

USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

By: Sean Dowhan

Social media has become a fundamental part of modern society. Social media is so ubiquitous that it has become a significant factor in people's initial professional perceptions of you, the trustworthiness of your firm, and the marketing of law firms to old and new generations.

This article will discuss the various social media platforms available, best practices to conduct oneself on each platform, privacy policies to be aware of for each platform, and how one can market their firm effectively through social media.

PLATFORMS AND PURPOSES

Social media platforms encompass many genres and have each developed their own specific demographic audiences. This section will go over the top six social media platforms and how they differ.

FACEBOOK

User count: 2.74 Billion (as of January 2021)

Facebook is one of the best-known and developed social media platforms globally. It hosts a large variety of features that allow for specific types of interactions – selling goods on their marketplace, catching up on a friend's life through their live feed, personally messaging friends to communicate, marketing, etc.

Quick facts on Facebook's demographics and other details:

- The majority of Facebook users are aged 25 to 34 ([32.4%](#)).
- Users aged 45 and older are the currently fastest-growing Facebook demographic.
- Facebook offers [marketing services](#) that provide robust advertisement targeting services, allowing a person or firm to effectively advertise to their core audiences.

INSTAGRAM

User count: 1.22 Billion (as of January 2021)

Instagram is best known for its youthful user base and domination within the mobile app sphere. The platform focuses on the ability to share photos and short videos with other users, alongside the ability to personally message others, perform marketing, tap into local and global ongoing trends through hashtags, and now even the ability to [shop off of the platform](#).

Quick facts on Instagram's demographics and other details:

- The majority of Instagram users are aged 25 to 34 ([33%](#)).
- Instagram is the most used social media platform by American teens [as of 2020](#).
- Instagram's [advertising services](#) offer a wide range of ways to reach your core audience – story ads that "connect with the 500M+ accounts using stories daily," photo ads, video ads, and more.

TWITTER

User count: 353 Million (as of January 2021)

Twitter has quickly risen to be a strong competitor within the social media sphere and well-known for the various major real-world announcements that originated on the platform. The site features the ability to create and reply to posts, threads, and direct messages. Like Instagram, the platform allows one to see trending events through its hashtag system.

- Quick facts on Twitter's demographics and other details:
- Twitter is rather well-rounded in terms of its demographics since the [age groups of 18-24, 25-34, and 35-49 all sit within a few percentages of each other](#) in terms of their distribution on the platform.
- Twitter's [ad services](#) allow its users to select a core audience for targeted marketing and amplify their tweets and account's general visibility.

LINKEDIN

User count: 722 Million (as of January 2021)

LinkedIn is a social media platform focused on professional networking. Its features – connections, CV sharing, blogging interface, and profile building— are centered around helping users publicly show off their best professional traits to clients and hirers.

Quick facts on LinkedIn's demographics and other details:

- The majority of LinkedIn users are either in the age demographic 25 to 34 ([38%](#)) or 35 to 54 ([30%](#)).
- [Fifty-five million companies are listed on LinkedIn.](#)
- [LinkedIn Marketing Solutions](#) offers the ability to create targeted ads that can reach up to 160 million users in the U.S. ([as of 2020](#)).

YOUTUBE

User count: 2.29 Billion (as of January 2021)

YouTube is the internet's premier video sharing platform. YouTube is increasingly prevalent in every facet of day-to-day life as it replaces television as the source for entertainment, news, information, and advertisements for many. It features the ability to create and upload video content, run marketing campaigns, and interact with your audience through comments.

Quick facts on YouTube's demographics and other details:

- Most YouTube users are in the 15-35 age range ([77%](#)).
- [74% of U.S. adults use YouTube.](#)
- [YouTube advertising](#) allows marketers to create advertising campaigns that target specific demographics and easily measure each campaign's results

TIKTOK

User count: 689 Million (as of January 2021)

TikTok is a rapidly rising social networking app focused on short-format video sharing. The app focuses on providing the content most relevant to its users' interests. Specifically, the app learns your interests by using a hashtag system that helps define the content shown on a user's "for you" page. TikTok features short-format videos and the ability for users to comment, forward videos, and direct-message other users.

