



How to Optimize Your Social Media Channels

(Plus Best Practices You Can Actually Use)

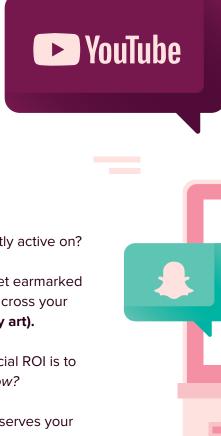


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Medium



Introduction

How many social media platforms are you currently active on?

With just a portion of your larger marketing budget earmarked for social media, properly allocating your spend across your channels is both a **science and an art (but mostly art).**

That means the primary way to maximize your social ROI is to optimize each and every post you publish. *But how?*

First, you need to understand how each channel serves your marketing goals. Then, know how your audience acts on those platforms. And finally, discover which types of content perform best.

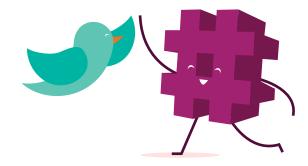
Let's evaluate the top social media channels most commonly used by marketers and the best practices you need to know.



Twitter

Twitter was founded on brevity. Although it doubled the max character length of posts, expanding from 140 to 280 last year, the platform is still designed for concise, provocative questions or statements.

The best Twitter users provide truncated links at the end of their tweets so followers can click through to other types of content, like longer articles. But the true hallmark of Twitter is how easy it is to thread together multiple tweets and curate user comments. Rather than publishing single, paragraph-length social posts (a la Facebook), you can keep your communications simplified through call-and-response techniques and relevant hashtags.



Hashtags allow nonfollowers to find your posts, and treating Twitter as a forum for two-way conversations allows you engage with the larger online world as efficiently as possible.

Much of your Twitter time should be spent replying back to followers, reaching out to other brands and soliciting honest opinions from the Twitterverse.



Platform Usage:

336 million monthly active users



Character Limit:

280





Content Types:

- Short copy
- GIFs
- Autoplay videos
- Two or fewer hashtags



Engagement Tips:

Run Twitter polls.
Retweet relevant content.
Communicate via Direct
Message for sensitive
matters or for followers
who are seriously
interested in doing
business with you.



Example: Vox

Vox was built for the online world of short attention spans and social sharing. By providing not just news but added context and opinions, Vox, as its bio suggests, helps followers "understand the news" with short snippets of teaser text linking to longer form content.

As this example shows, the copy is short, the title of the article is direct and punny and the most visually prominent feature, the image, illustrates clearly the objective of the tweet and what I, as a user, stand to learn from it.

Being cognizant of how quickly people scan through Twitter, Vox cuts to the chase immediately with content that's applicable to a wide audience. Although there are no hashtags, the topic itself allows for open-ended responses and thoughtful comments from followers.

That's a tactic every business can mimic.



LinkedIn

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LinkedIn is all about business. More than **40 million decision-makers and six million C-suite execs are active on LinkedIn,** which makes it a great tool for referrals and business connections.

Just as Facebook is the digital face of the average consumer, LinkedIn company pages are the initial chance for businesses to make a great first impression. This means having dynamic cover photos along with updated bios and summaries, publishing content that represents the best side of your brand and networking with potential applicants, current employees and industry leaders.

More so than other social channels, LinkedIn has immediate, defined business value in the form of staff recruitment, longer form content publishing and exclusive memberships in online industry forums.





Platform Usage:

250 million monthly active users



Character Limit:

40,000



Content Types:

- Industry news
- Event promotion
- Thought leadership pieces



Engagement Tips:

Use staff-driven opinions for authenticity. Post short videos from your execs. Encourage employees to share and comment on company posts.



