



# HOW TO DEVELOP A LOYAL FOLLOWING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Creating an online community of devout followers is essential for your brand's social media. Having loyal customers and followers not only drives sales, but it also gives you a mechanism to interact with, engage, and inform your audience. Although many of the tactics for growth are nuanced from platform to platform, the overarching theme of spreading awareness and creating meaningful relationships is consistent.

A Nielsen study reported that 92% of global consumers trust recommendations from friends and family above all other forms of advertising. Why is this important from a social media perspective? Your followers can extend beyond just being loyal customers to become strong brand ambassadors and your biggest advocates. In this white paper, we will outline various methods for increasing awareness of your brand, how to leverage social media as a tool to attract followers, and how to keep your followers engaged and supportive of your organization.

One important recommendation off of the top. Do NOT pay for followers! The purpose of gaining a following is not to have a high follower count, but to have an organic, authentic community that will further your business. Would you rather have 2,000 highly engaged customers or 10,000 bots that don't do anything for your bottom-line?

# General Practice

## ✓ Define your audience

- Creating a loyal following starts with identifying who will benefit the most from your offering. What kind of people are your products/services designed for? Why would they want what you have for sale?
- If you try to appeal to everyone, you will end up appealing to no one
- Defining your [audience personas](#) can be a great place to start
- Some social media platform demographics may be better suited for your target audience than others
- Here are social media demographics from [Sprout Social](#)

## ✓ Cross-Promote!

- Try to collaborate with other brands or people in your industry to create a mutually beneficial relationship where you get in front of their followers and vice versa
- Make sure to tag those accounts that are tied to your content so that they can engage with the post and share

## ✓ Make it as easy as possible for people to find and follow you!

- Have a link to your social accounts on your website, in your email signature, and in your online newsletters



## ✓ Embrace your customer service skills!

- By being responsive and helpful to people's queries and issues, you can turn a customer problem into a customer acquisition!
- According to the [Sprout Social Index](#), nearly 35% of customers chose social media for customer care
- Sprout Social's [Q1 Index](#) discovered 71% of users are more likely to make a purchase after a positive social interaction

## ✓ Provide value!

- Whether it's information regarding your products/services, education, entertainment, or a great visual, make sure you are offering something to your customers to keep them coming back

## ✓ Get your followers to participate

- Create challenges or contests to elicit user-generated content
- Not only will people be creating content that is tied directly to your brand but you are able to highlight the best pieces in order to honor your participants and add more diversity to your social posts

## ✓ Define your target audience and create content that appeals to them



- Use questions to elicit engagement and feedback from your followers in order to inform your content strategy
- This article from [Social Media Today](#) highlights various resources for question research in order to discover what questions your audience is asking and how to leverage that information to connect with them more effectively

## ✓ Follow other relevant users

- By following others, it is likely that they will look at your profile and if it resonates with them, will follow you back
- Tip: Find a user you want to connect with and in addition to a follow request, like and comment on one of their posts. Now they will have several notifications from you and will more likely look into who you are and if you are worth a follow back!

## ✓ Engage with other communities and profiles

- Social media is a unique form of broadcasting because it allows for two-way communication, not just posting and ghosting
- In addition to responding to those who comment on your posts, identify other communities in your industry and engage with their content. This will drive them to return the favor and will place your brand in front of new audiences



## ✓ Follow the 80/20 rule

- Only 20% of your content should be self-promotional. The other 80% should be comprised of interacting/sharing content from others and providing value
- Researchers at Rutgers found that social media accounts that share information rather than self-promoting have, on average, [twice the number of followers](#)

## ✓ Research the competition

- What are they doing well? Where are they lacking? What can you learn from how they are leveraging social media?

## ✓ Identify leaders in your industry

- Connect with them through social to garner incredible content and see how they effectively leverage their social media

# Instagram



## ✓ Incentives for following

- Discount codes exclusive to social media (Instagram stories)

## ✓ Optimize your Instagram account - make it easy for people to find you!

- Have a bio that explains what your business is
- A link to a landing page that people are looking for (products/services that you post about rather than a general home page)
- Keep your username short and clear without special characters or numbers

## ✓ Hashtags

- Use a blend of high to low popularity hashtags to increase awareness of your brand. Don't just use hashtags with millions of followers on it because your content will be swept up by the dozens of other posts that follow seconds after. Explore low popularity hashtags to keep your content front and center for longer
  - Use 15-30 hashtags per post
- In addition to hashtags relevant to your industry, incorporate hashtags that your audience is searching for. For example, if you are a real estate agent posting about a home you just closed, in addition to hashtags such as #homeclosing or #soldhome, you might also consider using hashtags such as #realestateagent or #homesforsale that your audience may be using to find someone like you who can help them find a home!
- Here's an article from [Hootsuite](#) on best practices for using hashtags
- Tip: To avoid looking spammy, post your content and then add your hashtags as the first comment

