



Rhetorical forms of the post

92 ways to build a social media post, from the plain observation to the open dashboard. For each one: its structure, an example, and the conditions under which it fails.

[Observation](#)[Story](#)[Proof](#)[Place](#)

This catalogue exists to vary the forms. Repeating one form wears an audience out faster than repeating one subject.

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

Each card gives a structure, a fictional example and two verdicts: the conditions under which the form works, and the ones under which it fails. The second verdict is the more useful of the two. Read it before you write.



MEDIAN ENGAGEMENT BY PLATFORM, INTERNATIONAL DATA

PLATFORM	WHAT WAS MEASURED	RESULT	SOURCE
Instagram	Carousel	6.9%	Buffer, 45 million posts, 2026
LinkedIn	Document, carousel	21.8%	Buffer, 2026
Facebook	Image	5.2%	Buffer, 2026
TikTok	Video	3.4%	Buffer, 2026
X	Text	3.6%	Buffer, 2026
LinkedIn	Text of 1,000 characters and up	1.18 times the reach	AuthoredUp, LinkedIn, 2026
LinkedIn	Polls	1.78x reach for 0.37x engagement	AuthoredUp, LinkedIn, 2026

WHAT THESE FIGURES ARE WORTH

Every figure in this document comes from international analysis. These are not Belgian measurements. They give an order of magnitude, not a guarantee of results with your audience. Each figure carries its source and its year. Check them against your own statistics before turning any of them into a rule.

THE EXAMPLES

The examples in this catalogue are fictional. They are set in trades that Bits & Bots works with, and they name no real company. The figures inside them illustrate a way of writing; they are not data.

MAIN FINDING

Form does not make up for format. A brilliant text posted as an outbound link on Facebook will still sit behind an ordinary image. Choose the format first, the form second.

01

The catalogue

92 forms in 11 families. The examples are fictional and set in four trades: electrical work, event styling, packaging, funeral services.

01 Observation

Nothing is told here; something is shown. These forms cost almost nothing to produce and are the ones small firms use least, because they look too plain to be worth posting. That is exactly what makes them credible.

OBS-1

The plain observation

FB · LI · X

One observed fact, written with no comment and no moral. The reader draws the conclusion.

EXAMPLE

Of the eight consumer units we opened this week within a ten-kilometre radius, six still had rewirable fuses. Three of them predate 1980.

Works

When the fact is precise, dated and countable. Restraint does the work: not drawing the conclusion is what makes the post credible.

Fails

When one sentence too many gets added ("book a safety check today!"). The observation becomes an advert and loses everything.

OBS-2

The close-up detail

IG · FB

A very tight shot of something tiny, plus two lines on why it matters.

EXAMPLE

That 0.4 mm offset on the crease line: invisible while the board lies flat. It is what makes the box buckle on the third layer of the stack.

Works

When the detail is invisible to a layperson and obvious to the trade. Expertise proven without a single line of self-promotion.

Fails

When the photo is too good. Studio lighting kills the caught-in-passing quality the form depends on.

OBS-3

The field note

LI · FB

Three or four raw observations from one day, listed flat, with nothing linking them.

EXAMPLE

Saturday notes: three in four brides asked for dried flowers this season. One of the venues we often work in has changed its rigging rules. The furniture hire firm is adding two weeks' lead time from October.

Works

When the notes have nothing to do with each other. The unevenness is what proves the notebook is real.

Fails

When the notes line up too neatly behind a sales message. The reader can feel the stitching.

OBS-4

What nobody ever sees

IG · FB · LI

Showing the back of an object or a moment the client only ever meets finished.

EXAMPLE

What the family sees: a clean notice online in twenty minutes. What they don't see: the first name checked four times, because a typo there can never be put right.

Works

When the contrast is striking without being staged. The form shows the invisible work, which justifies the price without naming it.

Fails

When the back of it holds no surprise. If the reader already pictured the scene, the post earns nothing.

OBS-5

The standing measurement

LI · FB

The same measurement, published at the same moment, at a fixed interval. The series makes the meaning.

EXAMPLE

Corrugated board price, week 36: up 2.1 per cent. Fifth rise in a row. (Weekly, every Friday here.)

Works

When the audience starts expecting the slot. Regularity creates a reflex no single post can.

Fails

When two weeks go missing. A broken series is worth less than one never started.

02 Story

A story holds the reader because an open loop asks to be closed. Short and dated beats long and vague, every time.

REC-1

The short case story

LI · FB

Starting point, what we found, what we did, result with a figure. Four short beats, a sentence or two each.

EXAMPLE

A customer rings: the RCD trips once a day, no pattern to it. Three electricians before us had replaced the RCD. The cause was an immersion heater whose insulation only gave way once hot. Two hours of diagnosis, one element replaced, not a single trip in eight months.

Works

When the reader recognises the problem and the closing figure can be checked. The most profitable form there is for winning local work.

Fails

When the case is anonymised into something generic, or when the story leaves out the step where we were wrong. Flawless reads like a brochure.

REC-2

The small story of the day

FB · IG · X

Something that happened, funny or touching, with no lesson at the end.

EXAMPLE

A family rang back three days later to change a comma in the text. We changed it that evening. They wrote the next morning to say thank you for taking it seriously.

Works

When the story wants nothing. Readers repay that kind of generosity with lasting goodwill.

Fails

When the ending lands back on the firm ("that's just how we work"). The story turns into an advert and the goodwill evaporates.

REC-3

The mistake owned up to

LI · FB

A mistake made, what it cost, what changed afterwards.