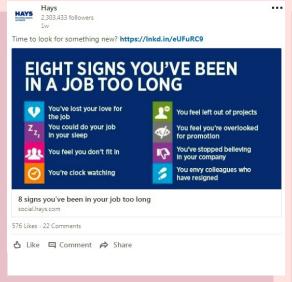
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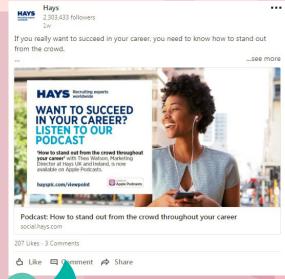
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Example: Hays

So who is the exemplar of LinkedIn profiles? According to LinkedIn itself, it's **Hays, a recruiting firm that topped** the list of "Best Company Pages in 2017."

Your business LinkedIn page should serve as a hub for great, diverse content that brings value in a more direct, professional manner.

In these three posts, Hays used custom illustrations, quotes, podcasts, infographics and stellar branding to offer followers thought leadership in multiple formats.



Facebook

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Facebook is a diverse medium, known for written posts, videos, memes, contests, events, images and more. Though it tends to skew more B2C in its applications, B2B marketers may find Facebook to be a useful way to humanize their brands and post content that resonates with audiences that aren't necessarily interested in buying a product or service.

Good content is good content, and Facebook's advanced targeting functions allow companies to publish and schedule posts that appear only on certain demographics' feeds. This feature enables you to cater to highly specific Facebook users, testing messaging and content that is most likely to work.





Platform Usage:

2.19 billion monthly active users



Character Limit:

63,206



Content Types:

- Narratives/Stories
- Videos
- Blogs
- Quizzes



Engagement Tips:

Upload videos directly to Facebook instead of just sharing YouTube links. Set videos to autoplay with subtitles and no sound. Pair blog headlines with hi-res images for stronger scannability.



Ideal Character Length:

40-80

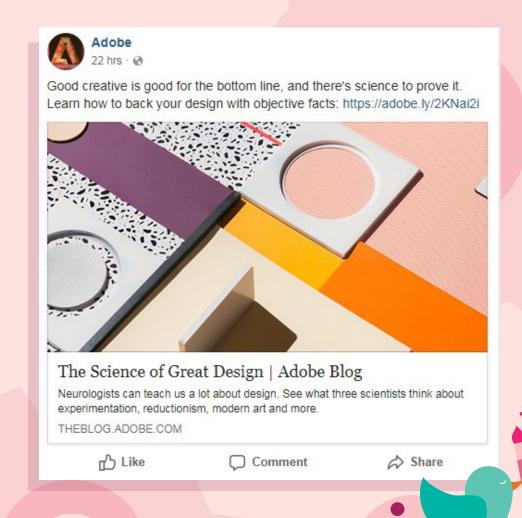
Example: Adobe

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Facebook users most often share videos, opinionated articles and science-related research, according to BuzzSumo's top-shared posts in 2017.

Adobe capitalizes on humans' innate desire to learn more about profound and sometimes shocking experiments, trials and facts. Despite selling B2B software, Adobe uses its Facebook page as a platform to be interesting for the sake of being interesting – it's what people prefer.

Here, the company uses short, two-sentence copy, a colorful image and thought-provoking concepts of "design," "experimentation" and "science" to set the stage for a unique, highly shareable post.





Instagram

Images. And only the best of them.

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That's what you post on Instagram, and that's how consumers want to engage with your brand.

Although illustrations have their place in marketing, Instagram is mostly for the human connection, meaning real-life photos of products, people and events resonate more innately than artwork that doesn't appear as natural.

Instagram is also great for including dynamic image filters, text overlays, brand-motivated quotes, limited-time promotions and user-generated content. By focusing on visual quality, your posts should be heavier on presentation and lighter on information

let your images and videos speak for themselves.





Platform Usage:

800 million monthly active users



Character Limit:

2,200



Content Types:

- Product photos
- Quotes
- Short narratives
- Videos



Engagement Tips:

Experiment with Instagram Stories (content that vanishes within 24 hours). Run hashtag campaigns to compile and distribute user-generated content. Use design templates for better visual and text combinations.



