WHAT THE HASHTAG?!
A Simple Definition of What a Hashtag Actually Is

Getting right to the point, a hashtag is a type of label used on specific social media sites which makes it easier for users to find social media updates (or messages) with a specific theme or specific content. In basic terms, a hashtag indexes a post to be about a certain topic, rather than just mentioning it in the conversation so that is can easily be found and referenced.

To create and use a hashtag, you simply place the hash character (or number sign) # in front of a word or unspaced phrase. This can be placed in the main text of a message like this: **Have you heard about The Social Marketing Academy? If not, it is time to enroll now for free #socialmedia classes! http://ow.ly/O1myl**

Or, it can be placed at the end of the message like this: **Have you heard about The Social Marketing Academy? If not, it is time to enroll now! http://ow.ly/O1myl #socialmedia**

Once you use this hashtag (and post the content), the hashtag will be hyperlinked. By clicking on the hashtag in a message, it will show all of the results within that social media site that include the same hashtag. Also, other users can search using that hashtag to pull up all of the content site-wide that have that hashtag.

Which sites currently use hashtags? Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Tumblr, Pinterest…but this is growing all of the time!

So, why use it? To see and be seen!

See: Hashtags allow you to easily search for information on the social media sites listed above. This is valuable as you are not only able to follow topics and keywords, but you can also follow major events. For example, if you are exhibiting at a Chiropractors National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, the conference should have a hashtag. Possibly, #Chiro2015. By keying that into a search on the sites listed above, you will be able to find ALL of the people that are discussing the convention… many of which are actually there on the floor walking right past your booth. So imagine the power when you tweet this on Twitter: **Are your feet tired of walking the exhibition floor yet? Stop by Booth C122 and get a free massage and enter to win an iPad mini! #Chiro2015** Also, by following this hashtag you will be able to learn what public opinion is like on the event, and gather lots of valuable feedback in real-time that you can use
to your advantage.

Be Seen: The example above involved a bit of the "Be Seen" aspect, but if you are experiencing extremely low levels of engagement on your social media accounts, hashtags can open you up into a whole new audience that is currently not being exposed to your content.

For example, if you would normally share an update on Facebook like this: **Are you struggling with your bills? There is a lot of power in consolidating your debt and our debt management services can help! Make sure to drop into our office in Austin for a free financial checkup!**

Now, let's look at how you might write that same post with hashtags: **Are you struggling with your bills? There is a lot of power in consolidating your debt, and our #debtmanagement services can help! Make sure to drop into our office in Austin, #Texas for a free financial checkup!**

By hashtagging "debt management" we were able to enter the post into searches for all of the people seeking debt management services. By hashtagging Texas, we are entering into all of the conversations about the state. We didn't choose to hashtag Austin as it is a very common name and would not bring in the quality results that we were looking for.

As you can see, hashtags have a lot of value and can really open up your content to an entirely new market that you thought to be out of reach. They also help you join conversations in a meaningful way in real-time, that will bring your brand more exposure and credibility.

So what are you waiting for? Get out there and get #hashtagging!

http://bit.ly/TheGoAgencyFB   : http://bit.ly/TheGoAgencyLI   : https://twitter.com/thegoagency