Social Media Best Practices Guide (2025)

Prepared by Cascade Online Design for the North Marion Business Service Alliance's Business Boost program.

Quick Reference Guide

Facebook

Best For: Local reach, community engagement, and events

- Prioritize Reels, Stories, and strong visuals
- Use Events to promote time-sensitive content (sales, pop-ups, classes)
- Engage in Groups—spark conversation, follow group rules, promote sparingly
- Keep hashtags minimal: 1–3 for posts, 3–5 for Reels
- Schedule using Meta Business Suite

Image Sizes: Posts: 1200×630 px (1.91:1), Reels: 1080×1920 px (9:16), Stories: 1080×1920 px (9:16)

Instagram

Best For: Brand lifestyle, visual storytelling, and inspiration

- Reels and Carousels perform best
- Always use strong visuals—never paste URLs in captions
- Use 3–5 hashtags for posts, 5–10 for Reels
- Tag relevant locations and collaborators
- Use Link in Bio tools like Linktree

Image Sizes: Posts: 1080×1350 px (4:5), Stories & Reels: 1080×1920 px (9:16)

LinkedIn

Best For: B2B, thought leadership, and networking

- Share tips, behind-the-scenes, team wins, and client stories
- Document posts (multi-page PDFs) build authority
- Combine personal profile with business page for best results
- Use a professional but approachable tone
- Engage with others' content to boost visibility

Image Sizes: Posts: 1200×627 px (1.91:1), Document Posts: Use clear, branded PDFs

X (formerly Twitter)

Best For: Real-time news, quick thoughts, bold brand voice

- Keep posts short and clear (1–2 sentences)
- Use Threads to share longer ideas
- Prioritize replies, retweets, and comments over volume
- Memes and personality perform well
- Use 1–2 relevant hashtags

Image Sizes: Posts: 1200×675 px (16:9)

TikTok

Best For: Storytelling, tutorials, humor, trends

- Hook viewers in the first 3 seconds
- Use trending audio when it fits your content
- Prioritize authenticity over polish—real content works
- Duet and Stitch to engage with the community
- Use 3–5 niche or trending hashtags

Video Sizes: Fullscreen: 1080×1920 px (9:16)

YouTube

Best For: Long-form content, tutorials, evergreen topics

- Title and thumbnail are most important for getting clicks
- Thumbnails should be custom images with bold text and emotion
- Use Chapters, End Screens, and Cards to improve retention
- Shorts help with discoverability and audience growth
- Use 3–5 relevant hashtags in the video description

Sizes: Shorts: 1080×1920 px (9:16), Videos: 1920×1080 px (16:9), Thumbnail: 1280×720 px (16:9)

Table of Contents

Content Strategy & Goal Alignment

Why social media matters for small business growth

Social media helps small businesses connect with current and potential customers more personally and immediately than many other marketing tools. Many people turn to social platforms to make buying decisions. Posting content that reflects your brand, answers questions, or shares your story helps build visibility and trust. It also supports your website and other marketing efforts by bringing people closer to your business.

Aligning social media with business goals

Your social posts should support your overarching business objectives. Whether you want to grow brand awareness, earn engagement, capture leads, or boost sales, your content should serve that goal. For example:

- Brand awareness: Share posts that introduce people to your business, like behind-the-scenes photos or customer stories.
- Engagement: Ask questions, run polls, or celebrate community milestones.
- Lead generation: Encourage people to sign up for a newsletter, download a guide, or send a message.
- Sales: Showcase a new product or highlight a limited-time offer with a clear call-to-action.

Mapping goals to key metrics (KPIs)

To measure success effectively, assign one or two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to each goal. A KPI is a measurable value that shows whether you're achieving your goals. For instance:

- For brand awareness, track follower growth, reach, or impressions.
- For engagement, track comments, shares, and poll responses.
- For leads, measure link clicks or message inquiries.
- For sales, measure conversions or sales volume from social links.

Be realistic and choose KPIs tied to what your business can influence directly.

Understanding your audience

To create content that resonates, you first need to understand who you're talking to. This means learning about:

- Their demographics: age, gender, location, job, income level
- Their motivations and values: what matters to them

- Their online behavior: which platforms they use, how they engage, what content they prefer
- Their challenges and pain points: and how your product or service helps

Start by analyzing your current followers using built-in tools (like Facebook Insights or Instagram Audience data). Consider running a quick poll or asking questions in posts to gain more insight into what they want or need.

Choosing the right platforms based on your audience

Not every platform is the right fit for every business. Instead of trying to be everywhere, focus your efforts where your audience already spends time. Start by thinking about your customers' age, interests, and how they like to interact with content. Use your own insights along with broader trends to choose platforms that align with your goals and audience behavior.

