

# GRACE<sup>®</sup>

Communications Foundation

## USING SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGICALLY



# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

## Introduction - Social Media is an Investment

For many cause-focused communications professionals, social media is something that they know needs to be done, but seems to always get short shrift during the busy day when there are fires to put out and pressing deadlines approaching.

Doing social media right, regardless of the scale at which you're operating, requires an investment of time and effort. So, it's important to frame the work as a business investment. By framing the time and energy spent on social in this way, it will help you and your team internalize the value of the effort spent on a process that otherwise may seem frivolous. This framing allows teams to approach social more strategically and focus on making improvements rather than thinking of the process as simple upkeep.

## Reasons to Invest Time in Social Media

There are plenty of excellent reasons for cause-focused brands to invest energy in social media. Here are just a few mission-focused business reasons to allot staff time and creativity to posting on social platforms:

- ⦿ Change hearts and minds!
- ⦿ Build coalitions
- ⦿ Content Marketing - Drive traffic to your site
- ⦿ Engage influencers and journalists
- ⦿ Get inspired by like-minded orgs
- ⦿ Counter industry's use of social

## Goal Setting in Social Strategies

It's imperative to set goals for your social strategy. If any of the following are goals of your communications efforts, then you need to be doing social!

### **Are you trying to...**

- ⦿ Raise awareness of an issue? Educate the public?
- ⦿ Build support for proposed policies? Push changes to legislation?
- ⦿ Build support for an initiative?
- ⦿ Change consumer behaviors? Change business behaviors?
- ⦿ Fundraise? Find volunteers?  
48.5% of those aged 18-38 in the US learned about the causes they support via Social
- ⦿ Engage people? Find program participants? Find sources?
- ⦿ Get more people to use of your tools or take a pledge, etc.?

### **Then there's a reason to invest time in social!**

## Being Clear-Eyed about Capacity is the Key to Success

Because it does take considerable effort to produce quality social media content and maintain a relationship with your audience, it's imperative that you and your team are clear-eyed about your capacity to spend time on social. This will allow you to be able to clearly communicate with leadership about the return on your teams' investment in social. By outlining the amount of staff hours per week and the numeric goals you've set, you'll be able to quickly answer all of the questions that can otherwise waste hours of your day, like "why haven't we posted about this yet" or "I read this great article, we should post about it today" etc.

## Set a Goal of Posts per Week per Platform

While many social media managers shy away from setting a numeric goal of posts per week so that they're free to be more creative and less tied to schedules, we encourage you to do so for a number of reasons:

1. You've set expectations for your team so there can be accountability if your numbers fall short.
2. So much of hitting your goals for social and keeping social audiences engaged comes down to the amount of content your brand publishes on the platform. People can't engage with tweets that aren't written.
3. When leadership or others asks for more to be done for a certain purpose, you know what it will take to fulfill those requests.

Be realistic! Block out approx. 30 to 45 minutes per post, depending on your team's expertise with social. Also, feel free to flex your schedule based on what's going on. If you've got a very busy week or staff out of office, it's fine to go light during a week, especially if you're able to make up those numbers the following week.

## Sample Schedules

The following are two sample schedules of posts per week on the same platforms. The first would apply to a smaller team or someone with a few hours per day to spend on social. The second would work for a team with a staff member who spends a majority of their week on social. Don't let these numbers intimidate you! Using the below strategy, these numbers will seem much more do-able.

| LIGHT SCHEDULE  | HEAVY SCHEDULE:   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3 Instagram Posts</li><li>2 Facebook Posts</li><li>5 Tweets</li><li>1 LinkedIn Post</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6 Instagram Posts</li><li>5 Facebook Posts</li><li>21 Tweets</li><li>3 LinkedIn Pos</li></ul> |

# BEST PRACTICES ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS

The following best practices will speed up your teams' time spent on social and will get you the most bang for your buck.

## Social Media Algorithms

### WHAT IS AN "ALGORITHM" AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A platform like Facebook uses its algorithm to sift through all the posts published by the people and pages that are followed by a user in order to find the content that it will display for that user.

- ⦿ Each platform's goal? Keep viewers on the platform to sell more ads.
  - Platforms want users to have an enjoyable experience that is highly engaging. They want to minimize the number of viewers that click on links that take them off the platform.
- ⦿ Each platform's algorithm does something different
  - Some platforms, like Facebook, do not show brands' content very much at all to encourage brands to pay for reach, and so that their users aren't constantly bombarded with solicitations and marketing. Others, like Twitter's popular feed, do not have an algorithm at all because their users demand it.

