

Year 11 Introduction to BTEC Information Technology

Welcome to this pack of information about Information Technology. Included in this pack is information, activities, tasks, websites and videos of content that will be useful as you embark on your IT studies.

It would be impossible to cover all the areas in this pack, so we have concentrated on Social Media and the Web.

There are some practical activities that you can have a go at including using Canva for social media and creativity and also building some knowledge of HTML for producing web pages in Year 13.

Information Technology has never been so important. The world in Lockdown has shown the importance of IT and being connected and that is something IT is all about..... from Health Care to security to Finance and Entertainment IT is all around

Some key areas are highlighted in the following videos:

- **Artificial Intelligence and Coronavirus**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000g8w5/click-can-ai-help-fight-coronavirus>

- **The Impact of GDPR**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005cx6/click-gdpr-one-year-on>

- **The Rise of the Machines**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m00054ph/click-rise-of-the-machines>

- **The future is 5G – What does it mean?**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0004v9t/click-5g-whizz>

Activity 1

Using the document social media for Business.pdf

This introduces the first unit of work on the course. You are challenged to understand how Social Media for Business works. Take a look at all the different platforms that you can use. You may be very familiar with several of them. It is very different to the ways that you use them day to day.

Learn about the most popular platforms for Business, why businesses use these platforms and then how to get started on each platform.

How do you tweet for business and post on Facebook? What is the value of the hashtag? How much money is spent on Social Media in Business – be prepared to be amazed. There are jobs working in Social media and many of our students have gone on to do so.

Learn some of the terminology for the unit including:

- ROI
- SEO
- Engagement
- Keywords
- Hashtag
- Reach
- Insights
- Analytics

All of these terms will be important on the course and any work you do on this will be valued and quite possibly allow you to pick up marks before you start.

Activity 2

Social Media Fails – social marketing campaigns that went wrong. Do some research on this and try to find out what makes a good strategy and what doesn't?

Find some good examples of Good and Bad on any platform.

Activity 3

Use the document - Develop a Social media presence.pdf

What steps are required to create a social marketing strategy. You will actually do this for a business and create their pages and make posts for the business on platforms of your choice.

Activity 4 – Practical - **I LOVE THIS.....**

Canva – a fantastic online tool that allows you to produce professional Graphics with beautiful layouts.

There are loads of helpful guides and support for this application but honestly it is easy to use. You don't need to use the Adobe software and it is a great way to become creative – your friends will be very envious of your online presence.....**keep it a secret.**

Use the following website to sign up and get your free 30 days' subscription:

<https://www.canva.com/>

The following are some useful support websites. There are loads to choose from online.

- **How to Use Canva to create Social Media Graphics**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf87zUM5h90>

- **How to Use Canva: An 8-Step Guide to Creating Visual Content**

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-use-canva>

- **Canva – step by step start Guide**

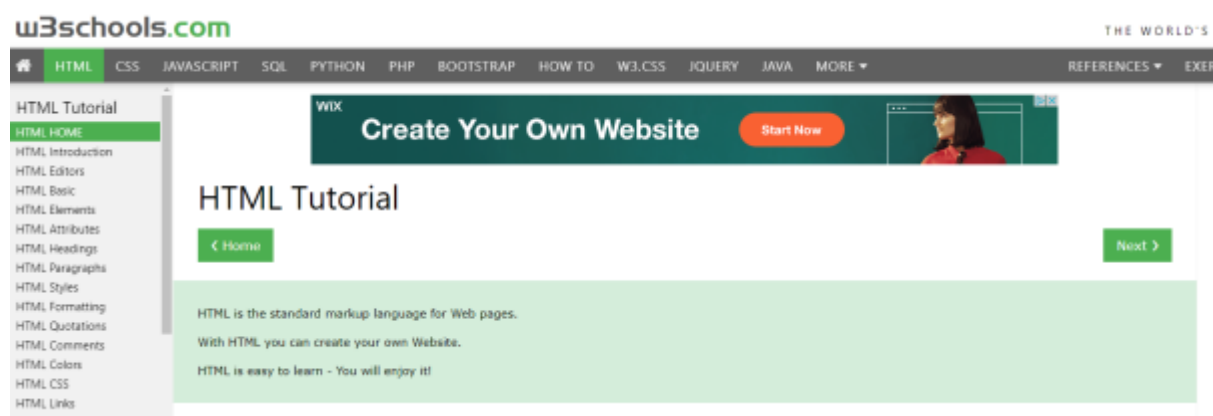
<https://www.canva.com/learn/canvas-quick-start-guide/>

Please use - **social media links with videos.pdf** - This has lots of really engaging and useful links to key areas of the Social Media unit. There is short Ted talk and loads of useful information to help before you engage on your Level 3 study.

Activity 5

Learn some HTML – Hypertext Markup Language. We use Dreamweaver and JavaScript to produce a website in Year 13. We also use Adobe Illustrator to wireframe our websites.

However, in the first instance go to the following website:



It is great and can give you an insight into the world of HTML. You can use free software like Notepad or Notepad++ to write the code.

We don't create the websites in this but it will be helpful in understanding the code generated and used to write webpages.

Learning Aim A
A Guide only ←



BTEC
LEVEL 3 IT,
UNIT 3
INTRODUCTION TO
SOCIAL MEDIA
FOR BUSINESS

NOTE: FOR EXAMPLE In order to reach the criteria of the Learning Aims shown. You must explain in more detail in the SPEAKER NOTES.

[More templates](#)

CONTENT

- Introduction to Social Media
- Technical run through of
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
- Brief Guides to
 - LinkedIn
 - Instagram
 - Google+ & YouTube
 - Pinterest



THE MAIN QUESTIONS?



What is social media for business?

How to use social media for business?

Why use social media for business?

Who uses use social media for business?

When to use social media for business?



WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?



"Social media has been broadly defined to refer to 'the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships' "

.....Wikipedia

(hey... mm, some people don't like Wikipedia but I thought it was OK for this)



How about... It's about utilising Social Media platforms to **communicate**, raise brand awareness & build relationships with your wider community
It extends your 'real life' community



HOW SOCIAL MEDIA WORKS...



Ultimately Social Media works by driving traffic to your website



WHY IS SOCIAL MEDIA SO IMPORTANT?



- It's where your customers are
- People buy from people – social media facilitates business to consumer / business communication
- Reach specific audiences
- It increases your search engine optimisation
- It enhances your brand and your reputation
- Monitoring your competition
- Product testing
- Market research – invaluable!



Advantages Disadvantages



- Free / low cost promotion
 - Making relationships with suppliers, customers, your community
 - Social proof! Customer testimonials
 - Reach out to wider markets
 - Target specific groups
- Time
 - Technical – each platform has it's own technical behaviour and way of communicating
 - Technical – changing of algorithms, new rules
 - Negative experiences / reviews
 - Maintaining consistency
 - No guarantee of Return on Investment – just like any other marketing

TOP PLATFORMS FOR BUSINESS IMO

(IN MY OPINION)

- | | | |
|--------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| ▪ No 1 | FACEBOOK | B2C (Business to Customer) and B2B |
| ▪ No 2 | TWITTER | B2C and B2B |
| ▪ No 3 | INSTAGRAM | B2C and increasingly B2B |
| ▪ No 4 | LINKEDIN | B2B |
| ▪ No 5 | GOOGLE+ | Not too keen (IMO) |
| ▪ No 6 | YOUTUBE | Has a role in all of the above |
| ▪ No 7 | PINTEREST | E Commerce, female, niche |
| ▪ No 8 | SNAPCHAT | The millennials - RISING STAR! |



GETTING STARTED ON TWITTER

Learning Aim A D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience



- Why use Twitter?
 - 15 million UK users, high number read only
 - Broadcast channel – microblogging - 140 characters
 - Conversational
 - Trends
 - Hashtags: **#Geographic #SubjectSpecific**
 - Increasingly becoming a customer service tool. Risks could be trolling and vendettas - highly public. Take to Direct messaging to avoid risks.

Learning Aim A D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience

GETTING STARTED ON TWITTER

Getting started...