Here's a general breakdown of where each platform fits:

- **Facebook**- Great for local businesses trying to reach a broad audience. Facebook is still widely used by Millennials and Gen X, especially ages 25 to 44. Features like Groups, Events, and Reels help build community and visibility. Teen usage has declined, but it's still a key platform for everyday communication and neighborhood engagement.
- **Instagram**- A strong choice for businesses that rely on visuals, like retail, food, or wellness. Instagram is especially popular with ages 18 to 34 and offers high engagement through Stories, Reels, and influencer content. It works well for product promotion, brand storytelling, and behind-the-scenes moments.
- **LinkedIn**- Best for professional services, B2B businesses, and anyone targeting decision-makers or educated professionals. It's commonly used by people ages 25 to 34 and is a go-to platform for industry news, thought leadership, and company updates.
- **X (formerly Twitter)**- Works well for businesses involved in real-time updates, news, or public conversation. The audience skews slightly male and tends to fall between 25 and 35 years old. Use it for timely announcements, interacting with customers, or weighing in on trending topics. It's useful if your brand wants to be part of public discourse or local chatter.
- **TikTok**- A top platform for reaching Gen Z and younger Millennials. If your audience is 18 to 34 and enjoys short, entertaining, or creative content, this platform is worth exploring. It's especially effective for fun behind-the-scenes content, relatable storytelling, and product discovery.

- **YouTube**- Ideal for video content that's educational, entertaining, or in-depth. It has strong reach across all age groups, especially 25 to 34, and is increasingly popular with older viewers too. Use it for tutorials, product explainers, event recaps, or long-form storytelling. YouTube Shorts also offer a way to share bite-sized video content for mobile users.

Choosing the right platforms is about focusing your energy where it will have the most impact. By aligning your audience's habits with each platform's strengths, you'll spend less time guessing and more time reaching the right people in meaningful ways.

Developing Your Brand Voice

What is brand voice and why it matters

Your brand voice is the consistent personality and style you use when communicating with your audience. It's how your business "sounds" in writing. A clear brand voice helps people recognize your business, builds trust, and creates a more personal connection. It also keeps your content aligned and consistent across platforms, especially if more than one person is managing your social media.

People are more likely to engage with brands that sound real and relatable. A clear voice helps your posts stand out and gives people a reason to follow and connect with you.

Defining tone, style, and communication traits

Start by identifying three to five traits that describe how your business should sound. This might include things like friendly, professional, confident, or down-to-earth. Avoid choosing traits that contradict each other.

Once you've identified these core traits, think about how that voice will come through in tone (how you say it), style (your sentence structure and word choice), and content (what topics you focus on). You can be more playful or relaxed in some posts and more serious in others, but the overall voice should still feel like you.

Ask yourself:

- Does my audience expect casual or professional language?

- Should posts sound like a conversation or a formal update?
- How much personality or humor feels right for my business?

Use this as a guide whenever you write content. It makes your business feel more cohesive and familiar to your audience.

Voice charting

A voice chart is a simple tool to help you stay consistent. It outlines your brand traits and shows what each trait sounds like in practice, and what to avoid. You can keep this chart in your social media planning documents so everyone who posts on behalf of your business stays on the same page. It also makes it easier to onboard new team members or social media managers.

Brand Voice Chart

Trait	What It Sounds Like	What to Avoid
Friendly	"We're here to help!"	"Customer #456"
Playful	"Guess what? We're rolling out a new feature 🎉"	Jargon-heavy or robotic language
Empathetic	"We hear you. Let's fix this."	Dismissive or defensive replies

Include columns for:

- The voice trait (like friendly or expert)
- How that shows up in your content
- What to avoid to stay consistent

Adapting voice across platforms

While your core voice stays the same, your tone may shift slightly depending on the platform or context. For example, you might use shorter sentences or more emojis on Instagram, and longer, more detailed explanations on LinkedIn. On Twitter/X, you may need to be extra concise. The key is to stay true to your brand's identity while adapting to how people use and expect content on each platform.

Think of it like talking to different groups of friends. You're still yourself, but you adjust your tone depending on the setting. Social media works the same way. You can still be consistent while meeting the expectations of each platform.

Platform-by-Platform Best Practices

Facebook

Facebook remains one of the most effective platforms for small and local businesses. It's designed for connection and community, which makes it especially powerful for reaching local audiences, building brand trust, and encouraging engagement through conversation.

Why Facebook Matters:

- Widely used by adults ages 25 to 44, with steady engagement from older demographics
- Strong community focus through Groups and Events
- Great for local visibility and building brand familiarity over time
- Still prioritizes personal, relatable content in the feed

Content Types and When to Use Them

1. <u>Posts</u> - These are your regular updates on your business page. They are best for announcements, sharing links, promotions, customer highlights, or behind-the-scenes content. Always include a high-quality image or a link with a strong preview. Text-only posts often get ignored.
2. <u>Reels</u> - Facebook Reels are short videos that can help boost your reach, especially with mobile users. Use them to showcase quick tips, customer reactions, product moments, or fun, engaging content. These are great for visibility, especially if your business has an energetic or visual personality.
3. <u>Stories</u> - Stories are short, time-limited content that sits at the top of the feed. They're ideal for more casual updates, quick reminders, or flash promotions. You can use polls, questions, and stickers to get people interacting. Think of them as a way to stay visible in-between main posts.
4. <u>Livestream</u> - Live video helps you connect with your audience in real time. Use Facebook Live for product launches, Q&A sessions, virtual events, or giving a behind-the-scenes look. It builds trust, encourages direct interaction, and notifies followers when you go live, increasing visibility. After the stream ends, the video can stay on your page as a regular post for people to watch later.

