

## **7.4 Social Media Planning Tools**

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to research and understand a social media post scheduling tool to help automate the posting process across multiple social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Later was the selected tool for this project. Part of the exercise was to create and schedule at least 10 different posts using the selected automation tool. In this paper, you will find sample images used as well as a posting schedule to show frequency and quantity. Screenshots of the posting calendars are also included for reference. Initial thoughts and further insights on social media marketing and posting are included.

**Keywords:** social media, platform, automation tool, social media marketing

### 7.4 Social Media Planning Tools

For this assignment, I select the social media planning tool Later (later.com) because after comparing the services I felt like it was best suited for my personal posting needs for my business, Stacey Sansom Designs. One of the deciding factors was how many social media platforms were allowed at the base cost – free. A true test of how it works is best used across all platforms that are currently used regularly or I am trying to increase my use of.

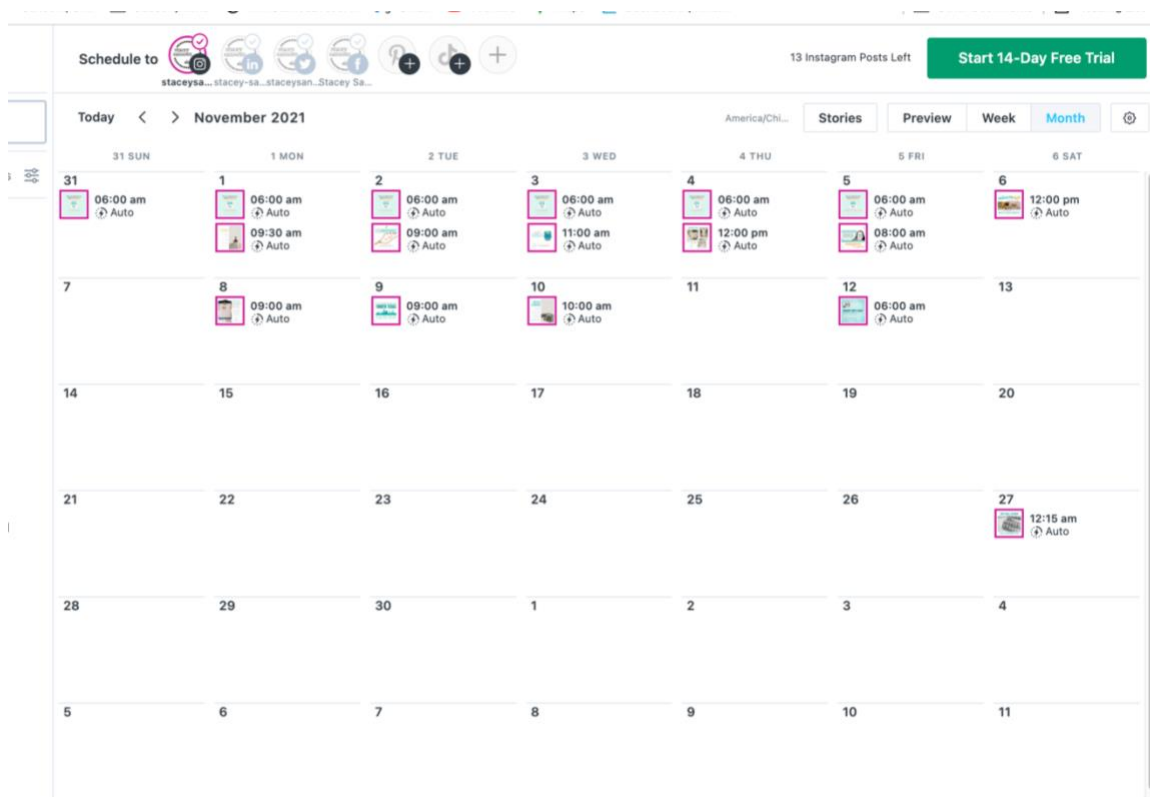
Later also exceeded the other recommended services with their allowed number of automated posts per month on their free plan, allowing up to 30 posts per month per social media platform. That is a good test number in my opinion to see if things are working as hoped or if you are simply wanting to automate posting for more consistency.

The initial setup was not difficult with Later although I feel that the website probably aided in this ease of use. The iPhone app is less intuitive for setting up everything for use, but it is easy for posting. I did have a problem getting my Facebook Business Page to connect to Later initially and had to put in a support ticket for help. I did get it to connect before they responded so this could have just been internet or server issues. I also could not get my Instagram account to stay in automatic posting mode, but today it allowed this automated connection.

