

The CSA Marketing Handbook



**A comprehensive guide to setting up
and marketing your farm's CSA online.**



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Should I Run My CSA Online?

If you've picked up this guide, this is probably your first question. Not to worry, we have the answers. First, let's talk about the different CSA models that exist and can be easily supported online.

Different CSA Models

For one, you could run a **food-box style CSA**. By this, we mean that your customers purchase their share at the beginning of the season and receive a weekly food box containing what's been harvested that week.

Pros

- If customers want more than their allotted box, they can purchase additional produce.
- Easy model to offer delivery and pick up with.
- Every CSA member receives the same order, for easy packing

Cons

- Customers have limited choices in what they get each week. This could deter them from purchasing a CSA share next season.
- Customers have no ability to "skip a week".

Next, you could offer a **market-style CSA**. In this model, customers purchase shares at the beginning of the season. On CSA pick up day, members come to the market to get their share.

Depending on their share size, customers will receive a set number of products that they can choose that week. For example, a full share may represent 8 choices.

Pros

- Customers have the ability to choose what they want each week.
- If customers want more than the set value, they can purchase additional produce at your market stand.
- No packing orders required. Just arrive at the market with your harvest.

Cons

- You can only offer pick up at the farmers' market. Some customers may not want to attend the market each week.
- Customers have no ability to "skip a week".
- Customers who can only show up later in the day might be disappointed with their selection – the early bird gets the worm.
- Days are long for the farmer.

Finally, you could run a **buy-down model**. This model is similar to a market-style CSA, however instead of members receiving a certain number of vegetables they can choose each week, their CSA is awarded as monetary credit. Each week your members are able to shop as normal (as much or as little as they want), and their purchases are deducted from their initial credit paid.

Pros

- Customers have the ability to choose what they want each week.
- No set value each week. Customers are able to choose how much or how little they want.
- Customers can easily skip a week.

Cons

- Customers who order later in the day might be disappointed with their selection but can easily see online what is already sold out.
- The need to individually pack orders for customers. Depending on how many products you offer, this can be a time-consuming step.

Each model—food-box, market-style, and buy-down—all have their pros and cons. Different models may also suit you better depending on the stage of your business. Just starting out as a farmer? A subscription box model might be the easiest, with its few moving parts.

How to Run Different CSA Models on Local Line

The beauty of all of these models is that you can run them 100% online! **Local Line**, the e-commerce platform for farmers, is also built to support CSAs. Here's how:

Food Box Model

To bring your CSA online, sell shares ahead of time through an online store. Set the number of shares available for each size (i.e. half and full) and list them as products on your online store. When you're ready to sell shares for the season, send your customer list a link to your online store.

Your online store will be able to track inventory and collect payment. No more chasing after customers for payment after they sign up.

Bonus: if you have extra produce to sell week after week after you've filled your boxes, list your products on your online store and allow customers to order extra!

Market Style / Buy-Down Model

Use store credit to manage shares.

After customers have purchased their shares for the season, allow them to sign up for an account to your online store, located right on your store's main page.

With Local Line, you are able to add credit to their accounts. Each week when you open your store, customers can select which items they want to receive that week and use their store credit at check out.

