

Social Media

MARKETING BASICS



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According to a 2018 study, 77% of Americans and approximately 2.34 billion people worldwide are on social media. That's 2,340,000,000-people posting, tweeting, liking, friending and purchasing products across various social media platforms! If your marketing plan doesn't incorporate some form of social media, you're likely missing a big portion of your audience.

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01

Social Media Platforms for Authors

There are hundreds of different social media platforms. From the widely known [Facebook](#), to the obscure (but growing) [Vero](#).

The first step is to determine which platform, or platforms, are right for you and your author brand. Thankfully, your readers will largely be making this decision for you based on where they frequent. Even if you personally have a preferred social media platform, you are going to struggle to get any traction for your author brand if your readers aren't there.

First step: find the platform your readers use.

We have to make some assumptions about habits here, but the majority of readers are likely to be using the most common platforms. If you write romance or thrillers, you're going to find a lot of readers on Facebook. If you're a business professional with a how-to book, LinkedIn is the place to be. Maybe you're more of a literary fiction author? You're probably going to find more readers on the Goodreads forums.

Second step: build an author brand.

For your social media presence, you need to determine whether or not you'll be posting as yourself, or as you the author. For something like Goodreads, there really is no difference. But for Facebook, you should definitely consider a Business Profile, especially if you're going to try and sell books on their platform. There's a lot of specificity for each platform, so be sure to understand thoroughly how your chosen platform (or platforms) operate.

Third step: bring on the content

You'll be posting regularly once you have your profile established. How often will vary—for Twitter five or more posts a day is nothing. For Facebook, five posts are a lot. If you're on Goodreads, you'll be spending more time blogging and responding in long form, so the posts may be less frequent, but the responses will pile up.



Facebook

The social media giant, Facebook attracts the broadest group of potential readers. If you're writing in fiction genres, there's a good chance you'll find multiple Facebook groups focused on your genre. This platform is a safe bet, but because it is so heavily trafficked, you can easily get lost in the "noise."

Facebook requires anyone using the platform for business to use a Page, not a personal profile. One important thing to note: you need a Facebook profile in order to create a Page. You can take your personal account and convert it to a Page, which Facebook can use to create a Page in addition to your personal account.

Your information will be transferred over to the Page and you will essentially have a duplicate of your personal profile. However, for your author profile, it's smart to make a separate account. Make it different than your personal profile and give thought to your author brand and what you want to show the world about who you are and what they can expect from your work.

Keep in mind that with a Page, you don't need to friend people and wait for them to accept your request to connect. Fans can just "Like" and "Follow" your Page. And with a Page, you can have an unlimited number of Likes.

Unlike your personal profile, a Page has analytics incorporated. This means you can measure posting performance (how well your post did relative to others) in [Facebook Insights](#). A major benefit includes tracking demographics. You can see if your cookbook is being seen by people who predominantly cook (ex. parents), or if your Sci-Fi epic is being seen by your target audience (ex. 18-45-year-old males). The demographic information allows you to target your ads better (if you're running ads), helping you attract more new followers, who will become your new readers!

Once you've started to gather information about your followers, you can create and monitor Facebook Ads with the Ads Manager. In general, they're a great investment (when you can afford to invest), but not something you should do without a fair amount of data to drive them. When investing in ads, it's important to remember that money you spend may not immediately come back to you with increased sales. Make sure you [study up](#) on the Ads Manager first!



Twitter

Unlike many other social media platforms, Twitter is almost entirely focused on individuals. With that in mind, you'll do best on Twitter if you have a significant following for yourself, rather than your content or works.

The way you use Twitter to promote your author brand and your books will be a little more straight forward than Facebook. While you do have the option to create a separate profile specific to you as an author, there really isn't a need. Twitter users want interactions with the individual, so it is best to be yourself here. And because Twitter happens so fast, you don't have to worry as much about how often you post.

To be successful on Twitter, you not only need to create quality posts and share them consistently, but you also must engage actively with other users. Twitter demands that you seek out conversations and join them.

