Social Media and Content Creation Best Practice Guide

In today's digital world, social media is a fantastic tool for promoting your business. However, it is essential that your business has a strategy in place.

In this guide created by Whitewall Marketing, we share helpful tips on how you can create high quality content and improve your social media marketing.

Table of Contents

Content Creation and Capture Recommendations

When capturing content there are several quick and easy elements to consider ensuring your images or videos feel as polished and professional as possible.

- Clean the lens - check it once, check it twice, check again. Ensure that your camera and/or phone lens is always smudge free. Clean with a microfiber cloth.

- Check your settings - Check your phone camera settings are set correctly for professional shooting. iPhone example: Format – high-efficiency with video shooting at 1080p at 60fps with Apple ProRes set on.

- Find your angles - Take the time to position your phone and find the right angle. It is low angle to create scale or drama. Or perhaps high angle aerial shot to capture a tabletop or display.

- Rule of thirds - This is a simple guideline for composing your shot. Imagine dividing your screen into thirds both vertically and horizontally and framing your subject where the lines intersect. Some phone camera settings have a grid feature that can be turned on.

- Lighting - it's recommended to use bright but indirect natural light, either outside or near a window. Avoid direct sunlight as this can look over exposed and harsh. If you are in a darker setting, use a ring light or other light accessory to create a more natural and vivid look. Be aware that in a shop setting, LED lighting can come across as flickery when recording video in this case, we recommend capturing still photography and editing it into a compilation.

- Steadiness - When taking a photo or video, keep your phone as steady as possible. Hold it with two hands or use a stabiliser to prevent shaky footage. If this is proving too challenging, we recommend using a tripod for static shots or investing in a gimbal accessory which allows for more complex moving shots to be captured with ease.

- Use editing tools - Many phones have built-in editing tools that allow you to adjust brightness, contrast, and other elements of your photo or video. Take advantage of these tools to enhance your content. Additionally CapCut and Canva are good options with both free and subscription options.

- Use templates - When creating reels using templates from CapCut or Canva not only makes editing quicker and easier but also helps you learn effective video lengths, transitions types, speeds and audio styles.

- Trending Audio - Be cautious when adding audio to content. It is always recommended to use copywrite free music, audio or SFX. Rights to music can differ across Meta and TikTok so it's best check rights and you may need to use separate soundtracks for each platform.
  - Meta Sounds: https://www.facebook.com/sound
  - TikTok Sounds: https://ads.tiktok.com/business/creativecenter/music/pc/en

- Practice - The more you practice taking photos and videos, the better you'll become. Experiment with different settings and techniques to find what works best for you and look for inspiration in other content.

Content Categories

When planning your content calendar consider where your content will sit within key categories or pillars:

Products and Services

- Tag the product suppliers in your stories and posts. Try using multiple tags, but do not clutter the content, neatly align or stack in a corner of the frame.
- Share testimonials and reviews.
- Share user-generated content on stories (stories the page has been tagged in by customers on socials) to increase audience engagement.
- Share competitions and giveaways which prompts likes, tags and shares as entering mechanisms. This can increase reach and awareness.

Educational Content

- Sharing educational content on social media can establish a brand as an authority in its industry, build trust with followers, showcase expertise
- Share industry related news.
- The story behind the business.
- Supplier stories and why your businesses work together
- Customer tips or USPs related to the product or service

Company Spotlights

- Share company updates.
- Behind the scenes or set up footage
- Meet the owner / meet the team content. Photography with bios or mini-interview series to portray skills and personality.
- Celebrate milestones, awards, accreditation

Follower Engagement on Stories

- Adding an interactive or personalised elements to stories can help increase content engagement and reach.
- Run polls on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok to ask your followers opinions on product, services, relevant topics or why not spark a debate with a trending topic that aligns with your business.
- Add an emoji slider – add a slider to story content for a gamified element which can boost audience engagement
- Use the question function to host a Q&A session on stories. Prompt your audience to ask any questions regarding your business. Answers can then be posted on subsequent content or help form FAQs on your website or Linktree.
- Feature UGC (user generated content) that your business has been tagged in on stories.
- Offer exclusive discounts or promotions for your social media followers that can only be accessed through your stories for a limited period. This not only increases engagement and create a sense of excitement but also encourages purchases or enquiries.