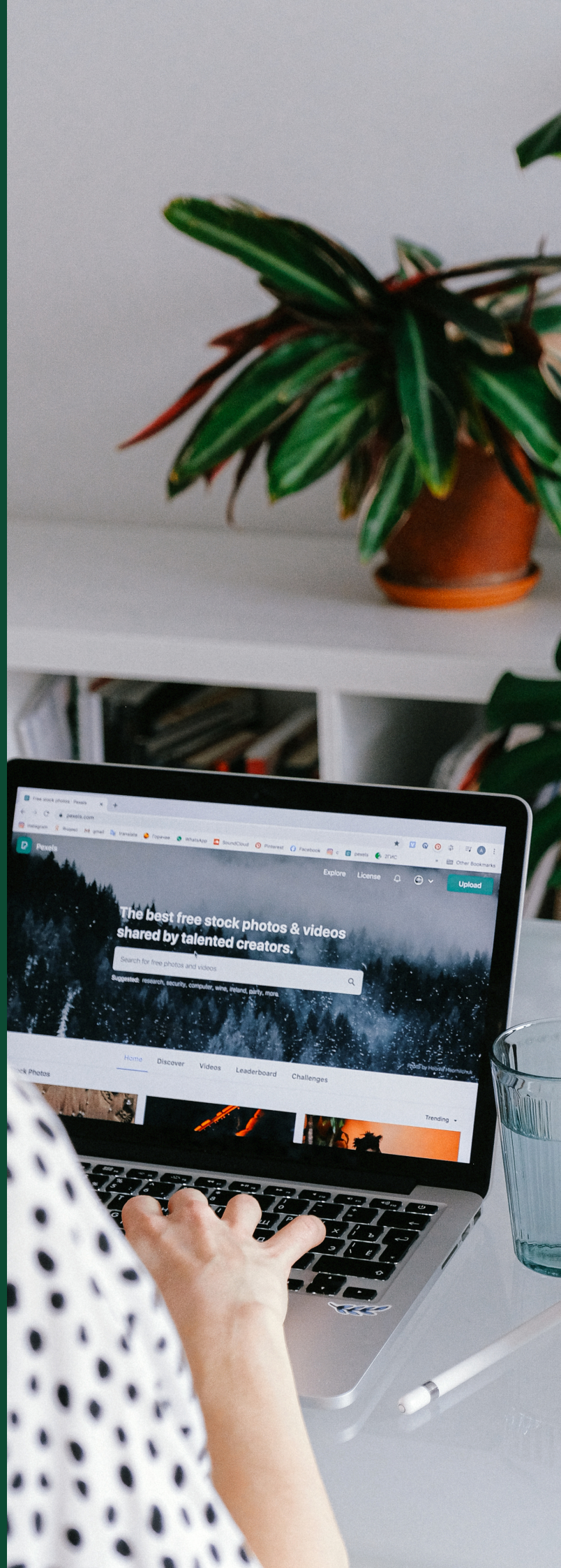
Either credit your customers the full share amount or top up their account week by week based on how much they can spend. You can add store credit to your Local Line subscription for only an **extra \$10/month!**

Marketing Your CSA Online

Choosing the right CSA model is entirely up to you! Each model has its own benefits and considerations. After you've selected your model, you need to determine how you're going to market your CSA.

CSA members are a unique type of customer. Unlike a retail or market customer who shops from you occasionally – a CSA member is invested in what you do. They want to support the farmer behind the food. It allows for a different form of marketing that focuses on connection, engagement, and consistency.

Let's go through some strategies you can use for your farm today:





Email Marketing: Tips to Make You a Pro

Email marketing is one of the most effective marketing strategies for small businesses. When used right, it can be both relationship-building and profit-building.

Unless you have the people or free time to individually build a personal relationship with each one of your prospects and customers, email is your best marketing friend!

With email marketing and newsletters, you own the channel, and—most importantly—you own your email list. Using only social media means you're building your marketing efforts on borrowed land.

Every marketing tool has its purpose, and each is essential for connecting with customers. Social media is great for sharing photos and content; however, it can create a lot of noise, and things can easily get lost.

A direct channel for customers can be very helpful to share your products, story, and life directly with them. This is where email campaigning comes in. It allows you to create demand by telling your authentic story.

Instead of just sending another email, use this tool to best showcase your lifestyle and products to potential customers that might need that pull to commit to becoming a customer.

Benefits of Email Campaigns



Build Your Brand

Consumers will have a higher likelihood of purchasing from you if they know you. Brand recognition is a key tool for driving new leads. Email campaigns can be a great way to grow that recognition and increase reach over time.

Increase Your Visibility

Did you recently write a great piece of content or release a new product to your store? Email campaigning can help drive traffic to your website or store for new items.

