

### 3. Marketing

## Leveraging Online Marketing Channels to Build Your Brand

The number of online marketing channels is broad and continues to rapidly evolve as new platforms launch and gain acceptance with various audiences. These channels, often search or social media driven, provide opportunities to promote your business and products in a highly targeted manner. They provide the ability to engage individually with your customers, find out what customers are saying about your brand, promote new products, increase website traffic, and ultimately drive brand loyalty.



While these platforms offer what appears to be inexpensive ways to reach and engage target consumers, they hold the risk of draining resources from a small food business — both time and financial. Often food companies rush to create a presence on several leading platforms without considering how each platform is best used, which consumers are likely on the platform and what content is most applicable. Considering these factors can help a brand wisely choose which platforms they should utilize and which they might want to ignore. This is also useful if there are limited resources available, limiting time and dollars spent on platforms that will return the most value.

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## Overview of Online Marketing Channels

Popular online marketing channels are often mistakenly referred to in whole as social media when in fact, they can generally be grouped into four primary categories based on the type of activity they encourage including social networking, microblogging, search, and photo/video sharing. It's important for food businesses to consider their marketing objectives and decide which online channels best support meeting the objectives to right-size the resources invested in building and maintaining an online presence.

Data gathered and considered accurate as of December 2020.

### Social Networking

| Type/<br>Channel | Who Uses?  | How it's Used?   | Food Business Opportunities  | Limitations  |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Facebook         | 69% of U.S. adults use Facebook; driven by ages 18–64; Only 46% of adults 65+ and 51% of teens use Facebook.   | The social media pioneer, user share photos, quotes, and points of view. Users post their own feed and interact with feed from others.                           | Highlight events, promotions, new products and insert themselves in relevant usage occasions. Free to create profile page. Paid promotion of content through Facebook Business Manager.  | Actual two-way conversations are rare.   |
| LinkedIn         | >160 million U.S. users. 77% of users have at least some college education. More than 37% of people 20–49 years old use LinkedIn. 49% have income >\$75k+. | Largest networking site for business professionals; users' network with other professionals about common business interests, seeking employment, self-promotion. | Share company news, highlight new products and offer thought leadership. Free to create profile pages. Paid promotion through sponsored posts that appear in the users' feed; targeted by rich demographics, experience level and job function. Specifically target individuals and send messages through Sales Navigator. | Business-to-business site, so less useful to reach consumers; may be a great fit for businesses serving restaurants, institutions or food manufacturers. |

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## Microblogging

| Type/<br>Channel | Who Uses?   | How it's Used?   | Food Business Opportunities  | Limitations  |
|------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Twitter          | 22% of U.S. adults on Twitter. Skews to younger audience, though shifting older.                          | Users send and receive Tweets, short posts, up to 280 characters. Tweets can be messages, include links to relevant websites and other resources. Twitter users follow other users.                        | Place ads and sponsor tweets to get them in front of target audiences. Highlight events and promotions, share videos, drive traffic to company websites. | Character limit may make some messaging difficult.   |
| Tumblr           | 31 million U.S. users. Hosts more than 480 million blogs. 40% of Gen Z and 30% of Millennials use Tumblr. | Microblogging channel with heavy photo/video focus. Users post content to their feed. Can be accompanied by text without length restrictions. Other users can comment on posts and repost to their boards. | Share content that highlights product usage or new product news. Sponsor posts to drive exposure with their audience.                                    | Not particularly efficient for sharing time-sensitive posts. User interaction through comments only. |

## Search Engine

| Type/<br>Channel | Who Uses?  | How it's Used?   | Food Business Opportunities   | Limitations  |
|------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Pinterest        | 87 million U.S. users.<br><br>About 1/3 of people from 18–64 use Pinterest; but only 15% of people 65+.        | Visually driven search engine lets users find, gather and organize ideas like recipes, home and style inspiration, etc.<br><br>Users search topics similar to how they would Google, with the returned items being "pins" from other users. Users can then save and store them to their personal bulletin board. | Highlight the brand offering, share product use ideas and recipes. Sponsor content and target audiences by demographics, interests, and keywords. Often, food companies navigate the user to a website or online shopping cart.   | Useful only for visual relevant content.<br><br>Not useful for time sensitive information. |
| Youtube          | 73% of U.S. adults use YouTube. 38% log in several times a day.<br><br>Nearly 90% of adults 18–49 use YouTube. | Users create and share videos on a wide variety of topics for educational and entertainment purposes.  | Share content highlighting product uses, recipes, and promotional events. Multiple options to place ads at start of other video content; not necessarily relating to the content it's preceding. Video discovery ads can place an ad in the stream of results for a given search allowing a food company to place their ad within other relevant content. | Useful only for video relevant content.<br><br>Not useful for time sensitive information.  |

