

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD YOUR BLOG

*A free course written and provided
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Hi! I'm so excited that you're taking the time to read this course! Zack and I spent a lot of time creating something that we hope is helpful for everyone, with long-term strategies that will remain helpful for a long time.

This could be a 200+ page book, but we're trimming the fat and focusing on the truly important stuff that everyone should be doing.

In this course, we'll discuss Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, Pinterest, Google+ and YouTube.

After talking about the basics of each network, we'll share some tools that make managing social media easier. A lot of these tools are major parts of "courses" that other bloggers sell. We don't believe that sharing information about another company/service is information that should be sold.

While having successful social media accounts can be a business in its own regard, this course will cover using social media in conjunction with blogging. If you're getting paid opportunities on Instagram because of your 20,000 followers, more power to you, but let's talk about how to use that to build your blog!

One thing that we never, ever do is automate our social media activity. Social media is inherently well, social, and automating things is just the opposite.

Additionally, when you automate, you are presumably scheduling posts in advance. It could be devastating to your business if you happen to have a post scheduled right after a huge tragedy happens. Imagine

having a post about your crazy little two-year old who won't stop running all over the place titled "The Hurricane Couldn't Be Stopped" that went live on your social network just as a deadly hurricane was tearing apart the country. It's a far-fetched example, but I think you get the idea.

I hope this is sort of an "aha" moment for you if you do automate a lot of your social activity. I mean, it's so NOT social to schedule Tweets and Facebook updates and to not be around to respond to people who are interacting with those posts.

Scheduling on Pinterest is not as bad, but you should definitely check with Pinterest's terms of service before using a scheduling service there. I know of some pretty mainstream tools that were breaking the rules of Pinterest and resulted in people losing their accounts. We'll talk more about that later in this course.

It is completely understandable to schedule a post now and then if you're going to be out of town, or extremely busy, but we really do recommend doing it as little as possible.

Another major part of social media is using each platform with the right context. You wouldn't post a 140 character snippet of text on Facebook, and you wouldn't post a random thought on Instagram with a grainy picture of your backyard. Spend that extra 5 minutes getting the perfect photo for Instagram, but don't waste it if you're just using a picture for Twitter. Post a random thought or funny quote on Twitter, but leave that stuff off of your Facebook page and Instagram.

You should also avoid being a salesperson in every single status update you make. No one wants to follow someone who is simply using their account to post links to their blog or affiliate links to stores having sales. Offer something of value, connect with your followers and when the

time is right, hit them with those important links. The return will be much greater.

Your priority on social media should be interacting with people and forming relationships. Getting people to your blog will come naturally if you connect with people in a natural way.

Be interesting, be unique, add value, be friendly, be approachable. *Be social.*

Next page:
Instagram

Instagram

Let's start with one of the most important social networks for bloggers, especially those in the fashion and lifestyle niche.

Basics of Instagram:

- premium quality photos are crucial
- hashtag friendly
- viral potential low (ability to share others' photos is not offered)
- reach followers on a different level
- links not allowed in updates or comments

If you're not using Instagram, you should be. Instagram has absolutely blown up in the past 12-18 months and is basically a MUST for anyone with a blog.

This is a great network for building a more real relationship with people. You can share photos from your life that you might not post on your blog. There are also a LOT of brands on Instagram. Furthermore, even after over a year of major success for Instagram as a platform, not every brand is on it. The brands who are active on Instagram tend to be the more tech-savvy ones who have more of an interest in working with bloggers.

Tagging brand Instagram accounts in your posts can grab the attention of a company's PR team and could lead to some great opportunities. This practice has led to several opportunities with brands for us.

Hashtags on Instagram

Using hashtags on Instagram is a must. Instagram recently changed their app layout and discovery tab. Now, each hashtag has a popular section at the top with (usually) 9 “top” photos. Generally, these are the most liked ones, but not always.

Keeping this in mind, while it’s still a good idea to use general hashtags like #baby or #food, it’s now a much better idea to use what we call “mid-range hashtags”. Being in the top 9 out of 50,000 posts for the hashtag #italianfood will yield better results than getting lost in the mix of 50,000,000 posts for #food.

It’s a good idea to use a dozen or more hashtags in each post if you’re trying to build a following. Something we like to do is publish our post with a normal caption and maybe 0-3 hashtags, then immediately leave a comment on our own post several more hashtags. This way, your captions are not all cluttered with hashtags.

Keep your Instagram posts unique. Publishing the exact same thing on Instagram more than once will likely get people to unfollow you quickly if it happens too many times.

