Digital Skills for German-American Nonprofits – Session Two

SOCIAL MEDIA & CONTENT CREATION

How to reach, engage and connect with your community

Organized by the Goethe-Institut
Facilitated by Vanessa von Hilchen

GOETHE INSTITUT

Hello!

- Started my career in journalism
- 15+ years in nonprofit, political and public-sector communication
- Specialized in digital communication and strategy
- Led communications at the Goethe-Institut San Francisco



Vanessa von Hilchen

Before we start.

60 minutes
Social Media & Content Creation in a Nutshell

Questions are welcome
Please use the chat

Recording
This session will be recorded

Materials
Slides and worksheets will be shared afterward

What we'll cover today.

Planning

Brief recap of session one.

01

Platforms

Which are useful for your goal and doable regarding your capacity?

02

Content

Creating engaging and reusable content.

03

Design

Design for clarity, attention and recognition.

04

Tools

Simple set of what your team will actually use.

05

Measurement

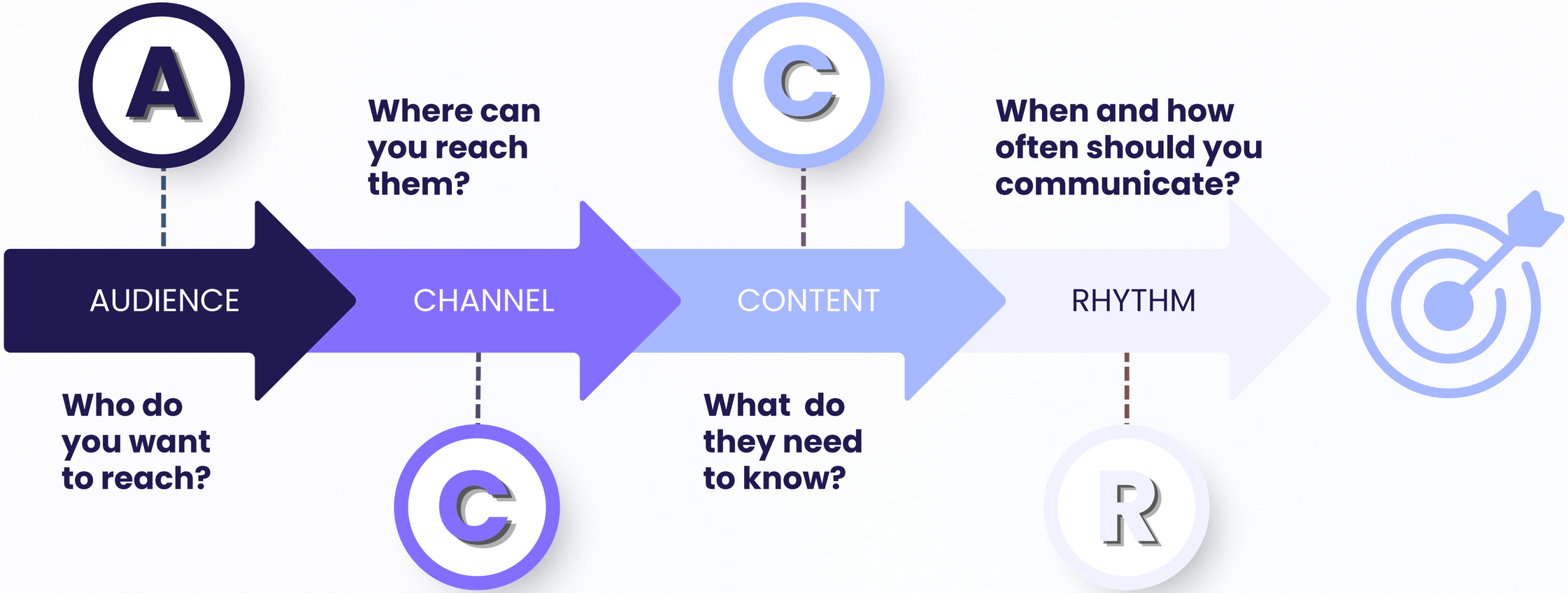
Understand what works and why.

06

SOCIAL MEDIA IS COMPLICATED.

Start with your Goal.

ACCR-Framework:



Social Media: From visibility to connection

BE SEEN

Reach the people who care about your mission.

KEEP PEOPLE INFORMED

Share useful and timely information.

START CONVERSATIONS

Invite questions, responses and participation.

BUILD TRUST

Show who you are and why your work matters.

Choose your platforms with purpose

Facebook

- Local community building
- Events & groups
- News & organizational updates
- Reaching established audiences

TikTok

- Reach & discovery
- Entertaining / educational short-form video
- Trends & authentic content
- Reaching new audiences

Instagram

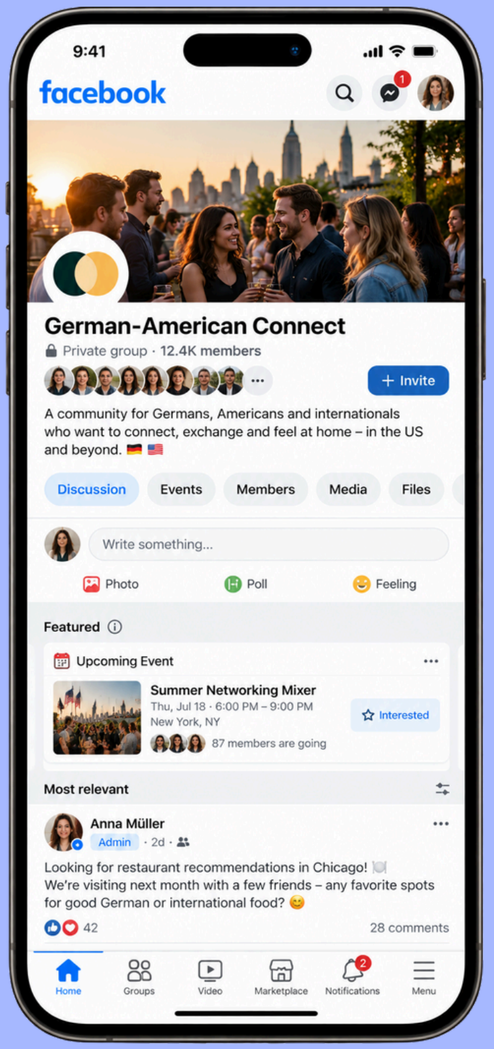
- Visual storytelling
- Community & engagement
- Events & campaigns
- Showing people, impact & personality