Ideal Character Length:

138-150

Example: Cotopaxi

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There's a reason travel and lifestyle brands excel at Instagram.

The organic experience between company and consumer through such a simple medium works because audiences want their media to be an escape from the daily drudgery of web content.

That's exactly what Cotopaxi, an outdoor clothing brand that funds poverty relief, accomplishes with its Instagram posts.

In this example, there is no mention of a product, and there's no overt business pitch – just a simple story, a compelling photograph and enough breathing room for followers to imprint themselves into this moment. Who wouldn't want to replicate this experience?

Now, the next time someone is in the market for outdoor apparel, this short post might help Cotopaxi be front of mind. **And that's how social media marketing should work.**



YouTube

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Because nearly 80 percent of all online traffic is video, YouTube is a must-have marketing channel.

In addition to having more users than Netflix, Hulu and Amazon, YouTube is also one of the largest search engines, offering companies a multitude of opportunities to reach customers through visuals. And by customizing channel trailers and using YouTube's video editor tools, you can turn your marketing presence into a versatile production studio.

By making videos as comprehensive and informative as possible, you increase watch time, which is a top ranking factor in search. Think of them as the visual equivalent of long-form how-to guides, packing value into each frame and standing out from every other competing video on a given subject.





Platform Usage:

1.8 billion monthly active users



Character Limit:

70 for video titles. 5,000 for video description.



Content Types:

- Tutorials
- Interviews
- Testimonials



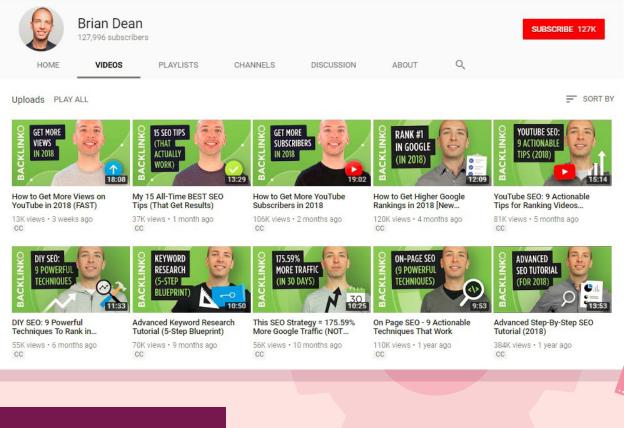
Engagement Tips:

Verbally ask for comments on your video. Thread together subsequent videos in a playlist to keep viewers on your page.



Ideal Character Length:

9+ minutes



Example: Brian Dean

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Are there important points you want to get across to your audience that are just too dense to write out in 3,000 words? **Make a video instead.**

You're asking someone to grant you a moment of his or her time with every piece of content you create, and a video is the most digestible, presentable manner to satisfy each person's content needs without being boring.

That's what Brian Dean of Backlinko does with his YouTube channel.

Brian's channel is consistently branded, employs expert splash screen design to entice clicks and uses verbiage that promises actionable results. You'll also note that each video is 9 minutes or longer, meaning you know that you're in for an in-depth experience that is likely to answer all your questions.



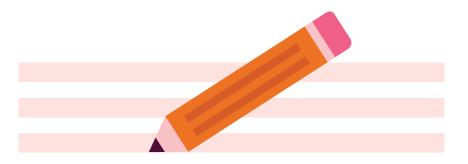
Medium

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As both a publisher and a platform, **Medium puts your content** in front of millions at the touch of a button.

While a corporate blog may restrict writers and marketers to defined branding and messaging guidelines, Medium is a channel on which you can publish thoughtful opinions in your own voice or offer commentary on large-scale issues your industry faces.

You can republish content that already lives on your site, or you can treat Medium as a unique, standalone outlet for your ideas. Want to write 5,000 words? Go for it. Want to embed media features your company's CMS doesn't support?



