social media

10 best pratices 2022

10 Best Practices Social Media 2022

The social media landscape is constantly changing. This is not only the result of new features or platforms, but also of the changing requirements of the target audiences for each platform. Social media itself is certainly no rocket science, but when you set up an account or if you want to make an existing channel more professional, then it is a good idea to keep a few things in mind. Why have you set up a channel, what tone of voice should you use, and how can you ensure that you will post content regularly and consistently?

The 10 Best Practices

1. Establish clear and measurable social media goals
2. Get to know your audience as well as you can
3. Choose the right social media platforms
4. Brand your social media profiles
5. Become friends with your audience
6. Use the correct formats for social media posts
7. Take a different approach on each platform
8. Use the correct tools
9. Post at the right time
10. Keep an eye on the competition

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Using these 10 Best Practices, we will help you to get started. We will not only give you good tools to work with, we will also give you a couple of practical examples. If you go through all the tips & tricks, you will be completely up to date and you will know which changes you can make for improvement.
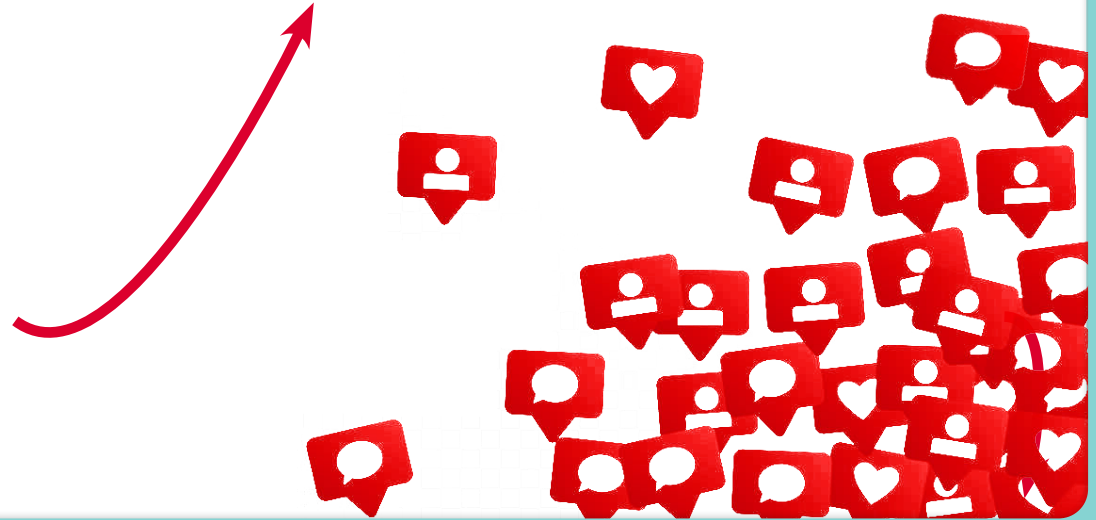
#1 Set up clear and measurable social media goals

If you start using a new social media platform or if you want to make an existing channel more professional, then it is incredibly important to map out your social media goals. Often, you might just start an account because you are convinced that you can achieve something with it: do you want your brand awareness to increase or do you want to transfer certain knowledge or information? Do you want to interact with current followers or generate traffic towards an existing website?

By making your goals more tangible, you will be able to be better guided in the steps that will follow later in this document, such as determining the target audiences, the content, and tone of voice to be used. Another advantage of having clear goals is that you can use them in analyses and identify the things you have learned from them at a later time.

#2 Get to know your audience as well as you can

If you want to reach your target audience, you must clearly map out what their characteristics are. In addition to age and gender, there are a number of important characteristics that you must identify before you determine what type of content you are going to offer and on which platform you will offer it:

- What stage is your target audience in? Is your target audience mainly made up of prospective or current students? Are you talking to Bachelor's or Master's students? Or have they all finished studying and are they among our alumni community? Or are you dealing with lecturers, researchers, or journalists?

- What country are they from? What kind of background do they come from? Is your target audience Dutch or more internationally oriented? And if you are dealing with an international target audience, can you also divide them up into EU/EEA?

As you can imagine, every target group needs a different approach. Not only in terms of the content, but also in relation to the way you speak to them online. If you would like to know which social media platforms are currently popular, which users are connected to them, and why they are using a specific platform, then take a good look at this article. Are you an administrator of all existing accounts? In that case, you can also find

#3 Choose the right social media platforms

Now that you know what your target group looks like, which demographic characteristics and interests this group of people has, and where they are located in general, you can make a final decision about which platform to use to reach out to them. Below is a short summary of how the social media team at the University of Groningen have set up the various channels in terms of the subject matter and for which target group they

Instagram

Target group: future and current students (national/international) and young alumni

Tone of voice: informal, use of hashtags, emojis, and humour is allowed

Content: photos, videos, and user-generated content that provide a behind the scenes view of the UG and the two student cities, Groningen and Leeuwarden. It does not focus on academic life; it also shows issues and topics that students can really relate to.

