

# Building and Implementing an Effective Social Media Presence

Marketing

# Introduction

This SmartGuide was created for IT Solution Provider Owners, Practice Managers, and Marketing Leaders as a best practice tool to help create and implement an effective social media presence.

Social is everywhere, and getting on board doesn't always seem clear and simple. With these best practices, you can create an effective and lasting social media presence that generates revenue and engagement while solidifying your business as an industry leader.

Social media isn't just for entertainment or personal use anymore—it's influencing purchase behavior, even for B2B products and services. In fact, 75% of B2B buyers and 84% of C-level or Vice President level executives use social media to make purchasing decisions. You know your company needs to have a strong social media presence to stay relevant, but where do you even begin?

## Components at a Glance

1. Create a Social Media Marketing Plan
2. Choose a Platform That Best Fits Your Business
3. Craft Your Profile
4. Learn Do's and Don'ts of Social Media
5. Create a Social Media Calendar
6. Post with Purpose
7. Don't Just Post, Engage
8. Respond to Engagement
9. Leverage Analytics
10. Test, Reevaluate & Adjust

# Create a Social Media Marketing Plan

You won't be able to successfully implement a social media strategy without a plan. Just as with business overall, without a plan we may fail. Creating a plan will set you up for success. Below are some considerations to take on your plan.

## Set Social Media Marketing goals

Define your goals and objectives so that you can be able to measure success, and work on any improvement opportunities. Make sure your goals are S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time – bound), and don't forget to track these on an ongoing basis.

## Know your Audience

Create audience personas to be able to know your audience better, understand what they want to see on social, the type of content they may be interested in, what motivates them and what they care about from a business outcome standpoint. When building personas, don't make assumptions. Gather real data if possible whether it is from your own reporting tools, or perhaps by asking the sales team or anyone working directly with your customers. There are tools that can help you build personas, and we have included a resourceful link on our Additional Resources section.

## Research your Competitors

Perform a competitive assessment of your competition and their social media platforms and content. This will help you identify what weaknesses they may have, and what your opportunities are.

Another way is to participate in social listening. 69% of Americans use some type of social media—that's a lot of free insights you could be using to your advantage. Social listening is the process of monitoring the social media activity of other businesses and customers in your industry. Do this before you set up a social media profile or revamp an existing one to help you understand the platform and how it's currently being used by your target market. Once it's up and running, continue this process regularly to stay up to date and informed on hot topics in the industry, what your customer's needs are, and what competitors are doing.

Observe to gather knowledge and insights, but don't be silent. Join the conversation, chime in with a helpful piece of information, and make recommendations. When you're aware of what others in the industry are doing and talking about, you can thoughtfully move your social presence in the right direction. Our SmartGuide: Leads 101: Defining, Generating, and Nurturing Leads through the Sales Funnel for B2B Businesses will teach you how social listening can also be leveraged to help you generate new leads.

# Choose a Platform That Best Fits Your Business

While there are many social media platforms out there to choose from, it is best suggested that you pick one or two to begin with if you are just starting with social media. Ideally, you will want to do some research and pick the top two where you will have the most audience in, or where the majority of your target customers or business partners are present. The most common platforms businesses use today are LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and even Instagram, but of course the ones you choose will be based on the type of audience as well as the nature of your business.

As an IT solution provider, Twitter and LinkedIn are definitely top of mind, but of course, it's up to you and your organization. However, just ensure that you will have a dedicated resource maintaining the platform with content as consistently as possible; the quality of the content and consistency is a reflection of your company.

### **You may also have a multi-channel approach...**

Once you have a consistent brand voice nailed down, you can use it effectively across multiple channels. Just being present on Facebook isn't enough anymore—companies are now using every platform from LinkedIn to Pinterest to Instagram to gain new business and expose their brand. These platforms can be leveraged in various ways, such as creating a Facebook event your clients can RSVP to or making an Instagram Live video in real-time. This creates new and innovative ways you can interact with consumers and showcase what your business has to offer.

LinkedIn is another instrumental tool that B2B businesses especially can take advantage of. Many decision makers and high-level employees have a presence on LinkedIn that they use to not only to grow their professional network, but also to search for information about potential business deals and partnerships. Everyone has their own preferences and favorites when it comes to social media platforms, so having a multi-channel presence provides your business with the opportunity to reach and engage with a wider variety of users in more ways.

## **Craft Your Profile**

Creating your social media accounts shouldn't be left as an after-thought. Your profile accounts are excellent tools to not only strengthen your brand, but also to communicate who your company is, as well as the value it provides. Put as much energy as possible into making your account be as consistent, engaging and providing quality content.

The elements that need to be completed or included when creating accounts may be different for each platform, but below are some key tips for important elements for major social media platforms.