Using Groups Effectively

Facebook Groups are one of the best free tools for reaching new people, especially if you're targeting specific communities or local audiences.

- <u>Engagement Posts</u> - Posts that spark conversation tend to perform best. Ask for opinions, simple "yes or no" questions, or invite quick answers. Not only do these boost visibility, they help keep your brand top of mind in your niche or local community.
- <u>Promotion Posts</u> - Use these sparingly. People join groups to connect, not be sold to. When promoting, focus on clear, value-driven messaging with a strong hook. Think: "Here's what we're offering and why it matters to you." Include a clear CTA, like "Sign up," "Join us," or "Learn more."

Always read the rules before posting in any group. Some allow promotions freely, others restrict them to certain days or formats. Some only allow personal profiles to post rather than business pages.

Hashtags are not necessary in group posts. Focus on clarity and community tone instead.

Hosting Events on Facebook

Facebook Events are one of the most effective tools for promoting time-sensitive activities like sales, product launches, pop-ups, classes, or community gatherings. Creating an event gives your business a dedicated space where people can view the details, RSVP, and easily share it with others. When someone marks themselves as "Interested" or "Going," their activity may appear in their friends' feeds, helping your event reach a wider audience organically.

To make your event successful, start with a clear, engaging title that makes people want to click. Pair it with a high-quality image or flyer and include a short, well-written description. Make sure to add keywords that relate to the event and a strong call to action, such as "Sign up now" or "Join us this Saturday."

After the event is published, keep it active. Post regular updates in the event discussion, respond to any questions, and invite your followers or customers to attend. You can also share the event to your business page, in relevant groups (if permitted), and even on your personal profile to extend its reach.

A well-managed Facebook Event not only builds awareness, it creates a sense of momentum and gives people an easy way to engage.

Image Sizes and Formats for Facebook

Always include a photo or video with your posts. It helps you stand out and improves reach.

Recommended Sizes:

Profile Photo
196 x 196 px

Portrait Image
1080 x 1350 px

Landscape Feed Image A
1200 x 630 px

Stories & Reels
1080 x 1920 px

Profile Cover Photo
820 x 360 px
Visible range: 640 x 312 px

Landscape Feed
Image B
1080 x 810 px

Carousel
Image
1200 x 1200
px

Square
Image
1080 x 1080
px
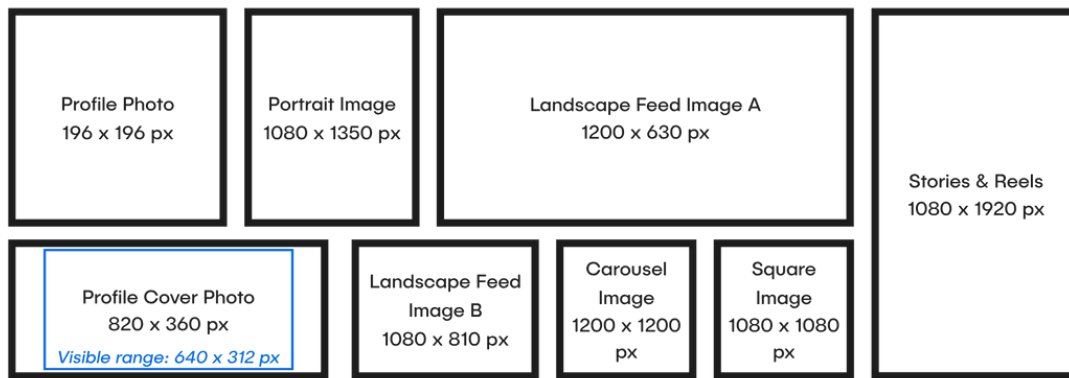
Instagram

Instagram is a highly visual platform, ideal for building brand awareness, showcasing your business's personality, and engaging both new and returning customers. The emphasis here is on polished, visually engaging content that aligns with your brand's style and vibe.

Why Instagram Works for Small Business:

Instagram excels at helping users discover brands through visuals, hashtags, location tags, and the Explore feed. It's especially useful for businesses with a strong aesthetic or lifestyle angle, such as retail, beauty, food, creative services, or hospitality. With the right strategy, you can grow your audience, encourage interaction, and drive website traffic using a link-in-bio tool like Linktree.

Content Types and When to Use Them

Instagram offers a few main content types. Understanding how each functions helps you decide what to post and when:

- Posts - Single image or video posts that appear on your profile grid. These should be visually on-brand and high quality.
- Carousels - Multi-image or multi-video posts users can swipe through. Great for storytelling, product showcases, step-by-step content, or educational posts. Carousels are often prioritized by the algorithm.
- Reels - Short, vertical videos designed for discoverability. Use Reels to showcase behind-the-scenes footage, product demos, trends, or quick tips. Reels can be your best tool for reaching people who don't already follow you.
- Stories - Disappear after 24 hours unless saved to a Highlight. Stories are great for time-sensitive updates, casual content, announcements, or interactions like polls and Q&A. These are shown prominently to your followers and keep your business top-of-mind.

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Reels and carousels are particularly favored by the Instagram algorithm, so include them regularly in your content plan.