## ✓ Cater to your audience

- Use the questions, poll, or DM Me sticker on your Instagram stories to ask what products/services they prefer, their biggest challenges, their objections, and more in order to inform your content strategy and offering

## ✓ Urge your followers to tag their friends

- Occasionally share content and encourage your followers to tag the friends who they think it applies to
- Tip: Leverage feel-good content that makes your followers feel as though they're being a good friend by tagging them

## ✓ Highlight your most important information first

- Captions in users' feeds cut off after a few lines of text, so put the most compelling text at the beginning

## ✓ IGTV

- Get in front of new audiences by using the “go live with a friend” feature and co-hosting an Instagram live session with someone else in your industry
- If you need help going live, check out our whitepaper on hosting virtual events across social media platforms

## Twitter



## ✓ Unlike other social media platforms, **Twitter does not penalize you for tweeting frequently**, in fact, tweeting often is a great way to build your following

- [Coschedule](#) recommends a “sweet spot” of 15 Tweets a day although depending on your objectives this number may change
- Tweet consistently rather than in bursts

## ✓ Bio

- A clean profile photo. According to the psychology of social photos, an unobstructed facial photo is ideal if you aren’t using a high-res brand logo
- Relevant tags, industry keywords, and location information
- Tell your customers about your business and express your brand character with some emojis and personality

## ✓ Hashtags

- Use popular community hashtags like #MotivationMonday to go beyond your standard business-oriented messaging
- Make sure not to go overboard with hashtags especially if you want the reader to click on a link. Having too many hashtags can distract the user from your call-to-action

- Tip: Incorporate hashtags within the copy of the post to reduce distractions

## ✓ Pin your best tweet

- From your latest promotion to an important update regarding your business operations, use the pinned tweet function to express this important message at the very top of your profile

## ✓ Retweet old, high-performing content

## ✓ Create a Twitter thread

- Tweet something and then reply to the Tweet in order to continue the conversation beyond the character limit and bring your entire thread to the top of the feed with each reply

## ✓ Twitter Chats

- There are recurring Twitter chats for various industries that pose questions, invite guests, and create a space where you can share your perspective with relevant accounts and discussions
- Create your own Twitter chat to develop your own community and engage with them on a consistent basis

## ✓ Twitter Lists

- Rather than sifting through your cluttered feed with content from every account you follow, you can create Twitter lists and add certain accounts to them. This allows you to curate the posts you see and the communities you want to target
- Tip: People can see when they are added to a public list so make sure you don't name it something offensive like "Low-hanging fruit"