Foster Business Relationships

We make brave decisions that we believe will elevate the vegan food industry as a whole, and we put innovation at the forefront of our minds when making these decisions.



Here Are 8 Ways To Sell More With Email Marketing:

1. Make it easy

In order to be successful in the long term, it is essential that you build up your email list. You want prospects to find your list and jump at the opportunity. Some great ways to easily increase your list are to:

- Have forms throughout your website to capture contact information. These can be located at the footer of your website, your online store page, “products” page, etc. You could even have a dedicated landing page for email newsletter sign-ups.
- Make the most out of your social media pages. Use the link in bio!
- Add call-to-action in your social posts, such as “Sign up for our newsletter for the newest updates!”

Also, make sure you’re inviting existing customers to join your email list. In this introductory email, be sure to include expectations about frequency, content, and topics you plan on sharing.

2. Create a schedule

Ensure consistency by setting a schedule for your email marketing. We suggest aiming for once a week or biweekly. Whatever frequency works best for your business, we recommend sending the email on the same day each time.

After you've picked your frequency and day, create a content schedule. Map out which types of emails you will be sending out and when in the month/year to send those. Create an excel spreadsheet and roughly plan your whole year. Even if you don't end up sticking exactly to the schedule, it is always great to have a reference point to refer to. It will keep you consistent and accountable.

Some email types could include:

- Catalog reminder email
- New product alert
- Seasonal product pairings or recipes
- Process reminders or tips for success (delivery/pickups)
- Monthly check-in
- Customer contest
- Vendor spotlight(s)



3. Personalize it!

Personalization is targeting an email or email campaign to a specific subscriber by leveraging the data you have about them. Marketers see an average increase of 20% in sales when using personalized email experiences ([Campaign Monitor](#)). Personalized emails are relevant, timely, and are coming from a person. They make it more likely to be opened and clicked on, and it strengthens your customer experience by sending the right content, to the right people, at the right time. Ways to personalize your emails include:

- Use their name! Maximize “personalization tokens or tags” by including them both in the email copy and the subject lines as well.
- Segment your list. Segmenting your list allows you to further tailor the content to match what your subscribers need, which again, builds more trust with them! They'll be more likely to open emails that make sense for their needs and interests. Such as
 - Customers vs. prospects
 - Repeat customers vs. new customers
- Have an automated welcome email that sends out to a new subscriber as soon as they join your list.
- Follow up on recent product purchases, offer tips for using the product, and suggest relevant products they might like.
- Celebrate birthdays, customer anniversaries: offer a discount or store credit

4. Optimize your email structure

Every marketing email has the same structure: above the fold, below the fold, and the footer. Use this structure to put the most important information first and draw the reader to continue to scroll through.

Above the Fold: the content a user can see on the initial open of the email, before scrolling down. In this section, add a high-impact visual and your key information.

Below the Fold: the content a user cannot see without scrolling. In this section, add contributing details and any other CTAs and content.

Footer: the section that appears at the very bottom of your email below the main content. In this section, add links back to your website, main pages, evergreen CTAs, and social channels. Also, include business information and unsubscribe details.

5. Get visual

Make your email pop! The more visual you can be, the more likely your recipients are to engage with your email. No one likes to get a wall of text. We want something that will all at once inform us and entertain us. Use images, video messages, GIFs, and/or recipes and links to engage with your audience.



6. Write a creative subject line

You want to capture your audience right away. Sometimes the subject line is more important than the email body itself! A well-crafted newsletter is great but means nothing if it never sees the light of day. Use the SPUN acronym to craft your subject line and it will be a winner every time!

Scarcity	Personalize	Urgency	Numbers
Today Only!	Use names	Don't miss out!	Our top 5 veggies
This week only!	Use specific counties	Shop now!	30% off
For the next 24 hours!	Name markets you attend	Save my spot!	Get 2 for 1!
Only X left!		Reserve now!	

