

The Ultimate Guide for Social Media Professionals

by SEMrush



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Introduction

Social media marketing is one of the most effective ways to connect with your target audience. Businesses and brands can use these platforms to offer effective touchpoints for users at all stages of the digital sales funnel. When utilized correctly, social media can be used to nurture leads, strengthen relationships with customers, and create online communities that will have a significant impact on your business. In order to get to those benefits, however, you need to know how to leverage social media marketing to work in your favor.

There's a common misconception that social media marketing is easy because Facebook and Twitter are already so engrained in our lives. The reality is very different, however; it's much more difficult to not only get engagement as a brand on social media, but to even get your posts seen by your target audience. Here at SEMrush, we understand that better than anyone, which is why we have created several helpful tools, all of which we'll cover in this guide.

In this guide, we'll take you through the whole process of creating, running, and managing excellent social media campaigns that your followers will love to engage with.

Who is this guide for



This guide is for social media professionals and agencies who are responsible for managing social profiles and campaigns for businesses and brands.



It's also for small business owners and brands building a social media presence for themselves.

Strategy



Strategy

Too many social media profiles from businesses and brands lack any semblance of a strategy, which is a critical mistake. All social campaigns should have a strategy before they're even developed into actual content. Without this, you won't be optimizing for specific results, and it's likely that you'll fall short of whatever goals

you're abstractly trying to accomplish.

The first step of creating great social media campaigns is therefore to develop a strong strategy. This should be a heavily research-based process which can be broken down into several distinct stages. The first is setting clear goals.

Set SMART Goals

When you're creating campaigns for your clients, it's important to start with clear, definable goals. This allows you to develop strategies based around these goals, and they give you something concrete and measurable to work towards. This can help both you and your client evaluate the progress you're making.

Establishing SMART goals from the very beginning of your campaigns can be immensely beneficial. SMART goals are:

- **Specific.** You would choose something like "brand awareness" or "lead generation" instead of "get attention."
- Measurable. Each goal should be measurable, and you should identify key performance indicators (KPIs) you'll watch during this stage. Each different goal will have different metrics to watch for. Conversion campaigns would optimize for sales and clicks, for example, while brand awareness campaigns might look for brand mentions or more social engagement.
- Attainable. You need your goals to be realistic, or you'll never reach them. You wouldn't want to set a goal of 200,000 social media followers within six months for a new brand that only has two followers

- **Relevant.** Your goals should be relevant to where the business is at right now and what the current business objectives are. If you want to release a new product quickly, keep that in mind.
- Timely. These goals are designed to be accomplished within a set period of time, like six months or a year, and they should be realistic for you to start shooting for realistically at the time your campaign will begin.

Once you've decided what goals you want to accomplish, you can then begin your research to decide what types of content would best help you reach them.

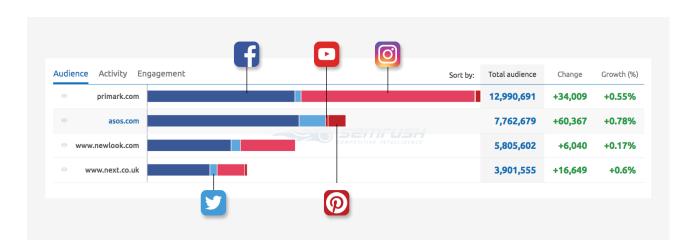
Conduct Competitor Research



Tools to use: Social Media Tracker

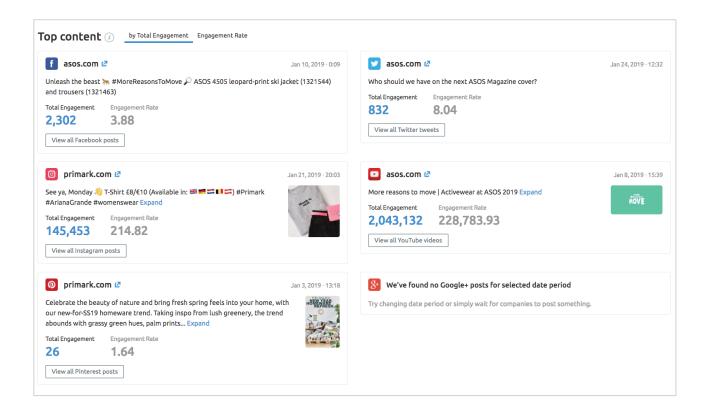
Start by looking closely at your competitors' content strategy. They may have found a strategy that you haven't discovered yet, or they may use certain types of content (like link sharing or status posting) more effectively. After all, there will be a lot of audience overlap here, so you can learn a lot from what your competitors are doing well.

