Pinterest for Business: Everything You Need to Know

While social networks like Facebook and Twitter are great for sharing content, some businesses can benefit from showing off their more visual sides, and Pinterest is the perfect platform for doing just that.

Pinterest is still fairly new to the social networking scene, so many people and businesses are still learning the best ways to navigate it. However, the platform can be incredibly valuable to marketers when used correctly. And Pinterest seems a lot trickier than it really is — it's mostly about sharing the right content in the most visually appealing and searchable way.

Ready to take on one of the most pin-teresting social networks out there? Here's everything you need to know before you start pinning.

What is Pinterest?

Pinterest is a platform that allows users to share and save content to virtual collections called pinboards (also referred to as simply “boards”). The social network has both a website and a mobile app, and was launched in 2010 by co-founders Ben Silbermann, Evan Sharp and Paul Sciarra. Initially, the website was available only in a closed beta model, and users could join only by invitation until August 2012, when Pinterest opened to the public.

The platform has a very unique demographic, in that the vast majority of its more than 70 million users (according to a July 2013 study by Semiocast) are female. Globally, 83 percent of Pinterest users in 2012 were female, according to a study by Engauge.

While you can find just about anything on the Web on Pinterest — the website’s categories include everything from art to technology, Pinterest is known as a hub for DIY and craft projects, recipes, fashion, home décor and health- and fitness-related information.
How does Pinterest work?

Creating your account

To use Pinterest, you first have to sign up for an account. For businesses, it’s really important that you make sure you specifically sign up for a business account. Using the main sign-up page creates personal accounts — to create a business account, go here.

It’s important to make this distinction because business accounts, while free like personal Pinterest accounts, give you access to features to help your business thrive on the platform, like analytics tools.

To sign up for a business account, you need to enter your email address, a password, the name of your business and your website (though including your website is optional). You also need to select what type of business you run from a drop-down menu. From there, you can set up your profile.

When you log in to your Pinterest account, you’re taken to your home feed. Your home feed shows you all of the most recent pins from the other Pinterest accounts you follow and features endless scrolling for seamless browsing.

Across the top of each page you visit on Pinterest, there is a large search bar with the Pinterest logo on the left-hand side, and a drop-down menu to the right. Clicking the Pinterest logo takes you back to your home feed, while clicking the drop-down menu displays links to all of the categories you can browse through on the platform. To the right of the search bar you’ll see a button with your username and profile picture, and a small button next to it that pulls up a window with your recent activity (i.e., your notifications and messages as well as news from people you follow). Clicking your username takes you to your profile page, where you can see all of your boards and pins, as well as options to edit your profile.

So what exactly are pins and boards? Well, in simple terms, pins are the content you share on Pinterest, and boards are how you organize that content — sort of like visual bookmarks. Before you can start pinning anything, you need to create your boards.

Creating your boards
To create a Pinterest board, go to your profile page and in the space where your boards would go, you’ll see a rectangular space with a “Create a board” button.

Once you click, a box will pop up with the information you need to fill in. You’ll need to enter a name for your board, a description of what your board is about (these are optional, but should be filled out as they can help people discover your boards more often) and select a category for it (also optional, but very important for the same reasons). In addition, you can choose to keep your board secret, so that only you have access to it.
At the bottom of the “create a board” box, you’ll also see an option entitled, “Who can add Pins?” with a text box where you can invite other Pinterest users by username and/or by email. Adding other users to your board creates a group board, which will show up on both your profile and the other users’ profiles as well, and everyone added to the board can contribute pins.

Once you’re done filling out your board’s information, just click “create board” and you’re done. From there, you can start adding pins.

**Adding pins**

You can add pins to your Pinterest boards in a few different ways. To add your own content to Pinterest, go to the board you want to pin to, and click the “Add a Pin” button. A box will pop up with the options to add a pin from the Web or from your computer.
If you decide to add a pin from the Web, Pinterest will prompt you to enter a link to the page you’re pinning from. Once you enter the link, you’ll be taken to a page that shows all of the images from that website. You can then select the image you want to pin, which will open a box that allows you to enter a description for your pin. You can also change the board you want to pin to via the drop-down menu. When you’re done, click the “Pin it” button. Pinning content from the Web will ensure that your pin links back to the website it came from.

