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ULTIMATE

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

for Tour and Activity Providers

by Colm Hanratty

ULTIMATE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE for Tourism Companies

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Author's Note

When I'm giving businesses social media advice, I like to give practical tips that can be put into use straightaway. Whether it's in a seminar I'm giving, a blog post, or in a one-on-one chat, I want that person to have one key takeaway that they can put into practice almost immediately. With this in mind, I've compiled 20 practical tips that you can put into practice when marketing your tour or activity company using social media.



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#1

As social media is so easy to get started with, many businesses use it before really thinking what they're using it for and without any real strategy. But building a strategy doesn't have to be a long and arduous task.

It can be a short one - you just need to finalize questions such as 'What are we using social media for?', 'Who do we want to target?' and 'How are we going to do it?'.

Once you answer these questions and get some plans in place, you'll have yourself a strategy. This means that everything you do will have a purpose. [Here's my advice on building a successful social media strategy.](#)





#2

See your ROI by setting objectives

Too many businesses are wary of social media because they think it's hard to see a ROI (return on investment). But once you set an objective and subsequent KPIs (key performance indicators), figuring out your ROI is easy.

For instance, if you're using social media for customer service, then the number of queries answered via Twitter/Facebook etc shows you your ROI. If you're looking for traffic, the more traffic referrals you get from social networks, the higher the ROI.



#3

Register your vanity URL on every social network

If you never plan on [using Snapchat for marketing your tour or activity](#), this doesn't mean you shouldn't open a Snapchat account. The reason for this is so you own your brand name on every social channel, or your 'vanity URL' as it's known. You want to make sure nobody else is using your brand's name anywhere on the internet.



#4

Take your social media seriously

There's a big problem with social media - it's too easy. It doesn't take a whole lot of skill to open a Twitter account and start tweeting away for a business. As a result, many businesses aren't taking it very seriously and they allow staff members without the required skillset to manage their account. Make sure you take your social media seriously: more people will see your activity than an ad in a newspaper.

To continue in the right direction, here are my tips for creating your [Twitter strategy](#) and [Facebook strategy](#).

#5

Use a content calendar

If you don't have a content calendar, you won't know what you published last week or the week before, which makes consistency and diverse posting difficult. The way to combat this is by having a content calendar. It doesn't have to be anything too complex, just something where you can see what's being shared where and when.

A content calendar also helps you to understand which kind of content your target audience engages most with, as well as when to publish it. Remember to include in your planning: commemorative dates, industry news, and issues that matter to your audience.



#6

Stop retweeting every tweet that mentions your business

If you're someone who RT's every tweet that mentions your business, I have one word for you - stop. In fact, I've got two - please stop. If you are, you're probably not engaging with the people tweeting you. Also, you may be falling into the 'look at me' trap. Would you text all your friends to let them know your boss told you you're great? Then why RT your followers when somebody says how good you are?

When somebody tags you in a tweet with a compliment, engage with them and get a conversation going. Don't just simply RT and move on.

#7

Have a blog on your website

If you don't have a blog on your website, get one. I've [spoken about this before](#) in greater detail, but just to recap... they're [good for SEO](#), they give your brand a personality, they help position you as an authoritative voice, and much more. With a blog, you can schedule each new piece of content on social media, and you can also develop engagement with sharing and follow buttons using a tool such as [AddThis](#).

The Writing Handbook for Tour & Activity Providers

Whatever your starting point, writing is a skill that's worth developing. Follow our golden tips to craft better content that makes a clear impact.





#8

Use hashtags correctly

Hashtags originally belonged to Twitter, but now they're used across all social channels. The problem is that most people don't use them properly (or effectively). There's no evidence that using hashtags on Facebook give extra reach, but this doesn't mean they don't have a purpose there. They're good for campaigns, awareness and education.

On Twitter, overusing hashtags can seem a bit desperate, as hashtags have been proven to increase reach. Keep them to two a tweet.

On Instagram, alternatively, [using the right hashtags](#) is pivotal to increasing your reach. Hashtags such as #bestoftheday #igers<city> and others can bring your content, and subsequently company, to a wider audience.

Another wise strategy is to create your own hashtag. You can include the hashtag when sharing content that's created by your company, or to promote events, sales or offers, and institutional news. Remember to also promote your hashtag in your brochures and even during your tours; you can do this by asking your customers to use your hashtag when they post photos and videos.

