

EBOOK HASHTAG MARKETING

*for Small Business
Owners*



ThriveHive

A PROPEL MARKETING COMPANY

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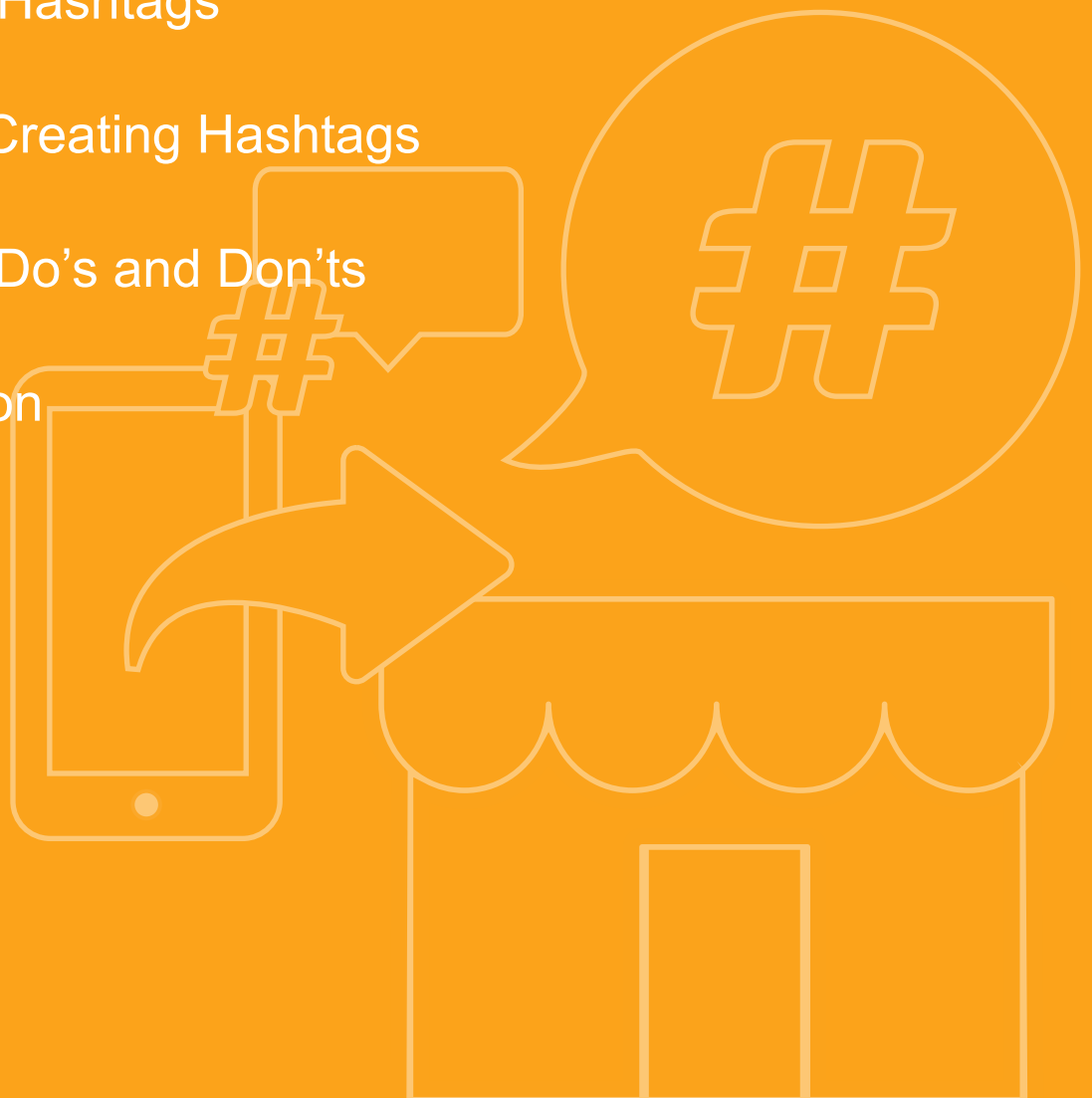
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INTRODUCTION

As it gets more ingrained in our everyday lives, social media has become an effective marketing tool for businesses both large and small. But, did you know that there is a way to make your social media marketing even more effective? By using hashtags in your social media posts, you can improve your content, increase your visibility, boost your engagement, and attract more of the right customers.