### **Account Name, User Name, Profile and Cover Pictures**

Make sure that you create account using a standard company email and that the account name is similar as to the name showing on your website. When it comes to the user name, think about what your audience would search you under, and use the same information for multiple platforms if you will leverage more than one. (Consistency, once again)

When it comes to the profile or cover pictures, choose either a logo or a professional image of your company. However, make sure that you are using high – resolution images and if possible original. Just like the user name and account name, use the same pictures for multiple platforms, this will help your audience to recognize you much easier.

### **Biographies / About You:**

If you chose Twitter, you may add something a bit personal about the company that resonates with the audience, or you may keep it as concise and professional as you desired.

However, sometimes giving it that personal touch can go a long way, and customers may be more likely to start following you. However, take advantage of this section to share the best about your company and what you offer and include main keywords.

# Learn Do's and Don'ts of Social Media

Learning what should and shouldn't be included in social media will allow you to make less mistakes. There are many do's and don'ts, and other social media tactics that can be damaging to your social media presence such as wrong use of hashtags, posting too much, or even deleting negative comments. The more knowledgeable you are around this area, the more successful and effective your presence will be. Check out the additional resources section for some resources on things you should avoid.

## Create a Social Media Calendar

To ensure social media success, create a social media calendar to help you get organized and figure when and what kind of content will be shared and how often it will be. This calendar should list the dates and time in which content will be published for each of your platforms. Make sure to also include some time for engagement if possible.

## Post with Purpose

Never put something irrelevant or inconsistent with your brand voice on your social media pages just because you feel you need to post something new. Always post valuable and well thought out content that is actually helpful or interesting to your target market and followers. Perhaps it's an educational tool, tells a personal story, or presents a new angle to look at a common problem in the industry. Whatever the topic or medium, make sure it has a clear purpose.

When brands start building a social media presence, they often think the goal is simply to make as many impressions as possible when in reality the objective should be educating and inspiring. Even though it's a business page and not a personal one, your company still has a personality and culture that can shine through your social accounts. Know your buyer personas, what channels each uses, and give them what they want! The end goal should be to become a thought leader in your space, where other businesses and industry leaders are looking to you for valuable and innovative material.

## Don't Just Post, Engage

Social media is meant to be just that: social. Simply posting content and leaving it there, however valuable it may be, isn't enough. It's important to actually engage with your own content, your followers, with other businesses, and with other content relevant to your industry and consumers. Comment on interesting posts, share relevant articles, and join in on conversations or industry debates with insightful information or helpful resources. Don't just promote your own products, links, or content—talk with your followers, not to them. It's also essential to respond to comments, questions, and reviews on your pages, whether they're positive or negative. In fact, consumers spend 20-40% more with companies that engage and respond to their customers via social media. Thank a client that leaves a positive comment or sharing a satisfied review, but never ignore or delete something negative. Instead, thank them for their constructive feedback and message them privately to try to resolve the issue and turn the experience around.

It's more important to be genuine and transparent than to have a page that looks too good to be true—it's easy to tell if you're only showing one side of the story. Strong, authentic engagement will

leave a lasting impression on those that interact with your social accounts, turning them into repeat customers who will stay loyal to your brand and promote it to others.

## Respond to Engagement

There is a reason every account you create will have followers. It is a place where they will come to gain knowledge, learn about your products, services and events, so always acknowledge anyone responding to your content.

You may like or even reply to their comments, and tag them in as well to make it personal. This is yet another opportunity to create a good impression, and build relationships. The more you are engaging with your followers, the more they will continue to engage with you, which will in return build a network, increasing your audience and business credibility.

## Leverage Analytics

Many platforms provide free analytics that your company should definitely take advantage of. You can leverage this data and compare it against the goals and objectives you set at the beginning when you created your social media plan.

In example:

- Demographics: Who was your audience? Titles, Gender, Location, Industry, Interests
- Clicks or Views
- Number of engagements: Likes, comments, shares or reactions
- Activity: Which days received the most activity, and during what timeframes? Also, were there any specific posts/ type of content that drove more interest?

When you leverage this type of data, you can build a better social media presence, and help you understand where you should continue to focus on.

## Test, Reevaluate and Adjust

This is a key step in any business. We must first test a product, or carry out a pilot before launching something officially. Before launching your plan and going live, perform a test for each of your platforms. Have some of your other team members review the page, content and such and provide you with feedback, this will help you make any edits before any of your followers catch any errors.

After you have implemented your strategy or plan, reevaluate how you are doing by performing a social media assessment. Are you achieving the goals you set at the beginning, and if not how can you improve them?

Determine what's working, and what's not? How does your presence compare to your competition? All of this information needs to be gathered in one place, and then analyzed to be able to create a new plan and plan on how to make improvements and adjust your plan or create a new one.

# Additional Resources

Main Social Media Platform Step- by –Step Creation Process

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

Other Useful Resources

- [How to Create Social Media Goals](#)
- [Creating Audience Personas](#)
- [Persona Templates](#)
- [Tips and Templates for Creating a Social Media Calendar](#)
- [Common Social Media Mistakes to Avoid](#)
- [Do's and Don'ts of Hashtag Usage](#)

For any questions  
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