7. Use calls-to-action

Calls-to-action (CTAs) are used to convert your email recipients. Examples include:

- Follow you on social media
- Visit your website
- Shop now
- Try our new product
- Share this to your followers

Use 1 or 2 main CTAs in each email to increase your chances of interaction.

8. Write persuasive copy

When writing your copy, ask yourself “What’s in it for my customers?” or “What action do I want them to take?”. Setting clear expectations and pivoting your copy to answer these questions will ensure that your email is achieving its purpose. How your copy is written can influence your email’s success. Some great tips for writing include:

- Write (almost) as you speak
- Be empathetic, specific, and concise
- Use lots of great adjectives to do with taste, touch, and smell

Use 1 or 2 main CTAs in each email to increase your chances of interaction.

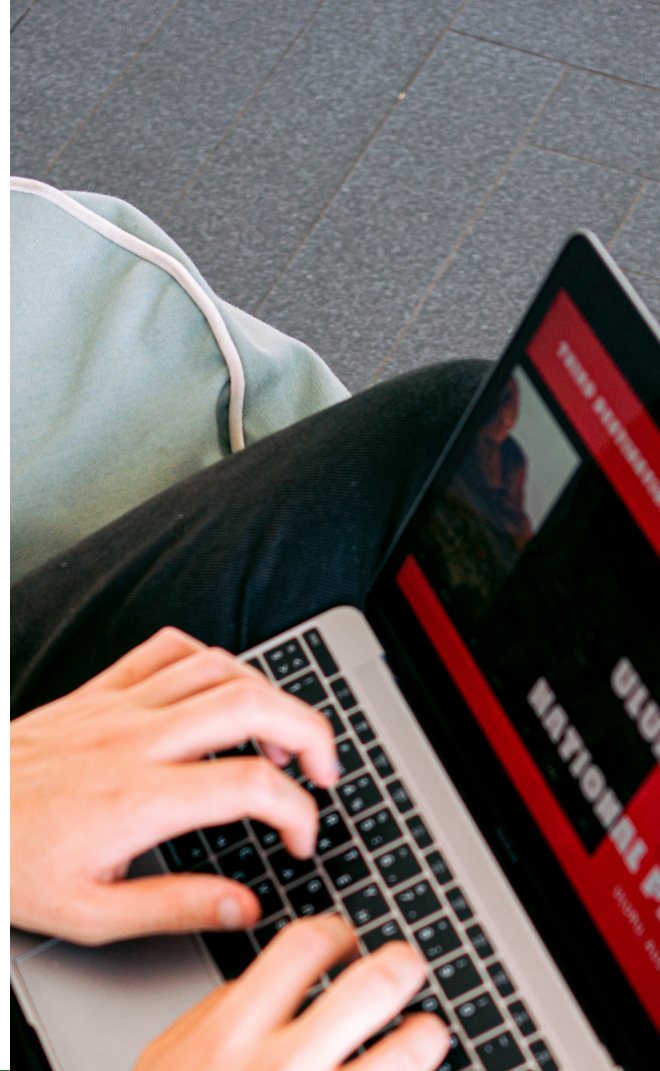
Choosing Your Email Marketing Provider

There are so many email marketing platforms on the market, and many of them have free plans (with the option to upgrade if you so choose)!

What makes a good email marketing provider?

- An easy user interface (quick to understand and easy-to-use—ideally, a drag-and-drop editor)
- Includes personalization (allows you to send emails personalized to the recipient's name)
- Budget-friendly! There are many email marketing tools out there, but they need to fit within the budget.

Here are a few we're familiar with:



1. Mailchimp

MailChimp is an online email marketing tool that gives small businesses with limited resources, access to technology to help them grow. The tool lets you use templates, fill in your business-specific content, choose recipients, and send! Further, the tool provides services like email automation, marketing campaigns, and analytics*.

*Note: Analytics is the discovery, accumulation, and communication of data collected on your marketing, such as the number of clicks, views, and replies.

