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GUIDE

# The Complete Social Media Marketing Guide

Not sure where to start with social media marketing? Want to refresh your strategies? Explore this step-by-step guide to get going today.

**Social media has been around for a while, but many businesses have yet to discover its full marketing potential. Here's our guide to fixing that.**

## What is social media marketing?

Social media marketing is any marketing that takes place on social media platforms. Unsurprisingly, this includes a huge range of activities that simply have social media in common. So whether it's promoting a blog post or running a recruitment drive, if it involves something like Facebook or Twitter, it's social media marketing.

Ultimately, a lot of the tactics you'll use are not new. It's a matter of adapting to new platforms and tools.

Hey there! So, we have some exciting news to share with you!



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## Should you start doing social media marketing?

Marketing on social media is pretty much a given for businesses and organizations now, especially if you're trying to sell direct-to-consumer (DTC) and cut out the middlemen. Whether it's done free or with paid ads, social media platforms give you access to huge audiences that you can build and grow yourself.

Of course, technically there's no "free" option. Someone's time has to be used to post on social platforms, but even a low time investment approach can work wonders if done properly.

Social media marketing won't work for everyone, and no one should see it as an easy, low effort way to make money. The best strategies take planning and tie into a company's overall strategy. Different approaches work for different businesses, but we'll come to that.

The main thing is that there is potential in social media marketing for most companies, but it's rarely a simple matter of sending out a few tweets and waiting for the cash to roll in.

## What can I get out of social media marketing?

As we've noted, there are a lot of different strategies, and the outcomes will depend on the ones you choose. But here's a very basic rundown of the main benefits of social media marketing:

- Offer quick customer service to customers wherever they are
- Create extra avenues to [sell and promote your products](#)
- Build loyalty and brand recognition with your customers
- Promote your own content to reach new people without big advertising costs
- Show off your company culture to support recruitment

As you can see, while all of these things help your company to become profitable, they're not all one-step journeys to sales. It's about seeing social media as a platform where many aspects of your business can sit.

## How do I get started?

First up is building out a list of aims for your social approach. As we've said already, how

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your approach to social media marketing will entirely depend on your business.

For example, if you sell a product or you're a charity, you'll have very different objectives and therefore approaches. Using very general ideas, here are the thought processes a for-profit and a non-profit organization might have.

### **For-profit example**

ProductCo sell some very famous products in physical stores. Their products are very popular so they've organically grown a decent following on their social channels, but they're not very active on them.

They decide they want to use this following to increase both online sales and physical sales, while also promoting new products as they're released.

This gives us some clear aims to base a strategy on. For example, here are just a few things they could do to begin with:

- Start posting about their products regularly with the aim to trigger sales in physical stores and online
- Begin running targeted paid campaigns to increase their following and sales
- Engage with their followers with specially-created content to build on the already existing enthusiastic following
- Run social-led competitions and promotions

### **Not-for-profit example**

PeaceOrg are a well-known charity thanks to great offline PR campaigns and TV adverts. Having said that, they've never set up any social channels before, so they'll be starting from scratch.

They decide they want to get involved with social media marketing to raise awareness of relevant issues, promote events, and bring in more donations directly.

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In their case, here are a few marketing techniques to begin with. [By using our site you agree to our use of cookies — I Agree](#)

- Create their channels and start promoting them via other mediums (email, post, including links in TV ads and on their website) to build up a following quickly
- Run paid ads to grow their following
- Create shareable and emotionally appealing content to start spreading their message organically and attracting new followers

This is just the tip of the iceberg, but you can see how two organizations need separate strategies based on aims, outcomes, and where they're already at.

Nevertheless, here's some guidance on some of the main aspects of social media marketing:

### Conducting a social audit

First things first, take stock of your current position. If you have zero social channels then this isn't much of a problem – your audit is done and you can get to work.

Other than that, no matter what position you're in, you'll want to look at the following:

- What channels you're active on
- Are any channels doing much better or worse than others
- What kinds of posts have and haven't worked in the past
- Is your audience relevant to your company
- Do any channels need clearing up? Perhaps to get rid of irrelevant or out of date content (this is a particular issue with YouTube)

For more specific advice, check out our [Twitter audit guide](#).

### What not to post

There are a lot of examples of businesses big and small tweeting out something and getting into a lot of trouble for it. Whether it's a joke gone wrong or a terrible opinion, social media can be a double-edged sword if you're not careful.

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There's no hard and fast rule for what you shouldn't post. Again, it depends on you and your

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business. Satirical and comedy sites can be as funny as they like, and even get away with pushing things a bit far. Your average company isn't in the same position.