Content Management

Social Media

- Post Regularly - It is best practice consistently post content on your chosen platforms. This doesn't mean daily, this can be unrealistic for even the biggest brands. Choose what is right for your business two or three posts a week is ideal but a minimum of once a week. Quality, consistent and considered content is more important than quantity. Regular content keeps you on your audience's feed and their eyes on your brand.

- Plan - Develop a content calendar that outlines the posts you are sharing across which platforms. It's useful to plan 3 to 6 months ahead to outline content pillars and purposes, to ensure you are hitting key topics or events. It also serves as a record when planning future content.

- Schedule - To keep on track with posting regularly use Meta Business to schedule content. Watch this useful step by step guide for more information How To Use Meta Business Suite [Updated for 2025]

- Be Authentic - Ideally create content using your own footage and photography rather than stock footage. This promotes a true representation of your company, service or products. If stock footage is required while you build your own bank of content, then aim for natural and less staged stock options for a more authentic look.

- Use Hashtags - Currently there is a debate if hashtags are still relevant. However, we recommend that for businesses, hashtags still serve a branding and categorisation purpose. Campaign-specific or community-driven hashtags can be useful, but they shouldn't be solely relied on for growth. Instead, focus on SEO-driven captions, key words and platform-specific trends. Include hashtags that are relevant to the content of the post and try to use niche hashtags where possible. Ensure the hashtags are included in the post and not as a separate comment. We recommend creating a hashtag bank that can be referred to when posting in the future.

- Key Word Messaging - Implementing key messaging into social posts and captions creates consistent messaging and can increase awareness and recognition of your business. Pull key words which are related to your business's USP and/or objectives.

Engagement for Growth

To increase the visibility and reach of business social media, we recommend that you engage with other businesses' content. By posting regularly and engaging with other users content the platform algorithms will register that you are an active member. Your content and account will then be shared with other potential audiences and new followers. To boost your activity, try the following;

- Comments - Engage with comments on the recent posts of other, larger accounts you follow who's audiences are relevant to your own. This exposes you to the other company's audience and can boost engagement and interest in your account. Ensure to be positive, appropriate and professional.

- Watch - Watch and reply to stories of accounts you follow

- Support - Leave comments, like and share the content of other small business, accounts and councils. This not only help build your community but exposes your account to new audiences and possible new customers.

- Go Live - Using the 'live' function on TikTok, Facebook and Instagram engages your audience in real-time whilst showing the brands personality and authentic voice. Although 'live' should feel spontaneous and authentic to your audience, make sure to plan out your content so it remains professional and relevant. Also ensure you exit the 'live' function at the end, to mitigate any risk of streaming irrelevant content.

Setting KPIs

Following a KPI strategy is recommended to measure success of a marketing strategy. Trends and performance metrics from these results should be used to inform future social media campaign decisions. Example KPIs:

- Grid content - Posting 3-5 posts per week on Facebook/Instagram to increase brand presence.

- Story posted content - Posting a minimum of 1 a day on Facebook/ Instagram to increase brand presence.

- Reach - Measure the reach percentage of content posted on the Facebook/ Instagram page to indicate the number of people who saw the business' content.

- Followers - Measure the number of followers on the Facebook/ Instagram page for the business gains.

- Engagement - Measure if the engagement on the Facebook/ Instagram page has increased to indicate how to audience are responding to the type of content posted.

- Post interactions - Analyse if the content posted on the Facebook/ Instagram page is receiving interactions such as likes, saves and comments.

Measuring Results on Meta Business

Meta Business Suite – available on mobile app and website - can be used to measure results on both Facebook and Instagram. This tool also provides downloadable performance reports.

The insights within these reports or summarised dashboard offer insights on how the page is performing. Meta Business considers the following areas of performance:

- Content activity - Which posts/content are performing best.
- Reach - Quantifies the number of unique accounts that have seen a post at least once.
- Impressions - The number of times a post was on screen.
- Engagement - How many accounts that have interacted with your post.
- Post interactions - The total likes, saves, comments and shares on your post.
- Audience - The demographics of audience(s).
- Visits - How many visits pages and profiles have had.
- Likes and follows - new links and follows to pages of profiles.

Branding

When it comes to branding on social, consistency is key across your social media presence. Cementing your brand identity and presence across each platform and consumer touchpoint will shape your company's viability and recognition amongst your target audience(s). This is achieved by replicating your chosen company's; colour(s), logo, icons, name and usernames.

