

GUIDE

Creating a Social Media Strategy

A Guide to Developing Your Social Media Presence



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Getting Started

In order to gain customer trust, establish expertise, and meet potential customers, every business needs to have a social media presence. It's simply not enough to have social media sites up for your business; without a clear strategy for social media use, your business will struggle to get the customer engagement levels and increased sales you're looking for. To get the most out of your social media efforts, your strategy should include the following:

- Determining which sites are most beneficial to post to and when to post to them
- Deciding how large you want your social media presence to be
- Identifying the right metrics to use to measure your progress towards social media goals
- How and why to engage current and potential customers online

Use this guide as a first step towards learning more about how to create a social media strategy for your business. For more in-depth guidance on creating your social media strategy, Hootsuite University offers step-by-step best practices and business case study examples in a 30-minute on-demand course online. Enroll at learn.hootsuite.com.

Step 1: Clarify Your Business' Social Media Goals

All business planning should start with defining clear goals, and social media is no exception. Without a clear idea of what you want to accomplish with social media, you are unlikely to achieve anything at all because your efforts will be scattered or aimless. In addition, different social media goals require different sets of action. For example, if your goal is to gain consumer credibility, that looks very different than if your goal is to convert 30 percent of prospects to sales.

Start by writing down at least three social media goals for your business. Make sure each goal is specific, realistic and measurable. It is vital to make your goals measurable so that you can track your business' progress towards each goal. To test how measurable your goal is, ask yourself what it will look like when partially or completely achieved. If you don't know, you need to continue working on the goal's measurability. It's also important that your goals for social media relate to your overall goals for your business. Rather than choosing social media goals arbitrarily, make sure these goals tie in with your overall sales, marketing and productivity goals.

My Business Social Media Goals Are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: Audit Your Current Social Media Status

Prior to creating your social media strategy, you need to assess your current social media use and how it is working for you. This requires figuring out who is currently connecting to you via social media, which social media sites your target market uses and how your social media presence compares to your competitors'.

Take Current Social Media Inventory

Start by conducting a search for both officially sanctioned and unauthorized pages representing your company. These could be fan sites, rogue employee sites or malicious sites posing as you or your company. Check the pages to see how many followers you have, how much activity is on the page and whether all links work. If any of your pages have become overrun with spam, sign on and delete it.

My Business' Social Media Log

Social Media Site	URL	Followers	Last Activity Date
1.			
2.			
3.			

Distribute Surveys

If you're not currently on social media at all, your first step is to figure out which sites would be most beneficial for you to use. You can do that by inviting current customers to complete a survey online or in store. Consider offering an appropriate incentive to your customers for completing the survey, like a discount or coupon. Collect demographic information as well as information about which social media sites your customers use. If you already have some sort of social media presence, post a similar survey on your social media pages as well as providing it to customers after purchase.

My Business Survey Results

Number of Respondents

Average Age

% Male

% Female

% on Facebook

% on Twitter

% on LinkedIn

% on Other

Search for Your Competitors' Pages

Investigate what your top competitors are doing online. Check out their social media pages on each social media network to see how much of a presence they have. In addition to checking out whether your competitors have a social media presence, it's important to analyze their existing pages. Ask yourself what each of your competitors does well and does not do well on social media. You can use this analysis to help you in crafting your social media strategy.

	Social Media Network	Strengths	Weaknesses
Competitor #1.			
Competitor #2.			
My Company			

Step 3: Develop Your Content Strategy

All of the work you've done in the previous steps should now enable you to develop a comprehensive content strategy for your social media campaign. Your content strategy should include:

- What type(s) of content you intend to post and promote via social media
- How often you will post the content
- Target audience for each type of content
- Who will create the content
- How you will promote the content

As part of your content strategy, you should create an editorial calendar. Your editorial calendar lists the dates you intend to post blogs, Facebook posts and other content you may plan to use during your social media campaigns. Check out this sample editorial calendar, then create your own.