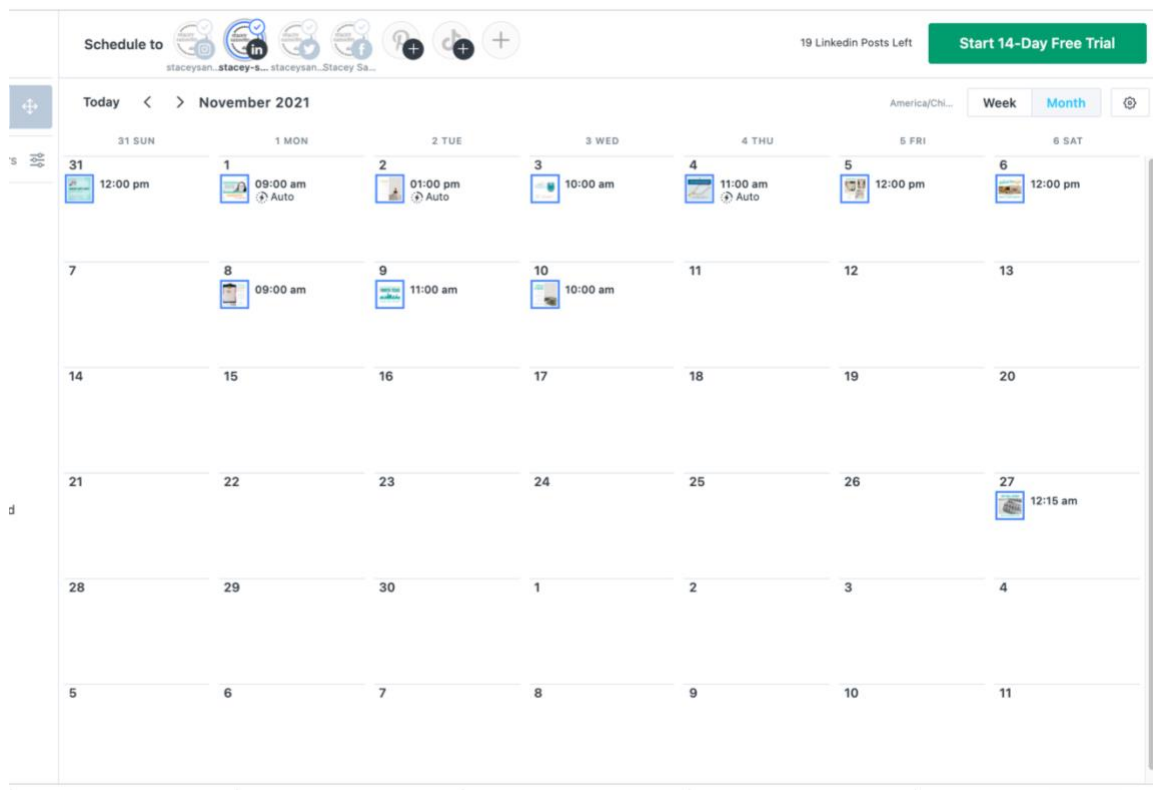
I set out to give this an honest test and scheduled posts for about two weeks starting on October 31, 2021. Ideally, I would have preferred to schedule out a whole month to see what impact the different types of posts have on follower engagement. However, I stopped at the posts indicated

in the images below due to time restraints. Also, these are tests, so I want to be able to adjust post types based on what is gathering the most engagement.

