

Before you groan at the thought of having to learn the ins and outs of yet another social media platform, just think about the reach your brand or business is going to achieve thanks to Snapchat.

According to Forbes, "Over 60% of Americans between the ages of 13 and 38 are Snapchat users." And Bloomberg says that over 150 million users are active each day on the platform, which shockingly surpasses Twitter's popularity.

Right now, "users are watching 10 billion videos per day on [Snapchat], up from 8 billion in February." That 2 billion view jump was over a period of *less than three months*, blowing Facebook's 8 billion views per day out of the water.

To say that Snapchat's worth your time and attention is a bit of an understatement.

But let's be honest: Snapchat isn't exactly the easiest platform out there, and it can be intimidating compared to the other social media beasts like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Luckily, this guide will help you navigate the unfamiliar world that is Snapchat.

We'll go over everything from the basics of Snapchat and why it's worth your time to explaining simple tricks for how to use it for your brand or business. We'll even show you how to measure your efforts so you can see tangible progress.

You'll have everything you need to create an effective Snapchat marketing strategy that engages your audience.

Let's get started with the fundamentals.

WHAT IS SNAPCHAT?

Technically speaking, Snapchat is a photo, video, and messaging app. Users post content, which are called snaps via Stories, or share them directly with their friends via message.

This sounds pretty standard as far as social media platforms go, but the key difference here is how long your content remains visible.

See, what makes Snapchat different from other social media platforms is that every post, or snap, is short-lived.

Snapchat videos are limited to 10 seconds, and snaps posted to a user's Story, which is similar to viewing a user's Facebook Timeline, expire after 24 hours. Unless you save the snap or Story to the platform's new Memories feature, the content disappears.

We'll go over these Snapchat specific terms in greater detail a little later on in this guide.

WHAT MAKES IT SO DIFFERENT?

Unlike the polished Instagram feeds you're used to brands expertly curating, Snapchat exudes raw, candid moments that connect users with the people behind the brand.

Sure, Snapchat has filters to help you polish up photos and add some flair (more on this later!), but since photos only last for a short amount of time, there's no pressure to make a lasting masterpiece that'll forever appear on your account.

When it comes to videos, there's no fancy equipment -- just the camera on your phone.

Users see the "real deal" on Snapchat. And they're connecting with this transparency on a much deeper level than a distanced, yet-pretty, Instagram post could ever do.

Instagram even acknowledged this by trying to imitate Snapchat Stories. Imitation is the best form of flattery, right?

The Stories on Snapchat also bridge the brand-consumer gap. It feels as if the person or brand is standing right in front of users, speaking directly to them, making it seem much more real-life than a Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram post.

IS IT WORTH YOUR TIME?

With over 150 million active daily users, there's a good chance of finding your target audience on Snapchat.

Millennials make up the largest portion of users -- 70% to be exact. Current reports point out that 45% of these users are in the 18-to-24-year-old crowd, but the demographics can stretch to the 35+ market as well, proving that Snapchat's not just for younger audiences anymore.

On top of the large user base and growing target market, Snapchat's high engagement rates are incredible. Right now, the app is surpassing both Twitter and Facebook "with users spending about 25 to 30 minutes on the platform each day."

As you can imagine, this high engagement rate opened the floodgates for advertising on the popular app. Mega brands like Gatorade and bareMinerals have seen outstanding results: Gatorade created a Snapchat campaign that reached 165 million total views, while bareMinerals doubled its brand's search traffic.

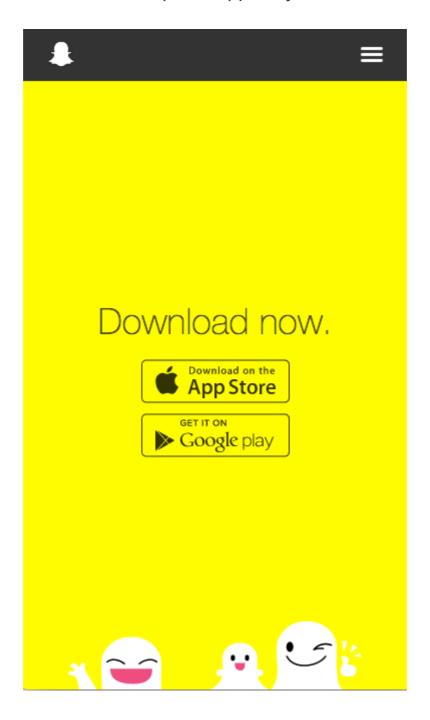
Not too shabby.

So let's talk about how to work that magic for your company.

GETTING STARTED WITH SNAPCHAT

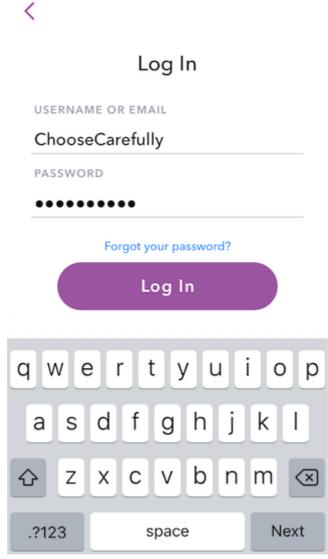
HOW TO SET UP YOUR ACCOUNT

To get started, download the Snapchat app for your iOS or Android device.



