

SOCIAL STORIES

**FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HARNESS THE POWER OF
SOCIAL STORIES TO BUILD A LOYAL CUSTOMER BASE!**



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Introduction

Social media stories started on Snapchat, but have since branched out to nearly every other social media and communication platform.

Social media stories are short 10-15 second videos that are time-sensitive. By default, stories disappear after 24 hours.

Given that they're temporary, they allow you to engage with followers and consumers in a very different way.

While feeds are carefully curated, social media stories tend to be more spontaneous. This means you can easily create stories that are designed in a "breaking news" or "company announcements" format, both of which can help to showcase your products and services.

Stories also help brands and influencers communicate without interrupting their main feed or timeline, and because of that, the use of stories dramatically helps to maintain and increase engagement.

In other words, stories are incredibly beneficial to businesses because their format is conducive to a more relaxed form of communication.

Because they usually appear before the home feed, stories have higher visibility than regular posts and are more likely to be seen by your followers.

And since stories can contain interactive features like polls and questions, they're a convenient channel to directly ask your followers about their preferences.

Accounts that qualify can also include links, which makes stories a great way to get traffic flowing from your social media to your website.

The increased CTR to your website also widens the middle funnel of your customer journey and can help increase the frequency of high-value conversions.

Overall, when stories are used transparently and authentically, they help to build loyalty and trust in your brand as they provide a more personable view of your business.

You've probably seen your fair share of stories already since just Instagram stories alone are used by 500 million people every day.

(Yes, you read that right! Over 500 million accounts use stories every single day on just Instagram alone!)

If you're interested in learning more about how you can create social stories that will drive an **endless supply of quality traffic** to your website and **solidify your brand** in your industry, this special report will set you on the right path!

Let's begin. 😊

Marketing with Social Media Stories

Like any other marketing strategy, **consistency is key**. You can't rely on traffic from a one-hit wonder when it comes to social media. To be successful, you need to post regularly and ensure that each story serves a clear purpose.

Here are some things to keep in mind.

Create and Maintain a Content Strategy:

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that stories are a low-effort alternative to proper content marketing! They're easier to get in front of people's eyes, sure, but you'll still need to put in the work at creating highly-engaging, relevant content.

This means that your stories should work into your regular content marketing strategy and provide value to your followers.

And since consistency is key, the best way to stay on track is to create and maintain a content strategy, including how many times a day you plan to share stories.

Since stories disappear after 24 hours, you can use them to create a sense of urgency, encouraging viewers to pay attention so they don't miss out. But for your stories to be most effective, you'll want to plan ahead.

For example, the best way to create a content strategy is to use a calendar-like system to keep track of new and upcoming products or services, launch dates, and sales. That way you can plan stories ahead of time with each one serving a specific goal.

And while social stories that are centered around marketing your products and services are likely what you'll want to focus on, you also need to strike a balance between promotional-based stories and those designed to create authentic moments of connection with your users.

If you're having a hard time finding out what your followers want to see from you, feel free to ask them by using a poll or form on your story!

Use Multimedia and Leverage your Existing Creative Resources:

Again, stories can be as simple as a self-recorded video of you talking to the camera about a product or service, or as complex as a four-part sequence of professionally animated videos.

Considering your budget, brand identity, and content strategy, you'll likely want to use a mix of new multimedia as well as your existing resources to create engaging and informative content.

By integrating all your creative resources you'll be able to create more compelling stories that capture attention.

Keep in mind that social media stories work best when they incorporate video, text, images, and storytelling all in one.

Nevertheless, something as simple as adding a title, automatically generated closed captions, photos, and stickers greatly increase your chances of catching the user's attention and convincing them that your story is worth watching.

If you've got custom assets like branded animations and audio, even better!

Increase the Lifetime of your Stories by using the **Highlights Feature:**

Let's face it; it can be time-consuming to consistently create good stories, especially when they disappear after 24 hours.

Additionally, some of your stories could contain content that's evergreen (relevant content that's not time sensitive and continuously drives content to your site).

Rather than reposting the same story and annoying your long-time followers, add the story to a *Highlight* on your Instagram account. This way, you extend the longevity of your evergreen content and leverage the value of each story.

Also, if you used content pillars in your marketing strategy, you could arrange your highlights to match these pillars.

For example, you could have a pillar for *behind-the-scenes* content, and a pillar for *custom orders* you've done in the past.

Track the Impact of Stories with UTMs:

Lastly, you'll want to work your stories into your attribution model by including *urchin tracking modules* (AKA: UTMs) in any links to your website.