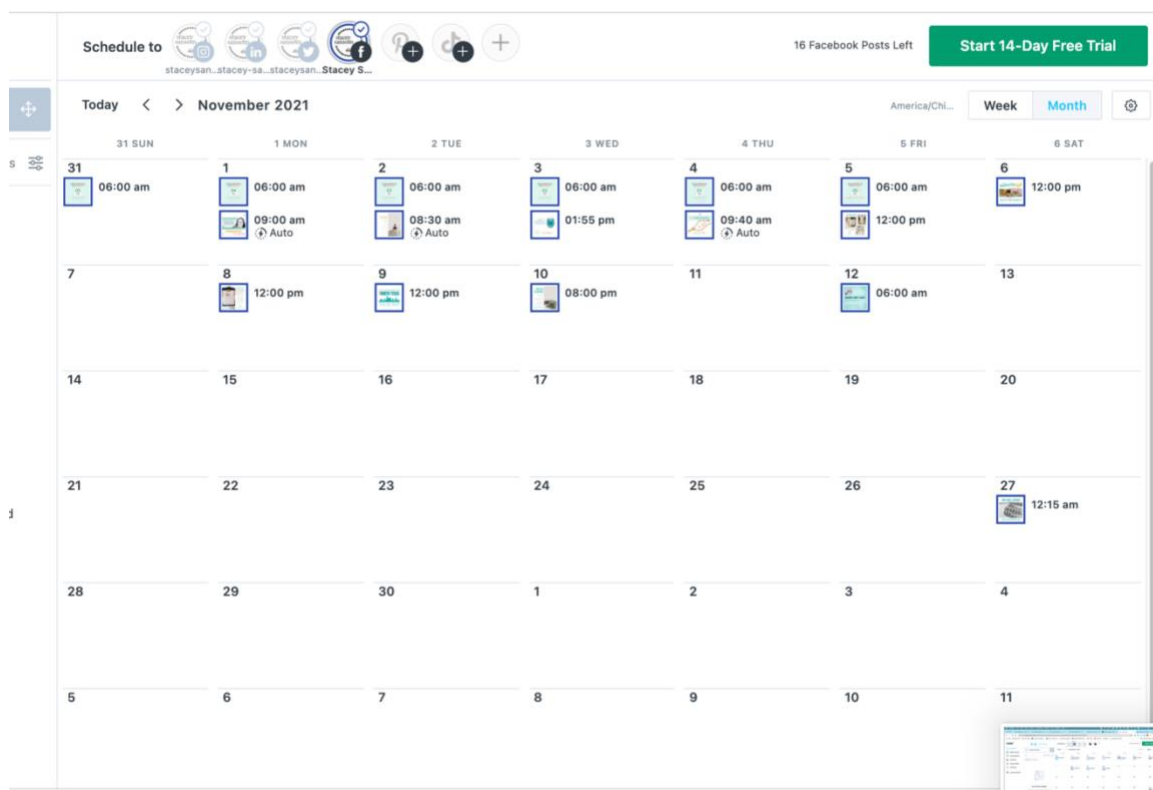
I did not plan different posts on each platform, because I wanted to test engagement levels before invested a lot of time adjusting post types, caption content, and image sizes. I used Adobe Spark to create my images for my posts. I selected the default sizes of Instagram, square, or a 1:1 ratio image for all but one post and stories. This was done because often square posts do post fine on Facebook while it is not the optimal image size for posting. The selection was made based on project time restraints. I have a most common image size post bookmarked for easy reference when I am targeting multiple platforms and want to guarantee full picture viewing on all platforms. For testing, I feel that the same image is adequate for rudimentary result tracking.



Instagram – Later automated posting calendar



LinkedIn Business Page – Later automated posting calendar



Facebook Business Page – Later automated posting calendar

I setup 4 of my 6 allotted social media platforms, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, but I primarily focused my efforts on Instagram and Facebook. While Twitter is still commonly used in some industries, I am not certain that it is used consistently in the sewing industry so I will focus on that at another date. I did a little bit of research and found that LinkedIn has considerably different recommended posting frequencies than Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. This is due to its different audience in general. I want to use it more but will have to experiment with the frequency a bit to see what works best.

As you can see, I scheduled 17 posts on Instagram and Facebook, and 11 on LinkedIn. Some posts were not relevant to the LinkedIn audiences so these were excluded. While the posts on Instagram and Facebook were identical, they were not necessarily scheduled on the same days or at the same times. I know many of my current followers are visiting between the hours of 9:00-11:00 AM, but I scheduled outside of this time range for testing purposes. I want to play with the timing over the next several weeks to see if it makes a difference on any of the platforms. My guess is that it will with other changes that have been made or will be made in the type of posts and their overall appearance.

