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Ologie
Social Media
Best Practices

FEBRUARY 2017

Born between 1996 and 2010, Generation Z is the up-and-coming audience that higher ed marketers need to reach—and stay ahead of—in their digital communications. It's no surprise that social media is a valuable communication tool for connecting and building brand awareness with both current and prospective students.

A strong marketing strategy will meet this audience where they are—on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter—to deliver compelling and relevant messages that will resonate for years to come.

Social media come in many forms:

- social networking sites
- photo-sharing platforms
- blogs and forums
- social gaming
- chat apps

Getting information from and communicating with people and brands has never been easier or more convenient. There are a sea of social media outlets that offer unique ways to consume content and information. Understanding each channel's purpose and metrics for success can position a brand to be seen, heard, and understood.

Let's break down the basics of the most commonly used social media networks today.

By 2020, the number of worldwide users of social media is expected to reach 2.95 billion, giving brands a megaphone to uniquely reach their key audiences.

Want to read more about Gen Z? Click here to read Ologie's report: "Understanding the College-Bound Mindset."

Facebook

Why should I use it? To reach and inform current and new audiences (students, prospective students, parents, alumni, donors and the community), driving discovery, engagement, brand awareness, and brand loyalty.

**Monthly Average Users:
1.87 billion**

Do this:
- Highlight campus culture
- Promote upcoming campus events
- Support athletic teams and extracurricular groups
- Keep students, faculty, and parents informed with campus news and announcements

Not this:
- Try to recruit students*
- Use it as an information dumping ground
- Post press releases and institutional content (remember: social media is about humanizing the brand)

*Paid social only

What should my content mix be?

- Refer to FB's Creative Guidelines.
- Include a CTA to drive users to a website or other owned channel, engaging them with the brand.
- Try using the carousel or album format to tell a unique visual story.
- Use a link-shortening and tracking tool such as bitly.com.

- Include subtitles. 85% of FB videos are watched without sound.
- 30–45 seconds is the optimal video length. Engage your audience within the first 10 seconds.
- Think vertical. 57% of FB users view their feed on a mobile device.

- Keep it short and sweet.
- Don't use hashtags in copy for discovery. It's not an inherent behavior to search hashtags on the channel.

How often should I post?
2 times a day
This frequency will maximize clicks and engagements on content.

What is the best time to post?
Tip: Visit the "Insights" tab on a brand business page, then select "Posts." This will show a recent one-week snapshot of what days and times fans are most active on FB. This is a good place to start in determining when to post or schedule content to best reach audiences.

What are industry benchmarks to know if I'm doing well?
- Average audience size: 209K
- Average post reach: 12K
- Average post impressions: 62K
- Average post engagement: 0.28%
- Average click thru rate (CTR): 0.25%

How do I measure success?

We define measurement in two big buckets:
- **Engagement:** Micro-conversions that lead up to the big actions
- **Conversion:** Actions that drive business results

Then we apply two filters:
- **Passive metrics:** Interacting on a shallow level; demonstrates *content* affinity
- **Active metrics:** Requires an action; demonstrates *brand* affinity

Engagement		Conversion	
Passive	**Active**	**Passive**	**Active**
• reach and impressions	• in-bound search terms	• returning page visits	• form submissions
• likes, comments, and shares	• in-site search terms		• event attendance
• click-thru rate	• unaided awareness		• email signups
• view-thru rate (VTR)			
• follower growth			
• event responses			

Instagram

**Monthly Average Users:
600 million**

Why should I use it? Think of Instagram as an art gallery. Carefully choose and curate pieces of the brand's best content. It's best used to inspire audiences, further driving discovery, engagement, brand awareness, and brand loyalty.

Do this:
- Highlight campus culture
- Share stories from students, faculty, groups, alumni and community members, as well as their unique perspectives on campus culture and current events
- Showcase brand-quality photography
- Mix it up with authentic content curated from students and faculty

Not this:
- Use it as an album of pictures; instead think: "What picture best embodies that story I want to tell?" and post that one
- Use applications to stitch pictures together in a single image
- Use filters on posts

What should my content mix be?

