MAKING YOUR MARK
WITH SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE U.S.
Twenty years ago, launching a promotional campaign for a new startup venture in the U.S. would have required tens of thousands of dollars for print mailings to potential customers, paid newspaper and magazine ads, and hiring a PR consultant for creating a buzz about your product or service in the trade press. Today, that’s all changed.

While there are still some needs to use traditional marketing and PR tools, many startups can connect directly with their customers and the media with an effective and well organized social media plan. The best part is that most social media efforts require little or no cash resources – only your time and creativity.

In the next few pages we look at “the big picture” of social media. This is not a step-by-step guide on specific social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram; but a resource guide for establishing a broad plan to make sure the time you and your staff spend on social media are productive.

**Have an Objective**

Always tie your goals to organizational objectives. You know that social media matters, but you’ll be better positioned to explain this to your CEO and partners if you know exactly how your work will support the mission and objectives of your company. Once you’ve clarified your goals and your strategies and you can show how you will measure their effectiveness, it will be easier to get the rest of your team on board in regards to budget and workflow. You won’t be stumbling to figure out what you should do next or what metric to measure: your goals will guide everything.

**It’s About the Brand – Not the Product**

Most of your postings whether Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn should be supporting your brand – not about a specific product. While there are exceptions, the most effective social media posts target users and potential users with messaging about your brand.
Real Example: IBM. While it could promote a specific software solution on its Facebook page, IBM Watson focuses on the benefit of Artificial Intelligence with an educational panel on “Why Data is the New Oil.” This is the kind of information that helps your followers with their own businesses and builds followers over time.
“Goals are different for each social media channel”

Create a Social Media Channel Plan

So many organizations feel overwhelmed by the need to create content for every social media platform on the planet. Or worse yet, many social media managers create one type of content and then blast that content onto every social platform. If that’s you, you need a social media channel plan.

Most likely, your goals are different on each social platform. Since that’s the case, the content you develop for that platform needs to be different as well. Here are the components for your channel plan.

- The Channel (For example, Facebook.)
- The Persona (Who are you specifically targeting?)
- The Goal (Is it a sales goal, cost-savings goal or are you trying to create a better customer experience?)
- Primary Content Type (Textual, video, infographics?)
- Structure (What does a general post look like?)
- Tone (Playful, sarcastic?)
- Channel Integration (How will this channel work with your other channels for maximum impact?)
- Desired Action (What user behavior do you want to achieve: increase sales? Connect with investors? Build awareness among similar professionals?)
- Editorial Plan (Every channel needs its own editorial calendar.)

If you leverage a social media channel plan correctly, you’ll be able to double down on the channels that work for you and be realistic with your resources on the other channels.
Measure, Measure, Measure

Having very active Facebook and Twitter pages can be great fun for you --- but unless you constantly measure the effectiveness of your posts, it can become pretty meaningless. Did your Facebook posts provide a spike on your website visits? Did a Twitter post spark a mention in a trade magazine? Did you suddenly receive queries from several investors right after a posting on LinkedIn?

While increased sales is always a good objective for marketing campaigns, in social media the goals can be different. The key goal is to grow a following – not just numbers of followers and likes, but meaningful dialog about your industry and your company.

“How will you know if you succeeded?”

Experiment. Failure is good

Pay attention to new trends in social media. Try new platforms, then see if it leads to growth in your audience. A failure on one posting isn’t permanent; try it again on another platform and keep measuring the response.
Size Matters

If you are a very small company (such as a solo startup), don’t scatter your efforts across multiple social media channels. To make the most of your limited resources, find the one channel that is densely populated with your ideal customers and inhabit it like no other. Make those limited platforms or platforms shine, don’t try to do a lot of everything --- (everything will be mediocre). The impact and return on investment (of your time) will be much greater, and you’ll begin to build a strong community versus a fractured one.

On the other hand, if you are working in a well-funded organization, with enough resources, go outside and hire independent contractors to do what you may not have the skill set for.

Retain your followers by being a publisher instead of a marketer

Think of yourself as a publisher more than a marketer. Share solid content with your audience—the kind you know they like because you’re listening to them. Be interesting to them every day, not just when they’re looking to buy, so you retain your followers and they’ll be more receptive to the marketing messages that you sprinkle in.