#9

Produce sticky and shareable content for your blog

If you're going to engage in content marketing by way of a blog, your content needs to be satisfy certain requirements. First of all, you want your content to be sticky. This means that people will read the content on your blog, remember your site for having quality blog posts, then return directly, giving you organic and direct traffic.

Secondly, you want your content to be shareable. This is self-explanatory: if you produce good content, it will be shared well via social media, thus giving you more traffic and a chance to reach a wider audience.



#10

Have a blog on your website

Your content needs to be two other things...

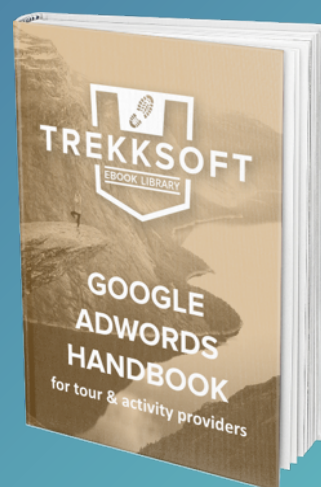
The first of these two things is 'discoverable'. Just like 'shareable', this is fairly self-explanatory. You want to make sure that you produce content that's found on search engines. To do this, find out what people are searching for using tools like Google Keyword Planner and Google Trends, and then optimise your content to suit those search terms.

Also, try to create 'evergreen' content. This is content that will be as relevant in five years time as it is the day you write it, meaning you can keep sharing it through social media too.



Google AdWords Handbook for Tour and Activity Providers

Learn AdWords best practices and use our checklist to successfully launch your first campaign. Here's how paid search can get your tour or activity business ahead.





#11

Don't tweet your Instagram photos

Once upon a time Twitter and Instagram were friends, and every time you shared your Instagram photo to Twitter the actual image appeared in the feed. But then in 2011 things went sour and they fell out. As a result, Instagram photos no longer appear in feeds. Thus, your Instagram tweets won't generate as much engagement as a tweet with a photo uploaded directly to Twitter.

So don't tweet those Instagram photos - keep them within that platform and upload the photo separately to Twitter.

#12

Don't cross-publish your content by connecting accounts

Recently I saw a tweet that said 'Hit 'Like' if you agree!' But I couldn't hit like. You know why? Because I was on Twitter! This update came from a person who connected their Facebook and Twitter accounts. This is lazy social media.

It would have taken another minute or two for that person to share the content on Twitter. Plus, they wouldn't be publishing incorrect messages. So don't publish the same content on two different platforms simultaneously by connecting accounts.

#13

Don't say 'Find us on Facebook' / 'Follow us on Twitter' without giving your username

So many businesses tell their customers they are on Facebook and Twitter simply by having the logos on their advertising, or having phrases like 'Find us on Facebook' everywhere.

The problem with this is that they are presenting their customers with a challenge. It's the same as saying 'Find us on the Internet' without sharing your URL, but nobody does that. Why? Because it's a stupid idea! So is saying 'Find us on Facebook'. Instead, say [FB.com/yourbusiness](https://www.facebook.com/yourbusiness) or have @yourusername with your Twitter handle.

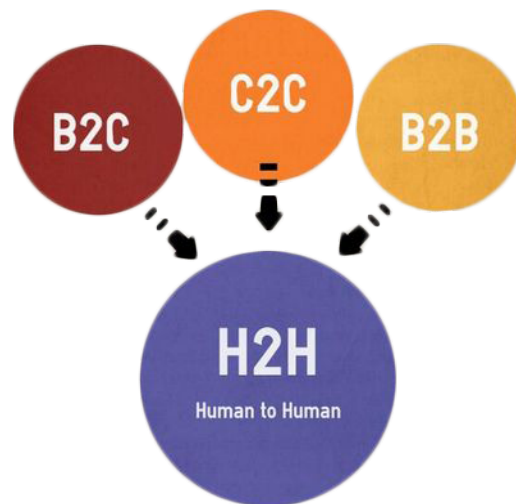


#14

Try to provide value in everything you say

I advise people to ensure that everything they say on social media is one or all of the following: engaging, entertaining, inspiring, or educational. If it isn't one of these things, maybe you shouldn't share it - it provides no value.

