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A step-by-step guide to social ad specs for small business.

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Is it time to give social advertising a go?

Advertising on social media isn't a new idea – it's been a marketing staple for almost two decades now, but some businesses still haven't made the leap.

For small business owners, social media can often seem a bit too complicated and time-consuming.

In this eBook, we aim to demystify, clarify and walk you through the basics of the big platforms – **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **LinkedIn** and **TikTok**.

There's info about the best platform for your business and those all-important specs to ensure you get it right first time.

Contents.

Best-practice basics for social media.

Every social platform has its norms, but some best-practice rules apply across the board.

1. Stick to one style.
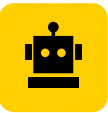
Building a following on social media is about connecting on a personal level – and you need a consistent brand personality to do that. The key is to pick a style and stick to it.

What you pick depends on your business: polished professional images or user-generated content, colourful visuals or a subdued palette, a casual tone with emojis or more formal language.

2. Make the most of automation.

All the big platforms offer automation for targeting, segmentation and ad placements, which is handy when you're just starting. For example, Facebook and Instagram's Advantage+ campaign tool lets you automatically optimise ad settings to maximise your ROI.

3. Start with broad audience targeting.

Broad audience targeting helps the platform algorithm collect data around clicks, browsing and engagement to find out who best to target. With that information, you – or the tech – can narrow your segments and optimise your ad spend.

4. Be patient.

Whenever you make a change, the algorithm returns to square one, meaning you lose all the 'learning' up to that point. Instead, leave the tech to do its job, particularly in the early stages of a campaign. Once ad placements and targeting have been tracked and optimised, you'll better understand how your content is performing.

5. Use multiple placements and formats.

You only know what works for your audience once you try it, so start with multiple placements and formats.

6. Check the specs.

Image specifications are there to make your ads look great. You can upload images at a lower resolution (with the same aspect ratio) so your story or ad loads quickly. Just check that it looks crisp before you post.

7. Don't over boost.

Social platforms let you boost high-performing posts to get you in front of more people. It's a simple option – and that's part of the problem. You can't pick your audience, set your placement or make changes, so boosting shouldn't be your go-to strategy.

Facebook – specs, formats and best practice.

Still an advertising powerhouse, especially for retail, real estate, fitness and healthcare.

Facebook is still a well-used platform with a huge global reach, beaten only by YouTube for live content consumption. It still delivers on the advertising front too.

Research shows that the average Facebook user clicks on 12 ads every month[1] and that 78% of US consumers have purchased a product after seeing it on Facebook.[2]

Who's on Facebook?

Older millennials are still scrolling Facebook almost as much as they did 20 years ago, but younger audiences are spending time on other social sites.

In one survey,[3] just 7.3% of women aged 16-24 called Facebook their favourite platform.

Placement types.

On social, it's not just about what you want the ad to say, but where your message appears. You can choose where you'd like your ads to pop up, or mix up your choices to get in front of different people.

The most common Facebook placements include:

- **Feed** – a continually updated stream of posts from friends, groups and advertisers

- **Marketplace** – a place for people to buy and sell everything from old couches to designer handbags

- **Stories** – photo or video sets, often including sound, music, links, emojis and text

- **Reels** – high-energy, short-form videos, made for mobile engagement.

Understanding Facebook ad formats.

Facebook ads come in all shapes and sizes – here's a look at the platform's main ad formats.

Facebook single-image ads.

Single-image ads are the simplest of the options on Facebook. As the name suggests, they include one image and short text sections, ideal for campaigns with strong visual elements. Even better, single-image ads are versatile and can be used across different ad types, placements and aspect ratios.

Single-image specs:

Design recommendations:
- File type: JPG or PNG
- Ratio: 1.91:1 to 1:1
- Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels

Text recommendations:
- Primary text: 125 characters
- Headline: 27 characters
- Description: 27 characters

Technical requirements:
- Maximum file size: 30 MB
- Minimum width: 600 pixels
- Minimum height: 600 pixels
- Aspect ratio tolerance: 3%

Facebook video ads.