The Collaboration Feature

Instagram's "Invite Collaborator" feature is one of the best ways to increase organic reach. Rather than just tagging a partner, you can invite them as a collaborator on the post. When accepted, the content shows up on both accounts, shares likes and comments, and reaches both audiences.

- This feature works well when teaming up with:
- Partner businesses or local organizations
- Clients or vendors
- Influencers or ambassadors

To use it, invite a collaborator while creating the post. If you need to add someone after publishing, you can edit the post on desktop to send a request. The collaborator must accept the invite before the shared functionality takes effect. They'll receive the collaboration request in their messages on Instagram, and are able to accept the request through the Instagram mobile app.

Using this feature boosts post visibility, supports shared growth, and signals connection with other trusted accounts.

Hashtag Strategy and Discovery

Discovery on Instagram is driven heavily by hashtags and location tags. Use location tags when relevant to help show up in local searches.

For hashtags:

- To reach new audiences, use around 8 to 10 relevant hashtags.
- To engage your existing followers, 3 to 5 is often enough.
- For Reels, aim for 5 to 10 relevant hashtags.

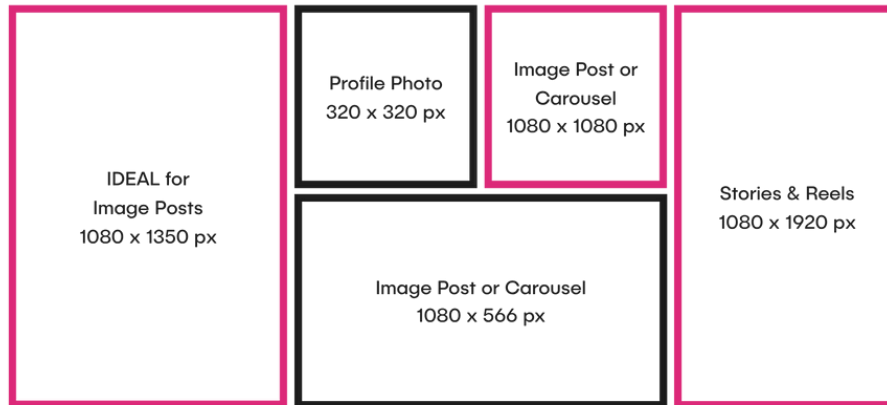To find effective hashtags, search within the Instagram app under "Tags" to view popularity, or browse the Explore page and Reels feed to spot current visual trends and sounds.

Avoid placing URLs in captions. Instagram does not hyperlink links in post text, so they won't be clickable. Always direct traffic through the link in your bio using a tool like Linktree or Beacons if you need to share more than one link.

Image and Video Dimensions

Keeping your content visually consistent, easy to recognize, and aligned with your brand personality will help you stand out and build loyalty over time.

Recommended Sizes:

IDEAL for
Image Posts
1080 x 1350 px

Profile Photo
320 x 320 px

Image Post or
Carousel
1080 x 1080 px

Stories & Reels
1080 x 1920 px

Image Post or Carousel
1080 x 566 px

X / Twitter

X, formerly known as Twitter, is a platform built for fast-paced conversations and real-time updates. It's ideal for businesses that want to stay part of trending conversations, share quick thoughts, and build brand personality. Whether you're sharing news, tips, opinions, or engaging with others in your industry, X can be a powerful tool—especially for brands with a bold, clever, or authentic voice.

What X is Best For:

- Thought leadership and expert opinions
- Sharing industry news or updates
- Promoting events in real time
- Participating in conversations that matter to your customers

It's especially effective for brands that have something to say and aren't afraid to show a little personality. Posts on X move fast, so you want to grab attention quickly.

Content Types and When to Use Them

- Posts (Tweets) - Short-form text content that performs best when it's quick, clear, and engaging. Use these for announcements, opinions, or questions.

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- <u>Threads</u> - A group of connected posts used to explain a topic in more depth, tell a story, or break down a concept. Threads are great for thought leadership or recaps.
- <u>Retweets</u> - Share content from other users to provide value or build community. Retweet with a comment when you want to add your own voice.
- <u>Polls</u> - Good for quick feedback or sparking conversation, especially when the question is light or timely.

Using a mix of these helps keep your content fresh and gives people more reasons to engage with your account.

Content and Engagement

Users scroll quickly, so short, punchy content performs best. Aim for 1–2 sentence posts that are easy to understand at a glance. If you want to share something longer or more thoughtful, use a thread—a series of connected posts that explain a topic or tell a story.

To grow your presence, don't just post, engage. X is a two-way platform, and interacting with others is just as important as creating your own content. Aim to spend about 70% of your time on X engaging and 30% posting new content.

Here are a few ways to build connection:

- Reply to comments and mentions
- Retweet with your own comment or take
- Join trending conversations with a relevant and timely response
- Comment on posts from others in your industry or community

Memes, humor, and bold opinions often do well on X, especially when they feel authentic to your brand voice. Don't be afraid to show your personality, people follow brands that sound real and relatable.