If you choose to add a pin from your computer, Pinterest will prompt you to
choose and upload an image file. From there, the process of adding a pin is the same.

To pin from the mobile app, go to your profile tab and click the plus button. This gives you the option to create a new board or pin from your phone’s photos, the Web, or to pin your location if you use the maps feature (part of Pinterest’s “rich pins”).

All pins must include an image or a video in order to be added to Pinterest.

You can also “repin” content from other Pinterest users, as opposed to adding your own content, and it’s good to share a mix of both. Repinning is an easy way to be more active on Pinterest when you don’t have your own content to share, plus, it can get other Pinterest users to notice your brand.

To find content to repin, you can browse through your home feed, browse through specific categories, or search certain keywords in the search bar. When you want to repin an existing pin, hover over the image and click the red “Pin it” button. You’ll then be prompted to select a board from the drop-down menu, and you can either leave the previous user’s description, or write your own.

**Rich pins**

Rich pins are a special type of Pinterest pin that make using the platform more straightforward and seamless. These pins include extra information beyond just the image, click-through link and the pinner’s description. Currently, there are five types of rich pins:

- **Place pins**: Place pins are a special kind of rich pin that allows users to create a map with the content they share. To enable place pins, you simply check off the “add a map” option when you create or edit a pinboard. Selecting the map option overlays your pins onto an actual interactive map (as opposed to the typical solid-color background). You can then add places to your existing pins and pin new places as well.
Place pins include important details like addresses and phone numbers — perfect for mapping out restaurants and other attractions when you’re planning a trip.

- **Article pins**: Just because Pinterest is highly visual in nature, doesn’t mean it’s not a good place to share written content. So long as an article features an image, it can be pinned to Pinterest.
But article pins make it so that users can automatically see the article’s headline, author and a story description — making them much more searchable and distinguishing them from other content on the platform.

- **Product pins**: Product pins make shopping via Pinterest a lot easier. Unlike a regular pin, these rich pins show where the product you’re pinning can be purchased, the current price and a direct link to the product page.
Additionally, product pins' prices are updated in real time, and if a user pins a product pin to one of his or her boards, that user will be notified when the product’s price is lowered. Since many Pinterest users create boards that serve as wish lists for things they want, product pins are a great way to convert pins into purchases.

- **Recipe pins**: Pinterest is already a huge hub for foodies, and you can find just about any recipe imaginable on the site. Recipe pins take sharing food on Pinterest to a whole new level. Unlike a regular pin, which would show an image and a description that is manually entered in by the pinner, these recipe-specific rich pins show users important information like the necessary ingredients and their amounts, cooking times and serving info.
Recipe pins also display details about whether a recipe is vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, paleo, etc., making searching for – and determining which recipes you can make – a lot simpler. And users can still click-through to the website from which the recipe came to see detailed instructions and more photos of the recipes they’re pinning.

- **Movie pins:** Great for film buffs, these rich pins show more details about the movies you pin. Movie pins include information like the year a film was released, its rating, the director and the main stars of the film.
When pinning from different movie websites like Netflix, Flixter and Rotten Tomatoes, pinners will also see how those websites’ users ranked films as well.

To use rich pins, you need to apply for them. According to Pinterest, there are four steps to this process.

1. Decide which type of rich pin you want to use.
2. Read the documentation for your chosen rich pin type.
3. Add the appropriate metatags to your website.
4. Validate your rich pins and apply to get them on Pinterest.

You can find out more about applying for and enabling rich pins on Pinterest’s developers page.
Interacting with other Pinterest users

Pinterest is, unlike other social networks, much more about saving and sharing content than it is about interacting with other users. However, it’s still a social network, and like any other social network, Pinterest does give users ways to connect with other people. Repinning and using group boards are a few ways to interact with other users, but there are other methods as well.

- **Likes:** Liking a pin is the easiest way to interact with another Pinterest user (and save a pin for later, if you don’t have time to pin it right away). Simply hover over the pin you want to like and click the heart-shaped button. As with favoriting a tweet on Twitter or liking a Facebook post, this will notify that user, and you can access your liked posts from the “Likes” tab on your profile page.