LinkedIn

- Professional & industry updates
- Thought leadership
- Partnerships & networking
- Jobs & volunteering opportunities

X/Bluesky

- Real-time updates
- News & current conversations
- Advocacy & public discourse
- Networking with journalists, experts & organizations









Facebook

WHO YOU CAN REACH

- Local communities
- Existing members and supporters
- Adults across a broad age range
- People connected through groups and events

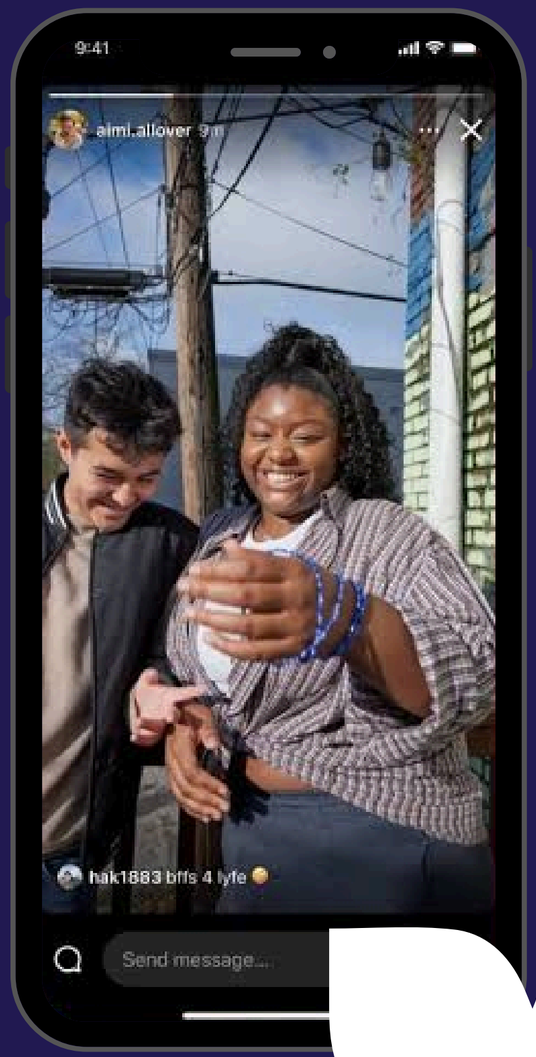
USEFUL FOR

- Local visibility
- Events and practical information
- Community groups
- Longer updates
- Conversations and sharing

KEEP IN MIND

Facebook works particularly well when your organization is connected to a place, an established community or recurring events.





Instagram

WHO YOU CAN REACH

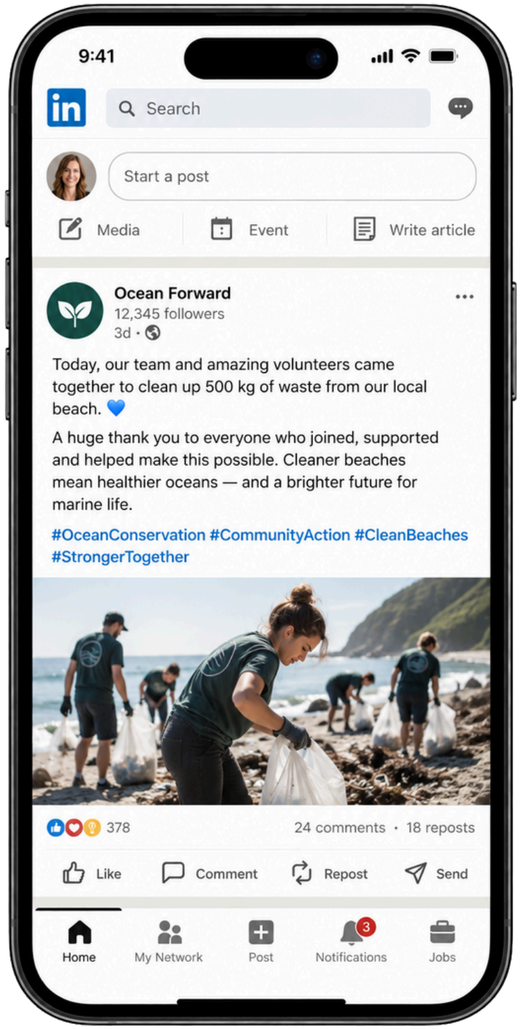
- Visually oriented audiences
- Potential participants and volunteers
- People discovering organizations through recommendations
- Younger and middle-aged adults

USEFUL FOR

- Awareness and recognition
- People and personal stories
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Short video
- Showing the atmosphere of your work

KEEP IN MIND

Instagram helps people experience the personality and visual world of your organization.









LinkedIn

WHO YOU CAN REACH

- Professionals
- Potential partners
- Funders and sponsors
- Employees and volunteers
- Stakeholders in your field

USEFUL FOR

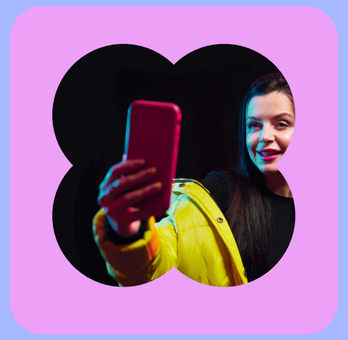
- Partnerships
- Organizational impact
- Professional expertise
- Leadership perspectives
- Volunteer and employment opportunities

KEEP IN MIND

LinkedIn can present your organization as a credible and professional partner.









