social media 101

RESOURCES & TIPS TO HELP YOU TAKE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

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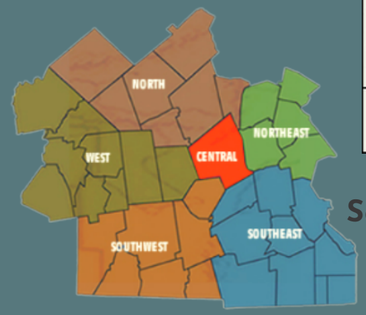


Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization

Social media is an invaluable communication avenue for businesses to build brand awareness, increase your customer base, and connect with current and potential customers, partners, and colleagues. The real-time advantage to social platforms allows your business to engage with your customers in a timely manner. Further, research shows that **81%** of buying decisions are influenced by friends' social media posts (Market Force); **71%** say that social media referrals make them more likely to purchase (Hubspot); and **53%** of consumers recommend companies or products in tweets, with **48%** following through to purchase those products or services (SproutSocial).

The proof is in the pudding; social media key for growing revenue for your small business! This guide was developed to help you get started with social media marketing, and to outline the "whys" and the "hows" of establishing a social media presence. Social media can help your business accomplish the following:

Garner Exposure

Your business will benefit from increased visibility through your followers. For example, you can create original content (i.e. a blog or a video) relevant to your field. Then when your followers share the post you'll be credited as the source. You can also gain new customers from your audience sharing your content with their friends and followers.

Establish Authority

In the same vein, you can establish yourself as a resource in your industry by sharing your knowledge and experience. You can do this by posting vegan recipe substitutions if you're a baker, or suggesting high impact home improvement projects if you're in real estate. Then when someone needs a vegan wedding cake, or is interested in listing their home, they'll know that you have the relevant experience to help them! Talking about topics that are pertinent to your business allows you to keep your followers' attention without "selling" constantly.

Stay on Their Minds

With the amount of content out there, there's major competition to be memorable. It's vital to stay in the minds (and newsfeeds!) of past, present and potential customers – but to do so in a palatable manner. The more aggressive your marketing approach, the more people may unfollow your social channels. This is yet another reason why it is critical to establish a tone that is helpful and well-informed, rather than wholly sales driven.

Boost Referrals

Your prospects and customers can increase your word-of-mouth reach and bring in more referrals via your social channels. Once your client base is connected to you, they may ask for help or tag you in posts from friends asking for recommendations.

Social media can clearly have a major benefit, but how do you get started? *In the next section, we'll explore who your customer is and where to find them online.*

With so many social media channels to choose from, deciding which ones deserve your attention can be overwhelming. Defining what you want to get out of social media will help you develop a social media strategy and pinpoint the best platform(s) for you. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be on every social network. In fact, for most businesses, the best approach is to handpick social media channels that make the most sense for your brand, rather than spreading your team too across many.

Your decision should be based on several different factors including your target audience, your industry and your social media marketing strategy. This guide breaks down how to choose the right social media channels for your business, and the key focusses and differences between four major platforms: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Twitter

Like text messaging, Twitter is ideal for sending out quick, short (maximum 280 character) messages (or "tweets") to a large number of people. While other platforms allow users to set aside content for later viewing, Twitter relies on real-time updates, breaking news, call outs, questions or immediate comments or opinions to connect with other users.

Twitter is ideal for businesses who want to make frequent connections with targeted audiences, like businesses related to sports, news, show business, marketing or online service providers. And the communication goes both ways. People can reach out to you and start a conversation or comment on your activity. If they're pleased with the service at your restaurant, users can commend you directly, or if they're looking to hire a plumber, they can ask for recommendations via tweet.

Instagram

Instagram is a platform focused on photos and videos. While it's only been around since 2010, it's a very popular network with more than 1 billion monthly users. Instagram is ideal for businesses relying heavily on visual content for marketing. This includes restaurants, clothing, technology, architecture, lifestyle and design related businesses. Brands targeting the 18-29 age demographic may also do well on this platform. When users open Instagram, they scroll through a feed of photos from the accounts they follow. 200 million users a day visit at least one business profile!