- Photos
- Bio
- Follow /unfollow
 - Who do you know in real life?
 - Who do you want to engage with?
 - Build influence & credibility
 - Influence not numbers of followers
 - Unfollowing
 - Blocking / reporting spam or abuse
- Etiquette
 - Thank people for Retweets (RT's) & mentions
 - Don't feel obliged to follow back
 - Building relationships by RT's & mentions. Some people may unfollow if etiquette ignored



GETTING STARTED ON TWITTER

- You are what you tweet
- Using @
- Hashtags – relevance/keywords or themes
- Quality of content
- Networking / chat hours #EBHour #SussexHour #1066Hour
- Using lists
- Link shortening – bit.ly ; tiny.url; buffer
- Consistency of posting
- Good twitter tips: @TweetSmarter @SMExaminer



THE PERFECT TWEET

Headline – call to action

Weblink – take your customer to the next step on the journey

Hashtags so your message can be seen

Image

(Video)

Only where important *sales message*



FACEBOOK FOR BUSINESS

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

31 million users 25-34 yrs (look it up for more recent stats!)

You versus your page

Creating & optimising your *business page*



Name, **address**, business category, contact details, opening hours, prices, about, website

Reviews tab

Growing your following / page likes

Facebook groups

Allows for fuller content

Visual /Video content



GETTING STARTED ON FACEBOOK



- You the person creates the **Page** (*but you create business page as business via your own profile*)
- Flick through the header category to get the best match for your industry category
- Photos
- Short & Long Description
- Address! Once verified 'Reviews tab'
- Page roles – adding admins



GETTING STARTED ON FACEBOOK

Learning Aim A D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience

Get your vanity url

New features

- Call to action button
- Page verification
- Response times
- Insights – track what works well and what does not
- Liking pages as your page – great to improve your visibility
- Always being updated and very dynamic as other social media tools (look up most recent!)
- Ever changing means risks of not keeping up with rival business on Social Media.



FACEBOOK ADVERTISING

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

Learning Aim A D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience

- Promote your page
- Promote your website
- Boost Post
- Audience options:
 - People who like your page
 - People who like your page & their friends
 - Create Audience(s)
 - Cities; Age range; gender; interests
- Images must contain less than 20% text
- Post should contain a call to action, and web link
- Link back to your website or point of purchase
- New & Exciting – add your Instagram account!
- Risks of Identity theft and Malware!



LINKEDIN



- UK stats 2014 – 10 million users, 60 mill page views per month (*add more recent figures here*)
- Social proof – **this is the validation platform**
- Professional networking
- Recruitment tool
- Marketing tool
- **Most trusted network**
- Good for making connections with people you want to do business with (if you know who they are!)
- **Good for SEO**



LINKEDIN

- Your title
- The Summary
- Previous work experience
- Endorsements & testimonials
- Interests – use to target your area of expertise
- Get connected 1st & 2nd level connections
- Advanced search – finding customers
- Groups
- Company page
 - Restrictions on creating one
 - https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1594



LINKEDIN



- Content posting & sharing
 - Updates
 - Posts
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20120906170105-29092-the-7-secrets-to-writing-killer-content-on-linkedin>
- Messages on Facebook may need to be tailored for LinkedIn and Google+ - *have a look at what people in the same type of business are doing*

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

Learning Aim A D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience

INSTAGRAM



- Started life as a photo sharing app
- Became massive in 2011 when Justin Bieber joined
- Only visual (photo & Video) content promoted via hashtags (up to 30)
- Use the hashtags to find communities e.g. #Eastbourne #nailart
- Great for visual businesses but increasingly non visuals are using it creatively @Petersens1
- Integration with Twitter & Facebook
- <http://blog.business.instagram.com>

INSTAGRAM



- Recent enhanced business functionality
- Business accounts
- Sponsored posts via Facebook
- Get started by hashtag searching to find your community and see what others are talking about for your sector.
- Build a record of key hashtags for your business
- Publish photo posts frequently to build your following

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

GOOGLE+

- Why Google+ is important?
- Niche Social Media platform – 300 million users
- It's Google! Great SEO benefits
- Authenticates your business
- Recognises you as an 'author' of your content
- Links to Google Ad Words, Google Analytics and YouTube
- Demographics: 62% Male, creative & technical industries
- Largely inactive; uncertain future



GOOGLE+

- Profile – Photos
- About including authorship
- Circles
- Build your network
- Profile – the business page
- Website verification
- Address verification
- Posting as the Page over the Profile



GOOGLE+ & SEO

- Use Hashtags – but just one
- Point your customers to leave Reviews
- Join Communities based on your business interests
- +1 is like 'liking' on Facebook, and sharing builds influence
- Google Analytics (*keep track of who is visiting your website, etc*)
- Google Adwords
- You Tube Channel
- <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/google-plus-for-business/>



PINTEREST

- One of the fastest growing social media platform
- **Most affluent** platform where the most money & time is spent
- Particularly suited to consumer facing businesses
- Feeds off of visual content
- Boards are a great way of harvesting content for use on other platforms
- Great for research, and again great for SEO, **link back to your website**
- Links to Twitter & Facebook
- https://business.pinterest.com/en/blog/9-ways-drive-traffic-pinterest-search?utm_campaign=partner_20140904_newsletter&utm_medium=2023&utm_source=31&utm_term=cta



YOUTUBE



- The biggest social media network after Facebook
- Create your own channel which you can promote across all platforms
- Video content is a great way of promoting your business, communicating with a wider audience, sharing industry tips
- Great also for cultivating related content
- Remember - YouTube is a community so look after your subscribers

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

SO YOU'RE ON SOCIAL MEDIA – NOW WHAT?

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.


Content marketing is the marketing strategy of creating valuable content to engage and grow your audience/customers online and ultimately get your customers to buy from you



Content mix 80 / 20

Content should be timely, informative, and engaging
Good social media is rarely achieved online only – offline relationship building is important too!

TYPES OF CONTENT

- 
- Press Releases (PR)
 - Blogs
 - Case Studies
 - Testimonials
 - Non 'business' related content e.g. stories about the team
 - Conversational e.g. Chat hours
 - Cross promoting – sharing content from others
 - Video / Vlogs



CREATING A CONTENT CALENDAR (PART OF PLANNING)

- Key national / international dates
 - Xmas, New Years, Valentine's etc
- Key local dates
 - Key events, Sussex Day, Airbourne, key business and community events e.g. Let's Do Business, South of England Show, the Tennis!
- Your businesses key dates
 - What are your milestones? What events are you involved in? New products or services? New staff?
- Key dates of those you support
 - Suppliers, local business people, charities etc.
 - Their events, milestones etc.



Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

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SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

(PLANNING)



- **Engagement** – A single dashboard where you can monitor all your social network messages and engage with your audience
 - **Scheduling** – A system of scheduling and recycling your content to each social network
 - **Reporting** – A method of analyzing and reporting how your content performs on each network
-
- Various tools can be used: Such as Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, Sprout, Buffer *(add your own)* to manage the following:
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Google+
 - LinkedIn
 - Pinterest (paid)

SUMMARY

Learning Aim A M1 Assess the different ways in which a business can use social media to attract a target audience.

Learning Aim A D1 Evaluate the business use of social media to interact with customers and promote products or services to a target audience

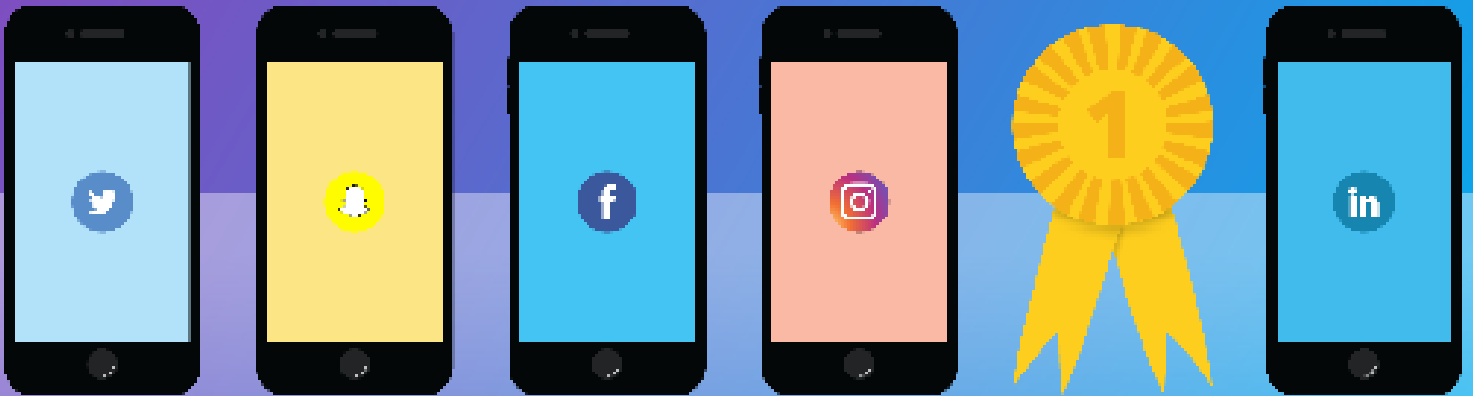
Social media is important for business because:

- It's where your customers are
- People buy from people – social media facilitates business to consumer / business communication
- Reach specific audiences *via age, gender, interests etc*
- It increases your search engine optimisation (*Using Keywords*)
- It enhances your brand and your reputation
- Monitors your competition
- Product testing
- Market research – invaluable!
- There are risks and potential issues involved as very public and transparent

GUIDE

Social Media Marketing Strategy

Eight easy steps to develop your social media presence



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Related resource

[The Social Media Metrics that Really Matter—and How to Track Them](#)

Step 1

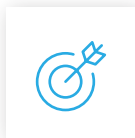
Set social media marketing goals that align to business objectives

The more specific your strategy is, the more effective the execution will be. Set SMART goals and track the right metrics to set yourself up for success.

Set SMART goals

The first step to creating a social media marketing strategy is to establish your objectives and goals. Without goals, you have no way to measure your success or your social media return on investment (ROI).

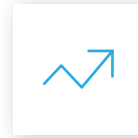
Each of your goals should be:



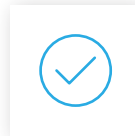
Specific



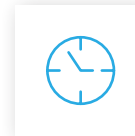
Measurable



Attainable



Relevant



Time-bound

An example of a SMART goal for your business might be "Grow our Instagram audience by 50 new followers per week."

With SMART goals, you'll make sure your goals actually lead to real business results, rather than just lofty ideals.

Track meaningful metrics

While vanity metrics like retweets and likes can be fun to share and easy to track, it's hard to prove their real value for your business. Instead, focus on targets such as leads generated, web referrals, and conversion rate.

You may want to track different goals for different channels, or even different uses of each channel. For example, you can use paid campaigns to increase brand awareness, but measure acquisition and engagement for organic social posts.

Make sure to align your social media goals with your overall marketing strategy. This will make it easier for you to show the value of your work and get executive buy-in and investment.

Start developing your social media marketing plan by writing down at least three social media goals.

Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Related resource

[How to build audience personas](#)

Step 2

Learn everything you can about your audience

If you're not engaged in social media listening, you're creating your business strategy with blinders on—and you're missing out on mountains of actionable insights from real people who are actively talking about you or your industry online.

Here's how to start listening and building your understanding of your audience and their needs.

Create audience personas

Knowing who your audience is and what they want to see on social is key to creating content that they will like, comment on, and share. This knowledge is also critical for planning how to develop your social media fans into customers for your business.

Try creating audience personas. For example, a retail brand might create different personas based on demographics, buying motivations, common buying objections, and the emotional needs of each type of customer.

Personas sharpen your marketing tactics. Luxury buyers, for example, might not respond to Facebook ads with sales. But they might respond to Facebook ads with exclusive in-store events to be the first to see a new line of clothing. With personas, you'll have the customer insights you need to create campaigns that speak to the real desires and motivations of your buyers.

Gather real-world data

Don't make assumptions. Social media analytics can also provide a ton of valuable information about who your followers are, where they live, which languages they speak, and how they interact with your brand on social. These insights allow you to refine your strategy and better target your social ads.

[Jugnoo](#), an Uber-like service for auto-rickshaws in India, used Facebook Analytics to learn that 90 percent of their users who referred other customers were between 18 and 34 years old, and that 65 percent of that group was using Android. They used this information to target their ads, resulting in a 40 percent lower cost per referral.

Related resources

[How to conduct a competitor audit](#)

[Getting started with social listening](#)

[Watch: How to set up social listening streams](#)

Step 3

Research the competition

Odds are, your competitors are already using social media—and that means you can learn from what they're already doing.

Conduct a competitive analysis

A competitive analysis allows you to understand who the competition is and what they're doing well (and not so well). You'll get a good sense of what's expected in your industry, which will help you set some social media targets of your own.

This analysis will also help you spot opportunities. For example, maybe one of your competitors dominates on Facebook, but has put little effort into Twitter or Instagram. You might want to focus on the networks where your audience is underserved, rather than trying to win fans away from a dominant player.

Engage in social listening

Social listening is another way to keep track of the competition.

As you track your competitors' accounts and relevant industry keywords, you may notice strategic shifts in the way competitors use their social accounts. Or you might spot a specific post or campaign that really hits the mark—or one that bombs.

Keep an eye on this information and use it to evaluate your own goals and plans.

Related resource

[Hootsuite's social media audit template](#)

Step 4

Conduct a social media audit

Conducting a social media audit helps you assess how well your current social media use works for you.

Evaluate your current efforts

If you're already using social media tools, you need to take a step back and look at what you've already accomplished. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What's working?
- What's not working?
- Who's connecting with you on social?
- Which social media sites does your target market use?
- How does your social media presence compare to that of your competitors?

Once you gather all this information in one place, you'll have a good starting point for planning how to improve your results.

Your audit should give you a clear picture of what purpose each of your social accounts serves. If the purpose of an account isn't clear, think about whether it's worth keeping. It may be a valuable account that just needs a strategic redirection, or it may be an outdated account that's no longer worth your while.

To help you decide, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is my audience here?
2. If so, how are they using this platform?
3. Can I use this account to help achieve meaningful business goals?

Asking these tough questions now will help keep your social media strategy on track as you grow your social presence.

Look for impostor accounts

During your audit process, you may discover fraudulent accounts using your business name or the names of your products—that is, accounts that you and your business don't own.

These imposter accounts can be harmful to your brand (never mind capturing followers that should be yours), so be sure to report them. You may want to get your social accounts verified to ensure your fans and followers know they are dealing with the real you.

Related resources

Watch: How to optimize your social profiles

We've also got step-by-step guides for each network to walk you through the process:

Create a Facebook business page

Create an Instagram business account

Create a Twitter business account

Create a Snapchat account

Create a LinkedIn Company Page

Create a Pinterest business account

Create a YouTube channel

Create a WeChat business account

Don't let this list overwhelm you. Remember, it's better to use fewer channels well than to stretch yourself thin trying to maintain a presence on every social network.

Finally, here's a quick reference guide for image sizes for every network.

Step 5

Set up accounts and improve existing profiles

Decide which networks you'll focus on, and then set up and optimize your accounts.

Determine which networks to use (and how to use them)

As you decide which social channels to use, you'll also need to define your strategy for each network. For example, you might decide to use Twitter for customer service, Facebook for customer acquisition, and Instagram for engaging existing customers.

It's a good exercise to create mission statements for each network. These one-sentence declarations will help you focus on a very specific goal for each account on each social network.

For example, you could decide that:

- Facebook is best for acquiring new customers via paid advertising.
- Instagram is where you build brand affinity with existing customers.
- Twitter is where you engage press and industry influencers.
- LinkedIn is where you engage existing employees and attract new talent.
- YouTube is where you support existing customers with education and video help content.
- Snapchat is where you distribute content with the goal of building brand awareness with younger consumers.

If you can't create a solid mission statement for a particular social network, you may want to reconsider whether that network is worth it.

Set up (and optimize) your accounts

Once you've decided which networks to focus on, it's time to create your profiles—or improve existing profiles so they align with your strategic plan.

In general, make sure you fill out all profile fields, use keywords people will use to search for your business, and use images that are correctly sized for each network.

Step 6

Find inspiration

While it's important that your brand be distinctive and unique, you can still draw inspiration from other businesses that are great on social.

Social network success stories

All of the social networks feature success stories that highlight how brands are using their tools effectively. You can usually find these on the business section of the social network's website. (For example, take a look at the [Facebook business success stories](#).) These case studies offer valuable insights you can apply to your own goals for each social network.