Also, don't forget your profile. Add important keywords to your bio and profile description so your account is more likely to appear in search results.
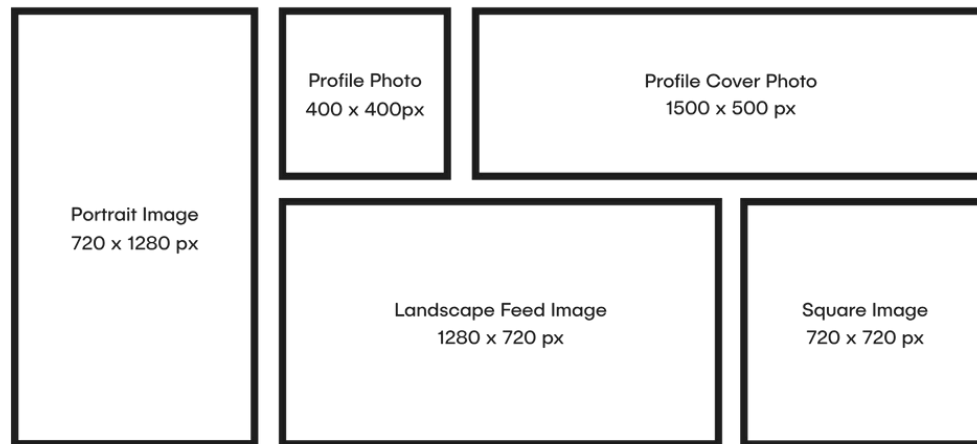
Hashtag Strategy

Hashtags can help with visibility, but keep them simple. Stick to 1 or 2 relevant hashtags per post. You can check what's trending using the Trending tab under the search section.

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Ideal Image Sizes

Keeping your visual content clean and properly sized ensures it displays well across devices, which improves your professional appearance and engagement.

Recommended Image Dimensions:

Profile Photo
400 x 400px

Profile Cover Photo
1500 x 500 px

Portrait Image
720 x 1280 px

Landscape Feed Image
1280 x 720 px

Square Image
720 x 720 px

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the go-to platform for professionals and career-focused content. It is especially effective for B2B services, thought leadership, and building strong business relationships. Unlike faster-paced platforms like Instagram or TikTok, LinkedIn is more intentional and slower moving, which makes it a great space for deeper insights and professional storytelling.

What LinkedIn Is Best For:

- Business-to-business (B2B) services and product promotion
- Showcasing industry knowledge and thought leadership
- Sharing company culture, team wins, and milestones
- Posting job openings and professional development content
- Networking and generating high-quality leads

Using both your personal profile and business page together is the best approach. Business pages establish your brand presence, while personal profiles tend to get more engagement and build trust more quickly.

Content Types and When to Use Them

LinkedIn offers a variety of content types to suit different goals. Here's how and when to use them:

- Posts - Short updates to share tips, stories, insights, or behind-the-scenes moments. Add a clear call to action when relevant.
- Articles - Great for in-depth content like how-tos, case studies, or commentary on industry trends. These stay linked to your profile and can build authority over time.
- Document Posts - Upload multi-page PDFs to create swipe-through content. These perform well for step-by-step guides, service breakdowns, or explaining complex ideas visually.
- Polls - A quick way to spark conversation and collect insights from your audience. Keep them simple and relevant.
- Newsletters - For businesses producing consistent, long-form content, newsletters allow you to send regular updates directly to your followers' inboxes.

Aim for content that shows what you do, how you do it well, and why it matters. Maintain a polished and professional tone, but still sound human and approachable.

Content and Engagement

Posting is only half of the equation on LinkedIn. To get the most value, engage actively. This means:

- Commenting on others' posts with thoughtful input
- Responding to comments on your own posts
- Re-sharing others' content with your own take
- Tagging collaborators or clients when relevant

LinkedIn rewards consistent activity and meaningful interaction. The more you show up, the more visible you become.

Hashtag Strategy and Discovery

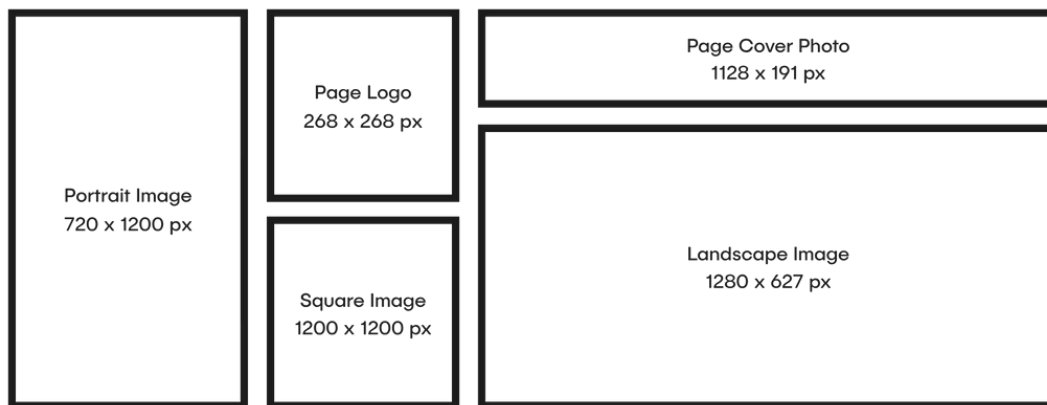Hashtags help your content appear in topic feeds and can improve discoverability. Use them wisely:

- Include 3 to 5 relevant hashtags per post
- Use a mix of broad and niche-specific tags
- Add them to the end of your post, not in the middle of sentences

To discover strong hashtags for your industry, start typing keywords into the post composer or search bar. LinkedIn will show follower counts for each hashtag.