Quick facts on TikTok's demographics and other details:

- Most TikTok users are in the 10-19 age demographic ([32.5%](#)), followed by the 20-29 age demographic ([29.5%](#)).
- [90% of TikTok users engage with the app multiple times a day.](#)
- [TikTok advertising](#) offers the ability to create a marketing campaign objective, select a targeted demographic, designate a specific budget for the campaign, and actively connect with all users who interact with your video-based campaign.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA – PERSONALLY & PROFESSIONALLY

An essential part of being present and marketing on social media is knowing how to use it effectively and professionally. Each platform has unique considerations - advantages and pitfalls - when attempting to maximize you and your firm's professional image.

FACEBOOK

An essential part of operating a personal Facebook page as a legal professional is being mindful and careful about what you post to it. You don't have to avoid ever posting anything personal, but you should always be aware of what your post will say about you as a person. It is increasingly easy and common for clients to snoop on whom they do business with due to so much information now being online.

A good formula for conducting oneself on Facebook is to focus most of your posts on relaying who you are and the qualities that make an ideal person to be either a friend or a client of. Don't feel like you have to neuter yourself to an "artificial" perfect self though! Feel free to voice your opinion and tell jokes, but when doing either, you must be aware of what you're saying and how that reflects on your character and affects your audience. Your jokes should tend towards "dad" and not dirty, for example. A not well thought and risqué joke can easily damage your reputation and alienate your audience and prospective clients. For the other part of the formula, sprinkle in posts that remind your audience that you're a legal professional and what you do at your firm. This sprinkling of posts will reinforce that you're a professional and reassure them that you both enjoy and work hard at your job.

One can see a cautionary tale of the dangers of non-professional Facebook conduct through the recent story of a [Nashville attorney who posted advice on "how to make deadly force look like self-defense"](#) for a Facebook friend. He claimed the joke was "dark humor," but the Tennessee Supreme Court saw it differently and suspended his license for a year for his dangerous and unprofessional conduct. Their opinion on the case explicitly stating, "Lawyers who choose to post on social media must realize they are handling live ammunition; doing so requires care and judgment."

INSTAGRAM

A critical decision in using Instagram is deciding whether you will keep your account public or make it private. A public account is accessible and seeable by anyone, while only personally accepted friends can see a private account. The advantages of a public account include a greater ability for potential clients and colleagues to discover your account and the allowance of a public platform through which to promote your brand. The advantages of a private account are that you don't have to as thoughtfully curate what you post and repost since fewer people will see it, and it allows you to control who precisely can view your account.

For posting on Instagram, you should try to make sure most of your posts show off your key aspects. A list of possible examples includes posting about your hobbies, major life events, time with friends, your day-to-day work, family, etc. A caveat on this opening of a window into your personal world is that you must be careful not to get too comfortable on the platform and upload posts that somebody could perceive as unfavorable or usable against you. An example of what you shouldn't post would be you overly intoxicated with friends and coworkers. A potential client or current employer looking at such a post could easily be rubbed the wrong way by it and assume you lack professionalism.

When interacting with the story feature, make sure to be aware of what you are personally posting or reposting. Individual posts on your story should show off your best self and not spout potentially alienating things – hateful comments, crude jokes, overly-political statements, etc. If you're reposting another person's content on your story, make sure the post reflects your own character and that the account you're reposting isn't

a controversial one. For example, you may find an account that posts very relatable humor on being an attorney and choose to repost it so your followers can also see it — seemingly a relatively harmless decision. Still, you must be positive that the joke itself doesn't harm a person's perception of how professional you are and that the account you're reposting doesn't include controversial posts outside the one you're reposting.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is undoubtedly the social media platform that you should most carefully curate, as it is a platform focused on networking within a heavily professional framework. You should view LinkedIn as a secondary CV and treat it with the same seriousness as you do your resume.

A significant part of being present on the platform is having a solid profile. The most important portions to have well-refined are your photo, headline, and about sections. These are all sections that the average user will look at if they are quickly going over your profile. Make sure your photo is a professional headshot, your headline describes your position and duties within your firm well, and the about section effectively summarizes you and helps you stand out from other attorneys. You can help make yourself stand out through both an attention-grabbing introductory sentence and a compelling telling of [why you do what you do](#). Also, make sure the rest of your profile — the more resume-like components — are well laid out and constructed.