The Social Media Tracker lets you enter up to 20 different competitors, who you can then track on every social media channel that they have. You can track the number of their followers, activity levels, and changes in growth or engagement, and you can see how you measure up.



You'll also be able to see which of their top content is currently performing better (or worse) than yours. This can give you valuable insight into what types of content your audience would rather be seeing, and give you new ideas for how to approach content creation.

It's important to remember, though, that engagement metrics aren't always as important as engagement rates. A brand with 200,000 followers but 60 likes per post isn't creating content as engaging as the brand with 400 followers and 30 likes per post. Sort your top content by both total engagement and engagement rate for a big-picture view of how you're ranking against your competitors, even if they have much more impressive follower counts.



See What Your Audience is Responding to



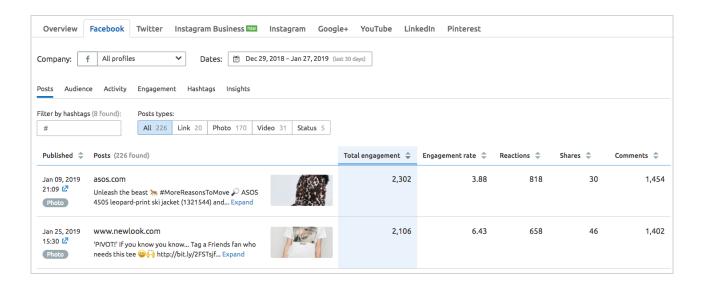
Tools to use: Social Media Tracker

After you've taken a close look at what's working for your competitors, examine what's already working for your pages and profiles if they're already up and running by using the Social Media Tracker's Top Content reports.

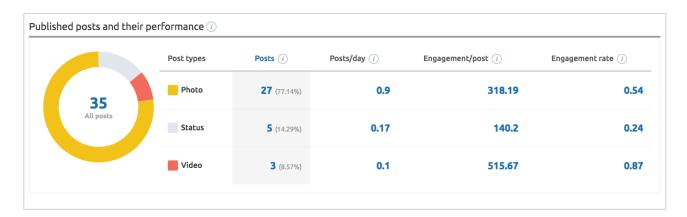
In many cases, businesses will hire social media agencies or seek help once they've got their pages up and running and have realized they need some help. This can give you a baseline of content and data to start with about what's working for you or your client's social media, along with what's working for other similar pages.

The Social Media Tracker allows you to analyze massive amounts of data about your social contents' performance on each individual channel. You'll be able to see specific performance metrics on each post, including:

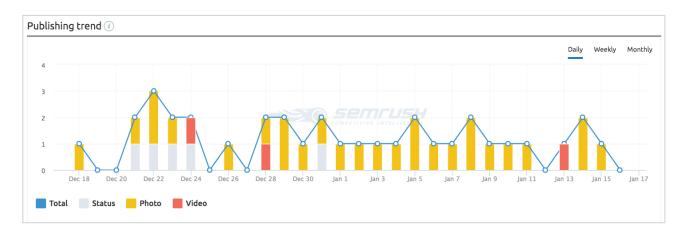
- Which posts had the most engagement
- Which posts had the highest engagement rate
- Specific types of engagement, like comments, shares/retweets, or likes
- Mentions and top mentioners on Twitter



For each social network, there is an 'Activity' dashboard that helps you analyze the frequency and nature of the content your competitors are posting, and see how much engagement their posts are getting.



Use all of this data to see which types of content your audience is most invested in. For the client above, for example, you could determine that content with visual components had significantly higher success rates than content without them.



Compile this information to develop your strategy for which types of content you'll use to accomplish your specific goals.

