

Transcript: Choosing the right social media platform for your business

Welcome to another episode of the Digital Master Class Series, part of the City Of Glen Eira's Digital Enablement program. Today's topic is: choosing the right social media platform for your business. Today, we'll be taking a look at the wide and diverse world of social media platforms; social media platforms and usage in Australia; what you need to do to choose your own platform. Then we'll be going through some of the most popular social media platforms here in Australia, which are: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.

First of all, there is an enormous array of social media platforms available for businesses and individuals around the world. This graph is an image of the world's most popular social media platforms in 2020. The leader is, of course, Facebook; followed closely by YouTube and Instagram; then, following these, you have more regionally-specific social media platforms. Qzone and Weibo are both two hugely popular social media platforms in the Asian market, particularly in China. You also have some more obscure ones there, as you go further down the list, like VK, which is very popular in Russia.

There are about 75 different social media platforms currently available around the world, with more being created every day. The advice of a social media specialist is: you don't need to be on all of these platforms, you just need to identify the platform where your audience is, and where they're going to listen to you. So, we're narrowing down what we're looking at.

Here is a list of the most popular social media platforms in Australia. You can see here that it is a little bit different to the graph that I showed you before. Once again, the leader is Facebook, followed closely by YouTube. Then we change a little bit, we go to Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, WordPress, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, and Tinder now. Obviously, not all of these are suitable for all businesses. Once again, something like Tumblr is an image-based, platform it's not necessarily a space where you want to sell things. It's more to do with art and sharing of aesthetics online. But, for the right business, it is possible to establish yourself there. Something like Facebook is hugely popular, both amongst Australians to connect with one another, and businesses, because it speaks to a very wide audience. It also has advertising and engagement functions that appeal to a very wide range of businesses.

And then there's everything in between, you can see it's a mix. Some are better suited to ecommerce, some are better suited to corporate. It really depends on the needs of your business. Choosing the right social media platform is not unlike owning a pet in that, before you buy your pet, you need to have a think about what you can commit to taking care of, consistently and over a long period of time. Before you even start conceptualising where you might want to be online, have a serious think about the amount of time that you can commit to taking care of your platform. That usually means considering four things:

1. You need time to create unique, channel-specific content (that is, content that is designed for the needs of the channel). So, YouTube will be video; Facebook would be shorter video with subtitles; Instagram would of course be image-based, and so on.
2. Post regularly: the frequency depends on the platform, but for something like Instagram, you might be doing a post three times a week, and a series of stories once or twice a week.
3. You need to keep your information up to date on the side as well. That means keeping all your relevant links up to date: your address, your phone number, your opening hours, all of those kinds of things.
4. You also need to be able to have time to maintain strong community management practices. You can see there, I've added a little statistic: 40% of consumers expect a brand to respond on social media within one hour of reaching out; and then, 79% expect a response in the first 24 hours. You

need to be pretty agile on these platforms, you need to be checking them every day, if not every couple of hours.

The next thing you need to consider once you've identified how much time you can commit to your social media is: choosing who it is that you want to be talking to. I'll preface this by saying, broadly speaking (and in conclusion to the last slide): for most businesses, one to two social media accounts is probably the most that a small business is going to be able to maintain. A larger business that has capacity to hire a social media specialist might be able to spread themselves further, but basically unless you plan to consistently take care of your channel, and post on there, it's going to detract, rather than add to your brand.

Moving on: think about who you want to talk to. Different social media platforms attract very different demographics. In Australia, one of the most popular social media breakouts of 2020 was TikTok. Whilst it is, sort of, the flavour of the month. the largest group of Australian TikTok users are aged between 10 and 13, followed by 14 to 17-year-olds. Whilst this platform might be very popular, and get a lot of likes and engagement, there are groups on there that don't really have the capacity to purchase products, or to engage long-term as customers of a business. Ethically speaking, it's not really suitable to be marketing to them.

Now, we'll move on to some of the more commonly used marketing platforms. The largest group of Australian Instagram users are aged between 25 and 34. Then, the next one that is perhaps the most famous, is there are over 1.65 million Australian Facebook users aged between 55 and 64; and 1.25 million users over the age of 65. If you're looking for older Australians, Facebook is the place to be. If you're looking for Gen Z and Gen X, Instagram is probably the place to be. It really goes down the scale, so understanding where your audience is, is a really important part of choosing where to put your business online.