Facebook

Facebook is the largest, one of the most established, and the model for most social networks that came after it. Backed by an estimated 2 billion monthly users, Facebook provides businesses with various channels where they can engage with targeted users. Like most channels, business success on Facebook is achieved not by openly pushing your products, but in developing long-term relationships.

Facebook is one of the most widely spread or diversified social networks in terms of demographics. Further, because users are required to include personal details upon registration, it is easier to use targeted advertising when you make use of Facebook's advertising tool.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn focuses primarily business-related discussions and sharing of information. LinkedIn has more than 660 million registered users, and of those, more than 260 million are active monthly. LinkedIn sets itself apart as the social network for business people and employed professionals. Up to 27% of Americans who are currently employed are registered.

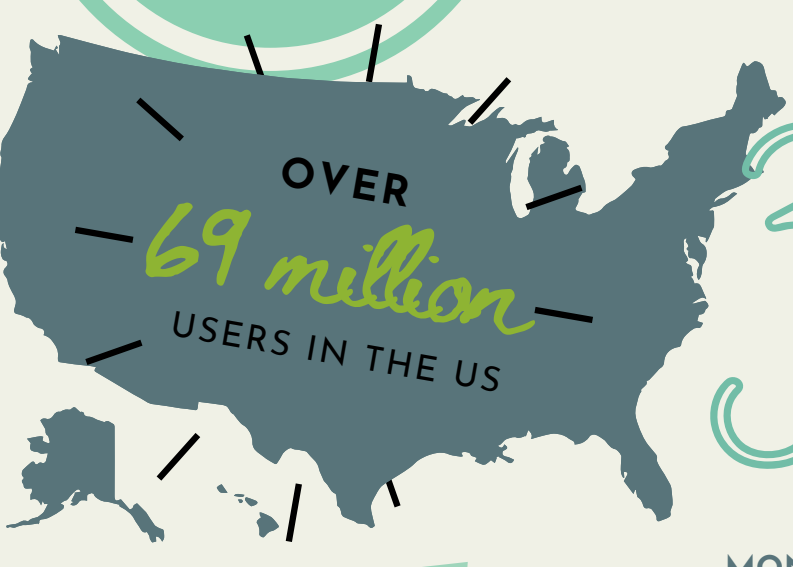
Originally intended as a portal where job seekers can connect with managers and executives, LinkedIn has evolved as the main social network where professionals connect and build relationships. Businesses and service providers focusing on the business-to-business market (i.e. tech, finance, manufacturing) may do well in social media marketing through LinkedIn. It's an ideal network for businesses and recruiters looking for skilled professionals, as well as freelancers and service providers looking for employment or projects.A LinkedIn profile provides content similar to what you would find on a company website. But unlike a website, it's interactive, so you can keep in touch with industry connections and present your professional expertise.

WHICH PLATFORM

is right for your business?

TWITTER

- Limits each post to 280 characters.
- Strong emphasis on real-time information.
- The majority of Twitter users are younger than 29.
- Great for engaging new potential customers through the use of hashtags.
- Use at least once per day, as often as hourly.



326
MILLION
MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS

6,000
TWEETS
EVERY SECOND

what makes a good tweet?

- Keep Tweets between 100 and 120 characters so others can modify or add to before retweeting.
- Take the time to use proper grammar and punctuation within the character limit.
- Encourage conversation by asking questions, quoting or sharing content, and thanking those who mention your business.
- Use hashtags often and wisely.
- Shorten links to get the most out of your Twitter real estate (use a resource like https://bitly.com/).
- Leverage images to increase engagement and retweets
- Maintain your own personality!

INSTAGRAM

- Pictures are focus of Instagram, but they should be used to tell a story.
- Develop a recognizable visual style for your business (i.e. consistently use one or two filters that fit your brands image).
- Hashtags can be used to promote your business. – do some research on to determine which ones are popular in your industry or start your own hashtag campaign by getting your friends and followers involved!

Social sharing app based on photos and 60-second videos.