Medium has plenty of third-party embeds you can automatically place in your posts, like Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

As a social channel, Medium is a great way to test which of your creative ideas are most favorably received by a community of other Medium subscribers. Plus, every post has a time signature that corresponds to how long it takes to read a post from start to finish, which allows users to quickly decide how willing they are to commit to longer or shorter pieces.



Platform Usage:

60 million monthly readers



Character Limit:

None



Content Types:

- Long-form content
- Industry opinions
- First-person narratives



Engagement Tips:

Include other forms of media to complement text. Post only the highest quality content you can produce (readers come to Medium only for interesting, opinionated work). Curate posts by topical similarity.











Would We Ever Know?

Example: MIT Technology Review

Is anyone smarter than MIT? Who knows.

On Medium, MIT Technology Review posts provocative, conceptual think pieces that the average web surfer would find difficult not to click on.

Whether it's forcing subscribers to re-examine the routines of their daily lives or pondering some of life's greatest mysteries, **MIT uses Medium as a channel to dream big.**

It's easy to see how readers could spend hours going down an MIT rabbit hole as they collect more knowledge but also conceive more questions they didn't even know they wanted to ask.



Snapchat

With mere seconds before its video and image content disappears, Snapchat places a premium on users' time and their relationships with brands they follow. Can you engage a user immediately? Can your message resonate with them long after your content has expired?

That's the name of the game with ephemeral content.

With geofilters, branded imaging effects and in-app messaging, Snapchat allows businesses to launch ad campaigns that entice users to participate — all they have to do is apply your filter to be part of a million-person movement. In terms of promotion and social engagement, few platforms can match Snapchat's prowess.





Platform Usage:

180 million monthly active users



Character Limit:

10 seconds for single snaps, but unlimited length if users tap through threaded snaps.



Ideal Character Length:

4-7 seconds for single snaps. Longer for snaps as part of a story.



Content Types:

- Brand Promotions
- Images
- Videos



Engagement Tips:

Use geofilters to tag your campaigns and encourage fan participation.

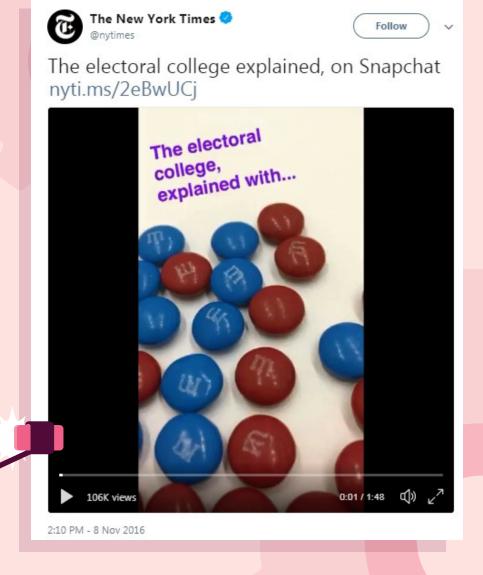
Example: The New York Times

How do you explain archaic constitutional legalese to a young audience in less than two minutes?

You better not try to do so with multiple paragraphs.

The New York Times used a 1:48 snap, M&Ms, several filters, short text overlays and simple narration to expound on how the Electoral College works. It's effective, users loved it and the video performed well on the NYT site and its other social channels as well.

The Times is a beacon of savvy journalism and breaking news, but it's **not afraid to cater to newer, digital-native audiences, and use a little humor while doing it.**





HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



Pinterest

Companies that are heavily product-driven use Pinterest to post high-quality images of their goods, not unlike Instagram.

But Pinterest is a more diverse content platform that functions like a traditional website, in that it has landing pages (boards), custom layouts for UX and consistent content flows (pins).

By publishing on a schedule, saving pins and curating ideas your audience will love, you form a navigable path for visitors to move through your content.