- Keep captions short and sweet (125 characters or less).
- Use keyword or trending hashtags to drive discovery.
- Keep hashtags to a minimum: three or four to the max.
- Tip: Create a strong CTA to drive to the brand's IG profile. Here you can include a trackable link to drive your audience to other owned digital channels such as a website or campaign microsite.

- Capture your audience's attention within the first 10 seconds of a video. Video recording time is 60 seconds max.
- Record or edit content vertically. Audiences are viewing IG strictly on mobile devices.
- Avoid capturing music that the brand does not have the rights to.

How often should I post?
2–5 times a day
With IG, it's all about consistency. Whether you're posting twice a day or five times a day, IG followers thrive on consistency, which will in turn drive positive engagement rates.

What is the best time to post?

It's a little tricky. The platform shows posts in the feed "based on the likelihood the audience will be interested in the content," instead of in reverse chronological order. That means content with more likes and comments will have a better chance of being seen, instead of when users actually post their content.

But a little intuition goes a long way. Test when content is posted (paired with a consistent posting schedule) to discover a "sweet spot" for engagement.

What is an Instagram business profile?
Business profiles are a free feature for accounts wanting to be recognized as a business on IG. This type of account enables additional features, including insights (a peek into audience engagement and metrics), contact forums (email, call, or text), and the ability to promote an IG post to an ad—all from within the app.

How do I measure success?

Engagement		Conversion	
Passive	**Active**	**Passive**	**Active**
• likes and comments	• in-bound search terms	• returning page visits	• form submissions
• click-thru rate	• in-site search		• email signups
• view-thru rate	• unaided awareness		• email or phone call
• follower growth			

What are industry benchmarks to know if I'm doing well?

- Average audience size: 30K
- Average post reach: 10K
- Average post engagement: 3.66%

Instagram Stories

Why should I use it? Similar to Snapchat, Instagram Stories enables users to share videos and photos that disappear after 24 hours. Share authentic stories and behind-the-scenes access to events to build brand loyalty among audiences.

Do this:
- Offer behind-the-scenes access to campus events
- Try takeovers by influencers
- Showcase live events on campus or in the community
- Tell a story: tease what viewers will see in an Instagram post with a strong call to action to watch more in Stories

Not this:
- Use it as an album of videos and photos that do not tell a story
- Use it as a dumping ground for unused content

What should my content mix be?

- Capture content vertically. Audiences are viewing IG Stories strictly on mobile devices.
- Use text overlays to tag partnerships and influencers.

- Capture content vertically. Audiences are viewing IG Stories strictly on mobile devices.
- Avoid capturing music that the brand does not own or have the rights to.
- Capture your audience's attention within the first 3 seconds of a video. Video recording time is 10 seconds max.

How often should I post?
as needed
IG Stories is not an "always-on" channel. Post when there is relevant, interesting, and engaging content to share.

What is the best time to post?
IG Stories content lasts for 24 hours. Time your posts according to when your channel audiences are most active.

What are industry benchmarks to know if I'm doing well?
Because IG Stories is a new feature, industry benchmarks are not yet available.

How do I measure success?

Engagement		Conversion	
Passive	**Active**	**Passive**	**Active**
• number of views or shares	• in-bound search terms	• returning site visits	• form submissions
• completion rate	• in-site search terms		• email signups
• follower growth	• unaided awareness		• email or phone call

Twitter

Why should I use it? Twitter is a tool to communicate information to current followers and to reach potential new followers via trending hashtags and culturally relevant events.

**Monthly Average Users:
317 million**

Do this:
- Share need-to-know information for current students, faculty, staff, parents, and community
- Showcase school spirit and highlight what's happening around campus
- Launch campaigns including school hashtags to drive discovery
- Participate in brand-appropriate trending hashtags and culturally relevant events
- Use Twitter as a vehicle to foster conversation

#NO **Not this:**
- Push branded content without a call to action or conversion opportunity
- Duplicate content from Facebook or Instagram

What should my content mix be?

- Images should be relevant to the content being shared and should support the tweet.
- Media attachments such as GIFs and videos should be short and grab attention within the first 3 seconds.

- There's a 140-character limit, not including media attachments (images, GIFs, videos, polls) or quoted tweets.
- Use hashtags to participate in trending and culturally relevant conversations or to reinforce adoption of a campaign.

