

How to Use Hashtag Marketing to Grow Your Business

You have probably seen hashtags used on various platforms like Google+, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Pinterest. But what are hashtags and why do businesses use them? Hashtags are an important way to promote your business across social platforms by connecting it to searches and discovery relevant to your target audience.

Why hashtags are important

Hashtags are important because they help **increase social media engagement** with new users. A “hashtag” is a label used on words or phrases on social media posts that help categorize together specific content on relevant topics. Hashtags, which can be phrases or acronyms, filter your social media posts to be searchable and linkable. For example, when you click on a hashtag, you are brought to a page with all the posts that use that same hashtag. It allows users to search for posts that have a common topic.

Businesses use hashtags to attract new customers and grow their online presence. Hashtags help facilitate filtering and discovery of related content. Users searching a hashtag you’ve used can come across your account and engage, becoming new followers and potential customers.

Before taking the time to use hashtags, make sure that hashtags will fit into your social media strategy. Do you use Instagram and Twitter for business? If so, you should use hashtags. If you engage your customers more through email, then hashtags won’t be applicable to your business.

By first knowing how to **market your business to customers**, you can develop a good strategy for hashtag use. If your customers are a younger demographic, they’re more likely to use social media and engage with hashtags as well as appreciate the use of them. Hashtags are modern, and they show already engaged users that you are relevant and follow what’s on-trend. This will help customers stick around and support your brand longer—especially if your target audience is in a younger demographic. Using hashtags to market your business to customers shows that you follow social media trends and want to extend your reach.

Who uses hashtags?

There are many **small business hashtags to use on social media** that can help you to market your business. However, you’re more likely to find hashtag use with businesses that use visual marketing than with professional services. Bakeries might use #bestcakesboston to gain customers that are looking for the best cakes in their area. Fitness centers might use hashtags for a competition or weight loss challenge they are promoting across social media. An accountant, however, may not benefit as much from hashtag marketing. Many businesses who host promotions and giveaways use hashtags to announce these events over social media. For example, Forever 21 once hosted an **Instagram contest giveaway** for denim for an entire year. Participants had to post a picture showcasing their favorite denim look and use the hashtag #allaboutdenim to win.

How to create a hashtag

Creating a business hashtag is easy. A hashtag can be made from any word, phrase, or acronym, as long as there are no spaces between words within the phrase, and it is preceded by the pound symbol (#).

Be sure that the hashtag is relevant to your business in terms of product, service, location, or period of time. For example, Warby Parker, a prescription eyeglass brand, has been using the hashtag #seesummerbetter in order to promote using their products for a more enjoyable season. Dunkin Donuts often has hashtags #DDperkslove for their customers to share pictures of them enjoying their coffee and donuts. Both of these hashtags are relevant to the business and what they do. **Daily hashtags for small business marketing** are another way to ensure relevancy in your hashtags.

What's the difference between @ and #?

It's important to remember that using the "@" symbol is different than the "#" symbol. Putting @ in front of anything tags another user on the social media site. You should only use the @ symbol if you are trying to directly reach the person through your post.

Create a hashtag that is unique to your brand. Something like #cookies will filter thousands of other posts that don't necessarily link up to you. Be more specific and include your brand name, or something special about your cookies that distinguish them from others. Make sure it's easy to remember so that others will use it when engaging with your brand.

If a hashtag is too long and complicated like #thrivehive2015bestcompany your followers won't remember it and won't use it. This defeats the purpose of using a hashtag at all. Your hashtag will become a central business tag so make sure it's unique and easy to remember. It will link all posts related to your business on all social platforms and allows customers to engage together.

How to properly use a hashtag

Since hashtags are a great way to promote your business, make sure that the hashtags you use are specific to you. When using them, it's important to search the results to make sure they are appropriate and relevant. You could create a hashtag that includes your business name and markets it to your users to filter their posts about your store.

When using a hashtag, make sure you add it into your post instead of just throwing at followers a list of hashtags without context. This will confuse users which can lead to disengagement. Also, avoid hashtagging a million different things in one post. It's overwhelming for users to see more hashtags than words. Remember, your goal is not to show up in every search, it's to show up in the right searches. What's most important is hashtagging relevant keywords or phrases that can bring new customers to your page. Only use multiple hashtags if each hashtag is extremely relevant to your post or your business. In addition to hashtag overloading, also avoid repeating the same hashtag multiple times in one post. You may use the word or phrase again, but adding the hashtag in front of every instance of that phrase will not increase the effectiveness of the hashtag.

You can use any sort of hashtag relevant to your business on your social media posts. People use local hashtags to find local business. Small businesses often use #shoplocal or #shopsmall to promote this. People also may use hashtags with their town name or shopping/eating in their town. **On Instagram**, food establishments often use something like #instafood as there are many popular food accounts that will repost your picture.

Use hashtags to Grow Your Business

During the crazy snow blizzards in Boston this winter, restaurants started to use #digoutdineout. People who might not have power or want to cook will know that the restaurants are open for business, even though there are 10 feet of snow. Many of these restaurants were offering specials and deals to customers who braved the weather to eat out—this helped the businesses to fill their tables, satisfy customers, and [give back to the local community](#).

Since the purpose of hashtags is to engage more users to your account, make sure the hashtags you use are [relevant to your target audience](#). Search similar businesses and see what hashtags they may use, or search your customers for their interests. Use the keywords associated with your type of business to ensure that the engagement you receive is the engagement you want.

Related: [Your Free Hashtag Marketing Handbook](#)

Hashtag trends

A trending hashtag is one that is being used by a lot of people at the same time. This commonly happens when there is breaking news or celebrity gossip or during a convention. Twitter alerts people when their followers are all tweeting about the same thing, so even if a hashtag isn't trending, they're good to use at events to increase your reach by helping acquire customers to increase the buzz about your brand.

Get involved with a trending hashtag! Do a little research [to find hashtags for your business](#). Some hashtags become common to use when posting certain content, so take advantage of it if it is relevant to your social presence and brand awareness. Some trending hashtags are popular acronyms that people post weekly, while some are seasonal and die out but are still important to connect with other users.

Research before using trending hashtags

Before using a trending hashtag, make sure to research it first. You don't want to make a bad impression on your followers or attract the wrong audience. DiGiorno made a big mistake by not researching the hashtag they used ahead of time when they used a hashtag about domestic violence to sell their pizza. They quickly deleted the tweet after receiving a ton of backlash, but the brand already offended many customers who will probably remember the incident when buying frozen pizza in the future. Don't let a hashtag [destroy your business reputation](#).

You can find trending hashtags on many of these social platforms themselves, or you may notice them in posts with users you are connected with. There are also many websites or apps that list what's trending or give you ideas of which ones to post. [Trendsmap](#) shows the latest trending hashtags in any location. This makes it easy for businesses to search and use hashtags relevant to their area. [WhatTheTrend](#) shows current trending hashtags and explains why they are trending. This is important if you want to use a popular hashtag but don't know why it's being used.