



# East Colfax BRT

## Social Media Content Guide

This guide will help with suggestions for creating content to post on your business pages.

### Developing a Brand for Your Business

A “brand identity” – what you say and how you say it – is everything. It’s the look and feel of your products or services. A brand identity is how you want people to think about your business.

Whether you know it or not, your brand already exists. Your goal is to control it as best as you can. To create a brand identity, have a clear idea of your:

- Mission (In 50 words or less, what is the purpose of your business?)
- Voice (Do you want people to think of you as serious or playful?)
- Core values (What takeaways do you want people to have after interacting with your business – are you like family, unique, independent, pro-environment, justice-focused, etc.?)
- Competition (What are your competitors doing? What’s working, what isn’t?)

Next, know your audience. Who are they right now – and who do you *want* them to be in the future? Think through **demographic** info like: age, gender, geographic location, profession, household income, etc. What are their hobbies and habits?

### Tone

“Tone” is the style and volume of speech. Most of your “speaking,” though, is in written form. Capturing the right “voice” on social media shows your followers/customers what your business is

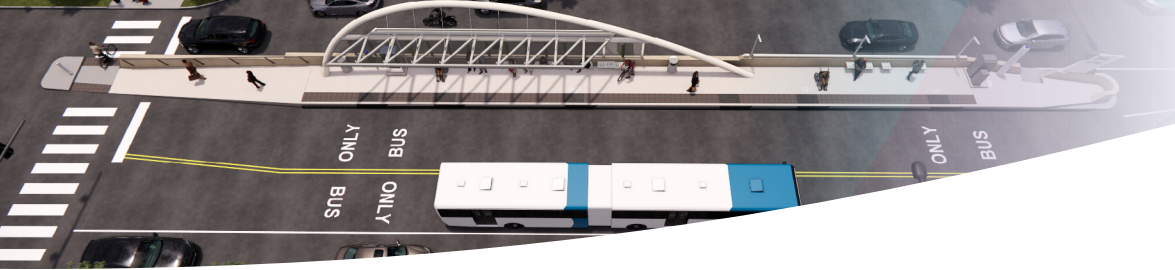
about, sometimes more than the content itself. If you want to reach business leaders, consider using a formal tone. If you’re trying to target teens, use informal language. Including current trends and references (like emojis) is always a must!

### Culture

Thinking about culture helps ensure your brand is inclusive of a broad audience. Here are ways to incorporate information about culture into your brand:

- Research local culture. Avoid assuming that the way you do things is how your customers do them, too. The backgrounds, traditions and values of your actual audience are often different than what you’d expect.
- Use inclusive language. Avoid simple phrases like “hey you guys” or “hey Denver” unless it is important to your brand and voice. You may not realize it, but these may subtly push women or folks from outside Denver away from your brand.
- Consider when and whether to include translations.
- Include diverse representations in photos, on your posts, reels, or your website. If people can’t see themselves, they may assume they aren’t welcome.

Seek feedback. Talk to your clients or customers; send surveys. Then, if it makes sense, use the answers you get to adapt your business strategies (e.g., inventory, hours, etc.) and your online voice/tone.



## A.I. can help!

If you are feeling stressed about all that writing – and you don’t have enough staff to share the duties – consider using artificial intelligence (a basic account on [ChatGPT](#) is free). If you sign up, the process for creating a post is relatively simple:

1. Collect all the information you want as part of your post.
2. In the question box, ask something like “Create a post for LinkedIn that includes x, y and z.”
3. Read over the response. If it works for you, copy and paste it. If not, try asking the question a little differently. The smallest change in question can result in big differences.
4. Be sure to edit the language! A.I. can be great at generating content, but it is *terrible* at following your brand and voice. It doesn’t know your audience like you do!

This will save you time. Tweaking a post can be less cumbersome than drafting something from scratch. But be strategic. Always check for accuracy, inclusive language and branding.