Your Instagram Profile

Because links are not allowed in updates or comments, a lot of people are not encouraged to use Instagram to build their blogs. This is a valid point, however you *can* put a link in your profile, so there is some incentive there. When used as a tool for connecting you with your readers, Instagram can prove to be very valuable, even without the ability to link.

Because the only link you can use is in your Instagram profile, people give more attention to others’ profiles on Instagram. They are also at the top of everyone’s profile and don’t require an extra tap to get to.

For this reason, optimizing your Instagram profile is incredibly important. Give a couple of quick facts about yourself. Be clear, honest, refreshing and funny – if you can pull it off. Then, link to your blog and include your username to another social profile. Snapchat is the best one to link because it is most closely related to Instagram and people are most likely to want to follow you there if they already follow you in Instagram.

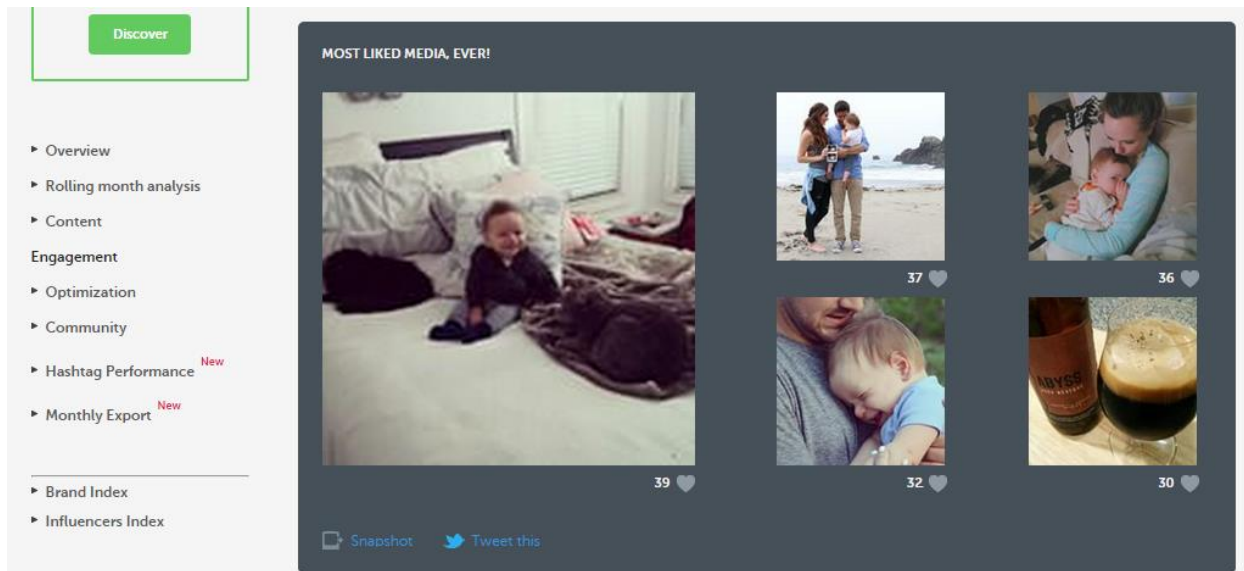
It's also a good idea to include an email address in your profile. If you're tagging brands like we mentioned earlier, they will come to your profile to check you out. It makes sense to have an email contact on your profile so they can contact you off of Instagram. It's also a good way for people (potential blog readers or people to collaborate with) to contact you as well.

Tracking Your Instagram Stats

It is also important to track your Instagram activity and see what is working well and what is not. While it's a nice thought to just post what you want, when you want, your actions on Instagram should be very calculated. You want to have your posts reach the maximum number of your followers. Iconosquare is a great tool for monitoring your Instagram activity, and one that we use regularly.

Head to [Iconosquare.com](https://www.iconosquare.com) and login with your Instagram account. Click the "Analytics" tab in the menu at the top of the site. Here, you can get all sorts of great information and really get a good look at your vital Instagram stats. You can see growth charts, patterns and your most popular content. Knowing this information is very important because you can then plan your posts accordingly. It's amazing how many bloggers and Instagrammers are ignoring their stats! Especially when they are provided to them for free!

Below, we're looking at Zack's most popular posts in one easy-to-read page.



It's important to gather as much data as you can when it comes to your Instagram posts and the way people interact with them. If you consistently see your fashion posts getting way more likes than your food posts, it may be time to post more fashion and less food.

In the same section shown above, you can see the most commented posts as well. Again, look for patterns and act accordingly.

Looking back at the picture above, you can also see your most engaged followers in the "Rolling month analysis" tab. This is important because you can show your most engaged followers that you appreciate them by going to their own profiles and interacting with them and their posts.