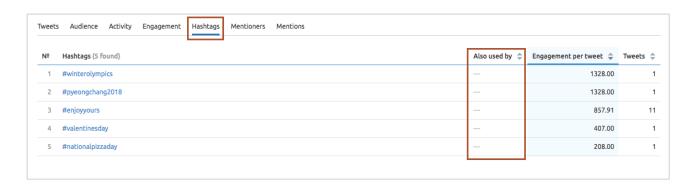
Search for Strong Hashtags



Tools to use: Social Media Tracker

Choosing strong hashtags will help you generate discussion and connect with the right audience on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. The right hashtag will expand your reach exponentially. You should always try to include at least one hashtag on Twitter, and between eight and eleven on Instagram for best results.

The Social Media Tracker will help you identify your own and your competitors' best performing hashtags on each individual platform, allowing you to discover which are working best on individual platforms, since they're unlikely to be the same on each. The tool will show you how much engagement per post the hashtags received, the number of posts your hashtags appeared in, and if they were used by any of your competitors. You can also research which hashtags your competitors use and incorporate some of the best ones into your own posts.



Create a list of your best performing hashtags and try to use some of them in every Instagram post, and add one or two regularly to your Twitter content. This will help you maintain your high reach while you test out other hashtags, too.

Scheduling



Scheduling & Posting

Once you've developed your goal-driven, measurable strategies and started generating content, it's time to dive in. Traditionally, posting content to every platform for all of your clients' social media was time consuming and frustrating, and there were so many tabs it was far too easy for something to get missed. This was true even if

you were just managing one client account.

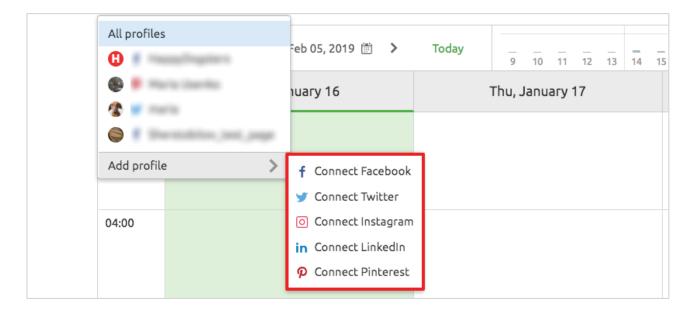
With the right process in place and the right tools on hand, however, you can streamline the social media posting and scheduling process to get more results and reduce your workload at the same time.

Use Scheduling Software to Plan Your Social Posts



Tools to use: Social Media Poster

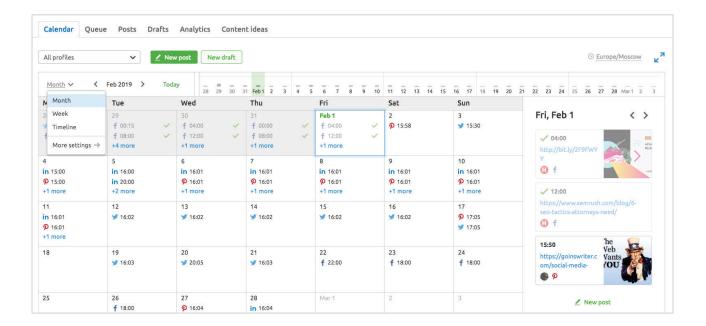
Gone are the days when you needed to worry about logging into each platform, logging out of one profile and into another, with too many tabs open on your screen. Now, you can utilize scheduling software so you can schedule social posts all in one place. When you're scheduling posts through the Social Media Poster, you can set them to be published to any combination of your social profiles, saving you a significant amount of time. Connect your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Pinterest accounts and off you go!



You can use the scheduling software to plan your most important posts ahead of time, especially those correlating to big announcements of special events, so that you never miss an opportunity and all the content will be distributed equally across each platform.

It also makes it much easier to create a cohesive social media editorial calendar, which can be synced with your business objectives and events (such as product releases or sales). You'll never miss a single opportunity, and your campaign results will improve because of this.

You can choose how you want to view your posts: for a bird's-eye view of your social media activity, switch to the monthly calendar view. Remember, the further ahead you plan, the better strategic vision you will have!



Alternatively, switch to the weekly view to see your posts for the week ahead, or to see them as a scrollable timeline.

