

A Recipe for Success

Blending the Best Ingredients for Social Media Success

By Alison Barksdale
CU Members Mortgage

In the long period of staying home due to the pandemic, my 12-year-old daughter who is known for taking on life in full-force, decided she wanted to take online classes to learn some new things. One of those was a cooking class to learn about baking.

As I listened to her speak about the things she learned, it made me realize how much cooking can teach us about social media.

Recipes are meant to be followed. They are the perfect combination of many different ingredients and techniques to result in a delicious dish. Along these lines, social media can be maximized when you follow a recipe.

You shouldn't have a social media account simply to exist in that space, and you shouldn't post just anything you feel like, simply on a whim. You need to be intentional in your efforts for the best results: You need to follow a recipe, so to speak.

This last year has been the year to embrace digital resources with social media being a big part. As we move cautiously into 2021, let's plan to embrace this tool more effectively. Let's look at the best recipe to maximize its use.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLATFORM

The first step is to choose the right platform for your credit union. When life became less in-person and more digital, sales teams and loan officers alike were forced to expand their digital reach as a way to connect with people. Social media wasn't just part of the plan, it was the plan.

But with so many platforms available, how do you choose where you should be active? Consider that your members will use various platforms based on the kind of information they are searching for online:

- **Facebook** is a great tool to bring up a wide range of content, and it continues to achieve high marks for popularity, according to Sprout Social.¹ Look at Facebook as your consumer tool to reach and teach.
- **Twitter** is your breaking news tool. Use it to let people know what's going on at the credit union. This is your megaphone for announcements.
- **LinkedIn** is your business platform for sharing industry and company news. If you have a focused membership, it's a great place to focus on SEG groups, since you can target those employees.
- **Instagram** is your photo platform.

It too has grown in popularity and has become particularly popular to younger generations with 75% of its users between the ages of 18 and 24. If you can offer followers engaging visual posts promoting your credit union, this is where they should go.

- **YouTube** is your video platform, and along with Facebook, is the most widely used online platform among adults. This is the place for you to host your videos and makes it easy to share videos across other platforms.

Many other social platforms exist. Pinterest, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Reddit, and more are popular, but those listed above are the most commonly used, and therefore, your best bet in sharing content.

For best results, think again of a recipe: use a blend of social media ingredients (platforms). It will ensure you are using the right tool for the right audience



and the right message to reach all of the demographics on your membership list. This is a formula for a winning dish.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

People seem to struggle with this part of the recipe. They get overwhelmed with what to post and how to mix together these ingredients (the content) to get the best result. Here's a great combination to consider as your starting point.

1. Informational content can be a great resource to members, but they need to know it's available. Publish it on your social channels to lead members to your website for more information. It can be from your blog or your website. Be careful using outside sources. They can deliver members to competitors if you aren't careful and don't know who the blog belongs to, for example.

2. "Did you know" factoids are fun ways to share information about your



Use a blend of social media platforms. It will ensure you are using the right tool for the right audience and the right message to reach all of the demographics on your membership list.



credit union. Use a graphic to do it and you've got a fun, eye-catching way to get member's attention.

3. Employee highlights and anniversaries are great ways to highlight staff and build awareness of your team. Members getting to know the team can help build trust and assurance. A focus on your loan officer would be a natural way to show who they can contact for home loan questions.

4. Member testimonials or surveys should be offered consistently. They build confidence and awareness of products and offerings. Plus, if a member can share a photo, it's an even bigger win for your members.

5. Add video to the mix. This is a growing trend that really became a norm during the pandemic as a way

to connect to members. Use a video to explain a process or concept to them.

6. Use hashtags to help people find your posts or content. They are used to help connect similar content. Search #firsttimehomebuyer and watch the results populate.

7. Connect with your Realtors or other industry vendors and share their info. A Realtor will be very appreciative that you are sharing their listing and helping them connect with possible buyers.

8. Tips, tricks and trends are great sources of information to engage members. Homebuyers are a great example. Not all your content should be focused on buying or selling a home. You want to share a few things with those you've already helped buy a home, too. Consider other content about home maintenance, remodels, upgrades, trends, etc. These will maintain your followers and likes past the closing date.

DON'T FORGET ADVERTISING

Advertise. Once you have consistent content, you'll want to focus on building followers, which is essentially what you want your social media posts to do. You can also use your posts as scheduled advertisements to members and non-members alike.

With advertising, you can manage your audiences and engage with potential members to lead them to contact your credit union.

Both Facebook and LinkedIn offer advertising options and analytic reports that can be very helpful in understanding audiences and their social habits. While mortgage advertising should never discriminate, it's helpful to understand who your audiences are, what kinds of subjects interest them and when they see your content.

The advertising part of the recipe helps you connect your social media goals with your business goals as you continue to see content views while your audience grows, and hopefully your membership base as well.

My daughter learned a lesson the hard way: If you rush through a recipe, you can easily miss an important detail or skip something that is instrumental to reaching the perfect flavors. The result is like a missed opportunity.

However, she also learned what ingredients worked best in recipes and what flavors she enjoyed most. While her recipe was a good foundation to create a great dish, she could add a few things she knew she loved to make it exactly what she wanted.

You'll find too, that over time, your members have favorite content they respond to, as well as social platforms they are most comfortable interacting with. That's where to put your focus and deliver what they need and when they need it most.

In 2021, let's refocus on our recipe for success and find the perfect blend of techniques and strategies to create strong habits for the future. ▲



Once you have consistent content, you'll want to focus on building followers, which is essentially what you want your social media posts to do.



Alison Barksdale is the AVP Marketing at CU Members Mortgage. She has 20 years of marketing experience and a Bachelor's Degree in Communications from the University of Texas at Arlington. Barksdale has written articles for credit union periodicals and contributes to blogs. She continues to build brand awareness for CU Members Mortgage, which provides credit unions and their members the best in customer service, educational resources, technology and home loan products. A credit union member, Barksdale also has gained understanding of how they help members by working in her local credit union.



Alison Barksdale

Footnote

¹ <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/new-social-media-demographics>