Set up your Snapchat account just like you would any other app: Enter your email, and create a username and password.

A word of caution: Your username cannot be changed. If you need to update this later down the line, you'll be forced to create a new account. Choose your username carefully.



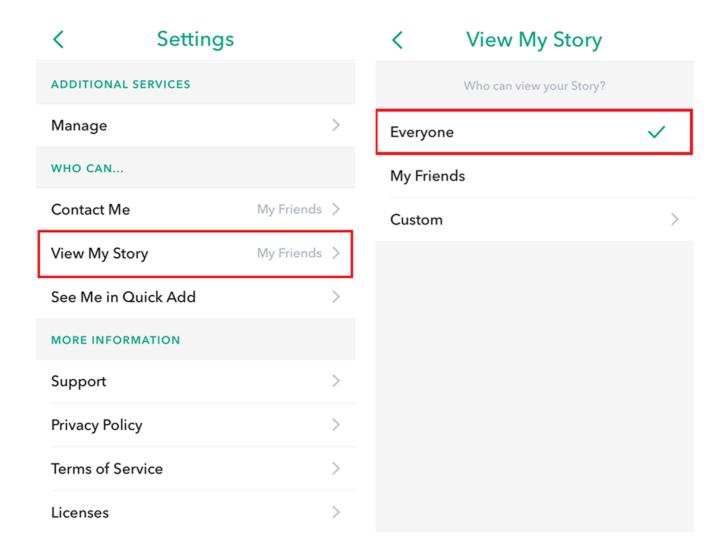
Next, let's jazz up your account by adding a profile picture.

You can do this directly in the app using your phone's camera. Click on the button that's floating at the top of your app to open this feature. As soon as you hit the camera button, a series of photos will automatically be taken similar to using a photo booth.

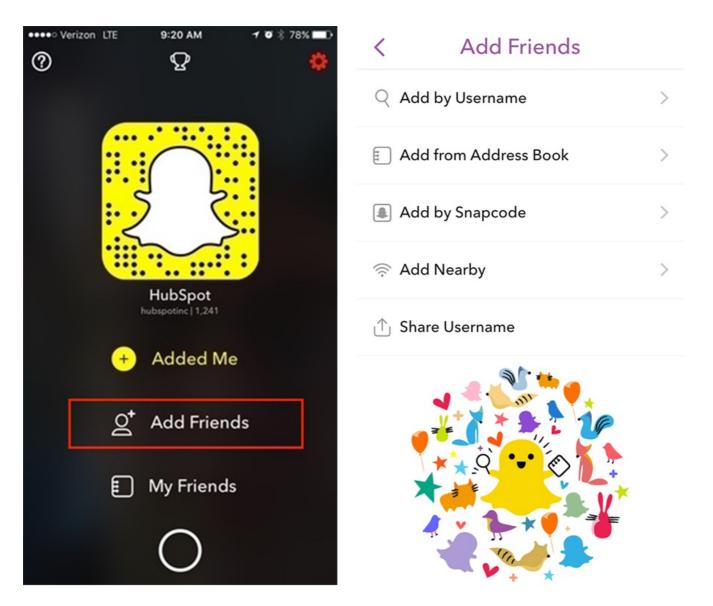
You'll want to switch the privacy settings on your account since every user starts with a private profile. Tap on the button again and choose the "Settings" gear icon this time, which you'll find in the top right-hand corner.



From there, scroll down until you see the "Who Can" section. Change the "View My Story" option to "Everyone."



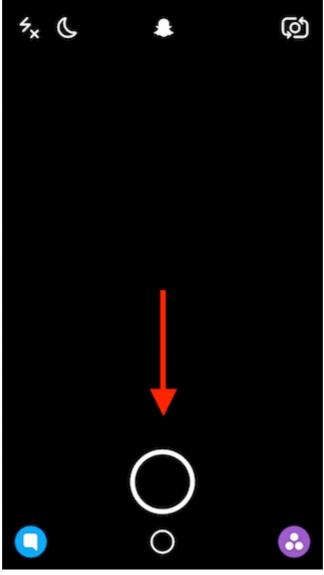
Now it's time to add some friends. Again, you'll start by clicking the button first to pull up the main screen. From this point, tap the "Add Friends" link. Here you can add friends by typing their username, Snapcode, or location.



HOW TO SEND YOUR FIRST SNAP

Your snap needs to be visual, such as a video, photo, or even an image uploaded from your phone.

To create a snap, navigate to the camera screen (hint: it's the page in the middle so you'll need to swipe left or right, depending on where you are to access this). Tap the button or anywhere on the screen to capture your photo.



Before you send your snap out into the Snapchat universe, you have a few photo enhancing options to play with.