Video delivers serious engagement – we're looking at 59.3% compared to 29.6% for static images – and can also let you deliver in-depth information. The key is to make your video content pacey and interesting so people stick around to watch it.

Video ad specs:

Design recommendations:
- File type: MP4, MOV or GIF
- Ratio: 1:1 (for desktop or mobile) or 4:5 (for mobile only)
- Video settings: H.264 compression, square pixels, fixed frame rate, progressive scan and stereo AAC audio compression at 128kbps+
- Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels
- Video captions: Optional, but recommended
- Video sound: Optional, but recommended
- Videos should not contain edit lists or special boxes in file containers

Text recommendations:
- Primary text: 125 characters
- Headline: 27 characters
- Description: 27 characters

Technical requirements:
- Video duration: 1 second to 241 minutes
- Maximum file size: 4 GB
- Minimum width: 120 pixels
- Minimum height: 120 pixels

Understanding Facebook ad formats.

Facebook carousel ads.

Carousel ads include up to ten images or videos that users can click through, each with a separate link.

They're a great way to showcase a specific product range, show off different features of a single product, or tell a brand story in still images or video clips.

Carousel specs:

Design recommendations:
• Image file type: JPG or PNG
• Video file type: MP4, MOV or GIF
• Ratio: 1:1
• Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels

Text recommendations:
• Primary text: 125 characters
• Headline: 32 characters
• Description: 18 characters
• Landing page URL: Required

Technical requirements:
• Number of carousel cards: 2 to 10
• Image maximum file size: 30 MB
• Video maximum file size: 4 GB
• Video duration: 1 second to 240 minutes
• Aspect ratio tolerance: 3%

Facebook collection ads.

Collection ads give browsers a mini interaction with your brand. Ads appear as a single image or video with content usually based on the user's browsing behaviour and up to three extra images or clips to swipe through.

When a browser clicks on a collection ad they go to a full-screen landing page called an Instant Experience, which can include video, photos and more info about your product or service.

Collection specs:

Design recommendations:
• The cover image or video displayed in your collection ad uses the first media asset from your Instant Experience
• Image type: JPG or PNG
• Video file type: MP4, MOV or GIF
• Ratio: 1:1
• Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels

Text recommendations:
• Primary text: 125 characters
• Headline: 40 characters
• Landing page URL: Required

Technical requirements:
• Instant Experience: Required
• Image maximum file size: 30 MB
• Video maximum file size: 4 GB

Facebook's ad specs and options are always changing – check out their ad guide for the latest information.

Instagram – specs, formats and best practice.

Visual, personal and perfect for health, beauty and food advertising.

Instagram is Facebook's cooler cousin. Now owned by Meta, the photo-centric platform lets users share photos, videos and stories and build a following, and see content from friends, celebrities and brands they choose to follow.

Instagram has an incredible 1.3 billion users worldwide[4] and works well for fashion and beauty brands, consumer goods and food and drink advertising.

The reach of paid Instagram advertising has jumped 21% over the last year despite changes to ad reporting. In other words, it's still an effective way to reach a huge global audience of potential customers.

Who's on Insta?

Instagram is Gen Z's favourite platform, with data showing that users aged 18-24 are the largest audience group. However, 25-34-year-olds are not far behind, making up 30.3% of the Instagram user base.

The platform is less popular with older people – those aged 55-65+ are just 6% of the Instagram audience.

Placement types.

Like Facebook ads, Instagram ads appear in user feeds, stories and 'explore' pages alongside organic content from personal accounts and promotional content. Ads look similar to user-generated posts but include a 'sponsored' label to show that they include paid content.

The most common placements are:

- **Instagram feeds** – The Insta user's main page, where they see updates from friends, influencers and brands they follow

- **Instagram stories** – Like Facebook stories, these include images and video clips, with sound, music, emojis and text to add emphasis or detail

- **Instagram reels** – Generally 60 seconds or less, the format lets brands create entertaining content and share it with the Instagram user base.

Understanding Instagram ad formats.

Like Facebook, Insta has a wide range of ad types. The format you choose depends on the goals of your campaign and the type of content you want to include.

Instagram single-image ads.

