

Video 1: Introduction - Content: The Backbone of your Social Strategy

Let's talk about content strategy for social media. Social media is nothing without the content that makes it interesting for its users. Content truly is the backbone for all of the other activities that make up your social media plan. And having great content can make all the difference when it comes to having the best reach and engagement for your brand, which helps you build more loyalty and drive more sales.

Nicole Votolato Montgomery, Associate Professor of Marketing at the McIntire School of Commerce, University of Virginia

"Marketers now have less than three seconds to grab attention. And the reason is because we are constantly scrolling through content. And so, consumers are making decisions in a matter of seconds whether or not they want to stay with a piece of content and engage or continue to scroll and move on to the next piece of content. So, it's our job as social media marketers to try to engage them and grab their attention so that we go from this to thumb stopping."

If you've been marketing for a while, chances are you have a content strategy in place already that includes things like your email newsletter, blog posts, your website, and downloadable content like ebooks.

Social content is different. It usually serves as the vehicle to get people to those longer pieces of content – or, to provide smaller, digestible bits of information that help expose your brand and your values to customers and prospects. The biggest difference between social content and traditional forms of content is that social content can be read and watched in the places and times that people choose.

There are three main reasons why people use social media: They want to be informed, entertained, and connected.

Social media helps people feel informed by helping them learn new things, stay up-to-date on topics that matter to them, and discover new ideas and trends. And although they are concerned about accuracy of news found online, two-thirds of Americans get their news from social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and others.

Social media helps people feel entertained by helping them find and keep up with entertainers, shows, and performances – and share and consume entertaining articles and videos. It's no wonder there's such an emphasis on video content on social: entertainment and video are key to keeping users engaged.

Social media helps people feel connected by removing many of typical barriers of communication and allowing people to contact anyone in their personal or professional networks whenever, and from wherever. Social media helps people share, comment, and take part in a global conversation that goes beyond just the people they're friends with.

It's up to you to determine which type of interaction your audience is looking for, and how you'll provide it to them through the content you create.

Video 2: Social Media Content: The Basics

At HubSpot Academy, we talk a lot about content - and about finding ways to give value to your audience on an ongoing basis through meaningful content. I'm sure you've heard the phrase that "content is king." But in the world of social media, there are really two main things that matter: the content, and how individuals on the network interact with that content.

There are a number of different types of content specific to social media, many of which can be used on a variety of channels. Let's break it all down.

Text used to be the mainstay of social media. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn were pretty text-heavy channels. But in recent years, they've shifted to becoming much more visual. In fact, [Cisco reports that globally, consumer Internet video traffic will make up 82% of consumer Internet traffic by 2022, up from 73% in 2017.](#) Think about that for a second, and think about how much video you're doing already.

Visual images include photos, infographics, animated GIFs, and illustrations. These days, you really only need a smartphone camera to take great photos. The possibilities are limitless. Product shots, office and team highlights, conference selfies, customer spotlights, and more. You can share more than a single photo in many cases. For example, on Facebook and Instagram, you can create galleries and use photo carousels. Twitter also allows for multiple photo uploads per post.

Animated GIFs can take you one step beyond standard images. They can also help you demonstrate complex concepts quickly and easily, as in this example from SAP in which they explain how AI will change the world.

Jacqueline Babb, Associate Professor and Chair of Marketing, Aurora University

"The upside of gifs is that they're visual content. They're highly shareable and searchable. NASA actually uses gifs on their website to show weather patterns, so there's definitely a time and a place for gifs, but if your users aren't using gifs and if you're using gifs just to get a click-through rate,

that's probably not the right reason to be using them. So be really intentional about using gifs to communicate a message and tell a story."

You can make animated GIFs in Photoshop or online at a variety of sites. Giphy.com is the most popular.

Video is the next big content bucket to consider. Did you know that marketers who use video grow revenue 49% faster than non-video users? Or that 59% of executives agree that if both text and video are available on the same topic, they are more likely to choose video?

Chad Rogers, Co-Founder and CRO, Lemonlight

"There is no better way to reach your customers, whether you have a service or a product, than video. You can speak to them in so many different ways. You can speak them directly to the camera like we're doing right now. You can educate them. You can entertain them. You can tell them stories. You can convey emotions like no other medium. Video is the only way to go."

Video can be used on every single social media site that I've mentioned. In short, you shouldn't ignore it. Live video is also becoming more common, and you can broadcast instantly from Instagram, Facebook, Periscope (which is owned by Twitter), YouTube, and a variety of channels such as Livestream. Video is not always cheap or easy to create, but you would be surprised at how often it is. Consumers appreciate brands being authentic on video, and sometimes that's easier with a smartphone camera than it is with an entire studio.