TikTok

WHO YOU CAN REACH

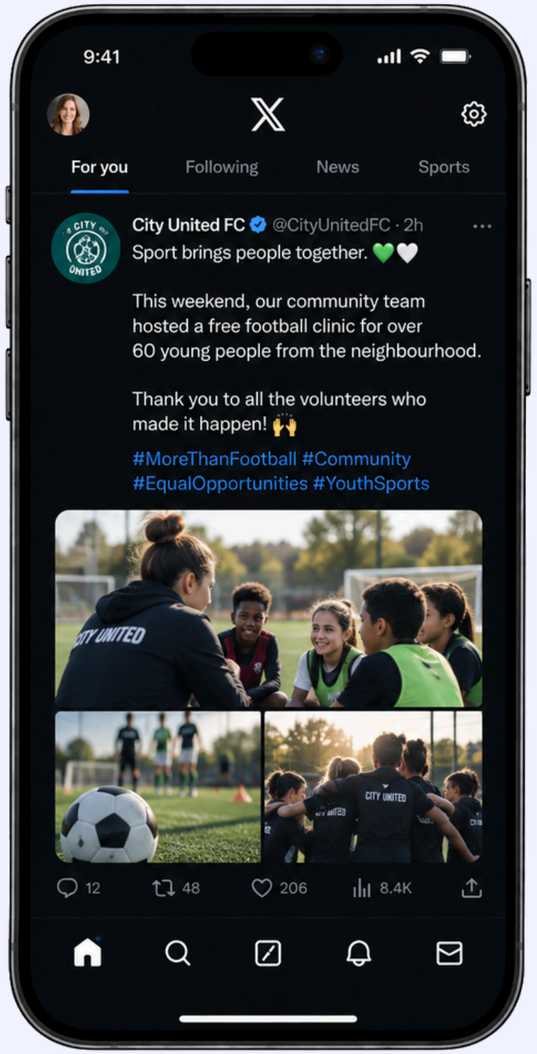
- Younger audiences
- People discovering content through interests
- Audiences open to informal and entertaining communication

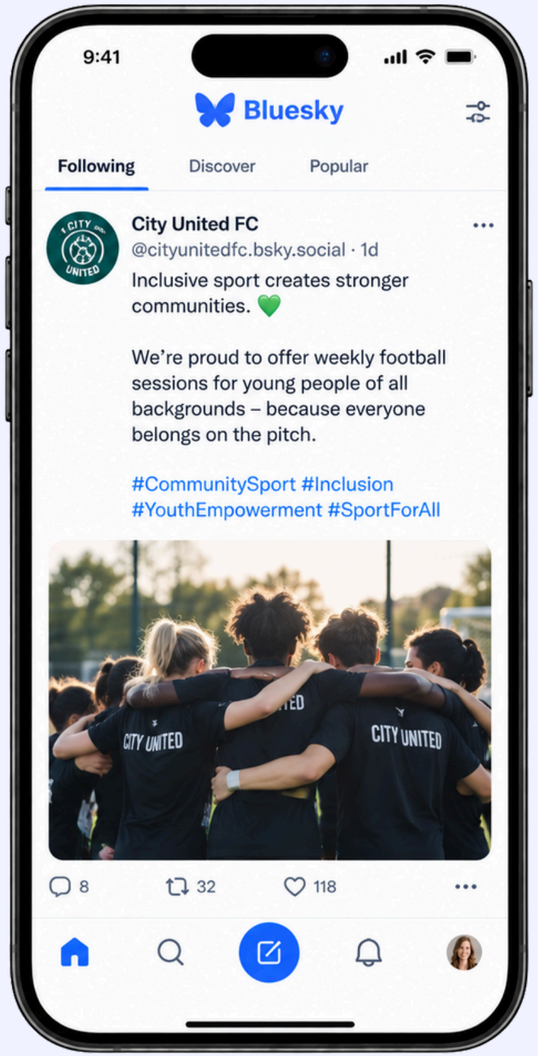
USEFUL FOR

- Awareness
- Short explanations
- Personality and humor
- Behind-the-scenes moments
- Participation in cultural conversations

KEEP IN MIND

TikTok rewards a native, personal and video-first style.





X / Bluesky

WHO YOU CAN REACH

- Journalists and opinion leaders
- Political and cultural communities
- Professionals and subject-matter audiences
- People actively following current debates

USEFUL FOR

- Timely updates, e.g. reactions to news updates, event announcements, statements
- Joining public conversations as they unfold
- Sharing commentary and expertise
- Networking around specific topics

KEEP IN MIND

Audiences can be self-selecting and concentrated within particular professional, political, or cultural circles.

Ok. But what about...?

Do we need on every platform.
Absolutely not.

How often should we post?
Consistency > frequency.

Should we keep an account just because we already have followers there?
Check audience, engagement metrics and capacity.

Do we need the blue tick from Meta?
No guarantee for reach. ROI is usually support + impersonation defense + trust in DMs/collabs.

Our audience is older. Do we still need Instagram/TikTok?
Age alone is no reliable indicator. Ask people, check your data, observe and test it. And choose the platform you like!



What should good content do?

Before creating any piece of content, ask yourself: What should this do for my audience? In the end, the success of your content is determined by how well it achieves its intended purpose, whether that's to inform, entertain, inspire, or engage.

