DIGISTORM

insights

A social media marketing toolkit for schools

↳ A step-by-step guide to the world of inbound marketing.

Contents

Let's get started!

With just a quick scan of Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, you'll see schools across Australia are super active on social media, and achieving quality engagement as a result. Social media has a multitude of benefits to your marketing strategy, so if you're not on board, you're missing out! Here's everything you need to know about the benefits of a strong social media presence and how you can create this for your school.

01

Why social media is essential for schools

Social media saturates our digital lives. According to Smart Insights, more than **3.8 billion** people use at least one social media platform globally. The takeaway? Social media is one of the best places for you to market your school to prospective families digitally.

Showcase your selling points

Social media is a great place to promote your school's unique selling points (USPs). People often turn to social media when they want to learn more about a brand – and that extends to schools too! So whatever your school's most marketable features are, promoting them on social media will help you stay top of mind for interested families.

Creating an engaged community

Keeping parents engaged can be a challenging task, especially considering how time-poor everyone is these days. However, 59% of people still check their social media accounts daily, so this is an excellent place to connect with busy parents. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram help create an engaged school community because they support genuine interaction through likes, comments and shares. The more compelling your posts, the more you get people talking, creating a more interconnected and friendly school community.

Encouraging social proof

Platforms like Facebook encourage social proof through features like reviews. Prospective parents can see what others have to say about your school, and if that person is their friend, the testimony holds even more weight. Social media is an ideal space for generating and viewing reviews, but if your school has no presence on these networks, then it can't exist.

02

Getting started on social media

<u>Selecting the right social media networks for your school</u> can be tricky, as every site has its pros and cons, and some support a school profile better than others. Let's break down the most commonly used social platforms and how you can use them to promote your school.

Facebook: The most widely-used social network, Facebook is worth using for your school, as it has the potential to engage your existing families whilst also generating new leads. It supports various post formats, meaning you can control and measure the kind of content you post.

Instagram: Instagram is another ultra-popular network, and one of its main draw cards is the platform's visual nature. It's fantastic for sharing images of your school and encourages bite-sized content that time-poor parents can quickly consume.

YouTube: With over 1 billion hours of content consumed every day, YouTube's primary benefit for schools is as <u>a platform to host your video content</u>. The high-speed, continually updated nature of YouTube minimises the chance of an outage, so your content should stay safe online as required.

Twitter: Twitter's primary content format is short-form text posts and is one of the platforms schools could take or leave. If you choose to use it, your focus should be on connecting with other people in the education sphere and making your followers aware of important notices and updates

LinkedIn: LinkedIn is primarily a platform for professionals looking to grow their networks. Your school will need at least a basic LinkedIn page so that your employees and alumni can add it to their profiles.

Establishing and measuring goals

You've set up your chosen social media accounts, and now you've begun the often-agonising process of deciding what to post. Marketing a school on social media is very different to promoting a business, and consequently, you need to approach your content from a specific angle. So let's start by establishing two things – <u>what your goals are for your school's social media</u> use and how you plan to measure and evaluate success.

Your overall goals should be similar to those for your website, blog or even email marketing strategy. These may include generating new leads, nurturing relationships with existing families, establishing a golden reputation or promoting your school events. Each of these goals can be supported by a solid social media presence. Identify your goals for your social media, keep in mind the differences between each platform, and make sure you note the goals down somewhere so that you can stay on track.

You should also establish how you'll measure your school's success on social media, for example, a growing number of followers, post engagement (likes, comments and shares), post and profile reach, or ROI. Determining what you want to achieve and how you plan on measuring success will ensure your social media presence remains consistent and purposeful.

Offering the relevant information

With your school's goals and metrics in the back of your mind, the first thing you should do on any social media account is ensure every relevant detail about your school is readily available to your followers. Many users revert to social media if they can't find out something from a cursory Google search, so if they *still* can't find the info on your social media, there's a high chance they'll give up entirely. Curb this abandonment

stage by making your social media profiles a hub for absolutely everything someone may want to know about your school.