Ai Addyson-Zhang, Founder of Classroom Without Walls

"Live video is really, really important, and because we are doing businesses with other human beings, and live video really showcase the personality of a brand, and the best part of live video is live video gives our audiences lots of agency to co-create content with a brand. And the more time our consumers are spending with our brands, the more likely they are going to do the marketing for us. So you really want to leverage live-streaming to figure out a way to engage our audience, to give their voice, to share their stories, to even let them influence what we are doing, as our companies or organizations."

Short form video is popular these days with sites like TikTok, and the Twitter-owned clone of the once popular Vine app, called Byte. These sites allow for very short videos of 6-15 seconds. These videos tend to be entertaining and casual, full of lip sync videos and funny stunts.

That brings us to the next type of content, Stories.

In 2017 we saw the rise of **Stories**, which is a type of content that got its start with Snapchat and that Facebook copied for both its own Facebook platform and for Instagram. Essentially, stories are quick bits of content, both video and photo, often with fun filters and "stickers" that disappear

after 24 hours. They're less posed, more entertaining, more casual, and tend to be more conversational than other types of content found on those channels. And guess what? Viewers love them. 500 million people a day are viewing Stories on Facebook and Messenger, and 500 million more are viewing Stories on Instagram. Plus, Stories are a great way to reach more audience if you don't have a lot of followers. A study by SocialInsider found that brands with less than 10,000 Instagram followers succeed at reaching more than 9% of their followers with Stories.

Stories give brands the chance to share fast content that is often more economical to produce and delivers incredible brand awareness. When users view your story, they can choose to swipe up or down to "see more," which can then take them to an offer or your website, so it's a great way to drive traffic. Polls are also a fantastic way to drive engagement through Instagram Stories.

Now let's go over some other types of content that have the potential to help your business jump ahead of the pack.

First, there are **quizzes, surveys, and polls**. You can engage your audience directly in Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with polls. Check out this example from Evernote.

This helps you build brand awareness and more importantly, affinity. Plus, along the way you'll receive some valuable insights into your audience that can help you boost other marketing and product efforts.

B2C companies in particular have embraced real-time marketing. Real time marketing is developing content on the fly for local, national, or global events happening online or offline. Doing so helps your brand be part of larger consumer conversations, boosting both brand recognition and engagement. You'll sometimes also hear real-time marketing referred to as newsjacking, a term coined by marketing expert David Meerman Scott. Doing this kind of marketing requires a hyper focus on a specific event using social listening. You'll also need to be able to generate content quickly, like Oreo and their marketing agency did for the Superbowl in 2013 when the lights in the stadium went out. Or when HBO accidentally left a Starbucks cup in its popular Game of Thrones show and Starbucks tweeted a witty response.

In some cases, you can anticipate the content you need ahead of time and insert your voice into the conversation, such as sporting events, new television shows, holidays, or fun designated days such as National Friendship Day.

This brings us to two types of content that you actually don't generate yourself – **influencer content and user-generated content**.

We love celebrities and give them enormous power to sway our opinions. And when they share content, people listen. Influencers are individuals that have huge, highly influential audiences.

These influencers may have a global or national audience, such as a movie star or other celebrity. However, social influencers could be individuals who began as bloggers or content creators in a certain field or on a certain platform and built an audience around their amazing ideas and visual imagery to amass a huge following. More and more brands are finding that these types of content producers are more advantageous to work with than a celebrity – both from a cost and reach perspective.

There are a number of influencer companies that will help you book individuals to develop or share your material. You can also build relationships with budding influencers who are creating amazing content and can help you stand out among the crowd.

And finally, there's the holy grail of social media content: **user-generated content**, or UGC. What is it, and why is it so important? UGC is content such as blog posts, tweets, posts, videos, images, or reviews developed by a fan of your company or your products and shared on a social channel. It could be a video unboxing a product, a photo of a fan interacting with your company swag or designing other kinds of content to show their adoration for your products or the work you do. It's the best kind of social content for a reason. Stackla found that 79% of people say UGC highly impacts their purchasing decisions. They also determined consumers find UGC 9.8x more impactful than influencer content when making a purchasing decision. That means user-generated content might be more fruitful than shelling out thousands or millions to work with an influencer.

Here's a great example of UGC developed by the team at Interware in Mexico, sharing their excitement of completing a certification. We loved this photo and the enthusiasm of this team. But this photo does more than make us feel good – it shows others that these individuals appreciate and are excited about learning with HubSpot Academy. It's a strong endorsement for our brand, one that potentially carries far more weight than any advertisement we could devise on our own.