Award-winning accounts and campaigns

For examples of brands that are at the top of their social media game, check out the winners of [The Facebook Awards](#) or [The Shorty Awards](#).

Step 7

Create a social media content calendar

Sharing great content is essential, of course, but it's equally important to have a plan in place for when you'll share content to get the maximum impact.

Your social media content calendar also needs to account for the time you'll spend interacting with your audience (although you need to allow for some spontaneous engagement as well).

Create a posting schedule

Your social media content calendar lists the dates and times at which you will publish types of content on each channel. It's the perfect place to plan all of your social media activities—from images and link sharing to blog posts and videos.

Your calendar ensures your posts are spaced out appropriately and published at the optimal times. It should include both your day-to-day posts and your content for social media campaigns.

Related resources

[How to create a social media content calendar](#)

[Watch: How to save time with bulk scheduling](#)

Plot your content mix

Make sure your calendar reflects the mission statement you've assigned to each social profile, so that everything you post is working to support your business goals. For example, you might decide that:

- 50 percent of content will drive traffic back to your blog
- 25 percent of content will be curated from other sources
- 20 percent of content will support enterprise goals (selling, lead generation, and so on)
- 5 percent of content will be about your employees and company culture

Placing these different post types in your content calendar will help ensure you maintain the ratio you've planned. If you're starting from scratch and you're simply not sure what types of content to post, try the 80-20 rule:

- 80 percent of your posts should inform, educate, or entertain your audience
- 20 percent can directly promote your brand

You could also try the social media rule of thirds:

- One-third of your social content promotes your business, converts readers, and generates profit
- One-third of your social content shares ideas and stories from thought leaders in your industry or like-minded businesses
- One-third of your social content involves personal interactions with your audience

Once you have your calendar set, use scheduling tools or bulk scheduling to prepare your posting in advance rather than updating constantly throughout the day. This allows you to focus on crafting the language and format of your posts, rather than writing them on the fly whenever you have time.

Step 8

Test, evaluate, and adjust your strategy

Your social media strategy is a hugely important document for your business, and you can't assume you'll get it exactly right on the first try.

As you start to implement your plan and track your results, you may find that some strategies don't work as well as you'd anticipated, while others are working even better than expected.

Track your data

In addition to using the analytics tools available within each social network, use UTM parameters to track visitors as they move through your website, so you can see exactly which social posts drive the most traffic to your website.

Re-evaluate, test, and do it all again

When data starts coming in, use it to reevaluate your strategy regularly. You can also use this information to test different posts, campaigns, and strategies against one another. Constant testing allows you to understand what works and what doesn't, so you can refine your strategy in real time.

Surveys can also be a great way to find out how well your strategy is working. Ask your social media followers, email list, and website visitors whether you're meeting their needs and expectations on social media. You can even ask them what they'd like to see more of—and then make sure to deliver on what they tell you.

Things change fast on social media. New networks emerge, while others go through significant demographic shifts. Your business will go through periods of change as well. All this means that your social media strategy should be a living document that you look at regularly and adjust as needed. Refer to it often to keep you on track, but don't be afraid to make changes so that it better reflects new goals, tools, or plans.

When you update your social strategy, make sure to let everyone on your social team know, so they can all work together to help your business make the most of your social media accounts.

Bonus: Download our social media strategy template

Does this all feel a little overwhelming? The truth is that building your social media strategy is a substantial job. It should be, since it's such an important document for your business. But it doesn't have to be complicated.

We've created a template to guide you through the whole process of creating your social media marketing plan. [Visit our blog](#) to download it (plus six other social media templates that can save you hours of work).

Take the next leap in your social media career

Hootsuite Academy

Earn industry-recognized social media certifications that will make you stand out from the crowd.

Begin with our free comprehensive training on social marketing. All of our courses are delivered online and taught by expert industry practitioners. [Take the free course here.](#)

Build a professional workflow with Hootsuite

From scheduling Instagram posts to advanced ROI measurement, Hootsuite's flexible platform helps you execute every aspect of your social media strategy. We're the world's most widely used platform for managing social media.

[Get started with the plan that fits your needs here.](#)

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Tell us whether we should praise our writers or shout at them. Either way, we appreciate your honest feedback. [Take our 4-minute survey here.](#)

#BrandsGetReal

creating connection:

what
consumers
want from
brands
in a
divided
society

sproutsocial



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Introduction

People today feel more divided than united—and it's all too easy to see why.

Political discussions veer toward 'right vs. wrong' and 'us vs. them.' Sharing an opinion can quickly devolve into name-calling and fighting amongst friends who don't see eye to eye. And online, this all happens at the speed of social.

New data from Sprout Social reveals that four out of five consumers believe society is more divided today than ever before. Asked what factors contribute to society's fracturing, 68% point fingers at government and political leaders, and over half of consumers (55%) say social media is to blame.

But despite the negativity, people remain hopeful. Hopeful that social media, for all its flaws, can actually heal society's divisions and reconnect people with one another. Ninety-one percent of consumers believe social can connect people, and 78% want brands to use social to bring them together. Unlike partisan public figures, brands find themselves uniquely positioned to foster connections between people online.

We surveyed more than 1,000 consumers to understand their desire for greater connection—with the brands they love and with each other—and how brands today benefit when they facilitate connection on social. This report explores why consumers see brands as ideal facilitators of connection and how brands can establish meaningful relationships with consumers by acting as connectors first and sellers second.



Key findings

Brands are no strangers to social. But, by and large, brands have only just begun to realize the value of truly connecting with consumers and treating social as more than a channel for promotion. Here are the top five findings from our research on the business value of building connections through social channels:

- **People believe brands and social media can power connections.** Despite feelings of division, 91% of people believe in social's power to connect people. More specifically, 78% of consumers want brands to use social to help people connect with each other.
- **Social is the number one channel for brands to connect with consumers.** When asked which communication channels give brands the best opportunity to connect with their customers, survey respondents ranked social media as number one.
- **Connection breeds loyalty and bottom line growth.** Investing in relationships with consumers directly impacts business revenue and strengthens customer loyalty. When customers feel connected to brands, more than half of consumers (57%) will increase their spending with that brand and 76% will buy from them over a competitor.

- **Real people are the key to authentic relationships.** Consumers want to learn more about the people behind their favorite brands. Seventy percent of consumers, for example, report feeling more connected when a brand's CEO is active on social. Additionally, 72% of consumers report feeling similarly when employees share information about a brand online.
- **People want brands to connect them to other people.** And they don't mean only those with similar mindsets. Sixty-two percent believe social can unify people of different backgrounds and beliefs, and more than half (52%) expressed interest in connecting with individuals different from them.



Connection is the new currency

Our newsfeeds today overflow with constant breaking news stories and examples of leaders pitting one group against another. All the political strife can make it a challenge to find a true connection. But while 72% of consumers cite government and political leaders as playing a significant role in dividing society, people have a much more favorable outlook when it comes to brands.

Their expectations for brands are high. Consumers expect brands to serve as connectors, whether that means fostering connection with their own customers or bringing together people with different perspectives. In fact, nearly two thirds (64%) of consumers want brands to connect with them, while just under half (49%) expect brands to bring people together toward a common goal.

High expectations: what today's consumers want from brands



But what defines a connection between a brand and consumers?

For starters, it's not just about a brand's popularity. Metrics like audience size and pageviews matter, but they say little about consumer sentiment or why someone stays loyal to a particular company. A growing number of followers, for example, doesn't reveal why someone feels an attachment to a specific brand or if a shopper is truly loyal to one business over another.

When asked to reflect on their relationship with brands, two thirds of consumers equate feeling connected with trust. Furthermore, 53% of people say they feel connected when that brand's values align with their own. And more than half (51%) say their relationship with a brand starts when they feel the brand understands them and their desires.