So how exactly can hashtags do this for your business? Or better yet, how do hashtags even work? This eBook will cover everything you need to start using hashtags to market your business.

Not only will you understand hashtags, you will know how to create them for your business, and how to effectively use them for your marketing.



HASHTAG BASICS

Before we get into hashtag marketing, let's start with the hashtag basics. Understanding how hashtags work is the first step to knowing how they can be effectively used for your business.

»» What is a Hashtag?

A hashtag is a word or phrase, preceded by the pound or hash sign (#), without any spaces. The entire tag, including the # (ex. #coffeelover) is referred to as the hashtag.

»» What is the Purpose of a Hashtag?

Hashtags are used on social media to categorize content, making it easier for users to filter and discover content.

»» Where are Hashtags Used?

Hashtags are commonly used on Twitter and Instagram. They can also be used on Facebook, Pinterest, and Google+ but are less commonly used on these platforms. At this time, hashtags cannot be used on Snapchat.

»» How Do Hashtags Work?

When the hash sign is added before a word in a social media post, the word or words typed after the # symbol (without spaces) become a clickable link. Users can explore hashtags by either typing a hashtag into a search bar, or simply by tapping or clicking on a hashtag used in a post. When users explore a particular hashtag, they will be shown all posts from public accounts using that hashtag, regardless of whether the user who posted them is following or followed by you.

HASHTAG MARKETING

How Do Businesses Use Hashtags?

People use social media to seek and discover information that is relevant, useful, and engaging to them. Businesses use hashtags to align with this type of usage. Hashtags are an easy and free marketing tool that can increase your visibility on social media, increase engagement, and deepen your connection with your target audience.

1. Increase Visibility

By using hashtags, your social media posts will be visible to users searching for particular hashtags. Social media users perform hashtag searches to find information on topics of interest, so incorporating hashtags into your posts allows you to show up in more search results, increasing your visibility.

2. Increase Engagement

Adding hashtags to your social media posts increases their visibility. The more visible your posts are, the more likely users will be to engage with your posts by liking, commenting, reposting, or entering contests. By using hashtags, you're attracting users who are searching for and looking to engage with specific content, make it more likely for your engagement to increase.

*With over **600 million users on Instagram*** and **317 million users on Twitter****, hashtags are a surefire way of getting more people to discover your business!*

*<http://blog.instagram.com/post/154506585127/161215-600million>

**<https://about.twitter.com/company>

3. Connect With Your Audience

It follows that since hashtags increase your visibility and engagement, that hashtags will also help you connect with your audience. Responding to comments forges a connection between your business and your target audience—you're literally responding to potential customers!

When you use hashtags that are relevant to your target audience, you also demonstrate that you know them well, stay on top of trends, and have their best interests in mind. Not only does this earn trust from your target audience, but connecting with them in a relevant context also deepens your connection to them.

What Makes a Good Business Hashtag?

While you can create a hashtag out of any word or phrase, that doesn't mean you should. The following are characteristics of an effective hashtag for small business marketing.

Relevant

The point of using a hashtag is not to get just anyone to engage with and follow your business, but to get more of the right people to do so. By using relevant hashtags, you can attract the right potential customers to your business.

Make sure your hashtags are relevant to your business by using hashtags related to your business name, product, service, location, or the current period of time. For example, relevant hashtags for a yoga studio in Boston would be #bostonyoga or #bostonyogi.

Popular

It is important to find hashtags that are popular within your target audience, but not so popular that your posts get buried under thousands of others.

For example, #yoga will get buried under 24 million posts on Instagram, but a hashtag more specific to your business such #yogamamas or #BostonOutdoorYoga will make your post visible without getting buried.

TYPES OF HASHTAGS

When it comes to hashtags, many business owners feel lost. When you can use any word as a hashtag, how do you know where to start? Here are 5 types of hashtags that you can use for marketing your small business.

1. Industry Hashtags

Industry hashtags use terms and topics relevant to your industry. These hashtags are already being used by businesses and customers in your industry. Using industry hashtags in your social media posts will help put your content in front of the right people and help you gain more relevant followers.

Examples of industry hashtags include #musicstudio #judomaster or #teacherlife

2. Location Hashtags

Location hashtags work to give your business more exposure to people in your geographic area. Location hashtags tie your business and services to your community, and using them helps you attract more local customers.

