

**21 WAYS
TO BUILD
RELATIONSHIPS
WITH YOUR
CUSTOMERS
USING
SOCIAL MEDIA**

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To get the most out of your business's social media presence, you need to use it to connect with your customers. Here are 21 tips for building relationships with your people — while not spending all day online.

1. Ask questions

When you post to Facebook, include a question as a conversation starter. It gets people talking, which gives your posts better free exposure. What kind of question do you think your people would like to discuss? (See what I did there?)

2. Feature customers

Consider periodically selecting one of your customers or clients and telling their story. How have you helped them? Have you made a measurable difference in their lives? Why do they like your products?

3. Be authentic

When you write social media posts, remember that you're a real person, talking to other real people. Communicating in a genuine way will help you connect with your people and will set you above your competition.

4. Post pictures

Share photos of your business in action. These should be reasonably good pictures, but don't have to be perfect — smartphone pictures are fine. Bonus points if you take a few minutes to learn some photography tips!

5. Go live

The newish Facebook Live feature is a great way to interact with your people in real time. Consider scheduling a regular time each week to go live. Ask for questions from your people in advance, then answer them during your live sessions.

6. Use hashtags

Create hashtags and encourage your customers to use them. They will help your posts spread, and can be fun for your people to use, too. And, pay attention to the hashtags that rise to the top of pop culture. Sometimes there will be opportunities for you to use them as well — not in a super-salesy way, but in a fun, lighthearted way.

7. Respond quickly

Social media is a right-now world, but you don't have to stay glued to your phone at all times. Use notification tools to help you know when you're needed. If it's still too much for you to handle during your workday, consider delegating the responsibility to an employee you trust or hiring a virtual assistant.

8. Celebrate milestones

Acknowledge big occasions for your business by asking your people to celebrate with you. On your fifth anniversary, post a throwback pic of your opening day. If you receive an award or recognition from your community, say thank you. You can recognize holidays too. Post a photo or video wishing your people well. These posts don't have to be sales-oriented, but if it's appropriate, they could be.

9. Rock customer service

When customers use your social media channels to report problems, help them. If there was a problem with a product, send them a free coupon. If they had a bad experience in your store, apologize. Be just as good (if not better) at customer service via social media as you are in person.

10. Be relatable

Your people probably already love that you're not a giant corporation. If you have to close up shop for the day unexpectedly because your hot water heater flooded your kitchen, say so! Share your life with your customers and clients on social media the same way you might in person.

11. Stay calm

Remember that even though you can't see each other face-to-face, there's a person on the other side of that computer. If someone is rude to you on social media, keep your cool and respond as you would in person.

12. Educate

Use your social media platform to teach people about your product or service. Add as much value as you possibly can. Post videos demonstrating how to use your product. Link to articles detailing why your service is important. Show new uses, creative applications, or helpful tips for what you do or sell.

13. Find your voice

Social media is a personable, friendly place. Formal writing typically doesn't fit in. (Grammatically correct writing is always in style, though!) Find the kind of voice that accurately reflects you and your business — this kind of writing will help your people feel like they really know you.

14. Offer discounts

Offer your people a small freebie for checking in at your store. Distribute a coupon. Use Facebook's deals feature to create an offer that will both engage visitors on social media and help you get their business.

15. Ask for feedback

Considering launching a new product? Ask your people what they think. Need to evaluate the effectiveness of your current services? Social media is a great platform to ask for and receive input from your people.

16. Share related content

When you run across articles, videos, and other content that you think your people would find useful, share them on social media. The social media economy is one of adding value — so when you link to and tag other people in your field, you get exposure in return.

17. Entertain

Try sharing an amusing meme or humorous story sometimes. One word of caution, though: humor can be hard to communicate in writing. Keep it simple and don't offend your people.

18. Join the conversation

Use monitoring tools to find out when people talk about your business. Then, engage them in helpful, authentic conversation.

19. Share user-generated content

Watch for photos or videos that your people post about your product, then share it. If you simply share a public post, you can probably do so without getting permission first. If you create a new post using content from someone else, or want to share a post that's not public, you'll want to get permission from the original poster first and give them credit in your post.

20. Name drop

When it makes sense, tag other respected businesses and people in your posts. This kind of digital networking gives your posts a wider exposure, and also reinforces your real-life connection with those businesses and people.

21. Drive traffic to your website

Take advantage of opportunities to link to articles and helpful pages on your website. And on your website, encourage visitors to sign up for your email list. This way, you can keep in touch with them outside of social media.