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How to Balance Between Personal and Professional Social Media

August 25, 2020 8 min read

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This article was written by Kay VanAntwerpen, an Entrepreneur NEXT powered by Assemble expert. Do you want to future-proof your business with on-demand expertise? Entrepreneur NEXT has the expert solutions your business needs to succeed in an evolving market.

For brands, social media is a double-edged sword. On one hand, when creatively employed, it can reach your consumer base in exciting and engaging ways (for example, DiGiorno's bizarre and hilarious Twitter account). On the other hand, when used recklessly or inappropriately, it can damage brand integrity and reputation in ways that are difficult if not impossible to mend—for instance, when TV star Roseanne Barr ended her comeback and erased herself from the pop-culture landscape with a couple of offensive tweets.

Regardless of risk, social media is here to stay. The audience is too large to leave untapped—3.5 billion people use social media worldwide, and the average person spends three hours *a day* using at least one social media platform.

If you use social media in your career, it can be difficult to navigate the tenuous balance between professional and personal social media use. And, yes, the categories often overlap. You don't need to feel ashamed if you're unsure where the boundaries lie. Below, we'll discuss the balancing act that is the dichotomy between personal and professional social media.

Advantages and disadvantages of personal and professional social media.

With all of the risk, you may be asking yourself "Why bother? Businesses got by just fine without it in the past." Except that's not an option in 2020. At this point, your customers expect to reach you via the web. Fifty-four percent of social

media users use it to research products they are considering purchasing. If you're not on social media, your brand still has a social presence (such as users who post about you), you just have less control.

However, some of the invaluable advantages of social platforms include:

- The ability to quickly inform your audience of new information, daily deals, changes in policy, and more.
- It's a visible demonstration that your company is on the forefront of technology and trends alike.
- It provides a venue for online chats with your clients about business-related topics.
- It can serve as a bulletin or news report for company information.

While there are people who abstain from personal social media, there are also many wonderful tools to be found with personal Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. You shouldn't have to sacrifice a personal digital presence for the sake of your career. Personal social media accounts are full of benefits that include:

- Development and maintenance of personal relationships, especially in the time of Coronavirus when in-person socializing is limited.
- Easy access to communication with anyone in your social network.
- The ability to build new connections within your existing social circles.
- Keeping up with news, releases, and special offers from your favorite brands and artists.

- Connecting with your favorite authors, musicians, and others on a personal level.

The disadvantages of social media most often come into play when the barriers between professional and personal use are blurred. It should be abundantly clear that your personal social media use *can* and *will* impact your professional reputation.

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How connecting with clients on social media can go wrong.

Two million friendships are requested on Facebook every 20 minutes. So what happens if one of your customers, clients, or another individual you have a professional relationship with decides to reach out to you on your personal social media? This becomes a situation where personal and professional are heavily blurred. So, how do you manage it? The simple answer is: you don't.

Almost all professional guidelines suggest avoiding personal social media connections with clients, and it should go without saying that you should never use your business social media to instigate a personal relationship.

In an interview with NCBI, nurse practitioner Patricia Sullivan said: "I believe that if you accept a 'friend' request, it crosses the boundaries and can be damaging to the therapeutic relationship."

She clarified that it's only acceptable to "friend" a client

if there’s a 100 percent guarantee that they would not be in a working relationship again. Absent that guarantee, the conduct is considered unprofessional.

The ever-widening number of problems from blurred social media boundaries include:

- **Damage to your professional relationships:** Making a personal connection on social media can cause your clients to begin to see you as a friend and personal connection rather than a business connection. As we’ll touch on further down the list, this simple change in viewpoint can damage your credibility, cause conflict, or lead to inappropriate relationships.
- **Your customers can decide they don’t like you:** Not everyone has the personality or demeanor for public-facing positions. You may make serious posts about politics or current events that would be inappropriate or divisive in the workplace. To the customer who just friended you on Facebook, though—you’re still on the clock and they’re judging every personal choice as if it represents your business.
- **Sexual harassment isn’t uncommon:** In 2015, *Cosmopolitan* asked women to identify those responsible for sexually harassing them on the job. While 75 percent said they were harassed by male colleagues, a whopping 49 percent of women were harassed by male customers. Opening your personal social media to a customer allows them access to personal data (such as where you live, work, etc). This is all information no customer needs to know, and all the more reason to draw a firm barrier between work and personal social media.
- **Damage to your credibility:** People share things on personal social media much more casually than they would on professional social media. Not everyone fact-checks

the stories they post, or the memes they share. Posting incorrect or damaging information on your personal page can damage your credibility.