More than transactional: how consumers define feeling connected to a brand

They trust the brand



The brand aligns with their values



The brand understands them and their wants

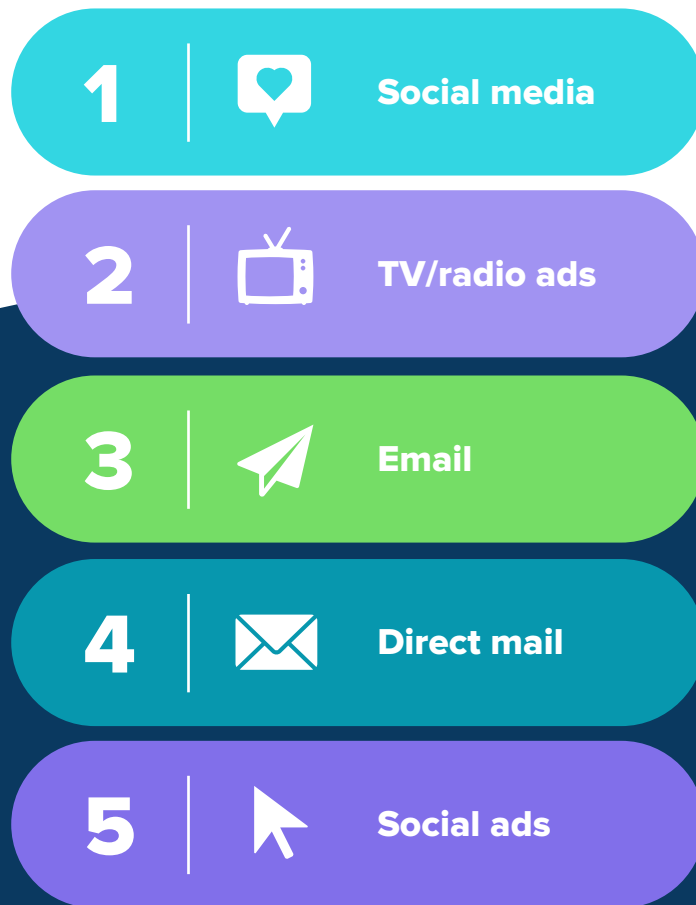


They depend on that brand's products or services



Of all the communication channels available to them, consumers point to social media as providing brands the greatest opportunity to truly connect with their audiences. Other effective channels for connection include TV/radio advertising, email and direct mail to consumers' homes. Social ads round out the top five.

Consumers rank which channels give brands the best opportunity to connect with customers

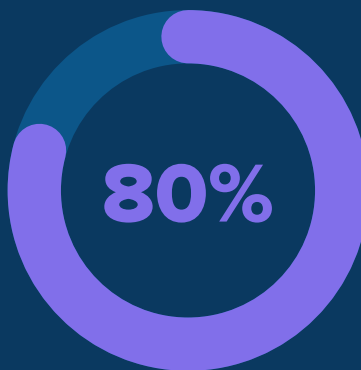


Social also gives brands the opportunity to connect people on opposite ends of the political spectrum. Seventy-two percent of consumers who identify as conservative want brands to use social to help individuals connect with each other; 85% of those who identify as liberal share the same desire.

Regardless of political affiliation, consumers want brands to use social media to help people connect with each other



Liberal



Moderate



Conservative

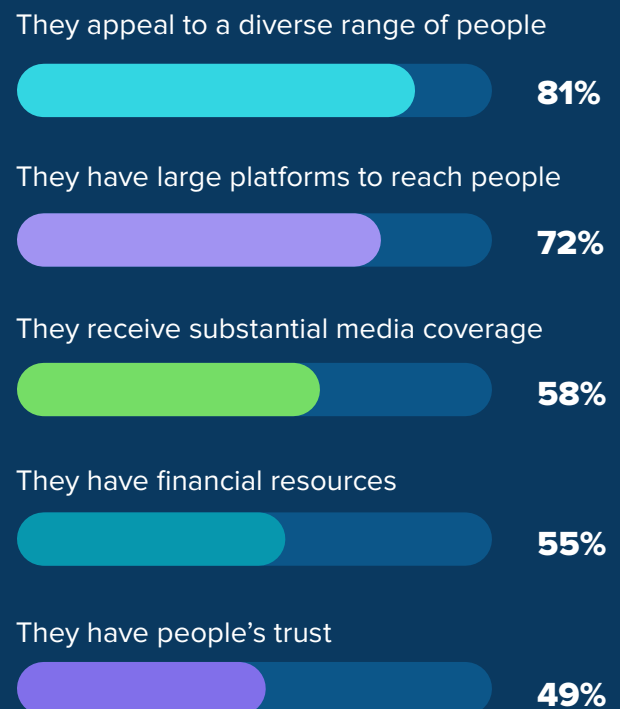


Brands are the new relationship experts

As the demand for connection grows stronger, consumers see brands in a new light. The brands who focus on building genuine relationships among their consumers, rather than strictly selling to them, will differentiate themselves from the competition.

Our research reveals that nearly four in five consumers (79%) agree brands are well positioned to connect people of varying backgrounds and beliefs—and for several reasons. Eighty-one percent of consumers say brands can be good connectors because they carry products and services that appeal to a diverse range of customers. And 58% make the case for brands as unifiers because they receive significant media coverage and attention.

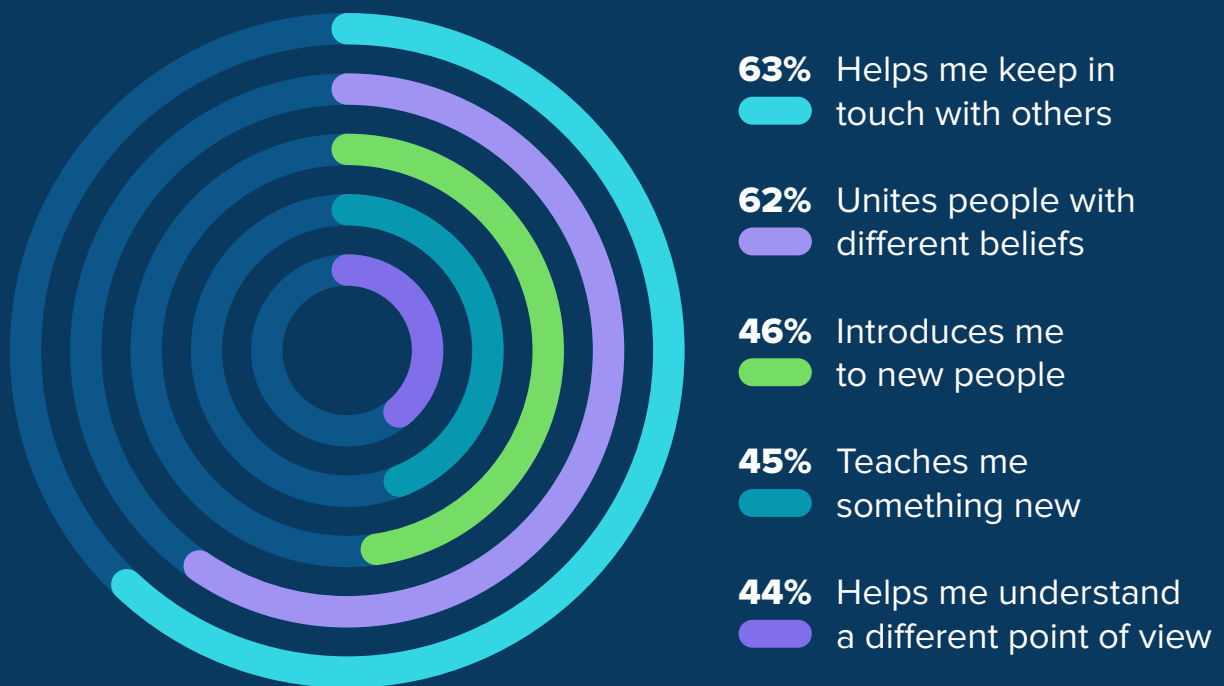
Why consumers believe brands are able to connect people of varying beliefs and backgrounds



So why do consumers rank social as the top channel for brands to use when connecting with their customers? It's worth taking a broader look at how people view social and its impact on their lives. The majority of consumers believe social can bring people together, with 63% citing social's ability to help people keep in touch, and 62% saying social unites people with different beliefs.

