

The Basics: Social Media for Event Professionals Part 1



Digital campaigns. Social reach. Hashtags. Livestreaming. Influencers. Impressions versus engagements. Follows, likes and shares.

If hearing any of these phrases makes your heart sink, you're in the right place.

Social media has become so embedded in the environment that it's rare to find an events professional who doesn't need to use it. But not everyone has the confidence or the skillset to use it well.

If you've been bluffing your way through meetings and only half understanding the terminology, here's the honest truth: you won't be the only one.

Here's another truth: you're missing out on a direct, personal and measurable way to communicate with your customer.

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- 2 Glossary: key terms explained
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1: Why social media matters

Do I have to?

What if you just don't want to use social media?

Well, that's simple. You don't have to.

You also don't have to answer the phone when it rings, reply to email enquiries, or smile and say hello when you're face to face with a potential customer.

But you do, right? You do all those things. It's part of your job. It's the expected level of service from a professional. And if you didn't do them, you'd soon find yourself with no one to arrange events for.

It's now an expectation that you'll have an online presence for your business: not only a website, but at least two social network connections.

74% of event planners listed social media as their most effective tool for marketing in 2018. That's at the very top, above email marketing, at 66%.

Still feeling reluctant? Let's look at what's holding you back.

What's stopping you?

I'm too old.

Nope. You don't need to be a digital native to become a digital natural. If you didn't grow up immersed in interactive social technology, in fact, you might have a significant advantage: you won't already have a digital trail associated with your name to clean up before you can make things look professional.

It's just for fun.

If you're a regular user of social media in your personal life, it can be hard to see its business value. But do your chats on the phone with your mates sound different to the way you speak to clients? Of course they do. Using social media for events just means using the right platform, and adopting the right professional persona for your field.

Social media's over.

Again: nope. Social media for business has changed, and it keeps changing. But it's an incredibly valuable, free, and – perhaps most importantly – measurable tool for you to interact with your customers and clients. It's not going away, and by the end of this guide you won't want it to.

I don't have time.

That might be true. Maintaining a high-quality social presence in larger companies can be a full-time job. But once you've set up your accounts (more quickly than you expect), you can schedule posts to go when you choose, to multiple networks at once. Add in a series of brief daily checks to keep on top of it all, and you're all set.

I tried, but I just couldn't get on with it.

You're not alone. That's why this guide is here, to give you the essential knowledge, tips and tools to use social media with confidence.

What social media can do for your business



*This guide is focused on free social networking. All networks offer paid advertising options, but that's for another time, and may never be right for you. For now, concentrate on getting the best out of your free options.

One word of caution

There's one thing worse than not doing social media.

Doing social media **badly**.

What does it mean to do it badly?

- Dormant accounts: a few hello posts, then silence
- No interaction: unanswered questions, or worse, unanswered complaints
- Too much interaction: privately messaging potential customers; aggressively using bots
- A slapdash approach: misspellings or inaccurate content
- Unprofessionalism: inappropriate language; shared content that's irrelevant or offensive
- Failure to respond to real-time events, such as leaving up scheduled posts that have now become inappropriate

Wait, come back!

That might sound like a long and scary list. But if you think of it in terms of answering the phone, replying to an email or smiling face to face - that's really all you're doing. It's all communication. You're simply trying to reflect the same professionalism and courtesy you would in person.

Because that interaction is public, the way you handle it can be seen by tens, hundreds, thousands of others.

Sounds scary? It's not. It's exactly what you want. People like people. They like ones they can get to know even more. You can give every event a personality, a tone of voice and an atmosphere of quality months before it begins – and be seen doing it.

And, if someone's not happy, they can let you know, which means you can fix it.

Remember: it's all communication.

2: Glossary

Analytics

This is the data which tells you what's happening on your social network profile. Analytics can show you how many impressions or engagements you've had; how many followers you've gained and lost; what times of day your posts are most successful; and some information about your followers. Most networks have their own analytics tools built in (look under the Settings menu). You can also use other tools to source more data: Buffer and Hootsuite have their own analytics options built in.