INFORM

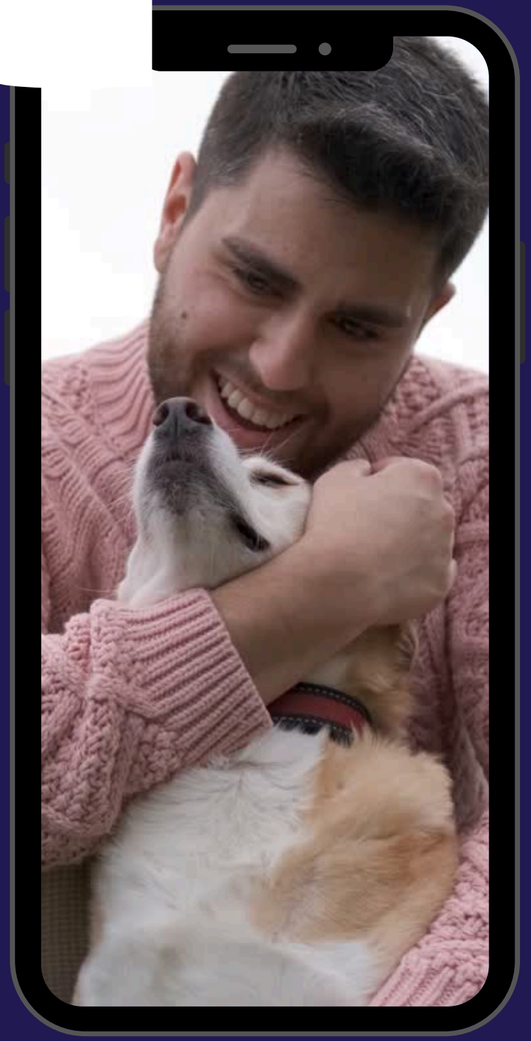
Give people useful and relevant information

INSPIRE

Show why your work matters and trigger their emotions.

INVOLVE

Invite people to participate and interact with you.









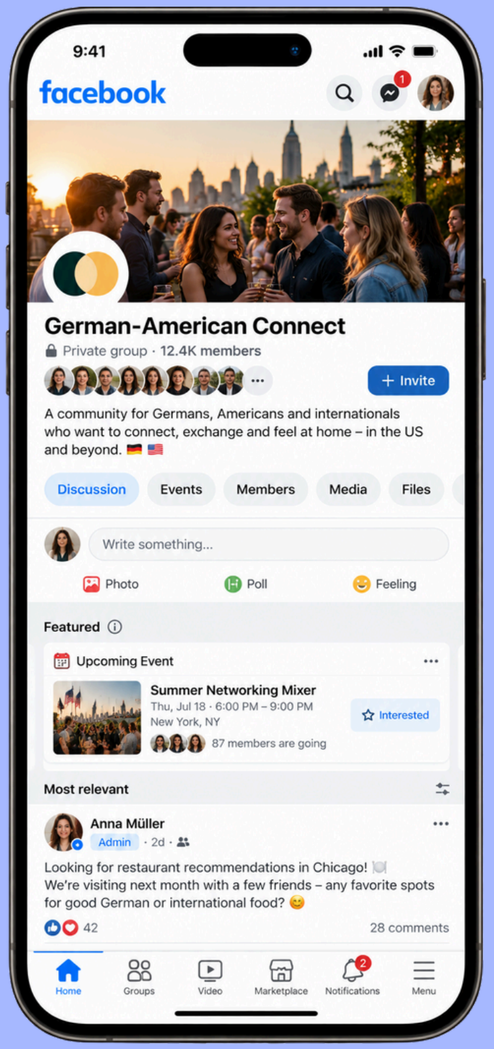
Content for Instagram

CONTENT THAT FITS

- People and personal stories
- Visual moments
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Short explanations
- Event impressions
- Recurring visual series

USEFUL FORMATS

- Reel
- Carousel
- Single image
- Story
- Highlight
- Collaboration post









Content for Facebook

CONTENT THAT FITS

- Events and program information
- Community updates
- Photo albums
- Member stories
- Links and resources
- Questions for the community

USEFUL FORMATS

- Event
- Image with explanatory copy
- Photo album
- Link post
- Short video
- Group post