### YOUR BEST BET? BE A GOOD CONVERSATIONALIST!

To make these considerations simple, think of social media as a conversation that you're having at a gathering. What are the qualities of a good conversationalist? You want to be knowledgeable but not a know-it-all; you want to be interesting but not only talk about yourself; you want to be responsive to people's comments and reactions without seeming fake; and most of all, you want people to like and respect you! As we go through the next sections, keep this conceit in mind.

- ⦿ Your brand is an online community member. Be supportive of your audience, be considerate of their sensitivities and hold trolls and other disruptors accountable.
- ⦿ By being a good conversationalist and a good online community member, you're also aligning with the goals of each platform's algorithm. You're interesting and are keeping their audiences engaged.

## Internal & External Content Sources

What proportion of your posts should be internal content versus external content?

- ⦿ **Internal Content**  
Linking to your content and campaigns
- ⦿ **External Content**  
Linking to partner's content, news articles and studies etc.
- ⦿ **Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn**  
More even distribution of internal and external content
- ⦿ **Instagram and Pinterest**  
Primarily internal content, though regramming and pinning are welcomed

# Content Decisions

Consider the following options as you plan out the posts you'll publish each week.

- ⦿ **Engaging with your Audience vs. Broadcasting**

- Engaging with your audience is very important and time consuming  
By engaging with your audience, they'll know you care and are much more likely to return to your page and share your content. Certain algorithms, like Facebook's, also reward brands that engage regularly with their audience.  
— Engagement posts would be comments, retweets, regrams, shares, etc.
- Without doing so, you risk seeming “broadcast-y”  
— Do both and include engagement posts as part of your week's numeric goals. If your plan is to tweet 15 times each week, have 4 of those be retweets and a few be replies.

- ⦿ **Content Marketing to Get Clicks vs. Posting Marketing Collateral**

It's important to share a good portion of both of the below

- Content Marketing: Posts that link back to your content. Doing this drive viewers to your site where they are able to engage with your Calls to Action.
- Marketing Collateral: Photos, videos, graphics or other types of posts that don't take audience off-platform. These posts will potentially get more reach (especially on Facebook) and go far to meet your goal of changing hearts and minds.

# Comments and Messages

- ⦿ **Responding to Comments and Messages is Important**

- Types of Comments  
— Supportive Comments, Questions, Disagreements or Problematic Comments (racist, bigoted or inappropriate comments and personal attacks)

- ⦿ **Comment Policy & Canned Responses**

- Plan for how to handle each type of comments in advance
- Canned responses are a great time saver, especially for problematic comments.  
— Our recommendation is to delete problematic comments and reply in the thread with a boilerplate response such as the following:

*“We care deeply about fostering an engaging, passionate and fair conversation. Accordingly, we do not tolerate racist or derogatory language and reserve the right to remove any comments that we deem offensive and inappropriate.”*

# Cross-Platform Content Efficacy

## Measure Twice, Cut Multiple Times

Use one concept or goal for a social media post – say promoting a new report that your organization has just released – and reformat the graphics and text for that post to fit every other platform you're using. This will drastically cut down on the staff time spent on social because your team will not have to constantly find, vet

and create completely new content for every post.

- ⦿ Take one post and reformat it for each platform
- ⦿ Adjust graphics to fit size constraints  
For sizing, use [Spout Social's Always Up-To-Date Guide to Social Media Dimensions](#)
- ⦿ Adjust text/captions to fit platforms' requirements, audience and demographics
- ⦿ Adjust video to fit times and sizes

## Editorial Calendars and Scheduling

### INTEGRATING YOUR EDITORIAL CALENDARS

Take your organization's editorial calendar and set a corollary calendar for social. Similar to the above tactics, this will cut down on the amount of time it takes for staff to come up with the posts for the week and allows your team to be strategic about when and how each campaign is promoted and ensures none of your communications goals get left by the wayside.

**Tools:** Google Spread Sheets, AirTable, Microsoft Excel, Hootsuite etc.

### PLAN FOR PARTNER AND FUNDER ENGAGEMENT

Funders and partners love to see their name shared in a positive light! They'll definitely notice.

— Tie out to broader appeals, partnerships etc.

### EXTERNAL CONTENT SOURCES AND NEWS COVERAGE

Keep an updated list of sources that consistently have engaging content that aligns with your message. This will speed up staff's efforts at finding new content and will help you onboard new staff as well.