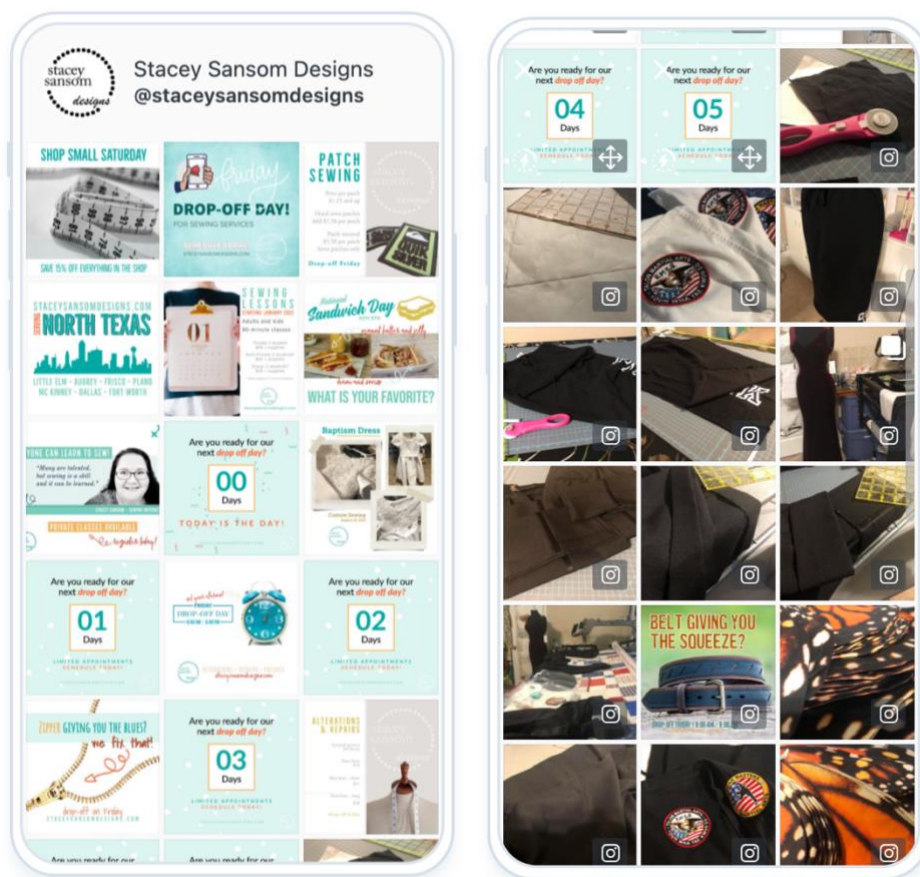
Initially, I tried doing some story sized images for automatic posting, but the free Later account does not support posting to stories. I also could not find any way to create a story on the website or in the app to use their push notification posting method. This is a cool feature where you receive a push notification to authorize posting a scheduled post instead of it doing it automatically. I can see this as a valuable feature if something is either time or quantity sensitive.

I could find it useful when I am marketing and advertising my services each week. I only take on so many clients each week based on how many other things are happening. Some weeks I skip posting advertisements because I can frequently get more customers than I can handle that week. Having the ability to schedule and then only post if I authorize it to do so can be very useful in situations like this.

Typically, I post in Facebook Groups to advertise my business. Our neighborhood has a lady's group that is over 1.7K members strong. I only post on Saturday based on group commerce rules and 90% of my Facebook referred business comes from this group. It is a very lucrative source of potential income for me. Unfortunately, the free Later plan does not support posting to Facebook Groups and this appears to be the norm across the various automated services. Thus, further limiting the overall usefulness of the tool for me. I am disappointed because it has so much to offer small businesses.

Two features that made me excited from a time management approach was the quick schedule feature and caption saving that Later offers even on their free plans. Think of quick schedule as preassigned business hours that are clearly marked on the calendar. These can be set based on your ideal posting times. Then it is a quick and easy drag and drop process to populate the calendar with posts. The saved captions can then be quickly used to populate captions on posts for rapid fire scheduling. I do not see this as 100% kosher from a SEO and content marketing standpoint, but it can be useful in ways that I would consider more appropriate. I find myself typing out the same string of hashtags on certain post types. This feature can be used to just populate the hashtags instead of entire captions. Both are huge time saving features.

One thing that I appreciated about Later was that I could use the preview feature on the Instagram platform to preview how my posts looked in the very visual Instagram feed. This preview is featured in the 2 images above. I include this because I have been frustrated with the less than stellar immediate first look of my Instagram feed, so I took before and after screenshots to illustrate the difference that consciously considered and scheduled posting makes, at least on Instagram.