Platform Usage:

200+ million monthly active users



Character Limit:

500 for pin descriptions. 200,000 pins.



Ideal Character Length:

17 or less for board names to avoid ellipsis



Content Types:

- Images
- User-generated content
- Event promotion



Engagement Tips:

Construct boards that touch on all relevant themes around your business.

Example: Deschutes Brewery

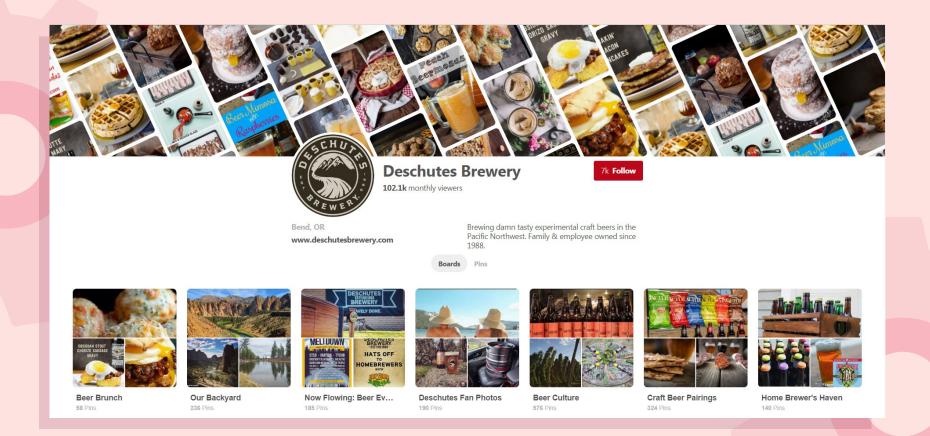
The importance of keywords and content relevance on Pinterest cannot be overstated – more so than other social channels. Pinterest is designed for SEO. Pair strong profile architecture with to-die-for imagery and you get Deschutes Brewery.

While Deschutes certainly pins visuals of its own products, it also has distinct boards for "Deschutes Fan Photos,"



"Women & Craft Beer" and "Our Backyard."

Followers get the full breadth of Deschutes culture and values, plus the many fun facts and quirky pins that come with an Oregon brewer that understands the power of a fresh brand image and user-generated content.





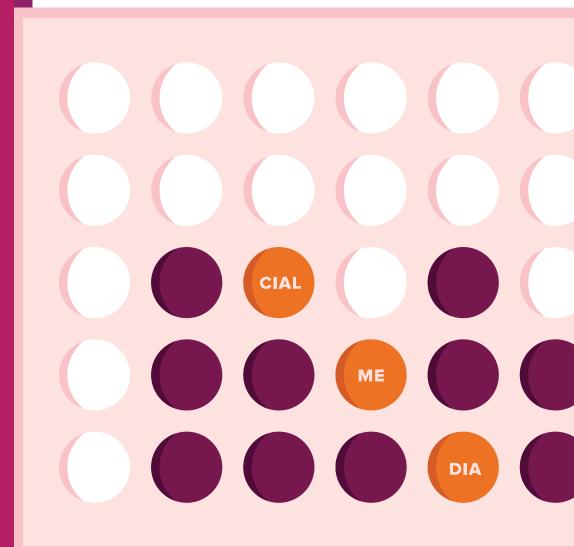
Conclusion

Your social media marketing is just as important as the core marketing assets you produce, which is why placing too much emphasis on creation rather than distribution can leave your strategy one-sided.

Your networks should present a consistent image but from multiple vantage points. On LinkedIn, you're informative and helpful. On Snapchat, you're concise and clever.

But, above all, you're relevant and memorable.

Customize your media strategy to oblige the idiosyncrasies of your audience – they don't come from an assembly line of robots. They have specific behaviors and needs that certain platforms are designed to satisfy. It's up to you to connect those dots.











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