How often should I post?
1–5 times a day
But this can vary depending on relevant and pertinent content that needs to be shared.

What is the best time to post?

The shelf life of a tweet isn't long. In fact, it's only 24 minutes. It's crucial to get in front of as many eyeballs as possible in this small window of opportunity to engage audiences.

As a starting point, test messages during different time frames to observe when the majority of your audience is most engaged. Start to understand your audience's lifestyles. When do they have free time and visit social media? Post around these patterns.

How do I measure success?

Engagement

Passive
- reach and impressions
- likes, retweets, replies
- click-thru rate
- follower growth

Active
- in-bound search terms
- in-site search terms
- unaided awareness

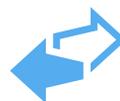### Conversion

Passive
- returning site visits

Active
- form submissions
- email signups
- event attendance

What are industry benchmarks to know if I'm doing well?

- Average audience size: 59K
- Average post reach: 2K
- Average post impressions: 11K
- Average post engagement: 0.06%
- Average CTR: 0.16%

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Snapchat

Monthly Average Users: 300 million

Why should I use it? Share authentic and casual stories and behind-the-scenes events to build brand loyalty among younger audiences.

Do this:
- Showcase behind-the-scenes access to campus and community events
- Try takeovers by influencers
- Curate user-submitted content to learn more about your community

Not this:
- Make it an an album of videos and content that do not tell a story
- Use it as a dumping ground for content
- Duplicate content from Instagram Stories

What should my content mix be?

- Capture content vertically. Audiences are viewing Snapchat strictly on mobile devices.
- Use text overlays and emojis to make stories authentic and playful.

- Capture content vertically. Audiences are viewing Snapchat strictly on mobile devices.
- Avoid capturing music that the brand does not own or have the rights to.
- Capture your audience's attention within the first 3 seconds of a video. Video recording time is 10 seconds max.

How often should I post?
as needed
Snapchat is not an "always-on" channel. Post when there is relevant, interesting, and engaging content to share.

What is the best time to post?
Snapchat content lasts for 24 hours. Time posts according to when your channel audiences are most active.

How do I measure success?

Engagement		Conversion	
Passive	**Active**	**Passive**	**Active**
• number of views and shares	• in-bound search terms	• returning site visits	• form submissions
• completion rate	• in-site search terms		• email signups
• follower growth	• unaided awareness		• email or phone call

What are industry benchmarks to know if I'm doing well?
Industry benchmarks for Snapchat are not available at this time.


But wait! Do I post to Snapchat AND Instagram Stories? One or the other? How do I decide?

Before posting to either channel, consider the current landscape of audiences and examine the growth of your channel followers. Who are your key audiences on each channel and what content will resonate most with each?

Because Instagram has been in the game longer, brands likely have a larger audience built on the channel, which allows users to stay within the app and easily transition to view Stories. This may be a better place to get your "disappearing-after-24-hours-content" feet wet.

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The Basics

There are four media types through which we can distribute social content: paid, earned, shared, and owned media. We achieve a successful marketing plan by first understanding why each channel matters, and then drawing on the strengths of each to execute a robust social media strategy.
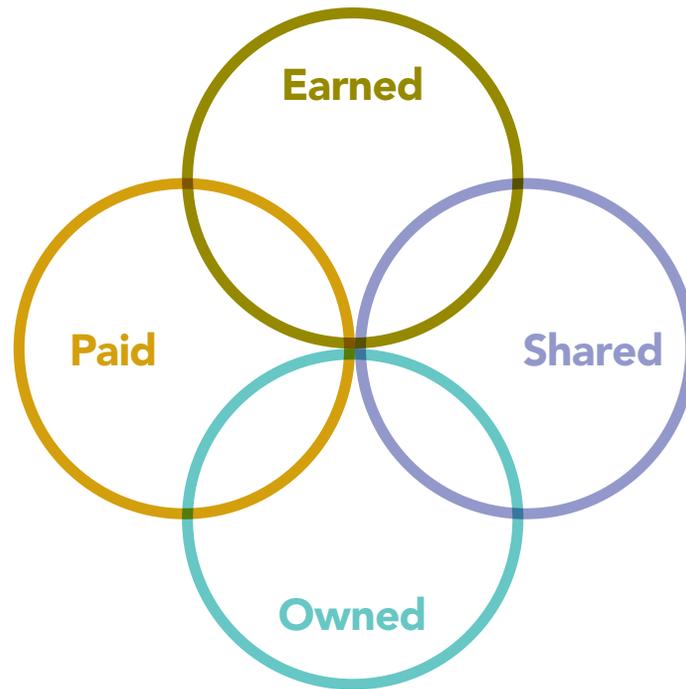
Paid—Putting money behind your social media posts to display advertisements in various formats to social network users.
- **Why it matters:** It gets more people exposed to your content and your brand (through audience targeting) and therefore drives more people to your website for conversion.
- **What you need:** A strong paid social media content strategy and content calendar, using each channel's best practices to consistently promote your brand. Continual refinement and optimization of ads based on objective and performance.