Image and Video Dimensions

Using the correct dimensions ensures your content looks professional and displays well across devices.

Recommended Dimensions:

Portrait Image 720 x 1200 px	Page Logo 268 x 268 px	Page Cover Photo 1128 x 191 px
	Square Image 1200 x 1200 px	Landscape Image 1280 x 627 px

TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video platform that's built for discovery. It has one of the strongest algorithms for helping new people find your content, making it a great place to grow your audience, especially if your content feels authentic, engaging, or entertaining.

What TikTok Is Best For:

- Storytelling and sharing quick, engaging insights
- Tutorials and how-tos
- Showing your business's personality
- Humor and relatable moments
- Trend participation and culture-driven content

This platform rewards creativity, speed, and boldness. Highly polished content isn't necessary. In fact, videos that feel real and personal tend to perform better than those that feel overly professional.

Content Types and When to Use Them

TikTok is built around short videos, but there are a few different ways to create:

- <u>Videos</u> - These are the core content format. Use vertical video (9:16) to tell stories, share tips, or entertain. You can film directly in the app or upload edited clips.
- <u>Photo Slideshows</u> - Share a series of still images set to music. Great for showcasing products, transformations, or visual storytelling.

- <u>Duets</u> - Post a split-screen video responding to or interacting with someone else's video. Use this for reactions, commentary, or adding value to existing content.
- <u>Stitches</u> - Clip a portion of someone else's video and add your own ending or perspective. This is ideal for adding thoughts, answering questions, or continuing a conversation.
- <u>Livestreaming</u> - Once eligible, go live to interact directly with your audience. This is great for Q&As, tutorials, or sharing real-time updates.

TikTok moves fast, and attention spans are short. To succeed, you need to hook viewers within the first 3 seconds.

What Makes Content Perform Well

To grab and keep attention:

- Start with a bold question, a value statement, or eye-catching movement
- Use on-screen text to make your message clear even without sound
- Include trending audio when it fits your message
- Keep the video vertical and full screen (1080 x 1920 pixels)
- Stay casual—TikTok favors videos that feel like real moments, not commercials

Some of the most successful TikToks feel like behind-the-scenes clips, casual tutorials, or funny thoughts. You don't need a fancy camera or perfect setup. Filming on your phone is often more than enough. What matters most is clarity, relevance, and personality.

Engaging with the Community

TikTok is very interactive. Growth often comes from joining ongoing conversations:

- Stitch and duet trending or relevant posts
- React to others' content or add your unique perspective
- Engage with comments on your videos
- Comment on other creators' posts

The more connected and active you are, the more likely your content is to be seen.

Hashtag Strategy

Hashtags help TikTok categorize your content and show it to the right people. Use a mix of trending and niche tags to optimize your reach:

- Use 3 to 5 relevant hashtags per video
- Avoid stuffing too many, clarity and relevance matter
- Search the Discover tab or scroll the For You Page (FYP) to spot trending topics

- Match hashtags to the content of your video for better alignment with TikTok's algorithm

Ideal Image and Video Dimensions

- Video Size: 1080 x 1920 pixels (9:16 ratio)
- Always use full-screen vertical video
- Keep closed captions and text within the [safe zone](#) so nothing gets cut off on smaller screens
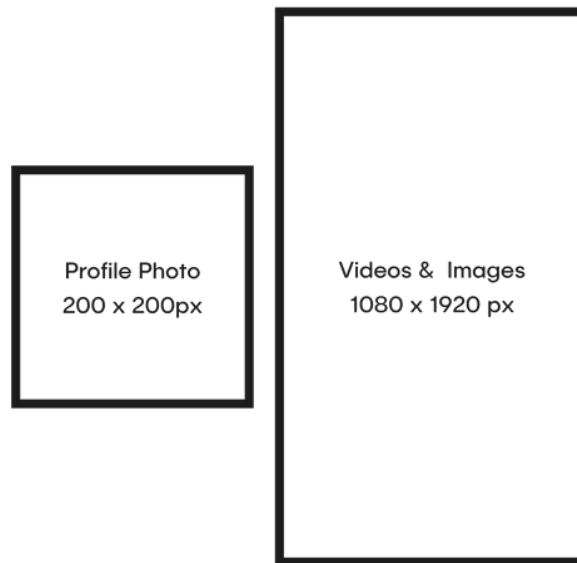
YouTube

YouTube is the go-to platform for long-form, searchable content. It's owned by Google, which means your videos can show up in search results and drive traffic over time. This makes YouTube ideal for building long-term visibility, credibility, and trust with your audience.

What YouTube Is Best For:

- Tutorials and how-to videos
- Deep dives into your services or topics you care about
- Educational or informative content
- Storytelling and case studies
- Product demos or reviews

YouTube is also great for creating evergreen content, videos that stay relevant and searchable long after they're posted. YouTube is a long game. Focus on quality content, eye-catching thumbnails, and consistent posting. Over time, your

channel can become a powerful tool for education, trust-building, and growing your business.