Beware of these mistakes.

Below are some tips (some more common sense than others) to avoid social media scratches and dents to your professional reputation. If you don't think actively about the way you post on social media, it may be easy to accidentally cross some of these lines. Take a look at this long list of people who were fired for inappropriate behavior on social media. A shocking 93 percent of employers look at their potential hire's social media before making the decision—and you can certain your colleagues and clients will nose around a little, too.

Be careful when posting about work: Posting business-related content such as news about new clients or projects can be considered discourteous, even if the material isn't directly labeled "burn after reading." It's especially important to stay away from information learned in private meetings with managers, colleagues, and clients—closed doors mean there's an assumed amount of privacy. This goes double for clients or colleagues you have negative feelings about—it can be tempting and gratifying to vent on social media, but you should always operate under the assumption your colleagues and clients will see your posts.

If your posts are public, it's not a good idea to post during work hours even if you're a manager and not an underling. Clients and colleagues are still able to see your posts and will recognize that the timestamps show you posted during work hours.

Remember to ask yourself if anything you're posting could harm your professional career. Don't post racist, sexist, or LGBTQ+ phobic content even if it's a meme or a joke. And especially

don’t pretend to be a domestic terrorist group—it’ll unsurprisingly end your career in a flash.

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3 Ways to Create Buzzworthy Social Media Images

August 25, 2020 5 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

The following excerpt is from Ultimate Guide to Social Media Marketing *by Eric Butow, Jenn Herman, Stephanie Liu, Amanda Robinson and Mike Allton, available August 25 via Entrepreneur Press. Pre-order now from* Amazon | Barnes & Noble | Apple Books.

Images rule on social media. If you don’t have a great image to include with your content, then you don’t have a useful post that will generate attention and conversions. Thankfully, that’s easily remedied. There are basically three ways that you can generate great images for social media:

- Purchase images.
- Create graphics.

- Photograph your own.

Let’s explore all three.

1. Purchase Images

Now, when we talk about purchasing images, that doesn’t necessarily mean they have to be expensive. There are even places you can get images for free, but they have to be designated as available for your use. Using Google’s image search is not acceptable unless you go to Google’s advanced settings and scroll down to set parameters for usage rights to be “free to use or share, even commercially.” Even then, be careful! Being sued for copyright infringement is not fun, and you could get in trouble for using an image that someone *else* illegally shared. It is worth the effort to use those other sites.

Related: 5 Ways to Step into TikTok

Pixabay, for instance, is a great place to source free imagery that you can use in your marketing and social media posts. However, any time you use an image, you are typically required to give credit to the source of that image, which may or may not be convenient. Instead, we recommend purchasing images from repositories like Shutterstock, iStock or Depositphotos.

Usually you can invest in “credits” upfront and use them to buy and download images whenever you need. This is particularly convenient when a site offers a sale on bulk credits at a discount, so watch for those!

There are two major benefits to buying images. First, you’re purchasing the right to use that image on social media and in marketing materials, so you know all your activities will be legal. Second, by paying for an image, you’re adding a layer of exclusivity to your design. More people will be likely to use a free image, meaning there’s a greater chance of that

photo turning up in someone else's marketing. By paying for your image, you make that less likely. (You also know that the image you're paying for will be high-quality.)

2. Create Graphics Yourself

The second option is to create the graphics yourself. We'll go into some tools you can use for this in a moment, but the idea is simple. Instead of a picture someone else took, you can create a graphic that uses shapes, textures, icons and text to communicate your message. These can be as simple as a few words of text on a white background, or as complex as a tall infographic that illustrates a series of facts and figures to tell a story.

While you will obviously need a minimal level of design skill, this is an approach that is worth exploring!.You can also consider using an outside graphic design service or working with a freelance designer from Fiverr to create one or more images or even templates for you to use again and again.

3. Shoot Your Own Photos

The third approach, and perhaps the best one, is to create your own photography images. This is an inexpensive way for you to create amazing images that align perfectly with your brand.

All it requires is a camera – these days your smartphone will do just fine – and some forethought. What can you photograph? What will you be talking about on social media where specific images would be a great addition?

If you've never done much photography, take a day to watch some YouTube videos on composition and techniques, particularly those related to your camera of choice. Peter McKinnon is one of our favorite photographers to follow;

you’ll learn a lot from his videos.