Examples include #LAKarate #NorthEndYoga or #bestbrunchBoston

3. Custom Hashtags

Custom hashtags are unique to your business. They may be your business name (as long as it is not a common name), a play on your business name, a slogan, a word or phrase related to your product or service, or one that reflects your culture or mission statement.

Custom hashtags help to authenticate your business on social media and build a community around your brand. Also, when customers and followers use your custom hashtag, you can use their posts for consumer generated content in your own marketing.

Examples of custom hashtags include: #paulpaintsNJ (for a painter in New Jersey named Paul); or #seattleslittlesunrays (for Sunshine Daycare in Seattle); or #thrivehive. We'll cover how to create your own business hashtag and how to use consumer generated content later in this guide.

4. Event Hashtags



Event hashtags are used to categorize posts for an event. Using event hashtags allows you and attendees of your event to share posts and search for posts from the event using the hashtag.

Event hashtags are a great way to build excitement around your events, get more attendees, and share content during and after the event. For example, a small gym named Main Street Fitness may host a 5K and use #5krunonmain. Solace Spa in Los Angeles may host a Mother's Day special in the month of May and use #LAMomsloveSolace.

Events also include social media contests and giveaways, where people enter by using your designated hashtag in their own posts or in a comment on one of your posts.

For example, Forever 21 once hosted an Instagram contest giveaway for free denim for an entire year. Participants entered by posting a picture of their favorite denim look and using the hashtag #allaboutdenim to win.

5. Small Business Hashtags



Small business hashtags can be used by any industry. These hashtags appeal to people who shop small and support small businesses. Embrace and highlight your small business ownership with hashtags such as:

***#shoplocal #shopsmall #smallbusiness #smallbiz #businessowner
#smallbusinessowner #smallbusinessweek #smallbusinesssaturday
#smallbusinessowners #smallbusinesslove #smallbizowner #smallbizlife***

USING & CREATING HASHTAGS

Using Hashtags for your Business

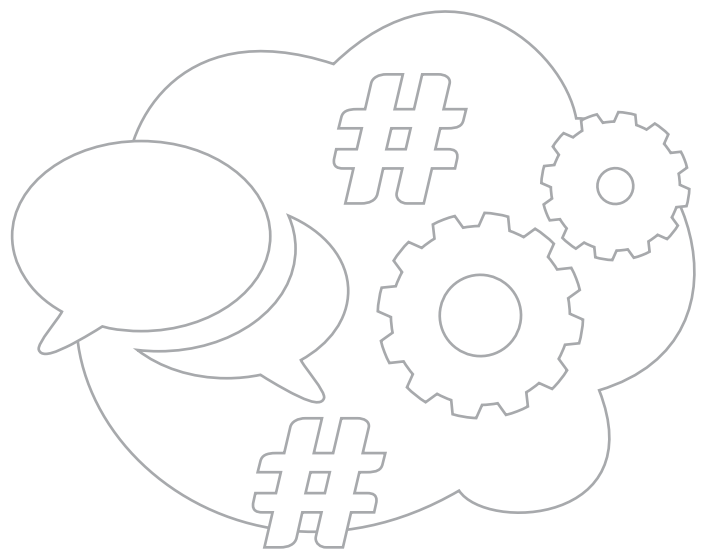
Coming up with good hashtags to use in your business marketing takes a combination of creativity, brainstorming, and research. The following are resources for coming up with hashtags for your business.

Brainstorm

Start with your own brain. Think about what your ideal customers are searching for and what is of interest or importance to them. Think about what makes your business unique or gives it value. This should help you to brainstorm and find hashtags that reflect your business and resonate with your target audience.

Platform Search

You can search for hashtags right in each social media platform. To search hashtags on Instagram, tap Search icon, then taps the Tags tab and type your word or phrase (without spaces) into the search box. A list of hashtags will pop up as you type in your hashtag. Next to each hashtag you'll see how many posts use each hashtag.



To search hashtags on Twitter and Facebook, enter the hashtag then the word or phrase (without spaces) into the search box. On Twitter, you can sort by “Top,” which displays the most liked and retweeted posts, including those from people you don’t follow. You can also sort by “All” which displays every tweet using the hashtag in real time, or you can view posts from only “People you follow.”

