

Strategy

Organic Reach is in Decline—Here's What You Can Do About It

It's no secret that most social platforms operate on a pay-to-play model for brands. But there are still many ways to improve your organic reach.

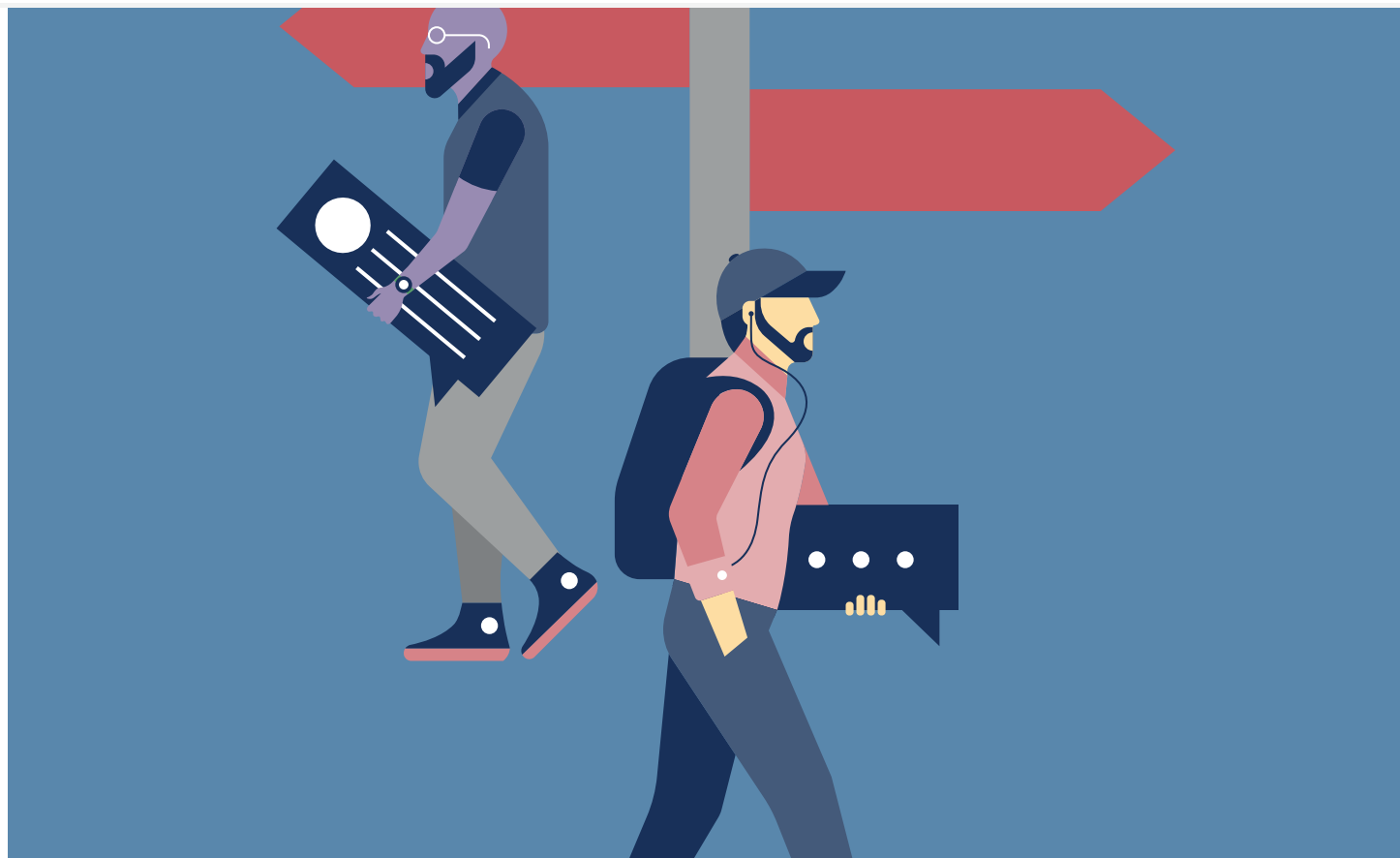
Katie Sehl

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Blog

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When it comes to organic reach, not a lot has changed over the past few years. The average number of people who see posts on social media that aren't backed by ad dollars is still low.