The platform that supports the most information is Facebook. So here are a few things that should be available on your Facebook page, no questions asked:

- Your school's address
- Your school's contact phone number and email address
- A link to your school's website
- Your school's opening hours
- Messaging functionality
- An integrated map of your school's location
- A quick blurb about your school
- Photos of your school community

The above is quite a long list, but we promise it's not as tough to get sorted once you get going! When you first set up your Facebook account, you'll find the process demands you enter most of this information anyway. Facebook is an intuitive platform, so if you've left something out, you'll probably receive a notification or prompt to add it in when you can.

Other platforms like Instagram and Twitter have less functionality, but they give users a bio section to fill out with important details. Be sure to include your school's address, contact number, email and website in every bio you write on social media. If you have external pages or resources that you would like to link to, many accounts leverage tools such as Linktree to achieve this.

Creating your first post

Armed with everything you've just learned, it's time to start posting! Your first post might seem a little intimidating, but it should simply be an extension of your school and its values – just like everything you'll post from here on out.

We recommend starting with something general, relevant and visual. If your first post is too specific, it may be off-putting to certain followers, so keep things simple – announcing your presence on social media is an excellent way to start. Include an image that best represents your school community. Think of your first ten or so posts as a way to highlight your overall brand before you branch out into more creative content.

Don't forget to include a link to your school's website in a few of your first posts. You can link directly to the home page, but it may be even more beneficial to link to a relevant landing page that ties in with the content of your post.

Finally, use one of your initial posts to establish your school's hashtag. Tack it onto the end of your caption, or create an entire post highlighting your hashtag and encouraging your followers to use it.

Building your community

We've lauded social media as a go-to space for fostering a sense of community and enabling a strong connection between parents, teachers, staff and students. But how do you build your following from the ground up? After all, engaged followers don't just magically appear the second you set up an account. Thankfully, your school already has an inbuilt community that you can reach and engage with. Chances are you have an established medium that your users are already active on, such as email or your school's website. The key is to use these to leverage a following on your social media networks.

Here are a few ways to make your community aware of your social media presence:

- Including social links in the header or footer of your school's website
- Incorporating social calls to action in blog posts
- Linking your social platforms in email marketing newsletters
- Sharing your social media links in other online materials

Each of these methods put the option to follow your school in the hands of the user. You'll probably find the 'evangelists' of your school (AKA those parents, alumni, staff and family members that are full of glowing praise) are quick on the uptake and will follow you without any prompting. However, this won't be the case for your entire potential network.

Need to encourage more engagement with your school's social media accounts? Try incentivising your community by running a prize draw or promotion. For example, parents might receive a 5% discount on uniforms if they follow your Facebook page. Remember, acquiring followers often means playing the long game, so don't be discouraged if you don't see an immediate increase straight away. It's worth maintaining a few of these methods and seeing how they perform over the long term.

03

Why Facebook is still worthwhile

Launched in 2004, Facebook has stood the test of time to become the global behemoth it is today. It is a valuable tool for marketers in many industries, including schools trying to encourage enrolments and tap into new audiences.

What kind of content works on Facebook?

Now you've got a simple overview of the actual posting process, let's dig into what kind of content works on Facebook and what kind of posts tend to fall flat.

When scrolling through their Facebook newsfeeds, most people aren't stopping to read every post. Instead, they'll scan until something appealing catches their eye. That's why **visual posts** – especially video – receive the most engagement out of any kind of content on Facebook.

Facebook is also known for posts that **go viral** – accruing millions of reactions, shares and comments. As a result, marketers are constantly thinking about how to best encourage interaction with their posts. We're talking quizzes, memes, and anything that asks users to tag a friend or share the post. Although you'll have to tailor this kind of content to an appropriate tone for your school's brand, it's always beneficial to consider how you are getting your followers involved.

Finally, users love it when a Facebook post provides them with an **answer** – even if they didn't know they had a question in the first place! Come up with a few FAQs and share

the answers on social media sporadically. This helps encourage interaction in the comments section and establish your profile as a source of useful information about the school.

Advertising on Facebook

Facebook advertising has tremendous potential to reach new audiences and accrue engagement at a fraction of the cost of offline advertising. Here are a few benefits of using Facebook ads.

Segmentation: Facebook advertising lets you tap into audience controls and target specific groups for your ads, narrowing down by age range, gender, location and even specific interests. Being able to segment audiences is a total game-changer in the world of digital marketing.