You can influence the creation of user-generated content by offering rewards, contests or giveaways, for example a photo or design contest. Or, create a quiz and have people share their results. And finally, you can get creative with **hashtags** too, like how Whole Foods encourages shoppers to share pictures of their carts with the hashtag #WholeFoodsHaul.

Hashtags are helpful for search, but they also enable the curation of specific types of content. You can create a branded hashtag to track a company effort or specific campaigns. If you've never created a hashtag before, it's simple, and you don't need any tools to create one. Simply put the pound sign (#) before the word or phrase. Don't use any punctuation, including spaces between words. For example, the HubSpot HR team uses the hashtag #HubSpotLife to showcase our fun culture.

Samarah Daher, VP Media Operations at Refinery29

"One of the great things about living today is basically all the barriers of entry to create great content have somewhat been eliminated. With Premier Rush on your phone, you can edit a whole video and post it on social. One of Refinery's top performing assets was an intern who wrote an inspirational quote on a post-it note and started taking photos on her phone with it in front of iconic landmarks in New York. So today, everyone really is a content creator, and the audience really appreciates the imperfections. So, you no longer have to think everything has to be perfect. Also, social media in a lot of ways, it's so ephemeral, that I always tell my team, "Progress over perfection". Just do something, put it out there, learn from it, and we can get it perfect in the future, but we'll know more by actually doing than just by thinking of doing."

As things continue to shift and change in the world of social media, there's bound to be new forms of emerging content. Don't be afraid to experiment with content types and different platforms, and also with the best times to share that content. There are a million studies that point to certain times being better for different types of content than others. The challenge with all those studies, however, is that the algorithms for social channels change regularly. What works well one week might not the next. A better bet is to dive deep into your social analytics to determine what content is really resonating and to do A/B testing to fine tune your process.

Now you know the basics to developing meaningful content for your social media audiences.

Video 3: Developing Your Strategic Social Content Plan

Let's talk about developing your strategic content plan for social media.

Adopting every social channel and publishing whatever content you feel like won't deliver business results. It's when you approach your social media content strategically that you'll see the most success.

Your success on social media depends on creating a sensible strategy for your content – one that fits well with your resources and your goals. This is especially important if you don't have a full-time team of social media experts at your disposal, because with fewer resources, you'll need to be even more strategic with what you publish and on which channels.

So, how do you develop a strong content strategy for social media that will bring success to your business? Let's go through a simple step-by-step process for developing a strategic content plan. The first step is to figure out what has worked well for you in the past. Which social media channels has your target audience engaged with the most? What types of content have performed best for views, click throughs, and comments?

Conduct a content audit of your social media channels to understand what your audience responds to best. In your content audit, look at:

- social networks,
- content types, and
- which social campaigns are seeing a return on investment?

To gather your data, you can either use a social analytics tool, like the ones we've listed here, which can aggregate all that data – definitely the easiest option. Or, you can manually pull the data from each channel's analytics tabs and compile it yourself.

Chad Rogers, Co-Founder and CRO, Lemonlight

"Brands should always be thinking about who their target market is, where they live, and how they're consuming that content. So, whether you're a B2B marketer or a B to C marketer, thinking about what platform is best for you. Secondly, how are they consuming that content? Are they consuming it on the go? Are they consuming it while they're leaning forward, taking a break from work? Or are they consuming it when they're laying back at the end of the day and they're consuming longer form content?"

To do your audit, use a spreadsheet to record how your content has performed so far, with a tab for each individual social media channel. Once you have your spreadsheet set up, go into each channel tab and record things like engagement metrics, publishing metrics, audience demographics, referral traffic, and any metrics that are channel-specific, like "retweets" on Twitter. Make sure you measure not just the raw numbers but also the percentage change from the previous month or year.

To get an even better picture of what types of content performs well, look through and identify the top-performing posts for each channel. You can even take this a step further by categorizing these top posts by post type: educational and informational posts, video posts, LIVE video posts, image and GIF posts, promotional posts, and entertainment posts.

That's right – really dig in at the post level to figure out which types of content you should add to your plan for each social channel. If your video posts got the most shares on Facebook, for example, then you may want to experiment with publishing more video posts. If your promotional posts get more clicks and shares on LinkedIn than they do other social channels, then you might think about scaling them back everywhere but LinkedIn. If your competitors are seeing success with live video and you haven't really tried live video yet, then you may want to test it out on different channels to see how your audience responds. Don't be afraid to play.

