

TECH TIP: Using Hashtags in Social Media

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Have you seen #hashtags all around you, but aren't sure what they mean? Do you want to make your organization's social media posts easier for your audiences to find? Keep reading to discover just what hashtags are and how best to use them.

What Is a Hashtag?

Wikipedia defines a hashtag as "a word or an un-spaced phrase prefixed with the hash character (or number sign), #, to form a label." Simply put, they are a way to group related conversations together, so that people who are interested in learning more about a particular topic can find similar posts. Hashtags allow you as the creator of social content to "tag" your content so it can be more easily found by your target audience.

How Are Hashtags Used?

To create a hashtag, simply include a # in front of a word or phrase, without spaces. A hashtag can occur at the beginning or

the middle of a post. As an organization, you can use a hashtag to make an event more social, (Like the OLHA Annual Meeting: #OLHA2014) join other conversations (like #museumsmatter), or boost the visibility of a picture or post (look for organizations that share specific hashtags like #ohiogram).

While hashtags originated on Twitter, they are now used on most of the major social networks including: LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Google+, Vine, Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Hashtags should be short, easy to pronounce and spell and give users a better idea about the topic of the conversation. If you have a hashtag that's too complicated, long or hard to spell, it will defeat the purpose of a hashtag, because people may forget it or may not be able to fit it in their tweets.

Tips for Hashtag Success

Use the hashtag on multiple social media channels.

This gives your hashtag more exposure to more people to help spread the

word about it. Second, this helps people to remember your hashtag when they see it multiple times on different channels.

Save a hashtag for when you need it.

Too many hashtags make posts look like spam, and research has shown that engagement drops when a tweet has two or more hashtags.

#DontCreateAHashtagThatsTooLong.

Keep your hashtag short and sweet, easy to spell, and easy to remember. If you want to incorporate your hashtag across multiple channels, you need to consider the character restrictions of those social networks. If you're creating a hashtag for an event with a long title, consider using an abbreviation or acronym, #SBW13.

Extra Tip.

Do a search for the hashtag you intend to use before you use it. You never know what people may be using hashtags to discuss. You wouldn't want to accidentally connect your organization to a negative, controversial or embarrassing topic. ■

2X

24%

21%

17%

Tweets with hashtags receive 2X more engagements than those without hashtags.

Only 24% of the measured tweets contained hashtags

Tweets with one or more hashtags have 21% higher engagement than those with three or more hashtags.

Tweets that use more than two hashtags actually show a 17% drop in engagement.

Some statistics about the effectiveness of using hashtags in your social media posts. Image courtesy of Constatnt Contact.