



# HOW TO BOOST YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

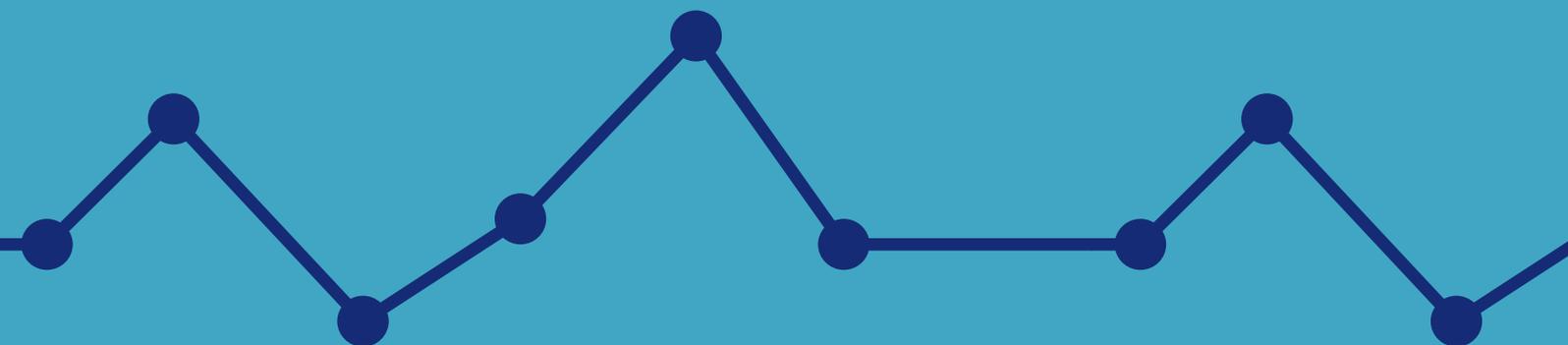
# INDEX

- 1. An introduction to effective engagement**
- 2. Facebook**
- 3. Twitter**
- 4. Instagram**
- 5. Youtube**
- 6. Valorising website contents**

# 1. An introduction to effective engagement

When formulating a strategy to promote your content online, there are many different but effective paths which you might undertake. There is no single formula which will ensure your success and no set rules to follow to boost engagement. Rather, there are various steps which you can take to improve your chances of success. These vary depending on your aims, goals, and the medium you are using to communicate it, but there are some general tips you can take into account to get you started:

- Remember that all **social media platforms operate differently**. What works on one might not work on all the others, so you must tailor your content accordingly.
- **Identify your target audience**. There is no point in sharing contents pertaining Spain if all your followers are from China, and there is also no point in sharing contents which might interest employed people if the average age of your audience is 15. Knowing who you are directing your content towards can go a long way towards improving your online communications. The Facebook „insight“ section is extremely useful for this. It contains a plethora of information about the demographics of your followers, from age and gender to geographical location.



- **Beware the algorithms.** Each platform has an embedded code which automatically pushes your content up or down in your followers' feed. Each one follows different rules and changes with variable frequency. This means that you need to figure out which sort of content each algorithm likes, and which it doesn't. It also means that you will have to regroup and figure out a different strategy every time the algorithm changes. You'll notice easily from the insight statistics which detail how many people your content has reached. The specific issue of algorithms for each platform will be discussed in the following sections.

- **Spam your content.** Chances are that there are many people who might be potentially interested in what you are doing, but simply haven't come across your activities yet. Spam might be annoying when you are on the receiving end of it, but it is also an effective strategy for better engagement. Don't make it obvious you are promoting your own content, but don't shy away from sharing it in all possible related places. Anything from Facebook groups for local news to the Twitter accounts of local newspapers works. Also, get in touch with the social media accounts of local/national TV or radio, schools, NGOs, etc and ask them to re-share your content. It doesn't work often, but at least you will make them aware of your existence. And in the rare occurrence that they do agree to re-share, it really does wonders for engagement.