Like many Instagram posts, these ads include a large image, a brief caption and a link to the product listing or sign-up page. Image types include photos, illustrations, graphics and even text-based images.

Single-image specs:

Design recommendations:
• File type: JPG or PNG
• Ratio: 1.91:1 to 1:1
• Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels

Text recommendations:
• Primary text: 125 characters
• Headline: 27 characters
• Description: 27 characters

Technical requirements:
• Maximum file size: 30 MB
• Minimum width: 600 pixels
• Minimum height: 600 pixels
• Aspect ratio tolerance: 3%

Instagram video ads.

Instagram bucks the video trend, with static images still outperforming video content. Of course, this doesn't mean you should ignore the potential of video – it's still a good way to capture attention and give customers more detail about your product.

Video ad specs:

Dimension:
• 1080 x 1920 pixels with an aspect ratio of 9:16.

Design recommendations:
• File type: MP4, MOV or GIF
• Ratio: 4:5
• Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels
• Video captions: Optional, but recommended
• Video sound: Optional, but recommended

Text recommendations:
• Primary text: 125 characters
• Maximum number of hashtags: 30

Technical requirements:
• Video duration: 1 second to 60 minutes
• Maximum file size: 250 MB
• Minimum width: 500 pixels
• Aspect ratio tolerance: 1%

Understanding Instagram ad formats.

Instagram carousel ads.

Carousels, or slideshows, let you use multiple images within one ad. The format works well in Instagram's quick, image-driven world – with an average engagement rate of 1.08%.

Carousel specs:

Design recommendations:
- Image file type: JPG or PNG
- Video file type: MP4, MOV or GIF
- Ratio: 1:1
- Resolution: At least 1080 x 1080 pixels

Text recommendations:
- Primary text: 125 characters
- Headline: 32 characters
- Description: 18 characters
- Landing page URL: Required

Technical requirements:
- Number of carousel cards: 2 to 10
- Image maximum file size: 30 MB
- Video maximum file size: 4 GB
- Video duration: 1 second to 240 minutes
- Aspect ratio tolerance: 3%

Instagram reels.

Reels are the perfect place for that short, sharp brand ad, a look at your product in action or a quick tip from your team. The highest reel engagement rates come from accounts with just 5000 followers or less, which suggests that reels are most effective when they're casual and personal.

Instagram formats change all the time – get the latest specs and formats here.

LinkedIn – specs, formats and best practice.

Professional connections, thought leadership and B2B engagement.

As a professional networking platform, LinkedIn is different from other social networks. Instead of funny videos and outfit-of-the-day posts, it's about sharing business expertise, finding partnerships and employment opportunities and connecting with other brands.

While people use the network primarily for job searching, users also follow their friends, professional contacts and other businesses, making it a good ad platform for B2B brands.

Who's on LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is by far the biggest professional platform, with roughly 875 million users spread over 200 countries worldwide and 58 million company profiles.

The site skews young and male – almost 60% of users are between 24-35,[5] while 56% of users are men.[6]

Ad placement on LinkedIn.

LinkedIn's ad placement options are not quite as varied as Facebook or Instagram, but there are plenty of ways to connect with your audience.

Here's a look at the most common placements:

- **LinkedIn feed** – The main connection point for LinkedIn users, displaying posts and updates from their network and any brands or businesses they follow

- **Sponsored messages** – Send direct messages to LinkedIn user inboxes, a great way to make a personal connection and cut through the advertising noise

- **Text and dynamic ads** – Appear on the 'right rail' of a user's LinkedIn page with the option of using simpler text or more dynamic ads.

Understanding LinkedIn ad formats.

Here's a basic rundown of the specs, word counts and guidelines for the most common formats.

LinkedIn single-image ads.

Single-image ads look much like an organic post, with a photo or illustration, headline and chunk of text above. You can include a link to your website or blog as well.

Single-image specs:

Design recommendations:
• File Type: jpg or png
• File Size: 5 MB
• Image Ratio:
  • 1.91:1 (horizontal, desktop and mobile)
  • 1:1 (square, desktop and mobile)
  • 1:1.91 (vertical, mobile only)

Text recommendations:
• Ad name (optional): 255 characters
• Headline: 70 characters
• Introductory text: 150 characters
• Description (LAN only): 70 characters. Only required if using LinkedIn Audience Network (LAN).