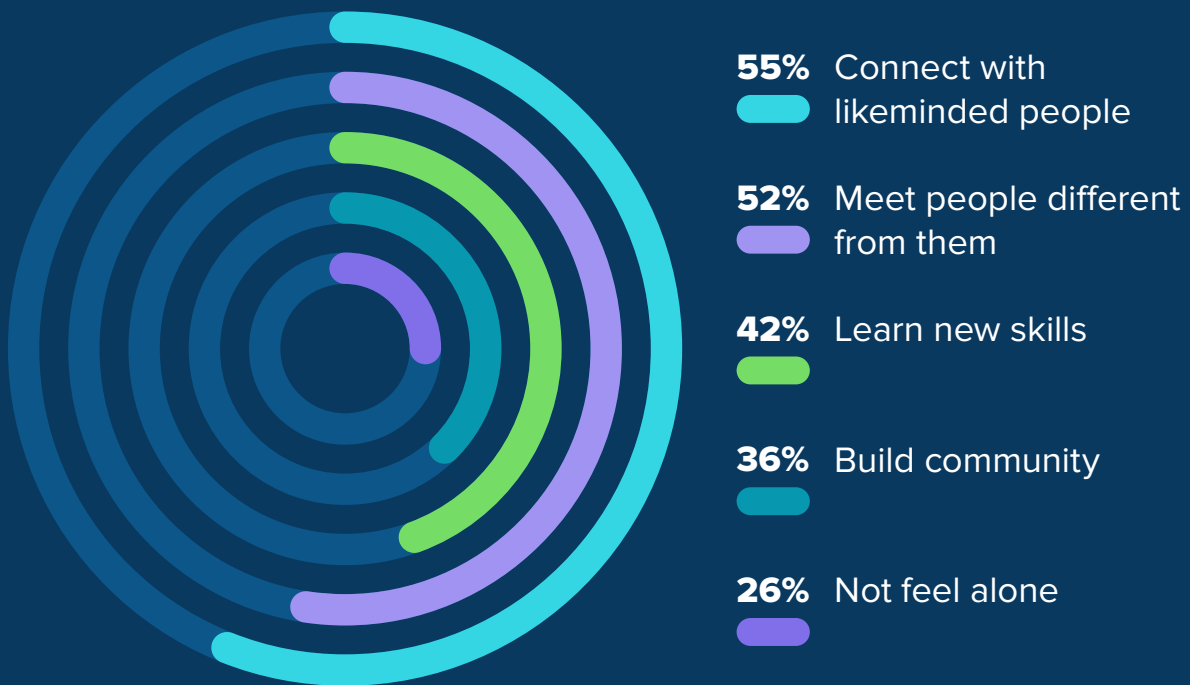
Based on personal experience, nearly half of consumers (46%) say social has introduced them to new people, while 44% say it has helped them understand a different point of view. As brands embrace their role as relationship builders, doubling down on social to power connections is the logical next step.

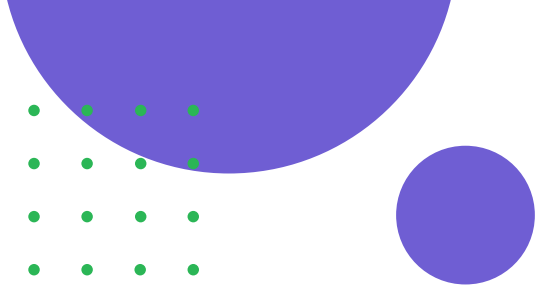
How social media builds connections, based on consumers' personal experiences



Consumers want brands to use social to help them connect with others for several reasons. More than half of consumers (55%) want brands to use social to help connect like-minded people with each other, while more than one third (36%) are looking for communities they can belong to. And over half of conservatives (51%) and liberals (54%) would like to connect with people who are different from them.

Why consumers want brands to use social media to help people connect with each other





But why should brands care?

Simply put, connection breeds loyalty, protecting businesses from boycotts when customers have a bad experience, or from losing customers to a competitor. Sixty-four percent of consumers say that their loyalty to a brand increases when they feel connected.

Connection also directly impacts a brand's bottom line. More than three quarters of consumers (76%) say they would buy from a brand they feel connected to over a competitor, and 57% say they are more likely to increase how much they spend with a brand when they feel connected. On the other hand, when consumers don't feel connected to a brand, 70% are less likely to shop there over a competitor and almost two thirds (61%) will spend less with that business.

Good business sense: why brands should prioritize their customer relationships

When customers feel connected to brands, they are more likely to...

76%
Buy over a competitor

57%
Spend more with the brand

64%
Be loyal to that brand or business

68%
Recommend brand to a friend

38%

Shop there after a bad experience



#BrandsGetReal: YouTube

YouTube, the global video-sharing platform, reaches more than one billion users every month. Recognizing the reach of its global influencers and creators, as well as the size of their potential audience, YouTube launched its Creators for Change program to build empathy and forge new connections among its users.

The program empowered people from all walks of life to connect with each other. Video simply provided the medium. With a platform to share personal stories with people of different backgrounds and beliefs, creators all over the world sparked conversations around topics like xenophobia and online extremism.

To supplement those narratives, YouTube creators also received the tools they needed to facilitate constructive dialogue around tough issues and to craft messages promoting social change. This campaign gave YouTube the opportunity to both address criticism related to the moderation of sensitive content on its platform and to put the focus on facilitating positive conversations. Since its inception, YouTube's initiative has logged 60 million views and 731,000 hours watched of all Creators for Change videos.



Real people drive real connections

For brands to build true connections with people, they need to meet consumers on their preferred communication channels and create content that puts a brand's own people front and center.

But companies can't tell the story of their people without a strong social foundation. According to our research, 65% of consumers feel more connected to brands that have a robust presence on social. That means brands have to pay attention to both the consistency and quality of their content. Specifically, consumers want material that humanizes an otherwise faceless brand, and they want the people behind the brands doing the posting.

Consumers are increasingly interested in learning about the humans who make up their favorite organizations. When a CEO has an active social presence, for example, 70% of consumers feel more connected to that brand. Of those respondents, almost two thirds (65%) say when a CEO uses social regularly it feels like real people run the business.

Consumers feel more connected to brands whose CEO is active on social media

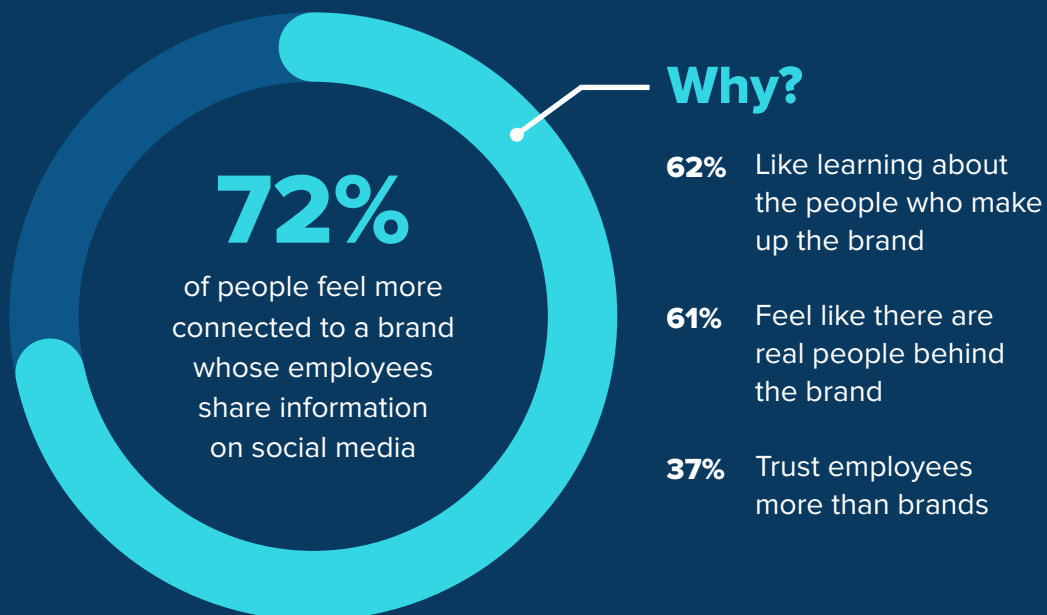


Why?

- 62%** Like learning about the people who make up the brand
- 61%** Feel like there are real people behind the brand
- 37%** Trust employees more than brands

Likewise, **people want to hear directly from the employees** who keep businesses running day and night. Seventy-two percent of consumers report feeling a bond with brands when employees share information about the business online.