It's no secret that most social platforms operate on a pay-to-play model for brands. The average reach of an organic post on a Facebook Page hovers around [5.20%](#). That means roughly one in every 19 fans sees the page's non-promoted content. The easiest way to boost distribution and direct sales is to boost your ad budget.

As a result, businesses [often underestimate](#) the importance of organic marketing. But organic social is the foundation that your ad strategy rests on. Behind every successful ad campaign with high paid reach is a consistent and creative social media presence that strengthens the brand, relationships, and trust.

With ad budgets down, competition for organic reach is up. To stay on top, the best brands will be the most creative.

Bonus: Read the step-by-step social media strategy guide with pro tips on how to grow your social media presence.

What is organic reach?

On social media, organic reach is the number of people who have seen your content through unpaid distribution, i.e. without you putting a budget towards reaching a specific audience. The metric is represented as a number of unique accounts and can include users who saw your post in their News Feed, watched a Story, or browsed your account.

Unlike paid content (such as Facebook ads), organic posts are generally not served to specific target audiences. Each social media network has a proprietary algorithm that defines how organic content is distributed on the platform (a.k.a. who gets to see your posts).

11 tips to improve your organic reach on social media

1. Learn best practices for each social media platform

Having general knowledge of how to write a caption or how to [create a video](#) is good. Knowing how to write a [good caption for Instagram](#) and [create videos for LinkedIn](#) is better.

Never take a one-size-fits-all approach to social media marketing, especially with organic content. To reach the most people, organic posts need to be optimized. And to optimize content, you need to understand the platform and audience you're optimizing for. A good place to start is by getting familiar with [social media demographics](#).

Focus on the platforms that make the most sense for your business and set out to master them. For example, if you plan to reach the younger crowd, you should probably figure out [Snapchat filters](#), [TikTok hashtag challenges](#), and [Instagram Stories](#). B2B companies, on the other hand, might be better off connecting via [LinkedIn hashtags](#) or [Twitter Live](#).

As a general rule, content that is designed specifically for the platform it's going on performs better. Learn the in's and out's so you can use social media features to their fullest potential. Tools like [hashtags](#), geotags, and people tags and

[shopping tags](#) can all boost the reach of organic content if you know how to use them.