71
PERCENT OF
AMERICANS 18 - 24 USE

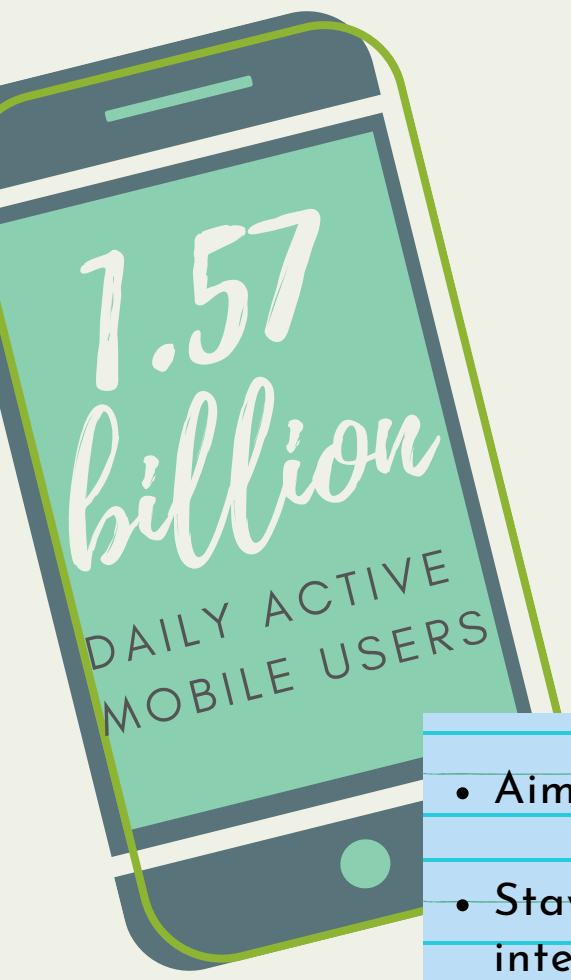
1
BILLION
MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS

WHICH PLATFORM

is right for your business?

FACEBOOK

Facebook is a great opportunity for businesses to make online sales, get a following, provide customer service and create a forum for customers to discuss products.



MORE THAN

2

BILLION

MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS

USERS SHARE

1 million links

EVERY 20 MINUTES

what makes a good facebook post?

- Aim for 5-10 posts per week.
- Stay positive. Facebook users interact most with inspiring or funny posts.
- Get creative by creating your own memes.
- Pose questions and use language that encourages interaction.
- Images sized to 403 x 403 pixels or higher will look the best in newsfeeds.
- Interact with followers and other people who comment on posts in your feed.
- Add comments to older posts to bring it up in the newsfeed again.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a business- and career-centric platform geared towards building professional connections for career development.

260

MILLION

MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS

- Keep it short. Give your audience just enough to know why you shared any links or posts and what it means to them.
- Reply to those who comment on your posts and like any of their content that has value for you.
- Commenting on your own post can open up conversation.
- Tagging people or companies that you are connected to adds legitimacy to your posts.
- When you share a link, the main image is what will appear in the feed. Make sure that images are relevant and vibrant.

What's Your Industry?

Not every social media channel will work well for your industry. For instance, visually driven trades like fashion, cosmetology and dining gravitate toward Instagram, Pinterest or Snapchat. These networks rely more on visuals than text, so they're a great fit. However, industries like software and tech have seen a lot of success with Twitter because they can curate content and drive traffic to their site.

One of the best ways to determine what social networks are most closely aligned to your industry is to look at your competitors' social media activity. When evaluating similar companies' profiles, consider both how **active** they are, and how **engaged** their audience is.

Their level of activity is an important consideration because companies don't tend to invest a lot of time on a social media channel that's not delivering results. Which channels your competitors post on the most are likely the ones that are driving traffic to their website or generating leads. The second piece, engagement, it's not about the number of followers, but rather how many likes, shares and comments their posts have. Engaged followers are directly interacting with content, and they are the most likely to remember your posts recommend your business.

Who's Your Audience?

