



How to create social media content that shines

A GUIDE FOR DOING MORE WITH LESS IN 2021





How to create social media content that shines



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Summary



2021 Trends

The Orlo Team
Digital Conversations Experts



We can all agree that 2020 was sent to try us. We adapted to remote working, liaising with colleagues virtually and catering to a more active online audience, all with fewer resources **and** a pandemic to navigate - phew! But as the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche said: "That which does not kill us, makes us stronger." And if nothing else, the last year taught us that **we can** continue to push on with great social marketing strategies regardless. In fact, with over 40% of internet users aged 16-64 spending more time on Social Media since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (according to [GlobalWebIndex's Coronavirus Research](#)) sharing quality content is more important than ever.

Now, we're not all naturally gifted when it comes to having an eye for visual media, a voice for podcasting or the attention to detail required for graphic design, but we've found that you can always find someone who is! So, with a little help from our friends, we've put together this handy guide, full of tips and tools, to help you with content creation for your digital channels in 2021 - no matter what it throws at us. But first up, let's take a look at the content trends Orlo predicts we'll see this year!





Trend #1 - Here's one I made earlier

In a world where much of what we see is carefully curated, edited and at times completely false, online audiences are craving authenticity from brands. What better way to add a human element to your marketing than by sharing content from *real life* users?! Not only do posts with untouched pictures or footage from customers boost credibility and trust, but they also require very little resources to pull together and can be created anywhere. So, go forth and harness the power of user generated content!



Trend #2 - Once upon a time...

The #ThrowbackThursday culture isn't new, but in a world where people have far fewer 'insta-worthy' moments to share, nostalgic posts are on the rise. This notion is filtering through into content too, with many brands finding inspiration in trends of yesteryear or sharing throwbacks of their own. What's more, [according to research by Dr Erica Hepper](#), a blast from the past can help us feel happier, closer to loved ones and that life has more meaning - all important stuff when we're physically distant from others. Better get rooting through those archives...



Trend #3 - Lights, camera, action!

The pandemic has caused a live streaming boom, with [Business Insider reporting](#) a 70% rise in the use of Instagram's Live feature in March of 2020 alone. There's a plethora of live streaming platforms to choose from and with many people around the world still isolated from others, the novelty of 'going live' doesn't seem to have worn off yet. It's undeniably a great way to connect with your audience on a personal level, no matter where they are - and if you can turn the stream into evergreen content, even better. So, get your promo plan, a strong call to action and appropriate branding at the ready - it's show time!



Trend #4 - The even smaller screen...

Video-sharing platform, TikTok, is another social channel that's benefitted from everyone being bored in the house and in the house bored. [Users increased a staggering 75%](#) last year and some even say the app is [as addictive as crack cocaine](#), so it's no wonder Instagram quickly followed suit with its Reels functionality. Add into the mix Instagram Stories, Snapchat and Twitter's newer Fleets and you begin to see why attention spans are dwindling. Audiences now expect to be entertained in a matter of seconds, meaning short-form videos with quick transitions and quirky effects are set to be big in 2021.



Trend #5 - Shop 'til you drop

It's forecasted that this year, the global social commerce market [will increase by about 34%](#) and [in a recent survey](#), 54% of respondents said they bought something after seeing it on Instagram - these stats alone show the potential value of social commerce. It's now commonplace for organisations to have a presence on a social platform, but those brands that are really thriving are working smart when it comes to their social campaigns. Using glossy product shots, shoppable posts and clear CTAs all do wonders for conversions, but employing hyper-targeted and personalised ads can give you that edge over the competition.



Trend #6 - Be the change

From reducing single-use plastics to ensuring ethical supply chains, to combating institutional racism and advocating for reproductive rights, brands have begun publicly supporting the social causes close to their hearts. Whether it's through their branding, the products they sell or the campaigns they run, they've begun using their platforms for good. Showcasing brand values in this way enables your brand to connect with consumers on another level - they're no longer just attracted to your product or service, but begin to value your brand based on shared beliefs too. Do good and reap the rewards? It's a win, win.