Here are 10 things you might consider photographing for your posts:

1. Yourself.
2. Your staff.
3. Your business and facilities.
4. Nature.
5. Your city.
6. Your customers.
7. Your target audience.
8. Your hobbies and interests.
9. Events.
10. Your industry.

Related: 3 Kinds of Social Media Marketing You Shouldn’t Ignore

For instance, with a newer iPhone in portrait mode, you can capture some amazing close-up images, allowing the phone to automatically apply bokeh (blur) to the background, giving the item you’re photographing additional focus.

Routinely taking an hour or two for business photography can create a library of “stock photos” that will last you and your brand for years.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/354728

Top five tips to use Twitter’s new Voice Tweets feature

30-second summary:

- Twitter has unveiled a new Voice Tweet feature, an exciting new way for brands to connect with fans and followers by leveraging the power of the human voice.
- Voice Tweets can add context and nuance that strictly visual language can’t capture.
- Voices.com’s CEO David Ciccarelli shares five tips for building a strategy that caters to audiences’ ears, not just their eyes, and creating successful Voice Tweets.

In a 2009 interview with the Los Angeles Times, Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey recalled how the platform got its name. He said the definition for the word “Twitter” was perfect because it “was ‘a short burst of inconsequential information,’ and ‘chirps from birds.’ And that’s exactly what the product was.”

This may have been true then, but Twitter evolved from a website full of inconsequential information to one of the world’s largest news sources. Today, the social media platform broadcasts everyone’s messages, including individuals, Fortune 500 companies, and even global superpowers.

Just as the site itself has grown and changed, its content features have evolved as well. The Twitter team added support

for GIFs and videos along the way, and tweets are now 280 characters when they were originally confined to 140. Most recently, Twitter announced its new Voice Tweet feature. Voice Tweets represent the social media giant's first departure from the visual realm. It's an exciting opportunity for brands to connect with their fans and followers in a whole new way.

The value of voice

Communication that's strictly visual can leave out a lot of information. That missing context can often lead to separate interpretations by different readers or viewers, and occasionally those interpretations are decidedly at odds. Voice, on the other hand, allows users to utilize all the nuances and complexities of inflection and tone, letting them convey additional meaning and subtext that eliminates ambiguity and enables deeper connections with the audience.

Twitter's new auditory feature ergo, Voice Tweets are an exciting opportunity for businesses to enhance their brand touchpoints with platform users by leveraging the power of the human voice. The key is putting in the effort and getting the rollout right the first time.

To build a strategy that caters to your customers' ears instead of their eyes, follow these five steps when creating Voice Tweets:

1. Appoint an audio ambassador

In addition to the CEO, select or hire one or two people to represent your brand as audio ambassadors. These people (and their voices) will be synonymous with your company, so they should be adept at connecting with audiences. Your ambassadors will be responsible for all audio operations and can assist in accessibility usage for those who are deaf and hard of hearing. In the U.S., 15% of adults 18 and over have some trouble hearing, according to the National Institute on

Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Create threads under your original Voice Tweets with transcriptions to improve accessibility and utilize SEO keywords.

2. Be clear on key messaging

To create coherent messaging, you need to clarify both the broad themes and specific details. Being clear on messaging can determine what keywords people associate with your brand and what future searches they'll make. What words or phrases do you want to be associated with your company? What would you and company leadership consider off-brand? Make a list and distribute it to all parties involved to ensure that the right messaging is top of mind. Then, plan to update your individual messages with audio cues that are specific to each campaign.

3. Define your style

Kantar TNS reports that almost 80% of Twitter users follow one or more brands. That's a sizable audience that represents a major opportunity, but it also means you'll need to find a way to stand out from the crowd. Your Voice Tweets should establish an auditory identity while staying consistent with your brand's style and personality. Define your style by determining your tone (for example, conversational or professional) and preferred word choice.

4. Create high-quality recordings

It may come as a shock, but most voice-over recordings happen in home studios. That's not just a recent symptom of the COVID-19 pandemic – it's a trend that's been happening for the past decade. You don't need to rent out an expensive recording studio to start publishing your brand's first Voice Tweets, but you also don't want to record in a busy home with lots of noise and distractions. Find a quiet space to record – whether it's a closet or a spare bedroom – in order to improve the audio quality.