- **Comments:** You can also add comments to other users’ pins. To do so, click on the pin you want to comment on. This will pull up a larger window with the pin and more information about it (especially if it’s a rich pin). Under the pin, you’ll see a comment box where you can type in and share what you want to say.

- **Sending pins:** You can also send pins you want to share with other users (or non-Pinterest users, even) by hovering over pins and clicking the send button. A box will pop up that allows you to search for other Pinterest users by username, or type in an email address to mail the pin to.
Additionally, you can find friends from other social networks to send pins to as well.

- **Tagging users:** Just like on Twitter, you can tag users using the @ symbol on Pinterest. When you’re writing a description for your pin or adding a comment to someone else’s pin, just type in the @ symbol and the username of the person you want to tag, and they’ll be notified.

Karen Leland, branding, marketing and content expert at Sterling Marketing Group suggested using these features to promote other brands.

“Build your brand by engaging with the community via repinning, commenting on and liking other pins,” she said, adding that tagging other users in your pins’ descriptions is a good way to reach out, too.
Hashtags on Pinterest

Pinterest users can use hashtags when sharing their pins, as with other social networks like Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr. However, Pinterest has its own unique search system, so hashtags are not the most effective way to make your content searchable on this social network. Hashtags are more effective if you use your own, brand-specific hashtags, and less effective if you were to share a pin with the hashtag #recipes, for example.

While you may be tempted to put hashtags in your business’s description (like on Twitter) or in your boards’ descriptions, don’t do it — hashtags on Pinterest only work in pin descriptions, so if you put them elsewhere, you’ll only waste your time and look like you don’t know how to use the platform.

What’s more important on Pinterest is that you use proper keywords when describing your pins and boards, keep your boards organized (i.e., don’t pin recipes to a fashion board by accident) and categorize your boards correctly. Hashtags are really only a bonus on Pinterest, whereas on Twitter they can make or break how successful your posts are.

Personalizing your Pinterest profile

Unlike other social networks, Pinterest does not give you many profile customization options. That doesn’t mean that you can’t show off your brand, though. Pinterest allows you to upload a profile picture, use a custom username, and write a summary about you or your business. You can also list your location and your website.
While you can’t change the layout of your Pinterest page like you can on Tumblr or upload a banner image like on Facebook or Twitter, there are other ways to make your profile unique. You can name your pinboards with clever phrases that are both searchable (i.e., contains the proper keywords) and relatable to your brand. You can also enter a short description of each board that explains what that board is about and how it aligns with your brand. Additionally, you can choose cover photos for each board that relate back to your brand and are visually stimulating. While you may not be able to change much about your Pinterest profile, you can still successfully represent your brand with the options the platform gives you if you get creative.

**Trending topics on Pinterest**

To see what’s trending on Pinterest, click on the drop-down menu in the search bar and select “Popular” (if you’re on mobile, go to the search tab and select the same category). The Popular page will show you a feed of the most popular pins on Pinterest at that time.

Above the popular pins, you’ll see a banner of the top interests on Pinterest at
that time. You can click these interests and see the popular pins in those topics in addition to related topics.

Knowing what’s trending on Pinterest can help you decide what types of content to pin. For example, if you see a lot of DIY projects trending, that would be a good time to find and share DIY content that can relate back to your business, if at all possible. Any time you can relate trending topics back to your brand, you make your business more discoverable on Pinterest.

**Advertising on Pinterest**

Currently, Pinterest does not offer advertising options for businesses. However, the platform has been testing an option called “Promoted Pins,” which Pinterest plans to launch in the near future. Businesses can sign up to receive updates and priority access to the Promoted Pins feature here.

**Pinterest analytics**

To access your account’s analytics page, go to your profile page and click the gear button in the top right-hand corner. This will pull up a drop-down menu where you can also access your account settings, a tips for businesses page, and the log-out page.

When you select “analytics” you’ll be taken to a dashboard where you can see statistics about your profile, audience and more. Specifically, you can see data on
your profile’s average daily impressions and viewers, your average monthly
viewers and average monthly engagements, and data about which pins are doing
the best. You can click “more” on this data to see graphs of all your data.

