



let's get
STRATEGIC

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Using Trending Conversations and Popular Hashtags to Build Your Brand, Part 1

Hashtags allow marketers to tag their content to attract the attention of users who may be interested in a certain topic; additionally, users are able to follow hashtags related to their personal areas of interest. They can be generic terms such as #love, brand-specific terms such as #CocaCola, or ambiguous terms (which social media users really need to click on to determine their specific meaning) such as #smilingfood. Hashtags are common on a number of social media sites, most notably Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

“Hashtags are the SEO components of social media, giving your company the opportunity to place content in Google search results,” says Beth Cooper, VP of marketing and sales at KNB Communications, a marketing and PR agency focused on healthcare. “Using hashtags in your blog titles, Twitter posts, and LinkedIn posts are great ways to get started,” she says, but it’s important for hashtags to be used strategically to help build awareness for your brand.

HOW TO USE HASHTAGS

The purpose of hashtags is to signal to social media users the type of content being used in a post. Users may follow hashtags to stay apprised of topics they’re interested in or click on a hashtag to find related information. For marketers, hashtags can be a great way to jump into trending conversations to promote a business without having to rely on ad spending, says Thibaud Clément, CEO and co-founder of the Loomly collaboration platform. “By connecting with customers over a viral topic, businesses can increase online engagement in a way that feels more organic compared to paid ads.”

Hashtags are also often used for specific events, such as #CybersecurityAwarenessMonth and #WorldMentalHealthDay, Cooper says. Using this type of hashtag, she states, is a great way to get your brand and content in front of a massive audience, as long as it is relevant to your message. In this case, Cooper notes, these specific hashtags can show “that your company is socially responsible, which will attract more customers.”

While being attentive to trending hashtags can be a best practice for identifying ones to include in your own posts, marketers need to exercise some caution, says Jason Myers, senior account executive at The Content Factory, a digital PR firm. Don’t just attempt to ride the wave of a trending hashtag without checking its relevance to your content and your brand, he warns. “This is flawed and can backfire, because if someone does land on your post by following a hashtag and you’re not talking about what the trend is actually about, you’ll probably

LINKS TO THE SOURCE

KNB Communications
knbcomm.com

Loomly
loomly.com

The Content Factory
contentfac.com

Tim Parkin's website
timparkin.com

Chic Pursuit
chicpursuit.com

Chic Pursuit's Instagram
[@chicpursuitx](https://www.instagram.com/chicpursuitx)

Chic Pursuit's YouTube
[youtube.com/c/chicpursuit](https://www.youtube.com/c/chicpursuit)

Chic Pursuit's dermaplaning post
[instagram.com/p/B4krqrbDU6z](https://www.instagram.com/p/B4krqrbDU6z)

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just create negative sentiment for your brand’s social channel,” he says. “Best-case scenario, followers ignore your post; worst case, they get mad that you baited them and unfollow, block, or report you as a spammer.” Clément agrees. “On the internet, attention is the currency, but trust is really where the value lies,” he says. Consequently, Clément cautions not to hijack a trend if you don’t have anything, individually, to add to the conversation.

ADDITIONAL, AND PERHAPS UNINTENDED, USES OF HASHTAGS

In addition to the popular uses of hashtags shared here, there are some other applications that can provide added value for marketers. For example, hashtags can be used to do online research into the type of content that works best for your products or services.

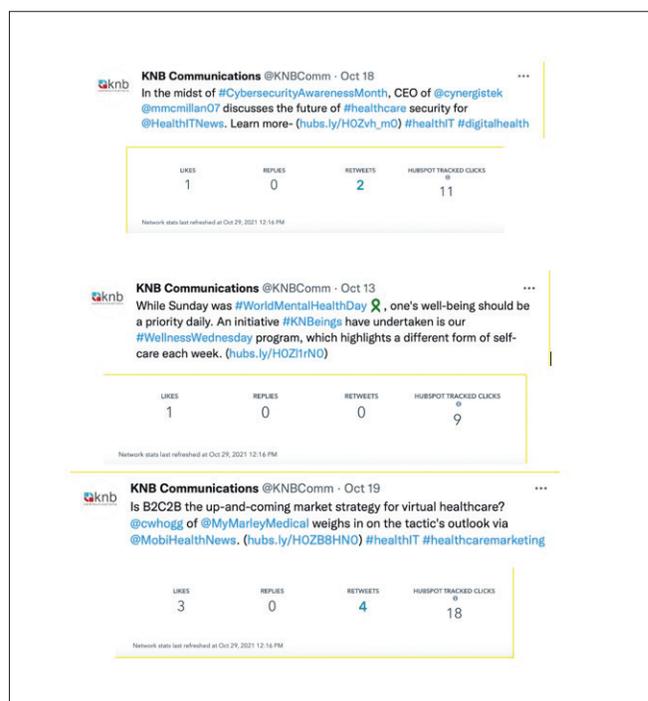
“A little-known approach that I advise my clients on is to create hashtags to identify groups of content and then use those as ‘labels’ to analyze the performance of those different groups of content,” says Tim Parkin, a marketing consultant. So, he says, a company with seven product categories might create product-specific hashtags and use them on all posts related to that product. It can then analyze the performance of each product category while also being able to view overall performance. “Being able to segment social media engagement and performance is really important because adjusting your strategy ... depends heavily on the type of content being posted,” Parkin notes.

Carefully evaluating hashtags can provide insights into topics you might cover in your content marketing efforts that are likely to attract attention. To start, though, make sure to take a look at those hashtags and how they’re being employed before you use them as a jumping-off point for creating content.

SOME BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Simply watching what others in your niche are doing online and how they’re using hashtags effectively can yield some great best practice examples. KNB Communications uses #WeAreKNB and #KNBeings to promote the firm and help with SEO, says Cooper. (She shares some examples in the screenshot on this page.)

Maria Juvakka is the creator of Chic Pursuit, a fashion and lifestyle blog with 3.5 million annual readers. As a fashion influencer, Juvakka has more than 37,000 followers on Instagram and about 12,000 on YouTube. “Chic Pursuit uses



KNB Communications uses the hashtags #WeAreKNB and #KNBeings as promotional and SEO tools.

hashtags on Instagram often to grow our follower base and create successful sponsored posts,” she states. Juvakka points to an example of a post on dermaplaning (see the sidebar on page 38 for the link), which got a lot of engagement and views by using the hashtag #FuzzFree. “The hashtag is used to explain and promote dermaplaning, a way of deeply exfoliating the skin. This works twofold by getting exposure for our brand and the brand we partnered with for the ad, Boots UK,” Juvakka says.

Using hashtags effectively, as we’ve seen, involves more than just coming up with words and phrases off the top of your head. It requires strategy and research, which, obviously, can take some time. “To save time, you may want to create a list of possible hashtags in Word or your Notes app after doing some research,” suggests Nancy Richmond, an assistant teaching professor in the department of marketing and logistics at Florida International University’s College of Business. “Having some hashtags ready to copy and paste can help make the process feel less overwhelming.”

Finding the right hashtags to use is both an art and a science. With Part 2 in the next issue, we’ll take a look at some best practices for finding hashtags that will work best for you.



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