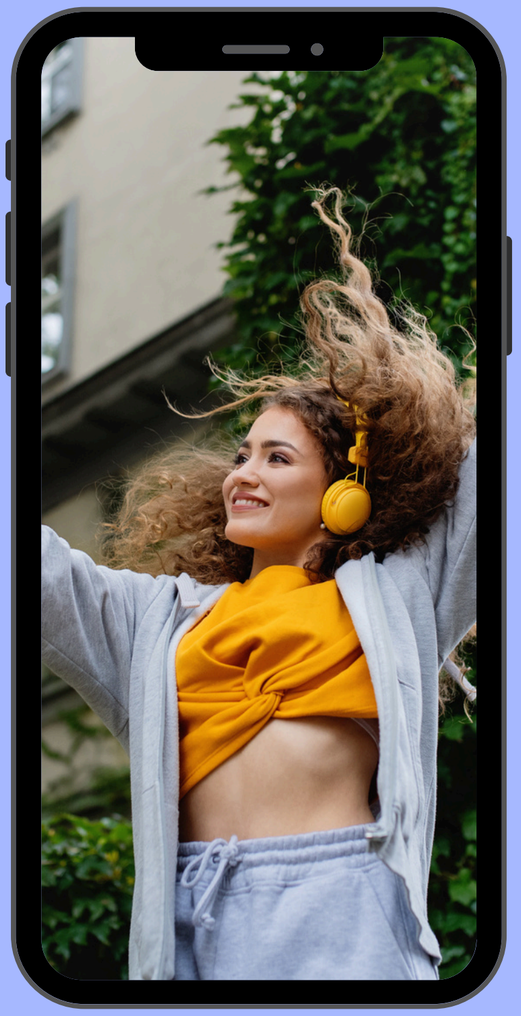
Content for LinkedIn

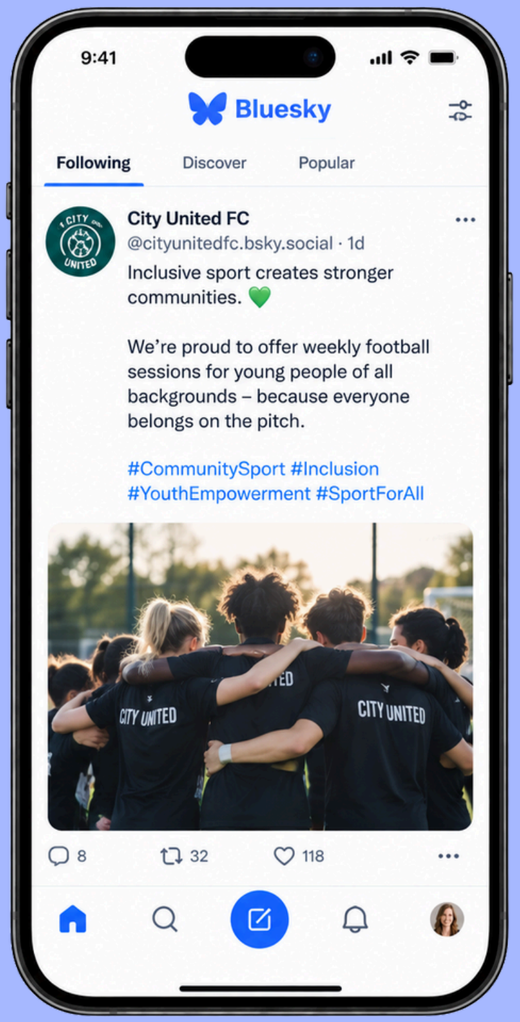
CONTENT THAT FITS

- Results and impact
- Partnerships
- Professional perspectives
- Volunteer or team stories
- Project milestones
- Opportunities to contribute

USEFUL FORMATS

- Image and text post
- Document carousel
- Short video
- Link post
- Personal leadership post





Content for TikTok/X/Bluesky

TIKTOK

- Short personal video
- Explanation
- Behind the scenes
- Cultural moments

X

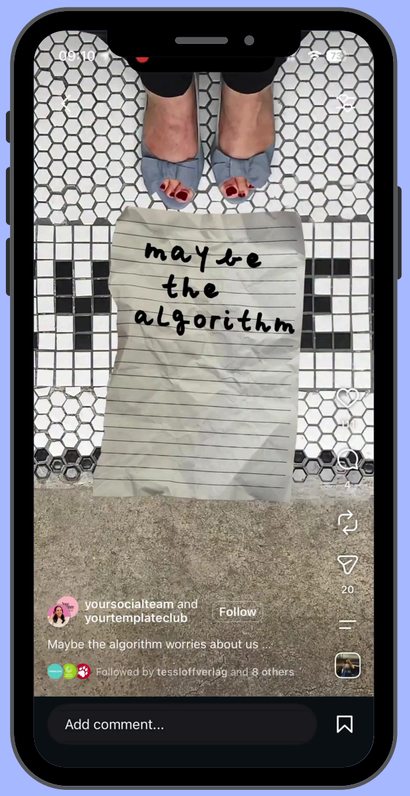
- News
- Live updates
- Commentary
- Links and conversations

Bluesky

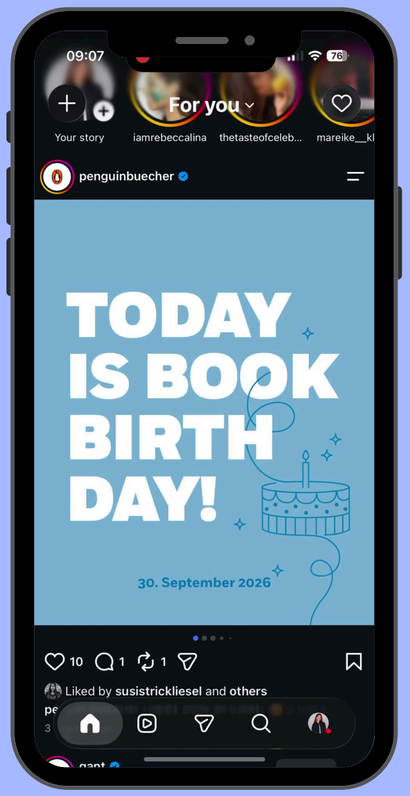
- Expertise
- Community conversation
- Cultural and political exchange
- Links and recommendations

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONTENT FORMAT

SHORT VIDEOS



CAROUSELS / SLIDE SHOWS



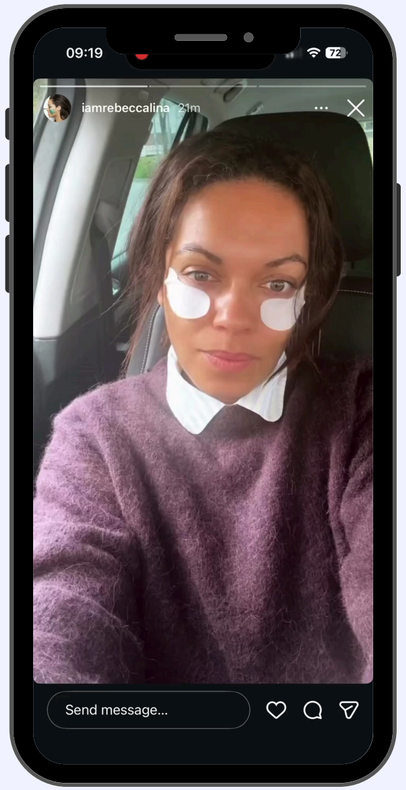
STATIC IMAGES / TEXT-BASED



LIVE CONTENT



STORIES



CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONTENT FORMAT

SHORT-FORM VIDEO
Reels · TikToks · Shorts
→ Great for people, personality, behind-the-scenes moments and quick explanations.
CAROUSELS
Multi-slide posts
→ Great for tips, how-tos, explainers, event recaps and storytelling.
STATIC IMAGES
Photos · Graphics · Announcements
→ Simple, fast and effective when one strong visual or message is enough.
TEXT-BASED POSTS
Updates · Insights · Questions · Stories
→ Great when the idea or conversation matters more than the visual.
LIVE CONTENT
Q&As · Events · Conversations
→ Useful for real-time interaction and community.
STORIES
Quick updates · Behind-the-scenes · Polls · Reposts
→ Great for timely, informal content and staying connected with your existing community.