Emilie Lewis, Social Strategist and Bookseller, Belmont Books

"So, our bookstore has three different social media platforms that we're on, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. We try to keep the same brand identity across all of those. We are a bookstore, we're about books, we're about customers, we're about readers and authors, but we do have different audiences and so we try to cater to that. Our Facebook is mostly concentrated on letting people

know our upcoming events. That's where we can put the most information, you don't really have a word limit. It's not as visual though. So for Instagram we try to post beautiful images of the books. You don't want to judge a book by the cover, but sometimes we do, it is part of marketing. So that's a really good place for us to show off our store, and show off the different authors and customers who are coming through. For Twitter it's a pretty quick bite. We want to let people know upcoming events if something is happening off the cuff that we weren't expecting or to maybe respond to a publisher or to an author to get that interaction and keep our names out there. So we do try and keep a consistent image and at least a consistent identity across all of those, but we do understand that they take more time if you're doing a big visual presentation, whereas Twitter, it's easy obviously to just hop on and say, "Hey, this author's just dropped by the store to sign books. Come and grab a copy."

Knowing which types of content performs well on each channel will be key to understanding what you should be doing more of - and less of. If you're missing any of these post types in your strategy, like live video for example, then think about how you can experiment with it in the future.

Ai Addyson-Zhang, Founder of Classroom Without Walls

"I love video, and the video makes a huge difference in our social media marketing effort. I think the best way to connect with others is face-to-face communication, nothing can replace face-to-face. The second-best way is video. Video really shows our personality in the social media, in the marketing space, we all prefer to do business with human beings. We don't just connect with the logo, we connect with others as humans. So video is a great way to humanize who we are, to humanize our brand, to humanize our message, and that human connection and level up the emotion, and many of our purchase decisions are emotional decisions. So really use video to humanize what you do."

Alright, now that you've done a full audit of your social content and channels, I want you to think carefully about your goals and your buyer personas.

Start with your goals. What do you hope to get out of your social media efforts? Are you trying to grow your audience? Increase traffic to your blog or website? If you find that you don't have any specific goals yet for social, then the audit you perform will help you establish a benchmark for certain metrics so you that can develop new goals and work toward them.

Now, who are your buyer personas? How are they using each social network? What are they talking about? What are they interested in learning? Are you already engaging them in ways that resonate with them?

If you don't have your business goals and buyer personas in mind as you're developing content and social campaigns, then you probably aren't using social as effectively as you could be. So you're creating your plan to achieve those goals and connect with those buyer personas.

Next, do research on how your competitors are using social media. How many followers do they have compared to you on each channel? How is their content performing – from the metrics that you can see, at least? Which types of content are performing best for them? How are they engaging with their followers? By looking at your competition, you can get a sense of how you stack up and where you might have gaps that you'll need to close in your own strategy.

Building a sensible content strategy takes a lot of research and analysis of not only your social content but also your competitors' content. Once you've done this research and analysis, you can start to piece together a plan.

Next, consider your resources. Who's writing and designing content for social media right now? Do you have a team dedicated to social media who can create great copy, images, GIFs, and videos? Or are your resources kinda limited, and you'll have to rely on help from folks within your organization or a third-party agency? Who's going to actually press "publish" on these posts?

Samarah Daher, VP Media Operations at Refinery29

"At Refinery, when we're developing content, we try to develop more content that's evergreen and has a long shelf-life. We still address the news, but typically not in types of content that would require a lot of resources. Instagram stories are a feed asset that's just text onscreen is a really good place to lean into something that's super trending, because it's so quickly to just pull out and make on your phone. But content that requires a host and a studio and multiple cameras, we try to keep that content more in the evergreen space, so it has a long shelf-life. Even if it's something that is topical, like Thanksgiving content, or spring break content, we know we'll be able to use it every year if we invest resources into it to make it high production value."

Think about the size of your team. Your content plan will look different if you're a one- or two-person social media team than if you have a team of five or more people. If you feel like you're strapped for resources, then you might want to prioritize your top social channels over the others. Think back to your content audit and identify which channels have performed best for you in the past – and think about prioritizing those channels.

Finally, always be testing your content. But no matter how big or small your team is, testing and playing around with different messaging and content types is the only way to learn what really resonates with your audience. Make sure experimentation is ingrained in your strategic plan.

Nicole Votolato Montgomery, Associate Professor of Marketing at the McIntire School of Commerce, University of Virginia

"Some interesting things that brands can do to stay nimble are to experiment when new platforms come out. Brands like ESPN and the NBA and even The Washington Post are experimenting on new

platforms like LinkedIn. I also think using a multichannel approach can be very beneficial for helping brands to learn what works. Casper is actually doing this. Casper Mattresses, they've developed a Casper Sleep Channel using Spotify and YouTube and IGTV. So continuing to test and learn is crucial to brands staying nimble in this changing environment."

