



The Relationship Marketer's Guide to Social Media Success

WHERE, WHEN, AND WHAT TO POST TO ENGAGE YOUR FOLLOWING

Introduction

Unless you've been sleeping for the past decade, you know that social media is essential to your business. Clients expect you to have a social media presence. These days, not being on social media is like not having a website. And that's not the only reason to get social.

It's where your clients are.

74%

OF ADULTS USE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.

Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and all the other big networks offer opportunities to build and strengthen connections with your clients virtually any time and anywhere. You can start conversations. You can create icebreakers for follow-up calls. If you pay attention, you can learn about your followers' interests and share relevant content with them.

Despite this, social media can seem daunting given the sheer number of networks, frequently changing technology, and busy work schedules.

Source: "Social Networking Fact Sheet," Pew Research Center, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/social-networking-fact-sheet/>.

320
MILLION

Twitter has more monthly active users (320 million) than the entire population of the fourth most populous nation in the world (Indonesia with 256 million).

Source: Elena Holodny and Andy Kiersz, "CHART: How Popular Social Networks Stack Up Against the Biggest Countries in the World," Business Insider, February 3, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/social-media-users-and-country-populations-2016-2>.

1.4
BILLION

With over 1.4 billion users, if Facebook were a nation, it would be the most populous on earth.

Source: Timothy Stenovec, "Facebook Is Now Bigger Than the Largest Country on Earth," Huffington Post, January, 28, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/28/facebook-biggest-country_n_6565428.html.



This e-book can help make it a little easier. We'll cover the essential information and offer pro tips to get the results you deserve from your social media marketing.

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Where to Post

It seems like a new social network pops up every week. And given how much is written about the benefits of social media, you may be tempted to immediately jump into all of them. Resist.

Engagement is more important than frequency. We recommend starting slow with one or two networks you know best. If you have a personal Facebook account, for instance, you should be able to learn how to use a business page pretty quickly. Once you get comfortable and start having success, then you can look to expand into the next site.

Choosing where to post will also depend on what it is you are posting. Each site has different features, strengths, and goals, and requires a slightly different strategy.



Facebook is a versatile social media network that people use for a variety of reasons, including getting or staying in touch with others, sharing images and videos, and as entertainment. It's a good choice for almost any content you have to share.

Google+ is another social website that offers options for sharing multiple types of content, such as images, video, and text. In addition, it lets you segment followers so that you can easily target your shares. You can use this for almost any content, but it's your top choice for content you only want certain clients to see.

Twitter is a communication tool with a 140-character limit. News, customer service, and quick messages are among the most popular uses. If what you're sharing is timely, Twitter is a great option.

Pinterest is a visual social media site. Everyone from shopaholics to DIY enthusiasts to small business owners use it for inspiration, organization, and reference. So if you have great images of home staging or decorating ideas, tasty recipes, or some other inspiring idea, this is a great place to share them.

Read more about what specific content works best for these sites later in this e-book.

When to Post

Lots of research has been done on the best days and times of the day to post to social media. TrackMaven analyzed over 1.5 million Facebook posts from nearly 6,000 brand pages as well as 1,423 Twitter accounts and 1.7 million tweets. SurePayroll and Ghergich & Company also compiled data on how timing affects social media performance. Here are the results of those findings:



Facebook interactions increase on **weekends**. Interactions were also higher for posts that went out during the **evening**.

 SocialBakers research suggests the ideal number of updates to post on Facebook is **1-2 per day**.



Sunday was the best day to get retweets, and the most retweets are generated at **night**.

 A study from SocialBakers found that average engagement rate declines after the third tweet posted during one day. On the other hand, because Twitter feeds fill up so quickly, Track Social found that response spikes at **5, 11, and 21 tweets per day**.



Saturday mornings are the most effective time to pin content, with the exception on fashion and retail businesses.

 The best time for them was **Friday at 3 p.m.** Conversely, sharing during normal work hours was found to be the least effective.

 Top brands have experienced rapid growth by posting **multiple times per day**.



Wednesday at 9 a.m. is the best time to post on Google+.

 Early morning and evenings are the worst.

