

Effective Social Media Marketing requires an overall strategy for posting, management, monitoring, engagement and promoting. With all the different social channels available, every business needs a strategy in order to identify where they fit in. Social media marketing presents a unique opportunity to build or join a community online and communicate with a vast audience. However, many marketers are behind in their social initiatives and have lost ground to competitors. Joining or starting a conversation around a brand or product is a smart way to build social sentiment.

Through social media, businesses have the opportunity to grow lasting relationships with potential and current customers. These relationships can bring about a highly valuable asset: customer advocacy. It is earned over time through consistent positive engagement with your customer base. You'll need to figure out what is most important to potential advocates. If you're listening for the right cues, social media can become an invaluable source of insight and feedback.

GETTING STARTED

Each company needs a unique plan

- The Social Media Plan should provide the marketing team with a roadmap which includes examples of best practices for topics like:
 - **Goals:** What are the social media marketing goals and how are they measured? (ex. Increased exposure, traffic to website, increased Likes and Followers)
 - **Timing:** Response times (ex. during business hours always within 2 hr. and non business hours always within 24 hours)
 - **Tone:** Either your voice or voice of company. How casual? Providing examples is useful.

- **Tools:** There are many, including free ones like BufferApp, Hootsuite, Tweetdeck and Social Oomph. Identify suitable tools based on team size and number of social media networks.
- **Other questions to consider:**
 - Which team members will be responsible for the various channels and responsibilities?
 - Who is the target audience and what channels do they use?
 - How is the key audience engaging with brands via social networks?

THE BIG 5 CHANNELS

1. LinkedIn

- **Fast Facts:** 40% who use LinkedIn check daily. Mainly used for professional networking and interacting with connections, groups, and company pages. Can be used to engage through offers, recommendations, groups, publishing and videos. Audience skews to men more than women. Higher household income bracket. Company page usage has more than doubled over the past year.
- **Best Practices**
 - Establish a company presence
 - Promote upcoming events
 - Engage with influencers and potential leads
 - Use channel as a direct recruiting tool
 - Join or create relevant groups
 - Optimize company page for search
 - Provide real value in your posts
 - Encourage employee participation

2. Facebook

- **Fast facts:** The largest channel. Very easy to create page, content, and advertise to key groups or individuals using "dynamic ad platform". Ad options include promoted posts, sponsored stories, display ads, applications, groups and newsfeed. Also offers advanced targeting based on location, interests, and demographic profile. Facebook Insights makes it easy to launch a small test campaign.
- **Best Practices**
 - Develop a business profile page
 - Set up sponsored posts and ads
 - Promote upcoming events
 - Engage with influencers
 - Set up Facebook tabs that sync to your marketing automation platform
 - Share a mix of relevant links, blog posts, and engaging visual and contextual content.

3. Twitter

- **Fast Facts:** Top micro-blogging network. Highly mobile. Ad opportunities include promoted tweets, trends, and accounts. 78% of Twitter's active users are on mobile devices and 46% use it at least once per day. Tweets are limited to 140 characters or less.
- **Best Practices**
 - Set up a Twitter business profile
 - Utilize promoted tweets
 - Share a valuable mix of news, blog posts, promotions, and visual content
 - Engage with relevant accounts or ones that interest you and participate in trending topics: follow, favorite and retweet

- Segment influencers and create lists

4. *Instagram*

- **Fast Facts:** Growing fast after being acquired by Facebook. Recently launched ad platform and video format. One key way its being used is photos of offices and events to humanize a company's story visually. Engagement is 15 times higher than on Facebook and it was fastest growing mobile app in 2013.
- **Best Practices**
 - Identify trending hashtags and use them to increase activity on your page
 - Decide on general branding guidelines for photos
 - Encourage employees and followers to submit photos
 - Promote new products using Instagram advertising

5. *Pinterest*

- **Fast Facts:** Mostly women. Very mobile (iPad is most common format). Sharing is main engagement tool (Pin and rePin). Fighting to overtake Facebook and Twitter for best sharing network (already took over Email). Lifestyle is most shared category with Food and Parenting a close second. During the 2013 holiday season, Pinterest was reportedly responsible for nearly 25% of all social sharing.
- **Best Practices**
 - Pin high-quality mix of images with clear descriptions on relevant boards
 - Follow other businesses, thought leaders, and customers
 - Tell stories that further your visual brand
 - Generate leads by posting coupons and referring traffic to your website