Under the "content" section, you can get details about which posts are the most popular according to the time and day of the week they were posted. This is some of the most valuable information you can have.

Wouldn't you want to post when you would receive the most likes? By looking at the data Iconosquare provides, you can do just that.

There are other options for Instagram analytics, including some paid options, but Iconosquare is a good place to start. We really encourage you to spend some time getting familiar with Iconosquare. Once you are able to quickly find whatever stats you want, it'll be a valuable tool that you use very often.

Tips for Building Your Following

There are a few strategies that you can use to build your Instagram following. We have used each of these, some more regularly than others, and will share our results here.

1. Be social. Perhaps the best, and most organic way to build your Instagram following is by making real connections with like-minded people on Instagram. Use hashtag search, or notice Instagrammers who are commenting on accounts that you like and interact with those people. Follow them, like their pictures and leave comments on them. This is the most time-consuming method, but it will yield the most engaged followers.
2. Hashtag. We already talked about this one earlier, and it's one of the best ways to build your following. Regularly landing on the "top posts" portion of a hashtag will get you a nice amount of likes and new followers. Even if you're not winding up in the top section, you'll still notice that you get more likes and followers if you are regularly hashtagging.
3. Follow Friday (or similar idea). This is a common technique for getting a nice boost of followers. Basically, you join up with 4 other Instagrammers and agree to post a picture containing all 4 profiles at a given time for a given amount of time. Be sure that everything is crystal clear (when does the post go up, who are the others involved, when can you take it done) before you agree to this type of thing. Try and do these with people who have a similar sized following as you, if not a bit bigger. Look up #followfriday in

Instagram to get familiar with how this works if you've never done it before. Another one we know of is Mom Crush Monday, which is basically the same idea.

4. Link or widget on your blog. Make sure, at the very least, that your blog has a link to your Instagram profile. A widget with a few recent pictures would be even better.
5. Post taggable things. If it fits with your content, in your caption, tell people to tag their friends. An example is posting a picture of Rachel Green aka Jennifer Aniston and saying, "Tag your friend who is most like Rachel Green". Getting people to tag friends of theirs who don't yet follow you puts new sets of eyes on your posts, and can lead to more followers.
6. Giveaways. These can be group, or individual giveaways, although group ones tend to yield more followers. We don't like to do these very often, but a lot of people have success building a nice following from them. We try and limit them because we really value *engaged* followers who follow us by choice, rather than wanting to simply get an entry in a giveaway.

Quality of Photos

It should be obvious that the quality of your photos is very important on Instagram. Whether you have a \$2500 camera, an iPhone or a \$100 point-and-shoot, you can take steps to ensure that your images are the highest quality they can be.

1. Pay attention to your lighting. If you're photographing food or smaller objects, move to the room in your house that gets the most natural light. Adjust your other settings accordingly so the picture is not overexposed and snap. Using natural light is probably the best thing you can do to get a great photo.
2. Edit – but not too much. Apps like VSCO Cam or Snapseed for cell phones or Photoshop or PicMonkey on computers can really make your pictures look a lot better. Just don't over-do it.

3. Frame your shot. Don't always center the main subject in your images. Photography has a "rule of thirds", which is basically that you want your main subject to be around the outer third of the photo (but not right on the edge), rather than right in the middle.
4. Pay attention to your background. If you shoot a lot of small things like food or jewelry pieces, invest in a few different types of background materials. Placemats and various wood slabs make for a nice place to set small objects being photographed. When taking pictures against walls, be mindful of what is on the wall behind you and try and choose as un-cluttered of an area as possible.

Taking small measures to get the highest quality of photo with your existing camera equipment makes a huge difference in the overall appearance of your Instagram profile.

Next page:
Snapchat

Snapchat

Snapchat is taking social media by storm. No platform has ever grown as fast as Snapchat. As of right now (and it doesn't look to be changing anytime soon) there is no way to offer direct links to anywhere else on the web from within Snapchat. For this reason, a lot of people don't see the value in having a Snapchat.

Additionally, the content disappears after 24 hours, which means you don't really have anything to show for the time you put into Snapchat. Well, this isn't entirely true.

Just like Instagram is a great way to personalize yourself and build real connections with people, Snapchat brings a refreshing sense of realism to social media. Whereas Instagram is full of beautifully edited photos taken at the perfect time of day, Snapchat is raw, and unfiltered. For this reason, Snapchat can be a place where you can allow your readers to get to know you on a more personal level.