1) ADD A FILTER

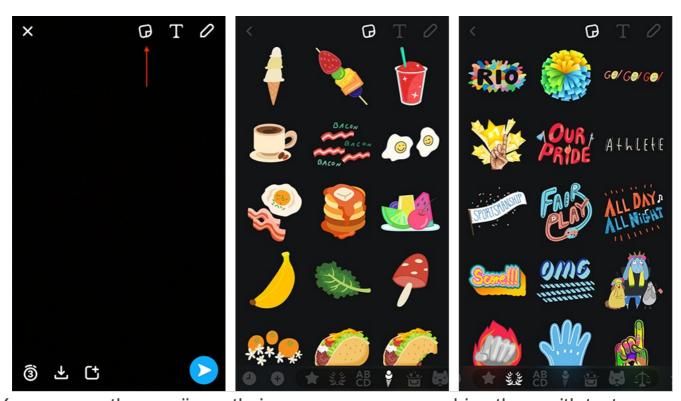
There are filters to change the color tones of your photo, similar to the options on Instagram, so if you decide your image stands out more in black and white, you can use a filter to adjust this.

Swipe left and scroll through filters that change the colors or you can add a picture overlay to the bottom or middle of your photo. Play around and have fun.

Bonus hack: You can even use two filters at once. To do this, hold down the screen using one finger (this keeps the first filter in place) and swipe left or right to find the next one you'd like to use.

2) ADD EMOJIS & STICKERS

To add emojis to your Snap, click on the button and a drop down will appear with a variety of emoticons and stickers to choose from.



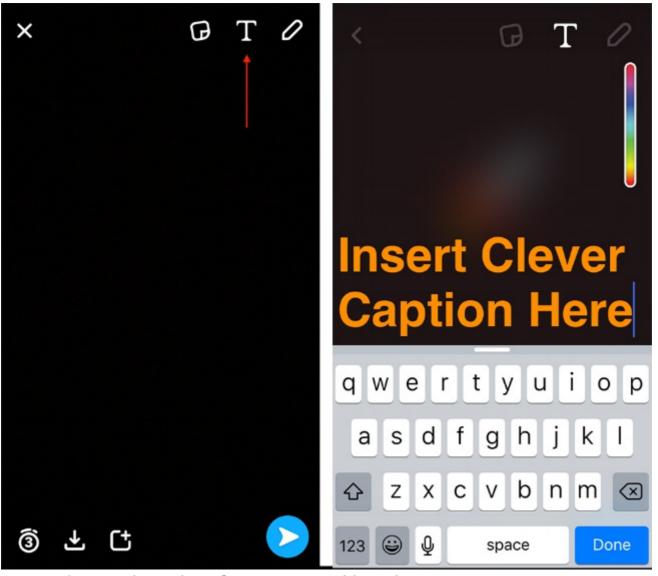
You can use the emojis on their own or you can combine them with text.

Bonus hack: Resize your stickers and emojis with a quick pinch and zoom. You can also move your stickers and emojis around on the screen. Use as many as you'd like!

3) ADD TEXT OR A CAPTION

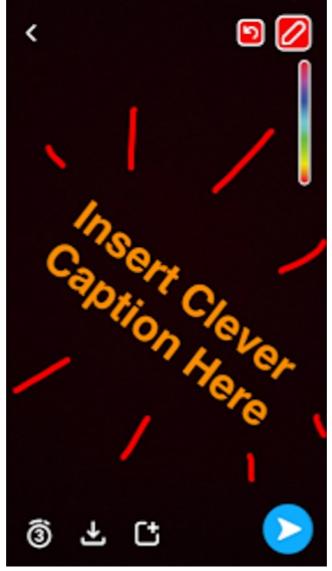
You also have the option of adding a caption or large, bold text to your image.

By clicking on the button, a light shadow overlay appears where you can add your text. If you click on the button again, the overlay disappears and the text becomes much bigger.



You can change the color of your text at this point.

Slide your finger down the color scale to the right of the button to adjust the font color. You can also enlarge, shrink, angle, or reposition your text from this point using that same pinch and zoom technique.

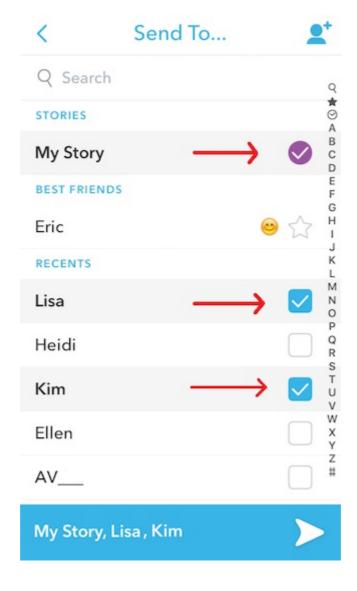


Bonus hack: The normal text feature only gives you a character limit of 33. By writing your message in an app, such as Apple Notes, you can copy and paste way more text into your snap caption.

NOW, SEND YOUR FIRST SNAP

When your snap is to your liking, it's time to make a decision about who can see it. Do you want to share your visual message with specific friends, a group of users, or everyone?