- **Be open to changing your strategy!** Try out different solutions, don't just grow discouraged if the first attempt doesn't work. Different target audiences react differently to the same content, and it may take some tweaking before you find the right combination.



- Once you have identified your target audience, **style your content accordingly** in a way which will appeal to it. Young people react better to images, colours, maps and infographics, and in general to anything that is short and immediately comprehensible (Canva is a great tool to produce this sort of content). On the other hand older people are more interested in long-form content. If you have long-form content you want to share with a younger audience, one good trick is to share a single, short visual stimuli and insert a link to the longer text in the description.
- **Engagement produces more engagement.** If not even the people already involved in the project can be bothered to interact with their own content, strangers or people who are seeing the page/profile you are trying to promote for the first time won't do it either. Start off with mobilising all the people who work on the project into liking, commenting, and sharing your content. Not only does this boost the reach, it also makes the project seem more open and approachable. Nobody likes posting the first comment or leaving the first like, after all.
- **Constancy is key.** Posting and sharing have to occur with a regular frequency. You should aim for at least once a day on most platforms. Twitter is the exception, as it requires more frequent daily tweets or re-shares, and so is Youtube, which requires much less.
- **No content is better than bad content.** That goes for all platforms, but especially Instagram and Youtube. Don't panic and post content that has not been thought through, even if you find yourself completely out of ideas for a certain day. Bad content leads to bad outside engagement, and bad engagement means that subsequent content will be penalised by the algorithm, leading to a lower reach.



# 2. Facebook

Facebook is by large the most important platform you can use for private, medium/small organisations to use for self-promotion and engagement with the target audience. It allows ample opportunity to maximise your reach, engage with the public, and publicise the widest possible types of content. However, it is also the hardest platform to get right in terms of social media strategy, because there are many things which the algorithm will penalise you for posting. Outlined below are some of the most important things to keep in mind when posting on Facebook.

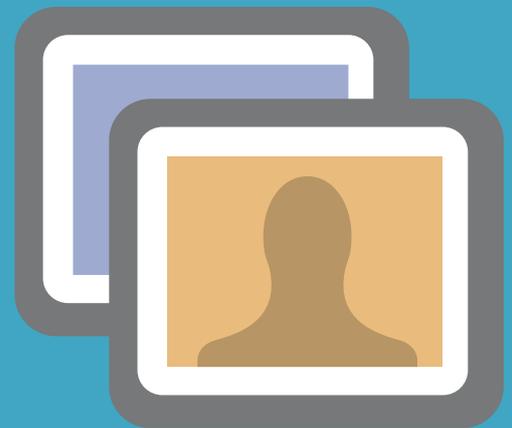
## Best content to post

Facebook is very picky with the sort of content it will allow, as Zuckerberg is trying to promote his own content over that of his competitors:

