

# Getting Past the Gate Keepers of Social Media



## How to Ensure Your Content is Seen by Your Social Media Followers.

We live in a world where bite-sized chunks of mathematical data have become central to how we live our daily lives. When you search online or scroll through your social feeds, you are guided by an algorithm that understands your consumption habits (perhaps more than you do) to guide your decisions and choices. As if by magic, you may be completely unaware of when an algorithm is at work. While this might sound sinister, algorithms are, by and large, there to help you.

Whether searching on Google or scrolling through Facebook and Twitter, the information presented come from a mathematical equation based on two factors:

- Algorithmic quality – the quality standard of the content available.
- Your previous history – the actions and reactions you’ve taken to specific chunks of content in the past.

This means whether by design or by personal choice, social media algorithms create filters to show the content we want and remove everything else. With that in mind it’s important that they are understood and when they are at work.

**Social media algorithms for information and news flow.** Time and again we see content go down a black hole because no consideration is given to a social media algorithm. What works on one social network may not work for another which is why it is important to understand how each algorithm works to create the content to suit it.

Content creators – brands and individuals alike – need to understand how best to work with the social media algorithms to generate the best return for their content creating efforts. Not that the social networks give us the ‘secret sauce’ to their algorithms. They do, however, provide tidbits of advice and information on occasion either through their official channels or by their employees on social media.

**Why do we need to understand social media algorithms?** A lack of understanding of how social media algorithms work is like driving in the dark with no lights on. It’s possible and you may get to your destination but it’s an unnecessary risk. In a nutshell, you need to understand them for the following reasons:

- Impact: To ensure that your content creates the greatest impact possible
- ROI: To ensure the time and effort spent has the greatest return
- Reputation: To become a long-term trusted source of information for the algorithms

**Since 2018, the tide has changed with the social media algorithms.** Facebook announced that it intends to start prioritizing “meaningful conversations’ instead of news articles. Twitter is killing automation on the platform. LinkedIn is prioritizing status updates by its professional users who are more personal and open about their lives. All of which are prioritizing content native to its platform over links to third-party sites.

This is the beginning of a new era in social networking – an era that’s more about human connection as opposed to information consumption.

This new shift calls for building a community, not an audience. It’s about making content conversational instead of attention-grabbing. It’s ultimately about taking a more honest approach when engaging with people on social networks.

Use these guides as a process and checklist you can follow to ensure your content and messaging has the best opportunity to receive maximum impact. Social networks are constantly changing, refining and testing their algorithms. It’s important we keep up with them.

Ready? Let’s dive in!

*“Time and again we see content go down a black hole. What works on one social network may not work for another.”*





## How to work with the Facebook algorithm in 2019

The accumulation of negative media coverage along with research finding that people feel less happy after visiting Facebook has prompted the company to make swift moves to eradicate the sharing of content that make people either mad, bad or sad. This means the Facebook algorithm will now prioritize content that drives discussions among friends and family as opposed to clickbait and links to third-party sites.

### What do we know about the Facebook algorithm?

- A post is served to a small percentage of users to measure initial engagement
- The Facebook algorithm prioritizes content that stimulates a conversation between friends and family, and prioritize links shared over Messenger. Brand or publisher content that is shared by a user and generates further discussion will be prioritized higher, as will live video because it receives more interactions
- Native video posts receive much more engagement than a link post
- Posting five times a day seems to be the optimal amount according to a Buffer study
- Clickbait and asking people to 'like, comment or share' your content will receive a markdown
- Sensationalist content will be marked down by the algorithm as will articles with false headlines

**Create content with the purpose of driving discussion among Facebook users.** This is the new normal on Facebook and anyone looking to work with the algorithm will have to take this into consideration when developing content, they want to do well on the platform.

**Take an 80/20 approach to native and owned content.** Facebook wants you to create content for the platform but if your goal is to drive traffic to your site you have to play nicely. Be a credible contributor to the platform using native content and post sparingly to your own site and the algorithm may help you

**Use live video to drive engagement whenever possible.** Facebook has specifically said they will prioritize live video because they know it generates six times more engagement than any other content. Anything that drives meaningful engagement is worth doing

**Develop an overall video strategy.** The data continues to show it and Facebook continues to verify it but native quality video will continue to be prioritized in Facebook for the foreseeable future. If you

**Aim to be reputable in the eyes of the algorithm (be choosy with what you share).** Don't use Facebook as a means to share every piece of content you have. If it doesn't generate engagement, then your credibility score will decrease. Only share content you believe is suitable for the platform and audience you're trying to engage.