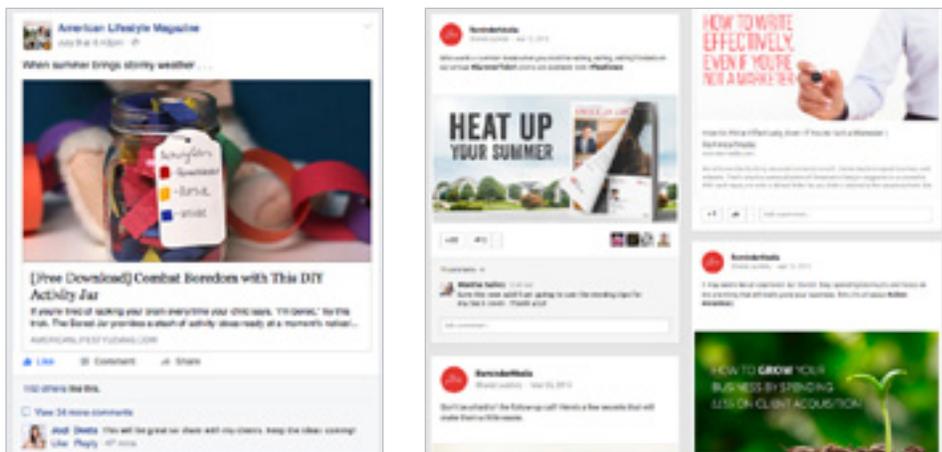
 **Consistency** is more important than frequency on Google+. Some users have seen traffic drop up to 50% when posting less than normal.

While these stats are helpful in planning an initial social media strategy, you'll want to test the variables for yourself. Depending on the industry, location, and other factors, your audience's social media activities may differ from the typical user.

What to Post

Social media is a place to engage and build relationships, not to overtly sell your products and services. That's why social media experts recommend making no more than 20% of your activity about your business. The rest should be content that interests, entertains, or enlightens your followers. Here are a couple of insights that may help:

Here's how an intriguing topic with an eye-catching image stands out in Facebook and Google+ feeds.

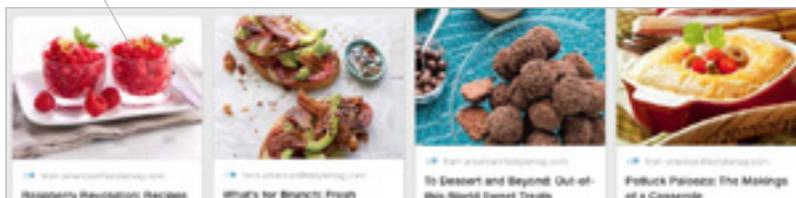
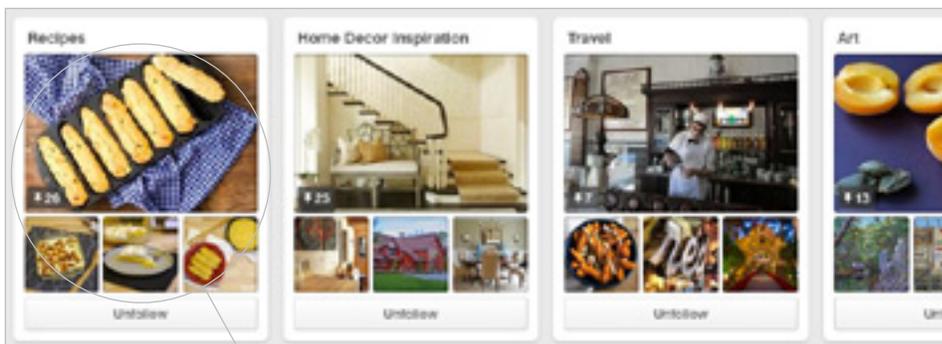


According to research from CoSchedule and Buffer, food, home, and lifestyle topics account for 85% of the world's most shared content.