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## Photo/ Video Sharing

| Type/<br>Channel | Who Uses?   | How it's Used?   | Food Business<br>Opportunities   | Limitations  |
|------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Instagram        | 116 million U.S. users. Skews younger — 75% of 18–24 year-olds on Instagram, but only 8% of adults 65+. | The dominant photo sharing app lets users upload photos and short videos. Users can caption posts, use hashtags and location-based geotags to make posts searchable by other users. Posts appear on followers' feeds and are viewable by the public when tagged. | Sponsor posts to target specific types of users. Shopping possible through in-app shopping cart. Post can be made shoppable or brands can provide collections through an editorial approach.                                   | Visual media not ideal for longer descriptions, narrative or storytelling. |
| Snapchat         | 98 million U.S. users. 69% of 13–17 year-olds and 62% of adults 18–29 use Snapchat.                     | Photo and short video sharing intended for quick and temporary viewing. Users exchange pictures and videos meant to disappear once viewed. Users can add filters, lenses or other effects. More social-focused than other photo-sharing platforms.               | Share images and video with targeted uses through sponsored posts. The platform allows businesses to build brand and product awareness, showcase services and drive traffic to company websites. Provides for in-app shopping. | Temporary nature of images. 1:1 engagement time consuming to maintain.     |
| TikTok           | 80 million U.S. users. 60% between 16–24; 26% 25–44.  | Short-form, video-sharing app that allows users to create and share 15-second videos, on any topic.  | Similar to other social sites, sponsored ads can build awareness or drive users to purchase.   | Current age of user-base may limit impact on sales.                        |

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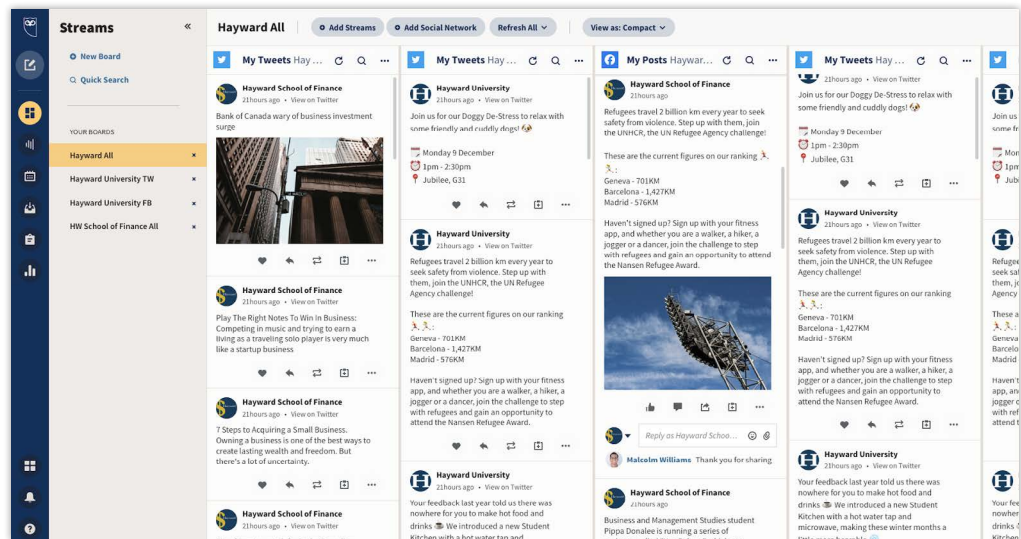
## Managing Your Online Marketing Efforts

The opportunities to market your food business online through the well-established online marketing channels is endless. Given the many platforms offering free opportunities to publish content and that the promotion of that content is scalable, it's tempting for food businesses to jump at creating a presence on many or all of them. However, it's important to consider the overall expense of being on multiple channels both in real dollars and the tradeoffs in terms of resources to manage an online marketing campaign. Attracting a new visitor to a website or converting a visitor to a sale, both have costs that should be weighed against the value of their initial and repeat sales.