Another significant component of LinkedIn is its networking features. When connecting with other legal professionals, make sure to only connect to persons with whom you've interacted before sending a connection request. The best people to initially connect with are other persons at your firm, peers from law school, and other lawyers you know. Alongside building a list of professional contacts, you should engage with ongoing discussion posts on LinkedIn. This strategy will help build up your reputation as an expert and increase the number of persons outside your own connections circle who know of you. Make sure to only join in relevant discussions that you have something valuable to contribute to, and not just comment on every discussion post possible for the sake of commenting.

YOUTUBE

If one engages with YouTube as a creator, the platform quickly becomes one you must run as meticulously as a LinkedIn account. The video format inherent to the site opens a much wider window into your soul for the average viewer. As videos allows a user to hear your voice, see who you are physically, how you act on camera, and what genuinely excites you. For example, an Instagram post of you explaining one of your hobbies conveys many fewer personal details for a person to judge you by than a YouTube video doing the same thing. If you're planning on posting videos meant solely for close friends and yourself, make sure to either make them private or unlisted. Look to what other attorneys are doing on the platform, home in on what is doing the best, and build upon what you observe to create your own unique videos.

TWITTER

Running one's Twitter account in a professional manner is an essential task for any legal professional. Please refer to the above section Facebook for general advice on conducting oneself on Twitter, since the advice for both is very similar.

The platform has become (in)famous for the number of persons who have had old posts dug up and brought to light. These old posts often contain non-professional conduct that more often than not result in real-world repercussions for the individual — loss of friendships, firing, etc. Make sure to regularly go through your post history and delete anything from the past you now find regrettable. If comfortable, you should also apologize for any egregious old posts and reinforce you are a much different person now.

TIKTOK

TikTok is a rapidly rising social media app that requires careful engagement. Many popular trends on the platform lean heavily towards the non-professional, so either repurpose these trends towards more professional means or find compelling ways to engage your audience without relying on ongoing trends. A common tactic used by attorneys on the platform is to offer general legal advice in a "talking head" format or react to a trending video under an analytical and legal lens.

Also, a point worth considering is the give and take game that creating videos on TikTok can be for legal professionals. Suppose you give in to trends to appeal to younger demographics. In that case, you may be taking away your appeal to older audiences that may perceive you as less professional due to engaging with activities not perceived as professional by their demographic – lip-syncing, dancing, memes, etc.

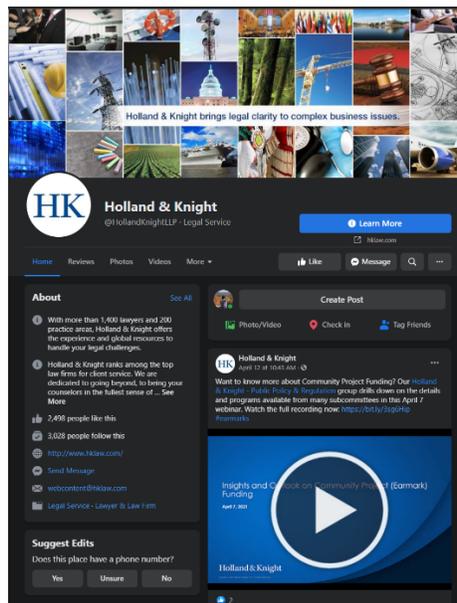
USING SOCIAL MEDIA – MARKETING YOUR FIRM AND YOURSELF

Social media platforms offer various ways for any legal professional to dive headfirst into marketing their firm and themselves. This section will cover the more technical side of social media marketing and engaging with advertising services.

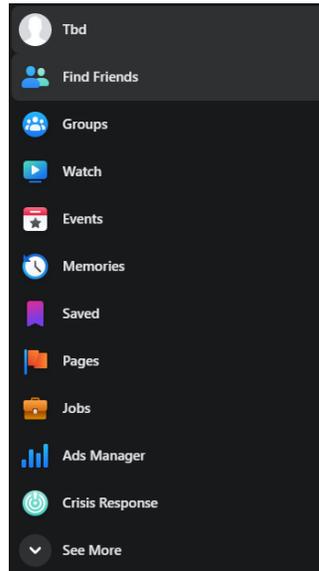
FACEBOOK

Marketing on Facebook relies on taking advantage of both the affordances of a Facebook page and Facebook advertising services.