With that being said, keep in mind that throughout all of your social activities, you want to stay consistent. A handful of people on Snapchat go really overboard with "letting loose" (possibly because of the whole idea that what goes on there is temporary) and it exposes a lack of authenticity. There's nothing wrong with your kids frustrating the heck out of you, or you swearing like a sailor when it's just you and the camera, but I don't want to go over to your blog or Instagram and feel like I'm reading and looking at the exact opposite of what I see on Snapchat. Keep it real here, people!

Snapchat is nice in that allows you to be very real, without the worry of being scrutinized for every piece of your outfit, or how your hair looks.

The content is gone in 24 hours, so give your followers a peek into your reality without worrying about new followers combing through your profile and analyzing each picture.

You can incorporate your blog or other social media accounts simply by mentioning them in your Snaps. Saying something like “hey guys, check out my post today all about staying stylish while keeping warm at katedidwhat.com” takes about 5 seconds of video to say, but brings attention to your blog.

Another idea is to treat Snapchat like a little preview. Hold up a new jacket and say, “see how I styled this 3 ways on my blog today!”

There are countless ways to bring attention to your blog via Snapchat, you just have to put yourself out there, produce good, compelling Snaps and occasionally pitch your blog or other social profiles. If your content is interesting enough, people will go where you lead them.

Next page:
Twitter

Twitter

Quick basics about Twitter:

- fast paced, chronological feed
- easy to reach out to other bloggers and brands
- posting multiple times per day (even re-publishing status updates every few hours) deemed okay
- not photo-focused, although you can (and should) post photos
- hashtag friendly
- low viral potential
- easy video response feature can really improve interaction
- works seamlessly with Periscope – the live streaming app/social network discussed a bit later

Most people have a love/hate relationship with Twitter.

Our favorite thing about Twitter is how easy it is to reach out to other bloggers and brands and for them to reach out to us. Very often, we use Twitter as a means of initially reaching out to companies that we want to work with. This method leads to the majority of brand relationships that we initiate.

As with other social networks, Twitter runs on a chronological feed. However, on Twitter, your content tends to get buried much faster, so if you have important status updates to promote, you will probably want to push them out 3-4 times per day. The chances of someone seeing the same update more than once are slim and you'll reach more of your followers by posting a few times.

Twitter did recently change their algorithm and it's supposed to make sure you see more useful posts on Twitter. If people are favoriting and re-tweeting your stuff, it's now more likely that Twitter will prioritize you in their main feed over people that they are not interacting with.

Because of this, getting people to interact with you on Twitter can lead to more people seeing your Tweets. Posting compelling content, asking questions and getting people to see your Tweets more will help boost your interaction. One thing you can try is embedding Tweets on your blog.

Here's how:



Twitter's embed feature can be very useful. Giving people the ability to favorite, reply or re-tweet you right from your blog is great, especially with the new algorithm change we just mentioned. Making it easy for people to share your content will go a long way, so give this a shot! You can even include a tweet of your most recent post. Just publish your post and tweet it right away. Then grab the embed code and edit your post. Think about it – if someone sees your Tweet on Twitter and they click your link, they no longer have the easy option to RT or reply. Give them that option back in your post!

Another thing you can do to make your Twitter profile stand out is to include images in your Tweets every so often. When scrolling through a timeline of Tweets, the ones with images definitely stand out. Be sure

your image relates to your Tweet and add images naturally – don't force them.

Twitter is a great way to open some dialogue with some "larger" bloggers or even public figures. This is a great way to get more exposure to your profile and thus, your website. Don't be annoying in your pursuit of people but instead, interact with them in a relevant, natural way. If you're just fishing for re-tweets, it's usually obvious and your existing followers will see it and will be turned off by that type of behavior.

Using hashtags on Twitter is a good idea. Keep them relevant to your tweet and keep them to 1-3 per tweet. Keep an eye on trending hashtags (found on the left part of your profile if you're on an actual computer, or through the search function in the mobile app) and use them if you can. Again, don't go crazy here, and try to keep it relevant to your own theme.

A newer feature of Twitter is the ability to quickly respond to Tweets with a video reply. This is great for thanking anyone who re-tweets you or shares a link to your blog. A video reply saying "thank you" is a very nice touch.

Be sure your Twitter profile is optimally filled out. The great thing about Twitter profiles is that they let you hyperlink more than one website. So you can include a direct link to your blog and another social profile of yours. Since you should be using Twitter to reach out to brands, the first thing they will see is your profile, so make sure it represents you well.

Next page: Periscope

Periscope

Live streaming is the next generation in social networks. Periscope is the leader in this industry. Meerkat is close behind, but we'll be focusing on Periscope here. That said, you can apply just about any of this to other live streaming platforms as well.

