


Digital marketing guide

Building an online audience > Social media



The purpose of this guide is to provide advice and tips to filmmakers on using social media to build an online community; be that for a short film, a feature film or a web series. By doing this effectively, you will be able to leverage an invested fanbase for your production.

The most important thing about building an online community is that it's never too early to start. And it doesn't have to be a costly exercise either; social networks are essentially free, the main investment will be your own time – although that is often the hardest commitment to make. However, time coupled with an intelligent strategy based on your realistic resources, will allow you to build an engaged audience that will spread awareness of your production and drive word-of-mouth.

About the author

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1.0 Top 10 social media tips for filmmakers

You can use these top 10 tips as general guidance when using social media to grow an online community for your production. Following these tips will set you on the right path when it comes to building your fanbase, but please read the full guide for further clarity around these points.

1. Start early

The sooner you start engaging in the social media space the better, and the longer you'll have to build an audience and achieve your objectives. An established and engaged fanbase is a powerful thing but it takes times to build a community. Even if you are in the pre-production phase, set up your social media presence and share your production journey.

2. Less is more

Focus on the social media channels that best suit your production but don't try and have a presence on every single one. Social media is resource intensive and managing too many channels is counterproductive. Just concentrate on being good at the platforms you need to be on.

3. Bank content

It's a tired expression but 'content is king' and you're a content creator. If you are in the production phase, try and hold on to bonus behind-the-scenes materials that you will be able to use further down the track to market your film. And if you are in a position to create bespoke content for social media then this is an absolute must.

4. Maintain tone of voice

Ensure your tone of voice is consistent across all your social media channels. And ensure it represents your film accurately. For example, if you are building a following for a documentary with challenging subject matter, then ensure the content you post and the language you use is true to that. Before you embark on any social media campaign, ask yourself what your tone of voice needs to be.

5. Follow and engage media influencers

Identify and follow the personalities and companies relevant to your production. That includes influential journalists and bloggers, find out who they are and follow their profiles. 'Like', 'retweet' and 'share' anything interesting they have to say and, when appropriate, engage them directly and interact.

6. Regulate self-promotion

Your audience has signed up to hear from you, but they don't want to be spammed by you! Regulate how often you post and don't just post about your film. Post about the topics your audience is likely to be interested in that might directly or indirectly relate to your film. Keep it interesting!

7. Leverage talent

If you have established talent attached to your project who have an influential social media presence, you should look to capitalise on this. Encourage talent to share key content, photos and news from your production. This is a great way to attract new followers to your community and tap into an already active fanbase who are likely to want to engage with your production.

8. Create shareable content

You are a filmmaker. That means you are a storyteller and in a great position to use social media as a device to tell an interesting story around your film. So, what original content can you create that will help you tell that story? What interesting materials can you post that will get traction with your followers and get them to share it with their networks?

9. Understand best practice and latest trends

Social media is a 'moving target' in terms of getting it right all the time. So, keep up with the latest social media trends to help you understand the latest happenings and changes. A great way to do this is to follow and read key publications online that focus on best practice procedure around social media activity.

10. Boost reach through social advertising

Advertising on social media can be an incredibly cost effective way of growing audiences, especially with Facebook's recent changes to organic reach. Make sure you are confident of what you want to achieve (Likes? Clicks? Views?) before embarking on a social advertising campaign and always test different ads to see what performs best before committing further investment.



2.0 Getting started

You may know a lot about social media or you may just be starting out. Either way, the following steps are essential if you want to strategically build a community for your production.

2.1 What are your goals and objectives?

First of all, think about what you want to achieve in the social media space. This will completely depend on the individual project and stage of production but it is important to ask yourself, what is the purpose of engaging in social media? What do I ultimately want it to do for me? A clear idea of this will help you decide what social media platforms will best achieve your outcomes, what your priorities are and what content you might need to do this successfully.

NB If your production is acquired by a distributor then ensure that your planned activity ties into the marketing activity of that distributor.

2.2 Who is your audience?

Think carefully about your film and who it might appeal to. Will it appeal to a broad audience or a niche audience? Will it skew young or old, male or female? What does your potential demographic look like and what are their interests and hobbies likely to be? For example, what films, TV shows, books, musicians, bands and celebrities might they like that are similar to or have a connection to your project? What about the media they consume? What magazines, websites and blogs do they read?