Bots

Bots or spambots are 'robots': fake accounts that don't represent real people. They auto-follow multiple accounts and share adverts or bad links that you don't want to click (they may lead to insecure sites, or worse, viruses and malware that will infect your computer). You can't avoid being followed by them. But you can block them on some platforms, and report them. If you've been followed by an account, always check their timeline before following them back. If you see nothing but the same post repeated over and over, inappropriate images or nothing but outgoing links, avoid and report.

Buffer

This is a tool to help you regularly post on social networks without having to do so manually. It allows you to schedule posts in advance, across a range of networks.

Engagements

Engagements are interactions with your post from another user on that network. Likes, link clicks, shares or retweets, media engagements (eg clicking a picture to expand it) and profile views are all engagements.

Engagement rate

This is the number of engagements divided by impressions. That is, out of all the people who saw your post, the number who interacted with it.

Follower

Another user who 'follows' your profile. A follower is effectively subscribing to hear from you. When you follow another user, you'll see their posts in your timeline.

Hashtag

The # symbol started on Twitter, but you'll find it used on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn too. Anyone can set up a hashtag just by using it (though it's worth checking first to make sure you haven't accidentally piggybacked onto one with negative or irrelevant associations). Hashtags link together posts within that social network that use them – so by clicking, for example, #eventprofs or #birmingham, you'll see all the latest posts using those tags. That means when you use popular hashtags, you'll hopefully be seen by more people. Popular hashtags include #MondayMotivation, #ThrowbackThursday and #FollowFriday (or #ff), where users share the usernames or profiles of people they think you should follow too.

Hootsuite

This is a tool to help you regularly post on social networks without having to do so manually. It allows you to schedule posts in advance, across a range of networks. It also allows you to view and manage multiple streams and accounts from a single dashboard.

Impressions

The number of times users of a network are served your post. That is, the number of times it might be seen. Your post may be seen not only by your own followers, but by others if it's been shared, or if you've used a hashtag. Impressions are not conclusive data: if, for example, you show your twitter feed in a widget on your website, that will not be included in your impressions.

Influencer

Someone who has a wide social reach, and the potential to improve your social reach. Influencers can be celebrities, prominent individuals or brands in your industry, or anyone who simply has a lot of followers and likes what you do. If an influencer shares your content or posts, you benefit from it gaining impressions from their follower base. Many influencers are paid to wield this power, but they will also always be looking for quality content to share for free.

Post

Post is a verb and a noun, and applies to all social networks. When you add a status update of any kind, you are posting a post. It can be made up of words, images, video or a combination of these.

Profile

This is your visible account presence on a social network. Your profile will include a profile picture, and a short biography. There's typically also space for weblinks, and sometimes other images or visual styling. Your profile may be the first information someone sees about you if they google your name.

Tweet

Tweet is a verb and a noun used on Twitter. When you write a post on Twitter, you have tweeted a tweet.

Reach

Your social reach is the number of impressions divided by the number of followers on that network. This percentage can help you see if you should be resharing your own content to maximise reach (the answer is probably yes), and also help you see if certain posts are especially successful.

Regram

Regram is a verb and a noun, specific to Instagram. When you share someone else's Instagram post, you are regramming a regram. This isn't straightforward on Instagram; to do this you need an additional app, such a Regram for Instagram or TicTac. You can more easily share Instagram posts on Facebook and Twitter from the main app (though this isn't strictly a regram). Be mindful when regramming another brand: this may be seen as an endorsement.

Retweet

Retweets (or RTs) are a way to share content posted by other users on Twitter. When you RT their post, or link, you show it to your followers too. You can RT with or without a comment of your own. RTs can be seen as endorsements, so be mindful. You want people to RT your content, too: it means they think what you've said is worth sharing.

Share

Sharing on Facebook is similar to retweeting. If you share another user's post, it will be seen by your followers (and, thanks to Facebook's complex settings, sometimes by their followers too).

