

**GUIDES TO USING THE NETWORKS ARE ALL-NEW**

# FULLY REVISED SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDES READY FOR USE ON MEMBER WEBSITE

By David Gould, Staff Editor

**G**rowing your instruction business is about building a personal brand, and there isn't a better tool for brand-building than social media. If you've learned to enjoy using Facebook, Instagram and the other major platforms to promote your services, that's a good position to be in. Regular or downright habitual posting is considered a cornerstone for social-media success.

The other hallmark of effective use is planning and strategizing weeks or even months ahead. It makes the time you spend putting your message out far more productive and efficient. That process often starts during off-peak periods, when a teacher can step back and ponder their target audience, brainstorm for different ways to reach them and hone their messaging so it produces the greatest impact.

You also need accurate, current information on leveraging social media that is customized to the type of business you run. Proponent Group maintains and updates exactly that information and guidance—and we've just done a full revision and rewrite of the Business Guides for all major platforms. This article contains some introductory and highlight material from the complete, full-length documents now posted on your exclusive, members-only Proponent website.

Our original set of Guides was comprehensive and tailored to golf instruction, but in the fast-changing social media world they had lost their currency. We hope and expect that the new material will be a go-to source for all members seeking to build their audience and engage with golfers efficiently, effectively and in ways that sharpen your brand identity at all times. What follows is our "quick look" summary of the various platforms.

## **Facebook: Still Job One**

Three-quarters of American adults use Facebook, a truly astounding metric. Due to its vast user base—1.4 billion people engage on a daily basis—Facebook is optimal as a social media channel for brand promotion. According to the marketing-services vendor Hubspot, 42 percent of marketers say Facebook is important if not critical to their business.

In Proponent Group's 2017 Operations Survey of Multi-Teacher Facilities, it was found that 85 percent of academies that responded do have their own Facebook page. In that survey we asked about number of Facebook "likes" and found that a small sliver of respondents, 4 percent, had amassed over 2,500 of them.



Whatever you do or don't like about using Facebook to reach current and prospective clients, those traits may not be in effect a few months down the road. The platform continually changes its policies and functionality. Of late, through a series of major alterations to its algorithm, Facebook has prioritized content from family and friends over commercial messaging. That makes it harder than ever to get your audience's attention on the platform.

To some degree the company has provided a remedy for this problem they've created. A new tool called Facebook Insights ramps up the analytics options for users. It's the best way to understand your Facebook page's metrics, so you can feel confident you're putting the right content in front of the right audience. A bit later in this section of the Guide, you'll find some useful advice on using Facebook Insights as an analytical tool.

To maximize Facebook's business potential, you need to create a business page, not a personal profile, to represent your brand. This allows you to promote junior camps and photos of your facility instead of distracting people with photos of your kids on vacation. Setting up a page is simple. Just visit <https://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php> and follow the step-by-step setup instructions. (Already created a profile for your business? No worries—Facebook now allows you to easily convert it into a business page.)

Question: Have you claimed your page's "vanity URL"? Once you've created your business page,

make it more shareable and easier to find by creating a recognizable vanity URL (e.g. [www.facebook.com/GolfChannelAcademy](http://www.facebook.com/GolfChannelAcademy)) Also, to make a compelling and memorable impression to golfers viewing you on this platform, it's important to put a legitimately creative cover photo and profile picture. And Facebook's new page design enables you to do that. There is capacity for you to feature an 851 x 315 pixel "cover photo," magazine-style, at the top of your business page. Get creative with it to capture the attention of new visitors.

Naturally, a focus of your planning and execution of a Facebook strategy involves the type of content you share. Many coaches get caught up in just sharing promotional content around their upcoming events or their array of products and programs. Certainly there's a time and place for that material, but you should be varying your content—bring in a mix of videos, photography, quotes, article links and so forth.

As you gradually become more effective in how you use the channel, it's time to think about doubling your efficiency and effectiveness by auto-publishing blog content on Facebook. You'll find yourself out ahead of the curve if you start populating your Facebook page's Timeline with content. If you maintain a business blog, you can connect your blog so that links to the latest blog content you publish will auto-post to your Facebook page. Blogging platforms like WordPress automatically offer this feature within its software—you just need to turn it on and sync it with your page.

At least for now and into the near future, Facebook advertising does remain inexpensive—to the point where it's difficult to justify ignoring the opportunity. A recent study of golf courses using Facebook Ads found the price of getting a text-only ad in front of a very targeted audience came to 25 cents per 1,000 impressions. For a photo ad on Facebook it was under \$3 per 1,000 people reached and for the sharing of a blog post that got to 1,000 sets of eyeballs it was about \$3.75.