Click on "My Story" to either share your snap with everyone, or select the users you'd like to send it to by individually clicking the checkmark box next to their name.



Can't decide?

You can do both!

Select the "My Story" option and only a handful of friends to send it to all at once. This posts the snap to your wall and sends it as a direct message to those friends you specifically chose.

Once your selections are made, a blue bar will pop up at the bottom of the app. When clicked, your snap will be sent to everyone with a check mark next to their name.

Remember, snaps that are sent directly are limited to a length of 10 seconds. And once someone views your snap, it's automatically deleted.

HOW TO CREATE YOUR FIRST STORY

WHAT IS A SNAPCHAT STORY?

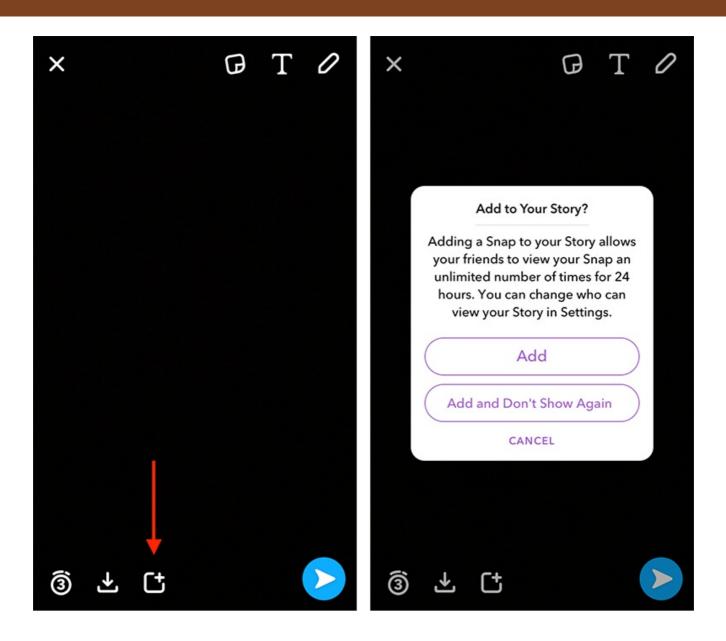
You can post individual snaps to your Stories section, which acts as a type of newsfeed. People can view all the snaps you add to your Story during a 24-hour period, and after that, the Story disappears.

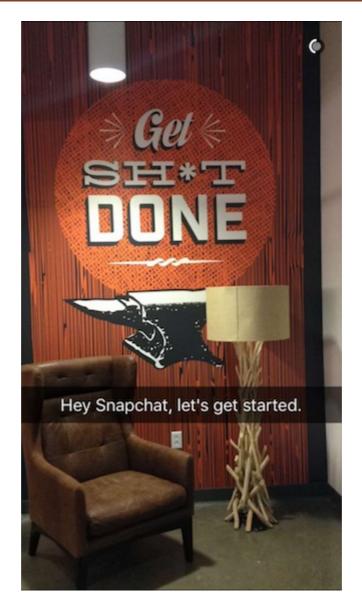
Everyone on your friends' list can view your Story as you continue to add to it during the course of the day. When users tap on your Story, they'll see every video or picture you snapped here in succession.

CREATING YOUR FIRST STORY

When you're ready to share your snap, choose the "My Story" button to add it to the 24-hour log that is your Story.

Repeat this process throughout the day using additional photos and videos. Eventually, you'll create an engaging sequence of videos and images for viewers to enjoy.





3 ADVANCED FEATURES TO IMPROVE YOUR STORIES

1) CHANGING THE SPEED & DIRECTION OF SNAPS

You can adjust the speed and direction of your video snaps by using the *snail* icon to slow your video down or the *rabbit* to speed it up.

You can also get creative by using the *rewind* feature, which reverses the order of your video.

To access this feature, keeping swiping left like you would with a filter. Stop swiping when you see the icon of the motion feature you'd like to use. This adjusts the speed or direction of your short video.

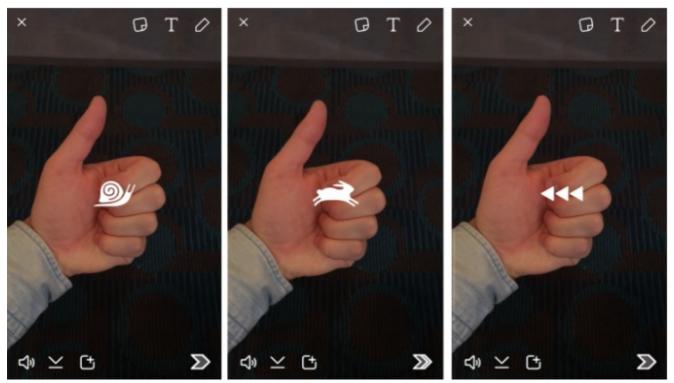


Image Source: TechCrunch

2) DELETE A SINGLE SNAP FROM YOUR STORY

If you find that one particular snap in your Story isn't performing as well as the others -- or if you're having second thoughts about keeping a certain snap in your Story all day -- don't sweat it.

