

TRANSCRIPT

Automating Social Media Posts [Featuring MavSocial]

Hi Everyone! Christopher Benoit here, of the Dishes Delish food blog. In this video, I want to share with you how we at Dishes Delish automate a portion of our social media posts.

I believe there are many different applications you can use for this purpose, but about a year ago, when I was looking around for one, the only free application I could find that would allow me to schedule posts in the future and include photos was **MavSocial**. The ability to include photos is critical to Dishes Delish, because we believe that our blog's greatest assets are Elaine's personality, her narrative voice - so, her writing - and her photos. Therefore, in addition to using social media for promoting the blog content and our recipes in general, I really wanted a platform that would enable us to showcase Elaine's photos all by themselves, even if people never followed links back to the blog. By now there may be other applications that let you post photos for free, but MavSocial is the one I use and the one I will demonstrate in this video. By the way, I love MavSocial and highly recommend it. And consider that I'm only using a fraction of its functionality. So let's get to it.

I'm a big believer in process and streamlining, which I accomplish largely with the use of spreadsheets. Spreadsheets are great for providing me with the structure to guide my processes, while at the same time tracking both the actions those processes require and the data they generate. I love spreadsheets and I use them to keep me organized in a lot of different areas of my personal and working life. FYI, you can download this spreadsheet from our site for free. Then you can adapt it and customize it as you see fit and as best serves your own blog marketing activities. And although I've created and use this process for the food blog, you could easily use it for other platforms and endeavors that benefit from structure, organization, and tracking.

First things first. I open my spreadsheet.

I access my computer file folders. Since I'm using a Mac, this means I open a new Finder window. On a PC, you'll open Windows Explorer.

At Dishes Delish, Elaine and I have a free **Dropbox** account to help our workflow. When I open Finder I go to our Photos folder on Dropbox. A tip I'd like to share at this point is regarding

filenames. One of the fastest and easiest way to organize your files, even before you start with a folder system, is through your file naming conventions. For our folder names on Dropbox, we use the following naming convention: We put the year, hyphen, the month and the day, and the recipe short name or title. [YYYY-MMDD Recipe Short Name/Title]. The beauty of this convention is that it ranks the photo folders themselves in chronological order by publishing date, which will also come in handy later on. Elaine names all of the photos using a short form of the blog post or recipe title, followed by a number starting from 1 and going up as needed. With rare exceptions, those numbers indicate the chronological order of the photos within the blog post, which is very useful to know when you're working with the files later on, as you'll see.

Now I open a browser window. I usually use Safari. Sometimes I use Firefox.

In the browser window, I open our Bitly account and the Dishes Delish homepage, in case I need to refer to it for any reason.

Now, by way of background into our process, Elaine publishes three blog posts every week. On Mondays and Wednesdays, she posts food recipes. On Fridays, she posts a cocktail recipe. All her posts go up around noon time. The work I'm showing you now, I do in a couple of hours on Saturday mornings, by which time Elaine has moved all of that week's blog post photos to Dropbox for me.

At the top of my spreadsheet, below the column labels, I insert three new rows for data; one for each of the new posts.

In my Finder window, I highlight and copy the three new folder names using my Apple Command button + the C button. This is a great feature of Finder's that I don't think is available in Windows, so PC users would have to type these filenames by hand.

I then paste the folder names into Excel.

I enter the new blog post dates; one each for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

I go to Bitly, copy the full blog post title and paste it into Excel.

I go to Bitly, copy the blog post URL – the long URL – and paste it into Excel.

And then lastly, I go to Bitly, copy the blog post short link and paste it into Excel. Elaine has already generated those links for me. She creates the entries in Bitly when she creates the blog posts.

Now, at Dishes Delish, we purchased a special branded short name domain (ddel DOT co) specifically to use with Bitly. It costs about \$25 per year, if you purchase privacy protection, which we do, but it's even less without that feature. We use Bitly, incidentally, to track our link traffic. However, you can even more easily and for free use the short link Bitly provides, too. So either way is fine. But in either case, we always further customize the URL, which you can do with both the branded short domain or the Bitly short link, and we keep this customized portion of the URL as short as we can, but that's a personal preference.

In my Saturday morning work flow, the next steps I take are to prepare and post Pinterest pins for each of the week's new blog posts, but I'm not going to go into those today. I'll do a separate video for those, if there's a demand for it (that is, if I get requests in the Comments section at the bottom of the page where I'll post this video), but the remaining Excel columns that you see pertain to Pinterest and to the activities that I'm going to perform next, but for posts that were published in the past. So they're a little further down.