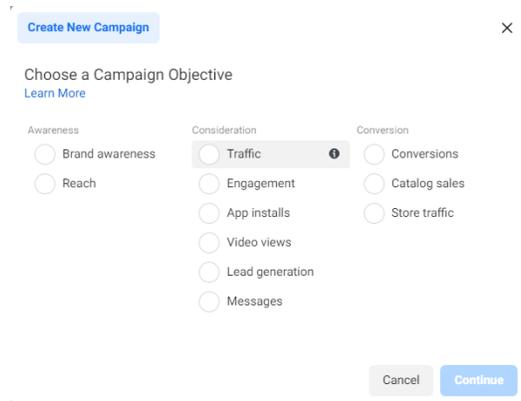
Firstly, you should set up a Facebook page for your firm if one does not already exist. The page should both be optimized and filled with relevant media. Specifically, the page should feature your firm's released content and upcoming events. The page should also have dedicated members of the firm running it who can engage with the public through answering their questions, sharing stories, build up credibility for the firm, and overall show off that the firm is dedicated to being active on social media and engaging with present and future clients.



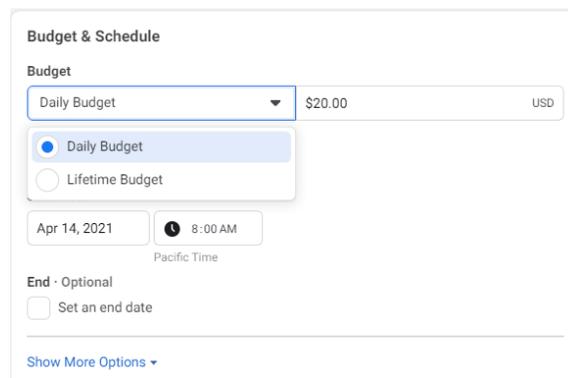
Secondly, alongside a well-maintained Facebook page, your firm should also take advantage of the advertising services offered by Facebook. To start and manage an advertising campaign, you should head to the "Ads Manager" option in Facebook's main drop-down menu.



From here, one should set the marketing objective of your advertising campaign. There is a wide range of objectives to choose from, ranging from reaching people near your firm to sending people to your firm's website. Also, Facebook will ask you for the name of your campaign and other necessary details.



Now, you will set up the budget for your ad campaign. You have to choose to either operate your campaign under a daily budget or lifetime budget.



A daily budget allows you to set a daily limit on the amount of money you spend per day on the ads you run. Your campaign withdraws from this daily budget every time a person clicks on your ad. The amount Facebook withdraws depends on the bid amount you set for the ads – you can choose either to have this automatically set by Facebook or manually. Once the daily budget is met, your ads will stop appearing on the site for the rest of the day.

A lifetime budget allows you to set a specific budget for the entirety of the campaign. You can either have the campaign continuously withdraw from the lifetime budget till it runs out or schedule out its usage. The scheduling option allows you to set an actual start and end date for your campaign. Facebook will automatically base its use of your budget around the dates specified to ensure it runs for the entirety of the time specified.

Then, set the target demographics for your campaign, such as thirty-year-olds living in San Francisco or divorced individuals residing in the suburbs.

The screenshot shows the 'Audience' configuration page in Facebook Ads Manager. At the top, it says 'Audience' and 'Define who you want to see your ads. [Learn More](#)'. Below this are two buttons: 'Create New Audience' (highlighted) and 'Use Saved Audience'. The main section is 'Custom Audiences' with a 'Create New' dropdown. It has two sections: 'INCLUDE people who are in at least ONE of the following' and 'EXCLUDE people who are in at least ONE of the following', each with a search box for 'Search existing audiences'. Below these are sections for 'Locations' (United States), 'Age' (18 - 65+), 'Gender' (All genders), 'Detailed Targeting' (All demographics, interests and behaviors; Detailed Targeting Expansion: Off), 'Languages' (All languages), and 'Connections' (All people). At the bottom is a 'Save This Audience' button.

