



FEDERATION OF
**MASTER
BUILDERS**
fmb.org.uk

Social media: A guide for builders

A marketing how-to for small
and medium-sized businesses
in the construction industry

It's easy to ignore social media if you're busy running a construction company. But it's an essential part of marketing your business. It can promote awareness of what you do, connect you with people looking for builders and can help you to grow your business.

Homeowners increasingly look to social media first when searching for quality tradespeople in their area. A survey by IronmongeryDirect in 2022* revealed that nearly half of tradespeople (47%) say being on social media helps them get work. So, it could be time to up your game.

In this guide, we'll look at how you can start to build a following on social media and engage with potential clients online to drive enquiries and bookings.

Meet our experts

Kelly Worrall, Director of FMB member company, NH Construction Ltd and Marketing Strategist specialising in construction, home improvements and trades. Visit kellyworrall.co.uk

Emily Sinfield, Digital Marketing Specialist at Voice Communications. Visit voicecommunications.co.uk

Know your audience

Before you get started, take some time to understand who your audience is.

"I would say not understanding your audiences is the biggest mistake you could make," advises Kelly Worrall. "You need to make sure you're promoting content your audience actually wants to see." She also suggests that this often means focusing on women as the key decision makers for home improvements.

"I see quite a lot of bricklayers on Instagram putting up bricklaying videos. They do get a lot of followers from it, but the majority are fellow bricklayers or people within the industry. As a woman who renovates properties and owns a construction company, I know that for me, I want to see the finished article. I want to see that beautiful extension with gorgeous plants and candles, and I want my extension to look like that. As a business owner, I need to create that FOMO – fear of missing out."

Tools for social media success:

There are a whole host of apps and tools available to make marketing on social media simple and polished. Some of the best offer free or low-cost subscriptions so you can play around and find what works best for you. The bare essentials are:

- + **Your phone:** It's likely you hold quite a powerful camera in your pocket already, as most phones now come with high megapixel cameras.
- + **A design tool:** Create professional looking graphics with an intuitive app like Canva, with no design experience needed.
- + **A video editing tool:** Canva will allow you to edit videos, or try other popular apps like InShot or Splice.
- + **A scheduling tool:** Plan, build and schedule your social posts days or even weeks in advance with a scheduling tool like Sprout, Hootsuite or one of many free alternatives. You can also respond to direct messages and comments all in one place and track who's talking about you.

* 2020 IronmongeryDirect survey of 500 tradespeople
<https://www.hvpmag.co.uk/Survey-85-of-tradespeople-dont-know-how-to-use-social-media-effectively/12225>

Where to start

Choose your platforms

Where do your customers go for information or inspiration? Facebook, Instagram and YouTube will lend themselves well to visual storytelling and can be a showcase for your work.

If you're looking to make connections with others in and around the industry, Twitter and LinkedIn are a must, and can be especially useful for developers, housebuilders and commercial work.

TikTok is worth consideration too – it's not just for Gen Z. Data from Ampere Analysis revealed that around 36% of TikTok users in the US are aged between 35 and 54 in 2022, an increase from 26% in 2020 and growing.

Plan your content

Managing social media accounts can become time-consuming, especially for a small business that doesn't have a dedicated social media manager. A way around this is to use scheduling software like Sprout Social.

Sprout Social is a free scheduling tool that automatically shares posts to your social media accounts (eg, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) at a date and time you set. If used well, it can save you a lot of time and money.

Next steps...

At the start of each week, write down what you're going to post about and when. Think about what's inspirational to your clients, what type of work or projects you have scheduled in, and consider what's in the news or upcoming events – can you talk about anything timely?

Once you're settled on the type of content you want to share, you can begin the curating process.



Spotting content opportunities

Visiting clients or just being on site can be the best opportunity for quick and authentic photos. Take as many photos as possible and you'll have an entire content folder by the end of the week. You can then use a social media tool like Sprout Social to schedule your content posts in bulk and release them over the following week.