Platform Suggestion

Social media platforms will also provide suggestions for hashtags. Platforms display a list of trending or suggested hashtags that might help guide you. Also, if you start typing a hashtag into a post on Twitter or Instagram, the platform will provide suggestions based on what you've typed.

Hashtag Research Tools

There are many great hashtag research tools available outside of social media platforms. Hashtagify.me is a free resource that measures tag popularity and compares them, while Hashtags.org offers information about trending tags. For businesses focusing on local communities, TrendsMap.com maps hashtag trends by region.

If you're just starting out, you might want to start with popular hashtags related to your business.

As you get more familiar with hashtags, you'll want to get more strategic with them.

How to Create a Custom Hashtag for Your Business

Using a custom hashtag for your business is a great way to get customers to engage with your business. The purpose of a business hashtag is to come up with a tag that will only be used by your business and your customers so that users can easily find content related to your business.

Your business hashtag can be anything from your business name to your slogan, but it's essential to ensure it is unique and easy to use. Here's how to create an effective custom hashtag for your business.

Make it Catchy

You only have a few characters to make an impact, so a good hashtag is usually a catchy one. The best way to do this is to use your business name or a phrase relating to your business. If your business has a common name, you can use humor, puns, rhyming, or alliteration in the hashtag to make it catchy.

Keep it Short

People are more likely to engage with a hashtag that they can remember. Keep your business hashtag short so that it is easy to identify, search, use, and recall.

A long hashtag is hard to remember, takes time to type out, and may be misspelled. Create a short, memorable hashtag (maximum 15-20 characters) related to your business that no one else uses.

Make it Clear

In addition to a short and catchy hashtag, your business hashtag should be obviously related to your business. Make your custom hashtag easy to read and understand, and avoid using acronyms unless they are obvious. If your business name or hashtag is confusing, you may clarify your hashtag with capitalization #YogaAroundTown vs #yogaaroundtown.

Search It

Once you've come up with a potential hashtag to use for your business, search the hashtag both in search engines and in the search bar of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. A search will pull up all of the posts that use that hashtag already.

For your custom hashtags, search it to make sure it's not already being used by another company and that there is little to no content already associated with the hashtag. You want the hashtag to be unique and memorable.

The goal is to find a hashtag that doesn't have any (or many) posts using it—the fewer posts using the hashtag, the easier it will be for you to associate the hashtag with your business. If there are some posts using the hashtag, make sure that it is being used in the way you plan to use it, and not in a different or even inappropriate way.

✓ *Proofread It*

Before deciding on your hashtag, proofread it yourself and ask others to read it to ensure that it makes sense. Check for spelling and make sure that there are no spaces or special characters. Hashtags only work with letters and numbers, and the hashtag ends with the first space that follows it.

When using multiple words, make sure that they don't produce other misleading combinations.

For example, the hashtag #nowthatchersdead that was meant to relate to the death of Margaret Thatcher, but had many people thinking the singer Cher had died. It's best to avoid this type of confusion.

Use It

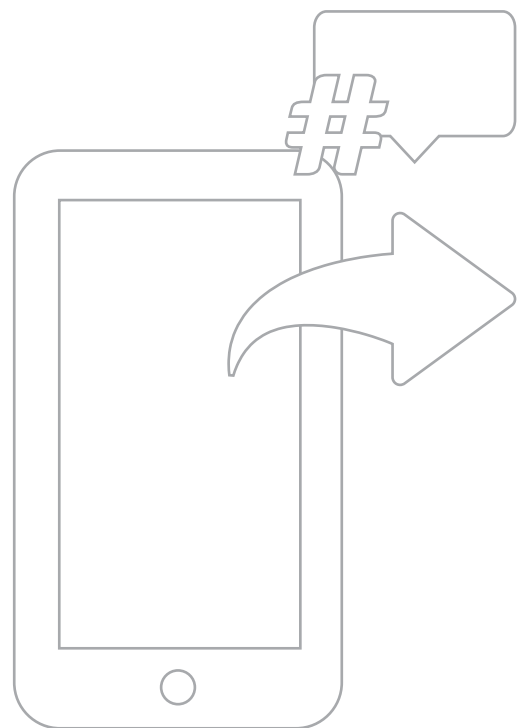
If you completed the above steps and settled on a hashtag for your business, now you need to use it! Put your hashtag in your Instagram profile bio and include it in your posts. The more you use your hashtag, the more familiar people will become with your brand and your specific hashtag, and the more likely they will be to use it too. Tell customers about your hashtag, encourage them to use, and reward them for using it by sharing their photos!