The first thing you should investigate is what social networks your customers or desired customers use. Define your target audience, and **match it against the demographics on the following page**. You can start zeroing in on your potential customer base by asking questions like 'What problems does my business solve?' and 'Who will benefit from it?'

These two questions alone will eliminate a large chunk of social media users from your target audience and help you identify your existing and prospective customers based on parameters such as income, geographical location, and hobbies. By researching your rival's customer base as well as your current customers, that list can be made even more specific until you have a precise target audience that can be catered to on social media. For instance, if you're primarily targeting women over 50 years old, Instagram probably isn't the best option as it skews younger. Research suggests you'd better off with Facebook or another network like Pinterest.

demographics

BY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

75% of women and 63% of men use Facebook.

51% of 13-17 year olds
76% of 18-24 year olds
34% of 25-30 year olds
79% of 30-49 year olds
68% of 50-64 year olds
46% of 65+ year olds
use Facebook

21% of women and 24% of men use Twitter.

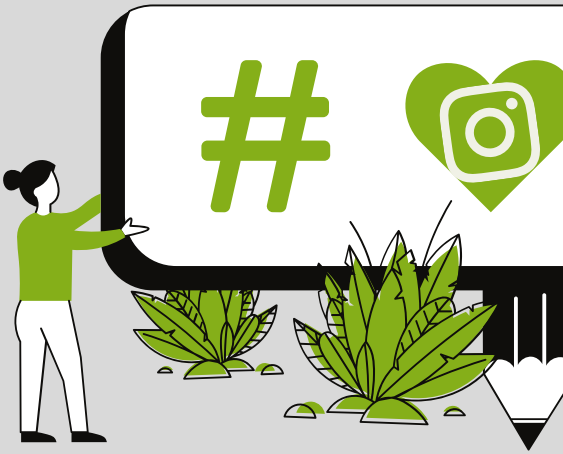
44% of 18-24 year olds
31% of 25-30 year olds
26% of 30-49 year olds
17% of 50-64 year olds
7% of 65+ year olds
use Twitter

demographics

BY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

43% of women and 31% of men use Instagram.

75% of 18-24 year olds
57% of 25-30 year olds
47% of 30-49 year olds
23% of 50-64 year olds
8% of 65+ year olds
use Instagram



24% of women and 29% of men use LinkedIn.

17% of 18-24 year olds
44% of 25-30 year olds
37% of 30-49 year olds
24% of 50-64 year olds
11% of 65+ year olds
use LinkedIn

Twitter

Steps to Create an Account:

1. Go to twitter.com.
2. Enter your full name, email address, and a password in the "New to Twitter? Sign up" box.
3. Click "Sign up for Twitter".
4. On the next page, you can select a username (usernames are unique identifiers on Twitter) — type your own or choose one Twitter suggest. Twitter will tell you if the username you want is available. This is formatted like @yourcompanyname.
5. Double-check your name, email address, password, and username.
6. Click "Create my account".
7. You may be asked to complete a Captcha.
8. Twitter will send a confirmation email to the address you entered on sign up, click the link in that email to confirm your email address and account.

You can also review this step-by-step guide from SproutSocial.

Instagram

Steps to Create an Account

1. Download the Instagram app for Apple iOS from the App Store, Android from Google Play Store or Windows Phone from the Windows Phone Store.
2. Once the app is installed, tap to open it.
3. Tap "Register with Email" to sign up with your email address or "Register with Facebook" to sign up with your Facebook account.
4. If you register with email, create a username and password, fill out your profile info and then tap "Done". If you register with Facebook, you'll be prompted to sign into your Facebook account if you're currently logged out.

To set Up a Professional Account on Instagram, you can convert your personal profile to a professional account. With a professional account, you'll be able to access business features and Instagram Insights. These tools can help you understand who is engaging with your business on Instagram. To switch your profile to a professional account:

5. Go to your profile and tap in the upper right corner.
6. Tap Settings.
7. Tap Account.
8. Tap Switch to Professional Account.