Consider your brand voice. You can get away with jokes, humor, and memes, but only if that suits you and your audience. Social media can be a place to stretch things a bit, but often it's not worth the risk.

Sit down and prepare for this. Make sure whoever is writing your posts is aware of the reputation the company wants to keep. Make a list of topics which are off-limits. And set out a customer service approach that isn't always followed to the letter to allow for adaptability.

Also, don't simply spam your followers with sales links to your products. We don't go on Twitter to be sold to, but that doesn't mean we don't end up buying something while we're there.

There's nothing wrong with a few sales-y posts here and there, but think about your messaging. Get people to want to look into your product actively rather than endlessly shoving it in their face and hoping they bite.

Don't forget the 'social' in social media. It's a medium for two-way conversation.

## Understanding your platforms

We won't go through all of the platforms here, but do your research about what works where. Formats are different and audiences are different.

A short sarcastic quip can do well on Twitter, but for LinkedIn something more actionable and advice based is better.

Do some reading on each of the platform algorithms and just spend time on them to get a feel for how they work.

Tailor your messages appropriately and you'll get far better engagement, traffic, and interest.

## Getting customer service right

Customer service deserves its own section here. Far too often have businesses ruined their reputation by not taking social media complaints seriously, or mocking them outright.

Social media gives us instant and easy access to companies. There's no phone line in the way, and I don't have to go to a postbox to send a letter. I just have to go to their Facebook page and I can complain – and it's public to everyone. That's a big shift.

The public bit is key. Sure, maybe the complaint is unfounded and unfair, but you still need to deal with them professionally. Blowing up at them will not help and suddenly you could be getting a lot of attention for the wrong reasons.

## Building a following organically

This is one of the toughest things to do if you're not a big, famous brand. There's no one way to do it, but instead a collection of ways. It is also a slow burner. Take your time, do it properly and eventually you'll have an audience who actually engages with you.

Here's a few steps to take to get you on your way:

- Create content people want to share and is therefore seen by people beyond your existing network
- Be a useful point of information for people who use your product and service
- Let people know through other communication methods that you've got social channels
- Talk about other people's content rather than just your own and build relationships with them
- Be interesting or useful, but never neither

While all about the Justin Bieber fandom, we have some great tips in this interview that are applicable to [growing a social community](#).

## Relevant social content

The amazing thing about social media is the ease of publishing something. It can be easy to get carried away and post everything and anything, but that won't do you any favors.


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First you need to think about what the people you want to attract are interested in. If you're too general, even if the content is relatively good, you'll struggle to stand out. By leaning into your area of expertise you can better catch the eye of the right people. This process builds the foundation of your following.

Next, play to your strengths. What does your company do that makes you best suited to post about what you post? What are you knowledgeable on? What unique and useful insights can you bring to the table?

As an example, on our Instagram account, we often post charts made by our team using data from our Consumer Research platform. It not only shows off the product, but that we understand what we're doing too.