Employee advocacy makes consumers feel more connected to a brand



Admittedly, shoppers might not be as eager to see a brand-sponsored post about a new product launch in their newsfeed as they are to hear from friends and family—but they may want to hear from a friend who shares excitement about the same launch, or describes their own role in making it possible. Encouraging employees to post about their employer can generate positive brand exposure while making announcements and brand messaging more interesting and relatable to consumers.



#BrandsGetReal: Papa John's

For years, John Schnatter was the face of his namesake US pizza brand. But when a conference call recording surfaced of Schnatter using the 'n-word,' the pizza chain knew it had to act fast to mitigate the fallout.

Instead of launching an apology tour for Schnatter's behaviors, Papa John's hired an agency to help the brand reconnect with its consumers through emotional storytelling and social transparency. This led to the creation of the "**Voices of Papa John's**" campaign, a series of short videos profiling the brand's employees describing why they value working at Papa John's.

While it's still too early to quantify the long-term impacts of the initiative, there are signs the **people-centric campaign** is slowly beginning to rebuild trust among the pizza brand's consumers. Papa John's success to date results from focusing on the many real, diverse people behind the brand sharing what the company means to them and giving consumers new faces—and voices—to associate with the brand.



Brands must listen before they speak

In order for brands to connect with consumers, they need to understand how to speak the same language as their target audience. Reaching that understanding, however, starts with listening. If brands fail to listen, consumers will sense they're not operating on the same wavelength and take their business elsewhere.

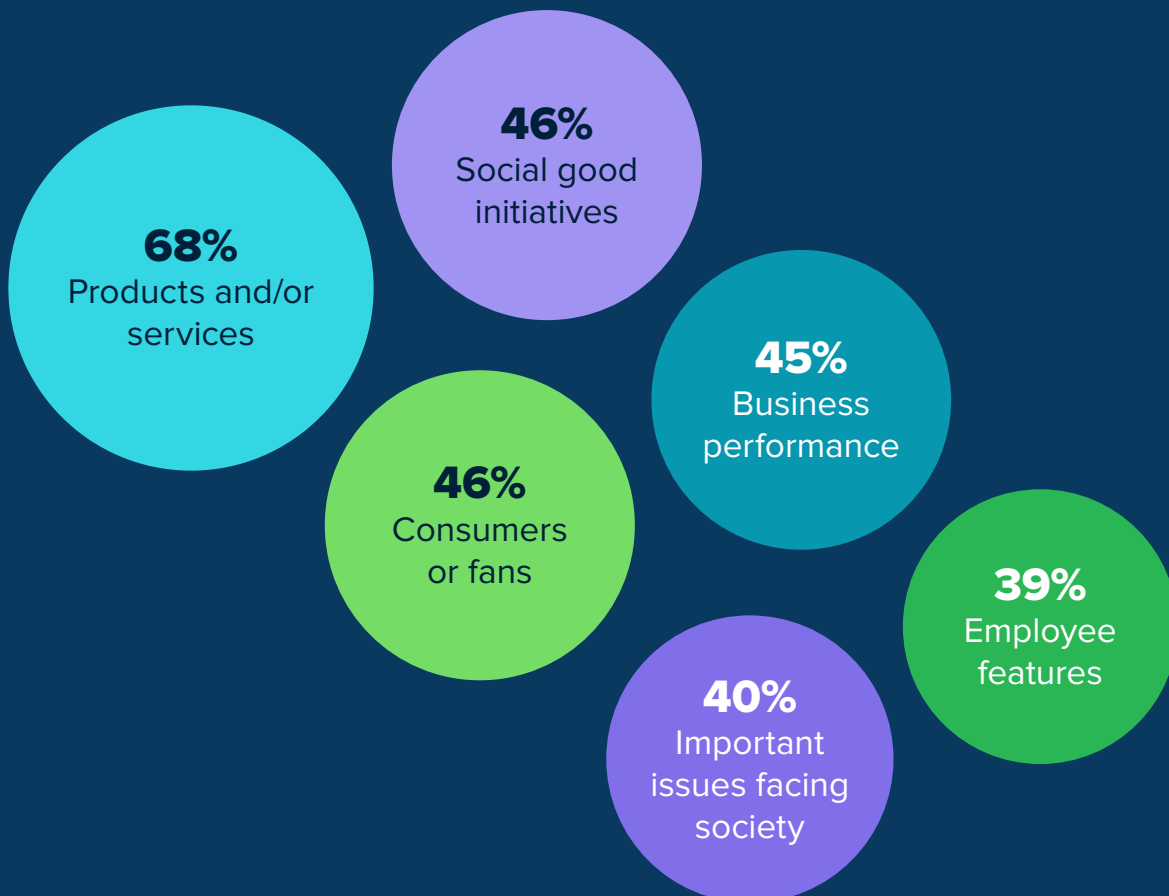
Listening reveals what types of content matter most to consumers right now. Brands can identify industry trends, pop culture events or timely news pieces that resonate with their consumers, then start and join conversations to capitalize on these insights. When brands create, participate in and even host relevant conversations online, 44% of consumers say they feel more connected to them. When brands share content highlighting the latest trends in their industry, 40% of individuals feel a stronger connection to them.

Social media behaviors that help brands connect with consumers



A deeper dive into the data reveals which topics will best pique consumers' interest. While consumers usually want information about products and services, they also want to learn what makes a brand unique. Forty-six percent of consumers are interested in content detailing a brand's social good initiatives and more than one third (39%) want features on company employees. As brands brainstorm topics for content creation, listening can play a big role in helping uncover ideas that will resonate.

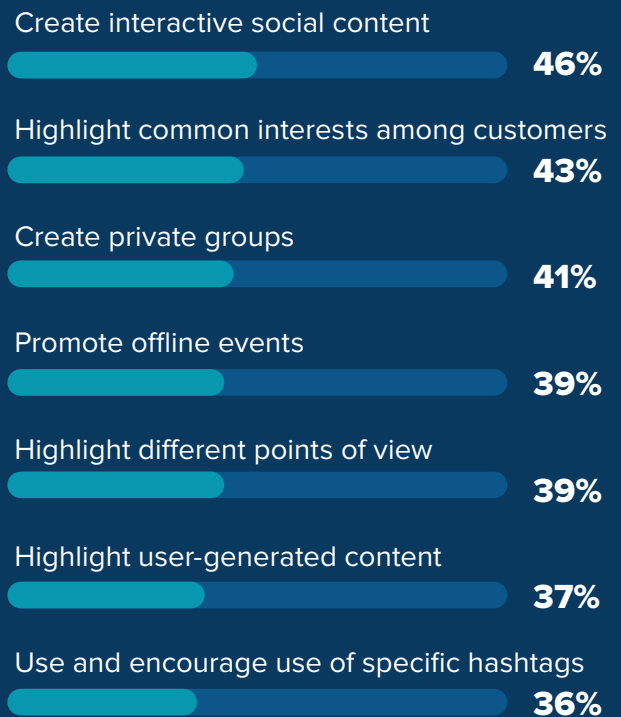
Topics brands discuss on social media that make consumers feel more connected to them



With a stronger grasp of what content makes their audience tick, brands can better leverage social to connect with their audiences and build community. When it comes to using social to help consumers connect with each other, 46% of consumers would like to see brands create interactive social content, while a little over one third (37%) believe brands should promote user-generated content.

And 41% of consumers believe brands should create private groups like the ones that [Peloton](#), the on-demand streaming provider and maker of the Peloton Bike, hosts on Facebook. These groups serve a dual purpose by bringing people together and giving brands a wellspring of ideas and feedback. Consumers who join private groups receive the content they want from and about their favorite companies, while brands can strengthen their relationships with customers and gain deeper insights into what their diehard fans expect from them.

How brands can leverage social media to connect consumers with each other





#BrandsGetReal: Aerie

Sometimes brands move in the opposite direction and take a gamble by highlighting issues that aren't trending in their respective industries. For teen retailer Aerie, such a bold move has paid dividends.

While most lingerie retailers focused on using models and a single body type for advertisements, Aerie paid close attention to what actual customers wanted, attaching itself to the conversation women were having online regarding body acceptance and female empowerment. The underwear brand encouraged people to celebrate body positivity and diversity by uploading selfies of themselves online with #AerieREAL. It even gave some women the chance to be cast in Aerie's latest campaign.