Now at this point, it would be useful, I think, for me to share that, even though MavSocial offers you the ability to post to Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, and YouTube, at Dishes Delish we currently only automate postings to our Twitter account. We then monitor the account for all other activity, including retweeting other people's recipes or their tweets and responding to our followers, but the process I'm discussing today is really the backbone of our Twitter marketing strategy; this automated tweets of Elaine's photos. Elaine actively posts on Facebook and Instagram, so those accounts she's managing personally on a daily basis. Our communities and the gurus we follow all stress simplifying your approach to social media, especially in the beginning and when you're small, as Dishes Delish is at the time of this video. Otherwise, you risk spreading yourself too thin and diluting your impact across social media, the Internet, and your marketing platforms. So, that's the rationale we currently follow. We automate our tweets for Twitter; Elaine personally manages Facebook and Instagram; we're not really active on other platforms. But obviously, you should give MavSocial a good review of your own in order to discover and determine how best it can serve your interests, your goals, and your social media capacity and preferences.

Okay. So now that I have this week's new posts entered into the spreadsheet, I move on to creating the social media posts I want to automate.

I scroll down the spreadsheet to find the next blog post eligible to post in Twitter.

I go to that blog post's corresponding photo folder on Dropbox in my Finder window. And now I take a few minutes to review these photos and determine which ones or which combinations of them I want to use. So, for example, if there are two photos that look very similar, I will only use one of them. And this happens regularly with Elaine's cocktail photos. Or, if there are photos that I feel would not really hold up or stand up to their own individual tweet, I plan to combine them, often as a before-and-after collage of some kind.

Now for collages, I use both Adobe Lightroom and Fotor. I don't recommend Lightroom, and not because it's not a good product. It is. But because, for one thing, it costs money and for another, it's not particularly easy to use, or I should say, simple to use, especially if you're not tech savvy. Fotor, on the other hand, is free and wonderfully easy to use. It's also highly simplified (in contrast to Lightroom's complexity and its steep learning curve) so you don't have to spend a lot of time figuring it out or agonizing over functions or worse, endless options. Too many options, in my opinion, are the bane of a smooth, efficient work flow.

Now, if I am going to combine photos, I open Fotor and make the edits. And let's take a few minutes to walk through that process now.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should start by saying that I do not use Fotor's full functionality, which falls under 3 categories: Edit, Collage, and Design. I currently only use the Collage function and I have my Preferences set to open the program directly onto the Collage page, which is what you see here. But please do your research, which should include reading some reviews, just so you have some perspective on my recommendation. I love Fotor, but I'm using it for very limited purposes.

Okay. So, I start on the upper right hand side of the page to select the ratio of my collage photos, which, after doing some research and experimenting, I prefer the 4 by 3. They always display well on Twitter. And then I pull in my photos, the photos I want to collage, which you can do from the Add button on the left as I just did, or by double-clicking within the empty frames. Once I pull in my

photos, I adjust frame width to 11, which is just a personal preference. And next, I position my photos in the frames but since I don't need to make any adjustments, and I almost never do, I go to the right side of the page again, where I click on the Export button. I save the photos to my computer – the collages to my computer – but as you may see here, you could export directly to Facebook, Flickr, or Twitter. I select the normal JPEG quality, which I find perfectly sufficient. Then I browse to the folder where I want to store the photo and I save that location. I go back to my directory in order to copy the name I want to use as a basis for the collage filename (which is one of the photo names), return to Fotor, paste that name and make my modifications to it and then I save it. So the photo saved successfully, according to Fotor, so I just I go back to check that the new collage is where I think it's going to be when I need it and once I confirm that, indeed it is there with the rest of the photos from that shoot, I close Fotor and I'm done with that program.

So now that I know or have created collages of those photos I'm going to tweet, I copy and paste the filenames, as I did earlier with the folder names, insert the requisite number of rows in my Excel spreadsheet, and paste the new items. I then tweak and scrub this mini-list of photos (names) to make sure I have the right photos, in the correct order, listed for creating my automated posts. And this order is important to your work flow later on.

Next, I copy the short link URL from the blog post I'm working with, and insert it into the appropriate fields in my spreadsheet. Keep in mind, I want to include it in every tweet. Now here's a bit of a digression to explain. When I first started out, I did not include short links back to the blog in my automated tweets, because I didn't want to "over-sell" or "over-market" the blog or appear too pushy with our content. But after a few weeks of tweeting, I realized that anyone following us or simply interested in the photos, was not going to know how to find their source without doing some digging into our Twitter account and that can be time-consuming; it can be inconvenient. That's when I decided that including the short link would actually provide a better experience to our followers. And if they didn't want to leave Twitter to visit the blog, the power to simply ignore the link was always in their hands. So, that informs my method today.