Tweets are usually short and often get bluntly to the point. Users want to see the newest tweets first and they often scroll toward newer content, while Facebook creates a news feed more tailored to your interests and connections. Twitter happens (very nearly) in real time. If you want to be active on Twitter and use the tool to drum up new followers, you'll have to spend some time getting used to the platform and engaging with it for a set period of time. Facebook is much more insular—you log on and scroll the page looking at posts, commenting and liking here and there. With Twitter, the conversation can happen as a back and forth between users on the site much easier and faster.



LinkedIn

Often referred to as the Facebook for business professionals, LinkedIn is becoming more and more of a content focused platform. That bodes well for authors who create self-help, business strategy, or similar content. If your audience is primarily targeted at business professionals, LinkedIn is the platform for you. Make sure to familiarize yourself with the layout and functionality of LinkedIn before diving in and posting!

In 2018, LinkedIn began to offer a simplified blogging tool, allowing users to create and share long-form content with their followers. This, along with the ability to connect directly with business profiles, makes LinkedIn a truly unique social media platform. It attempts to merge the scrolling/posting structure of Facebook, with a content focus similar to a blog.

What makes LinkedIn particularly useful for a business related self-publisher is the ability to build a network around your professional connections. Finding and connecting with past coworkers and employers opens up new avenues to reach potential readers. Or to land speaking engagements that further promote your author brand.



Instagram

Instagram is different than any other social media platform, telling strictly visual stories. It's best used to show off who you are, the face(s) behind your brand, company culture, and products!

Instagram is also one of the fastest growing platforms. From September 2017 to June 2018, their monthly active users grew by more than 25% to 1 billion. For comparison, Twitter is sitting at 336 million and Facebook had 2.19 billion monthly active users in the first quarter of this year.

If you're an artist—be it photographer, painter, sculptor or any other visual creator—you'll find a lot of traction on Instagram. The platform's focus on visual sharing means you get to highlight your work while connecting with a broad and diverse audience.

One powerful feature of Instagram is their [Instagram Shopping](#), a way for businesses to tag products and create a storefront. Customers can easily shop products in posts and stories, all within the Instagram app. When it comes to selling your book, the more options for buying, the better right?

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Goodreads

Goodreads is a bit of an outlier. It's not exactly a social media platform in the traditional sense, but because it is so focused on writers and readers, it bears consideration. Utilizing forum style groups and blogging, Goodreads can be a potent resource, but only if you have readers who use the platform.

Goodreads is a great way to keep track of books you've read, leave reviews on those books, and find new and interesting books based on what your followers are reading. As an author, Goodreads is quite powerful with a range of features.

- **Giveaways** – Goodreads giveaways are a great means to get your book out there and in the hands of readers. A giveaway is an investment. You are buying and supplying books at your own expense, but if those readers enjoy your book and leave positive reviews, you've bought a great deal of useful marketing at a relatively low cost.
- **News and Reviews** – The more reviews you have, the better. They don't even need to be all positive, though of course you want as many positive reviews as possible. Each review is a step toward furthering your brand and encouraging new readers to try your book. More than other sites (even Amazon), Goodreads is used to vet books, so the reviews you get here are particularly valuable.
- **Ask the Author** – Goodreads allows for two kinds of profiles; a reader and an author. If you have an author account, readers (and other authors) can follow you. And if you're being followed by another user, they can post questions for you. Just like Twitter, the Ask the Author feature in Goodreads creates a direct line between you and the reader. This kind of personal interaction can turn a potential reader into a true fan. They get to know you, they get to inquire about why you twisted the plot this way, or why one of your characters acted that way.

And the option to Ask the Author has a nice added bonus: any user who does so is directed to your author profile page. Now they see you, your information, and your catalog of available books.

02

Understanding Your Audience

No one can deny social media's impact on how we communicate. Though not even a generation old, social media has already massively shifted our dialog, introduced us to new and interesting people from around the world, and opened the door to global marketing in ways previously unimaginable.