Finally, you will create your Facebook ad itself. You can choose to create one from scratch or promote one of the posts already existent on your firm's Facebook page. Ensure your ad is as engaging as possible to succeed in its purpose – eye-catching title, compelling image, and promotion of your brand. Now, with your ad created, place your Facebook ad campaign order, and track how your now ongoing social media advertising campaign is going!

INSTAGRAM

To begin an advertising campaign on Instagram, you will be required to have a specific business profile set up. The steps to switch a personal account to a professional one are simple and explained by Instagram themselves [here](#). Worth noting is having a Facebook page linked to your business profile helps you access a broader array of features in advertising.

Once your business profile is set up, you can begin to advertise on Instagram either through using the Facebook Ads Manager or by promoting already existent posts on Instagram. If opting to perform a more comprehensive campaign, then Facebook Ads Manager is recommended (refer to the previous Facebook advertising section for instructions on operating the manager). If you want to promote specific posts to a broader audience, all you have to do is navigate to "Promotions" and then click on "Create Promotions." You will then be prompted to choose the post you'd like to promote and provide basic advertising details (target audience, budget, and duration of promotion).

LINKEDIN

Creating an advertising campaign on LinkedIn is straightforward and quickly done in just a few steps.

First, you will have to sign into the [LinkedIn campaign manager](#), which requires an existent LinkedIn page to operate effectively. If you have not signed into the campaign manager before, it will prompt you to fill out some basic information before setting up your first campaign.

Welcome to Campaign Manager!

Account name
John Doe's Ad Account 79

Currency
United States of America, Dollar (USD) ▼
Note that you cannot change currency later.

Associate a LinkedIn Page with your account (optional)
Some campaigns require a LinkedIn Page to use.
Enter an existing name / URL

Create new LinkedIn Page +

Create account

Second, you will now select the [objective](#) of your campaign. Objectives are centered around the actions you want your audience to take after seeing your advertisement.

Objective NEW

Let's get started! Select the objective that best fits your goals below.

Awareness Consideration Conversions

Brand awareness

Website visits

Engagement

Video views

Lead generation

Website conversions

Job applicants

Third, you will refine your campaign by setting up a target audience for it. LinkedIn offers extensive options (job experience, interests, education, job title, etc.) in choosing your target audience.

Audience Saved Audiences Audiences

Create a new audience

Where is your target audience?

Locations (Recent or Permanent)
United States

Exclude people in other locations

Your audience has their Profile Language set to English

Who is your target audience?

Start building your audience by searching for attributes of professionals you want to reach

Audiences List upload
Lookalike
Other
Retargeting
Third party

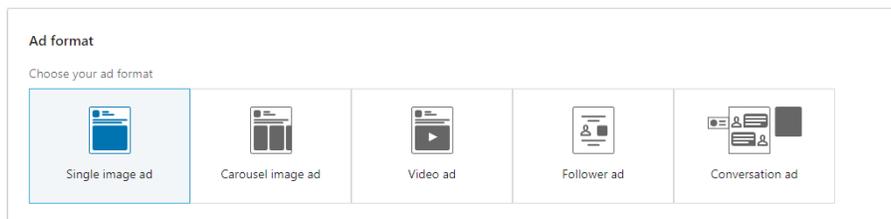
Audience attributes

Exclude people by audience attributes and Matched Audiences

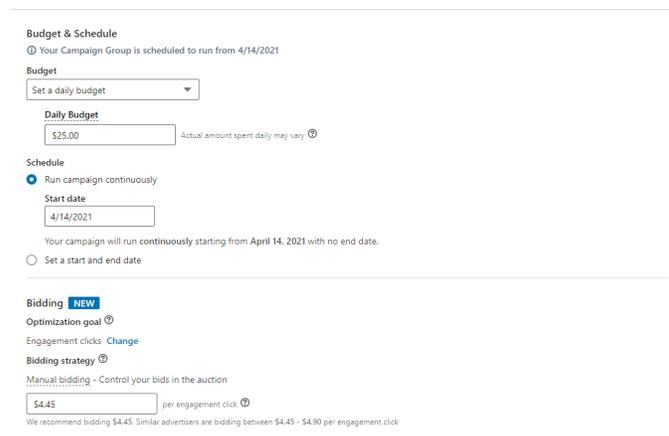
Enable Audience Expansion

Reset audience View audience summary Save as template

Now you will be required to select the ad format of your campaign. The formats available to you depend on the objective you chose for your campaign. The ad format options are [sponsored content \(single image, carousel ads, and video ads\)](#), [LinkedIn messaging ads](#) (conversation ads), [text ads \(right rail and banner ads\)](#), and [dynamic ads \(follower, spotlight, and content ads\)](#).