9. Tap Business.
10. If you'd like, you can follow the steps to connect your professional account to a Facebook Page associated with your business. This step is optional, and will make it easier to use all of the features available for businesses across the Facebook family of apps. At this time, only one Facebook Page can be connected to your professional account.
11. Add details, like your business category and contact information. You also have the option to display or hide your business category and contact information on your profile. After setting up, go to your profile and tap Edit Profile. Go to Profile Display under Public Business Information to choose whether you want to hide or display your category label and contact info.
12. Tap Done.

Hootsuite has developed a great guide to Instagram for business that may help you get started.

Facebook

Steps to Create an Account:

1. A personal Facebook account is required in order to create a Facebook Page.
2. Login to your personal Facebook account, and then go to facebook.com/pages/create/.
   - Choose the type of page you would like to create (i.e. business, artist, band, public figure, company, organization, institution, entertainment, brand or product, cause or community).
3. Enter in your business' info, review Facebook's terms, and click on "Get Started".
4. Facebook will provide four tabs:
   - About
   - Profile Picture
   - Add to Favorite
   - Reach More People.
5. Complete the fields within each tab and click on "Save Info".

You can learn more about getting started with Facebook on Hootsuite.

LinkedIn

Steps to Create an Account:

1. A personal LinkedIn account is required in order to create a LinkedIn Company Page.
   - To create a company page, your personal LinkedIn profile needs to be at least 7 days old, you must be a current employee of the company and the company position is listed on your profile, and you must have a company email address confirmed and added on your LinkedIn account.
2. Login to your personal LinkedIn account at linkedin.com.
3. Click on "Work" > "Create a Company Page" from the dropdown at the top of the page.
4. Select the appropriate category for your business page, enter in your company's name and your email address, and click on the check box to verify you are the official representative of the company.
5. To publish your company page, you must include a company description and company website URL.

Tips for Building Your Social Media Presence

Once you have determined the right platform(s) for your business, and created your account, get set up using the following checklist:

- Choose a profile image and use it everywhere you register an account. This will ensure people will recognize you and follow you across platforms. The best profile picture is a good high-quality image. This could be a headshot of a company representative, a logo, or your brand.
  - For Twitter, your profile picture should be your logo and the recommended size is 400 x 400 px. Your cover photo should be 1500 x 500 px.
  - Instagram uses a 160 x 160 px circle to show off your logo. Unlike Facebook, users can't click to enlarge the image, so be sure it's clear and recognizable.
  - Your Facebook profile should be a 170 x 170 px logo. Facebook says you may get better results with a PNG instead of JPG. Your Cover Photo should be an 820 x 312 px image if possible, but requires a minimum of 400 x 150 px.
  - Your LinkedIn profile image is recommended to be 300 x 300 px with a Cover Image of 1536 x 768 px.
- Use exact-match usernames. Make sure your username is a match for your business name and matches across platforms.
- Always complete the "Full Name" field. Stick to ONE version of your company name and don't change it based on platform.
- Enable custom URLs. Wherever possible, make sure you customize the URL for your account to help your profiles rank.
- Always complete the description section. Write a different, original description for each platform depending on audience, hashtag ability and the tone of your marketing strategy.
- Interlink your profiles. Several platforms allow you to link to your other business pages when creating a new profile. Co-promote all of your business accounts to give more information about company. This will encourage your new audience to follow you on other social networks too!

Best Practices

Whatever social networks you decide to be active on for your business, there are some best practices you should follow to achieve social success.

  - Post at the proper frequency. Make sure you are posting often enough that customers are up-to-date on your products and services, but not so much that they feel as though they're being barraged. These are general posting suggestions:
    - Facebook: at least twice per week, not to exceed once per day
    - Instagram: an average of 1.5 times per day
    - Twitter: at least once per day, with tweets spaced out at least an hour apart
    - LinkedIn: at least once per week, not to exceed once per day
- Follow the 80/20 rule of posting – 80% of what you post should be engaging (questions, photos, articles from third parties), while the remaining 20% should be about your company, products, or services.