Ok. But what about...?

Do we need Reels/video?
Helpful for reach, not mandatory.

Should we follow trends?
Only, when they fit.

Should we use hashtags?
Keywords in caption are more important.

Can we use AI to create content?
Yes, but use it responsibly.

Do we need to label AI content?
No federal law in the U.S. mandating AI content labeling, though proposed bills like the AI Labeling Act and AI Disclosure Act were introduced in 2023.

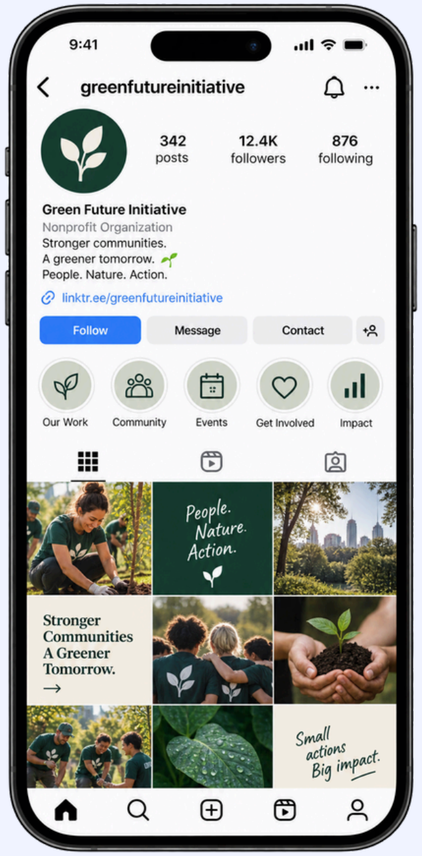
Should we cross-post automatically?
Do not copy and paste. Repurpose!

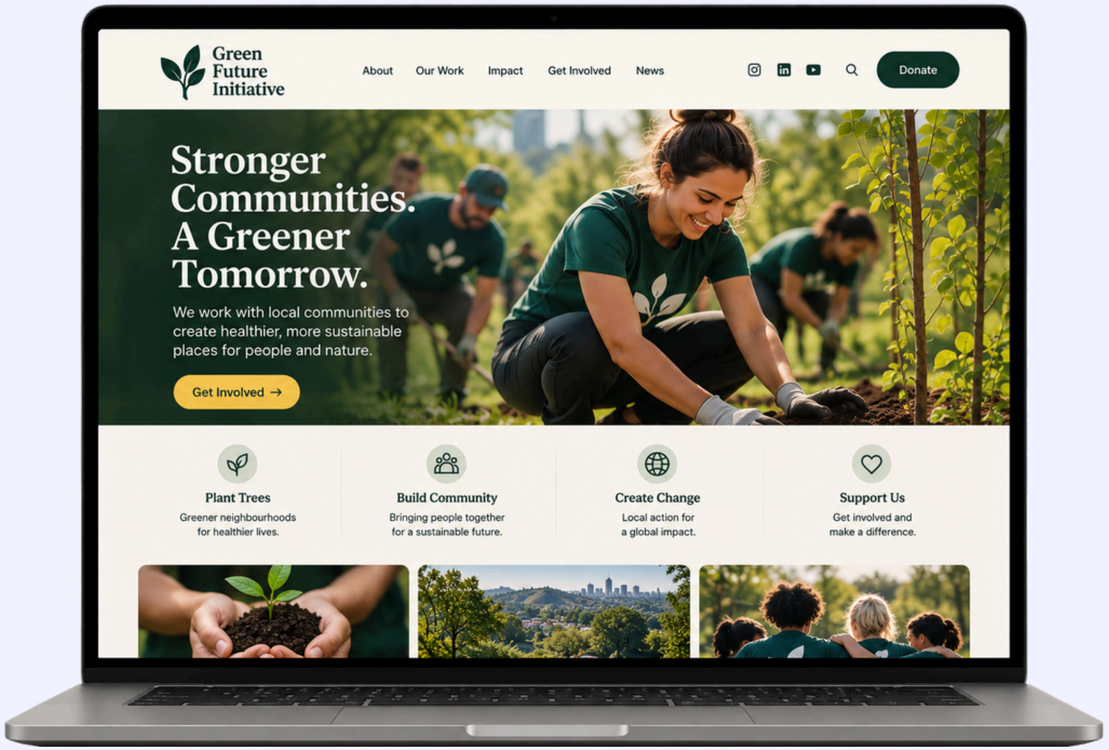


Build recognition through repetition and consistency.

Every channel should feel like part of the same organization.

- Consistent elements
- Organization name
- Logo
- Profile image
- Colors
- Typography
- Photography style
- Tone of voice
- Links and contact information





Green Future Initiative

Signature Content Formats

Don’t reinvent your content every week. Build formats you can repeat.

Examples:

- “Member of the Month”
- “3 Things to Know”
- Behind the Scenes
- Event Recap
- Weekly Tip

Why they work for small organizations

- Less work — No need to start from scratch every time
- More consistency — Your channels develop a recognizable look and voice
- Easier planning — You already know what kind of content to create
- Faster production — Templates and workflows can be reused
- Builds familiarity — Your audience learns what to expect

How to build a community

Social media is about relationships, not just reach. A strong community builds trust, loyalty and turns passive followers into active supporters.