Then you will create the budget for your advertising campaign. LinkedIn recommends taking a 70/30 split approach to budgeting your first campaign. A 70/30 split means 70% of your budget going towards driving bottom-funnel conversions¹ and 30% towards driving top-funnel conversions². LinkedIn offers further budgeting advice [here](#). At this point, you will also set up your campaign's schedule.



Finally, advertisements can now be created and promoted through LinkedIn's campaign manager. The advertisements you will create and promote will directly depend on the ad format options you chose previously.

YOUTUBE

YouTube is a platform hosted by Google, and thus one must use Google Ads service to run a campaign on it.

The first step in advertising on YouTube is creating a [Google Ads](#) account. The process is simple and easy, Google walks you through it step-by-step. Once your account is set up, navigate to your "Tools" and "Linked Accounts." Here you will link your YouTube account to your Google Ads account.

The next step is navigating to the dashboard of your Google Ads account, then to the "Campaigns" tab on the left, and selecting "New Campaign." From here, you will be prompted to choose the objective of your ad campaign – the list of which can be found [here](#). You will then be asked to select the format of your campaign, which will be video.

YouTube offers three video-specific ad formats to choose from – TrueView ads, non-skippable in-stream ads, and bumper ads. TrueView ads are likely the ones you personally experience most often when using YouTube. They are the ads that appear before, during, and after videos and feature

¹ Turning a potential customer into an actual one (usually targeted at individuals already aware of your brand or enticed by your previous top-funnel conversions).

² Building awareness of your brand and shaping perceptions of your company (usually targeted at individuals new to your brand).

a skip button for users. These advertisements will also appear in user search results and the YouTube homepage. Non-skippable in-stream ads also show before, during, and after videos but are not skippable by users. This ad format is restricted to a maximum run length of 15 seconds. Bumper ads are concise six-second videos that appear at the beginning of videos and aren't skippable by users.

At this stage, you will decide where your advertisements will appear on the platform and your target audience. First, you will determine the general areas your video will appear – YouTube search results, YouTube videos, or video partners on the display network (sites outside of YouTube). You will also be asked to select the language your customers speak and the locations you would like your ad to appear. Second, you will be asked to decide the inventory type you would like your video to appear alongside – expanded inventory, standard inventory, or limited inventory. The more limited your inventory, the more your advertisements are shielded from appearing on top of videos that cover sensitive topics and contain crude content (profanity, sex, violence, etc.) Third, YouTube offers the ability to exclude certain content, such as recent tragedies and conflicts, that you don't want your videos to appear on top of. The platform also allows you to avoid having your ads appear on specific types of videos – gaming, embedded, and live streams. Finally, you can make usage of Google's in-depth targeted advertisement system to target your ideal audience demographics.

Keep interests as broad as possible
 Reach people with these specific interests that you select below

Banking & Finance

- Avid Investors
- Banks Online

Beauty & Wellness

Food & Dining

Home & Garden

Lifestyles & Hobbies

- Art & Theater Aficionados
- Business Professionals
- Charitable Donors & Volunteers
- Family-Focused
- Fashionistas
- Frequently Attends Live Events
- Green Living Enthusiasts
- Nightlife Enthusiasts
- Outdoor Enthusiasts
- Pet Lovers
- Shutterbugs
- Thrill Seekers

Media & Entertainment

News & Politics

Now with the ad format and the target audience of your campaign chosen, you will set up the budget and schedule for your campaign. Your campaign's expenses will depend upon your bidding strategy, which is the amount of money you're willing to pay each time your ad is viewed. There are many strategies to choose from, so it is recommended to [perform personal research on which best aligns](#) with your campaign goals.