Find the Best Times to Post



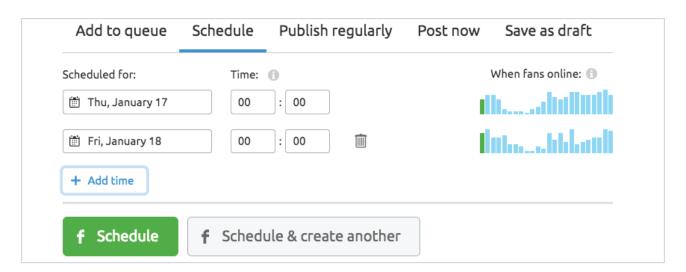
Tools to use: Social Media Poster

Before you actually start posting content, you'll want to determine exactly what times and days of the week you want to post. Timing does matter, after all, even on the platforms that don't organize content chronologically from the time they were posted.

Even on platforms like Facebook and Instagram that use relevance-based algorithms (which show users posts that the platform believes they'll most want to see based on past behavior and other user engagement), posting at the right times still matters.

If you post at peak times, users are more likely to see it, after all, and give you that initial surge of engagement that you need to give it a boost in the algorithms. This will significantly impact the reach of those specific posts. With competition in users' feeds being higher than ever (and with that unlikely to change), any boost you can give your content is a good thing.

When scheduling content to Facebook and Instagram in the Social Media Poster, you'll be able to see the times when your audience is most likely to be online and schedule your posts accordingly.



The tool provides you with five different options for scheduling your posts, including adding them to the queue, posting them immediately, scheduling the same posts for multiple dates/times, scheduling them to be published regularly, or saving them as drafts to edit and publish later.

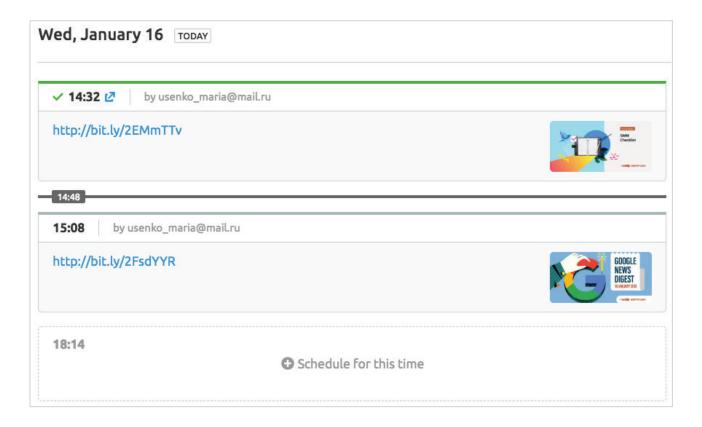
Set Up Queues So Content is Always Ready



Tools to use: Social Media Poster

You don't need to have timely content to post every single day, and that works to your advantage. In many cases, it's easier to spend one or two days a month creating large stores of social media content that's ready to post any time you have a void to be filled, and that's where social gueues come in.

The Social Media Poster queues tool is an excellent feature, allowing you to both create specific posts that you want to be shared when there's an empty space in the schedule, and decide when exactly you'd like those queued posts to go live. The social content queues are designed to make your life easier, as you can make quick last-minute changes without needing to go through multiple screens.



Queues will make your job as a content marketing manager significantly easier, and you can schedule different times and dates for queued posts to go live for each individual platform. Use this feature so that you'll never run out of content that's ready to be posted as-is, and your social results will be much stronger thanks to the consistency.

Automate Your Scheduling Routine



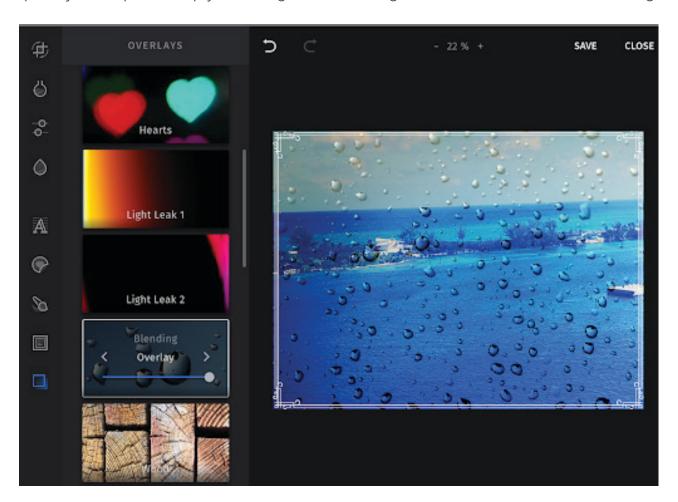
Tools to use: Social Media Poster, Social Media Poster Chrome Extension

When it comes to scheduling, automation is a real timesaver. Shortening links, adding UTM values, finding images, resizing and editing them -- it all takes an enormous amount of time. With the Social Media Poster, all these little tasks can be automated, allowing you to focus on strategic tasks.

