

Peacock Arts Trail 2021

An Introduction to Social Media for Beginners

This document is intended to give you some background and insights into social media and how it could work for your business. For practical steps on setting up and using an Instagram account, please see our notes 'A Practical Guide to Using Instagram'.

Intro - Why Use Social Media?

“Instagram has 3.6 billion users, with a projected 4.41 billion on the app by 2025

“93% people make buying decisions through social media, including via recommendations and referrals

Social media gives you the opportunity to communicate with so many people, practically for free, at the click of a button. You have the same opportunities as larger corporates as all users have the same functions and tools. This is a new era for marketing as previously businesses would have required a much greater marketing budget.

It may sometimes feel overwhelming, but there is great potential and opportunity. You don't have to like using social media personally, but it's important to understand the benefits from a business perspective. And ultimately you are able to control what you see and turn off certain types of posts which allows you to focus on your business.

The key to starting out is to pick one 'channel' that works for you. You don't have to use every social media channel to have success.

Here's a short video with some interesting stats on our digital age -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6k_G_h41ZaQ

Which Social Media Channel Should I Use?

Choosing the right platform for you will depend on you, your business and your work.

Audiences on each channel are very different. It is tempting to be on all channels and post the same content to them all, but you will find that audiences want to see different content on different channels. You will naturally find one that works best for you, where you get the most engagement.

If you do use more than one social media channel, it's ok to use same images and keep the same look and feel, but you will want to consider varying what you say across channels depending on the audience.

Ask yourself what are you trying to do: Who is your target audience and where do they hang out? Are you looking to increase followers or find customers?

The options -

- Instagram – more about visual, photography, video. Primarily used by women, mid 20's – late 30's.
- Facebook – the 'gateway' social media channel; everybody knows about. Once you get used to FB then you can try another channel. Ages 36-44 are still most active but 65+ is growing.

- Twitter – is the place for news, media and celebrity (and customer complaints!) It takes a lot of time - 1 tweet a day is not enough. To build up an audience and get found you need to be tweeting 4-6 a day, a few times a week.
- Pinterest – great for visuals and very well used for research. Doesn't have the conversation element of other channels.
- Tik Tok – all about short videos. Primarily used by youngsters.
- Clubhouse – is a new audio only channel – a bit like mini podcasts/pop-up seminars.
- Snapchat – short videos and stills. Posts are publicly viewed but content posted on here disappears after 24 hours. Primary users are the younger millennial. Instagram and Facebook now have 'Stories' which is their version of snapchat.
- LinkedIn – more business focussed. Primary users are male, 40's+, highly affluent.

Common Myths

1. You should join every network – no, just pick one.
2. It takes too much time - it can be time consuming, so it's best to commit to what you can reasonably achieve. If that's one post a week then that's fine.

It's about being consistent – use your calendar to remind you to post and check to see what you've got coming up, e.g. share a post about an event you're attending. There are scheduling apps, e.g. Later for Instagram. You could spend one afternoon scheduling 2 or 3 posts for that week.

If you post too much to begin with there's a risk you will lose enthusiasm or just end up posting sporadically.

3. It's only for young people – no, see stats above.
4. You have to reply instantly – you do need to respond but it doesn't have to be instant (unless the comment is time sensitive). It's actually better to spread out replies as this tells Instagram/FB, etc that your post is still interesting and relevant and so it will be boosted.

If it helps, you can set your own boundaries, e.g. add a note to your bio to say something like "This account is managed 9-2, Mon-Wed".

5. Social media doesn't impact the bottom line – social media isn't your entire marketing strategy, but it's an important element within it. Marketing takes time.
6. Asking questions gets people talking – yes, BUT the questions must be relevant! Or you must have built a really good relationship with your audience as they have to feel like they know you to respond.

Social Media isn't...

1. ...a short-term strategy -
If you start today, it will most likely take longer than 6 months to start to see real results. It should therefore be used as part of a wider marketing strategy.

Social media is best used for brand awareness - talk about your business/service/your art. By creating interesting and varied content, more people will talk about you and share your message/pictures. Once people start sharing your work, they're doing your marketing for you and the effects can snowball.
2. ...a one size fits all solution –
Not every channel will work for everybody or every business. You will need good visuals for Instagram and FB for them to work for you, whereas Twitter and LinkedIn are more about business-to-business. Are you looking to connect with individual customers or galleries?
3. ...the only marketing channel you should use –
You should be using other marketing tactics as well, e.g. have a website, send a regular newsletter, attend events or offline marketing such as leaflets and direct mail.
4. ...going to go away -
It's here to stay! Committing to understanding will help your business in the long term.

Social Media is...

1. ...word of mouth on steroids!
You can tell lots of people what you're doing very quickly and with exponential reach.
2. ...value for money!
Social media costs you time but not money. It is quicker and cheaper in both time and money to share one message in 10 minutes which could reach 200 people rather than design, print and hand out a flyer to 200 people.
3. ...fun, creative and informal!
Think how you'd talk to a friend. No Dear, Kind Regards. Informal – not long paragraphs.
4. ...an opportunity we've never had before!

Hashtags

Hashtags help people find you and is how Instagram powers its search tools.

An example of a hashtag is #peacockartstrail2021

To add a hashtag to a post, you can type it either in the description of your post, or in a comment on your post. Tip: if you put your hashtags in the first comment on your post, it counts as 'engagement' on your post and so makes your post more likely to be seen.

When you start typing with a # symbol, Instagram will automatically give you some suggestions for hashtags that other use with those words in. You can also see how many times that hashtag has been used. This helps you to find hashtags that are relevant for your business. You should aim to use

hashtags that have been used at least a couple of hundred times, but not millions as then it is too broad and you are unlikely to be seen.

Over time you can build up a bank of hashtags that work for you. Save these in a note on your phone or on your computer. You can then copy and paste hashtags into your posts. BUT, although you can use the same hashtags multiple times, don't be tempted to copy and paste the exact same set of hashtags onto every single post. Instagram will see this as spam and blacklist you, i.e. stop showing your posts to other people.

Measuring Success

Success on social media is measured by engagement, i.e. people liking, commenting and sharing your content.

When users engage with your post, it tells the site that people like what you have to say and so they will share it out to more people.

If people aren't engaging then you need to change what you're doing. This might be the visual element, or the words or the hashtags. You will have to keep experimenting to see what works for you.

Instagram Stories

Once you have the hang of the basics of Instagram, you can start to use Stories which adds another layer to your account.

Whereas the posts on your 'grid' are more like your shop front/gallery, Stories are more personal. These can be casual, throw away images that show behind the scenes of your business, or a very short video of a process.

More and more people are using Stories instead of scrolling down the newsfeed so it is beneficial for a business account to add to their story.

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#peacockartstrail2021

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