Your content strategy may also involve creating posts in advance to be posted later. You can use Hootsuite Pro to schedule posts to as many social media sites as you'd like. Remember to put your scheduled posts on your editorial calendar so you don't forget about them.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
1	Editorial Calendar									
2	FORUM/DAY	VENUE	MEDIA	CATEGORY	TAGS	AUTHOR	TOPIC / TITLE	ASSETS NEEDED	REPACKAGED & RECOMMENDED	
3	example	Blog	Case study	Direct Marketing	Email marketing	Fife	How Sharnah helped 10 College improve recruitment quality through seminars with regional email blogs	Write post, images, site results	Series as one section of a "why choose Sharnah" video to be planned and produced	
4	example	LinkedIn Group	Q&A	Brand Marketing	Image	Smith	How well defined is your university's cross communications plan?	Prep talking points for Q&A discussion	Same intelligence from Q&A discussion. Develop content for concentrated tutorials for small groups (be brand)	
5	example	YouTube	Video	Digital Marketing	Mobile media	Davis	Demonstrate mobile-ready and non-mobile web sites. Include statistics of mobile web to target demographics and best practice usability requirements	Variety of mobile phones, pre select appropriate web sites, statistics	Add video to Facebook	
6	example	Slide	Report	Marketing Research	Research report	Black	Recent findings of year-over-year retention rates for 12 institutions implementing 5 brand strategies (include names if needed)	PPT with text, graphics, images	Write 600-800 word article, share with LinkedIn Group	
7	example	Facebook	Post	Social Media	Community	Smith	What role does the institution have in fostering community involvement among students? What ways is your university building community?	Facebook poll application	Link with @facebook to Survey Monkey poll. Collect data, use to create a new report	
8	example	SlideShare	Powerpoint	Digital Marketing	Writing for the trade	Beroun	Presentation on new leading, readability, user preferences, links, social, etc.	Powerpoint with text, graphics, images	Concentrated tutorials for small groups (be brand)	
9	example	Selected from list of strategic sites	Post	Blog Commenting	N/A	Ranking grade	Comment on industry and trade blogs, providing Smart SEO and relevant topics	N/A	N/A	
10	example	Twitter	Shortly	Digital Marketing	Storytelling	Curwell	How to use Story to help your prospects experience campus life	Image, video text, prep questions	Blog post and/or webinar	
11	example	Blog	Post	Social Media	Facebook, Twitter	Smith	Examine recent study that reviews use of Twitter and Facebook by professors in the classroom	Access to study, write post, include link to Survey Monkey poll showing trends the reports to weigh in	If enough post results are received, write news post and publish on Facebook and Twitter, @facebook	
12	example	Blog	Podcast	Digital Marketing	Web analytics	Dudon	Review 3 most common GA setup errors that can cost you valuable insight	Powerpoint, research on best practice and record. Use iRubbery or other plug-in to add to WordPress	Share via LinkedIn Group and Twitter	
13	example	Selected from list of strategic sites	Post	Blog Commenting	N/A	Ranking grade	Comment on industry and trade blogs, providing Smart SEO and relevant topics	N/A	N/A	

Editorial Calendar example

Step 4: Use Analytics to Track Progress

Once you've begun your social media campaign, don't sit back and keep doing the same thing over and over. Instead, check your analytics frequently to see how your campaign is performing.

- Use your preferred analytics tool to find out who's reading, responding and reposting your social media posts. Hootsuite Pro offers advanced analytics and reporting for your social media measurement needs.
- Use Facebook Insights to find out when your fans are online, how many are seeing your posts and who's sharing or responding.
- Google Analytics can show you who's viewing and engaging with your web pages.

Remember to match your analytics up with your goals. Examine data that measures your specific progress towards your objectives so you can ensure you are on the right path.

Step 5: Adjust Your Strategy as Needed

Once you've analyzed your current campaign, resolve to do more of what is working and revise things that are not working. Re-write your content strategy based on your analysis to reflect your new understanding. You will need to keep developing your strategy and content and using analytics to guide your next step throughout your social media campaign.

My New Social Media Strategy

The following worked well to reach my goal of

1. _____
2. _____

The following did not work so well:

1. _____
2. _____

My goal for the next period is

In order to reach that goal, I will make these changes in my social media strategy:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Hootsuite University now offers a comprehensive 30-minute online course on Creating a Social Media Strategy. Access the course on Hootsuite University and learn how to create your social media strategy through easy-to-follow video courseware featuring tips, best practices and business case studies.

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