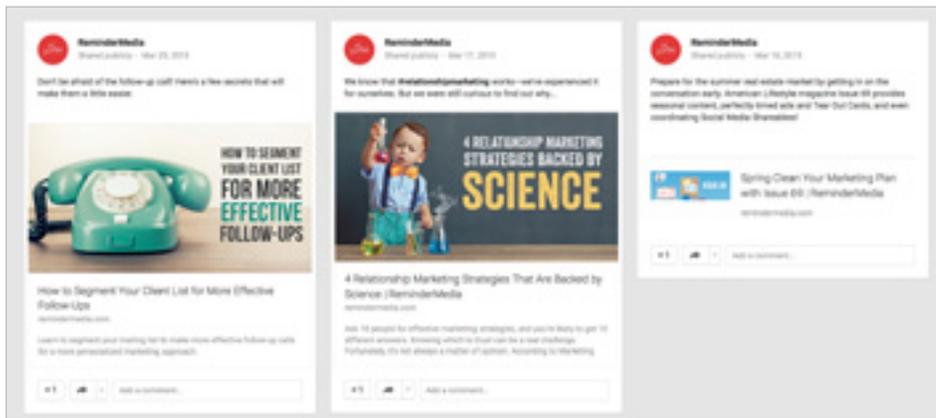
Images are highly engaging. In Socialbakers' analysis of the top 10% of posts by more than 30,000 Facebook brand pages, photos generated 87% of all interactions. No other format had more than 4%.

Group related images together on Pinterest boards to attract people seeking specific types of content, such as recipes, and engage your followers.



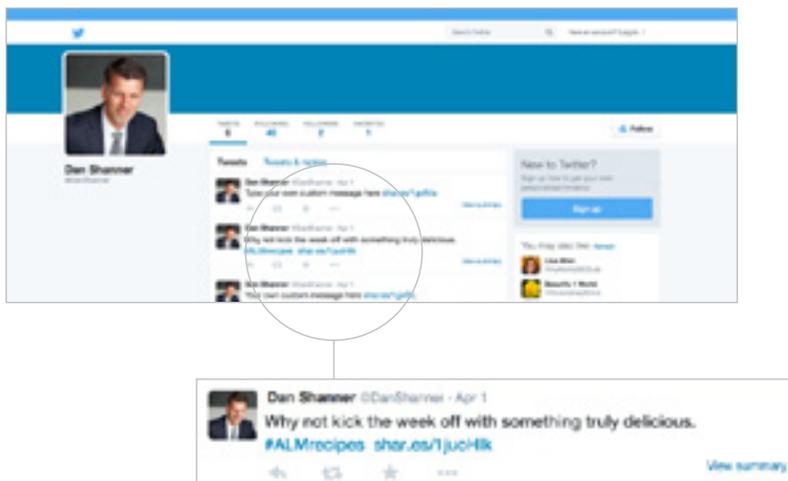
What to Post

Social media company HootSuite wrote on their blog that they found learning opportunities to be among most successful content on Google+. That makes educational or how-to shares worth trying on the site.



Linking to interesting articles is a great way to engage clients on Twitter. For added impact, include hashtags and mention other people. Research from Buddy Media found that tweets with hashtags receive two times more engagement than those without.

Here's an example:



Make your posts share-worthy.

One of the things that makes social media so powerful is the ability to quickly expand your reach. But that won't happen with mediocre content. Post things that get people excited and want others to see and interact with.

Like all of the advice in this e-book, you want to be sure to test these out for yourself as results will vary from business to business.



How to Get a Return on Your Social Media Investment

You know where, when, and what to post. Now comes the million-dollar question: How do you get business out of it?

