

ACTIONABLE TIPS FOR CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

# Turning marketing in to leads





## **OVERVIEW**

Why have a social media strategy?

Finding your niche

Picking your platforms

Creating content

Automation tools

How to drive engagement

Capturing leads

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

# Why have a social media strategy?

The word “social” is often ignored when people think about marketing, but engagement and real connection with people online is usually much more effective than posting something and leaving the site. In this guide, we are focusing on how to speak to real people through social media so clients will find you instead of you spending countless hours chasing leads. This is all about setting up a simple but effective process so you can focus more time on creative and business development.

People who interact with you on social media are most likely not ready to buy from you just yet. One of the most effective ways to get work from social media is to drive traffic to your site where you can then provide more in depth and tailored information that speaks directly to their needs. The purpose of your social media is therefore to increase awareness, interact with potential clients and generate quality traffic. When we say quality, we mean people who visit your site because they are interested in the product or service you offer. Once they arrive at your site, you need to create an easy path for them to take the action you are looking for.

**People interacting with you on social media are not ready to buy yet. That is why you need a strategy to get them from fans to clients.**

**IT'S STRATEGY TIME!**



# Benefits of a strong social media strategy

Besides getting more clients, there are a number of other benefits to having a strong social media strategy. Here are a few examples:

## **Increase credibility:**

Having a strong social media following with a lot of engagement can help communicate credibility to both clients and potential collaborators. To clients, seeing that you have a strong social media account could help them see the value of good design and creativity. For collaborators, you having a big audience means you can provide more value if you team up or cross promote.

## **Use your influence as a selling point to win clients:**

Marketing that feels organic is almost always a selling point to brands. If you post work you create as part of your portfolio, this can be a big selling point to brands since they will get exposure right from the start. You can choose to offer this as part of your service or you can choose to go the influencer route and charge for posting about the brand, the possibilities are yours!

## **Learn more about your audience:**

Nothing is more helpful when you try to get more clients than listening directly to their wants and frustrations. In a way, your social media account can be the perfect place to ask people questions and have a low stakes discussion. This will not only increase your engagement but it will give you valuable information that you can remember when you speak to potential clients in the future.

## **Build a passive income stream:**

If you would like to offer a product, downloadable guide or even a video course, driving the right type of traffic to your site is a great use of social media. If you find that most people following and interacting with you are other creatives, perhaps consider offering something directly to them. For some great inspiration check out [SpruceRd.](#) and [Nesha Woolery.](#)

Your strategy should be tailored to your business so we will now look at how you can create a custom strategy that works for you.

# Finding your niche

## WHERE TO START?

In order to appeal to people who visit your social media and website, you need to learn more about them. The easiest way to do this is to start by narrowing down the type of businesses and people who you would like to work with. This means you can focus on being great at a specific skill but it will also help potential customers feel confident that you have experience solving their problems.

## ASKING QUESTIONS:

Having a niche and a target audience is more or less the same thing. The goal is to find an intersection between the people and businesses that you want to work with and who can benefit from your services. If you have already worked with a few clients, you can start by looking here. Ask the following questions:

- What do you enjoy doing?
- What pays the bills?
- What was the feedback from the client?

Once you know this, you can start looking at potential competitors and see who they are targeting and where there is a gap. When we say gap, this does not have to mean that no agency or freelancer is focusing on this area but look for opportunities that are less saturated. To make this a little more clear, we will look at a case study of an agency "Clear & Bold" who are looking to define their audience. We will mention a few tools in this case study. You can find these and a lot of other ones in the tool section at the end.

## STEP BY STEP

To make everything a little less abstract, the next page has a step by step story so you can follow along for your own business. Even if you have tried some of these steps before, the market always changes so it is important to always stay informed.

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

### Google Keyword Planner

Find the right search terms for your area so you can reach the right people. Google will tell you how competitive a keyword is and how many search for it each month.

### Semrush

Semrush allows you to enter any website URL and see which keywords they rank for and what position in the Google search results they hold in any given country. You can also track your own website this way.

### BuzzSumo

This tool lets you find the most popular content and influencers in your area. You can use it to look at what content performs best for your competitors so it is a great place to start.

### Facebook Ad Manager

Even if you are not creating an ad, you can use Facebook's ad creator to find out the size of an audience and how easy/hard they are to reach.