EXAMPLE

We delivered 4,000 boxes in the wrong Pantone. Nobody caught it at proof sign-off, us included. Since then no run goes on press without a paper proof physically signed by the client.

Works

When the mistake is real and the fix is concrete. No other content builds more trust per line published.

Fails

When the mistake chosen is cosmetic ("our flaw is that we're too perfectionist"). The fake confession is spotted instantly and costs more than it earns.

REC-4

The story told backwards

LI · IG

Open on the ending, usually a surprising one, then work back through the causes.

EXAMPLE

The ceremony started forty minutes late because of a seating plan. Here is how two misspelled first names nearly got 200 guests reseated.

Works

When the ending alone already raises a question. The open loop holds the reader to the resolution.

Fails

When the opening overpromises. An ordinary ending after a spectacular hook produces disappointment, and therefore distrust.

REC-5

The job diary

IG · FB

A numbered series following one project from start to finish.

EXAMPLE

Town centre job, day 3 of 12: chases cut, old board off the wall. Found an old aluminium cable behind the plaster. Photo tomorrow.

Works

When each instalment stands on its own and still makes you want the next, and when the ending actually gets published.

Fails

When the series stops without an ending. A job abandoned at instalment 7 leaves a sense of unfinished business that rubs off on the trade.

REC-6

The portrait

LI · FB · IG

Someone from the team, the client base or the supply chain, shown through one precise skill rather than a CV.

EXAMPLE

Sabine has been setting the machines for eleven years. She hears the cut drifting out of register before the sensor flags it. We timed it: twelve seconds of warning on average.

Works

When the portrait runs on a checkable detail instead of adjectives. "Dedicated and meticulous" says nothing; the twelve seconds say everything.

Fails

When every portrait in the series follows the same template. By the third it stops being a person and becomes a form.

REC-7

The origin story

LI · FB

Why the business exists, told through the opening scene rather than the founding date.

EXAMPLE

In 2023 a funeral director showed us his folder: every notice retyped by hand, three times, for three different papers. That folder is what started the project.

Works

When it is told once a year at most and tied to a concrete decision.

Fails

When it becomes a content pillar. An origin retold every two months stops being a story and turns into a slogan.

REC-8

The object's point of view

IG · TT · FB

An object, a machine or a place speaks for itself. First person.

EXAMPLE

"I am the consumer unit of a house built in 1962. I carry 14 circuits; I was designed for 6. Nobody has opened me since 1998."

Works

When the object genuinely has something technical to tell and the tone stays dry. The personification serves the teaching.

Fails

When it turns into a writing exercise. If the object is cute and you learn nothing, all that is left is an awkward post.

REC-9

The day in hours

IG · FB · TT

One day cut into timestamps, from loading the van to the moment the client arrives.

EXAMPLE

5.40am load the van. 8am on site, the room hasn't been cleared. 11am the flowers arrive two hours late. 3pm everything is in place. 4pm the couple walk in and see none of it.

Works

When the times are real and the dead stretches are left in. The rhythm makes the trade tangible.

Fails

When the day is smoothed into a shop window. A day without a hitch has never existed and the reader knows it.

REC-10

The rush job

FB · IG

A phone call, a deadline, a resolution. The countdown gives the text its structure.

EXAMPLE

4.20pm, the client calls: the pallet goes out tomorrow and the wrap is torn on three sides. 480 boxes rewrapped from scratch, finished at 7.05pm, and the lorry left on time.

Works

When the times are given to the minute. Temporal precision is what creates the tension.

Fails

When the urgency is manufactured. Anyone in the trade spots a staged rescue faster than you would think.

03 Question

A question opens a gap in the reader's head. But take care: asking a question is not the same as asking for comments. The forms that work answer their own question.

QUE-1

The question and its answer

FB · LI · IG

A real client question, quoted as asked, with the full answer underneath.

EXAMPLE

"Do I have to rewire the whole house if I put in a charge point?" No, in 8 cases out of 10. What needs checking: the supply cable size, the agreed supply capacity, and spare ways in the consumer unit.

Works

When the question is quoted word for word, awkwardness included. Rephrased into trade language it loses the reader who recognised themselves in it.

Fails

When the answer is "it depends, give us a call". A question asked and not answered is an irritation, not content.

QUE-2

The open question

FB · LI

A question put to the audience that we honestly cannot answer ourselves.

EXAMPLE

We're weighing up whether to publish typical budgets for our venue styling. Those of you who show your prices: does it win you enquiries or cost you them?

Works

When it concerns a real decision in progress and every comment gets answered within the hour.

Fails

When it is a pretext for comments. "What's your favourite meal?" on a business page is engagement bait, and the algorithm demotes it.

QUE-3

This or that

IG · LI · FB

Two options, one question, no elaboration.

EXAMPLE

Regular slotted carton or sleeve? Both camps square up at every trade fair.

Works

When the choice genuinely splits the audience and the verdict gets posted a few days later. The second post is worth more than the first.

Fails

When nothing follows. A poll returns 1.78x the reach for 0.37x the engagement: with no write-up, you have bought noise.

QUE-4

The diagnostic question

LI · FB

A question that assumes the reader already has the problem, then names the cause.

EXAMPLE

Why do the LED lamps in your hallway fail twice a year while the ones in the living room don't? It isn't the brand. It's the dimmer.

Works

When the symptom is widespread and the cause counter-intuitive. The reader recognises themselves, then learns something.

Fails

When the symptom is too rare. If nobody recognises it, the question runs on empty.