## Engagement Strategies

The following are just a few engagement strategies you may want to include in your editorial calendar as a way to expand your social reach and impact.

- ⦿ [Live-Casting Announcements](#)
- ⦿ [Influencer Marketing](#)
- ⦿ [Twitter Chats](#)
- ⦿ [Contests](#)
- ⦿ Action-Related Social Campaigns  
Use the strategies outlined in this document to ask your audience to take a specific action, like make a pledge, sign a petition or share a graphic
- ⦿ [Thunderclap](#)

## SO, WHICH PLATFORM TO FOCUS ON?

When picking which platforms to focus on, consider your target audience(s). By reviewing each of the platforms below, your team should be able to make a determination ABOUT which platforms work best for your brand. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are very popular options for plenty of reasons, so you may want to give them some extra weight in your considerations. Also, consider the capacity you have to tackle each platform and your overall marketing goals.

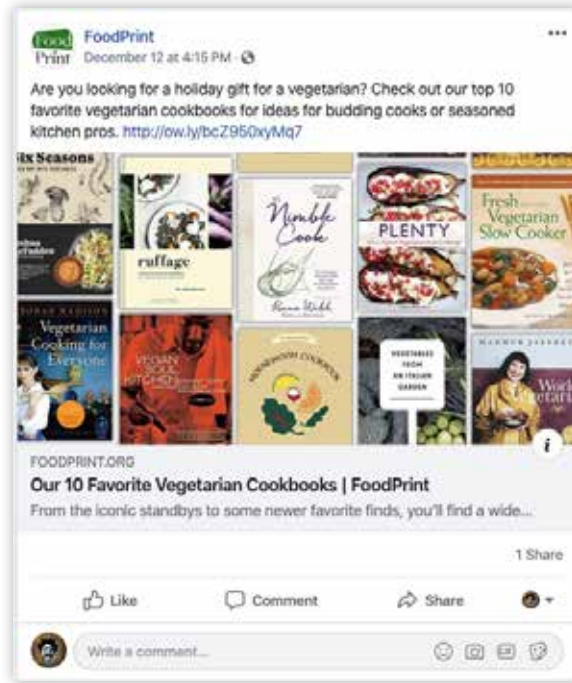
### **Platform-Specific Details**





# FACEBOOK

## Anatomy of a Post



## Reach and Algorithm

Now More Pay to Play – because Facebook’s algorithm cuts down on Page’s reach, some brands are only posting when they’re willing to pay to boost the posts’ reach. There are still good reasons to post on Facebook but your posts won’t go very far.

## Audience

- People use Facebook to keep track of friends and family plus engage on opinions
  - Demographics and Audiences  
(These stats are the % of US adults who say they’ve used the platform – 2019)
- Large market share - reaches older audiences

| US ADULTS 69% |     | AGE   |     |
|---------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Men           | 63% | 18-29 | 79% |
|               |     | 18-24 | 76% |
| Women         | 73% | 25-29 | 84% |
|               |     | 30-49 | 79% |
|               |     | 50-64 | 68% |
|               |     | 65+   | 46% |

## Your Goals on Facebook

- Share fodder for people sharing their opinions, your successes and stories

## Content Strategy

- Links, Photos, Videos
- Facebook Live
- Facebook Groups





# INSTAGRAM

## Anatomy of a Post



## Reach and Algorithm

- The algorithm awards brands that have a highly-engaged audience.

## Audience

- People use Instagram to get inspired, show they care and fuel their aspirations
- Demographics and Audiences  
(These stats are the % of US adults who say they've used the platform – 2019)  
Increasingly popular, especially as people lose faith in Facebook. Influencer marketing is huge here.

| US ADULTS 37% |     | AGE   |     |
|---------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Men           | 31% | 18-29 | 67% |
|               |     | 18-24 | 75% |
| Women         | 43% | 25-29 | 57% |
|               |     | 30-49 | 47% |
|               |     | 50-64 | 23% |
|               |     | 65+   | 8%  |

## Your Goals on Instagram

- Inspire your audience, share your story. It's difficult to link off platform, so your goals here should be more hearts and minds focused.