Scheduling

This is a technique which allows you to manage social media without constantly having to make real-time updates. Tools like Hootsuite and Buffer allow you to write posts in advance and schedule them to be sent out at set times.

Username

This is the name by which your followers will recognise you. On Twitter, your username will begin with an @ and may not be more than 15 characters (though your display name may be up to 50). You can't have the same username as someone else, so you may need to spend some time testing different options to find one that's available. If you can, use the same username across different networks to help people find you.

3: Platforms

Social networks

You've probably heard of all of these, and you might be using some already. Using social media for business works a little differently from your personal profile, however. Some of these platforms will be more or less relevant depending on your role and your goal.

Here's an intro to every major network (and some pointers on a few you need to worry less about), so you know which networks you should be concentrating on.

Universals

Every network has a different audience, reputation and value to your business.

When it comes to setting up your accounts, however, there are some rules of thumb that you can apply to all of them.

Images

It's essential to have a profile picture that's appropriate to your business.

Though your profile page will only be seen by those who click on it, your profile picture will appear next to every tweet you post – and in other people's timelines if they follow you, see an RT of your content, or view a hashtag that you're using. Your image will be cropped into a circle on screen.

Good profile and header images are:

- Centre-weighted (ie the main image is in the centre, so cropping won't cut off key elements)
- Consistent
- Easy to recognise even when on a small mobile screen

Bad profile and header images are:

- Text-heavy
- Unprofessional
- Images you don't have the right to use
- Low resolution, blurry, stretched or distorted

Once you've uploaded your profile picture and header image, check how they look. If you don't like what you see, change it. It needs to reflect how you want your business to be perceived – so if the images are irrelevant, blurry, distorted or stretched, start over.

Pro Tip: *social networks regularly update the guidance on the 'best' dimensions of profile and header images. Google to check you're using the latest information.*

Security

Keeping your social profiles secure is a business essential. Weak passwords or allowing too many users to have access to a single account risks serious public embarrassment.

It's also important to remember that if you use social media for personal reasons, you need to be mindful when posting. It's a little too easy to forget you were using your phone at work and were signed into the business account on a Friday night out. Although you can delete your own content, the internet never forgets – and once someone else has shared or screenshotted it, you have no control at all.

Twitter

Twitter is like a short-form newsfeed.

Messages can be up to 280 characters, plus photos and video. You can have as many profiles as you like, set up by entering an email address. Your timeline of posts appear to everyone who views your twitter profile page, and to other Twitter users who choose to follow you. When you follow other Twitter users, you'll see their posts too. If you like what they've posted, you can 'retweet' it into your timeline (with or without your own comment), which means your followers will see that content too.

Good for:

- B2B
- B2C
- quick easy communication
- an approachable public face
- building a network
- sharing news

How to set up a profile

You need an email account that's not associated with another Twitter profile to get started. If you want to use your phone to update Twitter on the go, you'll need your mobile number too (though you can add this later).

Go to <https://twitter.com/> and click Sign Up. You'll be prompted to provide a username of up to 15 characters. This should be appropriate to your business, though it may take a few tries to find one that you like which isn't taken. Remember: your username will be supplemented by your screen name, which users will also see.

You'll need to reply to a confirmation email or text to complete your sign up.

Biography

You should add a short introduction to your profile. This can be up to 160 characters, and should contain your business name and a taster of what you do.

You can also add your web address and general location.

Images

Your profile image will be rounded into a circle, so make sure you're following the guidelines in Universals.

Other settings and making changes

You can visit your profile page at <https://twitter.com/yourusername> (no @ symbol required).

If you're viewing on your desktop, click the small profile image top right, and you'll see a menu of other settings, including privacy and notification settings – so if you suddenly start receiving lots of emails, here's where you can turn that off. You can also edit your profile by clicking Edit profile, to the right below the header image.

If you're using the app on your phone, you'll find most of the same options by clicking the profile image top left.

Facebook

Facebook is a person-centred network with lots of bespoke options for business use.