# Facebook

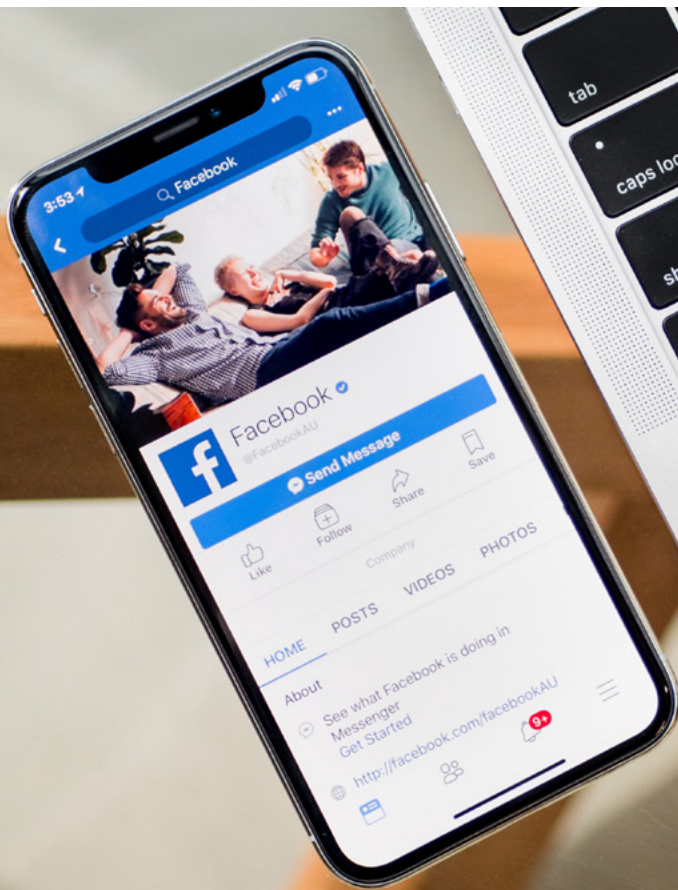


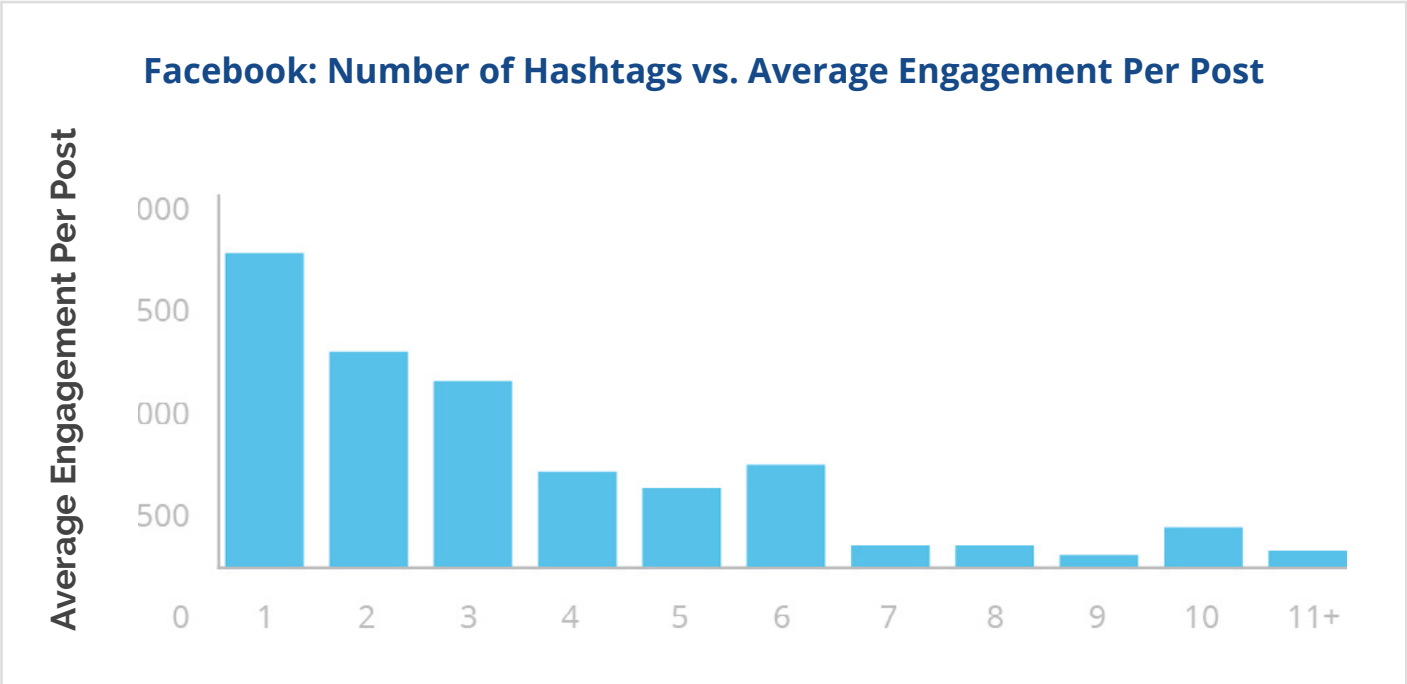
## ✓ Make your page easy to find

- Use your brand name as your Page name. Don't add unnecessary keywords that come off as spammy
- Select a memorable and consistent username (vanity URL). Your username should be consistent with your handle on other platforms so people who follow you elsewhere can find your Facebook page more easily

## ✓ Hashtags

- According to [Sprout Social](#), maximum engagement occurs when only one hashtag is used





## ✓ Leverage the About section of your Page

- In addition to including details about your business and your contact information, use the space to highlight important or personal aspects of your organization such as the origin of your brand, important milestones, or intriguing facts
- Facebook also views a Page with a complete profile as more credible, which gives you an advantage in the [Facebook algorithm](#) and shows your posts to more people
- According to [Facebook](#), the time people spend watching Facebook Live **has quadrupled in the past year**
  - Use live video to spur engagement and invite others to join your live stream to get in front of their audience as well

## ✓ Using Facebook video

- Here is a great infographic from [Social Media Today](#) on how to maximize engagement on Facebook through brand messaging
- According to [Sprout Social](#), Facebook users watch 85% of videos without sound
  - Adding captions to video ads increases view duration by an average of 12%

## ✓ Link from your personal page

- Include a link to your company page on your personal profile to direct your friends and followers to like and follow your company page. You can add this link to your place of employment
- Tag your personal page in company posts so that they appear on your personal timeline and your friends are able to see your company page without you shamelessly self-promoting

