



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media marketing is a very important piece to a well-rounded marketing strategy. It is an excellent opportunity for your business to find potential customers and engage with your target audience. You can use social media to:

- ✔ establish your brand's voice and identity
- ✔ build relationships by sharing useful content
- ✔ engage customers at all stages of the buyer journey
- ✔ show off what your business does best



PICK YOUR PLATFORM

Creating your business's social media presence can be intimidating. There are dozens of platforms, and a huge variety of options for content. When you're just getting started, it's best to focus on only a few channels that make the most sense for your brand's identity, your target audience, and the services or products you provide. This will likely be one of the four most popular options: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



LinkedIn

Core Advantage:

LinkedIn's predominantly professional audience makes it ideal for generating or nurturing business leads or growing your professional network. It also allows your business to establish a public image as a reputable and trustworthy organization. Finally, it is an excellent platform for conducting research on your competitors.



Facebook

Core Advantage:

Facebook has an enormous user pool, with 2.6 billion active monthly users—the highest of all social media platforms. It is best for increasing brand awareness, sharing information about your business, gaining feedback from existing and potential customers, and providing customer support. It is also a good way to direct people to your website.



Instagram

Core Advantage:

Instagram drives more engagement—i.e., interactions between users and the accounts they follow—than any other social media channel, giving you the opportunity to build a community that comes back time and time again. It is also an excellent content creator: you can gather user-generated content through its hashtag system, then (with their permission) re-purpose that content.



Twitter

Core Advantage:

Twitter is a conversational platform where most users go to collect news and current events. Approximately 6,000 tweets are sent a second, making it a great tool for gaining a wide range of valuable customer insights. It is also a good resource to study your competitors, learn about (or comment on) national and regional trends, and build your brand awareness and personality.

CREATE YOUR POSTS

Once you select a platform and [create an account](#), it's time to post!

Before you do, consider the following to ensure you get the best return on your time and efforts:

01

Research Your Audience

What are their demographics? Which industry are they in? What are their interests and needs? What solutions can you provide to their pain points? Once you know this, you can create your content accordingly.

02

Conduct a Competitor Audit

What are your competitors posting, how are they engaging with their audience, and how often are they posting? This can be a good start to see what works (and what doesn't!) in your industry and area.

03

Follow the 80/20 Rule

To keep users interested and build rapport, make sure that ~80 percent of what you post is educational, entertaining, or a useful resource. The other 20 percent can then promote sales-related content.

04

Don't Skip #Tagging

Add hashtags strategically in your posts to join conversations, source questions or answers from your audience, and amplify your campaigns to a larger audience who may be viewing that hashtag. You can even create custom hashtags for campaigns in which users add content on your behalf!

05

Establish Your Brand's Voice

Does your brand have a personality that is clearly communicated? There is value in good story telling—make sure tone and images are consistent across all marketing and collateral, and don't forget the human touch!

CREATE YOUR POSTS (cont'd)



TIP: EXIM uses [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#). You can share our industry and product posts to your page for extra content with minimal effort!

06

Don't Use Low Quality Graphics

Low quality content can negatively affect how people perceive your business. Make sure all images and videos are crisp, well lit, [sized correctly](#), and feature appropriate subject matter for your product.

07

Test Post Timing & Frequency

Posting at times when many other accounts are doing the same can result in your content being lost in the noise. Try different times and frequencies, then monitor whether your followers respond favorably.

08

Schedule & Automate Your Posts

Plan ahead: decide your posts' content, dates, and times well in advance. Then, save time by using a social media management tool like Hootsuite to pre-schedule them so they're posted automatically.

09

Interact & Be Social

Once you've posted, don't stop there. Responding to questions and joining conversations in a helpful, positive way can reinforce brand loyalty and show your commitment to customer service. (But don't go overboard; too many likes and comments can cause your account to be flagged as spam!)

10

Don't Pay for Followers

Buying followers can have detrimental effects on your social media presence. Modern consumers are smarter than ever, and may be suspicious if your high follower count isn't translating into real comments or likes. Building your audience takes time, but it helps legitimize your business.

MONITOR & IMPROVE

Find Your Data

Now that you have created a few posts, it's time to see how they are doing. Every social media platform collects performance data and stores it in different places: Facebook uses [Page Insights](#), Instagram [Account Insights](#), LinkedIn offers data to [page admins](#), and Twitter has an [activity dashboard](#).

Review Routinely

Once you've located your data, it's important to check it often. As you try different types of content, links, hashtags, post times, and frequencies, you should monitor the results and use them to guide future activity. Soon you will learn what your audience finds most interesting or useful, and you can create content accordingly.

Set Achievable Goals

You'll set yourself up for disappointment if you expect the same performance as a business with an established following when you are just beginning. A better method is to decide what result you want to see, track the correlating metrics, and improve via testing and optimizing. For example:

- ✔ *To improve brand awareness*, you should monitor impressions, reach, and your follower count
- ✔ *To drive followers to your website*, focus on your click-through rate and check your site's pageviews
- ✔ *To increase customer engagement*, measure clicks, reactions, comments, & shares

Thus, your final goal might be increasing the click-through rate for links to your website by 2 percent within this fiscal year. You might execute that goal by offering different incentives, increasing the quality of your graphics, and creating more resources for topics related to your product or industry.