HOW TO POST AND BUILD COMMUNITY

- *Overall, follow the "Rule of Thirds" for posting content*
 - **1/3 promotes** your business and generates profit. You can also show users how to creatively use your product with demonstrations, photos and videos.
 - **1/3 shares** ideas, tips, solutions, and stories from thought leaders.
 - **1/3 personal** interactions and building the brand. This includes the question and answer customer service element.
- *Other ideas for content*
 - **Adjacent content**, which is content that's tangentially relevant to your business
 - **Non-promotional company information**
 - **Job openings**
- *Frequency of Posting*
 - This depends on your audience and what you have to say. If you don't have anything of value to add, don't post just to meet a quota. That said; make updates regularly enough to entice users to follow along for fear of missing valuable posts. Test and see what works best on each platform.
- *Engagement*
 - **Monitor and listen:** Use services like Hootsuite or Google Alerts to notify you of certain topics or keywords so don't miss out on

a conversation. Be present and active, responding to user commentary and questions.

- **Ask for help:** Want community participation? Sometimes it's as simple as asking for a re-post or a follow.
- **Gamify:** People like competing and winning things, so including game-like elements will facilitate engagement.
- **Cross-promote:** Interweaving social channels with other types of marketing ensures your message gets to the end user, one way or another. Offer something unique in each channel to earn a well-rounded following.
- *Consistent branding and voice*
 - Develop brand guidelines based on questions like:
 - What is our brand voice and personality?
 - What do we stand for, and what do we represent?
 - What is our value proposition and differentiating factors?
 - What are our defined visual branding elements (logo, font, colors, etc.)?
 - What do we want our audience to expect from us via social channels?
 - Follow brand guidelines, but be aware of the particular social environment, adjusting tone and voice accordingly. Don't forget to be human, showing kindness, respect, and empathy, and occasionally posting something off-topic like a joke or local information about the community.
 - This is a long-term endeavor. The more you put in, the more you'll get out. By continually providing authoritative content that brings value to followers, you'll earn trust from fans and followers and start to build a community.

- *Customer Service and Crisis Management*
 - **Preparation:** Understand risks, build out escalation processes, draft responses, and determine team responsibilities. Also, make sure it's clear and easy for people to easily contact you.
 - **Response and measurement:** Responding is necessary, following up, measuring and monitoring reach, volume, etc.
 - **Recovery:** Typically consists of more measurement, follow up, case-studies, and knowledge sharing throughout the organization. Analysis of crisis and existing procedures, identification of opportunities for improvement, and acknowledgement of what worked well.
 - The social media audience is large, not limited by geography, and can easily amplify complaints. Show empathy, transparency, and a willingness to correct whatever wrong had been done. Being responsive and timely can fix many issues that arise.

SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS

- *The Basics*
 - Similar to using web analytics for a website, you can find clues by measuring the data from social. A common tactic is to measure traffic and engagements. Metrics can include views or follower totals as well as retweets, sharing and favorites. Get creative and measure things like savings from handling customer service complaints on Social Media rather than over the phone.

- Measurement of useful data leads to action and (perhaps more importantly) budget. Without the data, you'll be basing decisions and pitches on assumptions and instinct.
- *What to measure*
 - Start with **benchmark report** (before picture, also creates standard format for future reporting).
 - Identify your Key Performance Indicators (**KPIs**)
 - **Quantitative:** Followers/fans, Engagement, Links, Timing, Click-through rate (CTR), Website Traffic
 - **Qualitative:** Comment type, Influence, sentiment (positive or negative), conversation drivers in the industry, company or brand mentions
 - For branding or visibility, success means things like more fans or followers. But direct response or sales focused campaigns look to increase web or search traffic from social referrals.
- *Use tools*
 - Web analytics tools like Google Analytics or Web Trends offer reporting. Tools like Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, or Sprout Social will organize data.
 - Many tools offer free and enterprise level paid versions. Facebook and Pinterest offer good analytics tools but ultimately limit you to one channel. The benefit of 3rd party apps are having all channels combined and a one stop shop for posting and reporting.

When building a social media plan, it is essential to determine the tone, timing, tools and goals for the brand. Once the channels most significant to the organization have been selected, you then need to post content that fosters a sense of community. Finally, the appropriate tools for tracking KPI's that further the goals of the business will complete the process that leads to social media success.

For more information or a free social media analysis for your business, please click [here](#).