You can delete a single snap from your Story as if it never happened. And the best part is, you can do this even after you've already published your Story.

To remove the snap that's bringing your Story down, swipe one to two times to the right until you arrive at your main Stories screen (hint: it's the one to the right of the default camera view).

From there, you'll see your Story at the top of the list. Click on your Story, which will automatically start playing. Once your Story rotation lands on the Snap you want to remove, swipe from top to bottom to bring up a menu of options.

Click on the trashcan icon to delete this particular snap. A prompt will pop up to double check that this is the snap you want to remove. If it is, click on the delete snap button. Voila! Now you're good to go.

3) CREATE A CUSTOM GEOFILTER

One fun way to connect with Snapchat users in your area is to create your own on-demand geofilter, which can be used during a time and location of your choosing.

You simply design your filter, map out where you'd like it to be available, and submit it to Snapchat for approval.

Once approved, users in your chosen area will be able to use this specific filter to let their friends know that they're at an event or support your brand. This not only helps spread awareness for your events, it also engages users who are already there.

HOW TO CREATE STORIES & SNAPS THAT CAPTURE ATTENTION

To master Snapchat, you need to think creatively and keep an authentic tone in your Stories. Users on this platform aren't necessarily looking for perfection; they just want to be in on the action.

Start with a behind-the-scenes look at your brand, like showcasing new products in the works or key players within the company. The more your audience sees who's really behind the brand, the better. So show off your employees' and leaders' personalities, and don't be afraid to be quirky and silly on the platform.

With Snapchat, the videos don't necessarily need to be well-planned out. But that doesn't mean you should forgo a game plan either. Instead, try to come up with an editorial-type calendar that's based on general themes or events you'd like to cover with your team. Meet with team members to find out what events are planned for the next quarter, and brainstorm ideas for highlighting your unique culture, products, people, and customers.

Plot these ideas out on a calendar just like you would with a social media plan or blogging schedule.

Then, on those scheduled days, have one or a few designated employees tackling the live action, i.e., recording snaps throughout the day and adding them to your Story. This is the appropriate time to "wing it," instead of scripting something that will seem forced and stiff.

One thing to remember is that your Story is the result of all your snaps for the day, so try to focus it on a theme or a message to create a narrative. Consider the order of the snaps and how you can tease events throughout the day or build up anticipation around an event or a reveal.

HOW BRANDS ARE FINDING SUCCESS ON SNAPCHAT

In an article on HubSpot's Marketing Blog, we covered 10 brands that are paving the way with Snapchat so we'll just briefly discuss two of these Snapchat game-changers here:

GRUBHUB

GrubHub nails engagement with its Snapchat strategy in two important ways:

First, it knows how to build anticipation.

In the brand's first snap on the left, you can see that it's inviting viewers to play along in a contest. The next two snaps in the series show users the rules of the game. The last snap explains why it's worth their time.



Instead of cramming everything in one Snap, GrubHub spaced the messages out to give users just enough information each time, while also keeping them interested in what else was to come.

Second, GrubHub made our list because it's one of the few brands that has been dedicated to responding to viewers. In 2014, they sent and received a total of 40,000 personalized snaps. This increases engagement tremendously and is just another example of how to use the platform to make your brand more human and inviting.

DJ KHALED

DJ Khaled wasn't a household name before Snapchat. But thanks to his authentic and transparent Snaps, he's now on the radar of roughly 3 to 4 million viewers each day

And brands such as Silk are taking note.

In this recent partnership, DJ Khaled can be seen on his Snapchat talking to viewers about how "amazing" Silk is and how it "makes you smile." Silk paired his Snapchat videos with an animated background to produce a 15-second national commercial, showing that the vertical video format and Snapchat have become mainstream media formats.

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And all of this action came as a result of DJ Khaled's 22 Day Vegan Challenge where he showed users every step of his healthy journey on Snapchat.

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

To engage your audience on Snapchat, focus on interacting with them.

DJ Khaled does a great job at this. He combines his "be yourself" approach with these five daily interactions which has made him the Snapchat mogul we know him as:

- He starts every day with a check-in snap
- He shares candid behind-the-scenes peeks throughout the day
- He uses "Choppy" snaps to keep users interested. If you need to convey a longer message, choose to do so in a series of snaps instead of one big one.
- His snaps are positive, funny, and overall uplifting. You can't help but laugh when you view his feed.
- He ends every day on a positive note

We're not saying you'll have instant success if you follow his style, but it's not a bad place to start.

Think of ways to connect with your audience throughout the day and how you can get people to participate in your story or increase interest. Some ideas for interesting Snapchat content include:

- Q&A Sessions
- Behind the Scenes Videos
- Polls
- Scavenger Hunts & Contests
- Employee, Customer, or Influencer Takeovers
- How-To Videos
- Preview of a New Product or Project
- Follower-Created Snaps Included in Stories

HOW TO GROW YOUR AUDIENCE ON SNAPCHAT

You can't adopt a follow-for-follow type strategy with Snapchat. It's up to you to do some legwork to get this ball rolling.