UTMs are short bits of code that you attach to a link.

The code tells Google Analytics information like where traffic is coming from, how it's going to you, and which campaign this traffic is associated with.

Note: This is most beneficial for business accounts with over 10,000 followers that can add a "*Swipe Up*" feature that redirects their followers to a landing page.

You can find out more here: <https://buffer.com/library/utm-guide/>

Proven Content Ideas

It's time to start creating content! Here are a few tips to help you get started.

Of course, these aren't the only ways stories can be used, but these purposes leverage the format of social media stories to create more effective and engaging content.

Share the Link to a Regular Post to Increase Visibility:

This is a common strategy that most social marketers are familiar with because of its effectiveness.

Since the algorithm for home feeds can be unpredictable, your posts might end up getting buried under other accounts that your followers interact with more frequently (such as their friends and family, for example).

With stories, however, you're not at the mercy of the algorithm. Users tend to binge-watch stories in one session, so there's a high chance your followers will see your story and thereafter your post.

Share a Link to a Blog Post to Increase Traffic to your Website:

Every social story can be turned into an opportunity to drive traffic to your website.

Social media users expect fresh content every time they open the apps and since stories tend to indicate newness (since they're temporary) they're a great way to get clicks to your website.

By sharing a link to a blog post, those who are interested enough to keep reading will be able to easily find your additional content.

This is why it's important to end each story with a CTA (call to action) so that people know where to go to learn more about you and your business.

Share Content from your Influencers and People Who Mention your Brand:

Influencer marketing is popular on social media because they help expose your brand to new audiences in a mutually beneficial way.

Influencers post images and videos on their social media channels showing the brand products and talking about the benefits. Once those posts are out there, many businesses simply move on to the next brand deal.

However, if you want to extend the value of those influencer partnerships, you can feature the content that was created by those relationships as a special collaboration—through a series of stories.

Aside from influencers, some followers will also mention your brand in posts and stories because they've had a positive experience with you.

You may not want to repost their content on your home feed, but you can help your brand gain brand awareness by reposting it to your story, where it'll be automatically deleted after 24 hours.

Or, if you want to highlight positive reviews about your business, you might consider storing these reposts into a special Highlight on your account.

Tip: Tag your customers whose reviews you are highlighting so that they can also share your story through their accounts.

Repurpose Content from other Platforms:

We're aware of how time-consuming (and sometimes monotonous) content creation can be. To get the most out of your efforts and increase visibility on your content, find a way to spin it from one platform to another.

For example, it's easy to make infographics that highlight the key points in one of your blog posts. You could then create a story that summarizes the infographic, but also provides a link to your post where they can download a copy.

If you've invested time or money into making a YouTube video, look for interesting snippets from the video that will convert well to the vertical format and dress them up for stories.

Users that find the story interesting will then want to view the full video. Et voila, increased YouTube views!

Adapt Long-Form Content Formats to Stories:

Speaking of YouTube, if you think vlog-type videos would be interesting for your followers but are not sure how to go about filming and editing, consider trialing this type of content using stories.

Instead of editing your footage throughout the day or week into one video, post the clips on your story to mimic the vlog sequence.

Doing this also has the benefit of uploading content that feels as though it's produced in real-time, which is especially useful if you're combining it with something that creates a sense of urgency like flash sales.

Share Company Updates:

Company announcements or major releases are also great content to share on your stories. This type of content gets people talking, excited and wanting to interact with and work with your brand.

Create a Sense of Urgency:

People have got a lot on their minds, and unless you're an absolute behemoth of a brand, it's unlikely that people are counting down the days until you release a new product.

The great thing with stories is that you can position yourself up front and center, reminding followers of upcoming releases and generating buzz long before your launch.

Countdowns and posting intensely for a short period of time creates interest and excitement.

Highlight the unique selling point of your products and/or services, and try to think about the launch as curating an *experience*, so that the whole thing feels cohesive.

Also, when creating these types of campaigns, keep in mind that you're creating expectations and that you should be able to meet them (even better if you can exceed them). You don't want to be the brand that "didn't live up to the hype".

Host Contests and Giveaways:

Do you want to attract a larger audience, grow your following and get people excited about your brand?

Consider hosting a content or giveaway!

Giveaways can accomplish a whole host of things, depending on your needs, since your followers will be expecting you to stipulate certain tasks they must do to be eligible.

Common giveaway terms are following the account, liking a post, commenting on a post, or referring a friend.

You can also consider asking users to post something and mention your account (which you could then repost on your story), send you a DM with feedback, send them on a hunt for an Easter egg on your website, etc.