Once you have a good idea of this, you can start to form an understanding of who your audience might be and where they spend time online. This will determine how you connect with your audience, what tone of voice you will use and the kind of content you use to engage them.

2.3 What content do you have?

The next thing to think about is the content you'll have to engage an audience. Think about the photos, videos and behind-the-scenes materials you have (or might have) and make an inventory. If you are in the pre-production phase, and you realistically have the time, give some thought to materials you can hold back to help with the marketing of your film further down the track or even better, materials that you can create on-set that specifically address a social media audience.

2.4 What is your tone of voice?










How you address an audience on social media is particularly important, so ensure you have an idea of the style of tone you want to use and make sure it is consistent across all your channels. Based on the subject matter of your production, think about whether your tone of voice will be light and fun or whether it needs to be more formal and serious.

2.5 What are your timings?

What is your deadline? What stage of development is your production in now and likely to be in three, six, nine or 12 months? Are you building towards a particular date or do you have the luxury of time to build a community? Again, being very aware of this will help shape what is and isn't possible for your production on social media. Successfully building an on-line community can take time, so don't set unrealistic goals.

2.6 What are the key social media channels?

On the next page are the social media platforms that lend themselves well to filmmakers.

Platform	Description	Australian statistics*
	The world's largest all round social network, allows you to post status updates, photos, videos, memes, etc. Interaction is through fans' ability to 'like', 'share' and 'comment' on your content.	13.6 million monthly users
	The fast-moving micro-blogging service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages. Engagement is through 'retweets', 'favourites' and direct '@reply' conversations.	2.7 million monthly users
	The blogging platform designed to easily share multimedia content. Users are able to follow fellow Tumblr blogs. Almost half Tumblr users are under 35, so appeals to younger audiences.	4.6 million monthly users
	The world's biggest online video platform. Allows users to 'like' or 'dislike' videos and comment on them. If you have a lot of video content to share, you should set up a dedicated channel.	13.1 million monthly users
	A mobile photo-sharing platform (app) that allows users to manipulate photos and share them with their followers and through other social channels.	2 million monthly users
	A video platform similar to YouTube but on a much smaller scale. A great platform if you're looking to showcase your work to others. It also has a cleaner layout than YouTube, there are no ads and you can password protect your content.	N/A
	The career-focused social networking platform, great for raising your profile as a filmmaker and connecting you to the industry, but not so great for consumer engagement around your film.	3.9 million monthly users
	The self-styled 'homepage of the Internet'. Reddit is a source for what's new and popular on the web. Users provide all of the content and vote for what's hot and what's not.	160,000 monthly users
	The 'virtual inspiration board'. A social network where people collate ideas and things that inspire them by pinning them to their board and 'repinning' other people's pins. Roughly 80% of users are female.	370,000 monthly users

(*Stats from socialmedianews.com.au Sept 2014 <http://www.socialmedianews.com.au/social-media-statistics-australia-september-2014/>)

2.7 What social media channels should you engage in?

The first rule here is 'less is more' – especially if you have limited resources. Each social media platform offers something different, so review the options most appropriate for your film but don't try and be on every channel out there. Attempting this will end up being counterproductive and it's better to have no profile than a dormant one. Instead, concentrate on being good at the ones you really need to be on, you can always consider additional platforms later on.

» **Facebook** is still the natural starting place to build a profile. Being the most popular social network, your audience is highly likely to already be on there. Facebook has recently changed the way content reaches audiences but even with that limitation, it is worth having a profile.

» **Twitter** is an ideal platform for sharing real-time updates of your project and for following and engaging thought leaders and influencers, rather than just fans. That also includes editors and journalists of influential blogs and websites relevant to your film. Think of Twitter as a news platform for your film.

» **Tumblr** is good for engaging younger audiences if you have the resources to engage regularly with shareable multimedia content such as memes and gifs.