First, you'll want to promote your Snapchat channel on your existing social media platforms. Send out an announcement to your email list, highlight it on other social channels, and promote the launch of your Snapchat account on your blog. You'll need to use every channel to drive people to add your brand as a friend.

Check out these examples of how HubSpot has promoted our account on various other channels:



Download your Snapcode, a unique, scannable code, people can scan to easily start following your brand, and add this to your social networks.

You should also leverage your network and partner base. Influencer interviews and Snapchat takeovers with people who already have a following on the platform can help to expose your profile to a larger audience.

WHAT SHOULD YOU MEASURE?

When measuring the success of your brand on Snapchat, you should care about:

Retention rate:

To get this figure, track the percentage of people who watch each frame in your Story. Compare these results to see which ones perform better. We've found that Stories that are under 90 seconds are more likely to keep watchers interested. Anything more and you might lose viewers.

Drop-off rate:

Take a look at

where

users are dropping off. Did they make it past the third snap of the series? If not, you may have missed the engagement mark.

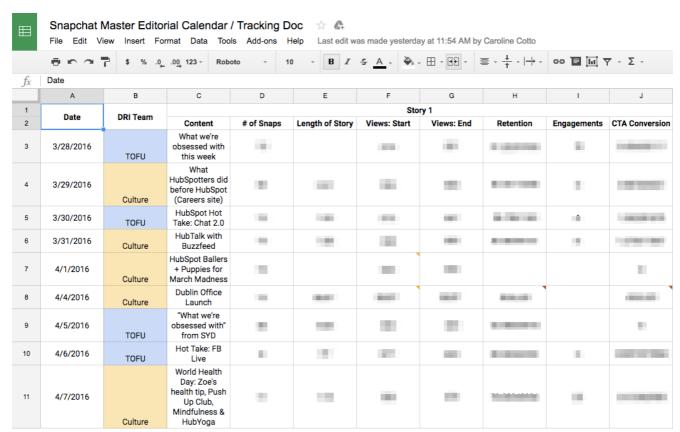
Response rate:

Has your audience reacted to your snaps? You'll see this in the form of feedback. If people are responding, you're moving in the right direction. If not, get creative to spur interactions.

At HubSpot, we track the following items in a spreadsheet:

- Story Title
- Number of Snaps
- Length of Story
- Views on the First Snap
- Views on the Last Snap
- Retention Rate
- Engagement (how many people screenshot your Snap or send a direct message)

Here's the hard part: You'll need to track these metrics by manually recording them within 24 hours of launching your first snap. Unfortunately, if you don't do this in time, you'll lose this vital intel and won't be able to gauge how effective your campaign really is.



You can find the engagement metrics by following the directions below:

See who viewed My Story

To see who has viewed your Story:

- 1. Tap to the right of My Story.
- 2. Tap a Snap.
- 3. Swipe up on the screen to see who has viewed and screenshotted your Snap. Views are represented by , while any detected screenshots are represented by .
- 4. Swipe down to exit when you're finished.

Pro Tip: You can always customize who can view your Story within your Snapchat settings, go here for more info

HOW TO IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT

As with any marketing strategy, you'll need to test the waters to see what works with your audience.

To give you an idea, we've seen the best results with:

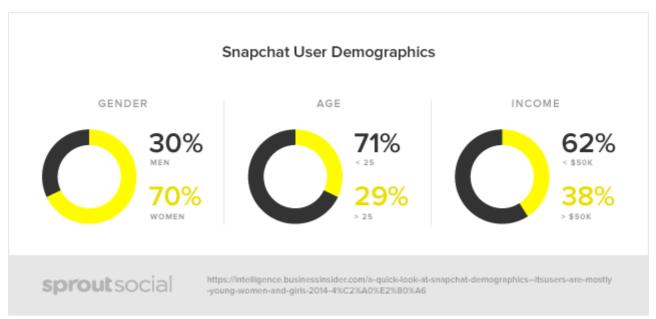
- Short videos: 60 seconds or less is best
- Videos that are perfectly timed: If you can jump on a news story as it immediately hits the press, you'll be ahead of the game
- Snapchatters who focus on variety: Don't be afraid to mix things up. Play with both selfie cam-style videos and still photos to see what works.
- **Those who get creative:** Snapchatters don't want a perfect story. They're more interested in the *real* story. Have fun showing off your authentic side, and you'll have no problem attracting and building an engaged audience.

So if your current strategy isn't working, or you're just starting from scratch, make sure to try these tactics first before giving up on Snapchat completely.

Now it's time to create that Snapchat account. Add a profile picture, and find influential friends and brands to follow. You could even start out with a personal account, just to test things out. You'll build an audience and get more comfortable with the process at the same time.

Once you've gotten the basics down, move on to the fun stuff -- creating snaps and Stories that will make your brand memorable to your Snapchat audience.