Create Beautiful Images for Your Posts

If you enter the post's URL, the tool will automatically pull pictures from it and let you select the ones you want to go with your post. If the image needs resizing or editing, you can use the built-in image editor — it is quick, easy, and requires almost no learning curve.

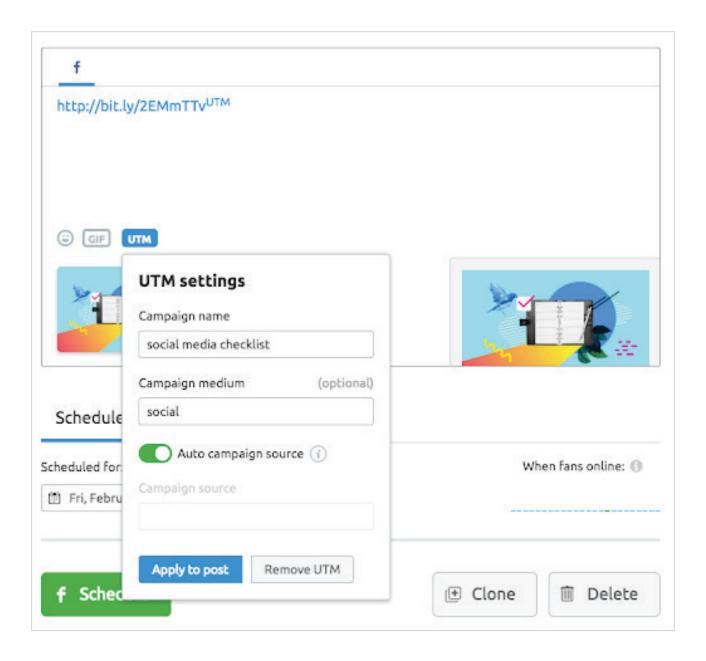
You can do everything from applying filters and color effects to adding a text overlay or stickers onto any image. There are also resizing capabilities that will quickly reshape or crop your images to fit the right dimensions for social sharing.



Shorten Your Links and Add UTM Parameters

The link you insert in your posting wizard will automatically be shortened with a built-in Bitly URL shortener. You can always un-shorten it by clicking the 'Unshorten' button.

You can add UTM parameters to your links, such as campaign name, campaign medium, and campaign source. The latter gets pulled automatically, depending on the social network you are posting to. Alternatively, you can set the source value manually.



Post-As-You-Go

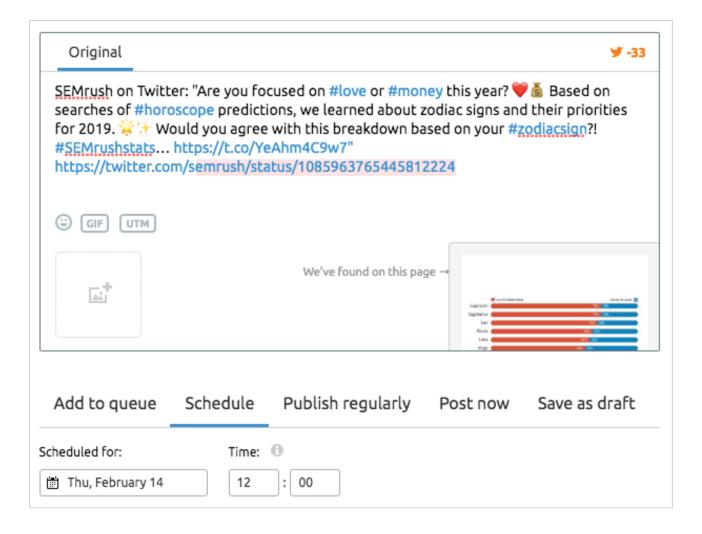


Tools to use: Social Media Poster Chrome Extension

Whenever you find something interesting that you'd like to share with your followers, you can post it across all your social media accounts with one click using the Social Media Poster Chrome extension. Just like in the tool itself, it has multiple scheduling options, including the option of posting immediately, scheduling for later, or saving your post as a draft. You can also choose to post only the selected text or an image if you don't want to share the whole article.