QUE-5

The question box

IG · LI

Collect questions on one day, then publish one answer a day from then on.

EXAMPLE

This week: your questions about publishing a notice. Deadlines, corrections, cost. We'll answer all of it, including the parts we'd rather avoid.

Works

When the answers become a series. Collecting is a content investment, not an event.

Fails

When only two questions come in and you let it show. Always keep three questions gathered elsewhere to prime the pump.

QUE-6

The picture puzzle

IG · FB

A puzzling photo, the answer in the comments or the next day.

EXAMPLE

Found in a cellar last week. Any guesses what this was for in 1955? (Answer tomorrow.)

Works

When the object really is puzzling and the answer teaches something. Curiosity has to be paid for.

Fails

When the answer is obvious, or never comes. Two puzzles with no answer and the mechanism is dead.

QUE-7

The question nobody asks

LI · FB

Ask the awkward question on the client's behalf, then answer it straight.

EXAMPLE

The question nobody asks on the phone: why a 500-box minimum? Here is the maths, from make-ready to the first sellable box.

Works

When the awkwardness is real and the answer doesn't dodge. This form clears whole objections out of the way.

Fails

When you pick a comfortable question. If the answer suits us too well, it was the wrong question.

04 List & structure

The most readable family, and the most copied, so the one that wears out fastest. Its value sits in how specific the items are, never in how many there are.

LIS-1

The checklist

LI · FB · IG

A run of checks, in order, that the reader can work through alone.

EXAMPLE

Before you book a wedding venue, check: the real ceiling height, permission to fix to the walls, the music curfew, lorry access on the morning itself, and who clears up at 2am.

Works

When the list genuinely works without us. Usefulness earns saves, and a save counts for more than a like on Instagram and LinkedIn.

Fails

When the last item is "call a professional". The list reveals itself as a trap and the reader feels played.

LIS-2

The numbered list

LI · IG

Several numbered points on one theme, one idea per point, nothing repeated.

EXAMPLE

Five things a compliance certificate does not cover (and buyers only find out after completion).

Works

When the points are specific and the first one already surprises. Point one decides whether the other four get read.

Fails

When the number is fixed before the content. "7 tips" with three real tips and four fillers shows from a mile off.

LIS-3

Three things

LI · FB · X

Short and closed: exactly three items, one line each.

EXAMPLE

Three things we look at on a proof before anything else: which way the text reads once the box is folded, the clear zone round the barcode, and the use-by date if it's printed on.

Works

When the rule of three forces the selection. The no-frills version of the list, written in five minutes.

Fails

When you use it every week. The formula is too recognisable to survive repetition.

LIS-4

X versus Y

LI · IG · FB

Two options measured against the same criteria, with a recommendation you stand behind at the end.

EXAMPLE

Single-wall versus double-wall corrugated: cost, stacking strength, footprint when flat, transport impact. For an e-commerce parcel under 3 kg, single wall is enough in 90 per cent of cases.

Works

When you call it at the end. A comparison with no recommendation is a spec sheet, not a point of view.

Fails

When both options come from your own range and both get spared. The reader sees the salesperson behind the expert.

LIS-5

The decision tree

LI · IG

A run of if-then steps that walks the reader to their own answer.

EXAMPLE

Installation under 25 years old? An inspection will do. Older, but the board already replaced? Inspection plus earthing. Neither? Budget for a partial rewire.

Works

At three branches maximum. Beyond that the tree stops being readable in a vertical format.

Fails

When every branch ends at "give us a call". The tool has to actually work, otherwise it is a contact form in disguise.

LIS-6

The short how-to

IG · TT · FB

Three to five steps for something simple and safe to do yourself.

EXAMPLE

Resetting an RCD properly: all breakers off, RCD up, breakers back on one at a time, and the one that trips it again is the circuit at fault.

Works

When the task is genuinely within the reader's reach. Giving knowledge away doesn't lose customers, it qualifies the calls.

Fails

When the task carries real electrical risk. The form turns into a liability question rather than content.

LIS-7

The period round-up

LI · FB

What happened over the week or the month, in three to five factual lines.

EXAMPLE

September here: 6 weddings, 2 trade fairs, 1,200 candles lit, two Saturdays running three crews at once, and one flower delivery sent to the wrong address.

Works

When the figures include something that doesn't flatter. The spotless round-up doesn't get read.

Fails

When it grows into a fifteen-line quarterly report. A round-up is short by definition.

LIS-8

The order of priority

LI · FB

Not a list but a ranking: do this first, then this, never that.

EXAMPLE

Rewiring budget tight? Earthing first. Then the consumer unit. Then the sockets. **Never** the designer switch plates first.

Works

When the "never" is blunt and costs something to say. That last item is what gives the post its authority.

Fails

When the order happens to match our margin exactly. The ranking then turns against us.

LIS-9

The list of what we don't do

LI · X · FB

What we refuse, what we turn down, what we don't sell.

EXAMPLE

What we don't do: notices published without the funeral director's sign-off, corrections after 10pm, texts proofread only once, and prices that change depending on the family.

Works

When the refusals are specific and explained. The negative list filters out bad enquiries and reassures the good ones.

Fails

When it reads like house rules in a shop window. The tone has to stay explanatory, never defensive.

05 Definition & teaching

The natural ground for expertise. These forms build authority slowly and can be recycled forever: a trade glossary is two years of posts in reserve.

DEF-1

One term, defined

LI · IG · FB

A technical term, defined in one sentence, then what it changes for the reader.

