



04

Social Media

Social media is a highly effective, trusted and low-cost platform to attract new visitors, generate leads, establish online relationships with past, prospective and current customers. You can monitor what is being said about your business, join in relevant conversations, share your latest news, events and promotions. All of this will help to highlight what makes your business special and get you noticed.



The aim of social media is to encourage engagement and conversation, to evoke a reaction, an emotion and an action – which may be to look at your website and offers, sign up to a blog or newsletter, ask you a question, make a comment, or share your post with friends.

Choose the right channels for your business as this will provide the best opportunities for reaching your target customers. Here are some of the key ones and a round-up of the best of the rest, together with top tips on using them to market your business.

Notice that many social media platforms have an analytics tool that allows you to understand and track the behaviour of page visitors, see which of your posts work and don't work, and improve your future online presence.

Facebook

As the largest social network in the world and with over 30m users in the UK, Facebook has become central to many businesses online digital marketing mix. When creating an account it's important that you choose the Business Page option, rather than a normal, personal account. A business page is easily managed and will allow access to additional features, making your business much more accessible to the public. The main principle behind a Facebook Business Page is to encourage past or potential customers to 'like' your page, this means that any future posts you make will appear on their timeline. Furthermore, any 'likes' or 'shares' they make to your posts will be seen by their wider Facebook friends group.

Pros

- Facebook is simple and affordable to use and provides exposure for your business.
- It allows you to post a variety of media, with engaging imagery and videos proving particularly effective.
- It's a good vehicle for maintaining contact with past or existing customers.
- A Facebook Business Page means anything you post can be found through search engines and also any links from your page to your website will increase the chances of your website achieving higher rankings within search engines.
- Facebook's 'events' feature allows you to create an event to advertise to the public, will give you an idea of how many people are coming and allow you to answer any questions that the public might have.
- You need to post regularly to ensure that your Page is fresh and up to date, but you don't necessarily have to post every day.
- You can post information and images to other Pages which can then be shared with their audience, as well as send direct messages.
- Use your personal profile to join groups which will help you keep up with industry news and developments, or perhaps learn about wildlife or heritage in your area and Wales in general.
- Remember to include relevant keyword hashtags in your post too, such as #Ceredigion, #CardiganBay, #CambrianMountains #dolphins etc. Remember to add them to keywords in your posts too.

Further information:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/overview>

Twitter

Twitter is the second most popular social networking site in the UK and allows users to send and read short 140 character 'tweets'. An excellent marketing resource that allows you to interact directly with your target audience and those who share similar interests. Tweeting is like sending a text to all your followers at once: it's quick, concise and current, perfect for sharing deals and offers, short bursts of information, or even live-coverage (known as live-tweeting) of events such as food festivals or day trips.

Pros

- A good way to speak directly to customers as tweets can feel more personalised than Facebook posts and with almost a billion users worldwide, even the smallest business can find an audience.
- Hashtags allow businesses to be a part of larger conversations. Using #Ceredigion in all relevant tweets, can help create an online community promoting the best of what Ceredigion has to offer.
- To include someone in a conversation use '@', e.g. @VisitCeredigion to include Discover Ceredigion in your conversation, or @DerekTheWeather to send him your beautiful weather or sunset images.
- You can integrate your Twitter posts into your homepage – helping keep your website looking fresh and current by only needing to regularly tweet.

Further information:

<https://business.twitter.com/>

Instagram

Instagram is an online photo and video sharing social networking service that enables its users to share pictures and videos publicly or privately, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. This platform is particularly impactful.

Pros

- A picture is worth a thousand words and if what you have to offer is photogenic, then there's no better way to promote it than with an engaging image or video
- You can link your Instagram with your Facebook and Twitter, allowing seamless interaction and consistency of brand and messaging.

Further information:

<http://blog.wishpond.com/post/59612395517/52-tips-how-to-market-on-instagram/>

Best of the rest

YouTube

With billions of users, YouTube allows people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube is the second largest engine on the internet and statistics suggest that a high proportion of travel shoppers watch travel-related videos before making purchasing decisions. This coupled with the fact that there is a much higher click-through rate to websites from video rather than text content, shows that when done well it can be a very powerful branding and promotional tool.

Pinterest

Pinterest allows you to create a virtual, online pin board based on your interests, so that you can access them easily at any time. Pinterest is more about the discovery and curation of other people's content and reflects what you as a business are in to at that time.