Tip: You can also share discounts and offer codes through your stories. Add a call to action along with it so that your customers don't miss the special offers and limited-time deals.

Seize the Power of Variable Rewards

Stories are a good way to release information about new products and build excitement in the pre-launch phase, especially if you use variable rewards which leave people searching for more.

Variable rewards can be *painkillers* (i.e. they solve a pain point) or *vitamins* (i.e. they're nice-to-have but not necessary).

Variable rewards might include:

- Rewarding users for completing tasks, such as commenting, liking or sharing your stories.
- Gamifies the user experience and adds variable rewards along the way.
- Provides incentives that your following will find incredibly valuable.

In other words, variable rewards are essentially *gratification tokens* that are designed to keep users repeating the same action in the hope of receiving another reward.

Also, make sure to emphasize that these rewards are only being featured on your stories. The more exclusive and special your stories are, the easier it will be to grow a loyal following.

Resource: You can learn more about the Hook Model and how variable rewards can help you maximize exposure here: <https://userpilot.com/blog/variable-rewards/>

Have your Influencers Guest Post on your Story:

This is a bit like getting someone famous to come to your launch party so that more people show up.

Rather than reposting your influencer's content on your story, have your influencer post their content directly to your story. They can then hint to their followers on their own account that they've done something special with your brand.

As with any influencer deal, it must be beneficial for you, the influencer, and most importantly their followers.

Share Behind-the-Scenes Content:

Sharing behind-the-scenes content on your story can help make you appear to be more personable and approachable.

Showing what goes on behind the scenes during the creation of your products, for example, will also help you connect with your following on a deeper level. It'll show a different side of your business, make it personal and help viewers feel more attached to your brand by letting them peek behind the curtain.

Testimonials from happy team members and customers, as well as employee takeovers and how-to videos also help build trust in your brand as users to get a real side of it.

Address Unhappy Customers:

Sometimes things go wrong, after all, you can't please everyone! A brand that only pushes extremely positive reviews can come across as untrustworthy.

Stories are a good way to address questions, negative reviews, and common pain points. Acknowledge what went wrong, take responsibility, and offer a solution to your customers (or simply a promise that you'll do better if it isn't a situation you can easily or quickly resolve).

And then follow through on those promises.

Taking the time and effort to do this shows your customers that there's a real person behind the brand. More importantly, it demonstrates that you care about the quality of their experience and are committed to improving.

Invite Direct Communication:

As we mentioned before, the interactive features of stories like reactions, responding directly to DMs, polls, and forms are a convenient way to get information from your followers quickly and easily.

But you can also use stories to let your followers vote on something like when your next product launch will be, what your newest product will look like, or even what the theme of the next sale should be.

You could also use these features to host games on your story (think trivia night)! Ask fun questions and offer a prize to winners like a raffle entry for a giveaway or a discount on their next purchase.

Some new direct-to-consumer brands are also using stories to trial consumer-run brands.

With these businesses, the entirety of the brand's strategic decisions is undertaken by the community, so all the brand has to do is the legwork of product development.

This is a pretty uncharted path to take but can give you an idea of how powerful social media can be for your business.

Livestream:

Livestreaming for businesses took off during the pandemic. It's currently taking shape as the 2020s versions of teleshopping.

Accounts that are hosting livestreams show up before regular stories, so it's a good way to get into the spotlight (especially during time slots when you know your followers will be online!).

What you do during your livestream and how much you prepare for it is entirely up to you. Some direct-to-consumer brands use livestreams to conduct special sales on items with limited stock. You could also have your influencer(s) host a livestream on your channel.

Or you could use livestreams to build hype for upcoming events like launch parties or pop-up stores.

How to Boost Engagement

Facebook:

With Facebook Stories, you can easily create more personalized content and better connect with your audience. With Stories, you can subtly promote products or services without looking like a hard sell.

And since Facebook brings such a massive audience, you'll be able to quickly get your brand in front of a new, ever-growing audience of people.

Stories on Facebook appear before the feed which makes it a great way to maximize exposure. Users can preview your story in the thumbnail, so they can select which stories to watch. Even for desktop users, Facebook shows stories at the top of their feed.

On Facebook, photos play for 5 seconds while videos of up to 20 seconds are supported. In addition, image ads in Facebook Stories play for 5 seconds as well, while video-based ads play for 15 seconds or less.

If your video runs longer, Facebook will split it into what they call "Story Cards", and your viewers will have to click "Keep Watching" to see all the slides.

When it comes to posting stories on Facebook, focus on the quality of your thumbnails.

