

5 ways your business can reach more people with hashtags

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Hashtags are a key component in any social media strategy. When used correctly, they can increase your business's discoverability online and reach more people who could potentially be interested in your products or services. In order to successfully use hashtags and not get penalised by those dreaded social media algorithms, you need to understand how they work.



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It is important to build an online community and to do that, you need to foster a space where your audiences can engage with your business and hashtags are a great way to do that. It's not about being seen by a lot of people, it's about being seen by the right people. With the mass amount of content that users are bombarded with every day, it is important to put thought into your strategy when using hashtags for your business.

Here are 5 ways you can set yourself apart from the crowd and reach more people with hashtags.

1. Use hashtags that are relevant to your niche

Using a variety of hashtags on your posts or stories can help you reach different communities. The catch is to use ones that are relevant to your specific industry or niche. For example, if you are a coffee shop in Maboneng, Johannesburg, then #MabonengPrecinct is a good hashtag to use to attract visitors in the area. People can choose to follow hashtags, which means they could see your post in their feed even if they don't follow you. Hootsuite's A/B testing is a great process to use to test which posts drive conversion and work best for your business.

Hashtags on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram build community online and allow people from all walks of life to connect on a topic of common interest. For example, the popular #JerusalemChallenge has been used over 10 million times across social media. People sharing their take on the dance has created a global community who have connected based on their love of good music and dance, irrespective of the language barrier. On the other hand, Nike Los Angeles created #PlayInside where users shared content on how they were staying active in their homes during a time when the world was in lockdown. This was a way for people to share their workout routines, encourage each other to stay active and remind everyone that they were all in this together.



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2. Do a quick hashtag audit and create your own branded hashtag

Depending on your business objectives, a quick social media search on what hashtags your competitors are using will give you a good indication of which ones are popularly used in your industry. For example, #SupportLocalBusiness is popular if you are a small business or #MeetSouthAfrica if you're in the tourism or hospitality industry.

It can also help you identify which hashtags to avoid using for a campaign if they have been used popularly or by other brands. A large number of posts on a hashtag means that your content could get lost in the clutter, so personalising it to your business is recommended. For example, Brutal Fruit South Africa has been running an ongoing influencer campaign for their new Spritzer flavour. Instead of opting for the generic 'drink responsibly' call-to-action that alcohol brand advertising has to have, Brutal Fruit put their spin on it with #BrutallyResponsible. It is simple, unique, trackable and still incorporates the call-to-action for their customers to drink Brutal Fruit responsibly.

3. Consider running a Promoted Trend

A Promoted Trend is a branded hashtag that appears as either the first or second trending topic on Twitter's "Trends for you" tab. It is a high-impact takeover that runs for 24-hours and is often used to launch a new campaign or connect with current events. When users click on a Promoted Trend, they will see unfiltered, open, and authentic results of other users interacting with the trend.

To book a Promoted Trend on Twitter, advertisers have to purchase the space. The trend is clearly marked with "Promoted" and also features the name of the brand that is promoting it. This ad unit gives brands an opportunity to drive online talkability, encourage user-generated content, reach a broader audience, and be top-of-mind when a user is looking to explore trending topics.

4. Avoid banned, spam or irrelevant hashtags

When inappropriate or harmful content becomes associated with a hashtag, platforms such as Instagram and Twitter ban that hashtag. On Instagram, these include #adulthood, #singlelife, #bikiniBody and even #ValentinesDay. It doesn't necessarily remove the hashtag entirely, it only shows top posts but no recent posts or Stories from people using the hashtag. This is done to adhere to the platforms' guidelines and protect users, particularly minors, from potentially harmful content. The best way to know if a hashtag is banned is to check it before you use it, especially when using a new one. Even if they're not banned, businesses should avoid hashtags that solicit likes, followers and spam such as #followme, #like4like, #tagsforlikes, #First etc. This can cause a drop in engagement on your business page, as your content will be penalised by the algorithm.



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5. Use insights to track how your hashtags are performing

Data should drive your content. Without it, you are completely ignoring the interests of your customers. If you are a business, it is important to have a Facebook Page and switch to an Instagram business profile. This will allow you to gain

access to insights on your posts that tell you how well specific posts on your profile are performing and the impressions and engagements you received from hashtags. This data will give you a better understanding of the type of content your audience interacts with the most so you can adjust your content strategy accordingly.

Happy hashtagging!

ABOUT ZUBEIDA GOOLAM

With a rich history and culture, Zubeida had an impressive repertoire, spanning over many years at industry giants, before starting and then dominating with her own company Valiant. Valiant incorporates multiple levels of marketing including but not limited to consulting, social media, storytelling and full content creation. With years of experience and a passion for creating, Zubeida now heads up the storytelling team along with co-founder Wayne Flemming, creating online campaigns that both inspire and drive critical engagement.

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