[Here's a great tutorial to get started.](#)

2. Constant Contact

Constant Contact is another online email marketing tool. It is the easiest and most user friendly email marketing service. You can manage your contacts, email templates, email lists, marketing calendar and so much more easily.

[Here's a great tutorial to get started.](#)

3. SendinBlue

SendinBlue is a complete SMS and email marketing software for businesses. They have a simple drag and drop editor which is perfect for beginners with no experience in email marketing. You can create workflows, send emails, segment users etc.

[Here's a great tutorial to get started.](#)

How To Write The Best Newsletter (and stick to it)!

Email newsletters are a great way to build community, keep your shareholders engaged, and market your business. Think about some newsletters that you are currently subscribed to? What made you subscribe to them? Are you still subscribed? Why or why not? Note down these points and start to compile a list. This will help you decide what you should or shouldn't include in your newsletter.

Do you need a newsletter? This is a big one. Creating a newsletter takes work and commitment. In order to keep your subscribers engaged, you have to be consistent. Yet at the same time, not too frequently that it gets annoying.

1.Create a hook for the subject line to entice people to open your email

You want your members to have a reason to open your email. Think about how many promotional emails you receive each day. Do you open all of them? What makes the ones you do open stand out from the rest? Usually, it's the subject line that intrigues you as to what's in the body of the email.

Some great examples are :

- Did you know Kale is an amazing super food? 🧐
- 5 actions you can take to help small businesses ✅
- 3 tips to be more sustainable this summer ☀️🌱

2.Add some calls to action (CTAs)

These are buttons that your subscribers can click on within your email. They can lead to different pages on your website, a brochure or flyer, a link to your social media account. The possibilities are endless.

3.Keep your copy easy to read and the design minimal

Your content should help to educate. There can be a portion that is promotional, but the majority should be education. If you bombard your customers with promotional content, they will have no incentive to keep opening your emails.

4.Add images to break up content and make sure they have alt text

Reading large copies of text will make anyone skip past. That's why it's important to break it into shorter sentences with images in between. There should be plenty of white space.

5.Make it simple for subscribers to opt-out

Have a button or a link to unsubscribe at the top or bottom of your email. This allows the subscriber to unsubscribe if they need to. Giving them this flexibility may even make them voluntarily opt-in in a couple of weeks if they feel your content was informative and they are now missing it. Make it an easy process. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

6.Keep track and measure your results

Constantly check to see the metrics from your newsletters. Were there some that performed better than others? What type of content was included in that newsletter?

A vertical image on the left side of the page shows the silhouette of a person standing on a grassy hill, holding a wide-brimmed hat up towards a bright sunset sky. The person is facing right, and the hat is held with both hands. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a lighter yellow at the top.

Building An Online Community With Your CSA Members

Communities are built when people share the same interests. It's a great way for people to gather within a group and bond over the same topics. Some great ways of building a community with your CSA members are:

- a) Start a Facebook group, this can be public or private depending on your preference.
- b) Host a weekly or monthly zoom call where everyone can interact virtually. You could even theme these calls to encourage discussions, such as favorite BBQ methods or how to get kids to eat more veggies!
- c) Host live videos on Facebook, Instagram, or Youtube. These types of events can encourage engagement with your audience.
- d) Or, you could even consider hosting in-person events at your farm with your CSA members.

The Social Media Basics

Social media: an essential component of your marketing strategy

Social media has become an essential component of your CSA's marketing strategy. It's no longer an option to not be present on social media; it's a key way to reach your customers, gain insights, and grow your business.

This section includes information on how frequently to post on social media (spoiler: consistency is what's best!), best practices for each platform, and the best tools and resources to help streamline your content creation, scheduling, and profiles.



The Benefits of Social Media

Connect with your audience

Farmers are often scared that moving online will decrease their genuine connection with customers. This is not the case! Social media allows your customers to have a sneak peek into your business, connect with you via messenger or comments, and stay on top of what you're up to! Think of it as finding a new place where you can connect.