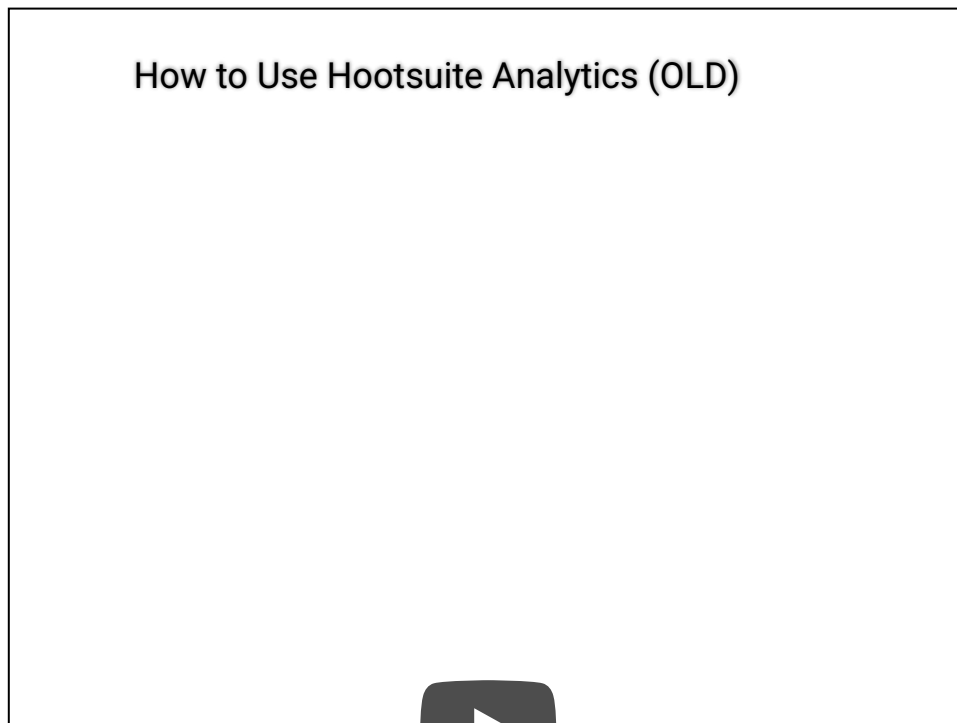
2. Develop a content strategy

No shortcuts here. If you want organic content to perform well on social media, you have to put some thought into it. If you don't spend time on [a social media content strategy](#), why would a stranger spend time on your content?

To start, learn about your audience. What are they interested in? What are your audience demographics? How do they vary by platform?

Most social media platforms offer business accounts access to these insights through their native analytics tools. If you have a presence on more than one platform, you can access your social media insights from one place using a social media management tool like Hootsuite.

Learn how to use Hootsuite Analytics:



[Social listening](#) is another way to learn what content your audience—and competitors—are engaging with. Look at what some of your favorite brands are

doing for inspiration.

Establish goals for your content strategy, but keep them realistic. You won't grow an organic audience by pushing sales all the time. Ergo, you won't drive sales that way either. Focus on building your brand, audience, and community. Measure your success with growth and interaction metrics.

As Matthew Kobach, Head of Content Marketing at Fast, [put it on Twitter](#), organic social media marketing is akin to the wining and dining portion of a sales pitch. Don't skip straight to dessert. Develop a relationship.

3. Engage your employees

An engaged community of brand advocates consistently interacting with your posts and sharing your content on social media can improve organic reach across the board. And what better place to look for brand advocates than your own team?

[Studies show](#) that potential customers trust a business's employees more than journalists, advertisers and CEOs. So, getting your team involved in distributing your content on social media can win you more than just improved organic reach.

If you're not sure how to streamline distributing content to your team (and come up with perks that will make posting worth their while), an employee advocacy platform like [Hootsuite Amplify](#) will help. It makes it safe and easy for employees to share approved social content with their friends and followers.

Employee Advocacy with Hootsuite Amplify




[Learn more about building an engaging employee advocacy program.](#)