# CLEAR & BOLD - FINDING YOUR NICHE

## STARTING POINT

Clear & Bold studio offers branding but feel unsure of who to target. After looking at the type of work they enjoy, they realise that they prefer to work with smaller companies where they can talk directly to the CEO. Most of their projects run more smoothly when they meet a client face to face so they would prefer to have local clients.

## FINDING AN OPPORTUNITY

They start by searching for a few key terms in Google to identify competitors in their area:

- "Branding Vancouver"
- "Brand agency Vancouver"
- "Brand strategy Vancouver"

This generates 30 results from companies that seem to offer a similar service. To find out more, they look at their tag lines and value propositions (how they explain the benefits of their service on their home page).

They realise that 18 of the agencies are focusing on bigger companies, 5 on startups and 5 target a specific niche like the Alcohol industry. The remaining 2 agencies appeal to companies that are in the growth phase. This appeals to Clear & Bold since they have had a good experience with clients like this before and their branding includes strategy that could help these companies as they grow.

## LEARN FROM YOUR COMPETITORS

To learn more about how these 2 agencies are targeting this type of business, they use online tools to see which keywords they rank for. They realise that the main keywords driving traffic to the sites are "branding for SME's", "brand strategy" and "logo design Vancouver".

Knowing this, they go to Google Keyword Planner and enter the keywords they found on the competitor sites. This shows that "branding for SME's" and "brand strategy" have a very low competition level and a high search volume while "logo design Vancouver" has a high competition level. They also get recommendations for similar terms and see that "brand identity Vancouver" is a great option. They can now use the keywords with a high search volume and low competition to drive traffic to their site and social media.



## LET'S RECAP

Clear & Bold now know that they want to target small growing businesses that have been up and running for a few years. This means they can start looking for other brands that already help these customers and how they use language and visuals to appeal to them. They can also look at their own following and see which type of content is currently attracting this group so they can focus in on what works.

## WHICH PLATFORM IS BEST FOR YOU?

# Picking your platforms

### WHY NOT USE EVERY PLATFORM?

A key step in setting up a successful social media is to choose the right platform. There are a few factors that play in to this. First of all, we want to make sure your customers will actually be on the platform. To find this out, you can look at marketing reports like this one from **Spreadfast**.

The second important thing to consider is if you actually would want to use this platform? The truth is, if you hate writing but love creating mockups or showing your process, Instagram is probably a better choice for your business than Twitter. This will make it feel easier for you to engage with your audience and stay consistent. And consistency might be the second most important factor after quality.

### COMPARING PLATFORMS:

Here are a few pros and cons of each platform so you can pick one that works for you:

#### INSTAGRAM

##### Pros:

- Instagram has great levels of engagement, 58 times higher than Facebook.
- Use of hashtags can help you target specific audiences.
- You can use up to 30 hashtags so your reach is wide.
- Popular Instagram posts have a relatively long life span (most liked rises to the top).

##### Cons:

- Since most popular rises to the top, small accounts need time to grow.
- There are a lot of bots and fake accounts that could give you a false sense of what works so do have a closer look at your followers when you do your research.
- You will likely get a lot of creatives following you but you can work on this with hashtag choices.

#### FACEBOOK

##### Pros:

- With **890 million users** it is the single largest audience
- Ability to add a lot of business information to your page
- Facebook offers a lot of analytical tools
- Easy to get started with promoted posts

##### Cons:

- Staying on top of reviews, comments and messages
- Getting followers can be difficult for B2B on Facebook
- Ever changing rules - Facebook update their algorithms very frequently which can make you see sudden changes in engagement.

#### LINKEDIN

##### Pros:

- Helps you get found by potential customers who are more ready to buy (actively looking)
- Helps you stay informed about your industry
- You can customise your business page
- Show your expertise with **LinkedIn Answers**
- Being a business platform means you can find qualified leads.

##### Cons:

- Quite a bit of upfront work to start seeing results
- A lot of spam from bots selling

#### PINTEREST

##### Pros:

- Each pin can link directly to your website
- A lot of content can be evergreen so it keeps driving traffic over time (**average 7 months lifetime**).
- Many people share and save pins which is great for getting discovered.