Choose high-quality media that's eye-catching even when thumbnail-sized. You should also aim to post often, at most two or three times a day, so that you're constantly visible.

You'll also want to take advantage of Facebook Story Highlights, where you can make your stories appear for a longer time. These highlights appear as a horizontal scroll bar at the top of your profile.

With Facebook, it pays to experiment with different formats and video concepts to see what resonates with your audience. Use stories insights to see what content has had an impact and cross-post your Instagram stories to Facebook to further maximize exposure.

Other Tips:

Ensure that your video is in the optimal video resolution and size.

Currently, Facebook Stories require a resolution of at least 1080x1080 pixels for both images and videos. They also recommend using an aspect ratio of 9:16, however other ratios are supported.

Finally, try to leave a space of about 250 pixels (about 14%) at the top and bottom of your story text-free so that your profile photo and call-to-action take up this space.

Instagram:

Like Facebook, Instagram stories appear before the feed but don't show thumbnails. To get into the first slot you'll need to livestream. You can also use stickers to help your stories stand out.

Instagram is also a highly visual platform. Your profile picture, although tiny, should be unique and eye-catching to help you stand out from others.

If your business is already using Instagram Stories, you can easily post the same content on Facebook Stories. This is a great way to boost exposure with very little effort.

Another thing to keep in mind is that you can combine video and image in your stories! This is a great way of adding additional context to a photo, such as an image of a new product combined with video in the background of you talking about it!

Layering images onto videos is a great way to stand out on Instagram.

You can also change your text to match your brand colors by simply selecting the brush tool from the Instagram Story features. And if you really want to add a bit of pizzazz to your stories, consider creating a patterned backdrop when sharing a feed post.

Here's how:

1. Take a screenshot of a feed post you'd like to share in your Stories and crop it.
2. Then, click the share icon on that original feed post and tap on *Add post to your Story*.
3. Stretch the feed post so that it fills the entire screen. This step is very important as it will make the final Story a clickable link that leads to your original Instagram post.
4. Open your camera roll and choose the background image or pattern that you want to use.
5. Then, paste in the screenshot you've cropped in step 1 and upload the story!

Once you've reached the 10,000 followers mark you'll also be able to add a link to your story and take advantage of link stickers.

Snapchat Stories:

At the start of 2022, Snapchat still has over 300 million active monthly users around the world. Compared to Twitter and Facebook, Snapchat is the most highly trafficked social platform amongst teenagers and young adults.

So if your business is geared towards a younger audience, primarily Gen Z or younger millennials, you'll definitely want to take advantage of the massive outreach available on this ever-growing platform as it can have a considerable impact on your ability to grow your business.

The barrier to entry to get your Snapchat stories on the Discover section, however, is quite high (you need to apply), but once you get in you'll be in a curated list with brands of a similar caliber.

If you have a large following on any other platform you'll want to let them know about your Snapchat. It helps to have a unique angle to the content you share on Snapchat that's at least slightly different from the content you distribute on other platforms as well.

For example, consider giving your followers on other platforms a sneak peek at original content you're making exclusive on Snapchat. This will create excitement and generate buzz that encourages people to follow you on that platform as well!

And finally, Snapchat tends to work best for direct-to-consumer brands who can use the app to drive traffic to an ecommerce website or app. It's designed to encourage impulse purchases due to their high-engagement rates.

YouTube Stories:

YouTube is the 2nd most-visited platform in the world, second to Google. So, it's clear that if you aren't using YouTube in your marketing campaigns, you're missing out.

With YouTube Stories, you can quickly capture the attention of your audience, strengthen your sales pitch, improve SEO and overall brand presence and offer a greater and deeper insight into campaigns.

One of the great things about YouTube stories is unlike Instagram, your stories will only expire after 7 days!

And another valuable difference is that with YouTube Stories, you also have a comment section which works towards encouraging open and ongoing discussions within your market.

However, the downside is that to use YouTube Stories, you must have 10,000 subscribers. But after that, as long as your channel's audience is not set as "made for kids" you'll be able to create highly-engaging stories that go the distance in helping you reach new followers and grow your business!

Tips:

YouTube will automatically put a subscribe button on your story. This makes it easy for users to click to subscribe to your channel.

YouTube Stories have sticker functions that are similar to what's available on Instagram. These can help you stand out, but you can also link to different videos either from your own channel or from others.

One thing to keep in mind is that with YouTube Stories you only have 15 seconds to convey your message. After 15 seconds, it's a hard cut-off.