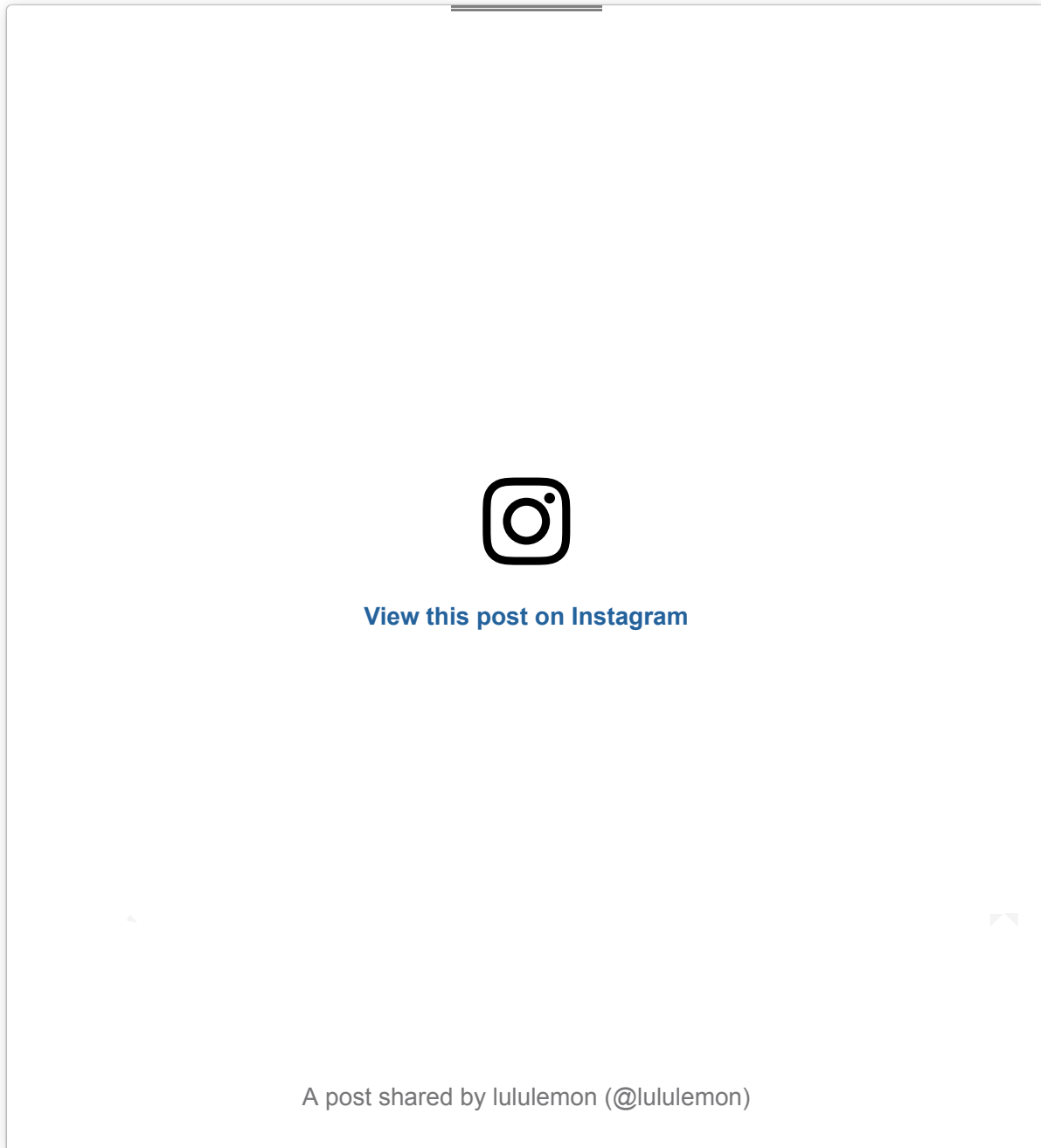
4. Focus on value

Organic content should offer followers something of value. Give people a reason to follow and share your posts. That could mean entertainment value, pearls of wisdom or motivation, or the opportunity to connect with a community.

Merriam Webster's Twitter account taps the dictionary for its full value potential. In addition to tweeting the Word of the Day, the account tweets "look up" trends that are often as revealing as they are relevant.

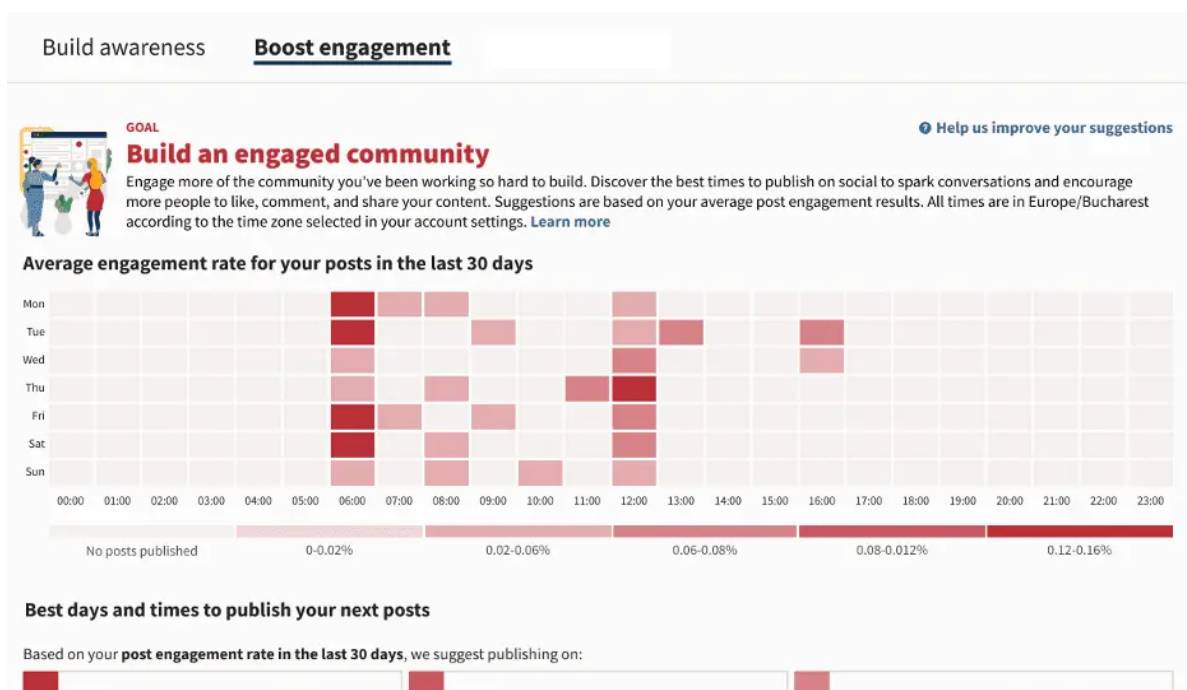
 Top lookups, in order: quid pro quo, oligarchy,
outlandish, integrity, insight
— Merriam-Webster (@MerriamWebster) [November 13,](#)
[2019](#)

