Your Guide To Social Media

Written by Melissa Larsen

As if out of thin air, social media is now part of our daily lives—whether posting lengthy updates about our kiddos on Facebook or getting our national news updates in our Twitter feed. Here, we take a look at four of the most popular forms of social media, who each outlet is geared toward and tips for being social media savvy.

Twitter

US Rank: 6* (Quantcast); 12 (Alexa)

Demographic: Majority of users are female, prominently in the 18-34 age range

Perfect for: businesses, media outlets

Top Phoenix-based Twitter users**:

I. 1.Todd McFarlane, 371,189 followers
II. 2.Kurt Warner, 267,292 followers
III. 3.Alice Cooper, 166,753 followers
IV. 4.Samantha Ponder, 130,392 followers
V. 5.Make-A-Wish Foundation, 94,491 followers

When the Boston Marathon bombings took place or the Oklahoma tornados ravaged the state in the late spring, concerned people far and wide took to Twitter to get their up-to-date news. “Big news stories are released on Twitter first,” says Ashley Oakes, account executive for Tempe’s Zion & Zion, Best of Our Valley winner for Best Social Network and Online Media Firm. “During national crises, people find out on Twitter first.”

Due to Twitter’s short-form, 140-character status updates, this form of social networking lends itself well to media outlets that are used to spouting attention-getting headlines. However, Twitter can also be a great tool for other businesses, updating its consumer on what’s new, upcoming specials and more.

Quick tip: “Studies show people pay attention to the headline, so you need a headline to capture the audience. Keep it short and sweet,” Oakes says.

Pinterest

US Rank: 7 (Quantcast); 12 (Alexa)

Demographic: Majority of users are female, prominently in the 25-34 age range

Perfect for: parents, DIY-ers, at-home cooks

Pinterest—a virtual bulletin board—is one of the fastest-growing forms of social media, becoming a special favorite of moms looking for craft ideas, yummy recipes and DIY home projects. Kai Neighbors, who oversees *Arizona Foothills Magazine* Pinterest page, on tips for becoming a pinning pro.

1. Photos The most important part of your success on Pinterest is the pictures you choose. This is a visually based social media outlet, so you need pin good pictures so other pinners will be interested in following you.

2. Pin, Pin, Pin The more active you are on Pinterest, the more traction you will create. Pin often, but do not do this all at once or you will lose followers.

3. Late Night I seem to gain the most interest from 8 p.m. and throughout the night.

4. #Keywords Use keywords in your description (i.e. orange handbag, maxi dress, California resort). Hashtags are also important for broader categories.

5. Board Titles Titles are a key part of Pinterest searchability. Cute, catchy titles with tilde marks and periods won't do anything for you with the search engine.

6. Link Back In all of your pins, always put a link back to your Web site.

7. Following Follow pinners who you are interested in and who have great content. This shows up on your main Pinterest feed, so choose wisely.

8. Categories Boards should embrace all facets of you or your company's image and lifestyle. Have lots of them.

9. Don't Be Stingy When pinning, don't just pin items directly from your Web site; pin from others' too. This will broaden your reach and generate followers you would normally not get.

10. Sync It Many people recommend syncing your Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter accounts. But if you pin dozens of times of day, it would be too overwhelming on all social media handles. However, tweet Pinterest URL links and put Pinterest URL links on all of our other social media outlets daily.

Facebook

US Rank: 3 (Quantcast); 2 (Alexa)

Demographic: Majority of users are female, prominently in the 18-24 age range

Perfect for: personal use for anyone

From teens to old timers, Facebook might just be the friendliest form of social media for anyone. “Facebook has become our social planner, address book and photo album,” Oakes says. While people are able to connect with pals they haven’t spoken to since college and Grandpa can catch up on photos of his grandkids from miles away, Facebook isn’t always the most effective tool for some businesses (Oakes suggests LinkedIn, which has some great new tools for businesses). For consumers, though, this form of social media can be a good way to connect with favorite brands.

Quick tip: “Set different friends groups so posts aren’t going to the wrong group. It is a conversation. [Give friends] what they want to read, not what you push on them.”

Instagram

US Rank: 475 (Quantcast); 29 (Alexa)

Demographic: Majority of users are female, prominently in the 18-34 age range

Perfect for: foodies, businesses that have a lot to offer visually

Instagram, which is the third most popular free iPhone app behind Facebook and Pandora, is a digital scrapbook of sorts. The service provides followers snapshots of one’s life, complete with a short description and cool filter effects. Instagram has become a fun tool for people to keep up with their pals from around the globe (where they are vacationing, what they are eating and wearing, for instace), as well as celebs to keep their fans in tune with their latest concert snapshots or pictures while on set of their new movie.

Quick tip: “Use hashtags the same way you would with Twitter,” Oakes says.

**Ranking and demographic information courtesy of www.alexa.com and www.quantcast.com as of May 20, 2013.*

***Number of verified followers was determined by fakers.statuspeople.com as of May 9, 2013.*

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