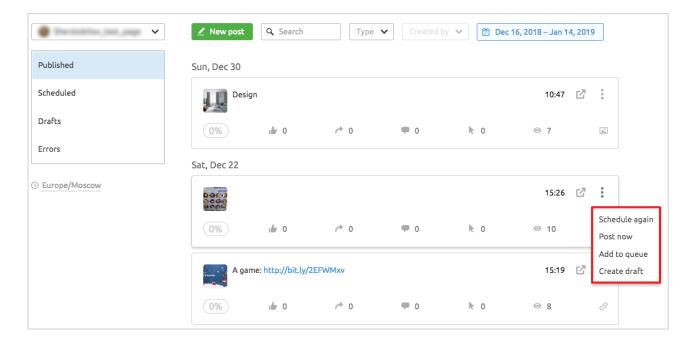
All the other features, including the ability to edit images, shorten links and add UTM parameters, are available through the extension.

Most social media managers' dream is to be able to schedule retweets for a specific time, which can be done via the Social Media Poster extension: you can schedule a retweet for any time you want, add it to your preset queue, or multi-schedule those tweets that will stay relevant for some time.



Keep Track of Your Recent and Future Activity

It's almost impossible to try and remember all your recently published, scheduled and drafted posts. To help you with this, we've added the 'Posts' tab to the Social Media Poster: it will give you all of this information at a glance, with a snapshot view of how each recent post performed so that you can reschedule the best-performing ones.



Diversify Your Content Feeds

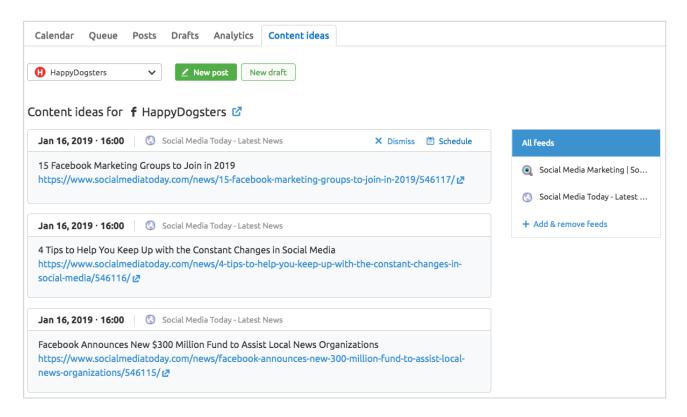


Tools to use: Social Media Poster

While a social media presence should be designed to nurture the relationship between a brand and its followers, that doesn't mean that all content should be about the brand all the time. Instead, it's actually more beneficial if you diversify the content on any given social profile. Share external content from other non-competing profiles that you'd like to establish relationships with.

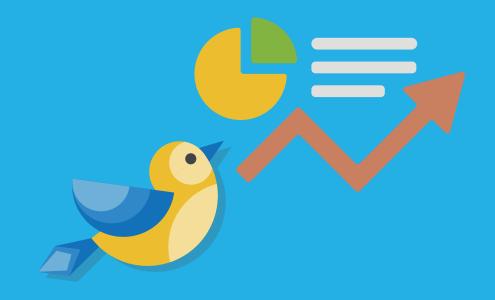
These other profiles could be from brands, businesses, or publications that regularly publish content that your audience would be interested in. For small local businesses, this may mean joining forces and sharing content from other local brands. For larger brands, it could mean sharing industry-related content instead.

Once you've found the brands that you want to share posts from, our Social Media Poster will allow you to set up RSS feeds that can help you post external content from these brands to your client's own social profiles. The feeds will automatically be updated with all new content from any given brand's RSS feeds, which you can then share to your business's or your clients' profiles with just a few clicks.



You can schedule these posts just like you would any other content, with additional options available to publish them immediately or put them into the queue. This will allow you to build stronger relationships with other brands in your field, and it can give you additional sources of content that you know your audience will love.