## ✓ Leverage Facebook Groups

- Create your own industry-related Group
- Interact with other relevant Groups and the relationships you develop will likely visit your profile and see the link to your company page. (You aren't able to join groups as a company page)

## ✓ Add a "Like us on Facebook" button to the "Thank You" Page on your website

- After purchasing from you, customers are likely to adopt a smaller commitment and like your social media page

LinkedIn



## ✓ Optimize your page for SEO

- Read this article from [LinkedIn](#) about identifying proper keywords, writing a strong About section, and more

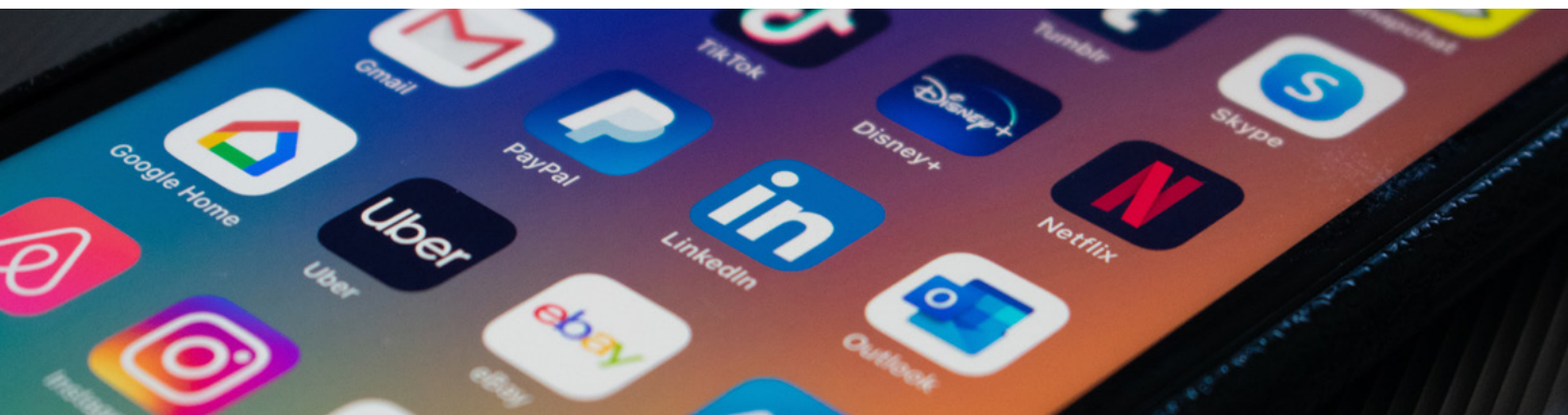
## ✓ Leverage LinkedIn Groups

- Just like with Facebook, join relevant groups to your industry or create your own and invite connections to join

- Tip: Encourage your employees to join your group and create some momentum with engagement and discussions

## ✓ Post Weekly

- LinkedIn's algorithm differs from other social media platforms in that you should post more sparingly in order to reach more of your audience
- According to [CoSchedule](#), you should only post about once a day or 20 days a month
- Tip: If you need help crafting content, check out the [Content Suggestions](#) feature for long-form articles that you can filter to pertain to your industry and demographics
- Your content doesn't always need to be buttoned up and formal
  - Give a face to the company
  - Let people know you're human
  - Showcase employees
  - Give a sneak peek on how you do business
  - Showcase your company culture



## ✓ Communities Hashtags

- Choose 3 relevant hashtags to associate with your LinkedIn page under the Communities Hashtags section
- You are then able to react and comment on conversations within these hashtags directly from your company page (rather than from your personal profile like with Facebook groups)



## ✓ Use Showcase Pages

- A Showcase Page is a branded extension of your LinkedIn page to show off a special sub-brand, initiative, or engage a target community. These pages give LinkedIn members another way to follow you, even if they don't follow your page
- Don't create a Showcase Page for every product or region but use it to segment different business lines or potential audiences

## ✓ Hashtags

- Use three to five relevant hashtags in your posts to reach desired audiences in your niche

Developing a loyal brand following on social media doesn't happen overnight (at least not the kind you want). It requires consistent posting, listening, and interacting in order to reach your target audience and create a space that they will proactively want to visit. Social media is unique because it is conversational and fosters back-and-forth communication. By humanizing your brand, providing value, and acknowledging users/followers, you can create an online community that will return the favor through increased brand awareness and customer acquisition. Social media doesn't have to be a chore, it can be educational and fun. Having an open mind and a desire to connect with others will allow you to build a following of loyal customers who will grow your business.



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