Content Types and When to Use Them

YouTube offers a variety of content options to meet your audience where they are:

- <u>Standard Videos</u> - Great for longer, in-depth content. These help explain ideas, answer questions, and showcase your expertise.
- <u>YouTube Shorts</u> - Short-form vertical videos, similar to TikToks or Instagram Reels. Shorts are great for reaching new viewers and gaining exposure through trending audio or quick tips.
- <u>Playlists</u> - Group related videos together to guide viewers through a topic and keep them watching.
- <u>Community Tab</u> - Once unlocked, use this feature to post polls, images, and text updates to stay connected between videos.

The key to success on YouTube is consistency and value. Focus on making content that teaches, inspires, or helps your audience.

Thumbnails and Titles: Your Video's First Impression

Your thumbnail and title are the most important parts of any YouTube video. They're what convince someone to click. Thumbnails are like the cover of a book. If they're not compelling, people won't watch. A good thumbnail grabs attention, makes people curious, and matches the video content.

Most creators upload a custom thumbnail image, which gives you more control over design and branding. YouTube will suggest still frames from your video, but uploading your own allows you to add bold text, highlight key visuals, and make sure your video stands out. You'll need to verify your YouTube account to access the custom thumbnail feature.

How to Make Effective Thumbnails:

- Use bold, easy-to-read text
- Include close-up facial expressions or relevant imagery
- Stick to a consistent visual style for branding
- Keep important elements away from the corners (they might get cut off on mobile)
- Test different thumbnail styles to see what gets better clicks

Pair your thumbnail with a clear, searchable title that describes what the viewer will get from the video.

Supporting Features for Better Engagement

To make your videos more effective and keep viewers engaged, it's important to use YouTube's built-in tools. Chapters allow you to break longer videos into clearly labeled sections using timestamps. This makes it easier for viewers to find the part they're most interested in and helps keep them watching longer.

Cards and end screens are valuable tools for encouraging viewers to explore more of your content. You can use them to link to other videos, playlists, or even your website, which helps guide viewers through your channel and extend their time with your brand.

Organizing your content into playlists is another smart strategy. Playlists help you group related videos together and create a natural flow for viewers. They also improve overall watch time and make your channel feel more polished and user-friendly.

Finally, don't forget the importance of clear calls to action. Asking viewers to like, comment, subscribe, or check out another video may seem obvious, but these prompts are often what actually inspire people to engage. Without a CTA, viewers may simply move on without taking the next step.

Descriptions, Keywords, and SEO

YouTube is a search engine, so SEO matters.

- <u>Descriptions</u> - Write clear, keyword-rich descriptions. Explain what the video covers, include links, and summarize key points.
- <u>Keywords</u> - Use terms your audience would type into YouTube or Google when looking for your content.
- <u>Tags</u> - Tags still help YouTube understand your video, though they're less important than they used to be. Focus more on the title, description, and transcript.

Hashtag Strategy

YouTube allows hashtags in the video description, which can help improve discovery.

- Use 3 to 5 relevant hashtags in your video description
- Hashtags are clickable and can appear above the title
- Especially useful for YouTube Shorts and trending topics
- Use YouTube's search bar to see hashtag suggestions and autocomplete results

- Explore popular hashtags in your industry and keep an eye on trends through YouTube Studio or Google Trends

Ideal Dimensions

Recommended Dimensions:
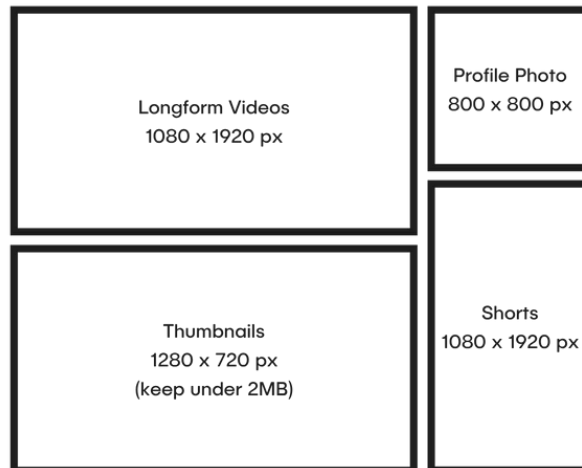
Creating Strong Content

Once you understand the platforms and how they function, the next step is building content that connects. Strong content is clear, engaging, visually appealing, and aligned with your brand and business goals. You don't need to be a professional designer or have a video crew to succeed. What matters most is showing up consistently, providing value, and building a sense of trust.

Use Strong Visuals in Every Post

Visual content stops the scroll. Every post should include a high-quality photo, graphic, or video unless you're sharing something like a YouTube link on Facebook (which auto-generates a preview) or posting short text updates on X.

Use:

- High-resolution photos and videos, or well-lit phone shots
- Consistent brand colors, fonts, and graphic elements
- Edited graphics sized properly for each platform
- Captions and on-screen text in videos to make them accessible and easy to follow without sound

Most platforms display on-screen elements in similar layouts: icons and buttons on the right, captions at the bottom. Keep important visuals and text within the "safe zone" of your video to avoid things being cut off or covered.