RESPOND

to comments and messages

COMMENT

on other people's posts

ASK

questions and join conversations

RECOGNIZE

members, volunteers & supporters

BE PRESENT

in your community (not just in your own feed)

Helpful tools to elevate your social media game

Canva

- Graphics
- Carousels
- Insta Stories

CapCut

- Reels &/ Video Editing
- Trend Research

Buffer / Metricool

- Scheduling & Analytics
- Free plans available

Unsplash / Pexels

- Free Images & Visuals

Meta Business Suite / Ads Manager

- Manage your Meta presence & run paid campaigns

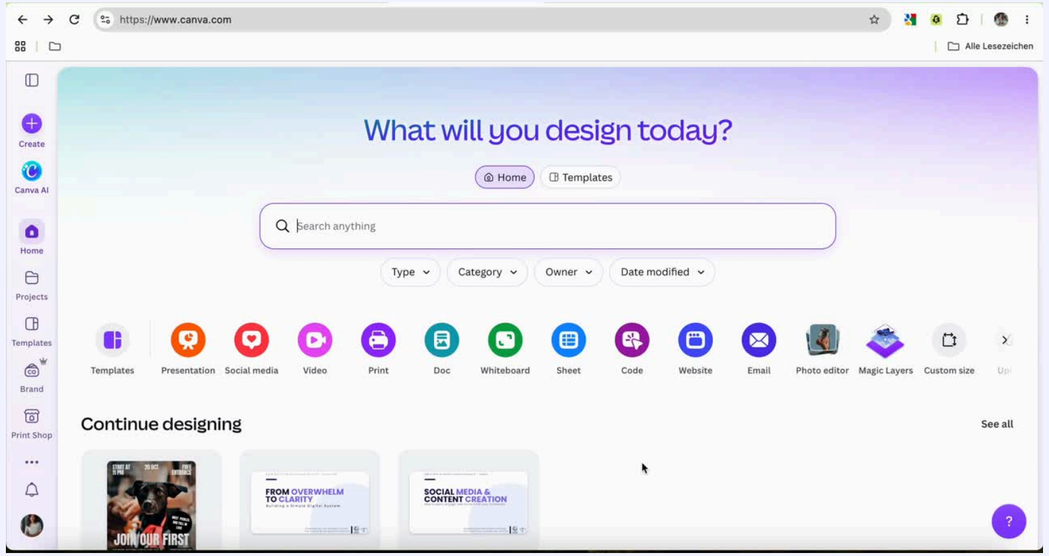
LLMs (ChatGPT, Claude)

- Ideas, hooks & copy

Canva.

Most important tool hacks.

Canva.
Most important tool hacks.



1. CHOOSE YOUR PLATFORM FORMAT

Canva will provide the correct dimensions

2. START FROM SCRATCH OR USE A TEMPLATE

Tons of options for any purpose

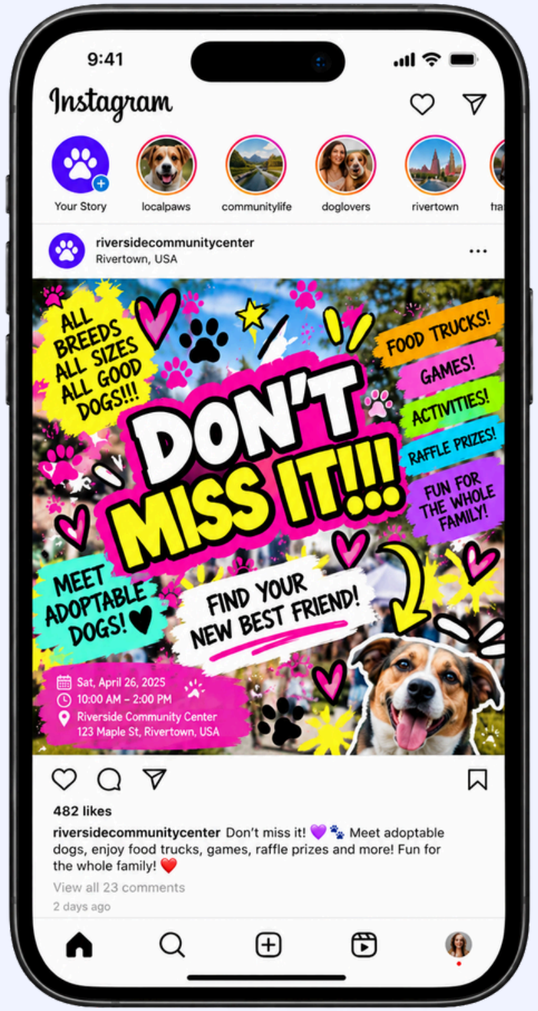
3. MAKE IT YOURS

Change the text, colors, fonts and images, and move, resize or remove any element.

4. SAVE IT FOR NEXT TIME

To reuse it and build your own brand design

Design Dont’s:



- ✕ Wrong message hierarchy
- ✕ Chaotic information order
- ✕ Inconsistent typography
- ✕ To many colors
- ✕ Missing or too much Info
- ✕ Wrong format

Design Dos:



- Clear Message and CTA
- Well-organized information
- Consistent typography
- Minimal color palette
- Prominent call to action
- Eye-catching visuals

Good content always tells a story.

Good stories turn information into something people care about. They capture attention, create an emotional connection and make your message easier to remember.



How to tell a good story

Good stories turn information into something people care about. They capture attention, create an emotional connection and make your message easier to remember.

HOOK
Why should I stop?

Start with a surprising fact, question, tension, strong point of view, or human moment.

TENSION
Why does it matter?

Show the problem, change, contradiction, challenge, or opportunity.

VALUE
What do I learn or feel?

Add insight, evidence, expertise, a human perspective, or a solution.

TAKEAWAY
What should stay with me?