Social media channels are founded and developed based on user behavior, which also means that everything your company shares should put their interests first. So before you pin that next image or post that next tweet, think to yourself: 'Does this provide value to my followers?'



#15

Be human

Social media isn't B2B (Business to Business) or B2C (Business to Consumer), it's H2H - it's Human to Human. When you tweet a brand you know there's a human behind that account tweeting. So make sure you act like a human!. Share content featuring your team, sign customer service tweets off with a name... let people know they're dealing with a person and not a logo.



#16

Keep up-to-date with social media updates and trends

I'm not a social media expert. The reason I'm not is because there's no such thing. But I do know a bit. The reason for this is that I read a lot.

Check [Facebook's Newsroom](#) regularly to see if there have been any algorithm updates. Another good resource is the [Twitter blog](#) and [Instagram blog](#). Also, independent blogs like [Social Media Examiner](#) and [RazorSocial](#) have lots of good advice. Add these sites to your RSS feed, follow them on Facebook, or see if your favourite websites have podcasts.





#17

Get noticed by 'influencers'

An influencer is someone who has a wide reach. This could be an individual or it could be an organisation such as a DMO (Destination Marketing Organisation). As you are in the travel industry, DMOs are key influencers, and since you're promoting their product, it could be in their interest to share your content.

So let's say you're a tour company in Queenstown, New Zealand and you take a beautiful photo of The Remarkables (the neighbouring mountain range). You could try reaching [Tourism New Zealand's](#) 133k Twitter followers by tweeting something like:

This is why we love Queenstown. Ladies and gentlemen we present to you... The Remarkables <picture> cc @PureNewZealand

Since the photo would be promoting both parties' products, they might well share it - subsequently bringing your business to a wider audience. When tweeting DMOs, also look out for any hashtags they recommend you use to show they can re-post your image. Tourism New Zealand recommend #NZMustDo and #RealMiddleEarth.

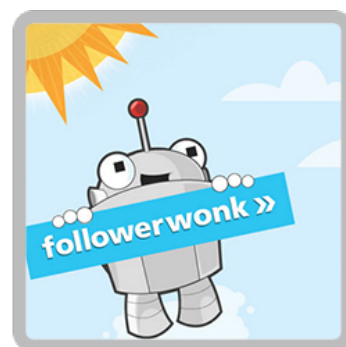


#18

Use the free tools available to you

There are lots of great free tools out there, particularly when it comes to Twitter. My favourites are [Hootsuite](#) (a free social media dashboard), [Twittercounter](#), which lets you track your growth in followers, and [Followerwonk](#) for a deep dive into your followers that tells you where they are, what time they're online and what their interests are.

With Facebook I never look further than [Facebook Insights](#), and when it comes to Instagram, [Iconosquare](#) is the best tool out there. It shows you when is the best time to share a photo, what type of filter is used the most, and more.



#19

Curate content

If you don't think you have anything to say on social media today, it doesn't mean you don't have something to share. Share somebody else's content! It could be a travel blog, it could be some industry news, it could be a beautiful photo... it could be lots of things. Find a host of resources that publish quality content that is relevant, valuable or enjoyable for your audience. You can then go back to these resources every time you want to share something with your followers.



#20

Analyse, analyse, analyse

This is the most important tip of all. If you don't analyse your data, you won't know how your social media activity is performing. If you don't know how it's performing, you won't be able to make changes, you won't be able to see what's working, and you won't be able to see what's not working. Analysing data and reacting to it is pivotal when it comes to social media marketing: above all, it will allow you to always have new insights and keep the exceptional posts coming.



Recommended

[TrekkSoft Vlog](#)

Subscribe to our YouTube channel and enjoy our weekly how-to videos for tour and activity providers on industry trends and ways to adopt them!



[TrekkSoft Webinars](#)

We regularly host webinars with industry experts to help tour and activity companies build their business, develop their marketing strategy, and drive bookings. Our webinars are always free to attend, join us for the next one!

[Tourism Success Hub](#)

Join our community on LinkedIn to connect with other successful tourism businesses, share your experiences and develop partnerships. This is also your go-to place to receive our team's expert advice for growing your business.



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