One option is to hire a social media or content specialist to manage the process on your behalf. Many individual practitioners and small firms can offer services for food businesses in the early stages of their social media communications initiative. We've provided several paths to resources here. For those interested in creating and managing their own online presence, but looking for assistance.

### Leading Social Media Management Platforms

Social media management companies offer their clients services to help schedule, manage and publish posts with ease and trackability. Three of the leading platforms are summarized and compared here. Similar to website hosting platforms, each offer unique benefits on top of a core set of similar services.



### HOOTSUITE

Hootsuite is a social media management platform that helps companies optimize their time by scheduling posts, pictures, or videos for publishing via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Pinterest. The tool allows the user to build out a social media campaign and schedule posts for specific predated times without pushing the 'send button' for each individual post. The system offers four subscription levels to accommodate number of users and social profiles. The platform is organized on one dashboard to help schedule, publish and manage content. Hootsuite enables users to create custom reporting and analytical tracking — more so than Buffer and Sprout Social.

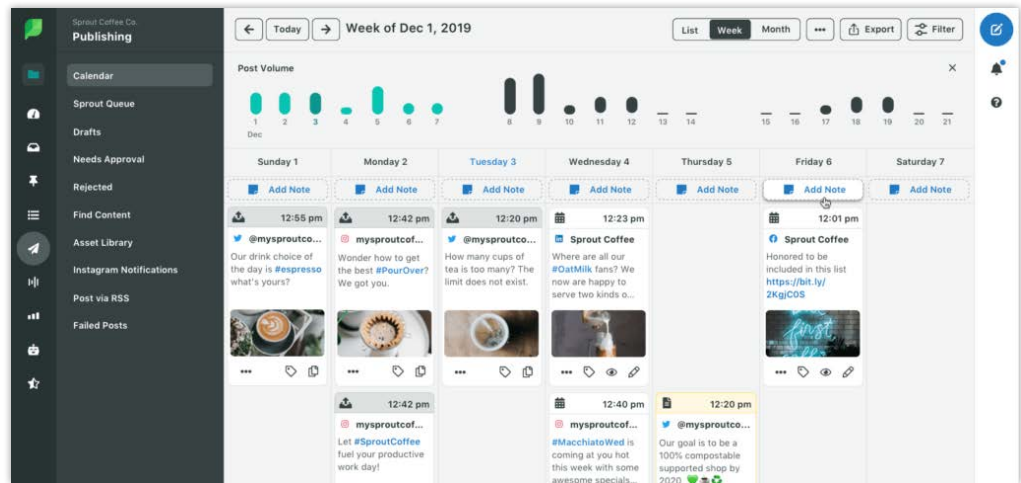


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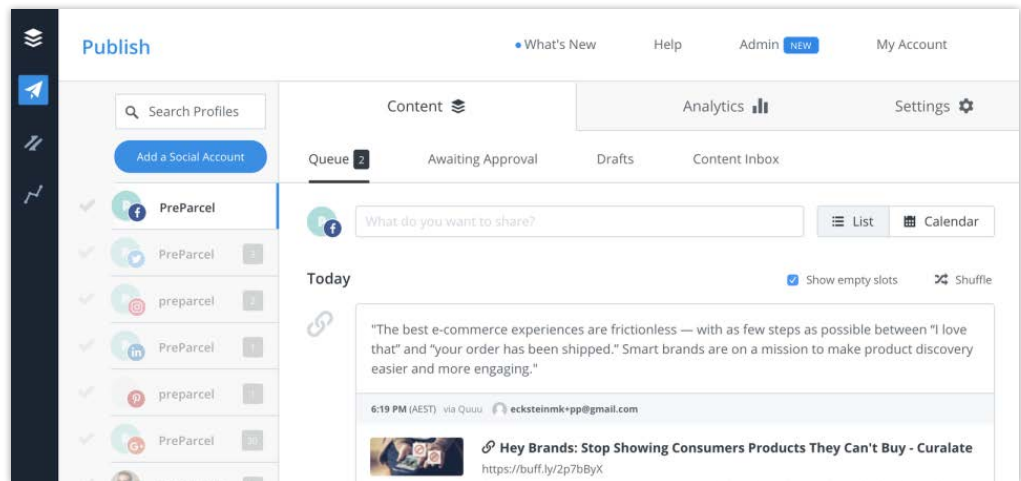
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### SPROUT SOCIAL