Brush up on trends and tricks

It's easy to search 'how to' online for video tips. "At the moment, I've been teaching a lot of SMEs how to create transformation videos, for example, by showing 'before and after' shots of their work" says Kelly.

GDPR Don't forget GDPR & data consent

If you're using case studies such as your past building projects (and we recommend you do) don't forget to check whether the property owners are happy with you using images of their property – out of courtesy but also for their data protection and compliance with **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** as they may be able to be identified from the image.

If you don't have this permission, you shouldn't share the images without consent. You may also be asked to take down any past posts and it can ultimately lead to legal action. Permission should be stored in a secure and accessible place – that can be on an email for example.





USE AUTHENTIC IMAGES OF YOUR COMPLETED PROJECTS

Sparking ideas for your social content

Variety

Go for a range of different content types to appeal to the social media algorithms and increase the visibility of your content, as well as your reach and engagement – that's views and clicks. As a guide, include:

- + **Video content:** Video content doesn't have to be very complex. In fact, studies suggest that users react better to authentic, home-made content over traditional commercial edits. It can be as simple as a five-minute explainer video or walk-through of a project.
- + **Photos:** Completed project photos are always best, but always experiment with images and see what works. Just make sure they're bright, engaging and relevant to your audience!
- + **Relevant copy for your captions:** Captions are an opportunity to speak to your users, so always be exciting and encourage the reader to take action eg "Visit our website for more info."
- + **Hashtags:** These boost engagement, but it's more about how relevant they are than how many you use. Check out the accounts of competitors or others in the trade, as well as the people who follow you. See what hashtags they use and research relevant topics. Avoid broad terms like #building.

Always keep in mind that you have two aims:

- + **Direct response** – Create leads who get in touch with you right way.
- + **Driving traffic to your website**, if you have one. Once you have a site visitor, you can try to convert them to a lead with messaging on your website, ask them to sign up to a newsletter and retain their site visit data to market to them in other ways.

Frequency

Your visibility on each social media platform depends on the site's algorithm. Usually, this dictates how often you post. For example, on Twitter, you may need to post several times a day to stay visible as it's very fast paced. On Facebook, you may just want to post once a day.



Consistency

Kelly says "Have a look at your metrics and see what times work well for you. So, for example, I've got one client who always gets really good engagement on a Sunday, so we tend to put a lot of content out on a Sunday because we know that's when our audience is online, and that's when they want to engage with us." Emily Sinfield adds "It also needs to be on-brand and professional looking to solidify your reputation. If you have a graphic which has been created quickly in-house, ask yourself – does this really convey the message I need it to? Am I on-brand?"

Originality

Try not to duplicate your content across your social media platforms. It can come across as impersonal, and the audience for each site varies and may respond differently to certain types of content.

Personality

Most importantly, let your brand personality come across in your content. This will help to create compelling and authentic stories that prospective clients will become invested in.

Going one step further, adding a face to the brand is something that most social media platforms actively favour in their algorithm, so don't be afraid to get in front of the camera. If this doesn't come naturally to you, perhaps a member of your team could take on this responsibility and become the face of your company.

Limited resources don't mean limited results

As an owner of a small or medium-sized (SME) business, you may not have the resources to make a big splash with your marketing activity. This is where social media comes into its own, as you can create impact with minimal technical knowledge or investment.

Kelly advises:



"At the moment, it's all about video. And the good thing is it's all about authentic videos. When I speak to companies, and they say, do I need a videographer? Do I need to pay somebody? You don't. You can shoot videos on your phone, whether it's behind the scenes or transformation videos showing before and afters."

How to engage with your followers

One of the main benefits of social media is the connection it gives you with your target audience.

Kelly shares some tips: "Have a look at who's on your timeline and who you're following - comment on their posts and share them. Bring people to your profile by, for example, searching hashtags for the location you work in. Search that hashtag and then start engaging with people who are using it."

Kelly continues: "Whenever you do anything on social media, it's important to have in mind at all times who are our customers and what do they want from us, which is why I go back to the importance of understanding your audience."