Analytics & Optimization



Analytics & Optimization

After you've implemented your new strategies and have gotten your campaigns up and running, your job still isn't over (especially not as a social media professional doing ongoing work for multiple clients). You need to find accurate, detailed analytics and understand how to interpret them in order to optimize your campaigns moving forward. This will allow you to do more of what's working for you, and cut what isn't. You'll also be able to adjust and formulate new strategies based on the data at hand.

Evaluate Content Performance

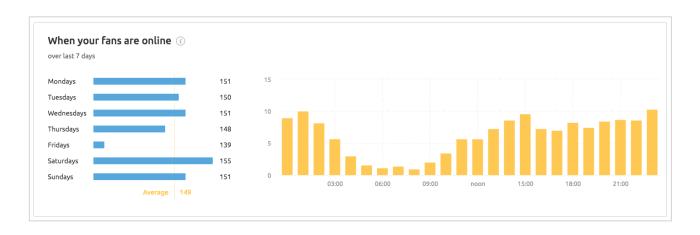


Tools to use: Social Media Tracker, Social Media Poster

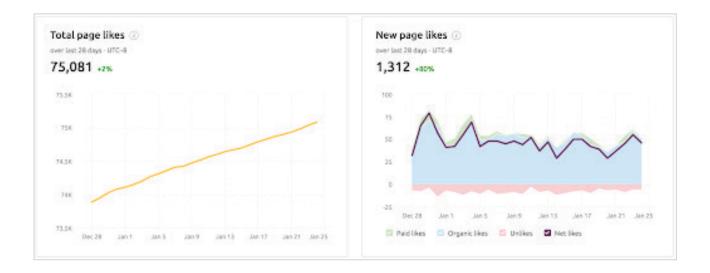
As a social media professional, it's crucial to constantly monitor your content on every single platform for every client. There may be general trends you notice that apply to all, but every audience is different -- even for the same client.

Once you're done with scheduling content, visit the 'Analytics' tab of the Social Media Poster to gain insights into your Facebook and Instagram performance.

You will be able to see detailed stats on your Facebook and Instagram followers' demographics and the time they hang out online most often.



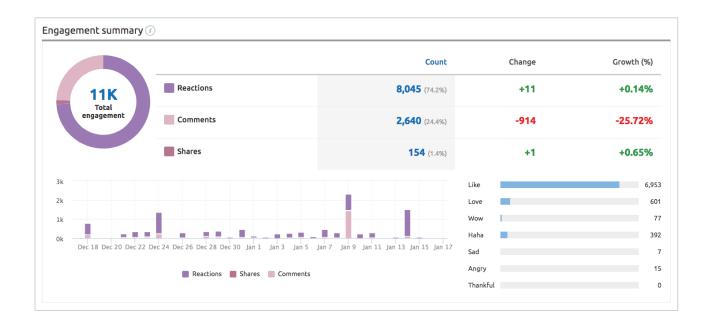
This section also provides you with a brief overview of your posts' performance. For Facebook, you get to see your total and new page likes.



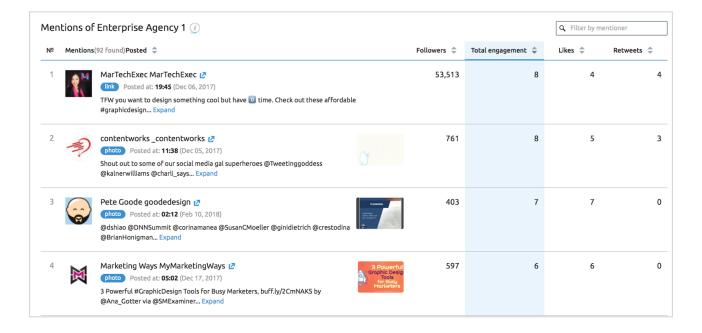
For Instagram, you will see the number of new followers and impressions, your estimated reach, and a chart displaying your audience's interactions with your posts.



Alternatively, use the Social Media Tracker to track and evaluate how your content is performing, and why. You can look at exact engagement rates, along with the different types of engagement on each post.



As you're doing this, look closely at your results and examine whether they show progress towards your goal. If you're trying to increase brand awareness, for example, you would want to look at the number of mentions you're getting on Twitter, and who is mentioning you.