Earned—When your audiences voluntarily or organically share your content through their own social media channels. This is where PR and viral content lands.
- **Why it matters:** It's free! People like your brand and are talking about you— and Google uses earned media to decide whether or not you deserve to rank high in their search engine rankings.
- **What you need:** Content that is share-worthy. Content that gets people, such as influencers, inspired and talking about your brand because they want to. And content with purpose that answers questions people are actually asking.

Shared—When brand and fans interact and collaboratively create content for the brand.
- **Why it matters:** It's an opportunity to interact, learn, and forge deeper relationships with your key audiences.
- **What you need:** Content from your owned and paid content strategies that consumers want to actively engage in.

Owned—Otherwise known as Organic; using the social media channels you own as a brand (such as Facebook, Instagram, or a blog) to drive traffic to a website or other brand channels.
- **Why it matters:** It can build a strong community of return visitors who are loyal to the brand.
- **What you need:** A strong social media content strategy and a robust content calendar, using each channel's best practices to talk consistently about your brand.
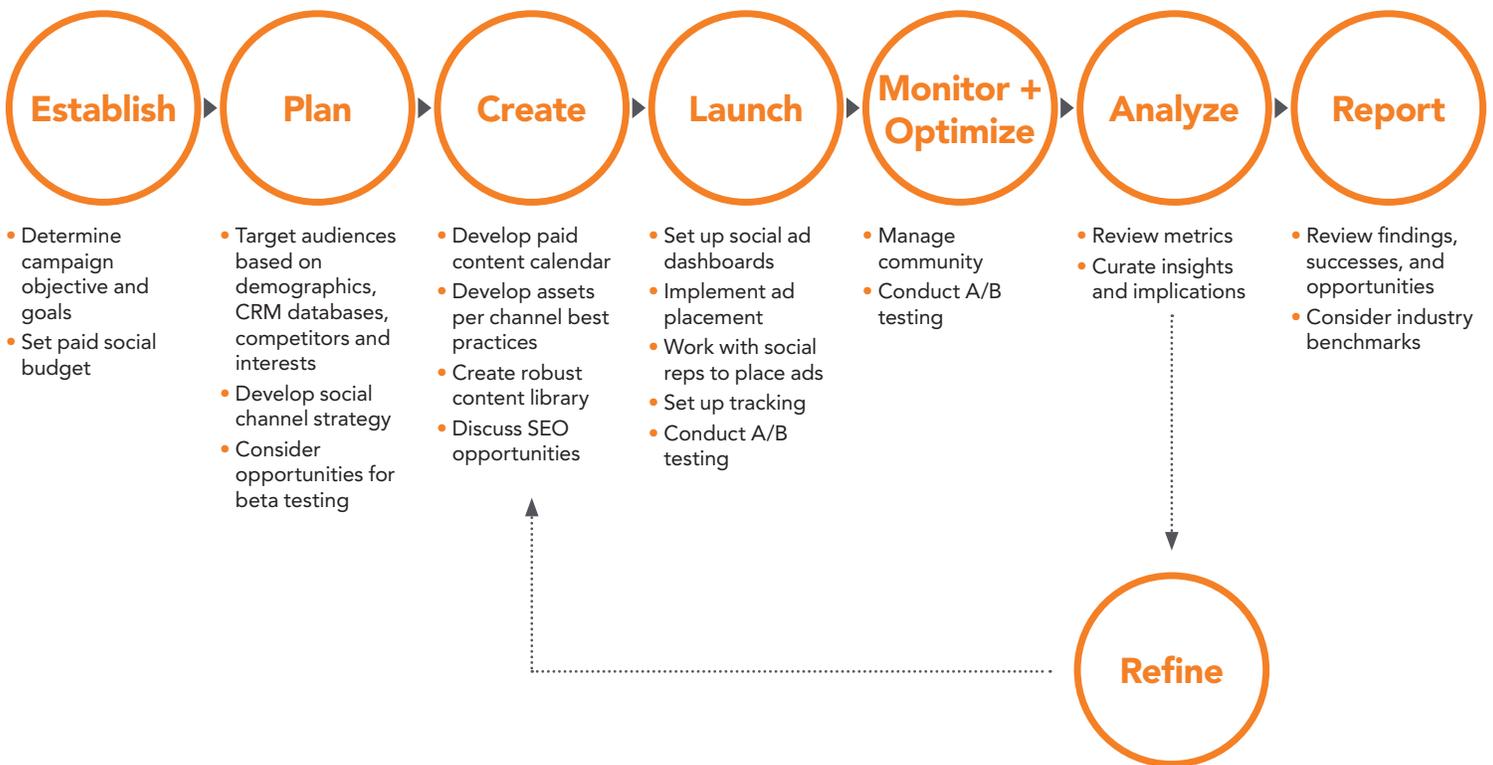
Paid Social—How big is the iceberg?

