

Restaurants Should Get Social

Use social media marketing to spread the word about your establishment

For restaurants, exposure to regular and prospective diners is critical to success and sustainability. Social media marketing is a great way to gain that much needed visibility at virtually no cost. The biggest hurdles for many restaurateurs are figuring out which social networks are right for them, getting started, and then maintaining their presence on a regular basis.



Picking the right social networks

With a seemingly [endless array of social networks](#) to choose from, it can be a little dizzying trying to determine which one, or combination, is right for your restaurant. Given their size, it's best to start the investigation with Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Here are a few reasons why we like each network:

Facebook: This is the largest social network with more than 500 million users, so it's a good probability that at least a few of your customers are using it. What's particularly cool about Facebook is the ability to build custom tabs for your Pages that can be used to convey and segment information (such as your menu) to your network. Plus, you can set a custom tab as the default view, making a Facebook Page look more unique than the standard Wall view users typically see when they land on a Page. You can also very easily share photos and videos, which can help bring your establishment to life.

Twitter: What hooked us about Twitter is that it's a place where influencers are waiting for that next piece of information or content to share with their audience. By providing good content in your tweets (that's what posts on Twitter are called), you're giving your followers and influencers information to retweet (or forward) to their own followers. Twitter makes it very easy for a piece of content or information to go viral.

LinkedIn: The real value of LinkedIn is found in the Groups features, which are essentially discussion forums centered on a specific topic or industry. It's a great way to help elevate your role as an expert and resource.

It's recommended that you at least sign up for each of these three networks to reserve your establishment's name there for future use.

Making the most your social networks

While the easy way to get started with social media marketing is to post links to blog and newsletter content to Facebook and Twitter, the real value is derived by becoming part of the conversation on these networks and further promoting your own business. Social media makes it easy to put a human face on your restaurant, so make sure when

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you post, it sounds like a person is behind the content, not a robot. People like to make connections with other people on social networks, not necessarily with faceless brands. Person-to-person connections are an authentic extension of relationship building.

Once you're a part of the social media conversation, your restaurant can then use the tools to:

Promote upcoming events: Tell your followers and fans about upcoming events at your restaurant (specials, deal nights, etc.) and how they can participate. Because of the nature of social media, you can post event promotions more frequently than you can send email campaigns. Just change the language and use a sense of urgency (e.g., "5 seats left!") as you continue to post updates over time.

Ask customers to share their actions: If you're accepting event registrations online, prompt attendees to share the news through their own social networks that they're registered for your event, and to ask their own followers to join in the fun. Or tell diners to share their experience at your restaurant with the Facebook and Twitter friends.

Spread your content further with Share, Like, and Tweet buttons: Facebook and Twitter both have buttons you can add to your website, blog, or email newsletter that make it easy for visitors and readers to quickly post links to your content to their social media networks. Services such as [AddThis](#) also offer widgets that make sharing content across multiple networks easy. Just putting a Share, Like, or Tweet button on your blog or in your newsletter is not always enough, though. You may need to explain to users what

the buttons mean, how they work, and prompt them to use the buttons.

Brand your tweets with a hashtag: When using Twitter, you can further brand your tweets with a hashtag (a # sign followed by word, such as [#greatfood](#)). Hashtags make it easy to find tweets from multiple people talking about the same topic. If you are hosting an event, use a hashtag in each post about the event and encourage your customers and attendees to do the same. Doing so makes it easier for you to find people you're not currently following who are talking about your event.

Keeping on top of it all

Once you get comfortable with social media marketing, you'll find an endless number of things to share and promote through your various feeds that will leverage your followers, fans, and connections to spread that information far and wide. And, if you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed trying to keep up the flurry of updates and posts on your social networks, give [NutshellMail](#) a try. It will help you keep tabs on all your social networks via email updates that are sent on a schedule of your choosing.

As long as you're in the restaurant business and can benefit from more exposure, social media marketing is something you have to do.

Want to know more about how social media marketing can help your restaurant? Visit [ConstantContact.com](#) to learn more.

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