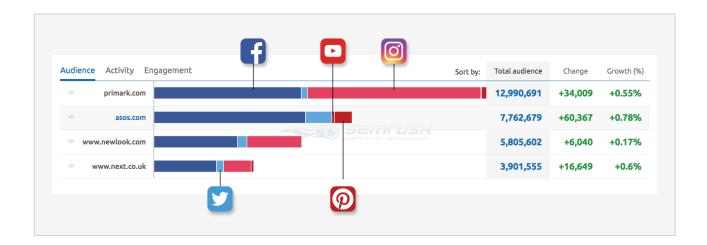
Your social media campaigns, after all, were all built around specific, measurable goals that were designed to help you achieve specific business objectives for your clients. Vanity metrics such as likes can be nice and make your clients happy, but they're often not enough to help reach goals like brand awareness, lead nurturing, or increased conversions.

Maintain Competitor Research



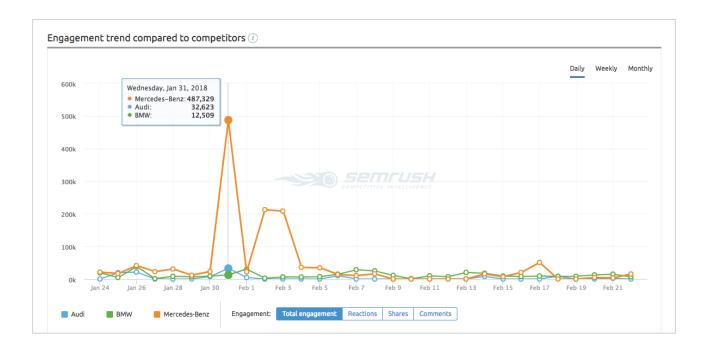
Tools to use: Social Media Tracker

Just because your content is up and running doesn't mean your competitor research should be done. Instead, you want to track how your campaigns are affecting your ranking against your competition. Are your engagement rates increasing? Have you surpassed them, or are they still getting more followers and more results?



Keeping an eye on your competitors over time can help clue you in to any big changes they've made, like new events they're hosting. Are you posting as frequently as they are? Are you posting less frequently but still getting more results? Take all of this into consideration to see how you can pull ahead if you haven't already. It's always important to keep one eye on your competition, so utilize the Social Media Tracker to do so.

You can also use this report to see what's happening in that particular industry or niche, looking for peaks and trends. Typically, a peak in posting means that your competitors have launched a new marketing campaign or announced an event that they wanted to attract a lot of attention. This can give you a quick indicator to go check out their big event or campaign to see what you can learn from it.



You may also make discoveries that surprise you. You could, for example, discover that every time one of your competitors goes live, their engagement jumps, getting at least three times as many comments and reactions. Look at all this data to see what you can learn.

Conclusion

The oversaturation of content shared by brands and users alike on social media can make your job as a social media marketer more difficult, but with the right tools in place, you can streamline the social media profiles you manage and make the process more efficient along the way.

SEMrush's **Social Media Poster** and **Social Media Tracker** tools are key to helping you get to that efficiency - even if you're currently struggling with it. We can do that by:

- Making it easy to post across multiple social media accounts all in one dashboard and without the need for six different tabs for one client
- Providing you with endless ideas and external content to share in one feed so that you don't get stuck in the loop of struggling for content or being "too promotional" with your own
- Giving you suggestions for the best times to post, taking the guesswork out of the process and helping you to maximize your results
- Identifying why your or your client's competitors are performing stronger on social media so you can adapt, implement new strategies, and improve your own performance.

Agencies and teams of social media professionals can benefit directly from SEMrush's social media toolkit. The team collaboration features make it easier to share your projects with multiple team members, allowing each team member to work seamlessly on every project and client profile they're assigned to. You'll also be able to export data in both CVS and PDF formats, and the data collected from the Social Media Tracker can give you detailed reports that show how efficient your business is. This will let you prove your value to your current clients, increasing retention rates, and help you to win over new clients who want proof of results before committing.



We love your feedback!

Was this guide helpful? Did it answer all of your questions? Are there any other features you would like to see in our tools? Shoot us a message at smm-tool-feedback@semrush.com and let us know!