## Content Strategy

- Strength of Visuals
- Regramming
- Influencer Marketing
- Stories
- Swiping Up



# TWITTER

## Anatomy of a Tweet & Twitter Cards



### Reach

- Twitter’s most popular content stream doesn’t have an overarching algorithm and is chronological because their audience demanded it

### Audience

- People use Twitter to keep abreast of news and engage in discourse
- Demographics and Audiences  
(These stats are the % of US adults who say they’ve used the platform – 2019)  
Politicians, journalists, other orgs

| US ADULTS 22% |     | AGE:  |     |
|---------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Men           | 24% | 18-29 | 38% |
|               |     | 18-24 | 44% |
| Women         | 21% | 25-29 | 31% |
|               |     | 30-49 | 26% |
|               |     | 50-64 | 17% |
|               |     | 65+   | 7%  |

### Your Goals on Twitter

- Influence public discourse, engage with journalists and politicians, give public fodder for advocacy

### Content Strategy

- Stay short even though length is larger than it was
- Hashtags
- Replies

**Anatomy of an Update**



**Reach and Algorithm**

- Use employees to share your content to quickly grow your following

**Audience**

- People use LinkedIn to network and share job-related content
- Demographics and Audiences  
(These stats are the % of US adults who say they've used the platform – 2019)

| US ADULTS 27% |     | AGE:  |     |
|---------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Men           | 29% | 18-29 | 28% |
|               |     | 18-24 | 17% |
| Women         | 24% | 25-29 | 44% |
|               |     | 30-49 | 37% |
|               |     | 50-64 | 24% |
|               |     | 65+   | 11% |

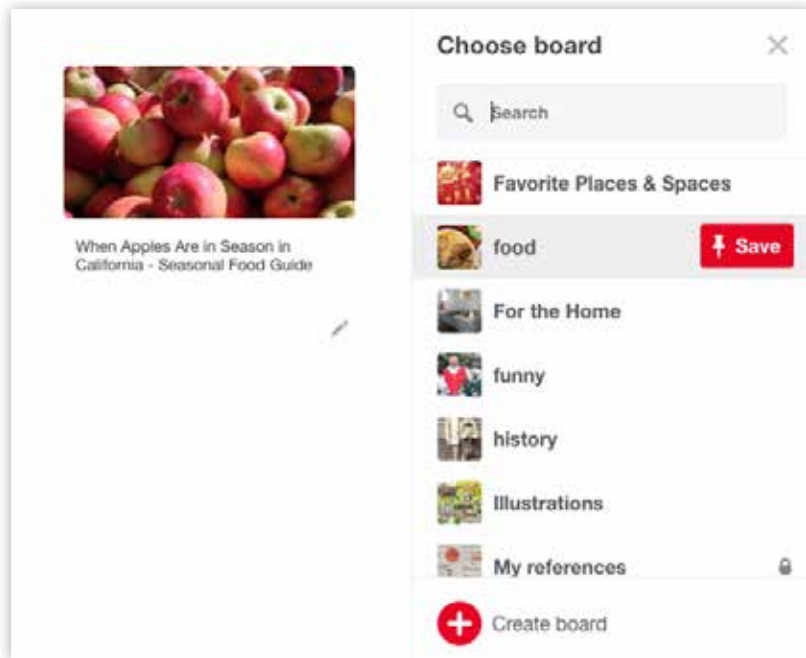
**Your Goals on LinkedIn**

- Promote content that professionals and academics may find valuable and/or share

**Content Strategy**

- Business & Work Focused

## Anatomy of a Pin



## Reach and Algorithm

- Pin others' content to your boards often and engage with other pinners' content.

## Audience

- People use Pinterest to get inspired and fuel their aspirations
- Demographics and Audiences  
(These stats are the % of US adults who say they've used the platform – 2019)

| US ADULTS 28% |     | AGE:  |     |
|---------------|-----|-------|-----|
| Men           | 15% | 18-29 | 34% |
|               |     | 18-24 | 38% |
|               |     | 25-29 | 28% |
| Women         | 42% | 30-49 | 35% |
|               |     | 50-64 | 27% |
|               |     | 65+   | 15% |

## Your Goals on Pinterest

- Inspire consumers to make changes or take an action

## Content Strategy

- Vertical
- Infographics
- Pinning

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- ⦿ Social Media Schedulers and/or Managers
  - [Hootsuite](#)
  - [Sprout Social](#) (For Pay)
- ⦿ [Canva](#) or other similar tools
- ⦿ Instagram
  - [Link in Profile](#)
- ⦿ [M+R Benchmarks Study](#)
- ⦿ [Sprout Social – Guide to Social Graphic Dimensions](#)



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