Instagram preview on Later

Above, the image on the right illustrates the before shot of the Instagram feed for Stacey Sansom Designs. There are a lot of pictures of work that I've completed, I finish and snap a picture and encourage others to bring their items to me for services as well. One thing that I noticed was that



one post stood out from the others. The image was my ad that I created for a previous assignment in this course. It was clean, tidy, and eye catching. It did not show the service or a finished product, but it touched a pain point of customers that need pants let-out after a couple of years of added pandemic pounds. The post is bright compared to the darker undertones of the other images.

The stark differences between what I was doing compared to my concentrated efforts to improve them was noticeable in this post and the two posts that I had already created and scheduled for next week. However, the feed took on a new lighter, brighter, and more cheerful attitude with the screen filled with the newer posts.



Before and after – post content

It was so noticeable that I did go back and change one image to blend in and coordinate better. These images can be seen above. Where I wanted the colors of the image to play on the “blues” word in the headline, I found that it was drab compared to the cheerier colors of other posts. This realization was a good reminder of why a business style guide is so important when marketing a brand. It ensures that all content is representative of the mission and vision of the company. This

can even make sure that the overall perception of the company's attitude and personality are present in all content.

I was curious if displaying the completed items in a different format would have an overall impact on the look of the visual feed. I quickly made a post containing some work that I finished a couple of months ago but have not posted yet because the mother wanted the dress to be a complete surprise for her family. That finished product collage post with more white space and brighter colors is posted below.



Product collage post and comparison of collage to another white product in the feed

The collage has been saved as a modified template in Adobe Spark, saving me some time in the future. Posting finished products will take an extra step, but this extra time is worth it to achieve the lighter and airier feel on the Instagram feed. While it is not ideal for every day posting, it gives a lovely, unified look for special projects. The collage gives the eye something to focus on and direction to follow in the feed.

For my automated posting, I selected different post types to see how they impact followers. With a business that offers multiple services, each service could call for a different post type and posting schedule, but this was not factored into the schedule.

Utilized post types are as follows:

- Count down posts – drop-off day reminder. This type is idea for counting down to a release date, upcoming events, class date, giveaway, etc.
- Special event posts – Amex Shop Small Saturday with promotion
- Special holidays – National Sandwich Day with two-choice poll
- Information posts – service area and service prices
- Pain point posts – broken zipper
- Announcement posts – sewing classes starting with pricing
- Personal quote posts – anyone can sew. This is a great way to display testimonials and helpful tips.
- Product posts – collage of completed project
- Reminder posts – drop off day registration

See the utilized posts in the images below:



Utilized posts – (left to right) announcement, reminder, information



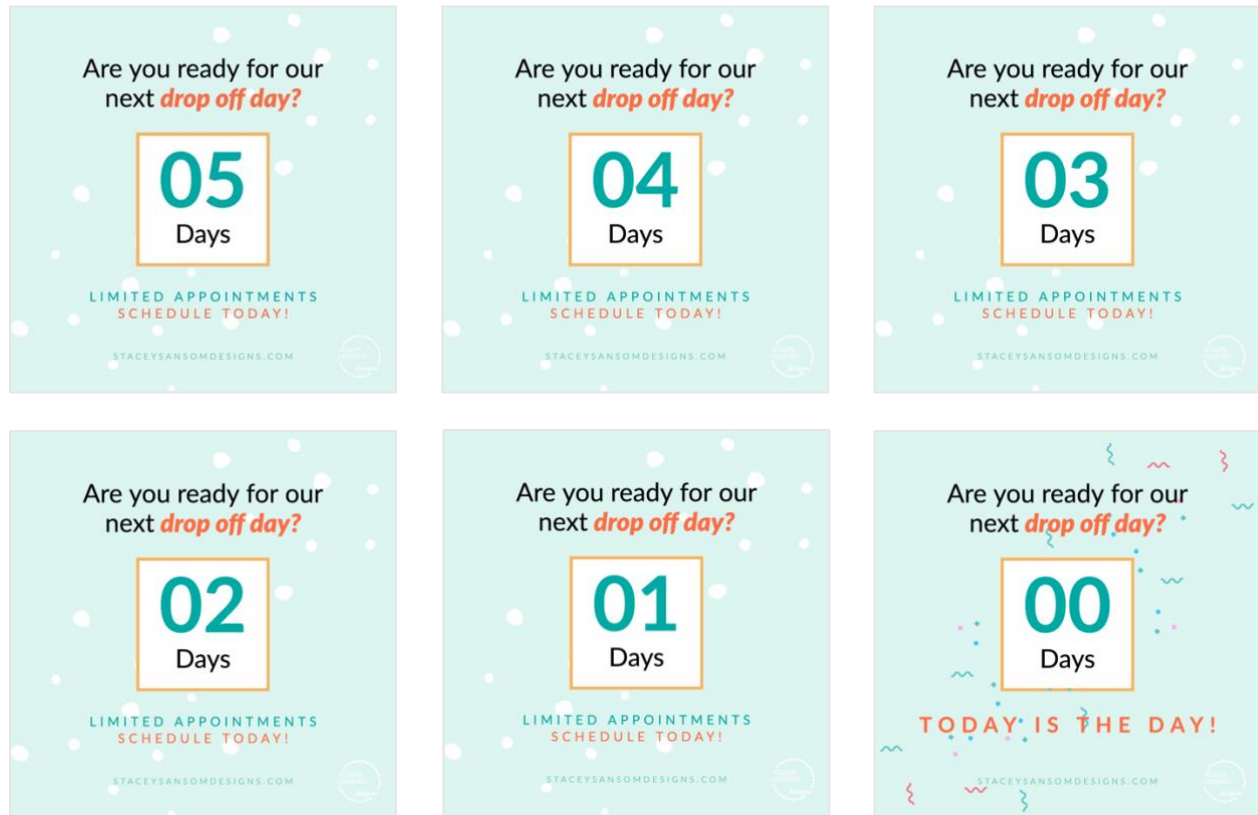
Utilized posts – (left to right) holiday with poll, reminder, and information