Dispose of the fluff and buzzwords

Use language and copy you would use in real life for your brand’s social channels. Digital communication is still humans interacting with one another, so why should our language suffer just because we’re talking online? If you don’t use words and phrases such as “stakeholder” in conversations with friends and family, don’t use them in social media. We’re all humans, both online and off, and our communications, regardless of platform or context, should maintain that human element. It’s a combination of “de-fluffing” our content and acting as if you’re talking with a friend that drives communities forward.
Discussions, not broadcasts

Your posts are to elicit discussions about your industry, your company and its brand. You’re not giving a speech, you’re entering a conversation. Contribute to other organizations discussions and posts. Don’t forget to listen. Sharing, commenting, distributing might all get top billing that you may forget to listen and then engage. Don’t forget to listen and remember that social media works best a two-way street.

Reposting Links to Useful and Interesting Content

Lead your users to useful content – videos, webinars, slideshows that will benefit them. We’re not talking about content exclusively on your channels, but on others as well. If there’s a great how to video on YouTube that relates to your industry, repost it on LinkedIn or Facebook. Your users will remember it was you who provided the connection to great content.
Be Brief

Make it count! Just like a movie trailer has 2 minutes and 30 seconds to capture their audience, your social media channels have a scroll through chance of grabbing the attention of the follower! Your social media channels are the trailer to your business or product. Once you’ve written a couple of lines on Facebook or LinkedIn, review it again to make sure it is as concise as possible and make sure it is full of active verbs and descriptions.

Be Visual

“A Twitter or Facebook post is far more likely to be seen with images and video”

Visual content is king. Adding a photo to a post increases engagement, and the rise of apps like Snapchat, Pinterest and Instagram shows that visual content is here to stay.
When you aren’t a photographer, graphic designer or even slightly creative, posting to these channels can become difficult. But who can resist trying, when Instagram alone boasts 300 million active users? Try these tools to help. VSCOcam, Snapseed, Wordswag, SumAll, Viralwoot, Canva and Legned See more at:

http://blog.sumall.com/journal/7-tools-to-help-you-create-visual-content.html#ixzz4EbZxsebV

**Deliver Content Consistently with Helpful apps**

One of the best ways to grow your following and increase engagement on social media is to be there consistently. The first step is to put the right systems in place to keep your posts relevant, interesting and valuable for your audience. One way to do this is by using some very easy-to-use and inexpensive applications such as Edgar. ([https://meetedgar.com/](https://meetedgar.com/))
Edgar allows you to create your own content categories so you can keep track of the specific types of posts you’re releasing; this ensures you don’t overwhelm your followers with the same types of posts over and over.

You can also schedule repeat posts indefinitely, so your content schedule never runs dry. Plus Edgar allows you to upload custom images for your Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn posts. As you build your content library, update your schedule with the categories you want to release and when. Then let Edgar take care of the rest.
Another important web application is HootSuite, (hootsuite.com). Available as a free or premium web app, Hootsuite automates many social media tasks such as delayed posts, posting to multiple channels, analytics, and URL shortening. With just a few lines of text you can reach your Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google+ channels all at the same time and set a time for the most desirable times of the day for your posts. (see more on this later on).

**Don’t forget to Blog**

Take your most popular tweets and Facebook posts, or the ones you feel most passionately about, and use them to develop blog posts. You don’t have to write three pages; you don’t even have to write four paragraphs.

Seth Godin is one of the most successful bloggers in the marketing world, and he writes in two-to three-sentence paragraphs. He’s a master at expressing ideas that are thought-provoking and easy to read. People are pressed for time these days and content can be overwhelming, so make it valuable and easy to read.

Another way to get ideas is to comment on the things you read, such as other people’s blogs and newsletters, media publications and anything else relevant to your business. You’re already absorbing the content and you probably have opinions when you’re reading it, so go ahead and comment on those blogs.

One benefit of commenting is that people will start recognizing your name; another is it gives you material for a blog post. For example, save the comments you write in your email drafts folder and use the subject line as a label for the topic. After you’ve saved the drafts, come back and turn these comments into blog posts. You can even make the comment itself the blog post.

**Manage Time Effectively**

How much time do you spend crafting blog posts? Sending emails? Sitting in meetings?

Even if you have a good idea of where you’re spending the bulk of your time, you may often feel there simply aren’t enough hours in your day. Getting a handle on time management is a huge challenge for business owners.

For example, let’s say you spend a great deal of time interacting on Facebook and Twitter, but you’re not seeing a lot of results. Meanwhile, your email marketing campaigns are intermittent at best, although you know the results are there for the taking.
Adjust your daily schedule so you spend more time on email marketing and see if it drives more sales. Remember, digital marketing depends on the triangle of social, blog and email. If you neglect any one of them, your entire strategy could suffer. However, give them each a little love, and you might just see explosive growth.

It’s all about finding a balance that works for you and your business.

**Expand Reach With LinkedIn Publisher**

If you haven’t already done so, take advantage of the free content publishing feature on LinkedIn called Publisher. It can increase your exposure to your target audience and help build your credibility as an expert in your industry. In fact, LinkedIn Publisher can greatly expand the reach of your business on LinkedIn, regardless of your network’s size.