Facebook

Target group: current students (national/international), young alumni, and prospective Master's students

Tone of Voice: a combination of formal and informal

Content: updates about events and webinars in and outside the UG, student blogs, and scientific communication

Twitter

Target group: colleagues (researchers in particular), the media, politicians (who e.g. retweet research) and members of the UG Board

Tone of Voice: formeel, kort en bondig

Content: tweets and retweets in relation to research or corporate policy at the UG

LinkedIn

Target group: alumni community and current staff at the UG

Tone of voice: formal, long captions, use of hashtags and tagging people allowed

Content: scientific communication and updates regarding multidisciplinary partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders on a local, national and international level

YouTube

Target group: a large target audience within and outside the UG community

Tone of voice: generally informative in nature

Content: long videos that explain several facets of the UG, for example specific degree programmes, student life, academic life, but also corporate topics

Tiktok

Target group: Gen Z - future students and Bachelor's students

Tone of Voice: short, flashy and funny

Content: 'snackable' content that displays very relatable situations for a young target audience. These videos are mostly about student life

#4 Brand your social media profiles

It is important to be consistent and uniform on social media platforms. If you are consistent, people will notice your channels more quickly and more often. You can ensure consistency in different ways, but these are definitely the most important components that you must consider:

Logo use:
If you start a social media channel on behalf of the University of Groningen, we recommend that you use a logo in the account's profile picture. The logo is used in many places so it is very recognizable for users. Do you want to know more about logo use in our visual identity? Click here to find out more.

Tone of Voice:
Be consistent in your use of language. Are there any particular words that you use often? And do you speak in a formal way with your followers or rather in a friendly and informal way? Make guidelines about this, especially if you are managing a social media platform with colleagues. The way in which you communicate with your target group of course also depends on the platform itself. On LinkedIn, you will probably use a formal tone of voice because your target group is older, and there is a bigger chance that a researcher or scientist will see your post. On Instagram, you will more often post captions that contain humour, slang, and emojis. Therefore, there is room to develop your own writing style, but make sure that you always keep in mind the tone of voice of the UG.

Company Description:
on social media platforms, you have the option to provide a description of your department/faculty. Try to make this as good and as clear as possible. Indicate that you are part of the University of Groningen, state the name of the department/faculty, and then add what your followers must know about you. Some social media platforms also provide the option of adding extra information. For example, Instagram's bio option allows you to add relevant hashtags and to refer to LinkTree.

#5 Become friends with your audience

Being prepared to interact with your followers is an absolute must if you manage social media channels. Your followers will surely find it a bit more fun if they believe that they are talking to a 'real person' instead of a chat bot. If you are looking for engagement with your followers, then act interested. This will have an even more positive influence on brand perception. In addition, you can turn your followers into brand ambassadors. These brand ambassadors are active followers who like to repost certain updates or offer user-generated content. This is nothing but good news because this allows you to increase the number of people you reach.

You can increase your engagement in different ways. For example, followers can give a simple like or comment, but you could also try the following:
Ask a question in your post. When people see a post with a question mark, they will be more tempted to give an answer. This might sound too good to be true, but it often does help Start collaborating with other accounts through Shared Reels and Instagram Lives for more exposure. Make another account, the central account of the University of Groningen or another faculty co-owner of the content.

- Add polls and quizzes
- 'Ask Me Anything' sessions by students
- Use animated GIFs: you can find our GIFs by searching Stories in 'UG40K'
- Share user-generated content
- Use custom stickers or filters for Instagram
- Do a livestream

#6 Use the correct formats for social media posts

Now that you have defined your social media goals, target groups, and social media platforms, it is a good idea to use the right settings whenever you post. Each social media platform has its own settings. In the plan below, you can clearly see what the best settings are:

		f		in
Profile photo:	320x320	170x170	400x400	400x400
Landscape:	1080x566	1200x630	1024x512	1200x627
Portrait:	1080x1350	630x1200	N/A	627x1200
Square:	1080x1080	1200x1200	N/A	N/A
Stories:	1080x1920	1080x1920	1080x1920	1080x1920
Cover photo:	N/A	851x315	1500x1500	1128x191

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Bron: Social Media Image Sizes 2021: Cheat Sheet for Every-Networkhttps://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-image-sizes-guide/

#7 Take a different approach on each platform

It is, in fact, not the done thing to post the exact same message on all social media platforms. First, copy-pasting can come across as a bit lazy, especially if people follow you on multiple social media platforms. Second – we have already touched upon this in point 3 – platforms are linked to target audiences, and target audiences are characterized by specific demographic characteristics, meaning that you have to approach each platform differently. You therefore cannot treat different platforms as one and the same.

If you want to transfer a message onto multiple platforms, then try to think about small adjustments that will make a big difference. An example of this is the tone of voice. On Facebook and LinkedIn, your post will probably be somewhat more formal and informative in nature than an Instagram post, where the use of emojis is definitely recommended.