- Pay attention to what's going on in your industry, as well as the world.
  - Being in tune with your audience's interest will help you engage with them and will build a strong customer relationship.
  - Monitor industry publications, competitor social media accounts, and popular blogs to stay aware of what's important to your customers.
  - Likewise, pay attention to what's going on in the world. Do not jump on a trending hashtag without first identifying what it means. That goes for scheduled posts, as well – an innocent tweet posted at the wrong time could result in a social media disaster.
- Set Goals and Objectives. Having a clear aim and schedule in mind makes posting easier and more enjoyable. You know what the potential outcomes are for your business, and you know what social media channels are out there and which ones you want to use initially. Now it's time to set your goals and objectives.
  - Goals: Set a few goals right away so you know what you're aiming to accomplish. If at any point you're unsure about something, you should ask, "Is this task helping me reach my goals?"
  - Objectives: Your objectives should be more specific and measurable. So while "increasing sales" might be a good example of a goal statement, the more specific objective would be "increase sales by 15 percent from the previous calendar year."

To help you make the most of your social media profiles, there are a number of tools that will help you save time and money, and measure your success. Below, we've summarized some of the best resources that you can access for free!

Ad Generators

Ad generators can help you create individual designs or full sets of static or animated ads within minutes. You can save time by creating multiple sizes to suit more than one platform at once by using an ad generator. There are a number of free sites that have templates that you can utilize.

Ad Parlor: Generate ad mockups so you can see what your ads will look like before you create your campaigns on Facebook or Twitter. Users don't have to login to use the tool and Ad Parlor allows users to verify specs for all of the ad spaces available on Facebook and Twitter.

Banner Ads Creator: This simple tool makes creating ads for YouTube, Facebook and Twitter fast and easy. Users click through each step, choosing the options they want to include. Ads can be created in a matter of minutes.

Content Tools

Content marketing is the bread and butter of social media. Your social content includes both your original posts and any links that you share, but you don't need to come up with all that content on your own! Use these great free resources to help you generate exciting content to engage your customers:

Hubspot Blog Topic Generator: Fill in three fields with topics you'd like to write about and this blog topic generator will provide a week's worth of blog titles within seconds.

National Day Calendar: Never miss another National Day celebration. Visit the website to check the calendar for upcoming National Day celebrations or sign up for newsletter to receive National Day notices via email.

Portent: Enter a subject and Portent will generate ideas for social content. Use the idea generator to write blog posts, create memes or develop videos.

PostCreator: Upload an image, insert a message, and add your logo. PostCreator will generate a branded image you can use on your social networks. There's a free basic plan available.

Social Media Calendars and Schedulers

In today's marketing environment, social media management goes beyond simply posting. It's important to ensure that your brand's social media activity coordinates with other time sensitive marketing efforts such as television advertising, email campaigns, or website developments. A social media content calendar is a working document used to schedule the content you'll post across all social media platforms for the month, week, day, and even sometimes the time of day.

This document serves as a communication tool for post content (pictures & video), post copy, hashtags, and tags to be used for each post. This is extremely important because it allows you to plan and make sure that you're sending the right message, to the right audience, at the right time. Having a central place for different teams across your organization to manage social media content allows for a much smoother implantation of your social media marketing agenda.

The following sites offer free options to help you schedule your online and offline marketing efforts.

Brett Snyder: This simple editorial calendar includes subject, working title, focus keywords, key elements, sources, complementary assets, and promotional strategy.

EditFlow WordPress plugin: This tool makes it easy for teams to collaborate within WordPress. Edit Flow gives you custom statuses, a calendar, editorial comments in addition to several other useful features.

Hootsuite: Hootsuite is one of the top social media management tools available. Hootsuite lets you manage all of your social networks from one platform. Use Hootsuite to schedule updates, engage your audience, and grow your brand. There's also an analytics feature available.

Latergram: Use this tool to manage your Instagram marketing. Schedule and manage your Instagram posts. Upload posts from your desktop, tablet, iPad or Android.

Optimize Book: This editorial calendar includes day to post, topic, targeted audience, keywords and tags, social topics and which social networks to use.

Riffle: This tool help you find and connect with Twitter social influencers quickly and easily. Use the tool to get Twitter engagement, interest and activity analytics in real time. This type of data allows you to engage with influencers while they're active on Twitter.