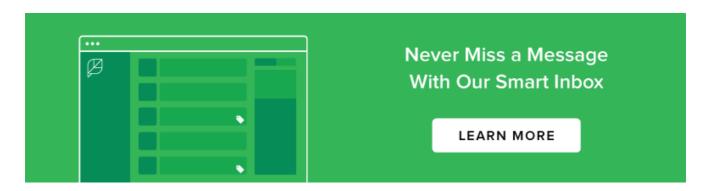
Let's not fool one another—Snapchat is a young game both figuratively and literally. According to Mashable, roughly 77% of college students use Snapchat every day. Additionally, only 29% of its users are over the age of 25—meaning even your youngest marketer in the office might be a bit behind.



Knowing how to use Snapchat effectively has been at the forefront of many companies' needs. There's a huge market of 150 million users and a core demographic that has been well-defined.

The trick with Snapchat is using resources correctly, understanding the market and actually providing users with content they want to see on the network. In this even newer world of social content promotion, you have to work with surgical touch.

In this article, we'll provide seven tips on how to use Snapchat in your social media strategy for 2017:



1. Create Context With Stories

Storytelling has been in our blood for centuries. A great story should ultimately inspire, create an emotion and be memorable. With Snapchat Stories, the idea is exactly the same. Crafting a followable Snapchat demands a cohesive message.

This is why context is so critical to your Snapchat content. Several brands create mini series, themed videos or even short movies, like Taco Bell recently produced. To get your followers involved, you have to provide context.

Why should they follow your brand over others? What sets you apart on Snapchat? How will you provide timely content on a regular basis? These are the types of questions marketers have to ask.

Push Your Creative Side

By giving a reason to follow the content, more users will share, interact and absorb your content. Luckily for marketers, this space is still new and budding. Take advantage of this unique space by promoting some of your more creative content.

This doesn't mean you can do whatever you want with the network. But to promote a brand, you have to create a space of creativity. People likely just want to follow brands on Snapchat for deals, humorous content or entertainment.

Get users wanting to see what comes next by providing a unique storyline through Snapchat Stories. Making videos with cliffhangers or "to be continued" could increase enticement. You don't need to create a long soap opera-themed Snapchat, but instead, a story where people can enter and exit with ease. WebPageFX recommends to keep Snapchat Stories between 1-2 minutes.

2. Increase FOMO By Showing Live Events

One of the biggest emotional pulls from social media is creating the feeling of FOMO (fear of missing out). Whether it's an Instagram video of the beach or Snapchat of you at an NFL playoff game, social increases FOMO.

For your brand, Snapchat could be the perfect space to promote this type of content. For example, the Kansas City Chiefs NFL team likes to give behind-the-scenes content that shows off what it's like for the players off the field. Additionally, others brands like to promote this type of content to get people involved on future events or online through social media.

The event you're promoting doesn't have be as big as Coachella. Instead, brands can share images and videos from other industry-specific events. Highlight things like co-marketing efforts between companies or the free swag you're getting by just being there.

It's tough to find time to produce high-quality Snapchat content, so show off live events, team outings and other happenings with the of the best in-the-moment social networks.

3. Highlight Industry Connections & Interactions

On top of showing off where you are, try to shine your industry connections and interactions. If you don't have the budget for social media influencers, try to plan content around industry connections.

Maybe not everyone knows the marketing associate on the team you're collaborating with, but noting both your presence together could be valuable. For example, if you were an email marketing agency, it might be good to highlight industry connections with content management providers.

The two industries likely attract a similar audience, and Snapchat can be a great way to showcase co-marketing efforts. Your content could promote things like upcoming:

- Webinars
- eBook collaborations
- Shared events/conferences
- Guest blogging updates
- Joint research
- Video series

This type of content will have your Snapchat users wanting to follow to find out who you're working with next. It's not easy publishing completely enthralling content on Snapchat. So try to send videos and image updates to your followers about your collaborations.

Some people will be more interested in what your company is doing than selfies.

4. Use Geofilters to Push Your Brand

Geofilters on Snapchat are oftentimes associated with locations such as neighborhoods, cities, sports arenas or major landmarks. However, one way companies engage with their customers on Snapchat is through on-demand geofilters.

For example, possibly the biggest brand taking advantage of its branded geofilter is Disneyland. As you can imagine, there's a ton of Snapchat action happening already. Disneyland is able to brand their photos with fun filters specifically based on their location.

However, you don't have to be a giant amusement park just to use branded geofilters. Other major chains like Toys R Us, Target and Starbucks use these filters for many of their store locations.

How Much Do Snapchat Geofilters Cost?

The cost of Snapchat geofilters depends on the size of the location, duration and the filter itself. Many couples can use geofilters for 24-hour events such as weddings, which can cost roughly \$15-20 a day.

On the other hand, there are business options from Snapchat, which can allow you have a duration of 30 days. But the size of the geofilter also depends on the area of your business. Sizes go from 20,000 square feet to 5 million square feet.

Geofilters are a simple way to engage your audience on a platform that can sometimes be hard to reach users. This is a simple and affordable advertising solution for businesses who want to have fun with their Snapchat customers.