The various filters used by these golf facilities to ensure an appropriate audience for their ads included age, sex, home address, education, marital status, work status and several other key traits. The trackable results of the investment were measured in home page Likes, click-throughs to website home page and click-opens of the blog. Don't expect 1,000 impressions to be enough for major results, but at these prices you can test a few messages and hone your approach. Someday, when Facebook totally rules the media world, it won't be cheap to take out Facebook Ads, so give it a try sooner rather than later.

### Instagram: For the Visual Age

Instagram's user base has been on a steady climb for five solid years, all the way up to 800 million active users, according to market-research source Statista. It is certainly younger and far down the market-saturation curve from its parent company Facebook, but its potential is immense. On the paid-advertising side, which small businesses have been slow to adopt, Instagram provides a platform to tell visual stories through various ad formats. Reports show that many advertisers have seen Instagram yielding a significantly high return-on-investment.



In particular, Instagram has proven itself to be a powerful tool for reaching younger audiences. And it's a highly valuable option for golf academies, which can very readily share eye-catching photos and videos. The average Instagram user spends 21 minutes a day using the app. In a head-to-head comparison, Instagram trumps Twitter for engagement and interactions.

Adoption of Instagram is fast-growing, although, again, not universal among small businesses. Golf instructors—with their highly visual daily activity and environment—are a natural user base. If you have not yet opened an Instagram account, you're preventing your teaching business from leveraging the large population of Instagram users in your market. It's easy to set up an account and even easier to start Instagram-ing.

Going back to Proponent Group's 2017 Operations Survey of Multi-Teacher Facilities, where it asked about "additional social media platforms," multi-teacher sites came back with a heavy endorsement of Instagram—70 percent called it their go-to choice after Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

Since Instagram runs on a mobile platform, you must register for Instagram by downloading the free iPhone/Android app. There is the capability to download the app on mobile tablets (i.e. iPad, Galaxy tab, etc.) as well but it is not necessary—however that's a useful step if you generally have a tablet with you out on the range. Once you complete the download, make sure to register an easily identifiable username (i.e.,

**The average Instagram user spends 21 minutes a day using the app. In a head-to-head comparison, Instagram trumps Twitter for engagement and interactions.**

PensonGolfAcademy)

It is important to link your photos so they also upload on Twitter and Facebook to increase visibility, efficiency and consistency of content. This is a great way to save time posting. It also keeps you from having to log into every different social media account.

You receive notifications when other users follow you, comment and like your photos, tag you and mention you

(i.e. @JeffPensonGolfAcademy). To get notifications to appear in real time on your phone, go to "Settings" and select "Push Notification Settings." You also want to make sure that your Privacy Settings are set on "Public" not "Private." This way people outside of your network of followers can see your posts (which is what you want!)

For those Proponent members now active on the platform, the question is whether or not you're achieving a high level of engagement, i.e., likes and comments. If not, it's possible or even likely you are skipping the vital step of adding hashtags to your posts and/or tagging your location in them. The way people find you and your account on social media is through hashtags (#). This is a way of classifying your posts so people can search for specific topics and find content they are interested in. Many of you post great Instagram photos but don't use any hashtags—as a result not many people can find you.

### LinkedIn: B2B Meets B2C

Although the 15-year-old social platform LinkedIn is predominately a tool for B2B marketing, having a LinkedIn presence is really a must—especially if you run corporate golf programs, hold networking events, want to expand your customer base or notice that a lot of your students are business executives or involved in the corporate world.



That shows up in demographic data about people with LinkedIn accounts. The average household income per LinkedIn user has reached \$109,000, which is much higher than Twitter, Facebook and the other big social networks. The tenor of interactions and content on this platform is much less frothy than what you find

**In the early days of LinkedIn, it was commonly felt that you should only connect with people you already know and trust. That made some sense, but the idea is becoming obsolete.**

elsewhere in social-media land. The messages are more professional and the conversations are geared toward partnerships, transactions, advancing careers or building businesses.

It all starts with your profile—again, it's your online business brand. You've probably noticed that a search of someone's first and last name on Google will very often bring up their LinkedIn profile in the top five results. So, when people do a search for your name to learn about your academy or teaching practice, show them a rock-solid profile and

make a great first impression in the process. Fill out your profile 100 percent, according to the provided questions and categories, then add some gloss to it.