There's also value for your brand in this approach. Take Lululemon, for example. Technically the company is an apparel retailer. By sharing tips and hosting workouts on [IGTV](#) and [Instagram Live](#), the athleisure brand is able to position itself as an authority on all things fitness. With workouts, Lululemon inserts its brand into its customers' daily routine, and shows off its products, too.



5. Be consistently awesome

You know the drill. Post regularly and post at the right time. When is that, exactly? It's when your audience is online and active. [Hootsuite found the best times to post on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn](#). But definitely double-check your analytics and adjust accordingly. (Or use Hootsuite's Best Time to Publish feature and get personalized recommendations for times to post on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn that will work best for *your unique audience*.)



Post consistently to establish and maintain a presence. But remember, when it comes to organic social media, quality always trumps quantity. This is why creating a quality content strategy and [social media content calendar](#) is so important. Planning ahead keeps the routine sustainable, and prevents burn-out.

Think long-term. Develop content themes, regular installments, or a recurring series. Ellevest, a financial company that aims to close gender gaps, hosts [#EllevestOfficeHours](#) once a week. Canadian designer Tanya Taylor turns

historically sad paintings into happy works of art with her #HappyFrameOfMind series.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Tanya Taylor (@tanyataylor)

6. Connect with people

Here's a little hack: Go to any brand's Instagram account on desktop. Hover over each piece of content, and compare like and comment counts as you go. Notice anything? It's likely that pictures with people in them have more likes and comments.

A [study](#) by the Georgia Institute of Technology and Yahoo Labs confirms this trend. After looking at 1.1 million photos on Instagram, researchers found that photos that contain faces are 38% more likely to receive likes and 32% more comments.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by YayDay Paper Co. (@yaydaypaper)

People connect with people more than products and services. Plus, consumers increasingly want to know the faces behind a brand. A [recent survey](#) by Deloitte asked consumers what they cared most about when making decisions about brands. The answer? How the company treats its people.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Indigo Arrows (@indigo_arrows)

Build a strong community by showcasing the talent, diversity and values that are already in your company's community. Be inclusive and representative. The more people who see themselves in your content, the more people there are to engage with it.

This may not translate to direct sales. But galvanizing your community around people and purpose pays off in the long run. Purpose-driven brands grow **three times** faster than competitors.

7. Call for engagement

Want better engagement rates on your organic posts? Just ask.

Questions are a great prompt. Ask your followers something you're interested in hearing about. Use this as an opportunity to learn more about your audience. Fashion and lifestyle content creators Shelcy and Christy received more than 100 responses when they asked followers what books they're reading.






[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by by Shelcy & Christy (@nycxclothes)

Fenty Beauty asked followers to reply with a picture and matched them with a lipstick shade. The single tweet received more than 1.5K responses and 2.7K favs. [Penguin Random House](#) took a similar approach, offering book

suggestions based on favorite authors. [Cash App](#) offered six words of advice to anyone who asked a question.