*"This new shift calls for building a community, not an audience, and making content conversational instead of attention-grabbing."*

**Absolutely no clickbait, engagement bait or overly promotional content.** The Facebook algorithm will mark down clickbait and sensational articles, statuses that ask users to like, comment and share, and promotional updates. To be seen as credible in the eyes of the algorithm don't do any of these.





## How to work with the Twitter algorithm in 2019

The intention of the Twitter algorithm is to make the timeline more relevant so users can catch important tweets that they would otherwise miss from people they engage with the most. At the same time, Twitter still considers itself as a live news site as well as a social platform. It reinforces this by asking “What’s happening?” when you log in to your account. It won’t show you tweets that are days old because, by Twitter’s standards, they’re too old. The intention of Twitter is to help people find out ‘what’s happening right now’ as opposed to Facebook or LinkedIn which is more about ‘what’s going on this week.’ So, while the algorithm will show you older tweets first, time is still an important factor. And if you want your tweets to get as much reach and engagement as possible, you have to work with the algorithm.

### What do we know about the Twitter algorithm?

- Using the 280-character limit increase engagement rates
- Tweets from people you engage with the most will show first
- A tweet is served to a small percentage of users to measure initial engagement.
- Time spent reading someone’s tweets or visiting their profile will impact the content you see even if you don’t engage with it. The more you engage makes the algorithm show any further tweets in their timeline.

*“A lack of understanding is like driving in the dark with no lights on. It’s possible and you may get to your destination but it’s an unnecessary risk.”*

**Timing: Tweet when your followers are online and show up every day.** Use a third-party service like Tweroid or ManagerFitter to tell you what time of the day your followers are usually online. This is the best time to post to ensure that your tweets get as much visibility as possible among your followers. The more visibility a tweet has, the greater chance of engagement it will receive. If you’re tweeting every day, the algorithm will reward you for it. If your tweets from the past week receive engagement the algorithm will prioritize you further. It’s about showing up every day and adding value to a relevant audience.

**Create tweets based on what your followers like** Your Twitter Analytics provides you with a wealth of data not just about your tweets but about the demographics of your followers, as well as their subject interests. Once you understand your follower interests you can create tweets for them. The more relevant they are the more likely they will engage.

**Use the 280-character limit to provide further information and context** Twitter has stated that tweets that use more characters get more engagement. Why? Because you can add more information and more context. You can also be more creative. Do this and the Twitter algorithm will reward you for it.

**Engage with your followers** When you retweet and @reply other people and they respond, the algorithm will place any further tweets of yours in their timeline (provided they are following you). Engaging with other Twitter accounts ensures that the algorithm sees you as a contributor to the community. Don’t just tweet out and expect people to engage with you – go out and engage with others.





# LinkedIn

## How to work with the LinkedIn algorithm in 2019

LinkedIn uses human intervention as well as its algorithm to determine content quality. If a post begins to receive a lot of engagement “real people at LinkedIn” will analyze it and decide whether it’s good enough to be seen by a wider audience on the platform. When a user logs into the platform, the LinkedIn algorithm sorts through tens of thousands of posts and ranks the most important ones at the top of the feed.

The LinkedIn algorithm gives your content virility by showing it to the connections of those who engage with it. If someone engages with your post either by commenting on it or liking it, the algorithm will show that comment or like to their 1st-degree connections (your 1st or 2nd). So, let’s say someone comments on your post, the LinkedIn algorithm will show it to five of their connections. This is how your content is amplified outside of your 1st-degree network to your 2nd and 3rd-degree connections.

### What do we know about the LinkedIn algorithm?

- Content will be shown to the most relevant people in your network by matching skills, industry and who you’re connected with. Content will be shown to people who have engaged with you on LinkedIn in the past and who you interact with the most frequently
- Likes, comments and shares are likely to have different weightings
- The key to going viral is to get the algorithm to show your content to your 2nd and 3rd-degree network
- A post is served to a small percentage of users to measure initial engagement
- One sentence paragraphs of personal narratives still do well as a viral mechanism
- Content with high engagement will be analyzed by LinkedIn staff and potentially opened up to a wider audience (though human analysis can be subjective)

**Create a relevant network of LinkedIn connections** If your LinkedIn network is full of people from a myriad of industries and sectors then your content won’t resonate with all of them. Instead, keep your connections relevant to the industry you’re in so your content has more chance of appealing and being shared by them to your 2nd and 3rd-degree networks.

**Engage with people in your network** Be a valuable member of your network by liking, commenting and sharing your contacts’ content.

**Use the status box over blog post to stand a better chance of going viral** Users report that statuses receive more visibility than actual blog posts. This is surprising given LinkedIn’s focus on publishing content and the greater effort it takes to write a blog post. While this might change in time, this is the way the LinkedIn algorithm prioritizes written content for now.