EXAMPLE

30 mA RCD: it cuts the supply the moment a leakage current exceeds 30 milliamps. In practice that is the difference between a shock and a fatal accident in a bathroom.

Works

When the definition ends on a concrete consequence. A definition without one is a dictionary entry.

Fails

When you define a term nobody has heard. Pick the words that appear on quotes, not the ones from the standards.

DEF-2

Word of the month

LI · IG

A named, scheduled slot that explains one trade word each time.

EXAMPLE

Word of the month: proof. It's the last image you sign off before the press runs. After that, one comma costs 800 euros.

Works

When the slot has a name, a fixed day and a consistent look. Recurrence turns isolated posts into a reading habit.

Fails

When the words run out. You need twelve in reserve before you start.

DEF-3

The quote line, translated

FB · LI

Take one real line from a quote and explain what sits behind it.

EXAMPLE

On your quote: venue styling, 1,450 euros. What that covers: the site visit, the floor plan, furniture hire, two people for six hours of set-up, and the strike at 2am.

Works

When the line you pick is the one clients trip over most. Openness defuses the haggling before it starts.

Fails

When the breakdown doesn't justify the price. If it doesn't hold, better not to open the subject.

DEF-4

The everyday comparison

LI · IG · FB

A technical idea explained through an object everyone knows.

EXAMPLE

A cable is like a garden hose. If it's too narrow for the flow you ask it to carry, it doesn't burst: it gets hot.

Works

When the comparison holds all the way. An image that works for two sentences and breaks on the third damages your credibility.

Fails

When it becomes a tic. Three comparisons a month and the account sounds like it is talking to children.

DEF-5

How it works

IG · TT · LI

How a system runs, in four steps at most, with no jargon.

EXAMPLE

How a death notice goes live in 20 minutes: the family fills in a form, the text is typeset automatically, the funeral director signs it off, and it publishes to the website and the social accounts.

Works

When the process described really is ours, with our real timings. Being specific beats being generally clear.

Fails

When you describe an idealised process. The first client who experiences something else will say so in the comments.

DEF-6

The rule, explained

LI · FB

A legal obligation: what it requires, from when, and for whom.

EXAMPLE

In Belgium an electrical inspection is required on every sale of a residential property. A failed report doesn't block the sale: it gives the buyer 18 months to put things right.

Works

When the jurisdiction and the year are stated. A rule quoted without a country or a date is unusable and casts doubt on the rest.

Fails

When the rule has since changed. An outdated standard published once circulates for years: check before every publication.

06 Number

One figure, precise and checkable, stops the thumb better than a sentence. A rounded, unsourced figure does nothing at all.

CHI-1

One number, centred

LI · IG · FB

A single large figure and two lines explaining it. Nothing else.

EXAMPLE

40 minutes. That's the average from a funeral director's call to the notice being live once corrections are counted, against a twenty-minute clean run.

Works

When the figure comes from your own data and you say where it comes from. An in-house number beats any sector report.

Fails

When the figure is round and unsourced. "80 per cent of people don't realise that..." convinces nobody any more.

CHI-2

The figure that contradicts

LI · X

A figure that contradicts what the reader thought they knew, with the explanation behind it.

EXAMPLE

Moving from double wall to single wall saves 18 per cent of storage volume when the boxes are flat. Most clients who ask for it were trying to save on board, not on warehouse space.

Works

When the gap is striking and checkable. Surprise is only worth something if the source holds.

Fails

When the figure only surprises because it was calculated wrong. Check the base before publishing, every time.

CHI-3

The sum, shown in public

LI · FB

Set out the full calculation where the reader can see it, assumptions included.

EXAMPLE

An 11 kW charge point for a car doing 15,000 km a year: 2,400 kWh, at 0.32 euros per kWh, so 768 euros of electricity a year. Compared with roughly 1,700 euros of fuel.

Works

When the assumptions are visible and arguable. A reader disputing one figure in the comments keeps the post alive.

Fails

When the sum has been rigged. An over-favourable assumption is spotted in thirty seconds by the first technical reader.

CHI-4

The price range

FB · LI

An order of magnitude stated in public, with the things that move it.

EXAMPLE

Styling a wedding venue for 120 covers: between 1,200 and 3,500 euros. What makes the difference: ceiling height, number of tables, and whether the room has to be cleared the same night.

Works

When the range is wide and the variables explained. Publishing a price is the most shared content a local service business has.

Fails

When the range is so wide it says nothing ("between 500 and 5,000 euros"). Better to say nothing at all.

CHI-5

The milestone

FB · LI · IG

A number passed, stated plainly, with a specific thank-you.

EXAMPLE

The 1,000th notice went out this morning. The first was in February 2024. Thank you to the six funeral directors who trusted us before we had anything to show.

Works

When the thanks name people or firms. A generic milestone interests only the person posting it.

Fails

When you celebrate a vanity number ("500 followers!"). The reader gains nothing from that.

CHI-6

The number brought home

FB · LI

A national statistic scaled down to your own town or region.

EXAMPLE

Across the manufacturers in this province, the new European packaging rule affects roughly one in three. We worked it out from public figures; the arithmetic is in the comments.

Works

When you explain how you scaled it. This is the one number national competitors cannot produce.

Fails

When the arithmetic is too rough. A bad extrapolation over a small area is noticed immediately.

CHI-7

The figure made visible

IG · X · LI

An abstract number translated into something you can picture.

EXAMPLE

The 40 metres of conduit we ran yesterday, laid end to end, reach from the church door to the far end of the market square. In a 140-square-metre house.