REPLY with a picture and we will match you to a Slip
Shine Sheer Shiny Lipstick shade!   
— FENTY BEAUTY (@fentybeauty) [June 22, 2020](#)

One LinkedIn professional took a poll from followers through the creative use of LinkedIn's reaction options. Her survey got more than 4K responses. Polls in general great feedback and engagement tools. As are stickers in Stories.

8. Respond fast and often

Get down in the comment sections of your posts. People are much more likely to engage if they know they may get a response from you.

Response time is of the essence here, too. After you post something, stick around and respond to your first few comments. This will increase the odds of you receiving more. It's also a good opportunity to [promote brand values and](#)

[personality](#). If you spot abusive comments, address them right away so you can maintain a safe and inclusive space.



investigocean is inconclusive so far but we otter get some results soon

— Monterey Bay Aquarium (@MontereyAq) [June 24, 2020](#)

Influencer and entrepreneur Jenna Kutcher has found success with this strategy. “When people see that I am online and commenting back on comments, they are far more likely to engage with my post,” she said on her podcast, [Goal Digger](#).

Responding to customers on social media pays off in the long run. Twitter research shows customers are willing to spend [3-20%](#) more with brands that respond to their tweets. On the flipside, those who don't get responses are [less likely](#) to recommend brands.

Use tools like Hootsuite's Inbox to keep tabs on direct messages, comments and mentions across all platforms and easily handle responses as a team.

9. Know the algorithms

If you've followed steps 1-7 so far, you're already in good shape for the almighty algorithms. But it's still worthwhile to stay in the loop on the tweaks and changes platforms make.

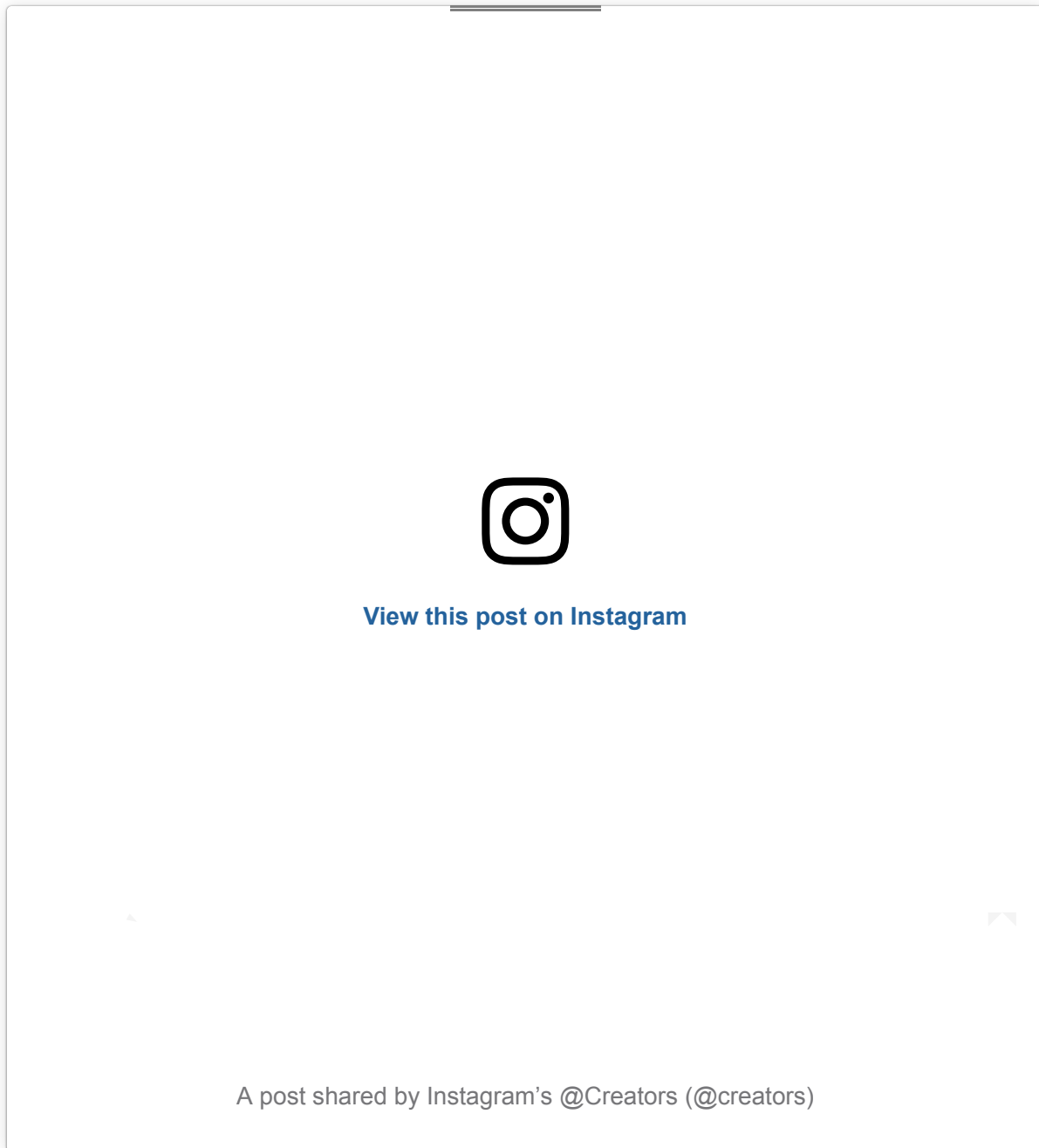
Social media algorithms use ranking signals to sort the order of organic content in their timelines and newsfeeds. These factors typically include relevance, timeliness, and the relationship someone has with the account.