The result? Aerie's decision to promote authenticity and user-generated content has seen the retailer become a real threat to established market leaders, and the company now approaches a \$1 billion valuation.

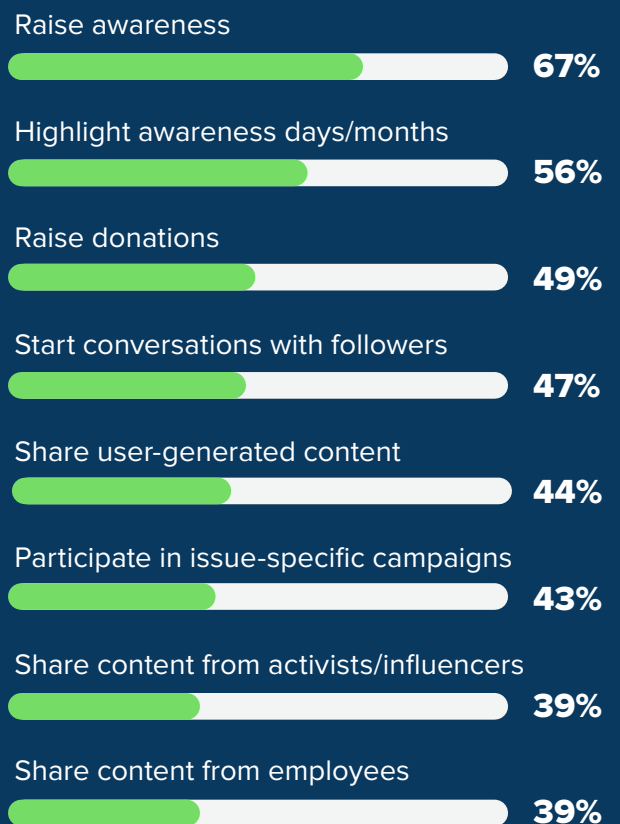


Bridging the gap: brands as community builders

It's no secret brands are already tackling a variety of social and political issues online, [taking a stand](#) when it comes to sensitive topics. For brands, the challenge isn't whether or not to engage in thorny conversations. Instead, they need to identify opportunities to lead those discussions in a way that unites, not divides, consumers.

To bring people together around social and political issues, more than two thirds (67%) of consumers believe brands should raise awareness around those issues on their social platforms. Fifty-six percent of consumers would like brands to highlight awareness days or months on social, similar to how [Barbie's #MoreRoleModels campaign](#) showcased female role models for International Women's Day. A little under half of consumers (49%) say brands should use social to raise donations and 47% want brands to start conversations with their followers to rally people around touchy subjects.

How brands can use social media to unite people around social/political issues



Which topics brands choose to highlight also matters to consumers. Over three quarters of consumers (76%) say brands talking about natural disasters or crises could unite people on social, while 74% point to education as an appropriate topic for conversation. Other social issues consumers see as opportunities to unite an audience include environmental issues, human rights and poverty.

Which social/political issues brands should talk about to unite people on social media



Some brands will choose to tackle issues that have the potential to be divisive because they know it will pay off and can deepen connections with consumers who share similar beliefs. Nike, for example, made NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick the face of an ad that ran during the NFL's regular-season opener, a move that ultimately paid off; spotlighting Kaepernick resulted in the [company's stock closing at an all-time high](#). Similarly, the shoe company [TOMS](#) launched a social campaign closely aligned with the brand's beliefs in philanthropy and addressing issues that matter. Since advocating for gun reform on its website and social channels, TOMS estimates consumers sent over 750,000 postcards to state representatives in the last year.



#BrandsGetReal: adidas

As part of its commitment to removing barriers in sports, **adidas** launched the **She Breaks Barriers** initiative. This global movement builds on a previous campaign called **#CreatorsUnite** and aims to inspire and support the upcoming generation of female athletes with the tagline, “When creators unite, she breaks barriers.”

The sportswear manufacturer has invited fans, organizations and athletes to use the campaign hashtag on social and to share their personal stories, opinions and solutions on how to remove gender barriers in sports. Participants also have the option to submit ideas directly on the adidas website. By fostering conversation, and also partnering with influencers and advocates working towards women’s equality in sports, adidas hopes to raise awareness—and generate solutions—around the obstacles women face in athletics.



What's next for brands on social

In an increasingly divided society, connections matter more than ever, and people want brands to lead the way. Building these relationships, however, takes time. Brands will need to rethink how they leverage social media to nurture connections with and among their audiences. Brands that shift their strategic emphasis on social from revenue to relatability will be the best equipped to engage with people on an emotional level and uncover connections in an otherwise divided environment.

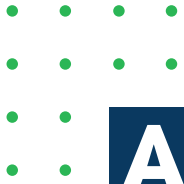
As brands increasingly embrace their shifting role as premier connectors, they'll need to keep in mind the following as they rethink their approach to marketing, customer experience and social strategy.

- **People, not just products, will win over consumers.** Social media has made it easier than ever for brands to talk about their goods and services to large groups of potential customers. But consumers want more than product information; they also want to learn more about the people who make up their favorite brands. To foster genuine connection, brands need to think beyond what they sell and consider the needs and desires of the people they are selling to.
- **Employees are a brand's best advocates.** While some brands turn to influencers to boost awareness, others look inward for new spokespeople. Consumers enjoy seeing the real people who bring a brand to life, and they report feeling more connected to brands whose employees act as advocates on social. Brands should consider implementing advocacy strategies to encourage participation and simplify the sharing of approved content on employees' personal profiles.

- **Take time to listen to what people are saying online.** One of the quickest ways to sever a connection with a customer is to participate in conversations they find irrelevant or boring. Social listening enables brands to craft content that people will want to read and can help brands pivot to a different topic when they feel their audience's attention is waning. The key is to find a reason for consumers to want to engage with a brand on social media—and capitalizing on timely topics is just one way to grab people's attention.
- **Find common ground to unite disparate people.** Despite their differences, consumers want brands to leverage their platforms to help people connect with each other and unite individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Brands can use their social platforms to raise awareness around important issues, invite people to join meaningful conversations and even build communities that spark long-term connections both online and off.

As social media trends back toward its original purpose of connecting the world, brands find themselves having to make a choice about how they will use their social platforms. Some brands will continue to maintain business as usual, while others choose to leverage their platforms to pursue a purpose that's greater than their bottom line.

Which will your brand choose?



About the data

The “Creating Connection: What Consumers Want From Brands in a Divided Society” study is based on a survey of 1,013 U.S. consumers. The survey was conducted online between November 20 and 26, 2018. Graphics are rounded to the nearest whole percentage and may not add up to exactly 100%.

For questions about the data, please contact pr@sproutsocial.com.



About Sprout Social

Sprout Social offers deep social media listening and analytics, social management, customer care and advocacy solutions to more than 25,000 leading brands and agencies, including Evernote, West Elm and Edelman. Sprout's suite of solutions supports every aspect of a cohesive social program and enables organizations of all sizes to extend their reach, amplify their brand and create the kind of real connection with their consumers that drives their businesses forward. Learn more at sproutsocial.com.



Videos for supplementing Level 3 IT Social Media for Business Unit 3

A1 Social media websites

Developments in social media affect the way businesses promote products and services.

A great intro into why use social media for business

https://youtu.be/_8nZDN7nJS4

A.P1

A1 Social media websites

Developments in social media affect the way businesses promote products and services.

Introduction of how something can go viral 'Mr Splashy pants' How to make a splash in social media, ideas for how to use social media to promote something.

https://www.ted.com/talks/alexis_ohanian_how_to_make_a_splash_in_social_media?language=en

Simple 7 steps to use social marketing for business

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haVA0ijJ_ZY

A.P1

A1 Social media websites

Features of social media websites tailored to business needs.

Finding the best platform for my business:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDfMEuSCizw>

What social media and why? For you and your audience

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GAlitPnXxU>

A.P1

A1 Social media websites

Features, structure and target audience of different social media websites.

Audience objectives: Why understand audiences:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol5pbanivBk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwa7Y4T28bU>

A.P1

A2 Business uses of social media

Content focus and meaning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46ywSw7A00Y>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNj9bD5VIsk>

A.P2

A3 Risks and issues

Risks of business in Social media

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAEPqigEZbY>

Top 10 disasters of using social media for business

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk0jwbDh7QU>

A.P3