Now, once you have a really good idea of which social channels you want to prioritize and which types of content you want to post on each channel, it's time to build out a content calendar that you can use to prep content for the upcoming weeks and months. And when you actually go to create your content, make sure you're following your brand guidelines for content creation if you have them.

And finally, don't be afraid to get creative with your social media content. One of the biggest challenges people face in social media today is that they have trouble being heard above all the noise, and creativity can help you stand out.

Denny's, a popular American restaurant chain, is a great example of a brand that could have blended in on social media but chose to stand out as part of their social strategy. There are a lot of brands out there like Denny's that have figured out how to stand out and get creative in a way that really resonates with their audience.

Building a social media strategy for each channel takes a lot of time, research, and careful planning. But the more you can base your content plan on what's worked in the past, on your specific business goals and buyer personas, on competitive research, and on continual experimentation, the more your social media efforts will pay off.

Video 4: Using Tone and Voice on Social Media

Let's talk about tone and voice in your social media content.

Here's the honest truth: Humanizing your brand is no longer just an option; it's a necessity. Humanizing your brand is a competitive edge in a highly competitive online world. People like to buy from people - they like making connections, and they like to invest their time and money in people they can relate to.

That's why tone and voice in your messaging are so important: Having a distinct tone and voice that reflects your values can help you connect with your audience in ways that business jargon simply can't. It also sets you apart from other businesses and gets your content seen, clicked on, and engaged with.

In other words, tone and voice turn your business into a brand..

So, let's back up for a second. What exactly are tone and voice? They aren't quite the same thing. VOICE means the distinct and steady personality or style of your brand. For example, HubSpot Academy's voice can be described as helpful, knowledgeable, empathetic, and friendly. And that's always true, no matter what channel we're using to communicate, or what situation we're communicating about.

To get this voice across on social media, we create content that comes off like we're a knowledgeable and supportive friend. On this you can see an example of the HubSpot Academy Voice. We use positive and inclusive language that makes our followers feel comfortable and welcome, and we use clear language that reflects how human beings actually talk to one another. Essentially, HubSpot Academy creates content presenting us as a helpful, supportive friend.

TONE, on the other hand, is a SUBSET of voice. It refers to the moods and attitudes of specific content pieces, which can change depending on the channel, the situation, and the audience. So, while HubSpot Academy's voice is steady no matter what, our TONE can differ from post to post.

Figuring out what the right tone is for a given post will vary depending on your audience, your message, and its purpose. A social media post letting your followers know that your website is down will use a different tone than one announcing an exciting new product, for example. But the voice of these posts should remain consistent no matter what.

If your brand doesn't have an established voice and tone already, how do you develop them? Here are a few tips.

When developing your business's voice, you'll want to think about your brand personality. If your business was a person, how would they talk? Would they be open? Witty? Friendly? Authoritative? Passionate? Energetic? Edgy? There are a lot of different descriptions you can choose from such as these examples of voice. Choose a handful of personality words that describe your business best and reflect its values and record them in a place where others writing marketing messaging can find them easily.

When developing your business's TONE, context is key. For social media in particular, think about the different scenarios that might come up and what tone you'll use to respond to them. See these examples of JetBlue's Tone. What tone will you use when people compliment you? What tone will you use when responding to customer complaints?

Christine Scarlett, VP Marketing Communications, Cotiviti

"Social media for a B2B company versus a B2C company is different in my view. Because I think in a B2B, you don't have the opportunity to be as playful, to be as casual, to be as witty. It doesn't mean that you can't sometimes interject that into your posts, but as a B2B company we need to be a little

bit more formal. But still yet approachable. We need to be able to convey our expertise within the healthcare industry, within the data analytics space. In order to do that, we have to make sure that the audience engages, feels like their engaging in what we're saying. And because of that, I feel like we need to be a little bit more serious."

When you consider the tone of a social media post, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the purpose of this content?
- Who am I writing to?
- How do they feel?
- What do they want to understand?
- Therefore, what kind of tone should I use?

Put yourself in your audience's shoes, and think about what their background, goal, and current mood might be when coming across the post.

By using an established, consistent voice and tone throughout all your communications, including social media, you'll build trust with your customers because you'll feel familiar, reliable, and human.

Video 5: Developing Social Media Content

The idea of creating all the content that a social marketer needs can feel overwhelming. But it doesn't have to feel that way. Let's break down some of the things that you should consider when developing content for social.