5. Listen to audio clips before publication

Have you ever recorded a voicemail greeting and then played it back? If you're like most people, you probably thought you nailed it on the first take only to listen in horror as you "umm" and "ahh" your way to the end. Voice Tweets should be no different, and your audio ambassador should always listen carefully to ensure that each tweet conveys a simple and coherent message that exemplifies your brand. Before anyone presses publish, verify that the recording is something you'd be comfortable or even proud to hear over and over.

As a nod to the original character limit, Voice Tweets give your brand 140 seconds to get your message across. Before you wax poetics about whatever strikes your fancy, focus on crafting each tweet in a way that builds and supports your brand's overall auditory identity. Capitalizing on a new feature is a large undertaking, but these five steps should give you a good place to start.

David Ciccarelli is the founder and CEO of Voices.com, the largest marketplace for audio and voice-over products and services in the world with over one million business and voice actor registered users.

More about:

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/08/25/top-five-tips-to-use-twitters-new-voice-tweets-feature/

TikTok Outlines Why It Thinks President Trump's US Ban Is Illegal

'By banning TikTok with no notice or opportunity to be heard (whether before or after the fact), the executive order violates the due process protections of the Fifth Amendment,' the company says.

August 25, 2020 3 min read

This story originally appeared on PCMag

Which is more important: national security or free speech? The result of President Trump's effort to ban TikTok may hinge on that question.

On Monday, TikTok filed a lawsuit challenging Trump's executive order to essentially ban the popular-video sharing app in the US. Trump says the action is necessary to prevent the Chinese government from potentially harvesting user data to profile and spy on Americans.

But according to TikTok, the same order oversteps the legal limits by banning an app used by 100 million Americans to communicate with each other. "We do not take suing the government lightly, however we feel we have no choice but to take action to protect our rights, and the rights of our community and employees," TikTok said in announcing the lawsuit, which it filed in a US district court.

To ban TikTok, Trump is exercising the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which allows the president to block transactions with a foreign company if it's deemed a

national security threat. According to Trump, TikTok poses such a threat because its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, is beholden to the Chinese government.

But in the lawsuit, TikTok says the IEEPA—originally enacted in 1977—has important restrictions. Specifically, it blocks a president from using the authority to regulate the "transmission" of any informational materials, including "films, posters, phonograph records, photographs, microfilms" in addition to CD-ROM-based content.

As a result, TikTok plans to argue the White House is misusing the IEEPA to ban the video-sharing app. "President Trump seeks to use IEEPA against TikTok Inc. … to destroy an online community where millions of Americans have come together to express themselves, share video content, and make connections with each other," the company writes in the lawsuit.

In the same complaint, TikTok says the company deserves a fair hearing. But Trump's executive order landed on Aug. 6 without any way for recourse. "By banning TikTok with no notice or opportunity to be heard (whether before or after the fact), the executive order violates the due process protections of the Fifth Amendment," the company wrote.

The other problem TikTok has with Trump's executive order is how it cites the potential for the Chinese government to use the video-sharing app for spying purposes without backing up the claim with real evidence. "These speculative assertions, made without any evidentiary foundation, do not constitute a bona fide national emergency," the company says.

Instead, TikTok suggests the executive order may have less to do with actual national security. "The President's actions clearly reflect a political decision to campaign on an anti-China platform," the company claimed in the lawsuit.

So far the Trump administration has yet to respond to the

lawsuit. But the president’s initial executive order gave TikTok’s parent company until Sept. 20 to sell off the business or face getting blocked. In addition, Trump issued a separate order through the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) demanding ByteDance divest TikTok by Nov. 12.

The TikTok lawsuit could result in a US court invalidating the original executive order. It’s also possible ByteDance could find a US buyer before the legal proceedings begin. Both Microsoft and Oracle are currently engaged in acquisition talks for TikTok.

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Top 10 Ways to Restore Your Social Media Reputation via @tallchickvic

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How to optimize for the Instagram algorithm in 2020

30-second summary:

- Instagram uses an ever-changing, machine learning-powered algorithm to customize and arrange posts in user feeds.
- Ever since the platform left the chronological feed behind and moved to the algorithmic feed years ago, marketers, content creators, and users alike have been speculating on what exactly determines which posts make it to the top.
- There are six key factors that the Instagram algorithm relies on to determine which posts should appear first: interest, relationship, recency, frequency, following, and usage.
- These six key factors are backed by performance metrics and patterns of user behaviors.
- Optimizing for the Instagram algorithm requires an understanding of key ranking factors and compliance with key metrics.