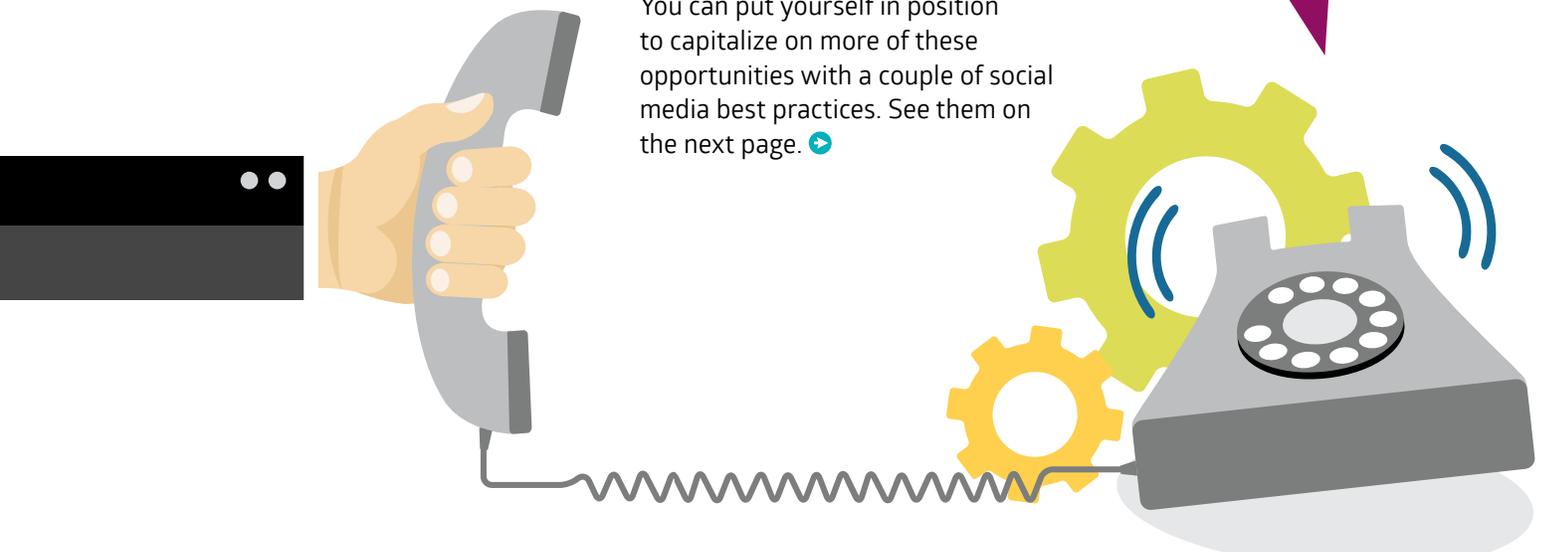
The same way you get business out of all your relationship-marketing efforts: pick up the phone, and call the person.

Social media won't make a sale for you. But it will give you opportunities to go out and get it.

Learn what your followers like, not just as a group, but on an individual level. If you notice that Bob likes the comfort food recipes you post, note that in your CRM. Now you have an icebreaker you can use to call up Bob and ask for referrals. Your opening could go something like this:

“Hey, Bob. I just found a great buffalo mac and cheese recipe, and I immediately thought of you. I’m going to post it on Facebook today, but I wanted to call you personally and let you know, because I know you like comfort food as much as I do.”

You can put yourself in position to capitalize on more of these opportunities with a couple of social media best practices. See them on the next page. ➔



How to Get a Return on Your Social Media Investment



Be social.

Don't treat social media like a broadcast channel. Use it to strengthen personal connections. Here are a few easy ways you can do that:

1 CARRY ON CONVERSATIONS.

Ask questions in your updates. Encourage comments on things you post. And reply to every person you engage online in a friendly, personal way.

2 CUSTOMIZE YOUR MESSAGES.

Do you have something to share that you know a specific individual will particularly enjoy? Most social media sites offer ways to share with individuals.



Utilize analytics to refine your approach.

This e-book includes suggestions on what and when to post on each social media network based on information gathered from third-party research. But it comes with a big caveat. The only way to know if these will produce similar results for you is to experiment for yourself. You may find that you have more success at other times, with completely different types of content.

Most social media networks have analytics functions that offer insights into audience engagement. Use them to test and measure different strategies to refine your approach over time.



Promote your social media accounts to build your following.

Great content does no good if nobody sees it. Get the word out, and build your following. Add links to your social media accounts to your website, e-mail signature, business cards, and marketing materials. Tell your clients about what you are posting, and follow up with a phone call when there is something particularly relevant.

Conclusion

It's easy to get wrapped up in all of the little details of social media. Obsessing over the perfect time of the day to share to a network, how many likes you get on a post, or the ideal length of a post are commonplace. But it doesn't have to be complicated or overwhelming.

At its core, social media is really about connecting with people on a personal level. Regardless of what tactics or tricks you use, your goal should always be the same: to build rapport and strengthen relationships with clients and prospects.

If you do that, you'll be successful.

FOR SHAREABLE CONTENT,
visit our American Lifestyle
Facebook page.

 reminderMEDIA

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