5. Preview Products or Demo Releases

Creating hype around a product release is a tried-and-true marketing tactic—so why not take this effort to Snapchat? With images or 10-second videos, this is the perfect place to build hype or give previews to your new products.

Businesses on social media use this across other platforms already, but Snapchat could give the extra flair of exclusivity. If your brand wants to show off all the effort going into your newest product or service, try using Snapchat to build awareness and buzz.

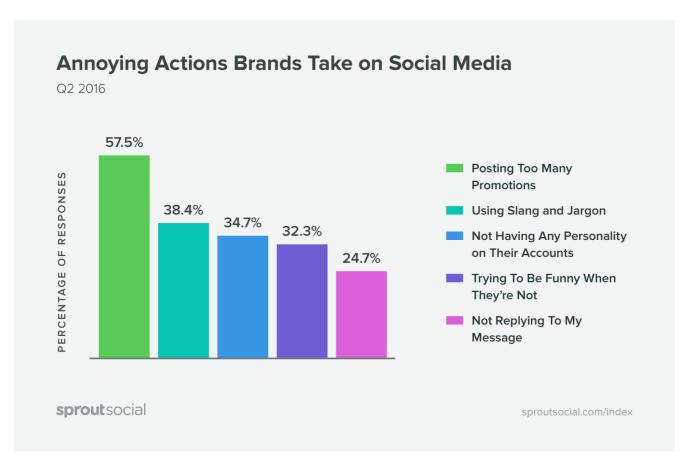


For example, GE commonly uses Snapchat to give tours and introductions to team members you might not expect. In this example, GE ends its Snapchat Story with information to "stay tuned" for more on drone development.

This creates buzz and awareness of GE's drone manufacturing and uses. Driving users to pay attention to new releases or major announcements helps create awareness while giving your audience a reason to come back.

6. Don't Be Afraid to Sell

On social media, it's easy to fall into a lull and become overly promotional. According to the Sprout Social Q3 2016 Index, nearly 60% of respondents said the most annoying action from brands on social is being too promotional.

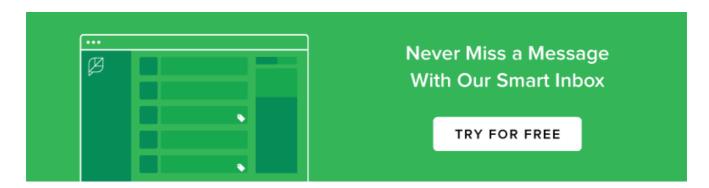


However, you shouldn't let this scare you from promoting on Snapchat completely. The network has no way of directing or linking organic posts to specific landing pages. This means your posts can be promotional, but not over the top.

Again, you don't want to only sell and promote on social, but you can use Snapchat to creatively push your products or services. One of the best at this is Bloomingdale's. The retailer's Snapchat often goes through a cycle of its products that you could use for an event.

For example, one of their recent stories highlighted exercise and yoga gear from mats and water bottles to fitness shoes. The brand avoids being overly promotional, but shows users its products in action.

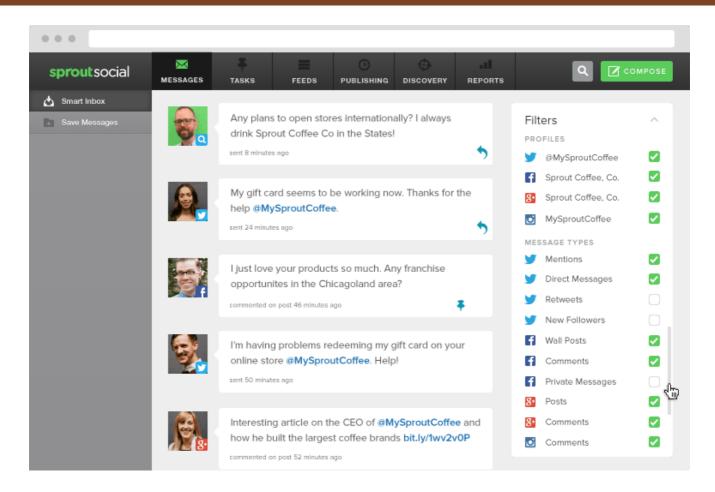
Don't be afraid to sell and use Snapchat as a unique promotional funnel.



7. Don't Pretend to Be Something Else

Lastly, it's critical to keep your brand values, voice and beliefs true on Snapchat. When a new social media channel comes out, it's easy to follow the pack on trends and content. However, no matter the demographic of your audience on the network, don't fool them into thinking you're something else.

What this means is to stick to your core company values. If you see a brand like Sour Patch Kids doing weird and funny content on Snapchat, you don't have to follow suit. Instead, harmonize your social media content across all channels and effectively manage your followers.



Use tools like Sprout's social media monitoring tools to track, measure and analyze what users say about your brand on social. While Snapchat isn't currently integrated in Sprout, you can use our tools to filter incoming messages from Twitter and Instagram about your Snapchat content.

Get your social media organized and on track for success with a free 30-day trial.