Post User Generated Content

The most important part about using a custom business hashtag is remembering to search the hashtag for photos that customers post using it. When followers and customers do share pictures and posts using your custom hashtag, they create user generated content.

By using your hashtag, they're getting your attention and associating their post to your business.

When you find users using your hashtag, take the opportunity to thank and engage with them. If you like the photo, you should ask if you can share it on your business's social media channels (making sure to give credit to the user who originally posted the photo). This is called consumer generated content and is a free and easy way to get content to use in your own marketing. In addition to being easy, it's also effective. It builds excitement around your brand, creates customer evangelists, and serves as customer testimonials about your product or service.



HASHTAG DO'S AND DON'TS

Hashtag marketing is easy and effective, but it is important to use it correctly for best results. Here is a list of hashtag best practices to help ensure proper use.

Hashtag Do's

✓ ***Make Your Profile Public***

Hashtags only work for public profiles, so make sure your Instagram and Twitter accounts are public. You should also check your general settings on Facebook to make sure your business Facebook page is public and accessible. Finally, make sure your profiles are up to date because hashtags will likely increase traffic to your profile page.

✓ ***Populate the Hashtag***

It is best to make sure there is content containing that hashtag before using it. Popular or trending hashtags will already have content from other users, but your custom hashtags may not. If you make a custom hashtag for your business, go back and edit your existing content to include the hashtag in your captions.

✓ ***Use Context***

Hashtags are not meant to replace a caption or content on a social media post. Make sure you use hashtags as a supplement to the content in your posts— not just by themselves or in a list of other hashtags.

✓ ***Know Your Audience***

It is important to know the language your audience uses, the topics that resonate with them, and which social media platforms they use. Think like your target audience and think about which hashtags they would be searching for to find content like yours. By using hashtags that your audience will search for, your posts will be more easily discovered by your target audience.

✓ ***Engage***

Monitor your hashtagged posts and interact with the people engaging with them. This will encourage them to continue engaging, strengthen your relationship with them, and inspire others to engage as well. In addition to responding to comments on your own posts, search the hashtags that you use, and engage with others using those hashtags.

Hashtag Don'ts

✘ **Use Punctuation**

A hashtag gets cut off with the first space or punctuation that follows it, so don't put punctuation in the middle of a hashtag. For example, writing #it'sagirl will create the hashtag #it. Users who tap that hashtag to see pictures of baby girls will instead see posts on information technology. Punctuation at the end of a hashtag is fine, such as with #itsagirl! or What's your favorite #motivationalquote?

✘ **Use Commas**

Even though you can use commas to separate multiple hashtags, it's better to use spaces instead. This is most common way that users list hashtags, and also creates a cleaner look. For example, use #remodel #renovationideas #beforeandafter instead of #remodel, #renovationideas, #beforeandafter.

✘ **Repeat Hashtags**

Using the same hashtag twice in one post will not increase its effectiveness, so don't do it!

✘ **Use Too Many in One Post**

Too many hashtags in one post are overwhelming and will appear "spammy", so limit yourself to 1 to 3 hashtags on Facebook and Twitter. You can use up to 30 hashtags on Instagram. If you're using more than a few hashtags on Instagram, put the hashtags in a comment so that they don't distract from the caption of the photo.

✘ **Use The Same Hashtag in Every Post**

You'll want to use the same hashtags frequently to build brand awareness and engagement, but do not use the same hashtag in every post. Diversify your content to avoid redundancy and losing followers. The one exception here is your own custom business hashtag, which you are free to use in all posts.

CONCLUSION

Who knew that a tiny little hash symbol could have such a big role? Hashtags have enabled users to search according to their interests and needs and help businesses stand out on social media. As a result, hashtag marketing connects your business with more of the right people and in a more relevant manner.

The role of hashtags in marketing will only continue to grow, so a hashtag marketing strategy is crucial to keeping up with your target audience. Remember, you don't have to get it right to start. In fact, the only way you will get it right is by trying it out for yourself. So now that you're equipped with the hashtag know-how, there's no better time than now to start using hashtags to grow your business!

ThriveHive

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ThriveHive is an all-in-one marketing platform that gives local businesses a better website and custom marketing plan. Get the tools and expertise to do all of your small business marketing, all in one place.

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