Remarketing: If you haven't harnessed the sheer power of remarketing for your school yet, it's time to try it out. Remarketing means targeting users who visited your website but clicked away before completing a desired action (e.g. signing up to a mailing list). Facebook ads can retarget lost leads by putting your school under their noses for a second time.

Simple, intuitive tools: Not only does Facebook advertising offer a variety of features, it presents them in a user-friendly manner that helps you weigh up the best options to suit your marketing goals.

To get started with Facebook ads, you'll first need to set up Facebook Business Manager. This is Facebook's business-specific system and is used to edit and manage your ads, as well as a whole host of other features. Once you're set up, you can move on to creating your ads – starting with choosing the right format.

Facebook offers five <u>different ad types</u>, so there's guaranteed to be a format to suit your message. Facebook walks you through step-by-step to select the right ad, based on which stage of the marketing funnel you want to target.

Now it's time to choose who you're marketing to. Using Facebook Audiences, you can drill down on specific demographic and psychographic criteria to build the ideal audience for your ad.

To measure the success of your ad, look at the **conversion** it helped achieve, rather than 'vanity metrics' such as the number of likes, which don't always impact your ROI. If you run an ad for your school promoting an upcoming tour or open day, your success will depend on the number of people who registered for that event as a direct result of your Facebook ad.

04

Instagram: an ever-popular platform

Instagram has some of the best engagement of any social media platform, with over 4.2 billion likes every single day. There's so much schools can achieve by using Instagram to promote themselves and encourage enrolments.

Getting started on Instagram

When creating your Instagram account, choose a username that clearly states who your school is - using your school name is the best bet. If it's already taken, try adding your state or country code, separated by a dot or hyphen. When completing the profile bio you only have 150 characters to work with so keep it snappy and professional – think of it as a two-line pitch you'd use to describe your school to an outsider.

How to post on Instagram

Now that your profile's set up, let's quickly run through how to post your first image. Tap on the plus sign icon at the top right of the Instagram app and select a video or photo from your camera roll.

From there, you can choose a filter and double-tap to adjust the intensity. For more advanced editing options, select 'edit' at the bottom of the screen. The next screen is where you'll input your caption and select your location and tags.

Before you hit post you can choose whether you'd also like to share this content on Facebook or Twitter. If you haven't set up this functionality, head to account settings and tap on 'linked accounts'. From here, you can select the social media platform you'd like to link to and follow the prompts. Social sharing from Instagram to another platform is a great way to efficiently post content and highlight your presence on other platforms to your audience. A quick word of warning though, Facebook's algorithm favours native content, so if you're going to share from Instagram to your Facebook page, do it sparingly.

Leveraging Instagram Stories

Instagram stories is a feature that allows users to share images, boomerangs, or video snippets that appear on their profile for 24 hours. The feature is easy to use and offers schools a broad range of opportunities to create unique content. If you want to save the story to your profile, you can add it to your "highlights," which give new or existing followers an instant snapshot of your school's content without having to scroll through your entire feed.

Take stunning social media photos

Once you've mastered the basics of social media, it can be tempting to rest on your laurels a bit – after all, it's a time-consuming job! One thing you should always focus on is the quality of your images. Here are a few fool-proof steps to improve your pics.

Instagram hints and tips

If you want to take your 'gram game to the next level, here are a couple of pro tips all the top influencers use.

Tag everyone in the same corner

The ability to tag other accounts in your stories is a great way to get your content in front of more eyes, but if you're tagging multiple accounts, it can look messy and ruin the aesthetic of your photo. All you need to do to avoid this is to choose one corner of your photo and layer each tag on top of the other.

Quickly flip your screen

If you've seen Instagram stories where someone will be speaking directly to the camera one second and then flip the view to be facing outward the next, you're probably wondering how they did this so seamlessly. It's much easier than you think; all you need to do is double-tap the screen to quickly flip your camera direction.

Hide your hashtags

Including plenty of relevant hashtags is important for post visibility on Instagram, but it can look a bit spammy. Instead, you can hide your hashtags by posting them as a comment or paste them at the bottom of your caption separated by several line breaks, with a full stop on each line. This will help to keep things looking slick!

