

We're at the heart of it.

STEP UP YOUR SOCIAL

15 easy ideas to drive more clicks & engagement across your social platforms



News and nostalgia is a powerful combination.

Connect people's lives with today's news and not only will you get terrific content, you'll get extraordinary traffic and sharing, too. CNN's "What the late '60s really looked like" story got more than 7MM page views on desktop alone.



Keep hashtags specific, inviting and branded.

When you're asking for content, that is.

A few rules of thumb:

- Be specific: #2013inFiveWords over #cnn2013
- Personalize the invitation: #MyChicagoland over #Chicagoland
- Add your branding for context: #AskMalalaCNN over #AskMalala



Tackle taboos with emotion & simplicity.

If you keep the ask simple and phrase it in a way that many people will feel comfortable responding, we've found that people are surprisingly forthcoming. Examples include CNN's "50 years after King, hidden racism lives on" and "My income makes me feel ___" stories.



Think beyond photos and video.

CNN saw great success in 2013 when we invited our iReporters (e.g. citizen journalists) to share personal essays. We published more than a dozen, with many social referrals and shares. Sometimes, the best thing is to let your audience speak for themselves.



Comments are better when you're in them.

A recent study at UT found that the chances of an uncivil comment declined by 15% when the author of a story participated in the thread. We see this time and again on CNN, too.



But not all stories need comments.

On the flip side, some stories simply don't have a participation angle, and your community is unlikely to have anything interesting to add. These stories can become playgrounds for trolls. Often, these are very short writes on spot news, especially tragedies in places U.S. audiences don't know well.



If a tweet works once, do it twice.

Only a tiny sliver of your audience will see your tweets. If you craft something that gets a good response the first time, it's OK to tweet it again while it's still relevant (but edit the intro a bit).



Use these phrases for engagement.

Want comments, likes and shares? Here are a couple of phrases that do well, and a few that don't. By the way, if the news is legitimately big and breaking, "Breaking News" is great for clicks, but not engagement.



Images give you wings, and Vines give you jetpacks.

Images drive more shares and engagement; Vine videos multiply that effect. During the Golden Globes, our vines of Matthew McConaughey and Amy Poehler achieved 3 times and 5 times the normal reach, respectively.



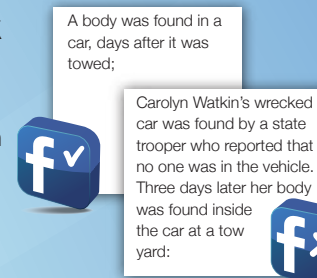
These words get clicks; these words don't.

We looked at every post on the CNN Facebook page in 2013, and counted which words appeared most frequently in the posts with the highest click-through. We did the same to seek out the lowest click-through words.



Keep it short on Facebook to get more clicks.

Two lines or less is your target. Posting all the details may get high engagement, but that won't translate into click-through. Ambiguity and sparking curiosity will ultimately drive more clicks.



Animals.

OK, so you probably already knew this one. It's true – the Internet likes animals. CNN's story about a woman carrying a wounded pit bull down a mountain drew 64K Facebook shares.



Crop tight for more clicks.

Don't give everything away in a photo. Crop tight to encourage click through.



Pick positive stories about people.

Stories with a human element and optimistic worldview draw the most engagement. This photo of a young Syrian refugee got the most engagement on Instagram for CNN in 2013.



Use large photos only when they're great.

Use photo posts when you have pics of people (candid is better) or photos that have a "wow" factor. For before/after photos, don't post the split image. Use a short-and-sweet caption (aim for 70 characters – best for mobile) + URL + a call to action.