Utilized posts – (left to right) information and special event with promotion



Utilized post – quote or tip



Utilized posts – count down posts

The posting schedule is in the table below.

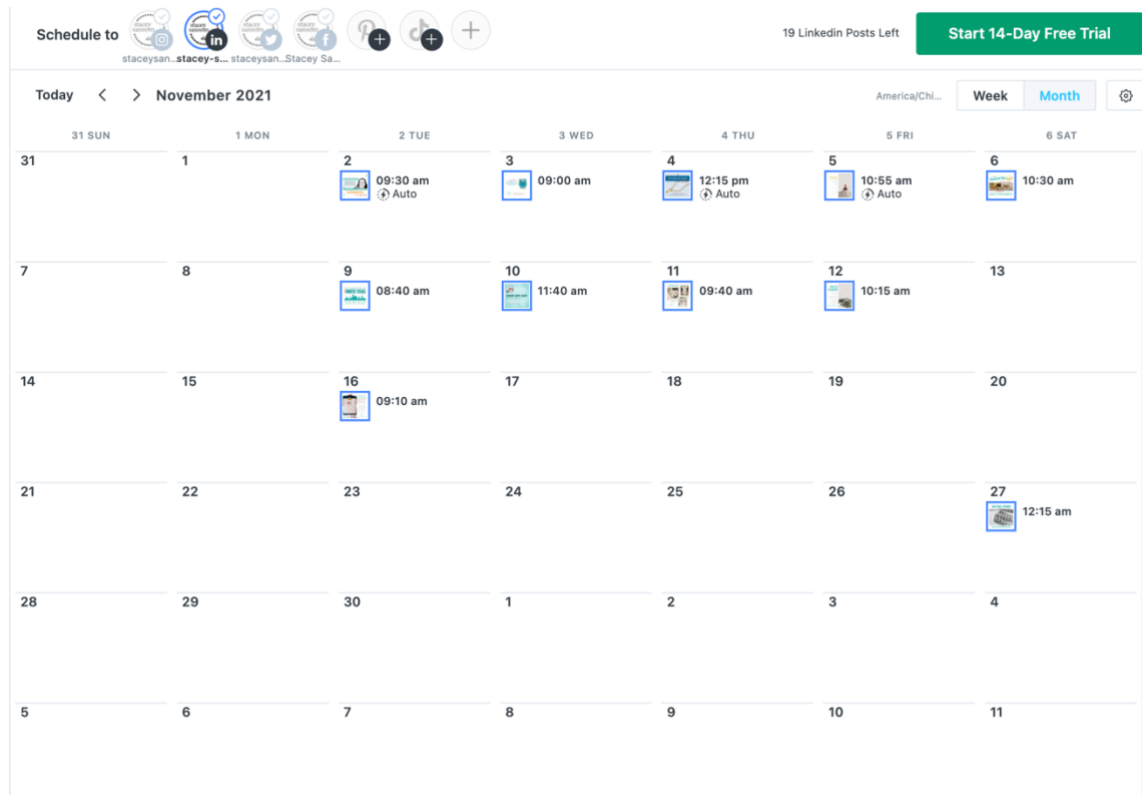
Date	Instagram	LinkedIn	Facebook
<b>Sunday – October 31, 2021</b>	6:00 AM	12:00 PM	6:00 AM
<b>Monday – November 1, 2021</b>	6:00 AM 9:30 AM	9:00 AM	6:00 AM 9:00 AM
<b>Tuesday – November 2, 2021</b>	6:00 AM 9:00 AM	1:00 PM	6:00 AM 8:30 AM
<b>Wednesday – November 3, 2021</b>	6:00 AM 11:00 AM	10:00 AM	6:00 AM 1:55 PM
<b>Thursday – November 4, 2021</b>	6:00 AM 12:00 PM	11:00 AM	6:00 AM 9:40 AM