**Take an 80/20 approach to native and owned content** Most brands and people prefer to use the social networks to drive traffic to an owned channel like a website or a blog. These days it’s increasingly harder to do so as the algorithms prioritize native content over external links. The LinkedIn algorithm, however, will still drive a lot of traffic to your owned channel provided you don’t abuse it.





## How to work with the Instagram algorithm in 2019

Instagram announced its own social media algorithm in mid-2016 as a way to provide users with the type of content they will engage with the most. Prior to the Instagram algorithm being launched, the feed worked in chronological order meaning you'd see the latest post at the top. Back then a post had a half-life of 72 minutes whereas now it can receive engagement days after it's published. Regardless of whether the people you engage with the most publish something the day before, you'll see it at the top of your timeline when you next login. Engagement is a key ranking factor for the Instagram algorithm. The more likes, comments, comment likes, post saves, DM replies and sent via DMs a post receives, the more weighting is placed on it by the algorithm.

### What do we know about the Instagram algorithm?

- When first published, a post is shown to a select group of followers to gauge engagement. The three most important factors are: 1. Interest (the more the Instagram algorithm thinks you'll like a post the more likely you'll see it), 2. Timelines (it prioritizes recent posts) and 3. Relationship (if you like and comment a lot it will assume you're friends and family)
- Posting regularly will help you feature higher in users' timelines and it won't downrank people who post a lot
- Posts shared via DM will be ranked by the algorithm and comments are weighted more than likes alone
- The genres of content you interact with most will be shown higher
- Hashtags still work in the algorithm but mainly for the Explore page
- An established and engaged community will improve each post's credibility
- Actively engaging with other people's content (via likes and comments) helps drive people and further engagement to your profile

**Post regularly.** If you post irregularly the algorithm will treat you as a bit player and won't prioritize your posts among your followers. And why should it? Those who post regularly and contribute the most will be rewarded for it.

**Engage with the types of content you post on** Engaging with content and users that are relevant to your own Instagram profile will help drive people to your own account. The more you engage with these accounts the more the algorithm will show your content their timelines.

**Publish content at the best time(s)** One of the three key criteria for the Instagram algorithm is timeliness. Learn when your best time to publish is and post then.

**Use hashtags with the intention to be found via the Explore page** If you can get to the top of the Explore page via hashtag usage it can generate hundreds, if not thousands, of likes and followers.





## How to work with the YouTube algorithm in 2019

The YouTube algorithm has been developed to serve those that contribute the most to the site. This is reflected in some of its ranking factors which are based on posting consistency and the number of subscribers a user has. Unless you're famous, superbly talented in some way or have a completely different angle to creating videos than anyone else, building a substantial audience on YouTube from scratch requires a lot of work. Why? Because the quality of content is exceptionally high and every topic imaginable has been covered already. On top of this, it requires posting of around 2/3 times a week to gain algorithmic traction.

Something to bear in mind is that users – even the most influential of users – don't have full control over their channel or content on any social media site and never will. It's rented land.

### What do we know about the YouTube algorithm?

- Total watch time and audience retention are important ranking factors
- Upload frequency is an important factor and those who upload consistently are rewarded
- A recently uploaded video is served to a small percentage of users to measure initial engagement
- The more subscribers, views, and channel followers you have, the more priority the YouTube algorithm places on your videos
- Video likes/dislikes and comments are important ranking signals
- The title, description and keyword tags are important ranking factors
- Videos that are 7-16 mins are the optimal length
- The YouTube algorithm is AI. It learns, understands and expands

**Consistency is key.** Channels that are sporadic in their video content uploads will be marked down by the algorithm. The best approach is to publish videos consistently and preferably at the same time and/or day each week. Not only will this help you from an algorithmic perspective, but your subscribers will be more receptive to new videos when they know they are due out.

**Building a subscriber base.** The more subscribers your channel has the more credible you are in the eyes of the algorithm. This is a catch 22 situation for anyone starting from scratch and looking to grow a YouTube channel making it all-the-more difficult for newbies.

**Make your video enjoyable to your target audience.** Of course, you should be doing this anyway but the more likes your video receives the more the YouTube algorithm rewards it. Make videos that your target market will enjoy and don't be controversial to encourage 'thumbs down' responses.

**Hook your viewers in on the first few minutes of your video.** The longer people watch your videos, the more interesting the YouTube algorithm will assume it to be. The aim is to hook the viewer in as soon as possible and many YouTubers use specific tactics to do so.

**Make your videos around 7-16 mins in length.** Videos which are 7 – 16 minutes in length receive the best retention, most engagement and best viewer-to-subscription rate.