Periscope is actually now owned by Twitter, so it works seamlessly with Twitter. Actually, when you open an account, it automatically follows all of your Twitter followers who have Periscope. You will also be added to anyone's follow list who follows you on Twitter and is on Periscope.

Since Periscope is such a new format, there are not a lot of examples of great success on Periscope.

Knowing this, it's best to follow some general guidelines. These are pretty obvious and go with just about any social network.

- Keep things consistent with your brand.
- Don't stream random things – always have a plan and a purpose for your streams.
- Keep the phone steady and try to stream as high-quality of a video as you can
- Use hashtags (starting a stream will automatically Tweet about it).

- Take note of what is working and what is not. Periscope's heart system gives you some feedback.
- Be mindful of your surroundings. Anytime you are live-streaming, anything can happen.

The main thing you should consider with Periscope is that you should have a calculated plan before diving in. Live streams are difficult to keep compelling and interesting without a plan.

Some ideas for using Periscope as a blogger are:

- Shopping haul videos
- Questions and answers
- 5-10 minute session of blogging tips

Next page:
Facebook

Facebook

First, here are the basics of Facebook:

- looked at as old-fashioned in today's social media marketing world
- cannot connect with all of your fans
- can tag companies for more exposure possibilities
- hashtag friendly
- can post status updates with links, photos or videos
- offers geo-targeted status updates
- decent viral potential with pictures or videos

A lot of bloggers and social media experts think Facebook is not worth the time anymore. That couldn't be further from the truth. You see, a while back, Facebook stopped showing status updates from pages to every single person who "liked" that page. They started selling the ability to "boost" a post so more of the people who "liked" the page could see it. This soured a lot of people.

Now, in 2015/16, Facebook is rewarding pages who post relevant content that their fans actually like. So, the more your content is "liked", shared and commented on, the higher the percentage of your fans will see your updates. It makes sense, really. If you're posting boring stuff, people don't want to see it anyway.

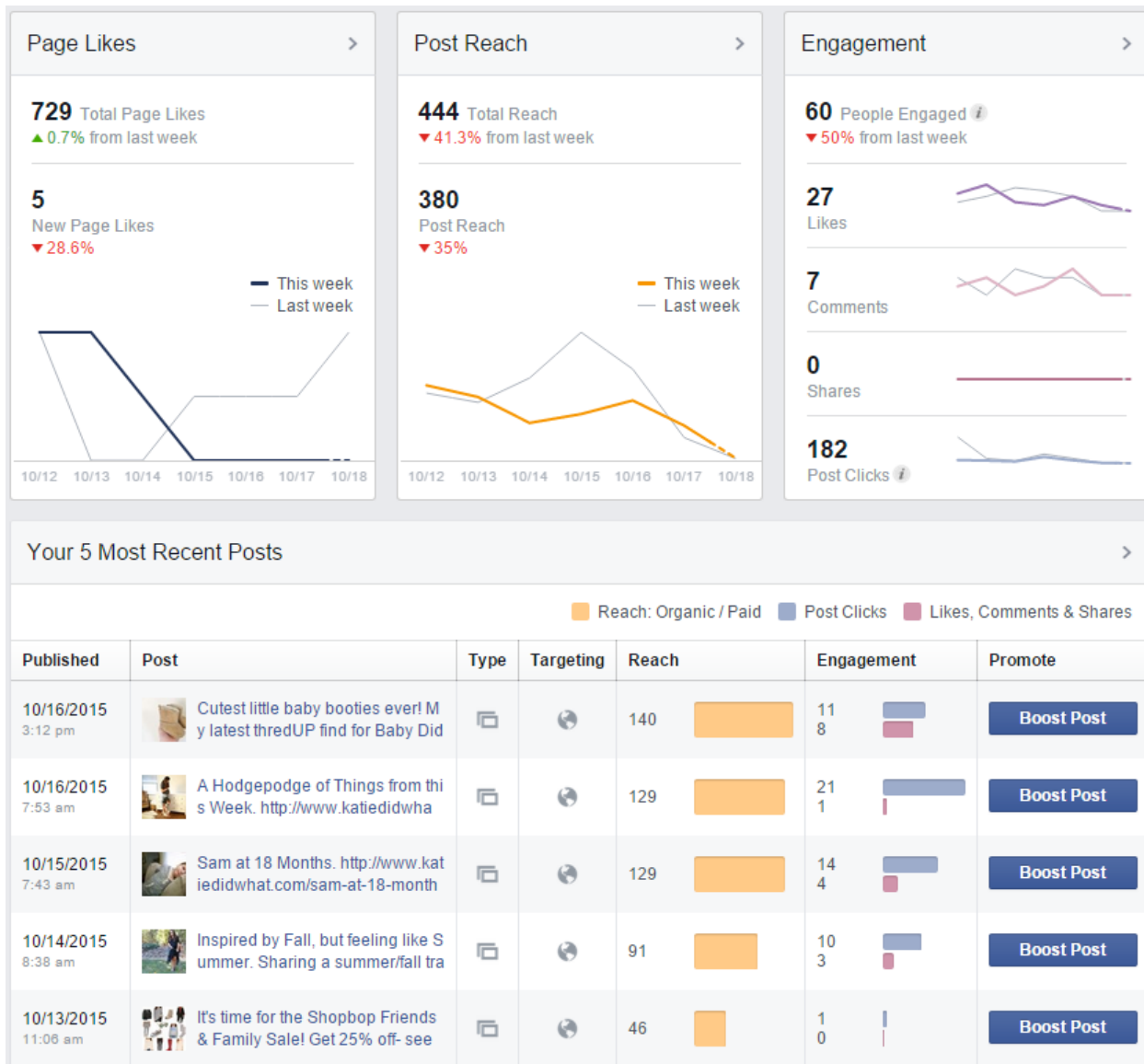
So let's talk about how to make it not boring.

