

Introduction

Social media contest done right can increase visibility and engagement, exposing new people to your business. Equally important: contests can provide valuable data about both existing and new customers.

If you've never run a contest--or had disappointing results from one--this checklist will help increase your odds of success.

<https://www.inc.com/jim-belosic/how-to-make-your-next-social-media-contest-go-viral.html>

Tips 1 - 7

1. Decide if you really need a contest. A social media giveaway on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest or Instagram is not right for every business. For example, a B2B company that deals in a niche market might not benefit from a giveaway.

2. Take your time and set some goals. Do you want to increase brand awareness or highlight a new product? Or do you want to increase the number of likes or followers on your social media accounts? Do you want to boost user engagement, gather user feedback, or develop advocates for your brand? These are all achievable goals, but each one will require different tactics.

3. Design the right kind of contest. There are four basic types of social media contests: sweepstakes, essay, photo and video. Video, photo, and essay contests provide lots of content for your social pages, but they also require more effort to enter. Sweepstakes are easiest.

4. Familiarize yourself with the policies and guidelines of whichever social networks you're using. When it comes to contests, make sure you read the platform's rules and guidelines. You'll save yourself a potential headache.

You can read Facebook's rules [here](#) and Instagram's [here](#). If you're hosting your giveaway on Pinterest, take a look at their rules [here](#). And find Twitter's [here](#).

5. Choose a third-party app to run the contest. While it's possible to host social media contests without using outside software, it will be much easier to collect and organize useful data (and prevent cheating) if you do.

6. Choose a third-party app that has these three essential features:

- Flexibility. If it's not customizable, the app might not give you the results you're after.
- Embeddable capabilities. Many third-party apps are made to use only on Facebook. Look for one that allows you to install the contest on your website, too.
- Mobile capabilities! According to Facebook's April 2015 report 798 million of its 1.248 billion users access Facebook from a mobile device.

7. Choose a third-party app that won't bust your budget. There are free third-party apps and those that cost thousands of dollars. Using a free or low-cost app reduces your risk if the contest doesn't deliver what you hope.

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9. Make it worthwhile. The value of your prize should reflect the effort participants need to make when they enter. Photo-voting contests are easy; essay and video contests require more effort. The prize you offer for a simple sweepstakes might be a 20% off coupon for your product; the prize for a video contest might be a month's supply.

10. Keep it simple. Make the contest easy to enter. The more fields you ask users to fill out, the fewer entries you'll receive. Before you ask entrants to fill in ten fields on a form, ask yourself if you really need to know their birthday, marital status, etc.

11. Make it visible. The contest should be easy to find on your website or social pages. Make sure verbiage like "Enter Now" or "-Sweeps" is clear, and post links to the contest on your various pages.

12. Tell the world about it. Promote the contest on Twitter, Facebook, etc., and include information about it in email newsletters. It is okay to remind your fans periodically that the contest is going on--just don't overdo it, and be sure to promote your overall business along the way.

13. Advertise. Investing in Facebook and Twitter ads is a great and affordable way to increase the reach of your promotion. Putting ads on your company's website and blog is even easier (and free!).

14. Mine the data. When your promotion is over and the prize has been awarded your work isn't quite done. You ran the promotion so you could gather information about your customers, so spend a little bit of time making sense of what you've learned.

15. Follow up! Make sure you follow up and let your followers know that you appreciate their engagement so they'll be motivated to keep "talking" with you. One final tip: when the contest is over, email all entrants to let them know that someone else won but you appreciate the effort they took to enter.

Tips 8 -15

8. Pick a relevant prize. A contest should showcase your own products and services. After all, people are coming to your social pages because they are interested in learning more about what you offer. Giving away an iPad or an iPhone will not bring you a flood of new customers. If you own a restaurant, on the other hand, giving away a few dinners for two just might.



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