#8 Use the correct tools to make life a bit easier

If you work with social media platforms, it is good to know that there are many tools that can make your life as an online content marketer a bit easier. These tools can not only assist you in terms of making your photos look nicer and making it easier to edit videos, but also when it comes to measuring the results of your posts.

Tools for editing photos and videos

On platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, you have the option of putting filters on your photos and editing your videos, as well as the option to edit with graphic elements, music, and sound effects. This mostly works fine, but it is sometimes good to also try out other apps. Some apps provide just a few more possibilities in terms of editing or are just a bit friendlier to use, but the latter is of course completely subjective. The apps that you could take a look at are Snapseed (for photo editing) and Capcut (for video editing). After you have edited your photo in these apps, it is easy to import them to a social media platform.

However, when you create a video and share it from a social media app (think of TikTok and Instagram), this gives a more positive result in terms of reach and engagement than if you create the video in another app and then publish it via one of your social media accounts. .Sometimes you can't avoid this, because you can't use all sounds and features in a business account due to the use for commercial purposes.

Measuring is knowing

If you want to know how your posts are doing, you can of course 'look behind' a social media platform at the analysis. This is good if you want to quickly gain insights, making it an absolutely great feature to use on a daily basis. If you would like to gain deeper insights, for example by comparing weeks, months, platforms, and topics, then Coosto is a good tool to work with. Moreover, this platform offers multiple opportunities for social media management. With Coosto, you can plan your posts ahead of time!

#9 Post at the right time

We have just discussed how you cannot post the same thing on all your platforms. In addition, you also should not publish all posts at the same time. Posting is most effective if you know that your target group is active at that time. As you can imagine, LinkedIn users are mainly active during office hours because they predominantly use this platform for work-related updates. Instagram, for example, is an app on which the majority of its users are active during their free time. The peak times are between 5 and 6 p.m., when users of this app are travelling home from work and checking their notifications on public transport, or during the weekends, when they enjoy sharing personal activities – such as birthdays and parties – with friends and family.

On most platforms, in addition to the demographic characteristics and

information that you can find, you can also find out about which times – during the week – your target audience is most active. Use this information well so that you know at what time you should post.

It is also important to keep posting regularly so you stay relevant in the algorithm. The algorithm is a partly secret formula, but simple to explain: social media platforms are becoming even more crowded and this is why it is important to ensure that you stay in the running. If you do not post regularly, it is bad for the algorithm and your posts will become less visible. If this description is too 'oversimplified', you can find a more elaborate explanation here.

If you find it difficult to post something regularly, then work with a content planner. A content planner helps you – just like the name suggests – to plan content. Consider what you want to post every week and act on it. You can find a lot of examples of content planners on the internet. We make use of a simple planner in which we note down every day what we are going to post, on which platform we are going to do this, and where we can keep track of the post. This last aspect is primarily good if you work on the content planner with multiple people and it gives an insight into tasks that still must be done. If, for example, you want to do a student takeover during Master's Week, it is wise that you prepare this ahead of time. A content planner can help you with this planning. This will prevent you from having to lean over backwards at the last minute.

#10 **Keep an eye on the competition**

It is important to keep an eye on the competition. Not just to see what they are up to, but also to learn from it. Check similar accounts, such as platforms from different educational institutions in or outside the Netherlands, and look at which posts score well for them, and which ones do not. Perhaps you will gain new inspiration from this and a desire to go about posting in a different way.

It is also good to occasionally step outside of your bubble. Educational institutions are not the only ones present on social media platforms. For example, retailers use every trick in the book to generate as much awareness as possible for their brand and to engage with their target audience. Not that you do not need to directly take note of everything that retailers do, but can perhaps transfer a few ideas and make them suitable for your own platform and target group. An example of this is the well-known #giveaway on Instagram, through which you call on people to enter a contest and kindly push them to take a number of actions, thereby boosting your engagement rate.

Extra – just a few final tips...

Now that you have gone through the Best Practices, you have hopefully acquired the tools to make an existing channel more professional, or to set up a new account. Before we finish, we still have a couple of final tips to offer you:

• If you are starting a new account, it is important to have already filled the feed with content before you try to direct people to the new channel. It is better for new users and followers to visit a channel that is already filled with photos and videos instead of an empty feed. #echo

• Just like you read in the first paragraph, the social media landscape is highly susceptible to trends. The majority of Best Practices will still be implemented next year, but there is a good chance that some facts will no longer be up to date. For example, banner settings may not be up to date when new platforms emerge, or there might be new ways to engage with your target group. If you find it interesting to delve into the depths of social media, there are enough blogs and websites to be found on the worldwide web that you can regularly visit to stay on top of the latest developments and newest trends.

• Remember: social media is, overall, a lot of fun because after publishing content, you can immediately see what the effect is. In addition, you can try new things because every platform has a lot of different features on offer. So, go forth and experiment, but always remain professional. You are communicating on behalf of the University of Groningen and that means adhering to certain guidelines, such as tone of voice and house style.

• If you have any questions about using UG social media channels or if you want to play around with a fun format, then please do not hesitate to contact the social media team:

socialmedia@rug.nl