Some ideas for getting a lot of interaction on posts are: post funny pictures, ask a question with a fill-in-the-blank answer, post photos and say "caption this" and watch the comments roll in. Again, this should all relate to your blog's message and reflect your brand's personality.

Facebook is constantly changing their algorithm and what works for bloggers is changing with that. For example, recently, status updates with dollar signs and other sales type of symbols are being shown to even less of a page's followers and are prompted with a message offering advertising from Facebook. It's always something with Facebook, as they try and make their shareholders happy by making more and more money. You just have to pay attention to what is working and what is not.

Make sure you are keeping your eye on the "Insights" section of your Facebook page. The image below is what the insights section looks like. The insights section will show statistics like reach and interaction for each post that you have published. This is all incredibly valuable information that you should not be ignoring.

You can take a look at the insights page to try and pick up on trends about your page. Perhaps you notice that updates posted between 1-3PM get better engagement than posts from 8-10AM. Now you know to save your best content for those times. Since all pages are unique, it is important to focus on your own page's insights and respond accordingly.



You can embed Facebook status updates into your blog as well. This (like Twitter) is a good idea to try because their algorithm is based on how much interaction each post gets. The more you give people a chance to “like”, share and comment on your posts, the better your interaction will be, and thus – the better your reach will be.



To embed, click the “see more options” as shown above to get the code needed to embed the status update into your blog post.

If you really want to be aggressive with increasing your interaction, you can embed a status in your blog post and ask readers to “like” it or share it. I don’t recommend doing that too often, as it comes off as a little “salesy”, but on posts where you really want engagement, it’s worth a shot.

Hashtags are part of Facebook as well and should be used in a similar fashion to other social networks. Keep them relevant and don’t use too many. As with Twitter, it is a good idea to tag a company instead of just mentioning them. This makes them aware of your status update and if it’s something positive, they might share it on their page too! The discovery possibilities from using hashtags is not as good as it is on Twitter or Instagram, but it’s still worth it to use them in some cases.

Additional FB notes: some pages have gone as far as deleting status updates that don't get a lot of interaction within the first hour or two. This keeps their reach (how many people see each update) higher because they only have posts with a high rate of interactions on their page. Facebook has caught onto this practice and pages have been getting dinged for this and their reach has plummeted. Basically, you shouldn't try to game the system with anything except great content.

One trend that is growing which I think is an excellent idea is the formation of groups as a supplement to a website. A Facebook group can create almost a forum-like atmosphere and can really open up the dialogue between you and your readers. Additionally, the way Facebook has groups set up is a lot better in terms of the members seeing the updates that you post.

Just be sure that you are ready to moderate a group. As mentioned above, they are a little like forums, and the more people who join, the more you will need to moderate things. This is why we encourage you to limit the group to a core group of people who are truly interested in what the group is all about. It's hard for anyone in a group of 800 people to feel connected with others in that group.

Next page:
Pinterest

Pinterest

Pinterest in a nutshell:

- photo focused – only put high quality photos out there
- viral potential high
- hashtag friendly
- Does not allow affiliate links on their platform
- users have a buyer’s mentality more so than any other network

Pinterest is another image-driven social network. Pinterest is possibly the least personal of any network covered in this course. Not very many people comment and interact on Pinterest other than “pinning” things. That being said, it’s still a great network to use and is one of the best at driving traffic to specific posts on your blog.