» **YouTube** is the number one platform for sharing video content. You can post videos to your other social networks, but housing them on YouTube will give you access to statistics on how your content is performing. If you have a lot of video content to share with an audience then a YouTube presence is essential and you should build a dedicated channel and look to build subscribers.

» **Instagram** is a visually led social media platform and perfect if your film lends itself to strong imagery. It is primarily designed for mobile use so is a great way of targeting users of mobile devices.

» **Vimeo** is generally the preferred platform for filmmakers that want to showcase their work to a particular community or other professionals, especially due to its clean look and high quality of video. The platform is also a far less distracting one than YouTube, so users are more likely to watch content in its entirety.

» **LinkedIn** is the platform to showcase your personal experience as a filmmaker and to connect with people in the industry. While you can set up company profiles, such as a page for your production company, you should really use LinkedIn as a platform for professional networking.

» **Reddit** is ideal if you want to get traction around a particular piece of content, but you will need to understand what kind of content gets picked up and the etiquette of being a 'redditor'. Worth signing up for but not a network you need to have an ongoing engagement with unless you have the appropriate content to share.

» **Pinterest** is all about sharing inspirational ideas. So again, if your project would benefit from having a presence on a creative platform like this, you should consider it as an option.



3.0 Social media engagement

Once you have decided on and set up your social media platforms, it's time to start populating your channels with content.

3.1 What should you know?

Ensure you understand how to use the social networks you have signed up to. Read up and research best practice tips both in terms of set up and engagement. Also, make sure you understand the terminology and etiquette that goes along with each particular network. This will prevent you from making basic mistakes.

Do remember to give your social platforms a 'spring clean' now and again and update your profile designs, change the header, cover and profile photos as applicable. Always make sure the contact details and profile descriptions are current and up-to-date.

3.2 What should you be posting?

The simple answer to that is interesting and relevant content! What is your audience going to be interested in? What could you post that might lead to better engagement? What could you post that might get your followers to share it with their friends and expand the reach of your content?

Social media allows you to post all types of content so keep it to a healthy mix of what interests you and what might interest your audience, with specific content around your project. The most important thing to remember when posting is not to spam your audience by over-posting (see next page) or bore them by constantly posting about your film. Keep it interesting!

3.3 What if you have nothing to post?

Never post for the sake of posting. If you feel you have nothing to say, and don't forget social media is all about having something to say, then put in the research and find articles online that you can share and comment on. This can take time, but it will keep your channel moving and is well worth it. Content fuels engagement, so if you haven't got it, find it!

3.4 How often should you be posting?

A common question in social media is how often and when to post. There is no exact science to this and it completely depends on the content you have, the platforms you are engaging in, the audience you are speaking to and your own production timeline.

However, below is an average guide of 'healthy activity' on some of the key platforms:

- » Facebook 1–2 x a day
- » Twitter 2–3 x a day (including retweets)
- » Instagram 1–3 x a day
- » Pinterest 2 x a day.

Again, it is not an exact science, but here are some times of the week certain platforms seem to get the best engagement (your experience may be very different, so experiment):

- » Facebook 6–8am & 2–5pm (weekdays)
- » Twitter 1–3pm (weekdays)
- » Instagram 5–6pm
- » Pinterest 8–11pm.

3.5 How do you keep people interested?

Try not to just dictate to your audience, once you have a bit of a following you should involve and engage them. Interact. Follow people back if they follow you, like fellow pages if they like yours and so on. Again, be social! Ask them questions, get their opinions on your content and after you have been posting for a while, ask them what they'd like to see on the profile in future.

3.6 How often should you respond to interactions?

It is good social media etiquette to respond to ALL audience interactions, whether they are comments, questions, @replies on Twitter and so on. So regularly check your profiles to see if you have had any interactions and try to respond to them as promptly as possible.

3.7 How do you deal with negative commentary?

Negative comments are a fact of life on social media but it's how you deal with them that counts. You have to accept that there will always be some negativity out there; everyone is entitled to their opinion.

However, if there is something that particularly needs addressing, it is considered poor form to react badly or delete the post in question. In the first instance, tackle the comment head on and be positive (not defensive), your response reflects your film and everyone can see it. Also, an engaged audience will likely back up anything you say and fight those battles for you. If someone is being continually offensive, you always have the option to block them from future interaction.