Works

When the unit of comparison is local and familiar. The conversion has to create a picture, not a second abstraction.

Fails

When the comparison turns absurd ("three Eiffel Towers"). The exaggeration discredits the original figure.

07 Correction & stance

These forms create difference, and therefore risk. They are essential but need rationing: an editorial line is not one posture a week.

COR-1

Myth, corrected

LI · FB · IG

The common belief quoted as it's said, then "no", then the explanation, then what to do instead.

EXAMPLE

"A switched extension lead protects against surges." No. The switch cuts the supply; it absorbs nothing. What protects you is a surge protection device in the consumer unit.

Works

When the myth really is widespread and the correction is usable straight away. No other form gets shared more in technical explanation.

Fails

When the tone turns condescending. "No, and please stop believing that" turns a grateful reader into an offended one.

COR-2

The mistake seen ten times

LI · FB

A mistake that keeps turning up on site, what it causes, how to avoid it.

EXAMPLE

Seen four times this month: fairy lights taped to flame-retardant drapes. The drape loses its certification, and the venue's insurance goes with it.

Works

When the frequency is counted. "Four times this month" carries weight that "we often see" does not.

Fails

When the mistake belongs to an identifiable competitor. The correction becomes an attack, with all the local consequences that brings.

COR-3

The clear opinion

LI · X

A plain, owned position on a practice in your sector, with the argument underneath.

EXAMPLE

Unlimited free samples are bad for the trade. A serious prototype costs half a day of machine time, and charging for it gets everyone a better result.

Works

When you can defend the opinion in the comments for two days. A position you won't see through costs more than it earns.

Fails

When the position is taken for the reach. Calculated contrarianism is spotted, and it erodes trust over time.

COR-4

The red line

LI · FB

What you refuse on principle, and why that refusal is in the client's interest.

EXAMPLE

We don't install client-supplied equipment. Not on commercial grounds: because the guarantee on the installation can't be separated from the guarantee on the kit.

Works

When the reason given is checkable. A red line with no explanation reads as rigidity.

Fails

When it's published right after a dispute. The post becomes a reply to one person, and everyone reads it that way.

COR-5

Against the sector

LI · X

Take the opposite view to something the trade treats as obvious, with the data.

EXAMPLE

Posting daily damages your reach. The measured balance point is 4 to 5 posts a week; past 7, performance falls away.

Works

When the data is there. Contradiction without evidence is just a pose.

Fails

When the contradiction suits us too neatly. If our offer happens to be the exact fix for the problem we're denouncing, the argument collapses.

COR-6

What I'd do in your position

FB · LI

Advice in the first person, including when it earns us nothing.

EXAMPLE

If your consumer unit is under ten years old and everything works, I wouldn't touch it. Get the earthing checked instead: it's 120 euros and it's the part that protects you.

Works

When the advice costs us a sale. It's the most memorable thing a tradesperson can publish.

Fails

When the disinterest is an act. Free advice that still routes back to us isn't advice.

COR-7

The self-criticism

LI · FB

Naming a real weakness in your own offer, with nothing to offset it.

EXAMPLE

We publish nothing between 10pm and 6am. At those hours nobody is proofreading, and a notice going live unread is a risk we won't take.

Works

When the weakness is the one clients already notice. Naming it before they do takes the force out of the objection.

Fails

When the admission is followed by a "but". The word cancels everything before it.

COR-8

The warning

FB · LI

A questionable practice seen locally, described without naming anyone, with the signs to watch for.

EXAMPLE

Three customers in the area have had visits from "inspectors" offering a free survey and then selling 1,200 euros of work the same day. A real inspection is carried out by an approved body, by appointment, and it doesn't sell work.

Works

When you give the signs to recognise rather than the outrage. The form does a genuine service and is shared heavily in local feeds.

Fails

When it slides into naming names. Real legal exposure, and a backlash in a small community.

08 Short & offhand

The hardest register for a brand to hold, and the most rewarding when it holds. Brevity excuses nothing: a one-liner has to say something nobody else would say.

CRT-1

The one-liner

X · LI · IG

One sentence. Nothing before, nothing after.

EXAMPLE

A quote that lands in 48 hours beats a perfect quote that lands in three weeks.

Works

When the sentence is dense enough to stand alone. The form rewards the phrasing, not brevity in itself.

Fails

When the one-liner is a platitude. Short and empty is worse than long and empty: it shows more.

CRT-2

The raw status

FB · X

A thought thrown down, unworked, with no shaping.

EXAMPLE

Three pallets turned away at the loading bay this morning. Odd day.

Works

When the account already has a recognisable voice. The raw status assumes a relationship; it doesn't create one.

Fails

When it's a new reader's first contact with the brand. With no context it looks like an abandoned account.

CRT-3

The minimal caption

IG · FB

A strong image, three to five words under it, and that's all.

EXAMPLE

"1962. Still in service."

Works

When the image carries 90 per cent of the message. The caption has to add information, not describe what you can see.

Fails

When the image is ordinary. A weak photo doesn't become strong because the line is short.

CRT-4

The adapted meme

IG · TT · X

A circulating image format, turned with the vocabulary of the trade.

EXAMPLE

The "nobody / absolutely nobody / me:" format applied to the client who sends their logo as a 200-pixel JPEG for large-format print.

Works

When the meme is still current and the joke comes from the job. The appeal comes from the gap between a mass format and a trade detail.

Fails

When the format is six months old. A stale meme signals an account that isn't keeping up, which is worse than posting nothing.

CRT-5

Hooking onto the moment

TT · IG · X

Attach your trade to something in the news or a running trend.