The big thing that you'll want to do is to think about your overarching content strategy, which should be based on specific social media goals.

Content across the social channels should vary in a few different ways. Ideally, you'll want to optimize your content for each specific channel. To do that, it's helpful to think in terms of campaigns. That way, you're tying every post back to a bigger social goal, with the idea of developing similar, related assets to use on different channels, without posting identical posts on each channel.

As an example, Chiquita Banana did a multi-channel campaign for the 2017 eclipse. It included live video shared on Facebook, a multitude of videos shared on YouTube and across other channels, with fun graphical treatments of bananas as eclipses shared in .gifs and images.

Bruno Cardinali, Head of Marketing North America at Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen

"I think the type of content that we develop for different channels has everything to do with the audience in those channels. So if you remember the memes that really made and were viral a few months ago where people were posting. So how they present themselves on LinkedIn, on Tinder, on Facebook or on Instagram. That's basically the same approach that we take here. We just tailor the content to the platform that we are engaging because of the way people consume content in those platforms. So it's quite different the way people consume content on Instagram, than Twitter, than Facebook and other channels. So we are really careful to think about the medium, the media that we're using first before creating the content so whatever we create is most relevant and most applicable to that specific channel."

There are several different components to think about when you are developing content: hashtags, text, call-to-actions, and tagging.

Let's begin with hashtags. Did you know that LinchpinSEO found that Tweets with hashtags have 2 times more engagement than those without, and 55% more retweets? Hashtags are used across most platforms but you tend to see them most on Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. Hashtags are formed simply by using a word with the # symbol in front of them. They're used to help anyone who does a search on that hashtag to easily find related content. They're sometimes used ironically as well, and as a brand you can play with that.

One thing to keep in mind is that you shouldn't use too many hashtags. You can get away with more than two on an Instagram post but on other platforms, try to limit to two or three at best.

Emilie Lewis, Social Strategist and Bookseller, Belmont Books

"So hashtags for us matter most on Instagram, it is where you can put the most hashtags and that's the way that people find your posts. They can of course be following you, they can search for you, but it's going to be a brand new audience who's potentially searching for Boston or Massachusetts. If we've tagged ourselves in those, we will show up. So that kind of widens our opportunity for new audience members, for new followers. So we really do try to include a lot. There's also some consistent ones that we use as just part of our brand. We always have shop indie, shop local. We always tag our cafe if we're including businesses that are local and things to do in the Boston area. So for us it is really important. Of course on platforms like Twitter you are limited, Facebook it doesn't really have the same effect. In that case, it's probably more helpful to look at paid ads to get a bigger audience. For us it's just getting our name out there. Our bookstore is only a few years old. So especially for a young company, I think it's important to try and get as wide an audience as you possibly can and hashtags are really helpful with that."

Jumping on a hashtag bandwagon is a good thing when it comes to trending topics and holidays, but make sure you have content that is relevant. Hijacking an unrelated hashtag to promote your material is spammy. Instead, tie in a product with an event that makes sense. For example, let's say your business is a restaurant. If you know that #NationalPieDay day is trending, you can share content with your audience that highlights the type of pie you make at the restaurant. It's timely, interesting, and makes sense in the context of the hashtag as well as being relevant to your product.

Next, the text you include on your posts is important to consider. We have a few tips for using text in posts.

- Check and double-check for spelling.
- Make sure you are considering your brand's voice and tone.
- And think about the length of your text.
- On Twitter, with only 280 characters, you are forced to be brief but in general, across all the channels, the shorter your message is the better your chances of that content being seen and re-shared.

A call-to-action, or CTA, is one of the most important components of any piece of social content. True, there are times when you may not need one, particularly for awareness campaigns or on channels such as Instagram where links aren't allowed, but in general you should think about how you can make sure a call-to-action is included in your content. This could be a link to click through to a blog post, a coupon or asking your audience to respond in some way. Keep in mind that you need to make the benefit to your followers clear. For example, if you ask them to watch a video, what will they get out of taking that action?

Your CTA should use active language. This includes words like download, like, buy, register, subscribe, donate, share, comment, secure (as in, secure your spot), and watch.

If you can make this call-to-action time sensitive, that's even better. We're all familiar with these types of phrases, because they work. Some examples of time sensitive phrases include: "Today Only," "Ends at Midnight," "For the next 24 Hours."

You'll also want to find ways to make this CTA stand out, either visually within the graphics you use, or finding ways to highlight the details in your text. Make sure you include a link so you can track the CTA.