Technical requirements:
• File Type: jpg or png
• File Size: 5 MB

Horizontal/Landscape:
• Minimum: 640 x 360 pixels
• Maximum: 7680 x 4320 pixels
• Recommended: 1.91:1 – 1200 x 628 pixels

Square (LinkedIn recommends this aspect ratio for best performance on CTR):
• Minimum: 360 x 360 pixels
• Maximum: 4320 x 4320 pixels
• Recommended: 1:1 – 1200 x 1200 pixels

Vertical:
• Minimum: 360 x 640 pixels
• Maximum: 1254 x 2400 pixels
• Recommended:
  • 1:1.91 – 628 x 1200 pixels
  • 2:3 – 600 x 900 pixels
  • 4:5 – 720 x 900 pixels

LinkedIn video ads.

As usual, video tends to grab audience attention more than static posts – in fact, video content receives an average of 3x the engagement of text posts.

Design recommendations:
• Video File Type: MP4
• Video Sound Format: AAC or MPEG4
• Recommended frame rate: 30 frames per second
• Custom Thumbnail: Optional but recommended

Ratio:
• 4:5 (vertical, 0.8)
• 9:16 (vertical; 0.57)
• 16:9 (landscape; 1.78)
• 1:1 (square; 1.0)

Text recommendations:
• Ad name (optional): 255 characters
• Headline: 70 characters
• Introductory text: 150 characters
• Technical Requirements
• Video File Size: 75 KB (min) – 200 MB (max)
• Video Duration: 3 seconds – 30 minutes
• Video Captions (optional): Video sound file size less than 64 KHz

Understanding LinkedIn ad formats.

LinkedIn event ads:

Running an online seminar or offline networking event? An event ad can get the word out to your followers and boost attendance.

Design recommendations:
- Image Ratio: 4:1 (image will be pulled from the Event page)
- Text Recommendations
- Event name (optional): 255 characters
- Introductory text: 600 characters

URL Requirements:
- Event URL: Required, LinkedIn Event page URLs only
- URL prefix: http:// or https://
- URL characters: 2000 characters for destination field URL

LinkedIn message ads.

Message ads let you speak directly to potential leads by messaging them in their LinkedIn inbox. Conversation ads are similar, and let you follow up with a customer after they sign up for a seminar or express interest in your business.

Design recommendations:
- Banner File Type (optional): JPG or PNG
- Banner Image Size (optional): 300 x 250 pixels
- Banner Image File Size (optional): 2MB
- Sender Image: We will use the LinkedIn profile image of designated sender

Text recommendations:
- Ad name (optional): 50 characters
- Message Subject: 60 characters
- Message Text: 1500 characters
- Custom Footer: 2500 characters
- Call-to-Action: 20 characters

LinkedIn lead gen forms.

Unique to LinkedIn, lead generation forms can streamline the sign-up process for interested customers, removing roadblocks and making it easier to collect customer information.

Text recommendations:
- Form Name: 256 characters
- Landing page URL: 2000 characters
- Offer Headline: 60 characters
- Offer Detail (optional): 160 characters
- Privacy Policy: 2000 characters
- Call-to-Action: 20 characters
- Confirmation Message: 300 characters

Form recommendations:
- Form Fields: 3-4 fields are recommended as best practice, with a maximum of 12

Understanding LinkedIn ad formats.

LinkedIn spotlight ads.

Spotlight ads appear to the right of the main feed and are targeted at users based on their browsing behaviour. Because users see just one spotlight ad at a time, it can make your ad stand out.

Design recommendations:
- Company Logo Size: 100 x 100 pixels
- Company Logo File Type: JPG or PNG
- Company Logo File Size: 2 MB
- Background Image File Type (optional): JPG or PNG
- Background Image Dimensions (optional): 300 x 250 pixels
- Background Image File Size (optional): 2 MB

Text recommendations:
- Headline: 50 characters
- Description: 70 characters
- Company Name: 25 characters
- Call-to-Action: 18 characters

URL requirements.
- Landing page URL: required
- URL prefix: http:// or https://
- URL characters: 500 characters for destination field URL

Want the full rundown of LinkedIn ad formats and specs? Check their page for the latest details.

