



Social Media for business is a three-legged stool:

- 1) Posting
- 2) Growth
- 3) Engagement

1) Posting

What you post should be clear, concise, and purposeful. Every character of text in the caption of your post should be working for you. Think “post with a purpose.”

Anatomy of a Perfect Post:

Join us **6/21 at 10am** for our #TechTuesday webinar, “Social Media for Small Business” with Melissa St. John from @theDofM [tag]. You will leave with actionable steps that you can take to improve your social media marketing! Register at <https://shoplocalraleigh.org/events/?etype=upcoming>
#shoplocalraleigh #webinar #raleighbiz

Here are the highlights of this “Perfect Post”:

- The specific day, date, and time. Just saying “tomorrow” isn’t enough because this post will live on after the event is over.
- The location including address if it’s in-person. In this example I’ve used the main events URL, not the specific event URL, so that in the future it will still take folks to relevant events.
- Tagging whomever is mentioned on each platform so that they will receive a notification that you’ve mentioned them and can engage.
- Using both general and brand-specific / geo-specific hashtags.
- What’s in it for them? Call to action / sense of urgency (giveaways, raffle, food, sale, great info, etc).

I can read this post in less than 15 seconds, and that's about as long as a post should be. Sometimes you will put content in the image itself, but be warned: social media algorithms don't like that. We'll talk about the algorithms more in depth during training.

2) Growth

Social media strategy needs to include a growth plan. The growth plan answers the question “how will I get this post in front of new people with the hope they'll follow me?”

Hashtags are a very misunderstood tool for social media growth. They fall into these main categories (although there are more and we can delve into those):

Brand-specific hashtags, like #shoplocalraleigh. Using this hashtag regularly will tie your content together into a feed about “Shop Local Raleigh” (click on the hashtag on any platform to see what I mean). It ALSO allows your employees, members, and friends to share on their platforms and tie THEIR content to YOUR feed. Brand hashtags organize brand-specific content together, regardless of who posted it.

Topic-specific hashtags, like #webinar This hashtag will put your content into a feed with other webinar posts so that people interested in webinars will see it—but they could be anywhere in the world. So using topic-specific hashtags may help to get your numbers up, but they may not be Raleigh eyeballs. Moderately useful, but not awesome.

Geo-specific hashtags, like #raleighbiz. Put together a list of these for your social media manager, or ask them to help you develop a list. Don't use the same ones all the time. Investigate what hashtags your competitors use and use those. Poach whatever geo-specific hashtags make sense with the post you are sharing. Change them up with every post.

Your social media growth can also be jump-started with paid ads on any platform. For as little as \$20/month you may touch hundreds, even thousands, of potential customers in your geographic footprint. The platforms all reward advertisers for obvious reasons, so I generally encourage some spending on FB and Instagram ads.

There is also something called a follow/unfollow strategy which may be considered controversial but, in my experience, simply works—especially for Twitter and somewhat for Instagram. We will delve into this strategy during training.

3) Engagement

This leg of the stool is the most time-consuming and is best done by internal staff or a carefully trained social media manager. Why? Because it requires that you put your actual voice out there. It's time-consuming and therefore not often done or done well, so a proper engagement strategy presents you with a real opportunity to shine.

Start by logging into each platform as your business page (not as yourself). Follow other businesses that are relevant but not competitive with you (clients, members, vendors). Then, every day or at least every week you need to read your PAGE feed and like OTHER PEOPLE'S posts, comment on them, share them. Remember this is not your personal feed. This is your business's feed. When your business likes other people's posts, they receive a notification and that keeps your business in their minds.

If you join relevant Groups on FB and LI, and comment on posts, you are getting your business logo out in front of the audience you want to reach—without waiting for them to come to you. I call this “working the room” and it's the most effective way to get social media engagement.

Find pages and groups where your customers are talking, and get into the conversation in a helpful, non-salesy way. If anyone tags you in a post, thank them and SHARE it. Your social media manager should do this for you. Encourage and reward user-generated content. Always respond to any comments or reviews on your platforms. Keep the “social” in social media!

In-real-life (IRL) engagement: You have stuff going on! Show the world! One of the fundamental principles of marketing is “nothing attracts a crowd like a crowd”—ask people at your events if you can photograph them and send those pics to your social media manager! Share every post to your Story on Facebook and Instagram. Ask members/clients if you can share their posts to your Story, ask if they will do the same for you.

These are the three fundamental things that your social media manager can help you with, but you need to be “thinking socially” all the time, and grabbing media whenever the opportunity arises. Note anyone or any place that can be mentioned with the media you share. Are you at a Health Fair? Who are you with? Where are you? What are you doing and why? Check in, tag, mention. These questions will help your social media manager to know how to maximize the impact of your post.