EXAMPLE

Cold snap forecast: "the three circuits that'll trip this week, in order".

Works

When the hook happens within 48 hours and the link to the trade is real. Duolingo and Ryanair live on that reaction time.

Fails

When the link is forced, or the subject is sensitive. A tragedy co-opted by a local brand is not something you come back from.

CRT-6

The public reply

FB · IG · LI

Turn an answer to a comment into a post of its own.

EXAMPLE

Someone asked in the comments why we only take one wedding a weekend. The answer deserved a whole post.

Works

When the comment is quoted as written and with its author's agreement. The form shows that somebody is actually reading.

Fails

When the original comment was critical and you answer from a position of strength. The audience sides with the commenter.

CRT-7

The controlled outburst

TT · IG · X

A deliberately absurd tone, outside the professional register, held for a few seconds.

EXAMPLE

A staged drama of the cable "refusing" to go into the conduit.

Works

When the brand can carry the reactions. Duolingo absorbs thousands of negative mentions in exchange for its visibility (Brand24, 2026): the question isn't whether it's funny, it's whether you can pay the bill.

Fails

In a trade built on gravity: funeral services, health, safety. There the outburst is a mistake, not a style.

CRT-8

Text against image

IG · FB

An image and a line that contradict each other. The tension creates the meaning.

EXAMPLE

Photo of a spotless consumer unit. Caption: "Three days ago this room smelled of burning."

Works

When the contradiction is resolved in the post. The reader has to get the explanation, not just the effect.

Fails

When the contradiction is left open to look clever. The reader feels handled.

CRT-9

The service notice

FB

Practical information, written flat, with no attempt at style.

EXAMPLE

Closed from 21 to 28 September. Emergencies covered by a colleague in the next village, number in the comments.

Works

Always. The most-read post on a local page, and nobody asks it to be creative.

Fails

When you dress it up. A holiday notice with a pun becomes unreadable for the information it carries.

09 Proof

The heart of social for any trade that sells a service. These forms convert even when engagement is low: the prospect reads them and never likes them.

PRV-1

Before and after

IG · FB

Two images, same framing, same light, with the interval stated.

EXAMPLE

A 1978 consumer unit and its replacement. Same wall, same angle, six hours apart.

Works

When the framing is identical and the interval is given. The discipline of the framing is what makes the change believable.

Fails

When the before is lit like a crime scene and the after like an advert. The staging destroys the proof.

PRV-2

The customer, word for word

FB · LI

A customer's exact words, awkwardness included, with a first name.

EXAMPLE

"Honestly I thought it was going to be a whole saga and then they came on the Tuesday and it was done by the Tuesday evening." Nathalie, customer since 2024.

Works

When the quote keeps its hesitations. A tidied-up quote sounds like a line written in-house.

Fails

When it's glowing and too well put. The polish of the writing is exactly what makes people doubt it.

PRV-3

Behind the scenes

IG · TT · FB

The work in progress, unstaged and with no conclusion attached.

EXAMPLE

Setting up for a wedding: 340 tealights to place before 3pm, three of us on it.

Works

When the work shown is genuinely demanding. Behind the scenes earns its value from the effort it makes visible.

Fails

When people in it are posing. A team smiling at the camera is no longer behind the scenes.

PRV-4

The demonstration

IG · TT

Prove a claim by doing it, in one take, no cuts.

EXAMPLE

"This box takes 80 kilos stacked on it." The video shows the 80 kilos going on, in a single take.

Works

When there is no cut. The unbroken take is the argument.

Fails

When the test is visibly built to succeed. A test that cannot fail proves nothing.

PRV-5

The customer's own picture

IG · FB

Reposting a customer's photo or message, credited.

EXAMPLE

Photo sent by a bride as she walked into the room, reposted with her agreement and her original message.

Works

When you ask first and credit visibly. The reciprocity is what makes other customers send theirs in.

Fails

When you repost without asking. The gain is nil and the risk to the relationship is real in a local customer base.

PRV-6

We tested it

IG · LI · FB

Try a product, a tool or a method and publish the verdict, including the negative one.

EXAMPLE

We tested three brands of cable detector for a month. Two of them get confused the moment there's metal in the wall. Here's the one we're keeping.

Works

When at least one verdict is negative. A review where everything is good is not a test.

Fails

When the product was supplied free and that isn't said. The omission destroys the whole test.

PRV-7

The invoice, explained

LI · FB

A real invoice, anonymised, broken down line by line.

EXAMPLE

A 1,240-euro invoice, broken down: 610 euros labour (12 hours), 430 euros materials, 120 euros inspection by an approved body, 80 euros travel.

Works

When every line is there, margin included, if you are prepared to stand behind it. Partial openness is worse than none.

Fails

When you pick the most flattering invoice of the quarter. Take an ordinary one, not your best.

PRV-8

The time-lapse

IG · TT · FB

A working day compressed into twenty seconds.

EXAMPLE

Building a wedding set: 9am to 2am in twenty seconds.

Works

When the camera stays still and the clock runs in the corner. The fixed frame is what makes the effort legible.

Fails

When the edit is too fast to follow. Twenty seconds, not eight.

PRV-9

The certificate

LI · FB

An official document obtained, shown, and explained in one sentence.

EXAMPLE

Accreditation for solar installations renewed. In practice: our customers keep their entitlement to the regional grant.

Works

When you translate the document into a consequence for the customer. Nobody celebrates a certificate; everyone celebrates a grant they get to keep.

Fails

When you post the document without translating it. The post becomes a display of ego.