The next step is thinking about the purpose. Why do you want to be on social media? There are a wide range of reasons why you might want to use a platform. Platforms tend to do multiple things at the same time so, broadly speaking, all social media platforms enable you to provide a degree of brand awareness. But, then you get more specific, so it's good to sit down and think about what are the three main goals that you want to achieve from having your social presence.

That might be: "I want to grow my audience". In that case, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are all really great places to grow a digital audience. "I want to provide customer service and support". In that case, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are useful. Although YouTube is a little different (in that it's not really so much a case of a customer asks a question and you provide an answer in realtime, but rather, you provide a tutorial or information about a service or a product). Something for a faster engagement, where the customer can literally ask you a question, like "does this cake have nuts in it?" or "what are your opening hours over Christmas?", that kind of thing, WhatsApp would be great for that. Twitter would be great for that, Facebook and Instagram would also be good for that. You want to engage with your community (as in, your industry)? LinkedIn is a fantastic place to be doing that, for building up your industry reputation; and if you're in business-to-business, LinkedIn is a great place for that. Facebook can also be quite valuable, as can Instagram, if you want to develop a very distinctive brand narrative and identity. These are just a few examples of all the things you can get out of having a social media presence. You just need to sit down and think carefully about what the main things you want out of social media are going to be.

Now we're going to look, broadly, at the four most popular social platforms in Australia, and what their audiences are; what their needs are; and how businesses can benefit from them.

The first one we're going to look at is Facebook. Theoretically, the core purpose of Facebook is social

networking. However, in practice now, Facebook has really evolved to a point where it really exists for advertising purposes (paid advertising specifically). That's how Facebook earns its money, so it's unsurprising that that is the main focus of this social media platform. Theoretically, it's for people to connect with one another, but it has shifted over time. Secondary purposes are: as a news platform, it's quite commonly used for people seeking news and information; as an advertising platform; as a location sharing function; and it is also interlinked with Instagram.

If you choose to use Facebook as a primary social media platform, and I would recommend it for most businesses if you're going to start with a social presence, Facebook is the place to go. You sort of get a two-for-one in that Facebook owns Instagram, and the two accounts can be interlinked. You can share content (to a degree) across both platforms, and you can engage with the same audience in the same way, so there's a two-for-one that you can get from there.

Now, Facebook's audience: 60% of Australians have a Facebook account, and it has huge engagement. Around 50% log in daily, and the largest user group is aged between 25 to 34. As I said before, the most active people on Facebook are actually the older Australian generation, and this is where you're going to find older Australians if you want to engage with them, and sell to them, and have them become customers. The industries that get the most engagement from Facebook (that is, the most likes, shares and comments) are: fashion, automotive, and e-commerce. If you think about them thematically, these are all trend-driven industries, they're all industries where people who follow them, and are interested in fashion or automotive, do quite a lot of shopping. They want to know what the latest thing is, they want to look at pictures, they want to see updates, and that's why these perform very well here. Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), that is supermarket products, like toothpaste, cereal, so on. Travel and not for profit also rank very strongly in that they get the most shares. For FMCG, a lot of the big brands put a lot of time and money into creating entertaining videos, creating jokes, widely shareable and relatable content. Travel and non-profit are also highly shareable topics to engage with. Sharing non-profit-related content, people like to do this as a form of virtue signalling. Travel is also an extremely popular one, just from an engagement and community point of interest.

The other thing that Facebook is fantastic for is check-ins. This is a really powerful word-of-mouth recommendation tool for hospitality and other services, like a gym, a salon, a nail spa, that kind of thing. They get a really high level of exposure (so, over 200 views per check-in). Now, just to be clear, a check-in is basically where a customer goes to your shop and then logs onto their Facebook account and says "getting my nails done at Glen Eira Nail Shop". They'll tag your business, if the business has a Facebook account. The name of your business, a link to your business's page, and the location of your business on a map, will all be published onto that person's profile, and shared with all of their friends. It means that, theoretically, every time a customer comes in, if they chose to do a check-in for your business, everybody in their network (over 200 people per check-in on average) would be looking at that, seeing the location of your business, potentially even clicking on your account to look through your business. It's a really powerful tool, especially if you have a brick and mortar store.