<b>Date</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Facebook</b>
<b>Friday – November 5, 2021</b>	6:00 AM 8:00 AM	12:00 PM	6:00 AM 12:00 PM
<b>Saturday – November 6, 2021</b>	12:00 PM	12:00 PM	12:00 PM
<b>Sunday – November 7, 2021</b>			
<b>Monday – November 8, 2021</b>	9:00 AM	9:00 AM	12:00 PM
<b>Tuesday – November 9, 2021</b>	9:00 AM	11:00 AM	12:00 PM
<b>Wednesday – November 10, 2021</b>	10:00 AM	10:00 AM	8:00 PM
<b>Thursday – November 11, 2021</b>			
<b>Friday – November 12, 2021</b>	6:00 AM		6:00 AM
<b>Saturday – November 27, 2021</b>	12:15 AM	12:15 AM	12:15 AM

I selected to only post 1-2 times per day due to automated post limits and time restraints, but I spread them across 12 total days from 12:15 AM and 8:00 PM. The reasoning between the 12:15 AM posts is for awareness first thing in the morning. These are time sensitive reminders and I wanted them available before the start of business day. Also, the promotion associated with the post starts at midnight and only runs 24 hours. Similar reasoning was used for the 6:00 AM reminder posts.

I based my LinkedIn post frequency off recommendations provided in researching ideal posting times. Daria Marmer from HubSpot states, “Once you publish more than 5 times per week (for most companies, this means once per work day) the return on investment drops substantially” (Marmer, n.d.). Incidentally, this article implicates that weekends and Monday are not ideal days to post on LinkedIn. Using this suggestion, I can theoretically adjust my scheduled posts on the

platform and spread the posts out over a more days of the month, such as the screenshot below illustrates.



LinkedIn Business Page – Revised Later automated posting calendar

According to the same article, it is worth further studying the current Facebook algorithms for posts on the business feeds because “[publishing] more than once per day won't just earn you diminishing ROI — Facebook could even punish your Page with the algorithm if you don't get a lot of engagement with your posts” (Marmer, n.d.). This indicates that it is more critical to increase engagement before increasing frequency. That could be hard for some businesses because they do not know what works best and could lead to lengthy tests to see what users engage with most frequently. I have adjusted my calendar based on the LinkedIn advice. I feel like reducing my existing post frequency on Facebook could be more of a hindrance than a help. As such, I will be paying close attention to statistics and insights on all the posts made on

Facebook over the next few weeks and will increase my efforts to achieve higher engagement rates with customers because there is such disagreement on what is most effective on certain platforms.

I have not included any sharing or curated posts from others but evidently this will also increase your engagement numbers overtime. Unfortunately, I have tried this in the past on Facebook and it was a lot of time to curate all those posts for a month or two at a time to only receive marginal engagement improvement over the course of the exercise. I will have to revisit this idea and see how to balance each post type with what followers are wanting to see.

Overall, I am happy with the changes that my posting schedule has made in my Instagram feed's appearance. That is a win in my book because it has solved one of my own pinpoints. I will reconsider the quantity of posts on Facebook and see how I can balance fewer posts distributed across multiple services. I do not want to advertise my sewing lessons with my alterations or patch sewing services. Perhaps the patch sewing (B2B) service becomes more prominent on LinkedIn where there is more B2B engagement. There is still so much to learn and discover on technology that is continuously changing.



### **Works Cited**

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