



Small Business Tips from the Experts

Top 10 Tips on Building an Engaged
Audience with Social Media

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Ricky Forbes

Ricky Forbes, host of international TV show Tornado Hunters, has learned first hand how to build business using social media. As the owner of one of Western Canada's leading resources for social media training & management, Blue Moose Media, Ricky will share the same tips that have brought him 450,000 followers personally.

1. Choose the right platform

With thousands of platforms to choose from, the biggest question with social media is where should you focus your efforts? It would be great to be able to be on all of the platforms, but it's next to impossible to be effective with limited resources; time and financial. We recommend that you first determine your primary and secondary audiences, and nail down the platforms that those audiences are most likely to be on. When choosing social platforms, the best strategy is to pick 1 to 2 to focus your efforts on and do really well with those. In the future, once you have a handle on those platforms, then consider adding a third.

2. Dial in your storefront

We call your social media profile your storefront, as this is often the first impression someone has of your business and possibly the only impression, so you want to make sure it is dialed. Comb through every feature on your storefront, from your profile picture, to the about section, and so on, filling in every detail that is applicable. This will help inform any potential leads with application information about your business. Further, following the rules of the social platforms you use will work in your favour by extending your reach on every platform.

3. Tell your full brand story using content pillars

The biggest mistake we see on social media is businesses not delivering value to their audience. It is easy to get stuck just pitching your product and/or service, but you want to make sure you're telling the full brand story of your business. By telling the full brand story, you deliver value to your audience and begin to develop a deeper relationship. We do this by using content pillars. Every business will have slightly different pillars, but typically, we recommend including content about the work your company is doing in the community, positioning your company as an industry expert, humanizing your company and finally, once you have delivered that value, then pitch your product and/or service.

4. Use a content calendar and schedule posts

Take the stress out of social media and make sure you are telling your full brand story by using a content calendar. A content calendar gives you a bird's eye view on how content will roll out over the next month, quarter, etc. and allows you to properly schedule your content pillars, any promotions, etc. Once the content calendar is created and approved, develop the posts, schedule the posts and voila. We typically try to plan a quarter at a time and drop in posts here and there as they come up. For scheduling, you have a number of options in content schedulers for nearly all platforms; our current favourite is Hootsuite.

5. Post at optimal times

You can find a million different articles telling you the best time and days to post, and they all seem to say something different. The best approach is to look at your own analytics with the social platform you are on, see how your audience is behaving and post according to that. Another option is trial and error, test different times and days, and measure engagement. All that said, our favourite time to post is anywhere from Monday - Friday at 11:30am.

6. Capture your audience with great imagery

You can have the greatest content in the world, but without engaging imagery, it can be very difficult to get your audience to stop for your post. You need great imagery that is sharp, tells a story, grabs your attention and if you can throw a smiling face in it, it's all that much better.

7. Deliver value and get results with great copy

This is where you get to set yourself apart from the pack. Many people can take decent photos, but few put the effort into crafting well-written content. Take the time to write content, schedule it, and revisit it to re-write that content. Remember to keep your copy concise, informative and entertaining. When the opportunity arises, throw in a call to action, a question, an emoji, a hashtag, anything to add flavour to your post.

8. Grow your online audience

We all want more quality followers. You need to approach this objective from a number of different angles. Put your social media handles on your business cards, your vehicle, your website, anywhere and everywhere you get a chance to promote your business. Invite your friends to engage with your page and don't be shy about it. Engage with your community; respond to any comments, any reviews, any messages—you need to engage with these people to foster your online community. Run contests with the goal of gaining new followers, and make sure to use a prize that is relevant to your business. And last, but not least, use brand ambassadors and/or champion customers to post about your business, driving traffic to your social media pages.

9. Utilize paid promotions and advertising

Every social media platform is a business, and a large portion of their revenue comes from advertising. They utilize algorithms to throttle your reach; therefore, it takes money to reach the audience you are after. That said, it is still by far the most cost-effective and measurable advertising vehicle out there. We recommend a minimum budget of \$100 per month on social media; above that, you will see that the more you pay, the better the results. This ad budget will go towards boosting posts, promoting the profile page, and potentially targeted ads if necessary. Once you get more comfortable with paid ads, you can get into really cool concepts like remarketing, where you can track down people who have visited your website and serve them ads bringing them further down the sales funnel.

10. Understand your ROI with social media

Whether to measure your own work or to show others the value in your efforts, you need to understand the different metrics to determine success. Looking at KPIs such as audience size, impressions, engagements, and comments are great, and these need to be growing, but we also want to look at website traffic, any increase in business leads and what that is attributed to, etc. You'll want to note where you are at now to create a benchmark, and look at past metrics to determine reasonable goals for going forward.

Good luck on your social media endeavours! If you have any questions please drop by www.BlueMooseMedia.com and get in touch.

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