Now, in terms of content, Facebook places a very strong emphasis on image-based content, particularly video. Video content performs by far the strongest on Facebook, but best practice is, whatever you post (whether you're posting your business hours for the new year, or posting about your latest services), something should always be accompanied by an image. That's because of the way that people scroll through Facebook on their phone, which is quite quickly. They'll only pause for maybe a few seconds to look at an image, and it really is the image and the video content that makes a user stop on Facebook to have a look at what is going on. So, images always need to be included in whatever you create on Facebook.

I would say daily posting is required on Facebook as a best practice. This can be a sliding scale, depending on the needs of your business, the size of your audience, what's going on in your industry, and what is common in your industry. You could do daily posting, as it's a way to stay in front of your users on a daily basis, to ensure you get some degree of engagement, five days a week (by daily posting I do mean five business days, not seven days a week, unless your business runs over the weekend). You could probably get away with three to four posts as well, but it does require quite frequent posting and engagement.

A caveat to all of this is – even though, in theory, if you have good content that is engaging and meaningful to an audience, you should theoretically pick up new followers and get engagement and get interest – Facebook's algorithm is now designed in such a way that paid advertising is almost certainly necessary to grow your audience. If you want to reach a new audience and get new customers by using Facebook, you need to engage a paid marketing professional to establish a Facebook advertising campaign for your business. I don't recommend doing this by yourself if you're unfamiliar with the platform and the needs of your business, because it can be a way to waste a lot of money, very quickly. If it is done properly, you can get very good sales conversion for very little money.

The next platform that we're going to be talking about is Instagram. It is primarily an image sharing platform, and unlike Facebook, it more or less stays true to this original purpose. Secondary purposes are: as a social networking site; as an e-commerce platform; and for advertising. And as said previously, it is interlinked with Facebook, which means you can link the two accounts and get a kind of two-for-one social media platform situation.

As I said previously, if you choose to establish a social media presence – Facebook and then Instagram – linking the two accounts is probably the best approach for a small business, although it will vary depending on your needs now. 41.3% percent of Australians have an Instagram account. That's a huge number and they do engage with it pretty much on a daily basis. The largest user group is aged between 25 and 34, so this again is Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X (so, a younger group). Older Australians don't tend to be on here, it really is for that that middle-aged group. The industries that do the best on Instagram are media publishers like fashion magazines, that kind of thing. That's because they have a lot of visual content to share, and they can share every day, if not multiple times a day. Basically, on Instagram, the more active you are, both in your Stories – which is a sort of ephemeral Snapchat-esque part of Instagram, where you share an image (or a video or content that lasts for 24 hours); and in the main feed, which is where images are posted and remain permanently – the more frequently you're able to post content in these places, the more Instagram's algorithm is going to favour your business.

Other industries that perform very well on Instagram are: fashion, beauty, automotive and sporting goods. Similarly to Facebook, these industries are ones that are trend-driven, that have influencer voices. Celebrities are often intertwined with a lot of these industries and it's very much a trend based platform. People follow brands on Instagram to follow trends, to observe emerging trends, to see how people use products, and also do product research if they're looking at purchasing something.

Effective use of Instagram requires a combination of posting in the main feed of Instagram. These are permanent images that stay in your Instagram feed, and are visible to anyone, at any time, if they search your account and scroll through your image gallery. That needs to be done several times a week for a business if they want to be active. It also requires the use of Stories which is, as I mentioned before, that ephemeral version of sharing images, videos, content. You usually do them in clumps, so usually, one to seven short pieces of content posted several times a week. Again, three

is probably a good benchmark to aim for there, so it is quite involved (more so than Facebook). But if your industry is suited to this kind of content, you can get incredible amounts of engagement off it. Another key thing to remember with Instagram now is that it has evolved to the point where you can use it as an e-commerce platform. You can literally sell your products on Instagram through the images that you sell, without having to have an e-commerce presence at all. So, if it is right for your industry, I'd say fashion and beauty specifically. Also, food, anything really aesthetically appealing. It can be a very powerful tool.

The third platform I'm going to be talking about is YouTube. Unlike the earlier two platforms that I was talking about, social networking is not a core purpose of YouTube. It is a video sharing platform primarily; and secondarily, it is audience subscription (again, not networking); as an information resource; as a form of video advertising; and also marketing.