This being a business/professional site, the profiles tend to be dull. To make yours stand out, experts advise you to add an interesting story in your summary, or have a video recommendation pop up in the first few seconds. Golf instructors bring passion to their work, and people respond to that, so introduce some profile material that brings that passion to the forefront.

Do you have a custom URL? Just as you can on Facebook, you can customize your academy page on LinkedIn. For recognition's sake, it's worth taking the time to do.

In the platform's earlier days, it was commonly believed you should only connect with people you already know and trust. That made some sense, but the idea is becoming obsolete. After all, you already know most or even all of the opportunities your closest connections can share, since you talk to them more frequently. The better option is to use LinkedIn as a live networking event and introduce yourself to others, make new friends, and start helping more people connect. Also, start accepting invitations to others who add you, as the more connections you have, the larger your expanded network grows which helps create more opportunities in the long run.

One caveat to that—be sure you're connecting in business-world context, as opposed to the way most people go about "friending" people on Facebook. Sure, you can connect with an old friend from middle school, but you should really be proactively targeting business leaders and influencers in your community as well as anyone who you think would be interested in networking or corporate events.

### Twitter: Build Your Following

As the tweeting public has gotten comfortable with the expanded 280-character limit (doubled from the old 140), posting photos and videos has also become commonplace. Along with being able to post



videos and photos on Twitter, you can even post polls for your followers to vote on. It has been shown, not surprisingly, that photos and videos receive a much higher engagement rate than conventional messages.



Your username on Twitter will be an integral part to customers finding you. You may need to abbreviate your full academy or golf course name if it's too long. The best usernames are your business name, but get creative if the name is taken.

Proponent Group members who use Twitter do so most effectively by "looking" for their peers and engaging with them. This is a social media platform that you can gain lots of traction in through the "shadow" method. Typically, one of the easiest ways to gain a following and build Twitter exposure is to follow and tweet similar peers or people in the golf industry, to gain exposure to their following. Start by following a few golf related accounts. To narrow down your suggestions, search keywords such as "golf" or "PGA." It's important for you to follow people in your local community too. For example if you live in Columbus, Ohio, follow the Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau and Columbus government accounts.

As we've mentioned previously in this guide, one of the quickest and easiest ways to stand out in the golf industry is to have high-quality photography and graphic design on your social media platforms and website. If you have a sloppy, pixelated photo on your profile, you will lose a lot of credibility. Sophistication in your digital presence matters. You might consider using your academy or course logo on your profile. Whatever you choose make sure it is easily recognizable. Make sure to also upload a header photo on your profile.

Naturally, you'll also help your cause immensely if you formulate a sound strategy, update it at times and execute it with persistent activity. Each year or each quarter, think about the goals for each of your marketing initiatives, including goals you will set for each social media platform. From there you can build a strategy on how to achieve these goals and track progress. Otherwise, you are just going through the motions without the ability to truly track results.

### YouTube: Expertise in Action

Short video is among the most attention-getting content online. We know that golf instruction lends itself to short-form video wonderfully. We also know that YouTube has an Internet monopoly, more or less, on archived short-form video. Conclusion: Golf coaches and teachers need YouTube. It's the direct pathway to a better relationship with existing clients and a proven builder of relationships with prospective clients—no matter where they may reside.

Jeff Ritter, founder and CEO of Phoenix-based Make The Turn, a high-performance golf coaching brand, has soared on the wings of videos shown via YouTube. Ritter's first experience with the website came in 2007 and within weeks he was getting considerable audience engagement. Several months later he was seeing that exposure pay off, with clients traveling from all corners of the world for in-person coaching on his lesson tee.

"It was a free method of advertising to a global



audience that I almost couldn't believe was available to me," Ritter says, looking back. "It did a ton for my career. It allowed me to tap into a global market versus being completely tied to my local market." The supply-demand outcome of this? Let's say it was very positive—Ritter was able to dramatically increase his rates without fear of losing clients or income.

"I figured," he recalls, "that if people were willing to get on airplanes, rent cars and stay in hotel rooms for the sake of a golf lesson, then why should I be the cheapest thing on their trip?"

YouTube also gave Ritter practice in front of the camera, something he believes every golf instructor needs if they expect to leverage their skill in coaching to its maximum potential. "The better I got on camera, the more calls I received from relevant media outlets to present content," he says. Investing some resources in quality YouTube productions led to segments airing on the websites of Golf Digest, ESPN, FOX and the Golf Channel. In addition, Ritter was used in commercial spots as a product spokesperson for PING, and has been approached by a number of other companies to act in the same capacity. **PG**