And finally, tagging is important. If you're resharing content give credit where it is due and tag the person who originally wrote it or shared it. Tagging your posts can also be beneficial to help you extend your reach if your content is in conjunction with a partner, customer, or another brand. Just make sure that when you are thinking about tagging private individuals, particularly on Facebook,

that you do so with their permission. Additionally, tagging photos on Twitter to merely alert someone about the content is considered spam.

Now let's talk about developing the content itself. There are a bunch of possibilities for creating content including creating it in-house to using a social content or social media agency.

When it comes to creating content in-house, there are a number of free or low-cost content creation tools available, which I've listed here. Take a screenshot so you can remember them later.

Fortunately there are also a lot of free photo sites available to content creators, which I've listed here.

And finally, there are the video creation tools that allow you to quickly and easily create video content.

Jason Hsaio, Co-founder and Chief Video Officer, Animoto

"Probably one of the number one questions I get is where do I start? What if I don't have content? I don't have this crazy slick studio like other big companies have. What I love to remind folks, is that you probably actually have a lot of great content already. If you look on your website, if you look in your marketing materials, you've already invested in great images, probably great video clips somewhere, and you can really start leveraging that. Even stills, right? Images can be used within video. You can pair images and text to make great videos for social. But the other thing too, is honestly, the camera in your pocket, your phone, the camera on these are just as good, if not better, than a lot of professional cameras out though these days. When you think about, especially for use on the web or use on social, these screens are usually pretty tiny. So we're not blowing this up to a billboard size or showing these on theater, so the phone in your pocket is actually great."

If you are ready to take your content development to the next level, social media agencies are also an option that you can employ to help you do everything from creating and posting content to optimizing your digital social advertising content.

Video 6: Demonstrating Industry Leadership Through Social Content Curation

Curating content for your social media channels is a great way to consistently stay active on each channel with less content, demonstrate industry thought leadership, AND to build a community - all while saving time.

So what is content curation? Content curation means gathering content that's relevant to a particular topic or area of interest, and then sharing it with your audience. It doesn't mean passing off someone else's content as your own, so make sure you're linking back to the original author's

content and giving them credit for creating something that was so good, you wanted to share with your community.

So, why should you include content curation in your social strategy? For one, content curation saves time and money. You know as well as we do that creating your own content takes a lot of time. But when you turn to your community to see what they're sharing and what they're writing about that relates to your own business, you'll discover an entire world of existing content and ideas that you can share on your own channels.

Secondly, content curation builds industry connections. When you shine light on other people's work by retweeting them and linking to their blog posts, you're showing them that you appreciate their content and think it's worthy of sharing, which is a great way to build your network.

Building industry connections through content curation can also help you extend your social reach. Let's say I'm a really big fan of a certain brand. If I find that your brand posts content from the brand I like so much, then I might check out your brand to see what you're all about. This will lead to increased social influence, too.

Sharing curated content also enables you to post a bigger variety of content. So let's say your own brand tends to publish and share a lot of blog content but not as many videos. If you can curate and share some really great videos from other brands alongside your own blog posts, you'll be giving your audience more variety so they aren't just seeing the same types of stuff from you time and time again.

Emilie Lewis, Social Strategist and Bookseller, Belmont Books

"So we do like to share whether it's a retweet or if we're co-hosting an event on Facebook, we leave comments on Instagram. We really liked that interaction. If it's something that we feel perhaps an author or another bookstore has said it better, we want to share that voice and just let them speak it if it's already been done perfectly, we don't want to try and change that in any way. But for us it is also part of building relationships. It's that interaction, whether it's with a community member, a customer or if it's an illustrator who's happened to stop by and is trying to promote their work. We really do try to just pick things up as they come. We don't plan any retweets or any reposting. But if it comes up and we feel like it's definitely worth saying and worth getting out to an even bigger audience, we're more than happy to try and help that along."

Speaking of variety, if you're sharing content from others, then your social feeds are going to appear more diverse to someone scrolling through. For example, if I know that your brand not only publishes quality content that you create but that you also publish industry news and other quality content in the industry, then I'm going to start looking to you as someone who really knows what they are talking about. That's right, content curation shows your diverse knowledge as a thought

leader. I'll see you as the kind of brand that posts on social to create value for your audience, not just to promote your own brand.

So, what are some tips for curating content effectively?

First of all, make sure you establish a good mix of promotional content and curated content. People get tired of brands endlessly promoting their own products, which is exactly why progressive brands think beyond products of features. The relationship customers have with brands today goes beyond the product itself.

When you're posting on social media, we recommend an 80/20 mix: Only 20% of your social media content should promote your own brand, and the other 80% should be dedicated to content that really, truly interests your audience and engages them in conversations. For the most part, curated content will belong in that 80%.