 **brandwatch**  
7,880 followers

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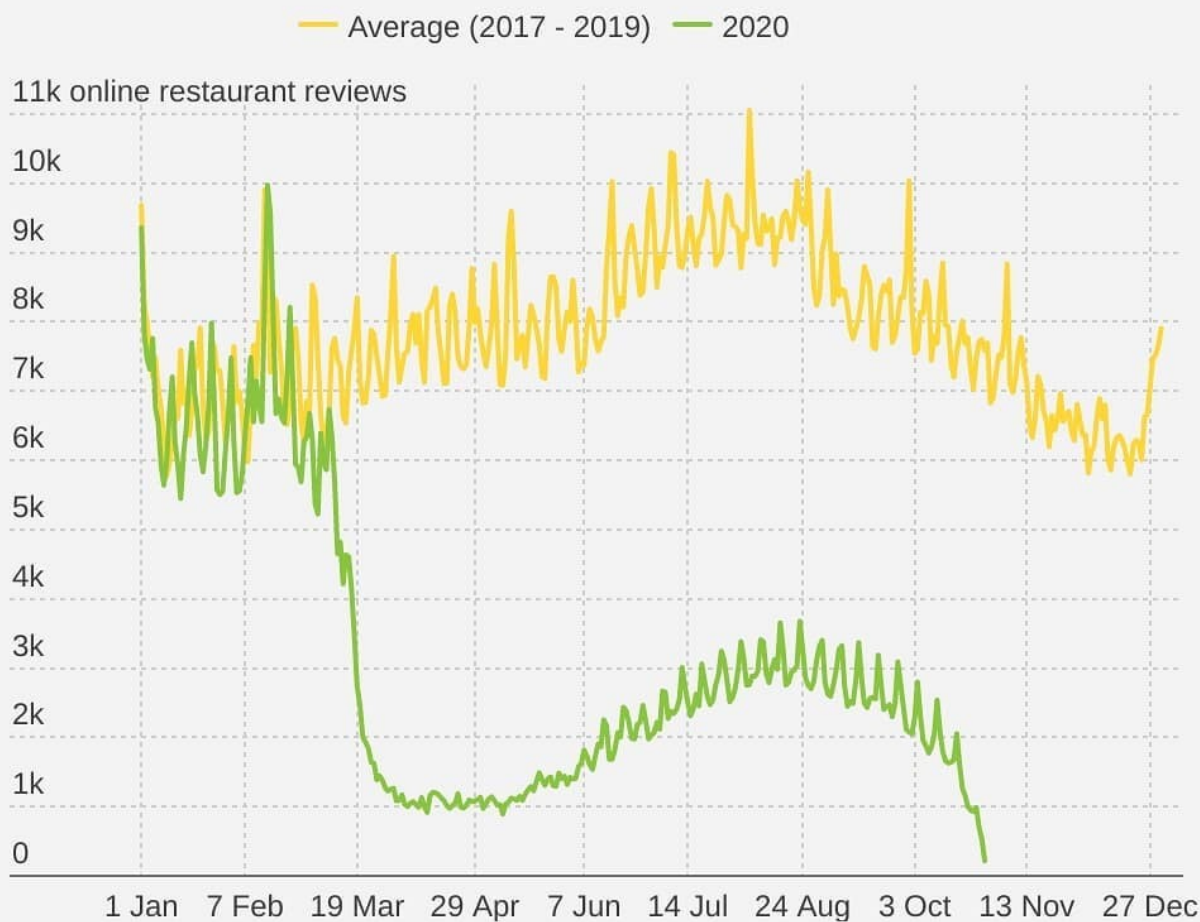
# Fall in online reviews shows the pandemic damage to the restaurant industry



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Source: **Brandwatch Consumer Research**

Shows number of online reviews for meals and restaurants from a range of review sites.



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## Interesting new trends and expert analysis from Brandwatch

To receive a summary of the latest consumer trends straight to your inbox, subscribe to the [Brandwatch Bulletin](#) (sent Mondays and Fridays).

## Shareable social content

Creating 'shareable social content' is advice often given with no actual advice with it. What is shareable content? What makes it that way? How do I figure that out?

Some of the best and most comprehensive advice we've seen on this includes Jonah Berger's *Contagious* and Dan Heath's *Made to Stick*. You can get both of these pretty cheap and they're well worth every penny.

To get a good introduction into some of the topics and advice in *Contagious*, [head here for a great diagram and a short talk from Jonah Berger](#).

## Paid social ads

These are big business, with companies spending billions worldwide on reaching audiences through Twitter, Facebook, and the rest. For Facebook specifically this has brought some negative attention with people accused of using their advertising platform to try to influence people's political views.

But don't let that put you off. There's far more pressure on social platforms to be more open

and transparent about how they work, and so as long as you follow the rules and do things properly, you'll be fine.

Paid social ads aren't really any different to other advertising. You try to target a certain segment of people and build ads geared towards them. The only difference here is that you can use social data to build custom audiences to target.

The subject is too vast to go into here, but with platforms suppressing organic reach, more and more companies are using paid ads to get their content and product in front of people.

Take some time to look into each platform in detail. They all work different and come with widely different costs. Either way, they're a great way to get yourself in front of new people. Don't write them off.

We have a guide on [ROI and paid social](#) that will give you some points to start off with.

## Calendars and scheduling

Another thing to consider is how often you post. This will often come down to what you've decided in your strategy and the kinds of posts you'll be making.

For example big publishers can post often as they're continuously creating new stories and articles, and it's safe to assume that their followers expect and want that kind of content.

For a business it's a different story. You might not produce content regularly, so don't feel like you have to post on Twitter all the time. People will quickly get fed up seeing the same press release over and over.

In our case, we post a wide variety of things from blog content to how-to guides to webinars, or just comments and normal tweets. If we're having a slow week in content we'll look to post older (but not out of date) stuff that we might not have posted for a while.

Many people also set up calendars in advance so they can schedule a lot of posts at once and just leave them to go out. That approach is fine for some, and not for others. Some strategies take a more in the moment approach where you might only schedule a few hours in advance.