Example: Wendy McClelland added her post, “Why I Say NO to Coffee Meetings” to LinkedIn Publisher and she received more views, likes and comments than she ever done on her personal blog.

Wendy’s following is just over 1,500, but this published post got more than 61,500 views, 350 likes and 500 comments! 60,000 people outside of Wendy’s network were exposed to her and her work.
While most posts will not achieve such extreme reach, all posts have the potential to reach new people. Each time you publish, all of your connections and followers will receive a notification. The post also has a chance to be included in the email LinkedIn Pulse sends out to its members with suggestions for posts that might interest them.
To increase your chances of success with Publisher, create professional-looking posts that address the needs and pain points of your audience. Make sure you avoid adding spammy or promotional information. Post valuable content that your network will share with their connections, and your reach will grow even more.

By publishing new and previously published content on LinkedIn, you can grow your audience and network while increasing your status as an expert. Through this open publishing platform, your original content becomes part of your company’s profile, is shared with your trusted network and has the ability to reach the largest group of professionals ever assembled.
Be Visual: with Pinterest

With over 70 million users (500,000 of them businesses) Pinterest has been around since 2010. And while the concept of posting pictures doesn’t seem like it would provide much marketing push, many businesses would disagree.

Nordstrom, one of the largest retail brick and mortar clothing stores in the US has nearly 5 million Pinterest followers. The company not only posts pictures of its popular items on Pinterest, but it also created an app to help sales people find the pinned items in the store.
When, Where, How Much and How Frequently?

All the Data You need to know about when to post, what to post, how many words to post and more. The Foundation, a major social media resource has researched and published a great resource for people serious about social media. If you use a resource like HootSuite in combination with analytics from The Foundation, you are sure to succeed at getting attention for your brand and your company. Good Luck!
**Twitter**

How long should my Tweets be? Sure there’s a character limit on Twitter, but being concise will get you more retweets. 20% more with tweets less than 100 characters. Engagement of your users will also increase if you limit your tweets to one to three each day. And the best time to tweet: lunchtime!

- **LENGTH**
  - 71-100
  - 20% more retweets for tweets with < 100 characters.

- **TWEETS/DAY**
  - 1-3
  - The best time to tweet is at noon, with most audience activity starting at 1pm until just after dinner time.
Facebook

Like Twitter, you’ll get 80% more engagement if your text posts are less than 40 characters and if you only post one to two times a day. Noontime and right before dinner are the best posting times.
Instagram

The most productive Instagram posts happen around 5pm to 6pm and save your video for YouTube, you’ll get much more engagement if you post photos only.

**POSTS / DAY**

2-3

**ACTIVITY**

12AM NOON 12AM

**ENGAGEMENT**

The best time to ‘gram is right around 5pm, with peak activity at around 6. The best days to post are all midweek.

**PHOTO VS VIDEO**

51%

more engagement on photos than videos.

95%

of all Instagram posts are photos.
Pinterest

Don’t post on Pinterest during mornings or at dinner time. Best times are 2-4pm and after 8pm. Keep in mind a majority of Pinterest users are women. Use a height of your image that’s 800 pixels or more and pin 4 to 5 times a day for the most engagement.
LinkedIn

It’s tempting to post on LinkedIn during weekends when you have more free time, but the optimum times are on weekdays at midday. Avoid evenings as well. One to two posts will also get you more engagement as will short posts less than 24 words. If you have any doubts about which is more effective for business people – Facebook or LinkedIn – LinkedIn wins hands down: with 276 more page referrals than Facebook.

- The busiest time on LinkedIn is midday on weekdays. Avoid weekends and evenings.
- 22% audience reach per single post.
- 276% more page referrals from LinkedIn than FB.
- 51% of businesses have LinkedIn pages.
- 58% of LinkedIn users are active monthly.
Useful Resources and Links

Social Media Examiner: http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/

Hootsuite: www.hootsuite.com

15 Excellent Beginners Guides to Social Media: http://bit.ly/2ark35d

Edgar: https://meetedgar.com/

Social Media Strategy Template (Powerpoint) http://bit.ly/2a9mNqZ


Definitive Guide to Instagram Marketing: https://dwusa.exavault.com/share/view/ckb7-dvfoxg7t

Best and Worst Times to Post on Social Media: http://bit.ly/2alzmrq


How to Build a Super Tribe using Google+: http://www.businessesgrow.com/2014/08/07/build-a-tribe/


Which Social Media Channels are right for you? http://bit.ly/1rj115Q

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