“Show me your Instagram feed and I’ll tell you who you are” – is a beautiful sentiment but it’s not actually the case. What’s closer to the truth is, show me your Instagram feed and I’ll tell you what the Instagram algorithm thinks is good for you.

It’s no secret that the content you see in your Instagram feed and the way it’s arranged is customized for you. Ever since the platform left the chronological feed behind and moved to the algorithmic feed years ago, marketers, content creators, and users alike have been speculating on what exactly determines which posts make it to the top. Why is it that some posts, however recent and relevant, never appear first in the feed? Likewise, what makes some content rank high regardless

of its relevance and recency?

Although Instagram's chronological feed might make a comeback one day, for the time being, what we're working with is the algorithmic feed powered by machine learning. As confirmed by Instagram itself (well, the creators behind it), feed ranking is evolving and changing all the time based on user data. This brings about both good and bad news for the people and businesses aiming to win the Instagram ranking game.

The bad news is, there'll always be something to catch up with. Working with an ever-changing algorithm means accepting the fact that it's ever-changing and keeping an eye on all social media updates. The good news is, ranking factors – and this goes both for search engines and social media algorithmic feeds – can still be discerned and optimized for. In this post, we'll take a closer look at what makes and breaks Instagram content.

Instagram ranking factors

There's been a lot of buzz around what helps the Instagram algorithm determine which posts deserve each user's immediate attention and should be therefore placed at the top of the feed. What we're looking at in 2020 and beyond it seems, are six key factors Instagram's ranking algorithm relies on when arranging posts.

1. **Interest** – how much a user is expected to care about the post
2. **Relationship** – how a user is related to the authors of the posts in social media terms and literally, that is accounts from the "friends and family" category are prioritized
3. **Recency** – how recently the content was posted
4. **Frequency** – how often a user opens Instagram, that is, the best posts since the user's last visit will be displayed first

5. **Following** – how many accounts a user follows, that means, the more posts there are to rank, the harder it is to display all of them
6. **Usage** – how much time a user spends on Instagram per session

As you can see, the six factors all help paint a decent picture of what type of behaviors any user displays and what type of content simply must get into the user's radar, however rare and short their visits to the app. Ultimately, all factors belong to three types of ranking signals:

1. Interest
2. Timeliness
3. Relationship

Naturally, the factors per se only give us a general idea of what kind of framework the algorithm operates within. To understand what it is that impacts Instagram rankings, we need to dive deeper and take a look at the metrics behind the key factors.

Instagram ranking metrics

If you think about it, every metric on the ranking algorithm's radar makes sense because it corresponds to the 6 key factors that determine Instagram ranking gains and losses. Let's revisit the factors and see what kind of metrics they translate into.

1. Interest = Engagement

It's very difficult to determine which posts will be of the most interest to the user. To do that accurately, the algorithm needs to analyze every type of engagement in the book, recognizing the patterns and making predictions about future behaviors. The types of engagement Instagram recognizes are:

- Comments (of all shapes and sizes!)
- Likes
- Reshares
- Views (for video content)

In addition to those, creators need to aim for saves – a type of engagement that's likely to be valued the most in a likes-free world dreaded by some and anticipated by others. Saves reflect an even stronger likelihood of further engagement as users are expected to go back to the posts they saved and interact with the content multiple times.

2. Relationship = Engagement + Real-life connections

Before you get weirded out, consider this: Instagram doesn't have to run actual surveillance and dig up records to establish your real-life connections and prioritize posts in your feed. It doesn't need to, as users provide multiple hints as to which of their Instagram interactions might fall into the "friends and family" category:

- Frequent likes and other types of engagement with posts
- Accounts users search for
- Accounts users send messages to
- Posts that get shared a lot
- Any type of behavior that signifies a real-life connection

It's therefore perfectly doable to establish a friend or relative, seeing how people tend to interact the most with content from their actual friends and family members. However, once an account has been flagged as a close relation to a user, it doesn't stay in the top place for long. Consistency of posting is also key to staying Instagram-relevant, hence the need to be visible and active to remain in users' sight.

3. Recency = Time of posting

By now, it’s been established that engagement is “the metric” to look out for when trying to crack Instagram’s ranking algorithm. However, the content has an expiration date – therefore, the recency of posts also counts. The intention is simple: Instagram is determined to serve only relevant content to its users. Posts that have been out there for a good minute may no longer be relevant, that’s why recency is a ranking condition too.

