



## 8 Must-Know Social Media Trends for 2021

### 1: Show Your Audience Your “Reel” Brand Personality with Instagram Reels or TikTok

Known for short and snappy content, these bite-sized, “snackable” content pieces give you up to 15-30 seconds to share your brand personality. They also cater to each generation’s average content attention span, which HubSpot cites as 12 seconds for millennials and 8 seconds for Gen Z, making them perfect for bolstering engagement as users multitask throughout the day. Here are a few ideas to utilize Instagram Reel’s fun, informal format to produce authentic, high-quality content: behind-the-scenes glimpses, before-and-after images, mini how-to tutorials, educational materials, product features, quick tips and even short skits.

### 2: Make New Friends, But Keep The Old: Don’t Leave Long-Form Video Out

In the midst of Instagram Reels, TikToks, stories, and other scroll-stopping video clips, long-form video remains key in content strategies. On March 15th alone, YouTube received over a 500% increase in views compared to the daily average the rest of the year! More than just another trend to follow, developing quality videos and live streams that entertain, educate, inspire or benefit your audience in some way allows you to build trust with your audience—helping you go from a paid ad to a follow. Taking the time to plan out what you’ll say and how you deliver it (lighting, sound quality, editing, b-roll footage, etc.) will help you stand out.

### 3: Stories Capabilities Are Not Only Here to Stay, They’re Growing

It started off with Snapchat (or Picaboo as it was originally called when it launched in July 2011) and now they’re everywhere, the fleeting forms of temporary content that allow brands and users to share material that disappears after 24 hours. Great for sharing casual updates, personable content and authentic, humorous or “imperfect” content, the stories format has continued to grow across various platforms’ mobile apps, including Twitter Fleets, Pinterest Story Pins and LinkedIn Stories. Not only do Stories allow you to show your audience a more personal side of your organization, they can help you get to know your audience! Like polls, quick questionnaires and other voting features, the rollout of Stories across additional platforms can be a great way for brands to get to know their audiences even better and further refine their strategy. Whether Stories will take off as much as Reels and TikToks did in 2020 is unclear, but an additional avenue to connect with audiences is never a bad thing, especially when it deepens that paramount brand-audience connection.

### 4: Replace Face-to-Face Time with Screen-to-Screen Time

Eighty percent of B2B marketers in the US and UK expect to run or participate in hybrid events in 2021, a research survey by Integrate finds. Helping brands connect to their audience and industry peers from anywhere, virtual events are a must or a must-try for brands, especially those that relied on live events for networking, sales and engagement prior to COVID-19, as we mentioned in our recent podcast. Social platforms met 2020’s challenges with major leaps in event hosting, promotion and engagement on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and, most recently, LinkedIn with the launch of LinkedIn Events and LinkedIn Live. On average, live videos get seven times more reactions and 24x more comments than native video produced by the same broadcasters, according to LinkedIn, expanding your brand’s reach while showing a face behind the brand.

## **5: Make eCommerce Even Easier: Social Media Becoming a One-Stop Shop**

With an increasing number of social media platforms offering more eCommerce capabilities, your digital storefront just got bigger! Consumers are no longer having to exit social media apps to make a purchase as the checkout process has been streamlined to occur directly within the social platform. Educational product videos, clear brand messaging and pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns can be integrated with shoppable posts on your social profiles to drive curiosity, increase sales and develop loyal customers.

Along with Instagram's new redesign, which gave Instagram's direct shopping feature its own dedicated tab, other Instagram shopping features, include Reels Shopping and Live Shopping. LinkedIn recently began rolling out an e-commerce Product Pages option, which allows organizations to highlight their products on LinkedIn. These can be used to highlight products with videos, photos and descriptions, feature endorsements and reviews from customers to build social proof, and generate leads with six customized call-to-action (CTA) buttons.

## **6: When It Comes to Content Strategy, Knowledge is Power**

2020 was the year of baking banana bread, growing plants, making TikToks or Reels, watching webinars, utilizing a lot of video and getting creative with the ways in which we keep ourselves, and for many of us, our children, entertained. Building upon 2020's momentum, informative posts, such as step-by-step guides, how tos, tips and recommendations will drive engagement this year; therefore, educational posts should remain in the front seat of your content strategy.

The best way to motivate, teach and help your customers grow in some way via social media? Through a mix of IGTV, Reels/TikToks and long-form videos, listicle Instagram Carousel posts and Instagram Guides, a new format for sharing curated, scrollable content of places, products or specific posts you've shared or saved.

## **7: Just Because You Can Go Text-Heavy on Facebook, Doesn't Mean You Should**

If you've ever been involved in the creation of a Facebook ad, you're likely aware of the infamous "less than 20% text in the main image" rule. Despite the recent removal of the parameter, our social experts and designers unanimously agree: ads with larger, bolder copy that deliver the hard-hitting facts first grab users' initial attention most effectively. Captions and Facebook Carousel formats provide the appropriate space to offer audiences a deeper explanation.

While it's been popular to showcase micro-blog captions on social media, especially on Instagram, it's important to err on the side of caution and keep in mind that the art of long-form caption writing is just that—an art. Read silently in the minds of your audiences, micro captions can quickly go from a powerful speech to a droning ramble if it's disorganized, unfocused and not something your audience is looking for. The key to incorporating long-form captions and text is knowing your audience and the type of content that will best serve them.

## **8: Keep What's Behind the Brand and Behind the Screen at the Forefront: People**

The running theme of so many of this year's social trends is to put people first. Beyond showcasing your brand's personality, company culture and insightful content, pushing your brand's "why" to the forefront remains ever-important as Gen Z and millennials mindfully build loyal relationships with brands whose values align with their own. It's been a buzzword for years, but "brand authenticity" had its moment last year and will continue to this year as the picture-perfect Instagram aesthetic shifts and brands are able to engage with their audience on more informal levels. Both B2B and B2C companies can benefit from showing their audiences the faces behind the brand, whether it's by signing off with the name of a responder in customer service inquiries, directly addressing company's handlings of world events or hopping on a live video to share news, audiences are looking for brands to share a more relatable, human voice on social.