Increases Brand Awareness

Most people are on social media in some form. What better way to connect with your existing customers and find new ones than social media? Having a great social media presence increases your visibility and unifies your brand.

Generates sales

The biggest benefit of using social media marketing is that it can increase your sales. With more exposure and more touch-points between you and your customers via the different platforms, you will generate brand awareness, confidence in your products—and sales.



We know social media marketing can be daunting. Sometimes it seems like a black box. But don't worry, we created this guide to break it down for you.

We want to introduce you to the biggest social media platforms today and inspire you to take control of your social media marketing.

How often should I post?

While there's no one size fits all when it comes to how often you should post on social media, there are a few best practices to keep in mind. Each social media platform is unique in how long each post "lives" in the feeds of your followers.

Did you know?
Facebook posts have a lifespan of about 4-6 hours, Instagram posts have a lifespan of 48 hours, and Tweets only live about 20 minutes.

Being sure to post frequently enough that your content is being shown to your followers is important, but what's more important is consistency. Each platform's algorithm rewards users who post regularly and consistently. If you can only post once a week, that's totally okay. Instagram will push your weekly post out to your followers.

How often you post isn't the only factor that helps your content be seen by followers and other users on each platform.

Post when your followers are online and active.

A good rule of thumb is to post during peak hours. When are your followers online and most likely to engage with your content?

You'll find this information in your **Instagram Insights**, **Facebook Audience Insights**, or **Twitter Analytics**. Each social media platform you use will have an **Insights** or **Analytics** feature to your profile.

If you're just getting started or don't yet have much data on your followers, take an educated guess based on your audience. Would they be online during lunchtime? In the early evening? Make sure your content is in front of them!

Encourage engagement with your audience.

Be engaging to encourage engagement! Don't just "post and ghost"—treat your social media as a community! Respond to comments, questions, and set aside time to engage with your audience online.

Use hashtags strategically.

The average is 5-7, but no more than 10. Know your audience's interests and research relevant hashtags (#localfood #farming, etc.) that apply to them!



Our Favorite Social Media Tools

We know social media takes a lot of time and effort to see a return on investment. So, make life a little easier for yourself. Use tools and resources to help maximize the time you spend growing your followers, converting them to customers, and building brand awareness for your business!

Here are our favorites (with hyperlinks!):

For your “Link in Bio” on Instagram:

- [Later](#)
- [Link in Bio](#)
- [Linktree](#)
- [Feedlink](#)

For batch scheduling your social posts:

- [Later \(for Instagram only\)](#)
- [Hootsuite](#)
- [Buffer](#)
- [Planoly \(for Instagram only\)](#)
- [TweetDeck](#)
- [Agorapulse](#)
- [SocialBee](#)
- [MeetEdgar](#)

For designing graphics and assets for social:

- [Canva](#) - Free / subscription, More affordable, Drag and Drop model
- [Adobe Creative cloud](#) - Great option, but expensive and has a learning curve.

Overview of Different Social Media Platforms



- Facebook has 2.912 billion active users. That's no wonder as it has been around since 2004.
- Facebook allows you to turn your client base into a community by creating public or private groups. You can create a business page where you clients can like or follow and keep up to date with your business news.
- You can also use your page or group to cross promote content from your website and boost traffic.
- This platform is our favorite as you can post long form content, stories, create a business page or create a group.
- The audience is targeted specifically to older people as its popularity had dwindled with the younger generation.



- Youtube has 2 billion active users. It is the second largest search engine after google.
- Your videos will show up in google search results if it ranks well and has a lot of engagement. Nowadays, people prefer to watch tutorial videos for learning new things rather than read through large bodies of text.
- Youtube is used to make instructional videos, product reviews and creative videos from content producers.
- Your videos need to be informational, high quality, and entertaining in order to show up in people's suggestions. Having a regular posting schedule helps to boost your channel's ranking.



