

Using your own digital channels

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This document is not intended to teach you everything, but if you are thinking about how to use social media, then this should help. We are going to cover a couple of the more popular social media channels. There are a number of different channels, and each may be used by different segments of your customer base. Depending on that customer/viewer base and its demographics, you may wish to consider what's most appropriate.

If you need to appeal to a younger demographic, you might consider TikTok, etc. There are also channels such as Facebook / Instagram where it is possible to post in both at the same time using the settings in your account.

There are various opinions about selling using social media, and some channels have their own shopping options. However, the received wisdom is that you should not focus only on selling. Posting about your creative process, asking opinions about your work, even your pets, etc., can create more reaction than a piece of art where you post a price. That said, a mix of posts can reach that customer who might not see your work anywhere else.

Some social media channels allow you to schedule posts, e.g. Facebook. If you're not going to schedule posts in advance, it's a good idea to have several day's worth of images on your phone so that you can post when you want. There are some theme days listed at the end of this document, which can be effective times to post, but make sure they are relevant for you or your customers.

With any social media, it's important to follow up if viewers like your posts and especially if they comment on them – make sure you reply and like where appropriate and invite them to like your page. Communication is a two-way street!

- Have a link on your website to your listing page on the POS website – it's great to use this in any posts that refer to POS activities, the work you are showing, the dates and

times you are open, pictures of any of your visitors. You can grab this link from the top of your Directory page, it will look something like this: <https://perthshireopenstudios.com/places/firstname-lastname/>

You can shorten this by using bit.ly or a similar site for free – <https://bit.ly>

Links can't be used in Instagram posts but you can include a link in your bio to your page and if you would like to include more than one web link in your bio, you can use LinkTree: <https://linktr.ee>

- Make sure your own website is up to date.

1. Facebook

Pin your most relevant content

- Make a relevant post appear at the top of your page. This could be a description of what you do or the next date for a craft fair / exhibition / or another event .
- To do this, create and share a post, then click on the 3 dots menu [...] to the top-right of post and select the 'Pin post' option at the top of the menu.
- This menu is also where you'll find the option to edit your post, if any details change or you notice a spelling error, etc.

Think about creating a group

A Facebook group allows you to separate communications between your family/friends and your clients and art fans. Facebook groups can be created by individual users. Groups allow members to post content such as links, media, questions, events, editable documents, and comments on these items.

Perhaps you can't make up your mind which picture to turn into a card – ask your fans. Groups are increasingly used by clubs, companies, and public sector organisations to engage with stakeholders, be they members of the public, employees, members, service users, shareholders or customers. Groups can have two different levels of privacy settings:

- "Public" means the group, its members and their comments are visible to the public (which includes non-members), but they cannot interact without joining.
- "Private" means that nothing can be viewed by the public or shared outside the group unless a member specifically invites another user to join the group.

Posting good content

The key to developing a winning fan page that builds fans and pushes your business forward is to post content that genuinely interests your customers or clients. Don't ONLY focus solely on you or your business, post about exhibitions you go to or major events in your life as an artist – anecdotally accounts comment that some of their best performing posts are about pets, family, etc. People like to know the people behind the posts too! By providing valuable information to the reader, you will build a stronger relationship with current and prospective customers.

There isn't a very tight restriction on word count but remember, if you have more than a couple of sentences people will have to click to read the rest of the post, so make sure the start of your post grabs attention so people want to read to the end.

Events

Facebook allows you to create events, so if you are open on specific days in the year, you can use this function to let people know what is happening. Even if people don't come at first, you will have created the idea that things are happening. Once you have set up an event, it will appear in your feed, and you can re-share this as well.

Using images

Posts with more than one image can work well, although Facebook will arrange multiple images into 4x4 picture template. So, if you load up more than one image then they will appear in the template with, for example, a '+6' on one image. The 6 other images won't be visible unless the reader clicks on them.

Make your photos eye-catching and fun where possible. Remember you can use just part of an image to garner interest. Image size is flexible but do try to be consistent with the shape and size of your images. Typically, you don't need to worry about high quality images as much as you would with print work, as the images are seen in a small format. With a portrait-style image, you will gain more screen time if using a single image and portrait-style works best.

Facebook has started allowing users to upload and view 360-degree photos. Mobile users will move their device around to navigate the environment, while website users will have to click and drag – now you can show all sides of your work, your studio, etc.

Reels

Reels are short videos that you can make to entertain your audience AND help introduce your business to new audiences, as these are also shown to people who are not your followers.

Reels have to be less than a minute long and are posted from the same place as you would normally post, simply click 'Reel'. You can add music and text to your stills and videos to make them more engaging. We recommend keeping these short and fun.

How to post on groups

To post on any group, you usually must have joined the group.

Open the group and you should see somewhere at the top an option with your profile icon to the left with the message "Write something". As with any post, you can add reels / photos / feeling emojis, etc. It will depend upon the group settings whether your post will require approval by a group admin before it appears online.

2. Instagram

Instagram has been recognised as a much more image-friendly social channel and allows some management of your images within the platform. It is a fantastic channel, but many users choose *either* Facebook *or* Instagram, so you may need to consider whether your customer base warrants posting in both. As mentioned earlier, you can actually post from either channel into both through your account settings.



