

A lot of marketing for companies, brands and businesses nowadays is through social media, it's a low cost, effective and it reaches the billions of people across the world who use these social media platforms. However, with the world of social media being so massive it could be hard to find posts, people or businesses you're interested in as there are so many users of social media. That's where hashtags come in.

Hashtags are clickable words that allow you to find a community of people who have used that same word you're looking for. Businesses can use these when posting their work online and wanting to show it off and attract new clients. For example, say you're a florist, you post a picture of an arrangement you have done onto your social media and attach the hashtag '#flowerarrangements,' someone who would be wanting a flower arrangement would put into the search bar that hashtag and your work comes up leading them to your page and the best-case scenario is they contact you wanting to use your business.

RESEARCHING HASHTAGS

Simply start at the hashtag search bar of whatever **social media platform** you're on, type in keywords that suit your business, like when we used #flowerarrangements before with the florist example, and see which words are the most popular that make sense to go with your business.

Research how many posts are linked even to your brand name and the fewer with this the better as that's how you can grow a community with hashtags but we will talk about that in a minute. If you're a small company research the bigger companies in your field of work and see what hashtags they're using as they will know best, they are the bigger company after all so their online game will be impeccable.

INCLUDING HASHTAGS

You want to include popular hashtags as they attract the most attention, obviously. But what will be most effective is if you add a combination of both popular hashtags and unique hashtags. This is where the hashtag of your company's name comes in. The fewer posts under the umbrella of your brand name as a hashtag is important, that hashtag collects all posts that you have created and where clients of yours can attach the work you've done or sold to them when posting it, this is where you gain user generated content. This means when users search your name all your work is displayed there to explore.

Unique hashtags mean fewer posts that aren't yours in the mix, fewer posts mean more exposure for your posts which is more exposure for your brand and less competition.



BUILD A COMMUNITY AROUND YOUR HASHTAG.

It is recommended to use around 3-5 hashtags per post in order to not overwhelm your audience but still stay relevant. However, if you experiment with more and it shows to work for you and your business then nothing is stopping you from exceeding that amount.

THE BEST HASHTAG TIPS

One of the best tips when looking at hashtags is to substitute words or phrases that you're already using in your caption for hashtags, for example:

-Back to when I gave social media tips to digital marketing students at Leeds University last August. #leedsuniversity #socialmediatips #digitalmarketing

-Back to when I gave #socialmediatips to #digitalmarketing students at #leeduniversity

This help to keep your caption short and snappy yet still effective with the use of the hashtags, this is important because people don't want to be reading or seeing paragraphs attached to pictures as they simply won't read it or take notice when flicking through their timeline. After all, you want people to pay attention to your hashtags as they are what will help promote your business.

Another one of the best tips when using hashtags is being aware to **localise your hashtags**. This is so simple! Businesses should simply add where their business is located, so for example as one of your hashtags, you should put #cheshire or wherever it is you are from. This means if someone is in your area looking for your kind of business to do work for them or buy one of your products you will come up when they put in their local area.

This is especially useful for **food businesses** as food is posted about a lot of social media and so when someone who maybe isn't from around your specific area wants to find a place to eat that is recommended, they can just type in where they are and find food places. Localising hashtags give you a great chance of coming up.

STAYING RELEVANT

You just have to keep on top of the trends, something that is on-trend today on social media may be a distant memory next week. Trends are constantly changing. Turn to your trusty search bar and maybe even Google to find out what is trending it really will make all the difference in your online performance. Keep up with the trends and keep relevant.

ARE HASHTAGS USED DIFFERENTLY ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS?

Good questions.

All social media platforms thrive off hashtags to give their media users a number of different communities to explore. So, you could argue that no, a hashtag is a hashtag and they are used on everything. But hashtags will help promote your business so treat all platforms as having their own identity, they all have their own algorithm with hashtags and ultimately what is trending on Instagram will not be trending on Twitter in a lot of cases. Do your research for each platform your business uses and separately look at trends for each.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM THIS?

A word that appears a lot in this blog is 'community', because that is ultimately what a hashtag creates, a collection of people using the same hashtag in order to appear and be relevant in their hashtag topic. You get a community of people who are in the same field of work as you or people looking for someone in your field of work, maybe even someone just admiring the work of what your business does. Hashtags are a simple little nugget of effectiveness that can help promote your business.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

We have seen **marketing failures** that have unintentionally implied racism, forced women to compare their body types to other's and exploited grief in children who have lost a parent. These harmful slip-ups from marketers have given brands and businesses reputations they will never be able to get rid of. The marketers behind ideas like this have lost their jobs and will carry the shame of the message their work put out into the world and they will most likely find it extremely hard to find jobs again. The marketer who made the failure in the Pepsi advert with Kendall Jenner in it had to step down from her role and said it was 'the most gut-wrenching experience of my career.' Mistakes like this do not just go away, so be careful and think of ways that your work could be interpreted.