Other tips: A.I. can help you generate new ideas (“Give me five ideas for a post on X about a new product.”) or take a post you’ve already used and turn it into something new (“Take this Facebook post and turn it into three new ones.”). If you’re trying to respond to someone’s concern on Yelp!, copy it and ask A.I.: “Help me respond to this comment.”

## Tagging

Tagging is a tool to create virtual and in-person communities around your business. Like a hyperlink on a website, tags link your social media posts to other people, businesses and ideas.

1. Add your business location to all your posts. This allows more people to know where you are. This brings in customers and promotes your business.
2. Tag people and other businesses. Whether you’re posting a story to promote a neighboring business (see the “Cross-promotion Guide” for more information) or just saying “thank you” to a customer, tags create connections.

## Hashtagging

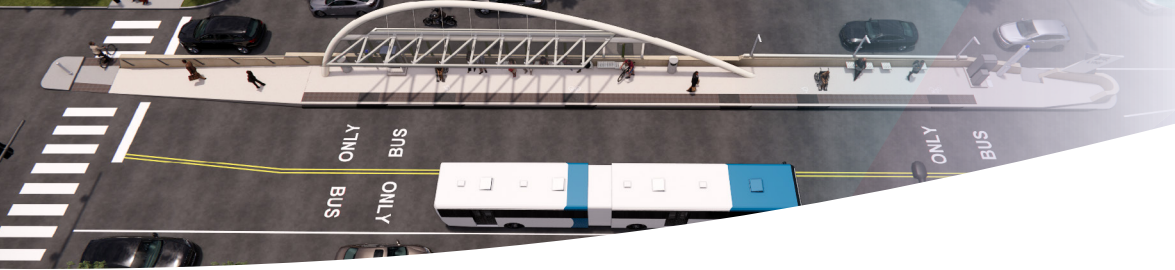
Hashtags are fun! And they can really pay off. For example, a popular restaurant hashtag could be a simple “#happyhour” at the end of the post (“If you’re tired of work, come on over for ½-priced apps from 5-7. #happyhour”).

Because hashtags are clickable, someone seeing #happyhour on another post may find you, too. Adding hashtags increases your “reach.”

Some hashtags can be in the main body of your post (“If you’re excited about #SummerDeals check out OUR sizzling special!”). Many people drop one or more at the end of a post.

**Remember:** some people think hashtags are unserious, so use them wisely. And if you add too many at the end of a post, it can look a bit desperate.

1. Easy to use hashtags: #ThrowbackThursday #TuesdayTip #SupportSmallBusiness #DealoftheWeek
2. Colfax-specific hashtags: #ColfaxThings #ThisIsColfax #ShopColfax #Colfaxsmallbusiness



## Developing a Tone for Your Posts

Like face-to-face customer interactions, social media followers will pick up on the tone. What can you say that will enhance the *feeling* of your business? If posting a picture, which one most effectively evokes your mission and core values?

Avoid negative messaging. Construction may impact your business, but it's important to keep a positive tone in front of your customer base or you may accidentally drive them away. To do this, see our Social Media during Construction document.

### How to Cater Your Content to Each Platform

Each platform has a unique style and different audience. Avoid simply copying and pasting the same one on every platform. Customize your posts! LinkedIn favors a professional image, designed to facilitate networking and showcase your company's professional activities. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok make more room for lighthearted content – so feel free to joke around and include more personal updates.

Adjusting to a different platform may include “cropping” your photos, adding music or changing a caption to satisfy the expectations of the platform's audience. Sometimes posting the same message across platforms is fine. The rule of thumb is: spend a couple minutes to **think before publishing**.

### Content across Platforms

Here are a few examples of the differences when posting across various platforms.