10 Place & timing

The structural advantage small firms hold over large brands: nobody else can write these posts. In a trilingual border region, that rootedness becomes a signature.

LOC-1

The local note

FB · IG

A dialect word, a local place name, a local habit, used as a matter of course.

EXAMPLE

The old depot corner. Nobody here has called it anything else since the depot shut, and customers in from the city are still looking for a street sign that says so.

Works

When the usage is genuinely yours. A local word in the mouth of someone local works; the same word looked up in a dictionary can be heard a mile off.

Fails

When you force the folklore. Staged local colour reads as condescension to the people who live there.

LOC-2

The seasonal piece

FB · IG · LI

Content attached to a moment that comes round every year and can be prepared in advance.

EXAMPLE

Every October: the checklist for portable heaters, and why they never go on an extension lead.

Works

When it goes out two weeks before the search peak, not during it. The seasonal piece is written in July.

Fails

When you repost last year's text. The season justifies the subject, not the copy-paste.

LOC-3

The local event

FB · IG

Talking about something happening in the community that you're part of.

EXAMPLE

We're dressing the entrance to the village festival this weekend. We've been assembling the 200 lanterns by hand since Tuesday.

Works

When your role is real and modest. A quiet presence at a local event is worth more than visible sponsorship.

Fails

When you attach yourself to an event you weren't at. In a small community it shows immediately.

LOC-4

The weather opening

FB · IG

A fast reaction to weather or circumstance, with advice that's usable now.

EXAMPLE

Storms forecast tonight: unplug the router rather than just switching it off. The surge device in the consumer unit doesn't protect the phone line.

Works

When the advice can be acted on within the hour. The most shared form there is locally in a moment of stress.

Fails

When you publish after the event. A storm warning the next day is noise.

LOC-5

The cover notice

FB

Exceptional hours, on-call cover, emergency number, handover between colleagues.

EXAMPLE

Covered without interruption from 21 to 28 September, weekends included. A notice received before 8pm goes live the same evening.

Works

Always, and publish it twice: a week ahead, then on the day.

Fails

When it only goes out as a story. Service information has to stay findable after 24 hours.

LOC-6

The border wink

FB · IG

Playing on the trilingual setting and the differences either side of the border.

EXAMPLE

Three countries within twenty minutes, two socket standards and three sets of inspection rules, and one customer in five coming back from across the border with an earthing arrangement that doesn't apply here.

Works

When the difference you raise is concrete and lived. This is content only a firm from here can produce.

Fails

When the wink turns into a comparison between communities. The ground is touchier than it looks.

LOC-7

You saw us out there

FB · IG

Explaining why the firm was visibly somewhere this week.

EXAMPLE

If you saw our van blocking the high street at 6am on Tuesday, that's what it was for. Sorry about the racket with the trestles.

Works

When you apologise for a real inconvenience. This form turns a nuisance into goodwill.

Fails

When it's really there to show how busy you are. Disguised boasting reads as exactly that.

11 Rare & experimental

Use them now and then, never in a run. Their value comes from surprise; repeated, they turn into a brand tic.

ORG-1

The open letter

LI · FB

A post written as a letter to a named recipient, real or collective.

EXAMPLE

"To whoever wired this house in 1974: thank you for labelling every circuit by hand. We worked out your logic in ten minutes."

Works

When the recipient is unexpected and the tone stays sincere. The letter form creates an intimacy the standard post never reaches.

Fails

When the letter is addressed to an abstraction ("Dear customers..."). With no real recipient the form runs empty.

ORG-2

The reconstructed exchange

IG · FB · X

A two-voice exchange, set down as it happened.

EXAMPLE

- Can you deliver by Friday?
- Next Friday.
- No, this Friday.
- It's Wednesday, 4pm.
- Exactly.

Works

When the lines are short and the punchline comes from real life. The fastest form to read in the whole catalogue.

Fails

When you write the lines to arrive at a sales message. You can hear a fake exchange.

ORG-3

The classified ad

LI · FB

The look and grammar of a small ad, turned to your own use.

EXAMPLE

"Wanted: 1960s consumer unit in original condition, for training purposes. Offers welcome."

Works

When the request is real. The turn works because it keeps a practical use.

Fails

When it's a pure style exercise. With no real request, only the gimmick is left.

ORG-4

The spec sheet

LI · IG

A post set entirely as a product data sheet: attributes, values, units.

EXAMPLE

Wedding no. 87. Covers: 140. Tables: 14. Candles: 320. Set-up: 7 hours. Strike: 2 hours 40. Things that went wrong: 3.

Works

When the "things that went wrong" line, or its equivalent, is honest. The dryness of the form makes the admission stronger.

Fails

When the sheet holds only flattering numbers. The coldness of the form highlights whatever you're hiding.

ORG-5

The ironic manual

IG · X · FB

An instruction set, serious in form and absurd in content, that tells a truth backwards.

EXAMPLE

"How to guarantee your goods arrive damaged: in 6 simple steps."

Works

When every step maps to a real bad practice. Irony teaches as well as straight advice does.

Fails

When the second layer isn't legible to everyone. Part of the audience reads it straight and follows the instructions.

ORG-6

The footnote

X · LI

An ordinary post plus an asterisk whose note carries the real information.

EXAMPLE

"Installation finished in three days*.

*four. The supplier's lorry got lost on the way."

Works

When the note gently contradicts the body. The form rewards the attentive reader.

Fails

When the note only adds length. With no turn in it, it belonged in the sentence.