Inspiring Infographics

Nick Moore
Digital Development Officer



Whether you're a visual person, you like numbers or you just want the highlights, infographics have something for everyone! These eye catching, easily digestible pieces have become a fundamental source of insight and inspiration shared by organisations far and wide.

Our friend Nick Moore, Digital Development Officer at Leeds City Council, is a firm believer in the power that these little pictures can pack, both inside and outside of your organisation. Here, he shares his top tips and useful resources for creating infographics, as well as other social media content.





Tip #1 - Always think about accessibility

One of the golden rules of graphic design is making sure it's friendly for all, so considering accessibility in EVERY aspect of your work is an absolute must! The [Government Digital Service's Social Media Playbook](#) has a fantastic section covering this, which is useful to those both in and outside of the public sector. Actually, the playbook is a fantastic resource all-round and seems to be updated as swiftly as times change.



Tip #2 - Get some context

If I told my Mum that a Facebook post I've spent all afternoon writing got a thousand likes, she'd probably be impressed – but she's biased! Other people might say, 'so what?' – but telling a story about the impact of that post might prompt a different response. What did it mean for your organisation? Was the outcome happy customers? A reduction in inbound contact? More sales? A short story to compliment your figures can help bring them to life.



Tip #3 - Think of your audience

Here's where Tool #3 comes in. Think about who's going to look at your infographic and ensure it's tailored to them. Sometimes - and I've learned this the hard way - reams and reams of data that you find exciting (and honestly, I do love a good spreadsheet) is not at all that exciting for busy senior managers. So, hit them with some impressive, high-level metrics and leave it at that – if they want to know more, they'll ask!



Tool #1 - Canva

An absolute no-brainer, Canva's straight to the top of the list! You don't need to be a superstar graphic designer or have big bucks to make things look great with this tool. There are hundreds of beautiful free templates at your fingertips and a sleek, user-friendly and intuitive interface that's completely browser-based to boot! And here's an extra little tip: if you want to stay on brand and use the right colours when creating, but don't have the hex codes to hand, there are a number of websites that allow you to import your logo and quickly find out.



Tool #2 - Facebook Insights (and the export function)

This might seem like an obvious one, but there really is a wealth of knowledge here - sometimes it can even be overwhelming! Insights gives you aggregated information about two groups of people - those connected to your Page and those on Facebook - so you can create content that resonates and build your audience. Bonus tip: go to the Overview page, export to .xls or .csv, and with a bit of Excel wizardry, you can translate the data into something more useful - maybe headline figures for monthly organic reach or engagement!



Tool #3 - The Periodic Table of Content Marketing

If you really want your infographics to pack a punch, before you get started, take a look at something like 'The Periodic Table of Content Marketing', designed by Chris Lake. It's a great little tool to refer to when planning your next move, to get you thinking about your objectives, how you're going to achieve them and what metrics you're monitoring. Just type the title into your search engine of choice and check it out - I've even considered printing one off and mounting it on my wall!



Fabulous Photographs

Matt Smart
Social Media Editor



With [just under 90% of adults owning a smartphone](#), nearly everyone and their dog has a tool to capture decent photos at their fingertips - literally! So how do you ensure the pictures your organisation posts stand out in the timeline against all of those selfies, memes and pictures of banana bread? Well, it might not be as difficult as you think...

A real pro when it comes to visual media, Matt Smart, Social Media Editor at Stonewater, has been dedicated to content creation for many years. Here, he provides some tricks of the trade to help you create fabulous photos from anywhere. Who knows, you might even be the next David Bailey!





Tip #1 - Let there be light

When it comes to getting a stellar shot, lighting is the key ingredient. Whether you've got a full studio set up, a camera flash or just a good old-fashioned window, use what you have at your disposal. To really get the most out of natural light, it could be worth investing in a reflector. The different colours have different functions, meaning you can use it to diffuse light softly, preventing harsh shadows, but also bounce or block light for different effects.