Algorithms prioritize posts that have a high probability of generating engagement. Early engagement is often taken to be a good indicator. Posts that use rich media such as videos, images, and GIFs also tend to be favored. Video is still the star of social media content.

Learn more with our platform-specific guides:

- [Instagram Algorithm](#)
- [Facebook Algorithm](#)
- [Twitter Algorithm](#)

- [LinkedIn Algorithm](#)
- [TikTok Algorithm](#)
- [YouTube Algorithm](#)



10. Collaborate and tag

A good way to signal boost organic content is with tags.

Beyond partnering with an influencer, which [technically qualifies as paid content](#), look for ways to collaborate with other accounts. That may include like-minded brands, creators, or even customers. Warby Parker's showcased the different styles of influencers and customers in its #WearingWarby series.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Warby Parker (@warbyparker)

[Prados Beauty](#) reposts pictures its customers share wearing the company's makeup and lashes. Elate Cosmetics invites partners and creators like Flora & Fauna and [@ericaethrifts](#) for account takeovers. Collabs and crossovers like these have the potential to spark early engagement and expose accounts to similar audiences.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by elate | ethical cosmetics (@elatecosmetics)

Need more inspiration? To celebrate 100 years of drag, Sephora teamed up with and tagged 15 queens. While this was likely a paid promotion, the idea could easily be adapted to work within your brand's community.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Sephora (@sephora)

11. Stage virtual events

Host a [virtual event](#) to up the entertainment ante and build buzz around your brand. Virtual events can include anything from Ask Me Anythings (AMAs) to [social media contests](#) and live streams on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#).

The runaway success of Cash App Fridays rolls the best of virtual events, series, and social contests into one. Since 2017, every Friday, Twitter followers who share their Cash App tag and retweet enter for a chance to win Cash App coin.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Cash App (@cashapp)

Super Cash App Fridays up the stakes by increasing the jackpot, and sometimes the entry requirements. For its [January 31](#) giveaway, participants were asked to tag seven friends. The stats speak for themselves.

This contest isn't 100% organic, since it involves cash prizes. But it is a creative way to circumvent social advertising. If you don't have the budget for prizes, be resourceful. Feature winners on your account. Let them name your next product.

Ultimately, when it comes to organic marketing, the most creative brands will prevail.

Use Hootsuite to easily integrate your paid and organic social marketing efforts. From a single dashboard, you can schedule and publish posts, boost top-performing content, create ads, measure performance, and much more. Try it for free today.

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By **Katie Sehl**

Katie is a writer and photographer based in Toronto. She used to be indecisive, but now she's not sure.

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