Sprout Social is a social media management and optimization platform that provides a single hub platform for social media publishing, analytics, and engagement across all social profiles. It offers full integrations with Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Pinterest. And similar to Hootsuite offers plans for various numbers of users and social profiles. Sprout Social hosts a three-tiered subscription model but does not offer a free user option. However, it does have a 30-day free trial. Sprout Social has a user-friendly interface and offers extra features like social CRM and audience discovery capabilities.



### BUFFER

Buffer is a software application designed to manage accounts in social networks by providing a means for a user to schedule posts to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram (IGTV), and LinkedIn. Buffer has two services that go hand-in-hand but are individually priced: Buffer Publish and Buffer Analyze. Buffer hosts a five-tiered subscription model with a free option. Buffer is a point solution platform, meaning the software focuses on one point of your social media presence — content publishing and scheduling. Food businesses only focused on publishing and scheduling content may find this platform efficient rather than an all-in-one social media management tool like Hootsuite and Sprout Social.





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## Online Marketing Best Practices

Managing a successful social media campaign does not need to be complex or particularly difficult. Below are a number of best practice considerations:

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- Start small. Both from an investment of time and money, it's best to pick a single channel, invest your resources and grow from there.
- Do less but do it well. Many companies have a temptation to appear on as many social channels as possible. It's more efficient and effective to pick one or two right channels and focus on doing them well.
- Adopt a "test and learn" mentality to your campaigns. Many channels are similar, but all are evolving rapidly. Explore what works and build upon past success.
- Engage your channels on a regular basis. It's better to be active even if the content isn't perfect. Social media has a degree of imperfection at its core. Don't overthink content at the expense of being active. To create regularity, devote a small period of time each day to engage rather than a large block weeks apart.
- Not only is it important to engage regularly, but strive for consistent content. Both from a visual perspective, but also in tone of voice and focus. It will help curate a voice for your brand.
- Engage genuinely. Be proactive with users, engage in conversations, apologize if something goes wrong and celebrate when things go well.
- Cross promote. If you've made the decision to be on multiple online channels, use channels to drive to deeper content. For example, a twitter post that points to Facebook content or YouTube video series. Think about how your website, search and social channels can interact with one another.



Engaging in the social and microblogging platforms above can occur in a very organic manner, with the food business creating and sharing its own content to its own pages or feeds. And, they can take the next logical step of amplifying their voice through paid promotion of those posts to potential consumers. However, the real power of these platforms is often when content is exponentially amplified through the voice of a social media influencer. An influencer is simply someone with a reputation and authority on a given subject. Many are familiar with celebrity influencers that have a significant impact on fashion or other lifestyle trends. However, there are influencers that are lesser known to the general public that may have tremendous influence on a smaller segment of the population. For example, a renowned chef with a blog may influence the product or dietary choices of their followers; or a physical fitness trainer may point their followers to various clothing or food in addition to following their workout advice.

The days of gaining the support of influencers for free has passed. If a person on the channel understands the value of their position and expertise, they will no doubt charge for their voice. That said, the cost does not necessarily need to be thousands of dollars. If you're interested in gaining the support of an influencer, reach out to them via a private message. This should start a negotiation either with them or possibly an agency they may use to manage their content relationships. Do not post your request on their public feed. One way to increase your odds of securing their support is to engage with their content by following and sharing their posts. This will be visible to them and may make starting a conversation about paid support easier.

### Resources:

For more best practices, visit:

- [Hootsuite Blog: Social Media Best Practices](#)
- [Khoros: Social Media Best Practices](#)
- [JUST Creative: Influencer Strategy](#)
- [Influencer Marketing Hub](#)

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