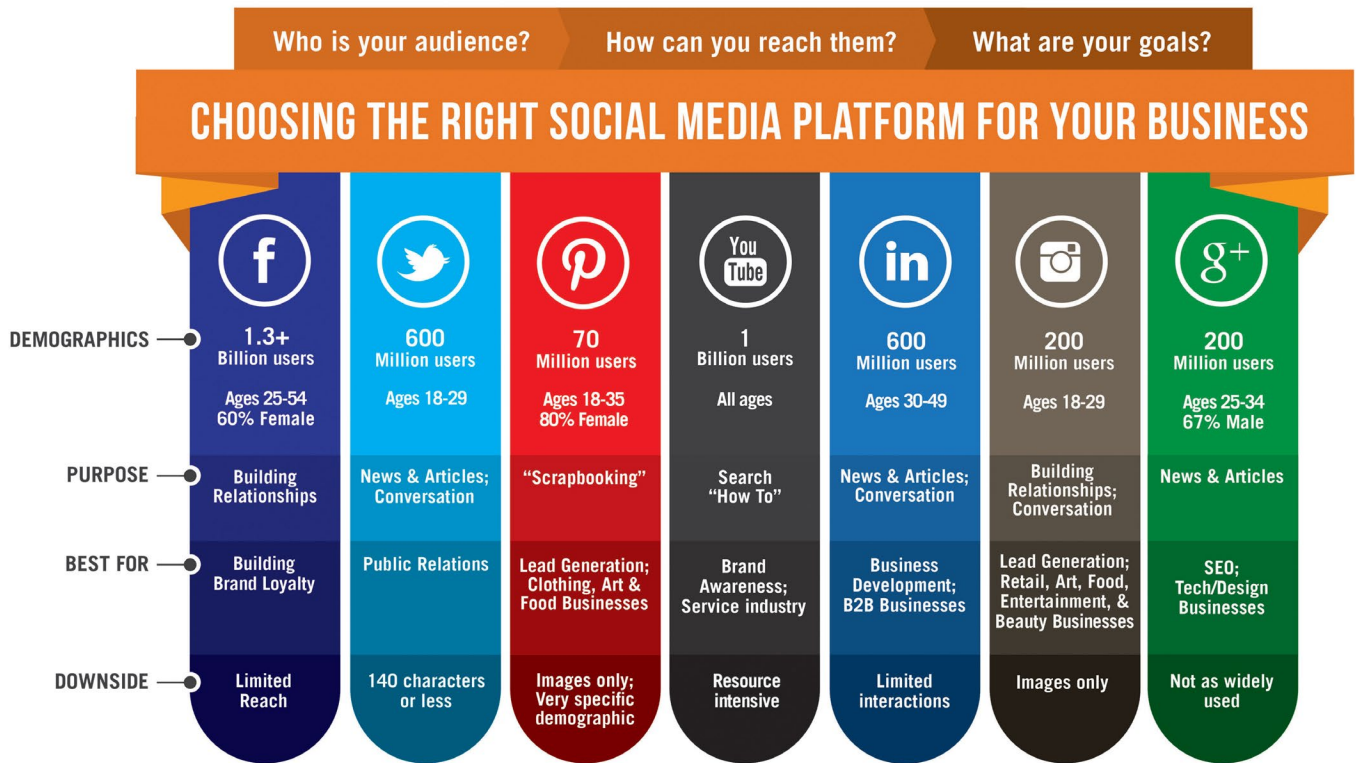
From instant messaging (anyone remember AIM?) to [Myspace](#), to the overwhelming dominance of [Facebook](#) and Twitter, social media has evolved a great deal in a relatively short time. It's connected us as never before and fostered a culture of connectivity and sharing.

The trick to making the most of Social Media is a deep understanding of your audience and what they want from their online experience.

Using the Right Platform

How do you choose? Just go with Facebook because you know it well? Switch to Instagram because the people who are interested in your books seem to gravitate toward that platform?

[Accion](#), a nonprofit community lender funding entrepreneurs, offers this graphic that highlights the difference and purposes of social media platforms:



source – [Accion](#)

While their graphic is a good starting point, it oversimplifies to some degree the differences. What matters most is where your readers are.

And that is something you should be learning continually, even before you publish and start selling. What social platforms do you use? What groups are you part of? These are the people you've followed and interacted with while creating your book, so of course they will want to be your first source for potential customers.