"Don't buy likes or followers," warns Emily Sinfield. "This can really dilute your outreach, meaning that you don't end up getting in front of your target audience and your followers aren't authentic."

If you receive negative comments or complaints in your feed, make sure you deal with them as soon as possible and avoid getting into discussion on your public feed. It can help to take things offline by offering to contact the person by direct messaging in the app.

How often should you check social media?

It's more about creating a routine that works for you and less about keeping a constant eye on your social media accounts. That being said, if you're encouraging people to contact you via social media, only checking in once a week could lead to frustrated followers!

Setting aside time once a day to check for and respond to comments or messages will make sure you're keeping on top of enquiries.

Paid social media

If budget allows, it's worth considering social media advertising. "What a lot of people don't realise is only 2-3% of your followers will actually see your posts" Kelly explains. "So for example, if you've got 1,000 followers, only 20 to 30 people will see your post, and then within that group, the process needs to resonate with them to get them to stop scrolling." She advises: "Having an advertising budget allows you to push your content out to more people that are your target audience. And it's really important to stress that I don't mean boosting a post."

Emily echoes this thought: "Boosted posts on Instagram and Facebook are quick to do but don't always target the right people, locations or provide you with as many options for objectives. Boosted posts are optimised more for engagement rather than conversions so will not always give you a good ROI (return on investment)."

The look and feel of your social ads should echo the authenticity that you're nurturing on your feed. Kelly shares a few examples of what's worked well for her business: "Sharing customer reviews works for us from a lead generation point of view. We also ran an ad for about seven days and spent £90 and had six qualified leads from it, and the reason it worked so well is because we had really good images of previous extensions we'd done."

Keeping momentum with your social posts

If you are managing your own social media, try setting aside half an hour each day to dedicate to setting up your posts and responding to queries, so it is more manageable and fits around your business.

Social media marketing is often considered a 'free' marketing activity, but that's only true if you don't place a value on the time you spend on it. So, if you find social media is working well for your business but perhaps it isn't the best use of your time, that's the point at which it may be worth considering paying for a digital marketing agency, social media freelancer, or a virtual assistant to manage your posts.

How to measure success on social media

When you log in to your account on each platform, you should have access to a detailed breakdown of activity, which allows you to make informed decisions about what works for you on social. Some example metrics include:

- + **Followers** – You'll want to see an increase in your number of followers.
- + **Impressions** – How many times your post or profile is seen. Bear in mind, this includes the same account viewing you more than once.
- + **Reach** – The number of unique accounts who have viewed your post.
- + **Web traffic** – The number of clicks through to your website. As this information is part of your website analytics, you'll need to check Google Analytics for your website. Go to your **Google Analytics dashboard**, click Acquisition / Traffic / Channels / Social.



Get support for your business

Once you've optimised your social media presence, it makes sense to look at other ways to make an impact online with our guide to building a website for builders. Or if you need to work on developing your company's brand identity, check out our marketing guide '**Building a brand – A guide for builders**'.

Don't forget, if you're a member of the Federation of Master Builders, you can access further useful resources to promote your business, including TrustMark membership, FMB marketing materials and special offers on a range of useful products and resources like website and PR agencies. You can also save time and money by accessing expert business advice, helplines, contract templates and online learning.

If you're not already a member of the FMB, call us on 0330 333 7777 to apply today, or visit www.fmb.org.uk to find out more.



About the FMB

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is the largest trade association in the UK construction industry representing thousands of firms in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Established in 1941 to protect the interests of small and medium-sized (SME) construction firms, the FMB is independent and nonprofit making, lobbying for members' interests at both the local and national level.

The FMB is a source of knowledge, professional advice and support for its members, providing a range of modern and relevant services to help them succeed. The FMB is committed to raising quality in the construction industry and offers a free service to consumers called 'Find a Builder'.

For further information about the FMB, visit www.fmb.org.uk

Share your social journey with us:



@FMBuilders



federationofmasterbuilders



Federation Of Master Builders