It was once thought that in order to be ranked high, content creators needed to strive for absolute maximum user engagement within 30 minutes since their posts went live. As confirmed by Instagram, there’s no such requirement. That said, it helps to know the best time for posting, that is, the time when the account’s audience is online and most likely to interact with posts and give them a timely engagement boost.

4. Frequency, following, usage = user data

The three factors that have nothing to do with the content or technology behind posting and everything to do with user behaviors are frequency, following, and usage. They all help Instagram’s ranking algorithm learn more about each user’s habits and mode of using the app: how often, for how long, and to what extent any given individual uses Instagram.

More active users of the app will for obvious reasons see more content as they spend more time browsing Instagram and explore more posts in total. *The* most active users might even see a chronological feed of sorts, as there are only so many relevant posts, and the feed gets populated with all of the available content eventually.

Meanwhile, users who follow a lot of accounts, even if they choose to spend hours browsing Instagram, are unlikely to see

every single post as there are just too many to fit into one person’s feed.

How to optimize for the Instagram algorithm

Now that we’ve gone through the basics of Instagram’s ranking system, let’s see what can be done to help content rise in Instagram’s eyes and user feeds.

1. Research your audience

Seeing how Instagram seems to have users’ best interests in mind (or at least that’s what’s being projected via personalizing feeds), it makes all the sense to strive for top audience engagement and maximum relevance. This can only be done by running a thorough audience analysis – a full scan of an audience segment that reveals, among other things, preferences, interests, alliances, and even stances in public debates.

Employing social media listening in researching the Instagram environment means monitoring Instagram conversations and drawing data-powered insights for every move. Content curation to hashtag analysis – knowing what’s buzzing around your brand, what’s trending and can be amplified on, and what resonates best with your audience empowers you to craft your best Instagram posts and please the algorithm, too.

2. Be present

In social media terms, being present means posting consistently while staying relevant. Although the 30-minute-rule to getting engagement has been busted, it definitely helps to know your best posting time and post consistently. Maintaining a consistent Instagram presence, especially when you’re striving for maximum user engagement, can be

exhausting. Luckily, there are always Instagram content ideas you can borrow from fellow marketers in pursuit of getting the most out of brands' social profiles.

To boost brand visibility and secure a top spot on the screen, do not neglect posting to Instagram Stories. As long as the content is engaging, diversifying the formats it comes in will only get you more ranking points.

3. Incorporate IGTV videos

While it has been confirmed that Instagram does not discriminate between photo and video content as users simply see more of the type of content they already interact with the most, incorporating videos can do no harm to your Instagram rankings.

For one, video content gets a longer viewing period, which means you boost user retention and prolong the interaction people have with your content. In addition to that, IGTV video content can take up four times as much screen space as photos in Instagram's Explore section, i.e. putting IGTV videos out there increases your chances to be discovered and interacted with.

4. Do not hesitate to move to a business profile if you need to

On the same myth-busting spree, Instagram confirmed that the way posts are arranged in user feeds is not determined by the type of accounts creators hold. Whether you post as a business or individual and whether or not your account is verified – what determines your position in the feed is engagement and genuine interest in the content you put out. Which brings us to the final tip.

5. Keep it real

Authenticity and transparency come first and second. Striving to replicate the human world, Instagram operates by the rules of likability and genuine engagement. To achieve that, content creators need to appeal to their audiences like never before, working on building unique brand personalities, collaborating with Instagram influencers in favor of celebrities, and staying authentic above promotional.

When it’s machine learning that determines authenticity or the lack thereof, appearing genuine is a game-changer. More often than not, authenticity means engagement, and engagement is the gold of the Instagram ranking game.

Wrapping up

Instagram ranking signals come and go, user behaviors keep changing, new formats emerge and fade away – combined, things to keep up with may appear overwhelming.

However, behind the smartest social media algorithms are solid logic and good intentions. Understanding how Instagram content is ranked and acting on the patterns is the least you can do to help people discover and engage with your content. From there, winning the Instagram game boils down to playing by the rules and keeping it real.

Julia Miashkova is a social data analyst with a background in public relations and SEO. Her focus is social listening research and data journalism. She can be found on Twitter @JMiashkova.