##### Cons:

- Taller images get more clicks so you will need to customise your mockups or portfolio pieces if you want to optimise for this. This is not to say that you can not have success with other dimensions.
- You might get a lot of traffic from other creatives rather than customers.

# Creating content

## USE BATCHING TO MAKE CREATION QUICK AND EASY

Even if you love designing, many creatives find that following a strict content schedule can feel stressful and like you have more deadlines all of a sudden. The best cure for this is to batch content creation. This means that instead of trying to come up with something to post every day you allocate a block of time to creating a bank of content on a regular schedule. Some creators prefer to take 2 full weeks and produce content for the next 3 months and some people prefer to have one day a week since it makes it easier to work on client projects at the same time. Find a strategy that works for you. The benefit of batch creation is that you can easily set up one template and create more content in less time since your focus is in the right mindset. Another benefit of planning ahead is that you can create more intentional feeds such as Instagram grids.

## WHAT CONTENT SHOULD YOU CREATE?

### 1 Start with your existing brand and followers

Take a look at your social media account and your past posts. Which ones performed the best and what feedback did you get? Make sure to separate different causes like the time you posted, the hashtags you used and the type of content. This can seem tricky most platforms have an analytics section you can use as a starting point.

### 2 Trends

When it comes to your vision and brand mission you do not have to change with trends but in order to appeal to your audience you need to understand what they care about in the moment. According to Adobe's head of trends, viewers in 2019 show a much bigger interest in brands that embrace diversity, natural and ethical production and a number of other characteristics. You can watch the full interview [here](#).

### 3 Make use of content you already have

Unused concepts, multiple shots from the same project and ideas that you never used, you can use it all as part of your social media content. And multiple times at that. Many people feel uneasy to post the same thing twice or to show more than a few pictures from the same project but social media moves really fast and most people will never see your content even if they follow you. This is especially true for platforms that have feeds, like Twitter and Facebook, where you can use reposting as an opportunity to test different images, copy and **time zones**. If it is helpful to someone, like a blog-post, then this is even more relevant since you are adding value.

The content you post goes beyond the visuals. Copy is a great opportunity to address your customers concerns directly and show expertise. If you post a portfolio piece, explain the thinking behind it and why you made the choices you did.

### 4 Consider the lifetime

You want all your content to feel intentional but some content like Instagram stories that is more temporary can focus more on emotion and behind the scenes imagery compared to your more curated feed. Also do not be afraid to delete posts. If you feel like some content in your feed no longer fits your brand, it is perfectly fine to delete it.

#### TIP:

Allocate a block of time to creating a bank of content on a regular schedule

# Automation tools

## WHY USE AUTOMATION?

If you batch your content creation, there is no reason for you to not do the same for your posting setup. Instead of spending time everyday and breaking up your work flow, you can use an automation tool that let's you schedule posts well in advance and even repost the same content at a certain interval. Now that is useful! Here are some of the options you can consider:



### Later

Primarily focused around Instagram, Later still lets you schedule posts for other platforms such as Facebook. Their new feature **Linkin.bio** is helpful to connect users with your landing pages.



### Meet Edgar

Meet Edgar has now introduced a function that automatically generates suggestions for Tweets and status updates from your blog posts and other content, super helpful!



### Buffer

Besides scheduling, Buffer also offer a range of analytics for your social posts.



### Hootsuite

Hootsuite let's you filter comments and interactions based on keywords. Perfect if you want to find out more about your audience and schedule posts all in one place.



### Sprout Social

Sprout Social is one of the largest scheduling tools and also offers services like Social Listening which looks at trends in social media.



# How to drive engagement

## ENGAGEMENT IS CONTAGIOUS:

The more engaging you can be, the better. You can use polls, ask questions and even run competitions to grow your following and build your brand as an engaged and available source of information. This will break down the barrier and make it feel less intimidating for potential customers to reach out.

Another great way to build organic engagement is to cross promote with another creative or business. This means their followers who already have a strong loyalty to their brand will feel excited about you and it is a great way for followers to discover new content.