One great thing about Pinterest is that studies have shown that Pinterest users are more likely to buy based on a recommendation there than on any other social network. So that is a HUGE deal. If you review or talk about products on your blog and can drive traffic from Pinterest to your blog where people can purchase those products (through paid affiliate links), you can make some good money from Pinterest!

In general, to be a major player on Pinterest, you’re going to want to show that you care about what your photos look like. Take the time to make the necessary edits and publish high-quality photos. Uniqueness is also big. People are very inclined to share a unique idea they found on Pinterest. Whether it is a recipe they’ve never seen or a sweater styled in a unique way, being different stands out to others on Pinterest.

Graphics are also a big part of Pinterest. Whether you are creating an entire image via a graphic design tool, or just adding words to an existing image, creating high-quality, good-looking images is very important to

your success on Pinterest. Luckily, there are some nice tools out there to help you with your images.

One of our favorite tools for making unique images for Pinterest is [PicMonkey](#). They have a ton of great features with their free plan, but we have a premium plan, as it is only like \$35 for an entire year. ONE graphic can cost that much or more from a designer, so we have no problem paying that. Plus, it's tax deductible. With PicMonkey, you can make simple quotes look pretty and eye-catching with just a few minutes of work. PicMonkey also has some easy-to-use photo editing features if you just want to use it to make your existing photos more pleasing to the eye.

More than any other network, you are rewarded for posting a ton of updates on Pinterest. Many of the biggest Pinterest accounts are pinning 25-50 times per day. This can get time consuming, and this is one of the only places where automation is truly beneficial. Tools like Ahalogy, Viralwoot and Tailwind help with scheduling pins.

You'll also want to show that you are active beyond pinning your own things. Create boards related to your subject matter and add several pins per week to those boards. Keep your boards organized and uncluttered. If people find you and like the way your boards are set up, they are more inclined to follow you. Additionally, like any social network, following people in your niche can lead to more followers.

Group boards can also be a very nice way to build your own account and get more eyes on your Pins. There is no fancy way to join group boards. The easiest way to do it is to find group boards (Here: <http://pingroupie.com/>) and comment on Pins complimenting the board or the Pin and asking the Pinner to add you to the board. It'll work every now and again and if you stick to it, you'll be a member of several group boards before too long.

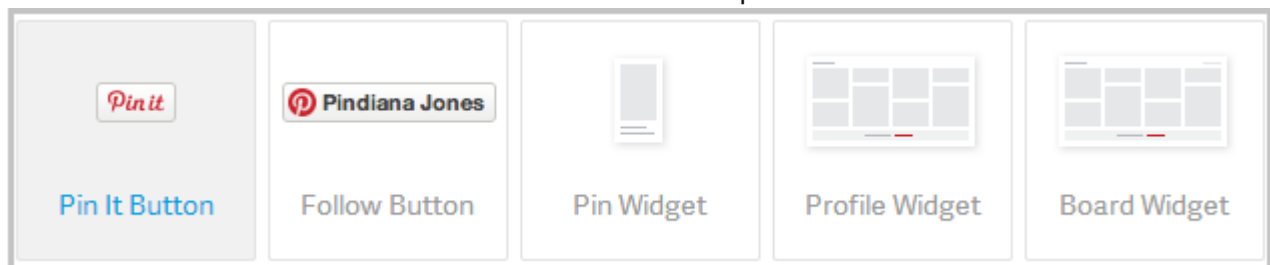
You'll also want to verify your site on Pinterest to prove ownership. See how to do that by clicking this link:

<http://morefromyourblog.com/how-to-verify-your-blog-on-pinterest/>

You can use hashtags on Pinterest too. Just put them right in with your description.

Try to keep your description brief on Pinterest too. No one comes to Pinterest wanting to read big block of text.

You can also embed little Pinterest boards right on your site or in your sidebar. [Head over here](#) and notice the 5 options:



Those 5 options will allow you to embed a button for people to Pin a certain picture, to follow a certain Pinterest user, to embed an individual pin, to embed a profile widget or to embed your favorite board. With the last 2 options, you'll be able to customize the size dimensions of the widgets. The 3 widgets work well in a sidebar. Try one out for a while and see how it does.

We like to put our most popular Pin or Pins in the sidebar for a while to see how they do. It's a god way to showcase your best content to some of your newer readers who may not have seen the post when it was new. It's also a nice way to pick up some extra Pins in addition to making your sidebar more appealing to the eye.

Next page:
Google+

Google+

For a while, it seemed that Google+ was going to take over the SEO world and you'd have to be a whiz at G+ to have any shot of ranking. Well, that never happened. This doesn't mean you should ignore Google+.