#### Facebook

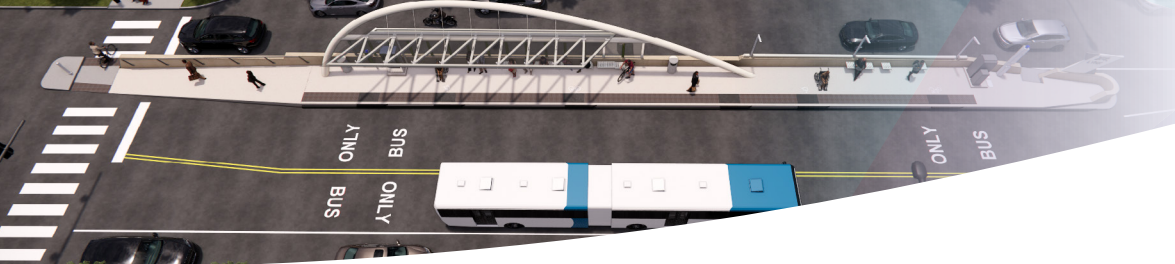
- Business pages on Facebook are often more informational than on Instagram or X. While you can create fun and trendy posts for Facebook, you may get less return on your investment in comparison to platforms like X or Instagram.
- Sometimes you will value efficiency. Check out the “Setting Up Your Business Page” guide to link your Instagram and Facebook accounts. You can set it so that what you post on Instagram will simultaneously post on Facebook.

#### Instagram

- Instagram is the fun, trendy social media app. But there are three dynamics to think through: the feed, reel and story. Use them all to maximize reach and engagement.
  - Only post high-quality photos and graphics to your feed. You can get away with less, but only if your caption is good.
  - “Reels” are short-form videos ranging anywhere from a couple of seconds to one minute long. Reels travel far and wide (they are not limited to your followers) and are incredibly popular. Creating a reel can be quite simple. Check out the reels section of Instagram to get an idea of what content similar businesses make. Turn your phone's camera to selfie mode and say something to your customers (practice first!) or record a look at all the items you have for sale. You don't even have to edit anything!
  - “Stories” are photos or videos with captions that disappear after 24 hours. These are fun to check in with your audience: add information that is only relevant for a short time.

#### X (formerly Twitter)

- X is a platform for talking more intimately with your audience. Be transparent about your business (but be short! There is a 280 character limit).
- Because the platform favors brevity, X is a great place to post deals, business updates or any other community message.



## LinkedIn

- Start using LinkedIn to promote yourself and your business. Gain momentum by sharing your story. Grow your reach as an influential business leader.
- With LinkedIn you can:
  - Broadcast your expertise and potentially reach new customers.
  - Strengthen your professional network to seek advice about your business.
  - Swap stories with people who've been in your shoes. Learn from others' experiences.

## Pinterest

- Though Instagram is often thought of as the most visual social media platform, consider Pinterest as another resource.
- Pinterest has the widest age reach of the platforms mentioned here – though know that it's audience skews female.
- For retail, art-related or restaurants, creating a "portfolio" for your different products, designs or menu items can capture new business. Portfolios can be a great place to store all your best photos.
- Be creative when titling your "boards." Portfolios are accessible from Google image search and other search engines.
- Link to your Pinterest page or Pinterest posts to use on your website, in promotional content or other social media platforms.

## Interacting with Your Followers

Much like in real life, building rapport with the people who "follow" you on social media is an important way to turn a person into a loyal customer – sometimes bringing others along.

### Easy ways to interact with your followers:

- Create content that starts a discussion. This can be as simple as ending a post with "What do you think? Comment below."
- Invite a future relationship. End posts with "Come back next week to see the results" or "We will feature a new customer profile every Thursday, so be sure to check back in."
- Some platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow temporary posts called "Stories." Posting stories is an easy way to continuously check in with your followers, and is low-stakes, as stories disappear after 24 hours. Look for a "+" icon on either app to begin making a story. Once on the camera, either upload a picture or take a new one, then swipe up to view the Stories tool. A few things you can do:
  - Post a fun picture or video.
  - Create a poll.
  - Ask a question to your followers ("What's your favorite drink on the menu?").
- Tag people and places.