Almost done! Set a budget that's right for you

How much you want to spend

Pay only when someone chooses to watch your video ad by clicking the thumbnail

Currency: USD

Enter a daily budget

\$ 20.00

Estimated weekly performance

30K - 170K

Impressions

An impression is counted each time your ad is shown. The amount of impressions won't affect your cost.

640 - 4K

Views

A view is counted when someone chooses to watch your video ad by clicking the thumbnail.

\$0.03 - \$0.06

Average cost per view (CPV)

The average amount you'll pay every time your ad gets a view.

The final steps are setting up keywords and the video you would like to use for the campaign. Assigning relevant keywords to your ad campaign will help YouTube place your ads alongside the ideal content on the platform. With all the other details of your campaign sorted, the last step is to simply select the videos you would like to use in your campaign.

TWITTER

Twitter offers a host of advertising features for anyone seeking to run a campaign on their platform.

To begin advertising on Twitter, the first thing you should do is create an [advertising account](#) and link it to your own Twitter account. Once set up, you will have access to Twitter's Ads Manager, which is what you will use to launch your campaign.

Once you begin a new campaign on the Ads Manager, you will be requested to choose the objective of your campaign. Twitter offers three broad categories of objectives – awareness³, consideration⁴, and conversion⁵.

You will be directed to the "Campaign set up" page after this, where you will be asked to name your campaign, set its budget, choose how you will pay for it, and when it will be scheduled to launch. The budget depends entirely on how much you are willing to pay daily and the total amount you are ready to pay for the campaign in general. After this stage, you will be offered the opportunity to set up ad groups for your campaign, but unless you are already confident in advertising, it may best to just stick to a singular ad group for now. You will be asked to select your target audiences and demographics for your campaign at this point. You can narrow your audience down through various means, such as by gender, age, location, interests etc. Next, you will select where you would like for your Twitter advertisements to appear for users – users' timelines, profiles and tweet detail pages, and search results are the options. Finally, you will be allowed to launch your campaign and begin to promote yourself and your law firm.

TIKTOK

Creating a TikTok advertising campaign is a quick and straightforward process that allows one to jump right into launching a campaign.

You will have to first create a [TikTok For Business](#) account in order to access the TikTok Ads Manager. Once you have access to the Ad Manager's dashboard, navigate to the "Campaign" section and select the "Create" button.

TikTok will first ask you to choose the objective of your campaign – awareness, consideration, or conversion. Then it will prompt you to pick a title for your campaign and set up its budgeting type. TikTok offers three budgeting options – no limit, daily budget, or lifetime budget. Setting no limit will result in, as the name implies, there being no restriction on how much money your campaign utilizes. A daily budget sets a maximum daily expenditure on ads, while a lifetime budget sets a total budget for the entire campaign.

Next, TikTok will request you to fill out the specifics of your campaign. First, you will be asked to decide the placement of your advertisements – in-feed video, top view, hashtag challenge, and branded effect. In-feed videos are advertisements that appear as users scroll through videos, top view ads appear when users first open the app, hashtag challenges allow you to promote a challenge that directly encourages your audience to engage with through their own response videos, and branded effects are augmented reality filters users can use in their video. Second, you will be asked to fill out a variety of ad details – promotion type, display name, category, etc.

Third, TikTok allows you to target your ads to specific audiences and demographics.

Finally, you will be asked to set up your specific budget and schedule before launching your campaign. The main decisions with your budget are your bidding strategy and the bid amount. Your bidding strategy will determine your ad's average cost per view and your bid amount, the actual

³ Building general brand awareness and reaching as many potential customers as possible with a specific message.

⁴ Encouraging users to discover more about your business and build their trust in you as a company.

⁵ Encouraging users to visit your website or app and do something (purchase a service, contact you, read an article, etc.)

amount you're willing to pay per view. With budgeting complete, you can now create your advertisements, upload them to TikTok, and start your campaign.

TAKEAWAYS

Here are a few key take-aways for your professional social media use:

- If you want to worry as little as possible about curating a professional social media account, then make sure to privatize as many accounts as you can and be careful about whom you let view your account.
- You must be conscious of the aspects of yourself that you show off on social media.
- Each social media platform offers unique challenges and benefits in staying professional and reaching out to target audiences.
- Setting up social media ad campaigns isn't as complex as it may seem and can be easily accomplished in less than ten steps.