Glossary

Awareness Metrics:

IMPRESSIONS (or views): the number of *times* your content was seen. A high number indicates you're building brand awareness.

REACH: the number of *people* who saw your post. (So, if a user sees a post 10 times, your impressions go up by 10, but reach increases by one.) Thus, your reach helps you identify the true size of your audience.

Engagement Metrics

LIKES, COMMENTS, & SHARES: ways your audience can interact with your posts. These indicate whether your audience is interested in your content; a low number in these categories may indicate you should adjust the timing of your posts or try a different type of content.

CLICK-THROUGH RATE (or CTR): tells you how often your followers are clicking on your posts or links. If your impressions and/or reach are high but CTR is low, it means your viewers are not compelled to click. In that case, you should adjust what you're offering or focus on telling users how the link benefits them.

CONSIDER SPENDING

Social media is often considered the least expensive marketing option because all platforms offer free accounts and features. These basic accounts are best for beginners and have been the focus of this guide; however, there are paid ad options if your business has the budget to consider them.

A Free Strategy:

Using only organic, or free, posts means that your content will be seen mostly by:

- ✓ users who are already following you
- ✓ followers of a user who shares one of your posts
- ✓ users browsing hashtags you added to one of your posts

Thus, the majority of the time your reach will be fairly limited when posting organically and growth will occur at a more moderate pace.

A Paid Strategy:

Paying for ads allows you to promote your business to as large of an audience as you want. You can specify:

- ✓ demographics (age, gender, etc.)
- ✓ geography (within a specific city, state, county, town, or a mile radius)
- ✓ user interests or job titles
- ✓ more, depending upon the platform

Because your audience is larger, growth tends to be faster (relative to your available budget).

In short, paying for ads gives you access to the widest audience and allows you to find new users who have the best chance of becoming customers. If you have the budget, this can be an excellent strategy for growth!

APPENDIX:

Social Media Account Setup

As each social media platform is designed differently, the basic text and images required to set up your account and begin posting are also different. Image editing software, such as [Adobe Photoshop](#) or [GIMP](#), makes controlling these variables easy, or you can use various of [resizer tools](#) available on the web.



LinkedIn

When creating a LinkedIn page, you should add more professional information than other platforms. This should include:

1. A profile photo (generally your logo)
2. A cover photo (this decorative image can show your product, location, etc.)
3. A few paragraphs about your business
4. Other business details (company size, location, year founded, specialties, etc.)
5. Link to your website

<i>Image Type</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>File Type</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Profile Photo	400 x 400px	JPEG or PNG	This image can be displayed in a circle, so add blank space around your logo
Cover Photo	1128 x 191px	JPEG or PNG	Check on a desktop computer <i>and</i> a phone to make sure it displays correctly
Image(s) in Post	1200 x 675px	JPEG or PNG	If sharing a link an image will be automatically generated, but you can add a new one by clicking the Image icon
Link Card Image	1200 x 628px	JPEG or PNG	n/a



Facebook

When creating a Facebook account, you should add at minimum:

1. A profile photo (generally your logo)
2. A cover photo (this can be your product, location, etc.)
3. A paragraph about your business
4. Method(s) to contact your company
5. Links to your website, other social media channels, etc.

<i>Image Type</i>	<i>Measurements</i>	<i>File Type</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Profile Photo	360 x 360px	PNG (preferred) or JPEG	This image can be displayed in a circle, so add blank space around your logo
Cover Photo	820 x 312px	JPEG (preferred) or PNG	n/a
Post Images	1200 x 628px or 1080 x 1080px	JPEG or PNG	n/a
Story Images or Videos	1080 x 1920px	JPEG or PNG / .mp4, .mov, or GIF	Leave the top and bottom 250px clear of text or logos



Instagram

When creating an Instagram account, you should add at minimum:

1. A simple, easy to understand username, or handle
2. A profile photo (generally your logo)
3. A short sentence to your bio
4. One link of your choice

TIP: Instagram allows only one link to be present in your profile at any one time. In addition, links added to posts will not work at all, so you must direct users to your profile where they can access that link. Choose your link strategically, or use a service like [LinkTree](#) to create a special webpage that presents users with additional options after they click.

<i>Image Type</i>	<i>Measurements</i>	<i>File Type</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Profile Photo	1080 x 1080px	JPEG or PNG	This image is displayed in a circle, so add blank space around your logo
Post Images	1936 x 1936px or 1200 x 628px or 1080 x 1350px	JPEG or PNG	Instagram will crop all posts to square on the grid view of your page; format to a square size when possible to avoid awkwardly cut off areas
Story Images or Videos	1080 x 1920px	JPEG or PNG / .mp4, .mov, or GIF	Leave the top and bottom 250px clear of text or logos



Twitter

When creating a Twitter page, you should add at minimum:

1. A simple, easy to understand username, or handle
2. A profile photo (generally your logo)
3. A cover photo (this decorative image can be your product, location, etc.)
4. A sentence about your business
5. Your location
6. A link to your website

<i>Image Type</i>	<i>Measurements</i>	<i>File Type</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Profile Photo	300 x 300px	JPEG or PNG	n/a
Cover Photo	1500 x 500px	JPEG or PNG	Check on a desktop computer and a phone to make sure it displays correctly
Image/Blog Link	1200 x 627px	JPEG or PNG	Adding multiple images in a tweet will result in cropped thumbnails; the user can click to see the full image