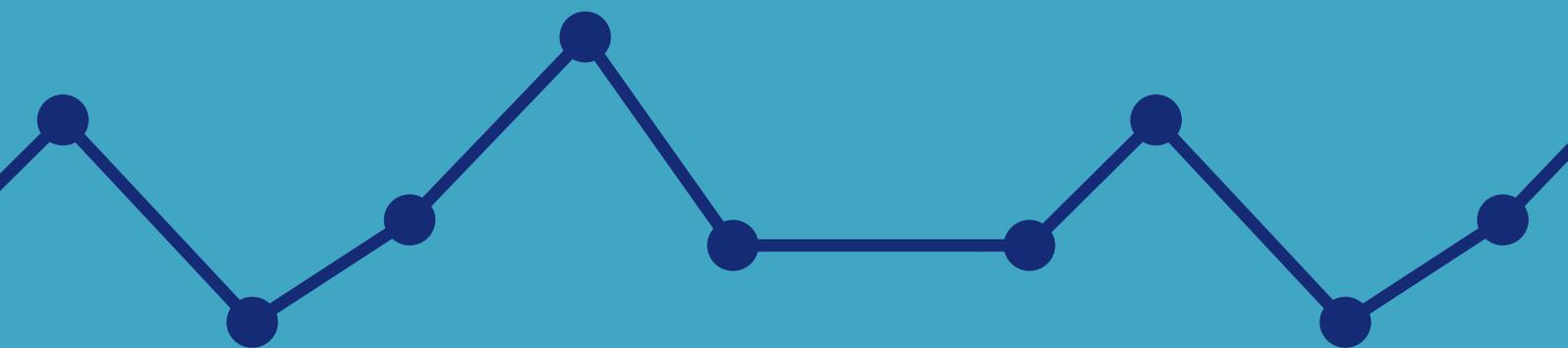
- **Videos** - Facebook hates links to Youtube, so do not share a direct link to a Youtube video for any reason. To promote your Youtube channel and share the new videos being uploaded on your channel, upload a shorter clip from the video directly onto the Facebook platform and insert the link to the full Youtube video in the description. Optimal length of Facebook videos is 1 minute 30 seconds, with some breathing room of about one minute either way. However, with the exception of direct Youtube links, Facebook is trying very hard to valorise videos, so do share them on Facebook if you have any because they perform very well. Be sure to add subtitles for your videos, so people can view them even without turning on the sound.

- **Events** - are a great way to improve reach, do create events if you are organising any sort of activity. Make sure you fill in all the fields in the event creation, from place, time, and description of what is going to happen in the event. A clean, attractive cover photo is also extremely important, as is a short and interesting title. They are the first impact followers will have with the event, so they need to be perfect. Make sure to re-share your own event and post it in related groups so that it reaches more people.

- **Images** - Facebook likes photos and images, so again, this is a good sort of content to post. Be careful, though: followers do not really interact much with photos of random strangers at an event you have organised. Also, Facebook tends to penalise photos with too much text in them, such as screenshots of tweets. Infographics, maps, and short and clean photos promoting your events can be great to accompany a link in the description, and they are some of the contents Facebook users interact with the most.



- **News, articles, and links** - lately, Facebook has been penalising pages which simply share links from other pages. There are two ways around this: you can either follow the advice above and share an image related to the article/link and then the direct link in the description, or you can forego sharing content coming from other pages in favour of your own content.

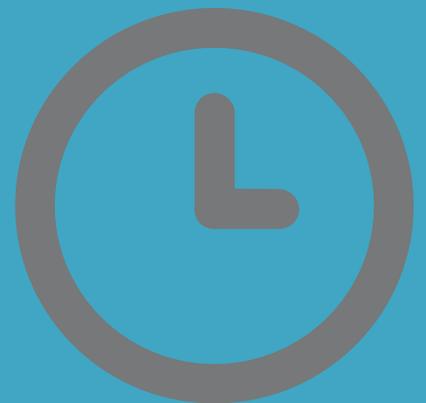


# Best time and days to post

For every network, there are different times and days when users are most active, and hence when it is best to post. Here is the current list for Facebook:

- **Best days:** Saturday and Sunday have 32% more engagement than other days, and Thursday/Friday have 18% more engagement. On Friday, post funny or upbeat content for maximum engagement: the „happiness index“ of people on this day is higher than other days.

- **Best times:** 9AM, 1PM, and 3PM. 1PM will get you the most shares, while 3PM will get you the most clicks. Post a few minutes before the exact o'clock to beat the rush of other pages scheduling at the same time and flooding people's timelines (e.g. post at 14:57, not 15:00).



**N.B.** this varies often due to changes in the algorithm, but you can easily look into the „insight“ section in Facebook pages and it will show you when followers of your particular page are most active.

## Tips and best practices

- Make sure your contact information and description of the page are up-to-date, clear, and brief. Nobody wants to read seven paragraphs in order to find out what a Facebook page is about.