TikTok – specs, formats and best practice.

Placements and formats on TikTok.

If you're used to Facebook and Insta, TikTok feels like a whole new landscape. Users have a main feed of followed and suggested content, but there are also TikTok news apps where users can see trending content and the day's top videos, as well as the hashtag challenge and Spark ad formats that aim to get users to engage with ad content.

Here's a look at common formats and placements:

TikTok in-feed ads.

These 5-60 second video or image posts appear in users' feeds, among other suggested content. They're an inexpensive, low-risk option for Tiktok newcomers. 9-15 second videos perform best, so keep them short, sharp and snappy.

In-feed specs:
- Video upload supported types: MP4, MOV, MPEG, 3GP or AVI
- Recommended aspect ratios: 9:16, 1:1, or 16:9
- Recommended video dimensions: higher or equal to 540 pixels by 960 pixels, 640 pixels by 640 pixels, or 960 pixels by 540 pixels
- Image upload maximum weight: equal or not greater than 500 MB

Young and trend-setting.

TikTok is the cool newbie on the social media block and it's all about user-generated short-form video and the endless scroll. Users see a continual stream of recommendations based on their previous views.

Because it's so fast-moving and trend-driven, TikTok can be tricky to get right – it's all about the viral moment.

Who's watching?

TikTok has built a huge following in just seven years. As of January 2023, the platform has over a billion active users every month, and the 10-29 year old demographic make up more than 60% of its audience.

If your target is this demographic, it's well worth getting on TikTok.

Understanding TikTok ad formats.

TikTok TopView.

TopView ads appear as full-screen videos that start when users open the app. Users can skip your ad after three seconds, so you need to grab attention fast.

TopView specs:
- Video upload supported types: MP4, MOV, MPEG, 3GP or AVI
- Recommended video ratios: higher or equal to 540 pixels by 960 pixels, 640 pixels by 640 pixels, or 960 pixels by 540 pixels
- Image upload maximum weight: equal or not greater than 500 MB
- Bitrate should be higher or equal to 516 KBPS

TikTok hashtag challenge ads.

In a branded TikTok challenge, advertisers set a 'challenge' for the community and users respond with their own content.

Take a look at successful challenges from other brands.

Hashtag challenge specs:
- Video upload supported types: MP4, MOV, MPEG, 3GP or AVI
- Recommended aspect ratios: 9:16
- Recommended video dimensions: higher or equal to 720 pixels by 1280 pixels
- Image upload maximum weight: equal or not greater than 100 MB
- Minimum of 5 seconds but should not exceed 60 seconds. Short videos of 9 to 15 seconds perform best
- Bitrate should be above 2,500 KBPS
- For video caption, 150 character maximum (including spaces and punctuation), and emojis are subject to approval

TikTok newsfeed app ads.

Newsfeed apps aggregate trending TikTok videos for specific areas and categories – for example, BuzzVideo pulls out relevant and entertaining content for TikTokers in Japan, while TopBuzz dominates the US TikTok market.

Each newsfeed app has its own ad specs, placement settings and content rules, so it's best to figure out the app you want to use before you start.

TikTok advertising changes all the time, with new formats and new ways to boost content – check out TikTok for Business to find out more.

Take the first step.

Advertising on social is incredibly popular for one simple reason: it works. Social media is where people spend most of their time online, so it makes sense to reach your audience in those spaces.

Despite seeming complex on the surface, social ad platforms do all they can to make it easy for you – after all, they want you to advertise on their platform.

Once you get started, you'll find that most social platforms walk you through the ad creation process step-by-step, cutting the guesswork and confusion.

Finally, if you need more help, Yellow Pages is here.

Check out our Business Hub for more social tips, tricks and how-tos or talk to the experts at Yellow Pages about creating a social ads campaign for your business. Find out more here.