

Contractors Guide to Using Social Media

Business Development Best Practices Series



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Building brand awareness on social media may seem like a daunting task, however, let me assure you it is worth your time. Social media is a vehicle to share your story, build brand awareness, and engage with your community, clients and employees. However, before you start posting, allow us to provide a foundation to integrate these efforts into your marketing strategy.

Every successful social media campaign begins with a strategy that integrates into the overall marketing plan. Social media offers a way to connect; and while all platforms perform a similar job, each one is different and offers unique features that can help you achieve your objectives.

For the construction industry, you will most likely gravitate to one or more of the following four platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. Here are brief user profiles for each:

1 Facebook

Users tend to be more female than male, with an average age range of 18 to 49. Although the largest platform based on users, Facebook content tends to be broad and very general. Facebook has what is called stories, which for contractors presents opportunities to showcase a new project, employee milestone, or industry issue that highlights your expertise. Facebook business pages can be utilized for promoting your projects, community outreach and other business culture items. This platform leans heavily toward community and social interaction. Content that performs better on Facebook is usually about people (employee highlights, volunteerism, community interaction, employment opportunities, etc.) and projects of visual interest.

2 LinkedIn

With LinkedIn, users are equally male and female with an average age range of 30 to 49. LinkedIn is the business world's social media platform. It is designed for professional engagement and sharing industry news, networking and information. Ideal topics for LinkedIn include company news, industry point-of-views, employment opportunities, project announcements, and business/employee achievements. A LinkedIn business page provides opportunities to showcase companywide industry expertise through articles, videos and links to association sites or event details.

3 Twitter

Users on Twitter are equally male and female and typically tend to be between 18 and 29. Twitter is a news highlights platform. With a limit of 280 characters, bite-size morsels of your story are ideal for quick newsfeed skims. Twitter tends to sit in between Facebook and LinkedIn when it comes to social engagement versus business engagement. Topics that tend to perform well on Twitter include business news announcements and expert commentary to published articles.

4 Instagram

Instagram users are typically more female than male, with an average age range of 18 to 29. Instagram is a visual platform, and similar to Facebook, also offers stories. Given the nature of this platform, images are key and stories such as project profiles, employee safety PSAs, or employee involvement will perform the best. Instagram also has IGTV which is very similar to YouTube. Through IGTV your company could post jobsite time lapse video, safety program videos or clips from training sessions.

We recommend using Facebook for culture related posts; LinkedIn to establish and strengthen industry expertise; Twitter for a social media repository; and Instagram for visual support.

Now that you have a solid understanding of these four social media platforms, the next step to building a solid strategy is to answer a few key questions:

- What do I want my target audience to know?
- Which platform(s) should I use to connect with my target audience?
- What post types work best on this platform (images, video, text)?
- How is my story unique to each platform?

With answers in hand, a strategy will soon take shape. Note, there are no limitations on how many platforms you engage in, however we strongly advise you initially focus on one or two platforms and concentrate on quality posts versus quantity. How often should you post on each platform will be determined by your target audience. Regardless of the frequency, consistency is the key to success on any social media platform.

As mentioned earlier, social media is a tool that is part of a broader, integrated campaign. People typically do not shop for construction services on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn. That said, they will most likely take to social media for reviews and to learn more about your previous experience. Most potential customers conduct research prior to your knowledge, and this research includes multiple touch points, so a consistent message is critical.

Social media is a major contender for your marketing dollars and having a presence in some way can be both valuable and beneficial to your company. How you use social media, and with what frequency, depends on your objectives, resources and budget. Whether you have an established following or are just getting started, use this information to develop and execute your social media marketing strategy. Social media can help put you ahead of your competitors and grow your audience in a way that adds value to them and our industry as a whole.

Demographic data provided by Pew Internet - pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/

About the Authors: As founder and president of Atlas Marketing, **Chris Martin** oversees the variety of campaigns that the company delivers. Throughout his twenty-five-year career, he has told stories for American icons and national heroes; and directed campaigns for a variety of national and international corporations.

As the social media manager for Atlas Marketing, **Beth Henry** brings decades of data analysis to her clients. Tying this analysis with a sound approach to telling clients' stories and you know why she has been called a savior and one of the easiest people I've ever worked with by her clients.



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