- Interact with your followers. Reply to comments, answer private messages swiftly and comprehensively, comment on other pages through your own page account, etc.

- Short, emotional descriptions and headlines get more shares and clickthroughs. Don't be afraid to clickbait.
- If you have had events where speakers have participated to, tag their profile/page in the the photos of the event. Be sure to thank them for their presence and for their intervention.



# 3. Twitter

## Best content to post

- Tweets with images have an 18% higher clickthrough rate than tweets without a visual component. And tweets with GIFs/animated images get over 160% more engagement than those with images. Make of it what you will.
- Half the people on Twitter post or re-share humorous and entertaining content.
- Conduct polls and surveys to engage with your followers, interactive content always goes well.
- Re-share posts by people or pages which are relevant for your goals, don't just post your own content.
- Twitter doesn't really penalise content like Facebook does. Events, news, text, anything goes according to its algorithm. However, users mostly interact with humorous content. If you don't have any funny description to add to a tweet, use questions or short and impactful descriptions to improve engagement.



## Best time and days to post

The Twitter algorithm changes significantly less than Facebook, so these indications should be more stable and less likely to change over time.

- **Best days:** Wednesday is the best day overall to post, but business-to-consumer interactions also perform well over the weekends, with a 17% boost in engagement.

- **Best times:** 12PM, 3PM, and between 5-7PM. Twitter users are 180% more likely to use Twitter during their commute to work and during their work/school breaks, so keep that in mind.

**N.B.** Twitter doesn't have an „insight“ section, unlike Facebook, but you can use Twitter Analytics or the free version of Followerwonk to analyse the best time to post based on when your followers are most active.

## Tips and best practices

- The average suggested amount of tweets per day is around 15.

- That amount of tweets requires a lot of time, and it's the reason why big organisations have people or even entire teams just dedicated to managing their Twitter account. What you can do to save time is schedule your posts in advance all at once, there are many online tools which will allow you to do this.

- Hashtags double the amount of engagement. That's right, you can get 50% more traffic on your Twitter account just by using hashtags. The suggested amount of hashtags for posts is 2-3: one should be a popular/trending hashtag and one should be a custom one.

- Follow accounts you want to attract the attention of. Following them will send them a notification which may lead to them checking out your Twitter account.



# 4. Instagram

## Best content to post

- Instagram is big on aesthetics, so use that to your advantage. Use photos of food, cities and landscapes as fillers for slow news day. Make them relevant to your project by making them about places where you have presence on the territory or partners. This has the added advantage of also allowing you to promote your own website/other social media content.
- Instagram stories are important for engagement, so use them.
- Photos of events and of your activities also work great, provided they are good quality. Quality is the most important consideration.
- Like for Facebook, infographics and short videos also work well,.