05

The power of YouTube

YouTube allows users to upload and share video content, embed video content on websites, and run targeted advertising campaigns across the platform. Here's why YouTube is a useful tool for schools.

As the second-largest search engine in the world, it's clear that video is an ideal format for many people looking to research a topic or gather information. It makes sense for schools to also leverage YouTube for this purpose. A dedicated YouTube channel allows you to create engaging video content that attracts prospective families. You can showcase your school through campus tours, student and staff testimonials, or highlights of school events.

Creating great video

To maximise views and engagement, you need a quality video that people will actually want to watch. The good news is that you don't necessarily have to hire a professional or spend a fortune on fancy equipment, in fact, with a few clever techniques, you can create a fantastic video on a smartphone.

06

Twitter, LinkedIn and more

Most people either love Twitter or have no interest whatsoever. However with 1.3 billion active users, there's no denying that it's a powerful communication tool. So let's look at some of the ways Twitter can work for schools.

Short and snappy updates

Twitter is all about quick-fire updates that can be clearly communicated in 280 characters or less. This is perfect for sharing real-time event updates with parents and the school community. Many businesses also use Twitter as a channel to receive and respond to feedback, and there's no reason why schools can't do the same.

Build an audience

Like all social media platforms, Twitter allows you to establish an audience to share your content with, but building an audience doesn't happen overnight. You'll need to put a strategy in place to post content regularly, promote your account, and interact with other relevant accounts to expose your profile and attract followers.

School hashtags

We can all thank Twitter for the creation of hashtags. Schools can add hashtags to their tweets to join a conversation about a hot topic or to broaden a tweet's visibility. For example, if you're running a cleanup event for World Environment Day –be sure to include #WorldEnvironmentDay to the end of your Tweet. Also, keep an eye out for trending hashtags to give you ideas.

Your school can also create its own hashtag. Ensure it's included at the end of every Tweet so that you'll end up with a library of engaging content that can be easily located, simply by searching your school's hashtag.

How to make the most of LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an invaluable tool for any professional looking to expand their network, and it's possible you could be missing a huge opportunity to connect with parents, staff and alumni. Here's how you can utilise LinkedIn to grow your school community.

Keep your information up-to-date

Head to your 'About' section and make sure everything from your school's size to your contact information is current. While you're there, check that your profile photo is a current, high-resolution image of your logo and that you've added an appealing header image.

Post quality over quantity

LinkedIn allows you to create and share content with your network connections. The goal here is to curate engaging content that your audience will want to click on, read, and share. Keeping your audience in mind (parents, staff, and alumni), be sure to tailor posts to match their interests — no cut and paste jobs here. Instead, craft your content to be informative and professional.

Employee advocacy

Leverage your current staff as brand ambassadors by encouraging them to like and share your posts; this will increase your reach and engagement while fostering a sense of community. What better way to boost brand awareness and attract new talented teachers to your school than by having your own staff as brand advocates?

Celebrate alumni

LinkedIn is a great way to keep in touch with your alumni members and encourage the next generation to enrol at your school. You can engage with alumni by posting content that promotes and celebrates past students' achievements.

Are there other social media platforms out there?

Another major channel in terms of use and popularity is Snapchat. Snapchat allows users to create and share temporary text, photo and video messages with contacts in real-time. When Snapchat was released back in 2011, its popularity soared, but the launch of Instagram's Stories feature has diluted some of Snapchat's unique appeal.

One of the newer social media players is TikTok, which allows users to create and share short, sharp videos with their followers. TikTok is now the #1 most downloaded app in the App Store. So should school marketers take notice of this platform? Absolutely. Should your school add TikTok to their social media toolkit? Not so fast. TikTok's focus is a young demographic (60% of users are under the age of 30) so, it may not reach a large portion of your target audience (usually, parents). However, if you are looking to engage students, it's possible TikTok is the breakthrough option you need.

We have no doubt that we'll see many more social media platforms come and go in the years to come. But for now, we recommend building your school's social media strategy around Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, to foster engagement and grow your school community.

insights

Resources and inspiration to **help schools grow**, curated by Digistorm