It gets around 15 million unique Australian visitors per month, or around 60% of Australians are looking on YouTube in any given month. The thing is, unlike Facebook or Instagram, they don't have accounts, they're not engaging as identifiable users and they're probably not going to follow your brand. The reason that Australians love YouTube and engage with YouTube is really to use it as an information resource. People love video content as a way of learning how to do things, picking up skills, catching up on news occasionally, following people whose opinions they are interested in (and who align with their values). YouTube is a little bit different to the two that we've been talking about previously in that it isn't really a social media space. It's not really somewhere where you connect with users on a long-term basis in the same way that you might on Facebook or Instagram or LinkedIn.

The industries that benefit from video marketing are (kind of counter-intuitively) industries that have a hard time explaining the concepts of what they do. They're not aesthetically appealing, it's very hard to demonstrate what they do, or what they are, with images or written content, so going to video is just a very easy way of explaining what they do, helping people to understand things, solving common customer concerns and problems, and building a reputation.

Industries that benefit from video marketing are: software-as-a-service (SaaS) industries; travel and hospitality; healthcare; education; agencies; law; finance; and e-commerce. An example of this might be an accountant, so not someone who has a lot of images to share on Instagram (unless they're particularly imaginative), or exciting content, or images or video content to share on Facebook. Nothing's instantly likeable. But, they might have a customer base where every year, 10 to 15 customers ask about their tax return. They ask about whether or not they can claim clothing on their tax return.

Something like that is a question that gets asked again and again. It's not something that can be easily explained, but a video is a really powerful way to either, create a graphic, or have an expert talk the user through. It avoids double handling, and it enables you to use YouTube as a resource for an existing customer base. Occasionally, it can be used to draw in new customers as well, who are information-seeking, but it's really about explaining complex concepts in a way that people find easily easy to digest.

If you wanted to use YouTube to establish yourself as a YouTube brand, you need to post original video content, around once a week now. Video marketing, and establishing a video personality on YouTube, is not really something that brands do, it's more something that influencers do. Individuals who have specific opinions, or world views that they practice, tend to post a video once a week. I don't recommend this platform if you want to grow your audience, or get new customers, or get conversions. I would recommend this platform if you're a business that has to explain complex ideas,

and find yourself explaining them over and over again. This can be a really useful resource and it adds value to what you're giving your customers.

The last platform that I'm going to be talking about is LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a professional networking and business-to-business social media platform, so it's not really for businesses that engage with the general public. It's really for businesses to engage with a specific industry, or other businesses at a certain level. Secondary purposes: it's a very popular job-seeking platform; it's often used to display expertise or industry developments; it's a community engagement space, where professionals from the same community can share knowledge or talk about events and current news. It also has an advertising function.

11 million Australians use LinkedIn, which is not as big as the other ones that I have been going through, but it is a significant number, and you get a very specific kind of audience. You can see here, in the two graphs that I've put up, who exactly is on LinkedIn. The most common individual that is on LinkedIn (unlike the other platforms, you can search very specifically, and market very specifically, to a person by their seniority, rank and their industry): middle management and senior staff at three million, those are the most common LinkedIn users. Then you can also see the company sizes that these people belong to. Whilst 11 million is not as significant as Facebook, it's really about quality, not quantity, when it comes to social media.

If you are a business who needs to target a very specific individual in another business, this is the place to be doing that, this is the place to be starting those conversations, even engaging in cold calling (where you just send a message introducing yourself and your services) is not unusual on LinkedIn. The core purpose of LinkedIn, like I said: it's a professional networking, B2B social platform. Engagement on this site is a little bit different to the other sites. Daily use is not that common. LinkedIn users will look maybe once a week at their profile, depending on what stage of their job cycle that they're in, and whether or not they're working on something specifically in the space. To ensure that the people who follow your business see the content you post, you need to post around two to three times per week. That is written content that involves images, videos, articles, links, etc. To make sure your content is seen now, LinkedIn (unlike Facebook and Instagram) tends to be a longer form platform. Content that does better on here is content that is extended opinions, articles, thought sharing, etc. Images and videos are still important, they still ensure a higher degree of engagement, but really, LinkedIn is where you share detailed, specific information, and display your expertise.

That concludes today's webinar on choosing the right social media platform for your business. I hope you enjoyed it and we look forward to seeing you next time. Thank you.