The next paragraph describes the type of posts you can make but one factor to consider is when to post: mid-morning, teatime, evening, etc. A lot depends on your viewer group but by trying out different times you can determine what works best for you, perhaps even a mix.

With Instagram, there are various options now for how to post. To keep your account fresh, it is a good idea to try to vary the type of posting between reels / posts / story / story highlights / live / guide / fundraiser. We won't be going through all of these in detail but there are excellent guides on YouTube or the web that you can refer to.

Definitions (typically most posts are in the first three options):

- Reel – a short video you can record on your phone, choosing to add music, text, effects, etc.
- Post – single or multiple images with the option to include text.
- Story – a 24-hour post that is seen by your followers.
- Story highlight – these appear on your profile page.
- Live – allows you to appear live to your followers.
- Guide – this is a way to recommend places / products / posts.
- Fundraiser – you can select a charity and there are no processing fees for donations.

As the focus is on the images, that it the first thing you should choose:

- When you open a new post, you are taken to your photos to select the ones you want – you can choose up to a maximum of 10 images.
- Images are best square (1080 x 1080 pixels is recommended) and high quality but as the images tend to be viewed on phone screens this doesn't have to be the case.
- Ideally choose your strongest image as the first, as this will encourage people to look at the rest.
- Be aware that there is a function on Instagram  which appears at the bottom left of the image, it allows you to toggle between image sizes, once set it applies to all images in the post.
- To choose more than one image you need to press the multiple button 
- Once you are happy with your images, press the 'Next' button at the top right of the screen. On this screen there are automatic colour options, including a black and white option which you can try out, as well some minor editing tools. The 'Next' button takes you to the final screen.
- There is a space to write a description of why you are posting and / or enter hashtags.
- You can tag people, by entering their account name with an '@' in front – they will receive a notification that they are mentioned in your post. There is also the option to collaborate here, which allows them to share your post on their account too.
- There are lots of other options to try out and see what resonates with your viewers and what gets a better response.
- Hashtags are important here too, see the section on Hashtags above in the Facebook section.

- You can also choose a Facebook account to share the post to. If you have multiple accounts, you can switch between them here.

3. Using hashtags

- A hashtag, with a '#' symbol preceding a word or phrase (with no spaces), i.e. #acrylics, is a tool on social media that allows users to follow topics they are interested in. So, by using hashtags you can attract users who've never heard of you before and may be across the world.
- Hashtags can be any word you think applies but typically using them for promotional purposes means you want to decide which to use. There are various tools / options that can help.
 - You can look at other accounts you know and see what they use.
 - Within some social media, i.e. when you start typing the hashtag in a post, options will be offered, showing how many of your followers follow the hashtag or if there is a better one to use.
 - Websites such as <https://www.best-hashtags.com> enable you to search for other similar hashtags that are commonly used and how many followers they have.
 - You can use hashtags at the bottom of your post *or* in a comment to the post. That's useful if you forget when making your original post – you can edit your post or add them in later as a comment.
 - You can simply type a number of hashtags leaving no spaces between the different ones, but it does read better for others to format each hashtag as follows; #artofinstagram #landscapes #oils #acrylics #glass #ceramics.
 - If a hashtag is in the right format, it will turn blue to show that it is live.
 - Please use our hashtags in your posts:
 - #POS #PerthshireCreativeTrail #POSFestival #POSSummerShow

To follow a hashtag on Instagram, simply type it into the search bar and tap Enter/Return. Once you click on a chosen hashtag, the 'Follow' button will appear. Tap 'Follow' and the posts and stories using this hashtag will appear in your feed and story tray, even when they are shared by accounts that you don't follow.

On Facebook, you can search hashtags but the option to 'follow' is not available.

4. Using photographs or Video

The best advice is to get professional photographs taken but realistically that's not always possible. Consider where the images are to be used and how long they'll be required, i.e. magazine print artwork, websites, social media might be an order of priority when deciding when to use professional images. Also, you can use the same images across various channels and create a brand identity.

It could be worth taking a course in photography composition, lighting, etc., that can help you produce better images. The quality of image does impact the viewer's interpretation.

Some guidance for you or your photographer(s):

- Consider the composition: a single piece of art, a grouping of pieces or complementary elements, e.g. often plants or flowers can make hard items such as ceramics or jewellery appear more engaging.
- Ensure your photographs are cropped appropriately: use photo editing functions to prepare your photos.
- Have examples in portrait and landscape format, and square as well for Instagram.
- Photos that are saved at the highest resolution, at least 300dpi.
- Use daylight and watch out for reflections in glass and take a photograph before framing an image.
- Include a picture of you working.
- Remember that good photos are fundamental if you are presenting yourself as a professional artist.

Many social media channels offer options for video to be posted or as mentioned above you can use reels to post videos taken as you make the post. Other options, such as iMovie, allow you to create a movie with music, titles, transitions, etc. This can then be posted to most social media, although some restrict the length of video – keeping it short also works for viewers.

You can practice videoing in portrait or landscape format, experimenting with how that appears and where you plan to use it. Speak to others you know who use the same media channel to post videos.

There are now several templates available on channels that allow you to choose a selection of images and timings with pre-set music choices that tie into the image transitions providing a strong overall effect. This brings movement to your post without actually recording a video.

As members of POS, remember you get a 10% discount from several video suppliers and there are plenty of courses online, from free to paid, to help you develop this aspect.