SocialRank: This handy tools lets users identify, organize, and manage your followers on Twitter and Instagram by sorting and filtering. Find out which of your followers are the most engaged.

Spruce: Make Twitter ready images in seconds. Type your message. Find the perfect photo. Get a beautiful custom image, perfectly sized for Twitter. Choose from millions of free images.

Headline Analyzers

Gallup trained advertising tycoon David Ogilvy is credited with saying, "On average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar." There's no denying that headlines are important, and there are a number of free headline analyzer tools available to help you make sure that yours are attention grabbing.

Coschedule: This tool analyzes blog post headlines and gives a quality score than determines the headlines ability to result in social shares. The tool will also provide a quality score that ranks your headline's ability to increase traffic and add value to your SEO.

Headline Analyzer: This free tool allows you to analyze how effective your ad will be at reaching customers in an emotional way. The analyzer will determine which of the following emotions will be impacted the most: intellectual, empathetic or spiritual.

Optimizely: Optimizely provides A/B testing for headlines across the web on any device. Users can even test whether different variations of images and headlines generate the best results. There's a free and pro plan available.

Image and Video Resources

The average human attention span is thought to be less than nine seconds. As a result, images are critically important on social media. A large part of the brain is focused on visual processing, allowing humans to process images at an incredible speed. As a result, using images is a great way to grab attention. A social media post accompanied by a photo or a video is ten times more likely to get engagement!

Avidemux: This free video editor is designed for simple tasks like cutting, filtering and encoding. Avidemux offers an automation feature.

Canva: Use pre-sized templates to create professional looking social media images. This tool has simple drag and drop features. Choose from hundreds of free stock images and attention-grabbing fonts.

imgflip Meme Generator: Choose from thousands of prepopulated images. Type your caption. Resize the text if you need to and click generate. It's that simple.

Lightworks: This video editing tool has so many editing features that it's been used to help produce Hollywood movies. Lightworks Free offers full editing power and export to their preferred upload partner Vimeo at 1080p resolution. The free version has a seven-day renewable license that all users can activate immediately after installation.

Mazwai: This website has free creative commons high definition video clips and footages. Choose the video you want. Click the download button and save the video. The only requirement is that you must credit the video producer.

New Old Stock: This is a great collection of vintage photos from various public archives. The photos are free of any known copyright restrictions.

PicMonkey: Edit pictures and designs. Add text to images. Resize an image that's too large. This tool is fairly easy to use. PicMonkey offers enough free features to make it worth checking out.

Picography: The selection of free hi-resolution photos isn't very large, but the images are great and the quality is amazing. There's no restriction on how you can use the photos.

Recite: A very simple tool used to create quote images in a matter of minutes. Type a quote then choose from the various quote images that are generated.

Unsplash: Choose from thousands of free high-resolution photos. There's no restriction on how you can use the photos. There are 10 new photos added every day.

WeVideo: This video editor provides 5G of cloud storage. Users can publish their video directly to YouTube. WeVideo connects to different social networks so the user can grab video clips. Mobile video editing is also available.

Windows Movie Maker: A free video editor included as part of the Windows Essential package. This software is included with every version of Windows. It's very easy to learn to use and it has many great features that get the job done.

Tracking and Analyzing

Finally, social monitoring can lead to faster response times, crisis prevention, identification of your advocates, and tell you how effective your marketing is.

AdEspresso's Campaign Rater: This tool helps optimize your Facebook ads. Get a better understanding of your key metrics. Compare your ad's performance with your industry.

Hubspot Marketing Grader: Receive a full report on how your marketing efforts are going. Just add your website address to the form and a report is generated in seconds. This tool gives you a score for social media blogging, SEO, lead generation, mobile.

Quick Sprout: This social media tool analyzes your Google Analytics data. The tool analyzes your data and provides a report that will help you improve your content.

Uprank: This advanced research tool analyzes your social media, in addition to your website's architecture, SEO, user experience, and mobile responsiveness. Uprank generates a digital marketing strategy that includes a list of comprehensive tasks.