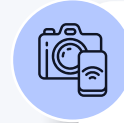
Tip #2 - Try, try and try again

It's time to get experimental, so don't restrict yourself to taking one image, trying a single composition or shooting from one angle. Test different backdrops, product positions and props, then try a range of perspectives too - wide, medium and close up. Once you're done, **don't delete anything!** You may not see it in the moment, but there could be some gold in there, so review your images with a fresh pair of eyes. And remember, you can always edit!



Tip #3 - The finishing touches

You've got a great shot, but it doesn't quite pop - what can you do?! Well, there are a few little tweaks you can make to take your image from drab to fab! Play around with the settings in your editor - maybe add a little bit of sharpening or clarity to subtly bring out details, or if the lighting isn't quite right, you can alter the whites, highlights or vibrance of your image to add a little more contrast and bring out the colours. Not happy with the framing? Crop your image to get rid of any mess or to place your subject front and centre - sorted!



Tool #1 - Choose your device

Whether it's the phone in your pocket or an expensive digital SLR camera, the first thing you'll need is a device to capture your images on. The good thing is you don't need a load of fancy kit to create something that looks great as almost all smartphones these days have cameras that will do a fantastic job!



Tool #2 - Set the scene

Composition makes all the difference, so think about your setting. Where would your product usually be used or stored? Try to recreate that scene realistically. You might need a suitable background for this - and those are available to buy - but if you want a budget friendly alternative, head to your local DIY store and collect some free wallpaper samples to get a similar effect for less!



Tool #3 - Polish it up

There are tonnes of photo editors available on the market - both free and paid for - but my tool of choice is Lightroom. It's part of the Adobe suite, so if you have access to Creative Cloud you'll be able to use the desktop version - but there is a mobile app too! You can download it for free on Apple and Android devices to make basic adjustments you'll need.



Cracking Clips

Ross Ironfield

Digital & Social Media Officer



With the growing popularity of TikTok and the introduction of Instagram Reels, video content - especially short-form video - saw a boom in 2020, and this isn't going to change in 2021! [It's predicted that](#) the average person will spend at least 100 minutes a day watching online videos this year, a 19% increase compared to 2019.

With that said, it's no surprise that marketers everywhere want to know how to create clips that capture customers' attention. Luckily, Ross Ironfield, Digital & Social Media Officer at Together Housing, is in his element when it comes to creating video content for digital channels - and here he shares the benefit of his experience with us.





Tip #1 - Get creative

Whether you use filters and effects, slow-mo and timelapse or give boomerangs a go, the key to finding what gets your brand noticed is trying different things. You can play about with audio too - just use the host of royalty free sound effects and music available online (but be sure to check the T&Cs first!). And to keep a bit of brand consistency, no matter what you try, create a bank of branded assets, including logo stings, to top and tail your video.



Tip #2 - Perfect for the platform

Sharing your clips across platforms? Be sure to optimise your video for the channel and audience you're targeting. Think about dimensions - if you shoot in 4k and frame your shot well, just a simple crop in editing will give you the sizes you need. When it comes to duration, don't go for the max. length just because you can. Look into optimal length and then test to see what works with your audience! Remember: captions can be invaluable too.



Tip #3 - Let the camera roll

Going 'live' has become widely accepted by audiences over the last 12 months, but there are a few things to think about before you do. Consider the length of your live stream - they tend to attract high engagement rates, but if they last too long, your audience will lose interest and leave. And remember, even though they get push notifications, people won't always join on the dot, so pad out your intro a little to allow for latecomers.



Tool #1 - Grab your gadget

If you've got a smartphone in your pocket, you're ready to go! Just ensure it's fully charged and you've got plenty of internal storage, so you don't run out of space. And depending on the conditions you're filming in, it may be worth considering whether your device is waterproof or whether you need a good protective case, in the event of any accidents - no one wants a smashed screen!



Tool #2 - More than the basics

Anyone can be a mobile journalist with a few kitbag essentials. Not only will these easy to carry tools help you take advantage of any filming opportunity, but they'll also help you take your videos to the next level! Consider a collapsible tripod for when a steady hand won't cut it; a gimbal for when you're on the move; a condenser mic to capture sound and portable headphones to monitor audio. With that lot you'll give Steven Spielberg a run for his money!