Unlike other networks, you need a personal profile of your own to access the business options: to set up a Page for your business, or an Event. These options work like miniature networks of their own within Facebook. You can share links to these anywhere, though only other Facebook users can interact with them.

Facebook's algorithm is tricky and ever-changing, so even if other users follow your Page, they may not see your content.

There's an easy-to-use messaging system built in. However, if you're using Facebook on your phone, you'll need the separate Messenger app to access this.

Good for:

- B2C
- one-off or annual events
- quick easy communication in hospitality or social events
- sharing news
- sharing special offers

Profiles, Pages and Events

Facebook can be a little confusing, so let's break down your options.

A **Profile** is your personal identity on Facebook.

A **Page** is a business identity, which you can set up from a personal profile. Your business Page is like a miniature website for your business, hosted by Facebook – but it can also act a little like a personal profile. For example, you can post as the Page, comment as that Page on other posts, and reply as the Page when people ask you questions. Facebook is pretty good at figuring out what identity to use, but it'll allow you to select between posting as your personal profile or as a Page identity. You can also invite multiple Facebook profiles to run a Page, so more than one person can be responsible for creating content on that Page, or replying to comments.

An **Event** is a time-specific event, such as a conference, a party or an exhibition.

When you're signed in with your personal Profile, you can switch between these other options. On your desktop, click the small arrow top right to choose your Page or Event. On mobile or tablet, tap the 'burger' menu top right to view the same options.

How to set up a personal Profile

As noted above, before you can use Facebook for business purposes, you need a personal profile. You can set one up that's separate from your existing personal profile if you have one you'd prefer not to share, using an alternate email address. However, it's not difficult to switch between the different settings within your personal profile, and you might find just having one account is more convenient.

Go to <https://www.facebook.com/> and follow the instructions to create a new account. You'll be prompted to add a phone number as well as an email address; doing so allows you to use the mobile app for Facebook as well as secure your account via your phone, but it's not an essential.

If you're a solo businessperson, you might want your personal profile to reflect your professional identity, rather than using it to keep in touch with friends and family. But you should still create a Page for your business as well.

How to set up a Page

From your Facebook homepage, scroll down the left sidebar until you find Pages. Click, then click on Create Page at top right. Choose Business or brand, and complete the fields as appropriate.

You want your Page to look professional, and be informative, so include as much information as you can.

You are now the Administrator of this Page. You can invite other Facebook members via their personal profiles to also be Administrators (or Editors or Authors), which grants them access to make certain kinds of changes to what appears on the Page. It's a good idea to make sure at least one other person is an Administrator, in case you ever want to delete your account, and to futureproof the Page for when personnel move on.

How to set up an Event

You can set up Events from either a Profile or a Page.

On desktop: navigate to the homepage for that Profile or Page (top right arrow). In the left sidebar, find and click 'Events'. Find and click 'Create event' under the header image.

On mobile or tablet: navigate to the homepage for that Profile or Page (top right 'burger' menu). Scroll down and tap 'Events'. Then tap the '+' button (lower right).

The Event form will allow you to fill in all your details: location, start time and date, and more. You can make these Events private to specific invitees only if you wish; otherwise they will be viewable to anyone.

Pro Tip: Facebook will allow you to use different profile and header images for Profiles, Pages and Events. Use these. As well as helping keep them distinct for others, it'll save you from accidentally posting as your personal Profile when you mean to post as your Page.

Instagram

Instagram is an image-based social network, which allows the sharing of photos and videos with accompanying text. It's a powerful and influential tool, which provides you with strong visual content that's easily shared. It's also a great way to mobilise your customer base to market your work for you.

Instagram is most easily used from a mobile phone. Images can be shared immediately with just a few clicks. The squared-off format, edit options and enhancement filters mean even a novice photographer can create sharp images that look impressive and professional. The platform also makes it easy to create and share short video, and multiple images in a single post. Posting from your desktop is much less intuitive, but still possible via a tool like Hootsuite. This means that you can share images from a resource bank, rather than only ones you've taken on your phone.