3.8 What is the best way to manage multiple profiles?

Social media can be a resource-intensive commitment so there are some great tools online that can help you to manage multiple profiles at once. HootSuite in particular is one of the most popular social media management tools for a reason: **www.hootsuite.com**

In addition, you can also dual post between certain channels (for example, what you post on Facebook can be replicated to Twitter and vice versa) to save time. However, this isn't highly recommended, each channel should feature content that suits that particular platform.



4.0 Growing an audience

When you first start out, it can be a little disheartening posting to a small audience but there are some basic steps to follow that will help grow your audience and build your community.

4.1 Activate your own network

The best place to start in terms of building an audience is to get your friends, family and peers as well as their friends, families and peers to follow and connect with your social profiles. The more people following you, means the more people that have the potential to share your content with their own networks.

4.2 Leverage talent

If you have established talent attached to your project that have a particularly influential social media profile then ensure you encourage them to share news and content from your project. Leveraging their social media footprint can be an essential way of attracting enthused followers and tapping into a fanbase outside of your community. Capitalising on the social media influence of directors, producers and actors is very much a key part of the modern marketing strategy for film distributors.

4.3 Publicise your presence

Publicise your social media presence by ensuring it is mentioned on all touchpoints for your film. Examples of this include website, flyers, business cards, email signatures and also through any personal social media profiles you might be running.

4.4 Follow key media influencers

Ensure your profiles 'follow' or 'like' key influencers relevant to the subject matter of your film. Do some research and find out who are the influential voices online. For example, if your film is a documentary about healthcare in the third world, then ensure you follow and/or like relevant organisations and professionals that have a presence on social media. This is an area where Twitter really comes into its own, as it allows you to open a direct dialogue with these profiles. Finally, ensure you also follow key websites and blogs relevant to your film as well as film magazines, trade publications and film journalists.

4.5 Use hashtags

Hashtags are a way certain social media channels group conversations around a particular topic. They started with Twitter but are now commonly used across Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest amongst others. Hashtags are a great way of exposing your social channels outside of their existing network and can lead to additional followers and increased engagement.

For example, if you are posting about film production you might include the hashtag #filmproduction within your post or if you are posting about marketing your project on social media, you could include the hashtag #socialmediamarketing. Posts with hashtags often get a higher level of engagement but there is an etiquette, don't use too many. Two a post is perfectly adequate.

4.6 Understand analytics

If you start to build some significant followers you should take advantage of the free analytics tools on offer with the social networks. Although they may take a bit of getting used to, they are well worth investing the time in, because they will allow you to track what is and isn't working in terms of your engagement. Facebook and YouTube have particularly good analytics tools and Twitter has recently introduced theirs at [**https://analytics.twitter.com**](https://analytics.twitter.com)

4.7 Boost through social advertising

Advertising on social media is a great way of widening the reach of your profile. And it doesn't have to be an expensive exercise. If you know your budget, the social networks make it easy for you to manage your spend so that you don't go over your budget.

Social advertising can be incredibly targeted and you can really drill down and target a precise audience by age, gender, hobbies, interests and many other categories. There are plenty of tutorials online that can help you navigate the differing advertising options, as it can be a little overwhelming at first, so definitely do your research before jumping in.

Here are some tips for advertising on social media:

» **Goals:** Identify your goals – do you want more likes, more video views, more clicks to your website? Ensure your advertising campaign is optimised to achieve this.

» **Testing:** When you first set up an advertising campaign it is always a good idea to test different versions of an ad to see what gets the best engagement and once you have a good idea of this, invest further in that format.

So that might be using the same ad but using different imagery, different text or different target demographics. Running ads simultaneously like this allows you to see which gets the best return on your investment.

» **Facebook:** Facebook have now made it harder to access your own audience by limiting the 'organic reach' of your posts. This was done to free up the congested Facebook News Feed and encourage brands to advertise in order to reach their audience.

Some tips for tackling these changes to organic reach on Facebook:

- Amplifying content with advertising (as above)
- Creating valuable content (exclusives)
- Posting at non-peak times
- Sharing premium content (images always do well).