YouTube also offers "*Shorts*", which is essentially their version of TikToks and Instagram Reels. These videos can be up to 60 seconds long and appear on what's called the "Shorts Shelf" when you're scrolling through the YouTube mobile app.

If you're interested in maximizing exposure by creating Shorts, keep in mind that just like TikToks and Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts loop. Make sure to take advantage of that by creating videos that encourage replays.

And finally, adding the hashtags #Shorts to your title and description has proven to help with discovery.

TikTok Stories:

TikTok Stories are videos and photos that disappear after 24 hours, just like other platforms. They can be accessed by tapping a TikTok user's profile picture when a Story is available and the profile image has a light blue circle around it.

Better yet, unlike many other platforms, users can publicly comment on TikTok Stories, which is a game-changer for brands and creators as it opens the door for better engagement and two-way conversations.

Here's how to publish a TikTok story:

1. Tap the camera button as you would to create a regular TikTok. You can either record videos on the spot or upload photos and videos from your camera roll.
2. Personalize your content with TikTok's tools like sounds, effects, text, or stickers.
3. Instead of tapping the red "Next" button to write your caption, tap the "Post to Story" button. You're done!

One thing to keep in mind that if you post a photo to your story, you'll want to choose a music clip to go with it, otherwise TikTok will choose one automatically for you.

Another thing to keep in mind is that watching and engaging with TikTok Stories is different from what we're accustomed to. TikTok is known for scrolling up and down, whereas Stories require scrolling across.

Finally, stories should be fast-paced, packed with value and engaging.

You'll want to cater your Stories to TikTok's existing audience and the way the platform is structured by keeping your stories short and punchy while creating content that encourages replays.

Things to Remember

1: Stories were designed to be vertical, so, 94% of users don't flip their phones when scrolling on social media.

If users need to flip their phones to watch your story, they probably won't watch it at all. Start on the right note by keeping your stories vertical!

2: Aim for a balance of quality and quantity.

Don't forget that stories are only 10 to 15 seconds long. So, if your story hasn't caught your follower's attention in the first few seconds or so, they're just one tap away from the next one.

Stories expire in 24 hours and are gone forever, so users don't expect the same level of quality that they might expect from a normal post. A good smartphone camera and in-app editing is really all you need to get started.

On the flip side, because users expect a lower quality, they also expect a greater quantity of stories. You can create sequences of stories or adapt other content ideas to your business like "a day in the life".

3: Be real and authentic, but still branded:

Personable and relatable content tends to perform well on stories, but users should still be able to identify that they're watching a business account.

You should make an effort to show or mention your brand in some way within each story, and always keep things professional.

Entice users with a call-to-value:

Lastly, if you're using stories to funnel people from social media to your website, you need to give them a good reason to do so.

Rather than a call-to-action, highlight how clicking the link to your website will provide value (hence, call-to-value).

Final Words

Stories allow you to showcase your brand and products in a different light and use tools that encourage interaction from your following. This ultimately helps build awareness and a loyal following for your brand and helps you achieve your goals.

That being said, there's no hard-or-fast rule to using Stories, so this is your opportunity to branch out from the regular content you post on your feed and experiment with different strategies.

In closing, here are some things to keep in mind:

Stories should be part of your content marketing strategy.

Yes, stories are temporary and disappear after 24 hours, but each one still represents your brand.

We strongly encourage you not to fall into the trap of treating your social media stories like a dumping ground for low-quality content. Remember to aim for authentic content, with a balance of quality and quantity.

Stories don't have to accomplish the same thing as regular posts.

Stories and regular posts are different media formats, so you can use them to achieve different things.

Given the way stories are designed, they're best used for increasing visibility, creating a sense of urgency and/or exclusivity, showing a more personable side of your brand, and building a community by directly engaging with your followers.

Focus on the channels where your ideal customers are.

You should be trying to build a community of ideal customers, not just a community of followers.

If your biggest following is on Instagram but your highest spenders are on Facebook, your best bet is to optimize your strategy to prioritize your followers on Facebook. You could do this by hosting your livestreams on Facebook, for example.

And finally, the most important thing of all, regardless of what platform you choose to create Stories on, is to develop a strong strategy, be consistent and always aim to level-up your content.

To your success

Resources

Here are links to a few resources that I believe will help you:

Instagram Story Hacks:

>> <https://www.planthat.com/instagram-story-hacks-2022>

The Hook Method:

>> <https://userpilot.com/blog/variable-rewards/>

Snapchat Stories Tips:

>> <https://www.techuntold.com/create-snapchat-stories-tips/>