Hashtags in Instagram work much as they do elsewhere. Because it's an image-centric platform, text is less well supported, and it won't style your links to other sites in an elegant way. It's also not quite as keen to make content from other users shareable: see the glossary for a note on regrams.

However, because it's a popular site with personal users, it's a great tool for sourcing images from people who enjoy what you do. With the appropriate credit to the original Instagram account, these can be shared on your other social platforms, blogs, your website and elsewhere.

Good for:

- B2C
- Hospitality and venue marketing
- Wedding professionals
- Sharing news in a visual way
- Before and after photos

How to set up an Instagram profile

You need an email account that's not associated with another Instagram profile to get started. If you want to use your phone to update Instagram (recommended), you'll need your mobile number too.

Go to <https://www.instagram.com/> and click Sign Up. You'll be prompted to provide a username of up to 30 characters. This should be appropriate to your business, though it may take a few tries to find one that you like which isn't taken. You'll also supply a screen name, but only the username will appear in other people's feeds: choose carefully.

You'll need to reply to a confirmation email or text to complete your sign up.

Biography

You should add a short introduction to your profile. This can be up to 150 characters, and should contain your business name and a taster of what you do. You can also add your web address and general location.

Images

Your profile image will be rounded into a circle, so make sure you're following the guidelines in Universals. There is no header image option on Instagram.

Other platforms

You'll probably have heard of these. But unless you're in a particular industry, most will have no relevance to you as an event professional. Here's a quick rundown of the basics, so you can feel secure about deciding what you need to engage with – and what you can safely ignore.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is probably the most obvious 'business use' social media platform – but it's also the least social. More importantly, it's not possible to measure the key metrics needed to see whether it's a useful platform, which renders it even less relevant.

Maintain a personal profile for your own career, certainly. But unless you're actively recruiting, don't bother.

Good for:

- Start-ups
- Recruitment

Snapchat

Although it has many of the features of a social network, this one is more ephemeral than most. It's an image-based platform which allows short-term sharing of photos and video with your network of fellow users; after this, the content expires. Its charm lies in its use of overlays, filters and text to make the most of your phone camera – for example through funny face-swaps or adding animal features to people's faces. It's been influential to prompt other platforms (Instagram and Facebook particularly) to borrow some of these features.

However, its business use is limited. It's possible but not straightforward to share this content to other platforms; you need to save them as images then share, limiting the use of video effects.

The user base is young, and due to the ephemeral way the content works, it's not an especially valuable tool to reach a professional audience.

That said, it's possible to create bespoke filters for events, which will automatically display text, logos or celebration messages on images. These can be effective tools for mid and post-event promotion.

Good for:

- Wedding professionals
- Themed events: eg seasonal events

Pinterest

This is less of a social network, and more a shared curation hub. Users create their own public (and private, if you like) 'pinboards' made up of content found online. Each pinboard can have a theme, and you can easily 'pin' a new image or post you've found to your board. It's been around for a while as a platform, and has a reputation for being crafty and arty, with a userbase predominantly of adult women. Professionally, this network is much less about personal profile or gaining followers, and you may find it more useful as a resource.

Good for:

- Wedding professionals
- Themed events: eg seasonal events
- Inspiration

Tumblr

Tumblr is dominated by entertainment media fandom, tech professionals and artists. The user base is broad in age and gender spread, but the majority are personal users.

This network is rarely used by event professionals.

Google +

It's a network you're probably already part of without trying to be – but not for much longer. After a security breach, Google have made the decision to shut it down completely in 2019.

However, Google my Business and Google Posts are both valuable free tools that come with your Google account (once you've done a little work to confirm you're the business owner). These allow you to have some control over how your business is represented on the biggest search platform in the world.

[Find out more about making Google work for you.](#)

Coming up in Part 2

- 1: What to share and when, broken down by platform
- 2: How to create a social media strategy with SMART goals
- 3: Tip, tools and tricks

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