Brand Colours

- Curating a palette - Having a more extensive palette allows for variety when creating content and ensures your content does not become too similar or samey for your audience. It also gives you more options for text overlays on images or backgrounds if your primary colour doesn't contrast well. When choosing your brand palette consider a primary colour as well as two or four supporting colours.

    - For example, the primary colour could be a dark strong purple which is used on the majority of your assets and your logo. Then the supporting secondary colours which will be used for alternative backgrounds or text overlays could be shades of purple from light to dark.

    - Alternatively, the secondary colours could represent elements of your business; green for sustainability or blue for community but always keep it within a similar tone of the primary colours. Such as bold and vibrant or muted and pastel.
    -
- Easy content creation - Having a predefined colour palette simplifies the content creation process. You and your team will know exactly which colours to use and how to maintain a defined visual identity. This can save time and effort in the long run.

- Stand out from competitors - A unique and consistent colour palette helps your business stand out in a crowded marketplace. When your brand consistently uses a specific set of colours, it differentiates you from competitors and makes it easier for customers to distinguish your content in their feeds.

- Professional presence - Consistency in your colour choices demonstrates professionalism. It shows that you pay attention to detail and are committed to presenting a polished image to your customers. This professionalism can instil trust and confidence in your brand.
    - Top tip - Many content and design platforms will use HEX number or value to quickly sample a brand colour. If you currently only have RGB values – provided by a branding agency or previous design you can convert the RGB colour to HEX on this website https://www.rgbtohex.net/ . Simply copy the HEX number and paste this into the colour search bar on your chosen platform such as Canva.

Logos and Icons

- Visual identity - Using a specific logo, set of icons or graphics provides a sense of order and visual cohesion across your channels and content. This makes your social media profiles look more professional, organised, and attractive. But most importantly recognisable to your audience(s).

Name and Usernames

- Consistent naming - Making sure that your company name is clearly named across all social platforms is key, as it ensures your audience(s) can search for, identify and distinguish your company from another. If your name is SparkleWindowCleanersLondon on Facebook but SparkleCleaningLondon on Instagram, this can confuse possible customers, especially if you logos and brand are not completely aligned.

- Location, location - Only use location markers such as London or Midlands if you ONLY service specific regions or areas. Otherwise be more general such as UK or if not vital to your offering don't include the locations. This can also be limiting or cause confusion in the future if your business grows.

Paid Social

What is paid social? Paid social media involves promoting content through paid for ads, while organic social media focuses on building a following through free content sharing and engagement. Paid social aims for targeted reach and immediate results, while organic social cultivates authentic relationships and long-term brand awareness.

Increased Reach and Visibility

Paid social media ads allow you to reach a larger audience compared to organic posts. By targeting specific demographics, interests, and locations, you can ensure that your ads are seen by potential customers in the correct location who are likely to be interested in the products and services sold.

Precise Targeting

With paid ads, you can define your target audience with precision. This ensures that your ad is shown to people who are most likely to engage with it and become potential customers. By narrowing your target audience to be location specific, you can focus your budget on reaching local individuals who are more likely to visit your business.

Call-to-Action and Conversion Tracking

Paid ads on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok allow you to include a call-to-action (CTA) button directly in your ad. This can be linked to a landing page on your website for example or a particular product/ service you want to increase sales on. This enables users to visit your website and make purchases. You can set up conversion tracking to measure the effectiveness of your ads in driving website visits, sign-ups, or purchases.

Ad Scheduling

Paid social media ads provide the flexibility to schedule your ads for specific times and days. This is beneficial for your objective of scheduling posts. You can choose to display your ads during peak times when your target audience is most active on social media. By aligning your ad schedule with optimal posting times, you can increase the likelihood of engagement and conversions.

Increased Social Media Presence

Running paid ads can help increase your social media presence by expanding your reach and attracting new followers. As your ads are displayed to a wider audience, more people will become aware of your business and follow your social media accounts. This can lead to organic growth and engagement as your follower base increases.

Useful Links

- <u>Best practice for Facebook Ads 2025</u>
- <u>Best practice for Instagram Ads 2025</u>
- <u>Create an ad on Meta Business Suite desktop</u> | <u>Meta Business Help Centre</u>

Running paid ads can help increase your social media presence by expanding your reach and attracting new followers. As your ads are displayed to a wider audience, more people will become aware of your business and follow your social media accounts. This can lead to organic growth and engagement as your follower base increases.

Further Support

If you require further support with your social media and content creation, please contact your dedicated adviser directly, or email invest@westlothian.gov.uk .