Creating Short-form Videos

Short-form videos like Reels, TikToks, and Shorts are some of the most powerful content types for engagement and discoverability. To create strong short videos:

- Grab attention early. Hook viewers within the first 3 seconds using motion, bold statements, or on-screen text.
- Use captions. Always include closed captions or subtitles. Most people watch without sound, and captions improve accessibility and retention.
- Stay in the safe zone. Keep all important text and visuals away from the edges, especially the top, bottom, and right side where platform buttons may overlap. This keeps your message easy to see on any device.
- Keep it real. Authentic, behind-the-scenes, or personality-driven clips tend to perform better than highly polished content.
- Use trending audio when it fits. Trending music or sounds can help your video show up in more feeds if it supports your message.
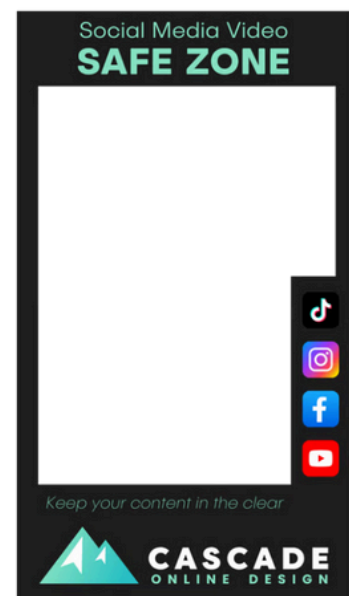
Focus on clarity, connection, and value for your audience.

Format Text for Readability

Good content also means easy-to-read captions. Large walls of text can turn people away. Instead:

- Use paragraph breaks to add white space
- Break up longer ideas with bullets or emojis
- Use a clear call to action at the end (e.g., "Comment below," "Visit the link in our bio," or "Book your session today")

The way your caption looks matters just as much as what it says.

Prioritize Relatability

You don't need a fancy studio to make good content. In fact, the most relatable and successful social media videos today often feel casual and unpolished. It's

okay to record from your phone, speak from the heart, and let your personality come through.

People are tired of over-polished perfection. A quick video showing your workspace, explaining your process, or talking directly to the camera can be more powerful than a professional commercial. This kind of content builds trust.

Behind-the-scenes content, whether it's your messy desk, a mid-project update, or a moment of vulnerability, can make your audience feel more connected to your brand. Even platforms like Instagram are shifting toward more real and authentic content. People want to see the human side of your business.

Managing Your Content Calendar

Posting regularly is one of the best ways to stay visible and build a relationship with your audience. But social media doesn't have to take over your life. With a little planning, you can stay consistent without feeling overwhelmed.

Best Posting Frequency by Platform

There's no magic number, but here are some general benchmarks that work well for small and medium businesses:

- Facebook: 3–5 times per week (mix of posts, reels, and events)
- Instagram: 3–5 times per week (including reels, carousels, and stories)
- X (Twitter): 1–3 short posts per day or active engagement on trending content
- LinkedIn: 2–3 times per week (personal profile + business page)
- TikTok: 2–4 videos per week
- YouTube: 1 long-form video every 1–2 weeks, or 2–3 Shorts per week

These are just guidelines. What matters most is consistency. If once a week is all you can manage, that's perfectly fine as long as you stick with it. Regular posting builds trust with your audience and improves how the algorithm views your account.

Timing and Scheduling Tips

Each platform has general windows where users are more active. While this can vary by audience, here are some common active timeframes:

- Facebook: Late morning to mid-afternoon (9 a.m.–2 p.m.)
- Instagram: Early morning or evening (7–9 a.m. or 6–8 p.m.)
- X (Twitter): Lunchtime and early evenings (12–2 p.m. or 5–7 p.m.)
- LinkedIn: Weekday mornings (7–9 a.m.)

- TikTok: Evenings and weekends (6–10 p.m.)
- YouTube: Afternoons and weekends (2–6 p.m.)

Experiment and check your own analytics to refine what works best for your audience.

Use Scheduling Tools to Plan Ahead

Scheduling your posts in advance lets you stay consistent, batch your content, and avoid last-minute stress. It also helps you stay visible even on busy days and maintain a more strategic approach to your marketing.

For Facebook and Instagram, the free Meta Business Suite is a solid option. It allows you to schedule posts, stories, and reels, and gives you basic performance insights.

If you want to schedule content across multiple platforms in one place, consider using a third-party scheduling tool. These platforms typically include helpful features like cross-platform planning, post previews, and analytics. These tools can help streamline your workflow and give you a clear view of your upcoming content.

Measuring Success with Analytics

Measuring your results is key to improving your social media and knowing what's actually working. Without tracking, you're just guessing.

Start by tying each post or campaign to a goal—awareness, engagement, leads, or sales. For awareness, watch reach, impressions, and follower growth. For engagement, focus on likes, comments, shares, and clicks. For leads or sales, track link clicks and conversions.

Each platform's dashboard provides this data. Reach shows how many unique people saw your content. Impressions are total views. Engagement shows interaction. Click-through and conversion rates reveal how well your posts drive action.

Look at your top posts to learn what works. Use those insights to repeat what performs well, improve what doesn't, and guide your strategy going forward.