More about:

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/08/19/how-to-optimize-for-the-instagram-algorithm-in-2020/

5 Ways to Step into TikTok

August 18, 2020 5 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

The following excerpt is from Ultimate Guide to Social Media Marketing *by Eric Butow, Jenn Herman, Stephanie Liu, Amanda Robinson and Mike Allton, available August 25 via Entrepreneur Press. Pre-order now from* Amazon | Barnes & Noble | Apple Books.

The most popular and talked-about social network in 2020 — and perhaps the second-most controversial behind Facebook — is TikTok. Beijing-based ByteDance Technology Co. bought lip-syncing app Musical.ly in 2017 and merged it with its own lip-syncing app in 2018 to create TikTok. (TikTok is known as Douyin in China.)

Both TikTok and Musical.ly did much the same thing: allow users to make 15-second lip-synced music videos, add filters to make them more amusing and colorful, and then send them to fellow users. But TikTok rules the shortform world.

ByteDance has continually upgraded the TikTok service, and its efforts are paying off—it now has 500 million monthly online users. The MediaKix website has some more interesting statistics about TikTok's rapid rise:

- People downloaded the TikTok app more than 660,730 million times in 2019.
- Only 26.5 million of the 500 million monthly online users come from the United States.

- The country with the most TikTok users is in India, which has 24 percent of all TikTok users.
- Though ByteDance is headquartered in Beijing, TikTok isn’t available in China. The company still sells its original app there: Douyin.
- Sixty-six percent of TikTok’s users are under 30 years old.

Related: 3 Kinds of Social Media Marketing You Shouldn’t Ignore

So when would you use TikTok to promote your business? If you want to attract young people, consider creating videos on TikTok in communities that dovetail with what your business offers. What’s more, if you market your business overseas, particularly in South Asia, TikTok should be on your list of social media networks to review as you create your company’s social media strategy. Here are five ways you can harness the power of TikTok:

1. Creating Video

TikTok allows users to select from a wide variety of background music. Once you choose your music, you can use your smartphone camera to record yourself dancing and/or lip-syncing to the music. Once you finish capturing the video, you can edit it with a variety of filters, such as one that allows them to change the speed of the video.

2. Sharing Video

When you’re done editing, you can share it with other TikTok users or post it on YouTube and Facebook. TikTok is similar to those other two social networks in that you can set your TikTok profile to private and share your videos only with your friends.

3. Find Your Community

What’s more, TikTok has a variety of theme-based communities that you can search for. When you find some, view some videos in the community to learn what types of videos are popular before you record and post yours.

4. Pay Attention to Reactions

After you post your video, the users you share it with can use TikTok’s “react” feature, which shows them reacting to your video in a small window in front of your video. That feature is an effective way to learn who likes your video within the community and/or within your group of TikTok friends.

5. Create Duets and Challenges

Two of the most popular features in TikTok are creating “duets” and “challenges.” A duet is a video that is combined with another video so both videos can be watched at the same time. Someone can do this with your video and vice versa. If another user has the Duet feature turned off, then you can’t add the video into your own duet. (You can also turn this feature off in your own profile or only allow friends to create Duet videos.)

You can also participate in a challenge, where one user will post a video about a topic and challenge others to post videos about that same topic. The One37pm website published a list of the best TikTok challenges in 2019; one example included showing off videos of a user’s best artwork and a glimpse into their artistic process. This challenge created an atmosphere of creativity and community.

Related: TikTok Bans Deepfakes, Expands Fact-Checking to Fight Election Misinformation

Data-Storage Investigations

All that said, TikTok has its apparent safety issues. In mid-2019, the UK began investigating how TikTok collected and used children's account data. This investigation came on the heels of a U.S. Federal Trade Commission fine of $5.7 million against TikTok in February 2019 for illegally collecting children's personal information.

In 2019, U.S. lawmakers in Congress expressed concerns that TikTok was censoring information, especially videos of the Hong Kong democracy protests, and sending user data to the Chinese government.

These concerns led to a formal national security review by U.S. federal government agencies. The U.S. Army and U.S. Navy have also banned their personnel from using TikTok on government-owned phones because they consider it a security risk.

For its part, ByteDance has pledged to cooperate fully with the U.S. government to assuage its concerns, but that promise was met with deep skepticism by Congress when the company refused to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee in November 2019.

(Since UG to SMM *went to print, there have been siginficant updates to the legal concerns surrounding TikTok and U.S.-China relations. You can read more about that here.)*

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