Finding Your Niche

Often times, niche can be confused with audience. They are different in the context of marketing your book.

Your audience are the people you are marketing too, but your niche is the genre or category you're marketing within. You might better think of the niche as the loose group of other books and authors your competing against, though that isn't a perfect analogy.

Understanding your niche is critical in social marketing because it will help you define your goals.

For example, if you write thrillers, you'll have a large niche full of similar authors. So, your social media goal will be focused on getting followers (you'll likely be using Facebook and Goodreads as your main platforms). Once you start to build followers, you'll want reviews on the sales you have, which will reinforce your value (and your book's quality) above other books in your genre.

Conversely, if you create coloring books, your niche will be broader but not as populated. You'll probably be focusing on Instagram and making sales, since you don't need tons of reviews to push a product like coloring books.

03

Snackable Content

Snackable content is one of those marketing professional catch phrases. The kind of thing you might hear at a marketing conference or see on some marketing guru's blog.

It basically means content that is easy and fun to consume with little effort from the consumer. Like a snack.

Getting the Right Content

Just posting something for the sake of making a post is a terrible idea. You'll be wasting your time making a post that most (if not all) of your followers will ignore.

Now, you can't honestly expect all of your posts to be amazing and eye catching. But you should aim to make every post have value and at least the potential to grab the attention of some of your readers. That means creating and sharing the right content.

Of course, the right content is vague. Because there are so many variables. The kind of book you're offering, the niche you fit in, the social media presence you've already cultivated, the quantity of followers you have, and many more.

Luckily, there are a few guidelines that can help start your content:

1. **Keep it simple and direct** – No matter what social platform you're using, keep your posts short and to the point. Unless you're penning a full blog post (which differs from a social media post) you need to give your followers just the most important information in a few words, an image, and a link to learn more if they desire.
2. **Post regularly but don't over post** – Give your followers consistent content, but don't post so much that your social media presence is overloaded with content. If you do post too much, invariably the quality will decrease and you'll be doing more work than you need.
3. **Carefully vet your shares** – One awesome way to add content is to share an article, meme, or post someone else made that you like or agree with. Just be sure to carefully review this content for accuracy before sharing!

Posting Cadence

Just how often should you post?

There are plenty of guides. Three times a day is common for a business on Facebook. But you could easily do three to five a week as an individual author.

What is important is that you maintain a consistent and regular cadence. If one post a day makes sense for your schedule and goals, stick to that. One post, every day.

Also, you need to be sure to post in the manner your preferred platform focuses on the most. That means responding to comments and engaging in conversation if you use Twitter, starting and engaging in forum discussions on Goodreads, and posting image-rich, hash tagged content on Instagram.

There is no perfect formula for your posting regularity, but the critical thing to keep in mind is consistency. Try to prepare your posts ahead of time and schedule them to post at the same time each day, with the same regularity. Additionally, try to use insights and data, whenever available, to optimize your content choices and posting times.

The Value of a Follow

When you make a sale, there is a tangible value to that action. A dollar amount you can easily quantify.

And when you capture an email there is something tangible (the user's email address) that has a measurable value because you now have direct and intimate access to their inbox.

Social media "follows" do not have as easily quantified metrics. How much is a Follow or Like worth to you and your author brand?

Fortunately for you and all entrepreneurs working to build their platform and make a living doing the things they love; social media is continually introducing new ways to monetize your follower list. Facebook and Instagram both offer a marketplace. Goodreads is tied directly to Amazon for the purposes of book listing.

With the growth in social media as a marketplace and ecommerce tool, the value and worth of followers will continue to grow. Their value is different than an email address because you cannot hope that all of your followers will see your posts. But because social media algorithms push content to their users based on those user's likes and interests, more of the people who see your content on social media will be those most likely to be interested, and ideally to make a purchase.

Appendix: Resources

Lulu Help Center and Knowledge Base

Lulu's Help Center features resources to help you publish your book. Visit the [Lulu Help Center](#) to learn more.

Additional Resources

Lulu Blog: [Let's Get Social](#)

Moz: [Social Media](#)

Social Media Examiner: [Getting Started With Social Media](#)