In short? BIG. The steps to achieving a successful paid social media campaign across any platform are pretty straightforward—but it's a little deceiving. Within each step in the campaign lifecycle are several tactics that must be executed with a whole lot of strategy and a dash of intuition.

For example, a good paid social strategy will launch beautiful creative, release one or two messages across multiple social channels, and get in front of some key target audiences—all while hoping the campaign attracts a few new followers and a conversion or two to a website. Good campaign? Not so much.

A great paid social strategy will test beautiful creative to see which resonates more with key audiences (which are selected based on demographics or interests). It will place ads in appropriate channels based on channel demographics (not one-size-fits-all content) and create A/B testing to optimize ads and spend. It will then manage the community that's engaging with the ads for customer satisfaction and loyalty, analyze metrics on a weekly basis to refine and gather insights, refine the strategy, and then finally report on the success of the campaign. And that success is more than a few new followers and conversions to the website. A great paid social strategy means conversions that get to your bottom line—ROI.

Oh, and did we mention this whole process sometimes happens weekly?

If it feels overwhelming, it can be. But we're here to help you through the process—every step of the way.

Establish
- Determine campaign objective and goals
- Set paid social budget

Plan
- Target audiences based on demographics, CRM databases, competitors and interests
- Develop social channel strategy
- Consider opportunities for beta testing

Create
- Develop paid content calendar
- Develop assets per channel best practices
- Create robust content library
- Discuss SEO opportunities

Launch
- Set up social ad dashboards
- Implement ad placement
- Work with social reps to place ads
- Set up tracking
- Conduct A/B testing

Monitor + Optimize
- Manage community
- Conduct A/B testing

Analyze
- Review metrics
- Curate insights and implications

Report
- Review findings, successes, and opportunities
- Consider industry benchmarks

Refine

Glossary

Audience: A group of people who can potentially see posts or ads. Ads can be shown to target audiences, segmented by the following:
- location
- age
- gender
- interests
- language
- look-alike audiences
- CRM databases

Brand awareness: The extent to which customers are familiar with the distinctive qualities or image of a brand.

Impressions: The number of times an ad is viewed.

Organic reach: Total number of unique people who are shown a post as a result of unpaid distribution.

Page engagement: Total number of actions people take on a page and its posts.

Paid reach: Total number of unique people who are shown a post as a result of ads.

Post engagement: Total number of actions people take on a post (like, comment, share).

Total reach: Total number of unique people who see a post, regardless of where it was seen (organic or paid).

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