Tool #3 - Video Editing Tool

There are more video editors out there than you can shake a stick at. The apps you have available as standard on your device can be great if you're low on budget and want something simple to try out. If you've got a little to spend, take a look at Filmic Pro - it's available for both Apple and Android devices. And if you've got access to the Adobe suite (or a good budget to make use of!) take a look at Adobe Premiere Rush.



Powerful Podcasts

Darren Caveney
Creator

COMMS2POINT0

Since the phrase was coined in 2004, podcasts have steadily gained momentum. In fact, [Rajar's Spring 2020 MIDAS Survey](#) reported that over 10 million people in the UK listened to podcasts weekly in 2020. That's an average of 18% of UK adults, up from a measly 1% back in Spring 2015 - a seriously impressive increase in just 5 years.

So, how can you unleash the power of podcasts? Well, Darren Caveney, creator of comms2point0 and co-host of the [Talking Comms Pod](#), is here to help! Back in 2017, Darren was relatively new to creating podcasts when his friend and top comms pro, Adrian Stirrup, approached him to collaborate. Adrian had a background in radio so pretty much everything Darren learned about podcasts is thanks to him - and now he's sharing that insight with you!



Orlo



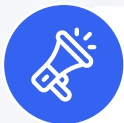
Tip #1 - Write for the ear

Listening is very different to reading and it's important to understand how we access audio content and what works best. Think short words and short sentences. Use everyday language – this isn't the time to show off with fancy long words when more simple descriptions can be used instead. Round up any numbers, use active verbs and above all else read your scripts out loud – record them and listen back to hear their sound and flow.



Tip #2 - Choose your kit wisely

There's a mass of well-priced equipment available now. But think about how and where you'll be recording your podcasts and therefore the type of microphone which best suits your needs. There are broadly three types – omnidirectional, cardioid and bi-cardioid. They all have different characteristics. An omnidirectional might be a good all-rounder, but if you're going to be recording face-to-face, one on one interviews, think about a bi-cardioid.



Tip #3 - Your voice

It may sound obvious, but make sure that your voice is in good order before you begin recording. Voice exercises are a great way to warm up and to improve the way in which you sound. And lay off the coffee – it isn't conducive to you sounding crisp and sharp. There's a reason why TV and radio guests have water available during interviews, so drink plenty of it before you begin in order for your vocal chords to be well lubricated.



Tool #1 - Pick your platform

Before you begin, it's worth having a think about which platform you will use to host your podcast. There's a whole host of free and paid-for options out there, so do some research and choose one that best fits your specification. Think about the space and functionality the platform offers and whether a paid-for option would be a good investment for your needs now or whether it's something to investigate in the future.



Tool #2 - Plan your promotion

Explore the ways in which you can and will promote your podcast. We're all up against demand for our audiences' attention, now more than ever, so you'll need to up your game if you want to stand out in a crowded market. Web, email and social are all good channels to drive listeners, but make sure the content you create is striking – think about using tactics such as audiograms and image quotes to really boost your promotional strength.



Tool #3 - Turn to the professionals

If adding a podcast to your content mix is something you're serious about for 2021, you want to be sure you're completely clued up. There are plenty of resources out there online for you to read, watch and listen to, but sometimes being able to ask an expert can do wonders for not just your knowledge, but your confidence too. A training workshop such as 'Powered-Up Podcasts' delivered by [comms2point0](#) could be worth a look.

Summary

Now, with a little help from our friends, you're all set to make social media content that **shines** in 2021 and beyond! So, whether you want to inspire your audience with infographics, unleash the power of podcasts or provoke emotion with visual media, the tips and tools in this guide have got you ready to make waves. No matter where you're working from or what budget you have available, it's possible to create top quality content that sets you apart from the crowd. So, what are you waiting for? Start doing more with less now!





Contact Us

Think we might be the one that you want?

If you're *hopelessly devoted* to delivering a great customer experience through digital channels too, then we're sure *we'd go together like rama lama lama ka dinga da dinga dong*.

So, what are you waiting for? Get in touch and let us know we're *the one that you want!*



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