Try to be consistent with how many times you publish curated content versus your own content on a day-to-day basis, too.

To figure out what content you should actually curate, keep your buyer persona in mind. Which industry thought leaders do they admire? Which publications do they trust to stay up-to-date on industry news? What other brands that aren't your direct competitors do they follow and want to hear from?

Use surveys and other methods to understand your customers. The best thing to do is to get on the phone with some of your customers who represent an ideal buyer, and ask them who they follow and who want to hear from on social. Knowing who your audience is interested in learning from will give you some great ideas for whom to keep track of and curate content from. Pulling from a consistent set of sources will also help you save time, but make sure you spread out posts from the same sources.

There are a few content curation tools out there that can make things easier. I've included a list of good ones here - make sure you screenshot it and check them out for yourself. Before you choose the content curation tool you'll use, make sure you really understand the role content curation will play in your social media strategy. A one-person marketing team should start simple. Begin with the free options. And then, as your business and team grow, content curation may play a larger role and require more powerful software.

By now, you should have a solid understanding of the role content curation can play in helping you demonstrate industry leadership, post consistently, and build a community across all your social channels.

Video 7: Tagging, Timing, and Testing Your Social Content

To get the best reach and results on social media, you need to do more than just creating and spreading your social content. There are three parts to your strategy that need special attention: tagging, timing, and testing.

First, let's start with tagging. Tagging means using a social handle or username of a person or business in your post or your photo. When you tag people or businesses in your social posts, you're identifying them and essentially linking them in your post. Don't confuse tagging with hashtagging, which is a way of grouping together posts have all been hashtagged with the same words.

So why is tagging an important part of your overall strategy? When you tag a person or business in your social media posts, your post may appear on their profile page, depending on security settings. This can be a GREAT way for your brand to get exposure to that brand or person's audience. On Twitter, when you tag a person or business in a tweet, they'll get a notification that they were mentioned. This tag won't automatically appear on their Twitter feed, but if they retweet the tweet you tagged them in, then it will be shown to their followers, leading to more brand exposure.

When you tag a location in your Facebook and Instagram posts, then your posts will appear in the feed of that location - and people do browse location posts, especially on Instagram.

You can use tags on Facebook, LinkedIn and Pinterest now, but they aren't as readily used as they are on other platforms. Use tags on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter.

To tag someone on any social media platform, simply type the "at" symbol, and then start typing the person or business's profile name. When their name pops up, click on it to finish tagging them.

Next, let's talk about timing. When should you post on different social media channels? How often should you post? How does timing vary depending on the network?

Unfortunately, there's just no perfect answer to these questions. Good post timing depends on the platform you're using and how your target audience interacts with that platform. It can also depend on the regions and corresponding time zones you're targeting, and your marketing goals, like click throughs versus shares.

What I can tell you is what the data says - and there is some good data out there that the folks at [Sprout Social did on the best times](#) to post on every social network. Before you rush off to dig into the data, I want to say this: Don't take this data as Truth with a capital T. Every social platform audience is different-- test to see what works best with your audience.

Check out the resources section for a [link to the Sprout Social guide](#).

One thing to note. If you're posting the same content across different channels, make sure you consciously stagger the times and days so you don't max out your audience with a single piece of content.

Bruno Cardinali, Head of Marketing North America at Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen

"When we are developing content, I think there's one thing that we never ask the agencies to do or we never put in our minds, it's for something to go viral. So, there's no way to create something that is viral. That factor is quite intangible to grasp. So, the way we develop content at Popeye's, it's always with two things in mind. So, really that the content is representing our brand positioning, our brand personality, our tone of voice. The second thing is that we are always looking for content that it's unique and it's relevant. So, the thing that really pushes us to do great work is to do things that have never been done before."

Finally, let's talk about TESTING. It's so, so important to test and tweak your content and posting times to figure out the best results for YOUR business. We've laid out some great best practices here, but you can never know for sure which social media tactics are going to deliver results for you.

Over time, you'll learn which social networks your audience favors, which post types that they engage with and respond to the most, which post timing and frequency fits best with their schedule, and how they prefer you engage with them.

As you test and tweak your content strategy on social, always keep your business goals in mind. There are a lot of metrics you could be measuring on social, from follower count and reach to engagement rate to response rate. But remember that at the end of the day, metrics like reach and engagement should be strategic and aimed at helping you hit your business goals. How is your social media presence driving brand awareness? How is it improving traffic to your website? How is it helping move your leads through the buyer's journey?

We hope this helps guide you as you not only create great social media content, but also expand your reach and get the most out of your content with tagging, timing, and testing.