- Twitter has 330 million active users. It helps to provide users with content and information from all over the internet.
- Twitter limits you to 280 characters which forces users to be concise. This can be a pro or con depending on who you ask.



- Instagram is more for visuals and aesthetics. It has 1.386 billion active users. Most users post photos or videos with a short text in the description.
- You can post to feed, add stories, create reels and explore other businesses and content creators on the explore page. It's the best platform for targeting a younger audience.



- Tiktok has 1 Billion active users worldwide. This platform is mainly for posting short videos. This platform is very popular with Gen Z and younger millennials.
- The 'For You' page is personalized content for users. That's the first thing they see when they open the app, unlike instagram.
- This app encourages users to engage with each other through stitches, duets and using someone else's original sound for your own video. It's popularity has grown within the last few years and it looks like it's going to stay.



Bonus: Get into Paid Ads

Grow your CSA membership next season and dive into paid ads. Similar to putting ads in the newspaper, paid ads are a great way to gain awareness of your brand. It lets potential customers know you exist and what you offer.

The traffic that is generated from paid ads leads to better conversion rates. This is because they chose to click on your ad which shows interest in the product being advertised.

These are the 5 most common types of paid ads:

1.Social Media Ads

These are the types of ads that you see on your social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube etc. They are based on the type of content (pages, brands, influencers) you interact with.

2.Search Ads

These are the results that show up at the top of the page on search engines like google, bing etc when you search for something. They have a little box next to them that says ' Ad' so you know it's not an organic result.

3.Google Shopping Ads

These appear as a carousel under the search bar results, when people search for an item. They include basic details like an image, price and website link to multiple websites that sell the same product.

4.Display Ads

These are banner ads that appear to visitors on websites. They include a photo, brief text and a link.

5.Retargeted Ads

These are specifically designed to target a user that has been on your website before but did not go through with a purchase. They can be in any format such as social ads, display ads or search ads.



Here Are Some Tips for Success in Your Paid Advertising:

1. Start with a small budget and stick to it.

It can be tempting to start with a large budget, but you want to test the waters and see where you perform the best. You can also ask or survey your customers on which platforms they are. You don't want to make assumptions without hearing from them.

2. Filter and dial down on your target audience

You want to make sure the right people are the ones who see your ad. Try to create buyer personas to help you understand who your customers are. You want to get as specific as possible for these personas in terms of age, interests, needs, ethnicity, profession, income, geographical location, etcetera.

3. Create targeted ads

Once you have all this information, you will need to adjust your ads accordingly. Ideally, you want to have different graphics and copy for each segment. This will give you a higher chance of the customer clicking on your ad while ensuring they are the right fit.

4. Track your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

How will you know if your ad was a success or not? This is why it's crucial to track your KPIs. Most platforms will give you metrics about your ads. You can make tweaks to the ad and see if this affected your metrics in any way.

Make sure to give it some time, you can't expect results in a day. But If you see that it's performing poorly, don't be afraid to pull the ad entirely. You don't want to keep spending money if it isn't giving you a return.

CSA CHECKLIST

Quick Tips for Setting up your CSA Online

- ☐ Define the aspects of your CSA:
 - ☐ Sizes of shares (ie. half or full?)
 - ☐ Season length
 - ☐ Pickup or delivery? Or both?
 - ☐ Products included in share
 - ☐ Prices
 - ☐ Customer limit
- ☐ Set up your online store.
- ☐ Upload your products to online store.
- ☐ Update delivery/pickup information onto your store.
- ☐ Add your payment options.
- ☐ Create a website (and link to/embed online store)
- ☐ Create a Facebook page and Instagram account.
- ☐ Promote your CSA! Use social media, word of mouth, email!
- ☐ Sell your shares!
- ☐ Write your CSA member handbook and define expectations.
- ☐ Send welcome email to new customers with instructions for the CSA.
- ☐ Use a weekly newsletter to promote with customers.