**Fun with Social Media**

**Hashtag**

A hashtag is a word or an unspaced phrase prefixed with the hash character (or number sign), #, to form a label. It is a type of metadata tag. Words or phrases in messages on microblogging and social networking services such as Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Twitter, or VK may be tagged by entering # before them,either as they appear in a sentence, e.g., "**New artists announced for #SXSW2014 Music Festival**" or appended to it. The term hashtag can also refer to the hash symbol itself when used in the context of a hashtag.

A hashtag allows grouping of similarly tagged messages, and also allows an electronic search to return all messages that contain it.

Because of its widespread use, the word, hashtag, was added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in June 2014

**Websites That Support Hashtags**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Twitter * Facebook * Instagram * Tumblr * Google+ | * Vine * Tout * Orkut * VK * Flickr |

**11 Social Media Best Practices for Brand Engagement**

**1. Follow Back and Interact**

If you’ve got a healthy number of social media followers and you’re only following a handful back, that tells everyone that you’re not interested in what your community has to say. Follow back and interact. This will help grow your overall following and create goodwill within your community.

Plus, when you follow back, you might get some public thanks, which will give you an opportunity to chat with your community members, learn more about their interests, and deliver on their needs.

**2. Keep the Social in Social Media**

It seems like it would be obvious, yet many brands using social media don’t actually get social with their followers. Should you engage with your brand’s influencers? Yes! Should you engage with your customers? Absolutely! Should you engage with everyone who reaches out to you? Indeed, with a few exceptions (like avoiding trolls and spammers). Social media is about relationships. Step outside your comfort zone and expand your horizons. Not everyone you connect with has to be like-minded. Diversity breeds inspiration!

**Be Visual**

Social media and visual content go hand-in-hand. In fact, using images or graphics has some serious benefits for social media. Research has discovered that images can result in an 85% interaction rate on Facebook and increased retweets by 35%.

While creating an item like an infographic can be cost you a pretty penny, you can always share a relevant infographic or chart that your audience will enjoy and share. There are also plenty of other free and creative options for adding images to your social media account that include:

* A behind the scenes shot of a new product
* Highlighting team members
* Old photos of team members, such as when they were children, or previous brand logos
* Asking followers to add a caption to an image
* Asking followers to share your image in action
* Holding a photo contest
* Sharing images from an industry event
* Create a collage through tools like Fotor, Photovisi, Picasa, BeFunky, Ribbet or my personal favorite Canva.
* Create cool and easy infographics with Piktochart. Easy way for me to crank out a bunch for cheap.
* Include games, contests and giveaways

**3. Determine Your Voice and Tone**

Is your voice very corporate or is it a bit more casual? What you’re sharing says as much about you as it does your audience. Is your voice representative of your brand? If it is, then is that representative of the demographic you’re trying to reach? If your tone and voice aren’t appealing to your prospects, then it’s time to change it up. Though it’s important that your social media engagement be as unique as your brand, it’s also important not to stray from your brand’s image. Let your corporate culture be your guide.

**4. Keep it Short**

According to Strategies for Effective Tweeting: A Statistical Review, “Tweets containing less than 100 characters receive 17% higher engagement than longer Tweets.” While Twitter limits your messages with its 140 character limit, Facebook, Google+ and other networks don’t heed the character limit. Sometimes, the shorter, the better!

**5. Create Brand Awareness**

Social media platforms offer the potential to increase your public profile. You have the ability to create grassroots campaigns, engage with influencers in your industry, share content from them and stay active in conversations. If you create and share worthwhile content, you’ll be ready for the time when industry influencers send a flood of new followers your way.

**6. Don't Over Share**

“Sometimes being able to publish every whim that scans across your brain is the best thing in the world. Sometimes, it can become a real problem. The killer is this: when it is a problem, you’re usually the last to know and the damage is done.” - Mitch Joel

While it’s important to stay in the loop and maintain social relationships, posting too often, whether it’s photos, status updates or frequent Tweets, can turn off your audience. Focus on sharing items that are of value to your community and reflect your brand. Creating a content calendar can help you with this.

**7. Don't Always Feel Compelled to Jump In**

Much like oversharing, you don’t have to be a part of every conversation mentioning your company. In fact, sometimes it’s better to let your employees, influencers, and other members of your community interject before, or instead of you. Determine what types of posts you want to respond to and which ones you want to sit out. Having a social media playbook will help to define when and where you should be a part of the conversation.

**8. Be as Transparent as Possible**

Openness goes a long way in social media. It’s a big part of building trust with your community. Give your customers behind the scenes access to your business by creating videos, livestreaming meetings and internal company events, and introducing your team through Google Hangouts or creative employee profiles with links to connect.

In turn, prospects will take more of an interest in your brand, and stay in touch when it comes to updates.

**9. Be Proactive, Versus Reactive**

Monitor general feeds in your industry to pick up a variety of posts that don’t mention our brand but are still valuable. This strategy reveals new conversations you may wish to take part in and enables you to establish new relationships. It’s also a great way to catch any issues before they become a potential crisis.

**10. Respond to Negative and Positive Feedback**

Though it may be tempting to respond to positive feedback and delete the negative, don’t. Instead, respond to positive feedback, thank your community for sharing your content or recommending your products, and invite members to share their stories through interviews or as guest bloggers on your site.

If you receive negative feedback, consider looking at it as constructive criticism and an opportunity to improve. If someone is complaining, it’s more than likely they’re looking for a resolution from you. Very rarely do people merely want to complain. Therefore, respond as quickly as possible and avoid the urge to purge.

**11. Repurpose Your Content**

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest are just four of the numerous social media networks out there. Furthermore, they all serve different demographics and have different features. Because of this, you should repurpose your content to fit the preferences of the specific social media audience you want to reach. For example, you could create a how-to-list for LinkedIn and convert that into an image to share on Facebook or Pinterest. You could even just update or republish one of your most popular articles. The idea is that you can use the same idea and amazing content to reach different audience across various mediums.

**Contact Information**

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