Next, returning to the spreadsheet, I fill in the date I want to post each tweet. Since Elaine is already tweeting directly from the Dishes Delish website on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays mid-day to announce her new posts, and since we've decided not to issue more than two tweets on any given day (as a rule), I avoid those times and I schedule all my tweets on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

afternoons – later in the afternoon – and twice a day on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Also, one Wednesday in the middle of every month, I will also tweet a call to action with a short link for subscribing to our new post announcements, so that's another slot I will avoid now while I'm scheduling. Lastly, in order to simplify and structure the timing and scheduling of these automated tweets, I turn to the time of day when I'm going to tweet them. And, I believe it's between 7:00 and 10:00 in the morning for Twitter and I want to say 4:00 and 8:00 PM in the evening for Twitter – but you really should look this up online to find out – those are the optimal times so those are the windows that I go for. And I put in – and this will be useful later when I'm entering all of these tweets or these posts, these automated posts into MavSocial, I'll need to know what time I'm going to schedule them – so I determine all that right now, and I put it into this spreadsheet and that's basically the last part of the structuring around the scheduling.

Now comes the most time-consuming part of the process, which is: writing the tweets!! I'm not going to say much about that, other than that I do try to be engaging and I do try to be funny when I write them. I'm something of a frustrated comedian, I admit it. However, I really try not to worry too much about the content because I feel that, number one: the best part of each tweet is the photo (at least, in my mind it is) and really the most necessary part is the short link so that, if followers want to, they can go back to the blog to see more photos, to see where that photo originated, and to look at the recipe. The rest of the information in the tweets I consider to be gravy.

But I would always urge anyone listening to go online and research for yourself the best times of day to post to Twitter, Instagram, or whichever platform you end up using (and yes, they are all different). You should also research how to write good tweets, as well as good Pinterest pins and every other category of online content you can think of. It's all out there to help you, you just have to go find it.

So, once all the tweets are written, that really encompasses the heaviest, and really most tedious lifting in this whole process and now comes the fun part, which is scheduling automated social media posts.

So once I've created tweets for all of the photographs I'm going to promote in this particular batch, I log in to my MavSocial account.

From within MavSocial you can start either from the Post Manager, selecting your Campaign up here in the dropdown. Or, you can go in through the Campaigns->Campaign Planner tabs, which is how I prefer to do it. From here, I select the **DishesDelish Photos on Twitter** campaign. And you can see on this page, by reverse chronological order of creation date, all the posts I have created and their status.

I select **Add Post**.

I select the **Twitter** icon. And you must select at least one icon in order to save your post, but don't worry - MavSocial will remind you if you don't!

I go to my spreadsheet and I make a copy of my tweet content.

I return to MavSocial, where I paste it in the text box. If I make any changes to it here, I copy and paste them back in Excel so I always have an accurate record of what I tweeted.

I click on the **Upload Image** icon to upload my photograph from our Dropbox folder.

While I wait for the image to load, I click on the **Schedule** icon, to select the date and time of my post. And this is where having those dates and times pre-determined for you comes in really handy.

I make sure the image has fully loaded and then I click the **Schedule** button.

And once I click **Schedule** and I see these – there's two black confirmation flags that pop out from the right side of the page; they disappear so you kind of have to watch out for them; they disappear after a few seconds – they tell me that my post has been... one says it's been Saved and one says it's been Scheduled. Once I see those, I go back to the campaign page to make sure that the post appears in the list.

I then select **Add Post** and do it all again for every one of the posts I want to schedule and have created in my spreadsheet to schedule. And after that, I'm pretty much done.

Periodically, as I'm working to add new posts in MavSocial, I will check the Campaign Calendar in a new tab, just to make sure that the posts are appearing in their correct order. And if they don't, I address my errors or oversights as I find them.

So here, I'm going to make one last digression and address the monthly new post announcements I alluded to earlier. You can see my campaign for subscribing to new post announcements on this page. And so I click into this campaign and the page I go to displays the list of all my tweets that contain the call to action to subscribe to Dishes Delish new post announcements. In order to create and schedule a *new* tweet – and you can do this in any of your campaigns, so this is a good functionality to know and I'm happy to demonstrate this – you simply expand one of the existing ones (and I usually expand the last one I created so that I'm getting the most recent content, just in case I may have changed it, which does happen) and I click **Clone**. And once the new, cloned entry appears, I expand it and click **Edit**. Now, in the case of these announcements, I'm reusing the same content each time so I don't need to rewrite or copy and paste a new call to action; I use the same one. So, all I have to do is go into the Scheduling icon to schedule the tweet and save that post.

So, that's our process at Dishes Delish for automating our social media posts. I hope you found this video helpful and worthwhile to listen to. I've had to leave out some information and some of the details; not regarding my process so much as how to do certain things online, such as open and use a MavSocial account, a Bitly account, or any new social media account. But there are plenty of other, better resources for that, which I recommend you find and review if you have time and the interest. As I said before, there's a ton of information out there and there are a ton of tools. Research which one is best for you.

And so that's it! Thank you for listening. Please share this video with others if you think it might help them with their blog, too. And best of luck with your own online marketing efforts!

Send me an email if you have questions. My email address is christopher@dishesdelish.com.