



Succeed with Social Media

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The Age of Visual Social Media

Recently, social media has been shifting from a heavily text-driven way of communicating and sharing with the world to a more visual one. Business involvement on social media sites such as Pinterest and Instagram is booming—companies are embracing the trend of a new, more visual way of communicating. To some, visual communication is intuitive, while for others it can be difficult to grasp. But for everyone, the entire shift can be a massive opportunity to grow business.

Less is More

As the world becomes more fast-paced and frenzied, snapping a picture on the go and updating it with a caption under 140 words is a lot easier and more convenient than writing out an essay explaining the situation on a blog. If you are an ice cream company or a clothing shop, wouldn't it make more sense that *pictures* of your products will bring customers in, not words explaining them?

In 2012, a study conducted by ROI Research, a company that provides marketing research services, discovered pictures were what people paid the most attention to on their social media news feeds. The photos that people post to Facebook garner over 50 per cent more likes than purely textual posts. These little snippets of a product or other people's lives can help us quickly decide within a moment or two if we are interested in what we are seeing or not. We don't have to linger, we don't have to waste time. And in today's world, that is what most people value—time.

Tips for Keeping it Short and Simple

So how can you take advantage of this 'short and sweet' tactic? Just posting pictures of a product all day long won't do the trick. You need to be savvy about visual posts.

- Use images to tell your company's story.
- If you have a choice between showing something about your product or telling it, always go with the former. Use pictures, infographics, videos or animations to get your message across. You can add a short caption to go along with an image, but it should be kept to a minimal length.
- If an image needs further explanation for people to understand it, consider using lists, short sentences or bullet points. And limit yourself to three understandable hashtags per post or tweet. Moving from textual to visual posts won't help your company if the post isn't understood.
- Post original content. Invest in a graphic designer or consider offering your employees some extra training on how to communicate via social media.

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- Obtain visual content from your customers to use as part of your social media strategy. Ask customers to create and share images, and consider holding photo or video contests that involve customers wearing, using or eating your products.
- Be sure to vary the visual content you post to keep customers connected and engaged. Throw in tips and statistics about your product, or activities that incorporate your product. Customers respond well to posts when they have value added to them.

Make it Meaningful

Developing visual content your followers enjoy is great, but when it doesn't further your business, it could be a waste of time. Always keep in mind that each post should directly or indirectly put your organisation one step closer to achieving the business objectives laid out in your social media plan. Don't lose sight of that goal.

Research familiar companies that are pulling off social media marketing well, such as Coca-Cola, Starbucks, O2, H&M, Waterstones and Nike.

Be Curious and Have Fun

If you enjoy the content you generate, your followers will, too. By continually creating, linking to and posting about content you find interesting, you become an important and reliable source of information to your followers.

Constantly digging for and creating visual content that you enjoy and that appeals to your fans will help you generate an active following for your organisation. An energetic fan base maximises your exposure and is a crucial element in any social media initiative.

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