ORG-7

The formal constraint

IG · X · LI

A post written under a stated restriction: seven words, a haiku, one sentence with no commas.

EXAMPLE

"Our job in seven words: write fast, and never write too fast."

Works

When the constraint is announced. The reader judges the performance, not only the message.

Fails

When the constraint damages the sense. The form must never cost the clarity of useful information.

ORG-8

Three truths and a lie

FB · IG · LI

Four statements about the firm or the trade, one of them false. Answer in the comments.

EXAMPLE

Four statements about our workshop this year. One is false. Answer tonight.

Works

When the true ones are surprising enough to make the choice hard. The game teaches three facts while you hunt for the fourth.

Fails

When the lie is obvious. The game collapses and the post reads as comment bait.

ORG-9

The named slot

all

A christened appointment with a fixed day and a consistent look.

EXAMPLE

"Thursday's consumer unit": one board photographed and written up in three lines, every week.

Works

When the name is simple and you have six months of material in reserve. A slot creates expectation, which no single post can.

Fails

When it stops without explanation. Better to announce the end of a slot than to let it die.

ORG-10

The open dashboard

LI · X

Publishing your own operating figures regularly, the bad ones included.

EXAMPLE

August: 9 enquiries, 4 quotes sent, 2 signed, 2 lost on budget. Average response time: 1.8 days.

Works

When the bad months get published too. The series is only worth something if it isn't selective.

Fails

When you start and stop at the first difficult quarter. The interruption says what the figures would have said.

ORG-11

The found object

IG · FB

A photo of something that turns up during the work, and the story behind it.

EXAMPLE

Found behind a skirting board: a cinema ticket from 1971. The place closed in 1983.

Works

When the object has nothing to do with the trade. Owning the digression is what makes the page human.

Fails

When you bend the object back into a company message. "Like this ticket, our commitment endures" ruins the whole thing.

ORG-12

The countdown

IG · FB

A series numbered backwards towards a real date.

EXAMPLE

5 days until the new die-cutter: the base is poured. 4: the machine arrives. 3: first set-up.

Works

When the date is real and gets met. A countdown that arrives creates a genuine peak of attention.

Fails

When the date slips. "1 day to go" becoming "6 to go" destroys the mechanism and the trust.

ORG-13

The reader's view

TT · IG

A scene from the reader's point of view, in the present tense, filmed or described.

EXAMPLE

"You're opening your consumer unit for the first time in ten years."

Works

When the scene is instantly recognisable and short. The second person does the work of identification on its own.

Fails

When there's no actual point of view behind it. The format is saturated: with no idea in it, it disappears.

ORG-14

The A to Z

IG · LI

A long series structured by the alphabet or another closed sequence.

EXAMPLE

Electrics from A to Z: A for amp, B for bonding, C for consumer unit...

Works

When the whole series is written before it starts. Twenty-six posts get drafted in advance, not as you go.

Fails

When you reach K and run out of ideas. A closed sequence doesn't forgive abandonment.

ORG-15

Handing over

LI · IG · FB

Giving a post to a client, supplier or colleague, who writes it in your place.

EXAMPLE

Today the funeral director explains what actually changes for families.

Works

When the guest genuinely writes it, in their own words. The form opens up their audience and their credibility.

Fails

When we write the text and they sign it. The change of voice shows within three lines.

02

Guardrails and implementation

What makes a post fail whatever its form, and how to get this catalogue into a real calendar.

These seven faults cancel out the benefit of any form in the catalogue.

DEMOTED

Engagement bait

"Tag a friend", "comment YES". Meta has demoted these phrasings since 2017. A call to action needs a reason to exist inside the post.

FALSE POSITIVE

The reflex poll

1.78x reach for 0.37x engagement (AuthoredUp, 2026). A vote is not a conversation. One poll a month at most.

WEAR

The same form three times

Three lists in a row and the audience drops out before the second line. Rotation protects reach better than frequency does.

GENERIC

The post with nothing in it

"Quality is at the heart of what we do." If the company name is interchangeable, the text needs rewriting.

COSTLY

The outbound link

Last of all formats on Facebook, at 4.43 per cent (Buffer, 2026). The link belongs in the first comment.

RISK

Nerve you can't back up

Provocative humour is paid for in replies. Size it against your capacity to handle the response, not against its reach.

OVERDOSE

More than seven a week

The measured balance point is 4 to 5 posts a week. Past 7, performance falls away.

1 · A "Form" field in your database

The codes from this catalogue as a dropdown. Every post carries its code. Without that field, none of what follows can be measured.

2 · A rotation rule

No two consecutive posts share a family. The constraint fits in one formula and makes wear structurally impossible.

3 · A mix per client

For a local trade: 40% proof, 25% teaching, 20% place, 15% stance. For a B2B trade: 35% observation, 30% numbers, 20% correction, 15% proof. Starting points, not rules.

4 · Measure by form, not by post

After about thirty posts, cross the form code against engagement. That table tells you what works for your audience. It should drive the calendar, not sector averages.

5 · Three forms in reserve

The service notice, the local note and the one-liner take ten minutes to produce. They save the thin weeks without anyone inventing anything.

SOURCES

Buffer, analysis of 45 million posts, 2026. AuthoredUp, analysis of LinkedIn content, 2026. Sprout Social, Facebook marketing for small business, 2026. Meta, engagement bait policy, 2017.



One form a week is enough to change a feed.

Bits & Bots is an AI automation studio for small and medium-sized firms, based in Kelmis, Belgium. We build content pipelines that hold up over time, not one-off campaigns.