Vimeo

Vimeo is a video hosting site much like YouTube, but with a tenth of the amount of users. Unlike YouTube, there's no advertising, which means videos can be watched freely without interruption. Vimeo also has a subscription if you're planning on uploading videos on a regular basis.

Google+

Google plus is great for brands already on the other major social networks and for bloggers too. It's a little more professional than Facebook and search engine optimization is central to its appeal. Having a Google account can be very useful, with its email, documents and slides features, as well as Google+. Having a Google account is also necessary to sign up to YouTube.

TripAdvisor

Tourists or travellers will often check TripAdvisor to see what others think of a business or destination and is considered a trustworthy source by consumers. Do check to see if your business is on TripAdvisor, and if there are compliments – why not thank the contributor. Do try to respond in a calm and factual way to any negative comments – it is often a matter of opinion, and ideally, any problems would have been resolved at the time. Remember you can load images of your own to TripAdvisor.

Top tips for successfully marketing your business through social media

Do your research and know your audience

There is a lot of information available about the most effective ways of marketing your business, and it can feel daunting to work your way through the deluge of information (some of it, often contradictory). However, a little effort in getting to know your target audience and their behaviour will result in your output having far more impact. What demographic are you targeting? Facebook users tend to be older than Instagram (with Twitter somewhere in the middle). How often should you post content? Twitter tends to require updating more often than Facebook in order to remain relevant. Do your research and reap the benefits.

Keep separate business and personal personas

Your social media channels are your opportunity to build the recognition of your business and sell it to the outside world. Therefore it is imperative that you keep your personal profile and your business profile separate to avoid any mixed messages and the subsequent dilution of what your trying to get across to your target audiences.

Follow the rule of thirds

It's important that your content is not exclusively about driving sales and marketing, but should be part of a wider engagement between yourself and the outside world. A rough guide is to follow the social media 'rule of thirds' where a third of your content is about promoting your business; another third should be sharing content from other leaders within Welsh tourist industry such as Discover Ceredigion and Visit Wales or other businesses that compliment your own; while the final third should be around personal interactions and engaging directly with your target audience. Avoid overuse of the 'hard sell'.

Be visual

It is said that a picture sparks a thousand shares, and there's no denying that engaging multimedia content drives increased traffic. While your images and videos don't have to be professional, it is nevertheless important to keep some quality control and always ensure content shows your business – and Ceredigion – in the best possible light.

Use the #Ceredigion hashtag

When posting content such as images and videos, use the #Ceredigion hashtag to complement your posts. Through doing this you can feed into and build an online community that showcases the very best that Ceredigion has to offer any potential visitors.

Engage with your followers

Social media is more than a one-way conversation and you should engage with your followers as much as possible. Be as helpful as you can and if faced with negative comments, try to mitigate these as much as possible in a friendly and professional manner, rather than leaving them unresolved.

Make sure to make the most of the 'about' section...

of your page in order to answer as many questions as you can before they're asked.

Experiment with social media advertising

Try your hand at advertising through social media platforms. Unlike more traditional forms of advertising, you can start off with as small a budget as you like. Also, you can further target your potential audience by factors such as age, interests or geographical location, ensuring any campaign can be tailored to be as impactful as possible.

Measure your success

Through the use of third party applications or Facebook and Twitter's analytical tools, it's possible to evaluate your output, and that of others, see which posts have been successful – and why – and try to replicate the success of these. The more you analyse your output and act upon the findings, the better your results will be over time.

Follow others within the industry

Remember to follow us on facebook.com/discoverCeredigion and twitter.com/visitceredigion, as well as the Visit Wales channels such as facebook.com/visitwales, twitter.com/visitwales and the business channel twitter.com/visitwalesbiz. Through working in tandem and using the same information and material for different purposes we can make an impact and show to potential visitors what a wonderful destination Ceredigion is for both short breaks and longer holidays.

Use third party tools

Getting social media right can be a very time consuming exercise, therefore use third party applications such as Hootsuite, Buffer or SocialOomph (amongst many more) to help you get the most out of your output. Through these you can schedule posts far in advance, meaning that you don't have to be on your phone or in front of the computer all the time. Furthermore, find out when your target audience is most active and schedule your tweets accordingly. Keep an eye out for courses that can help you use these features and tools effectively.

facebook.com/DiscoverCeredigion
twitter.com/visitceredigion

facebook.com/visitwales
twitter.com/visitwales

twitter.com/visitwalesbiz