## USING HASHTAGS:

Hashtags are great for helping you to promote your content but the way to use them differs a bit between platforms:

### Instagram:

Instagram allows you to use a maximum of 30 hashtags. There are a lot of studies that all give different advice on how many hashtags will give the best results. The main takeaway is that more hashtags will give you more exposure, the trick is to make sure the ones you use are relevant so the engagement can actually lead to potential customers and not auto follows by bots. To find relevant hashtags, look at your competitors, influencers and Instagram's suggestions. Since people can now follow hashtags, you can see related hashtags when you click the hashtag you are interested in.

More importantly than the number of hashtags is their size. When you start typing a hashtag, you will get suggestions from Instagram. Pay attention to these and try to look for medium sized hashtags as well as try out a few different sizes. If you only use very popular options, your image will quickly get buried by other content. If you use a very small one, chances are not many people will find you. I suggest testing options between 10,000 and 300,000 but every business is different so it can be helpful to use a tool like **Unionmetrics** that shows you statistics on which hashtags gave you the most engagement.

### Pinterest:

Pinterest allows up to 20 hashtags and the same rules generally apply to Pinterest as Instagram, keep them relevant and experiment with sizes. I suggest adding the hashtags after your description since users will not see the hashtags before they click on your pin and it helps make it feel less spammy.

### Facebook:

Hashtags for Facebook are a little less known and the guidelines put out by Facebook themselves have not been updated since 2016. It does seem that using hashtags can help increase engagement with some sources showing a **12.5% improvement** but they have to be used very intentionally for your business. A great use of hashtags is to help your readers find more of your posts on the same theme. For example, let's say that you share a design tip with your readers every week. You could easily add a branded hashtag so that when readers click it, they can see all your posts in the past. Another tip is to use trending hashtags like #internationaldoughnutday or a location tag like the city you operate in.

### LinkedIn:

Just like on any other platform, hashtags will make your content easier to find and you will most likely see more engagement from using them in the right way. Being a professional platform, you should consider limiting the number and type of hashtags you use on LinkedIn. They should be work appropriate and **Hootsuite** recommends using no more than 5 per post. You can add hashtags to articles and posts and a great trick is to capitalise the first letter in multi-word hashtags to make them easier to read.



## **Show your personality**

Traditional sales are working less and less, especially if your audience is Gen Z or Millennials. This means that people are looking for authenticity, to get to know you as a person and to find out what your company values are. How you achieve this is completely up to you. Some companies like to state their values in their descriptions, some like to post pictures from the office and some like to share their creative process. There is a clear difference between personal and private so make sure you use separate accounts for your business and private information and share things that are relevant to your audience.

**Customers  
look for  
authenticity  
Don't be  
scared to  
share**

# Capturing leads

## FULL CIRCLE:

In the beginning of this guide, we spoke about how people engaging with your social media are usually not quite ready to buy yet. This is where landing pages come in. Your home page is typically a great overview but a landing page can focus on the exact reason the visitor came to your site.

For example, let's say you would like for potential customers to book a free consultation with you. They see your content on social media and click the link in your description to find out more. This is where knowing as much as you can about your audience is helpful. At this stage they probably like your designs and want to find out more about your process and values. This means you can add answers to these specific questions on your landing page. For some this could mean linking to a blog post explaining your process and for other companies their portfolio page is ideal. If your audience is really engaged you can even consider sending them to your contact page.

## THE PURPOSE OF A LANDING PAGE:

Your landing page should have a clear call to action that allows you to connect with the visitor. Depending on your business, this can be signing up for a newsletter, booking an appointment, downloading a free guide or whatever you prefer.

Once someone has reached out or signed up for your newsletter, it is important that you follow up and offer something of value that does not seem to committal. Simply asking how you could help or offering a strategy session can be a great conversation started. Stay away from traditional sales language and just ask genuine questions.



## TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

### Tips for an effective landing page

This blog posts looks at what makes an effective landing page, how to structure your call to actions and shows you 23 different examples to inspire you.

### Crazy egg

This is a great resource that collects a lot of different information about the user behaviour on your site. All the information is anonymous but you can see where people click, how far down the scroll and even see recordings of users actions to find out where they get stuck.

### Olark

Olark is one of many chat apps that allows your visitors to ask questions when they get confused. The benefit of Olark is that it does not pop up unless the visitor has decided to expand the window.



## **FOUND THIS HELPFUL?**

We have a whole community of creatives and great tips for you to explore.

## **VISIT OUR BLOG**

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## **JOIN THE COMMUNITY**

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