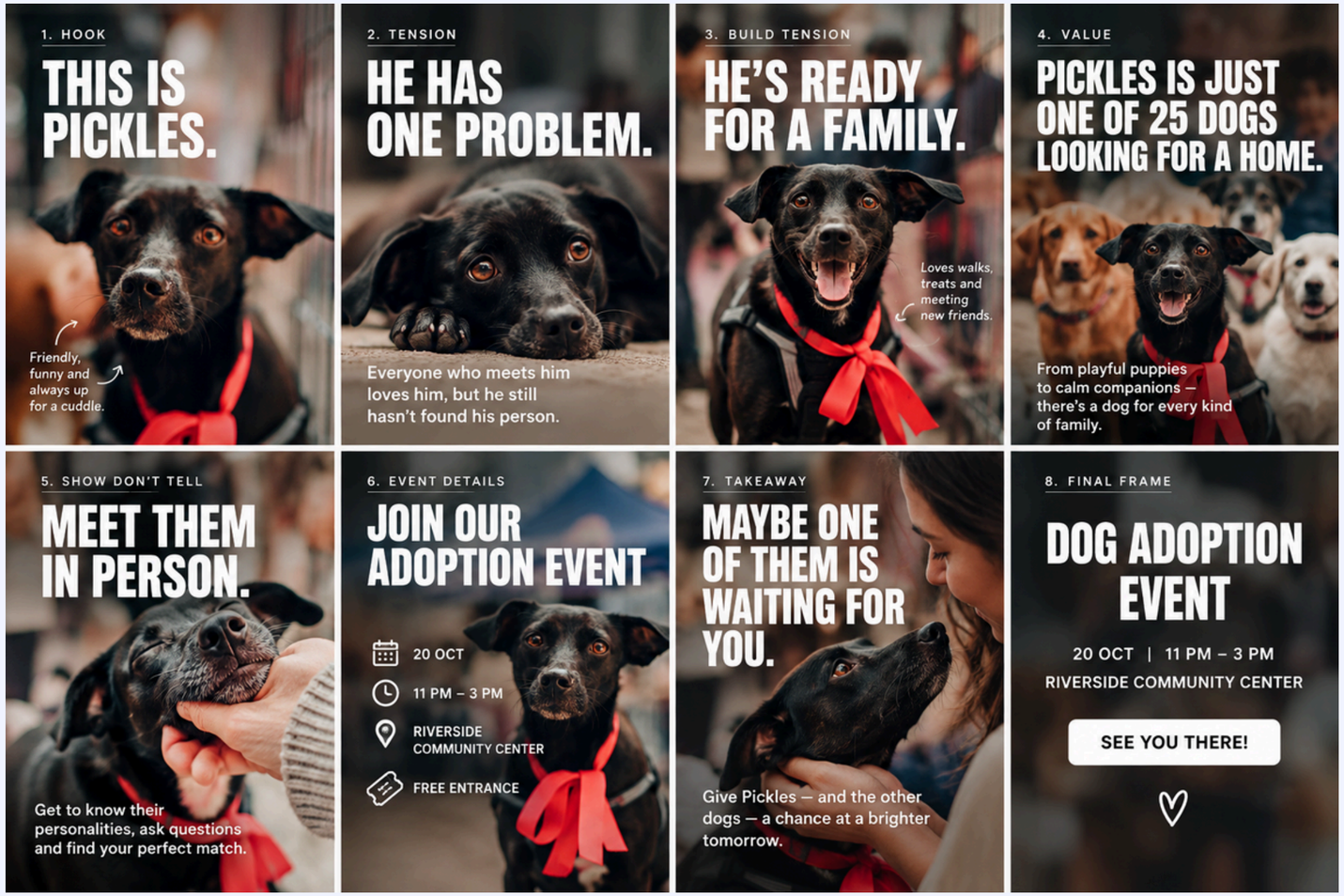
End with one clear idea or reason to respond, share, click, or act.



Instead of:

“Join our Adoption Event!”

You can tell a little story...



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End with one clear idea or reason to respond, share, click, or act.

How do we measure Success?

SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS

help us understand how people see, engage with, and act on our content.



EXPOSURE

REACH
How many people saw it?

IMPRESSIONS/VIEWS
How How many times was it shown or viewed? people saw it?

FOLLOWER (GROWTH)
Is our potential audience growing?



ATTENTION

WATCH TIME
How long did they watch?

COMPLETION RATE
Did they make it to the end?

VIDEO VIEWS
Did they start watching?



ENGAGEMENT

LIKES / REACTIONS
Quick response

COMMENTS / REPLIES
Conversation

SHARES / REPOSTS
Worth passing on

SAVES
Worth coming back to



ACTION

PROFILE VISIT
Want to know who you are

LINK CLICKS
Want to learn more

Vanity Metrics vs. Useful Signals

Not every number tells you something meaningful

DON'T obsess over:
Followers → How big is our account?
Likes → Did people casually react?

PAY MORE ATTENTION TO:
Shares → Was this worth passing on?
Saves → Was this useful enough to keep?
Comments → Did it start a conversation?
Watch time / completion → Did the content hold attention?
Clicks → Did people want to know more?
Conversions → Did they actually sign up, donate or attend?

Ok. But what about...?

What is a good engagement rate.
There is no universal benchmark. A “good” rate depends on the platform, your audience size, content format, and goal. Compare your performance over time rather than chasing generic industry averages.

Should we boost posts / run ads?
Sometimes. Paid social can be useful when you have a clear goal, a defined audience and a specific CTA. Don’t spend money just to get more views, use it when you know who you want to reach, what you want them to do and how you’ll measure success.

Should we use Trial Reels.
They’re a great way to experiment with new topics, formats or hooks and see how content performs with non-followers before sharing it more broadly. Use them to learn, not as a guaranteed reach hack.



What if a post didn’t work?

Don’t blame the algorithm. Analyze and learn from it.

RELEVANCE
Did the right people care about the topic?
HOOK
Did we give them a reason to stop?
CONTENT
Was the message useful, interesting or emotional?
FORMAT
Was it right for the platform?
CREATIVE
Was it clear and visually engaging?
CTA
Did people know what to do next?
PATTERN
Is this one weak post or a recurring pattern?

Don’t chase virality.
Focus on reaching the right people.

Don’t let algorithms define success.
Real relationships matter more than numbers.

Keep contributing.
Helpful, hopeful and authentic voices are needed online.

SESSION 3

Email Communication and Community Building

October 14, 2026, 11 a.m. CDT

THANK YOU!

