messaging functions to connect with potential partners and clients.

Instagram

Originally a platform for sharing photos, Instagram remains an image-heavy platform, popular for sharing pictures of the day-to-day and showcasing special events.



- Posts feature images and/or video clips and are captioned with “descriptions” that appear underneath the main visual content. The main focus is on the image/video content, not so much the text content.
- Instagram has a wide demographic, though it tends to skew a little younger than other platforms (25-40 year-olds).
- Hashtags are a useful tool for collaboration – similarly to Twitter, content can be labeled with relevant hashtags, and you can link to partner profiles by using mentions.
- Behind the scenes content is popular, along with photos from events, infographics, and tutorials.

TikTok

TikTok is a trendy platform for sharing short videos. Though this app is very popular, messages that are too serious or practical may not be a good fit.

- TikTok is popular with a younger demographic (16-30 year-olds).
- Good for fun and shows of personality.



Pinterest

Known as a haven for DIY enthusiasts, Pinterest is a platform that is comprised of links to many other websites. A “Pin” is comprised of a featured photo or video and a short description that links to a webpage with additional information.

- Pins are image-heavy. A pin’s primary purpose is to link to additional content such as blog posts, tutorials, articles, etc.
- Pinterest userbase has a wide variety of demographics and interests.
- Best used in tandem with other platforms that feature more robust content.



Bonus: Here are some best practices.

No matter what social media platforms you end up using, there are some techniques for producing content that are universally useful.

- **Be consistent in post frequency** — Posting consistently is more important than posting often. Try to adhere to a schedule, posting on the same day each week or month.
- **Diversify your content** — Creating different kinds of posts (updates, fun facts, tutorials, etc) keeps your content fresh and interesting for your audience.
- **Make sure your profiles are complete** — Fill out as much of your profile as you can, including your profile picture, bio, and links to your other social media accounts.
- **Engage and connect** — Respond to messages, ask questions, tag others, and make sure your content is inclusive and accessible.
- **Promote your channels** — Link to your social media profiles in your email signatures, website, and other social media accounts!



Awesome! **So what's next?**

Congrats! You've got the basics of social media.

With this new knowledge, you're ready to begin leveraging social media to spread awareness and foster engagement with your organization or business.

..Wait, is that really it?

Well, yes and no.

These are the basics – the building blocks of using social media. But of course there's always more to learn and do, like curating your content for different platforms and utilizing paid advertising.

If you're excited and want to go deeper, we'd love to dive in with you. Just send us a message to set up a free exploration meeting – let's get started!

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