Pinterest’s analytics tool shows you which of your pins have gotten the most
impressions, repins, clicks and likes, so you can see what types of your specific
content get the most traction on the platform.

Through Pinterest analytics you can learn valuable things about your audience
demographics, like gender, location and other interests, what devices visitors to
your page are using, along with what your most popular pins are.

You can learn more about navigating and understanding your analytics data here.

**Pinterest tips & tricks**

- **Connect to your other networks.** You can connect your Pinterest account
to your Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Gmail and Yahoo accounts, and can
choose to log in with Facebook and/or Twitter (instead of typing in your
email and password) as well. Connecting to your Gmail and Yahoo accounts
allows you to find and connect with your contacts who already have Pinterest
accounts, and when you connect to your other social networks, they’ll be
displayed on your profile so pinners can easily find you elsewhere on the
Web.

- **Use the Pinterest bookmarklet or browser add-on.** Pinterest offers both
a bookmarklet (a button that you can drag to your browser’s bookmarks bar,
which, when clicked, allows you to pin content from the websites you visit to
your Pinterest boards) and a browser add-on for Google Chrome. The
browser add-on appears as a small Pinterest logo next to the search/address
bar, and works similarly to the bookmarklet.

- **Add a Pinterest board widget to your website.** This is a great way to let
visitors to your website know that you’re active on Pinterest. Just choose the
board you want to share, paste the URL into the widget maker, choose the
size you want, and click the “Build It!” button. Then, embed the code on your
website somewhere visitors will see it.

- **Add the “Pin it” button to your website.** Have you ever gone to a website,
hovered over an image and seen a little red Pinterest button pop up? That’s Pinterest’s Pin it button, and it allows Pinterest users to easily pin your content to their boards directly from your website. Adding the Pin it button to your website makes it simpler to share content from your website — meaning more people are likely to do just that.

- **Watch your percentages.** Achieve balance with the content of your boards by posting specific amounts of certain content. Leland said that, in general, 40 percent of your boards should be motivational and inspiring, 40 percent should be instructional and educational, and only 20 percent should be directly about your brand (things like announcements, contests, etc.). Although it’s important to see what works with your audience by looking at your analytics page, and adapt your strategy that way, too.

You can find the bookmarklet and browser add-on as well as more information about creating a board widget or adding a Pin it button to your website here.

**Cool uses for Pinterest**

Pinterest may seem like a simple platform, and it is, but that doesn’t mean you can’t find cool and unique uses for your pin boards. There are a lot of ways that businesses and users alike can use Pinterest for purposes other than just sharing products, recipes or articles (or as previously mentioned, planning a trip with the maps feature). Here are a few ways to take advantage of Pinterest:

- **Create gift guides.** Don’t just pin your latest products to your boards. For holidays (or other special, relatable occasions), turn your pinboards into gift-themed gift guides. Include your own products as well as other brands, so that it doesn’t look like one giant advertisement for your business. Other pinners will love browsing through your products, and you’ll probably be more likely to make a sale.

- **Show off playlists.** Since you’re not limited to solely pinning images, try pinning music videos from YouTube to create a playlist board. With a huge fitness community on Pinterest, this could be a great way for fitness-related companies to stray from the norm of sharing workout guides and exercise gear, for example.
• **Make a reading list.** Save thoughtful articles and books related to your business with Pinterest by creating pinboards of all the good reads you think your visitors and customers would be interested in. You can also create secret boards with all the articles and books you’re dying to read in your spare time, so they don’t get lost or forgotten in your bookmarks folder.

• **Plan an event.** From a business trip to the office holiday party, Pinterest makes planning events (perhaps surprisingly) easier. Just create a secret group board with everyone who’s working on the event, and each person can pin or repin helpful ideas, locations and tips.

• **Redesign your office space.** Moving into a new office or redesigning your old one? If you can’t or don’t want to hire a designer for any reason, create a secret group board and invite your employees to contribute ideas. Pinterest has a plethora of DIY projects and décor ideas just waiting for you on the Web.

• **Do giveaways.** If you’re holding a contest or promotion, pin it to the relevant boards on your Pinterest page. Leland noted that pins with a call to action like this see much more engagement on the platform.