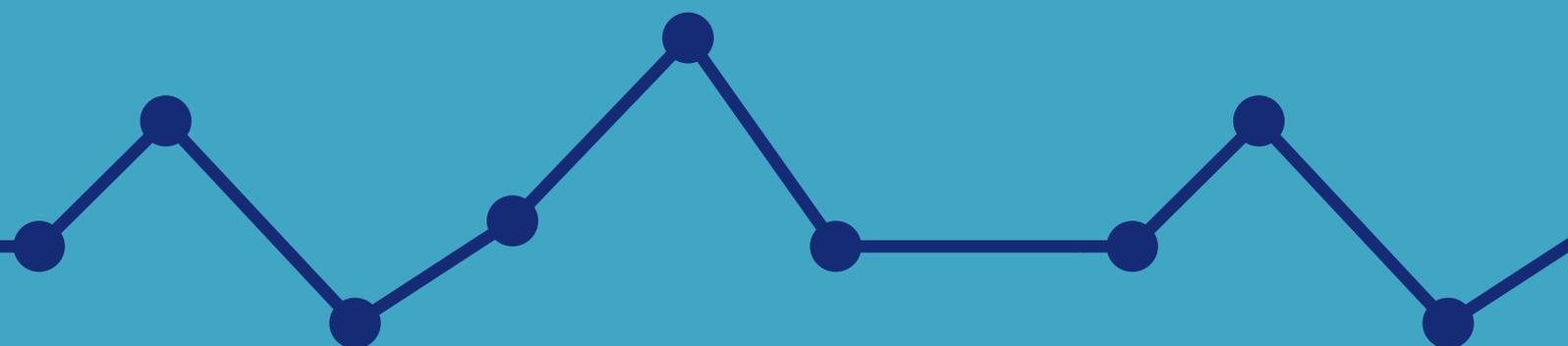
## Best time and days to post

- **Best days:** Monday and Thursday are the best days. Sunday has lower than average engagement.
- **Best times:** 2AM (yes, two in the morning), 8-9AM, 5PM. Avoid posting between 3-4PM. If posting videos, the 9PM slot gets 34% more interactions.

**N.B.** Post content more during off-work hours than during work hours, except for the peak times specified above.

# Tips and best practices

- Major brands share content 1.5 times per day, on average. 1-2 posts per day are more than enough.
- Like for Twitter, hashtags are extremely important also on Instagram. Market research suggests that the perfect amount of hashtags is between 10 and 15. Yes, that sounds like a lot, but hashtags are used on Instagram to categorise and to allow people to find similarly-themed content, so more hashtags equal more opportunities for people to find your content.
- However, make sure the hashtags fit the context and don't get spammy.
- Connect your Instagram page to your Facebook page and re-share your Instagram posts on Facebook. The Facebook feed likes that. In general, get in the habit of crossposting content across different platforms.
- Follow and like the contents of similarly-themed Instagram accounts.
- Interact with your followers and respond to comments promptly.
- Make sure that you like, comment, and in general interact with your own content. As above for Facebook, an Instagram account with comments and visible interactions seems more approachable.

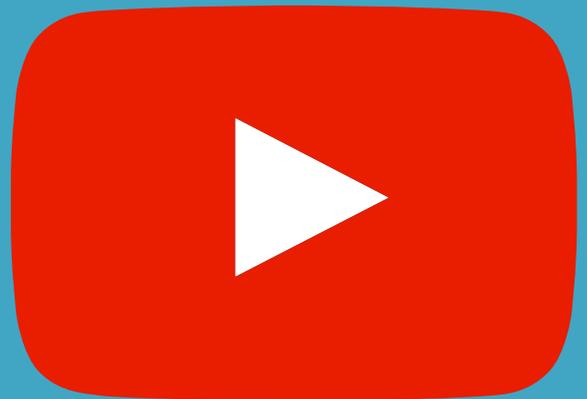


# 5. Youtube

## Best content to post

- Focus on quality, not quantity. Make sure you use a good camera and an appealing thumbnail. Good colour, text over images, and the presence of human faces are all elements which characterise an attractive thumbnail with a good click-through rate. Again, Canva is a good tool for this, it has an option to create Youtube thumbnails . And it is extremely easy to use.

- Favour short videos. The average length of Youtube videos is 4 and a half minutes, and the average attention span of users is even lower. Less than 60% of viewers will watch a full 4-minute video, while 75% of viewers will sit through a full 2-minute video.



- Use generic titles which are more likely to pop up in users' researches on other topics. For example, let's say you are uploading a video on an exchange between Mostar and Subotica. The first trick is not to use the names of the specific cities: people are more likely to search for „Serbia“ than they are for „Subotica“. Equally, don't use names of people. Something along the lines of „Adventures in Bosnia: Mostar“ or „Exploring Bosnia“ are more likely to gain the attention of people looking for information on the country than „Subotica-Mostar Exchange“ is.