First of all, I'd never ignore a large social network, let alone one from Google. Yes, it seems like no one uses Google+, but the numbers don't lie. People use it. You should be using it a little like Twitter, but without the character limit.

Perhaps the single best thing about Google + is that when someone follows you on Google+ and they search for something in Google that relates to your content, you have a great chance of showing up at the top of their search results page.

Yes, Google actually changes their search page rankings based on people who the searcher follows on Google+. So, instead of showing up on page 6 for Mary's search for "cute fall outfits", you show up as *result* number 6, on page 1. Statistics show that on page 6, you get less than 0.001% of clicks, and being number 6 will get you about 5% of all clicks.

So building a strong following on G+ can only help you. Additionally, while the concrete data on this is unproven, it's believed that even if you don't have a huge following, just having your site linked to an active G+ page will help your rankings.

As far as using the network socially, it is not popular enough to replace or even come close to Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest, but it's still a fairly large network. Add in the idea that it could help your SEO to just be a little active on Google+, and you can count us in. This is the only network where we can say it's okay to not be terribly active on or social on. Of

course, of people from your niche are hanging out there, you're going to want to spend more time there, but we just don't see that happening on Google+ in the blogging world.

Next page:
YouTube

YouTube

YouTube is a social network and the second most used search engine in the world. Let's read that again – **YouTube is the second most used search engine in the world.**

Knowing this, how could you ignore YouTube?!

Obviously, you will have to produce some form of video content to be really active with YouTube. The idea of being on YouTube in videos makes some people uncomfortable. Remember, you don't have to put yourself in a video to make a video. You can make tutorial videos using screen-recording software, you can unbox things and only show your hands and arms, among other ideas. However, when it comes down to it, YouTube is a place that you can use to better connect with your blog following. If you can, work on getting comfortable in front of the camera – the results will make it worth it.

You're going to want to create the highest quality videos that you can while staying within your own budget. Upgrading your camera to a Canon 100s, or 70D DSLR is one option, but you can also take simple measures like buying "daylight" bulbs instead of standard bulbs to give your videos a nicer clear lighting effect. Just swap them out with your standard lamps and you're good to go. Whatever you do, test different angles and lighting techniques and find out what produces the best-quality video with what you've got.

Remember, you can have the best camera in the world and studio lighting, but if your content is not compelling, it won't succeed. Your #1 focus should be on the quality of your content – video quality comes next.

With YouTube, you have to be ready for “trolls” to pop up like never before. Trolls are extremely sad individuals who hide behind a keyboard and say anything to get a rise out of others on the internet. They are especially prevalent on YouTube. It’s best to ignore the trolls. If they really bother you, you can always delete the rude comments individually or disable comments on your videos. Our thought on this is that you shouldn’t let one random depressed jerk stop you from interacting with other nice people who want to compliment your videos.

That being said, YouTube can be a fantastic supplement to your social profile. Try and build a following and be active in your niche just like the other networks. Take part in YouTube.

We mentioned earlier that YouTube is a search engine. For this reason, you should think of your videos in the same manner that you think of blog posts. In your video title and description, include keywords. Showing up in the top of YouTube search results is as good as showing up in the top of Google!

YouTube is simply one more platform where a LOT of people hang out and somewhere that you want to be so you can reel some of those people in as blog readers.

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Wrap-up

Wrap-Up

Social media is incredibly useful in sending targeted traffic to our blog in addition to creating connections with like-minded people. It is an essential part of our business and we wouldn't be nearly as successful as we are without it.

It is almost impossible in today's world to build a successful blog from the ground up without social media. The ability to have people exponentially share your content on networks like Facebook and Pinterest can provide growth that is not possible without those platforms.

Instagram and Snapchat are clearly at the forefront of the lifestyle blogging world. If you don't have active profiles in both of these areas, you're behind. You can choose to ignore these massive (and growing) networks, or embrace them and make them work to your advantage.

We're not saying that you cannot succeed without certain types of social media, but it would present unnecessary challenges to your growth. That being said, be sure to only take on what you can do well. Having inactive or defunct social profiles associated with your blog is not a good look. If you don't have time to deal with Periscope right now, then don't. If you are not seeing any return at all from spending an hour on Twitter every day, then re-evaluate where you are spending your time. It's okay to not be everywhere.

Remember, we're trying to make money (and maybe even make a living) blogging, so it's going to take planning and a lot of hard work. If you don't love it, you're not going to stick with it, so make sure you're having fun on social media! And don't forget the most important part: *be social*.