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If you have loaded up a lot of posts to go out just remember to keep an eye on the news and make sure any recent events won't make them seem out of place or in bad taste.

Finally, set different schedules for different platforms. For example, posting incessantly on Facebook isn't going to work, while on Twitter there's a bigger acceptance of more regular content. The best bet is to test and refine to see what works for you and your followers.

We have a great list of [social media management tools here](#) that will help you with this.

## Social media marketing strategy steps

Once you've gone through everything above, you'll be ready to really get going. Here's a few steps, or you can see it as a checklist, to bring everything together:

- Build your social media marketing team (and train them on your brand voice)
- Create your list of aims with your team and make sure everyone keeps them in mind throughout
- Conduct your social audit and platform analysis, sharing results with your team
- Work with relevant team members and create a stringent social media customer service process
- Decide on budgets and aims for your paid social media spend
- Create a posting schedule and calendar that everyone has eyes on and links with your content strategy
- Always track and analyze performance, sharing results with the entire team
- Improve and adapt your strategy based on results
- Try something new

## Tracking and analyzing your social media marketing

You can't measure the impact of your work without looking at the results. You might be putting out some witty tweets, but are they matching up with the aims you set out at the beginning? Here's how to make sure your social media marketing is results-driven.

### Social media tracking and analysis tools

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To begin with, most social listening tools will cover your needs. But as your strategy matures and you seek deeper audience analysis and actionable consumer insights, you'll be craving a more comprehensive platform like Brandwatch Consumer Research – the [world-leading social intelligence solution](#).

### Future-proof your needs now with the right tech

Brandwatch's platform can look at conversations across the internet, including [online reviews](#), and analyzes your performance on your own channels in real time.

With lots of data visualizations and flexible, useful components, it's everything you'll need to get increasingly more data-driven and effective in your social media marketing.

[Book a personalized demo of Brandwatch here](#).

There are plenty of other analysis tools, which we've listed in the pieces below:

- [Social media analytics tools for general use and specific platforms](#)
- [Facebook analytics tools](#)
- [Instagram analytics tools](#)
- [Twitter analytics tools](#)
- [Reddit analytics tools](#)
- [Pinterest analytics tools](#)

### What metrics to track

It is tempting to list a few metrics and send you on your way, but that's not how it works.

Different metrics are important to different companies and aims. This is the key to finding the right focus in a sea of metrics (that often overlap or are contradictory).

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Below we'll list a few common metrics and what they're useful for. Compare them to your strategy aims to see what fits for you.

## Followers

An excellent indicator of how many people want to see what you post, but this doesn't always translate into good results. Are your followers people who will actually buy your products, or do whatever else you want them to do?

This is where creating relevant content comes in. Create the right stuff, and you should avoid this problem (although it's not a particularly bad problem to have).

In the end, it's a good metric for indicating you're going in the right direction, but it's not something to live or die by.

## Engagement

This refers to a whole bunch of things, but ultimately it comes down to whether people are clicking on your social posts. This could be to like it, share it, or be taken to your website, it's all the same deal.

It can be measured in a few ways, but the big two are by volume, and by engagement rate. Engagement rate usually refers to the percentage of your followers, or people who saw the post, who engaged with a post. Simple stuff.

The problem comes with engagement referring to so many different actions. It's too vague. For example, two tweets could get the same engagement rate, but give you different results. One may get 12 likes, the other 12 clicks, with two leading to a sale. That's two very different outcomes.

It's important to parse down engagement, and single out the specific metrics that properly measure success for your campaigns.

## Traffic

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campaigns, especially ones that aim to get people to your site.

But don't lose focus. Going broad and off-topic makes getting traffic easier, but is it traffic that offers any value? What do you want people to do when they get to your site? If they're not doing it, it may be time to switch tactics.

## Reach

Reach usually refers to how many people see a social post. This will depend on the amount of followers an account already has, how many of these people the platform's algorithm will show it too, and how many people share it to their own followers on top of that. Hashtag discovery, and other routes, can also increase reach.

It's also measured differently on different platforms, offering wildly different numbers. We aimed to solve this issue with [our own reach score](#) that aims to make reporting far more simple and trustworthy.

At the risk of repeating ourselves, we have the same issues that traffic has. The bigger the reach the better, in theory, but if it doesn't lead to your campaign's goal, it's not doing any heavy lifting.



## Fuel your social media marketing

Analyze your efforts and guide your strategies using the right data in Brandwatch Consumer Research.

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