# Best time and days to post

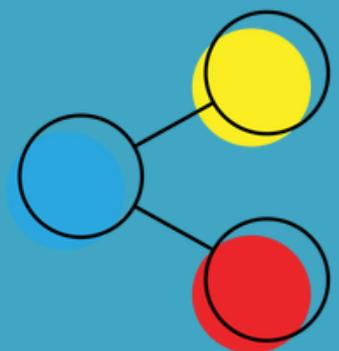
- **Best days:** Thursday afternoon through to Sunday afternoon.
- **Best times:** 2PM-4PM if you are posting on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. 12PM-3PM if you are posting on Thursday or Friday. 9AM-11AM if you are posting in the weekends or on holidays.

**N.B.** Daily online viewership peaks in the evening, when people have gotten home from work/school. Make sure to post your video slightly before that, to ensure that Youtube has enough time to index it and that it gets in subscribers' feed before the peak viewing time begins.

## Tips and best practices

- Youtube requires significantly less posting than other social media platforms. However, that doesn't exempt you from keeping a constant schedule. Make your videos with a fortnightly or monthly cadence, for example.

- Share your videos on all social media platforms you utilise, but remember to personalise it based on the platform you are sharing it on.



- The Youtube audience tends to be very responsive. Don't be afraid to engage with people in the comments' section.

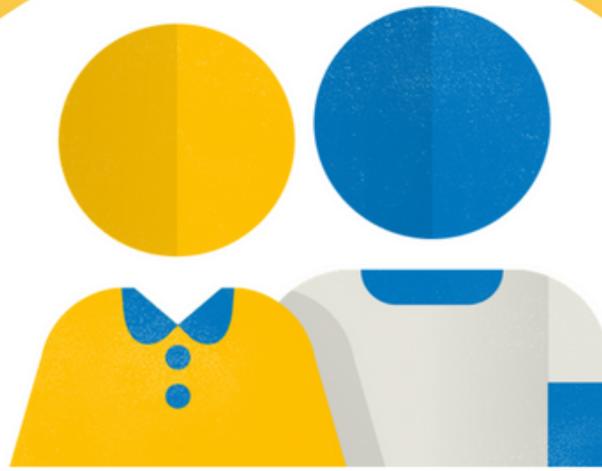
- Reach out to other Youtube channels who post similar content and try and organise collaborations, or just cross-account sharing of videos if in-person collaborations are impossible.

# 6. Valorising website contents

So you have a website and you would like to increase traffic to it. Ensuring visibility to websites can get quite complicated, especially because it won't just pop up in your Google searches unless you specifically search for it. And sometimes, even when you do search for it directly, it may be several results down the line on Google. Here are a few tips to promote content, especially long-form written publications, on social media in order to improve its reach:

- People don't like to read long articles unless they are about something that piques their interest. This is especially true for younger people, who are more used to digesting bite-sized, flash news thanks to the internet.
- Hook the reader in with the right written description. Asking „did you know?“ trivia questions is always a good strategy, adding the link to the complete publication after.
- Blog posts and easy-reads are an excellent way to get people on your website, and from there looking into the rest of the material you have available on it.
- Visuals are the most helpful tool to grab people's attention. A short, clean, easy to understand infographic which immediately makes people understand what is the topic of the publication is the best way to do so. On the following pages are two examples based on the latest publication of the Balkan regional platform.

1.



YOUNG PEOPLE IN KOSOVO ARE  
**19.3%**  
OF THE TOTAL POPULATION

# 2.

## FYROM'S NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY: KEY AREAS



PARTICIPATION



INFORMATION



LOCAL  
WORK



EDUCATION



EMPLOYMENT  
SUPPORT



CULTURE



SPORTS



HEALTH



QUALITY OF  
LIFE

**Produced by Eleonora Di Franco in the  
framework of the EVS project "IT-RS: Italian  
volunteERS promote active participation of  
disadvantaged youth"**