SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY GUIDE
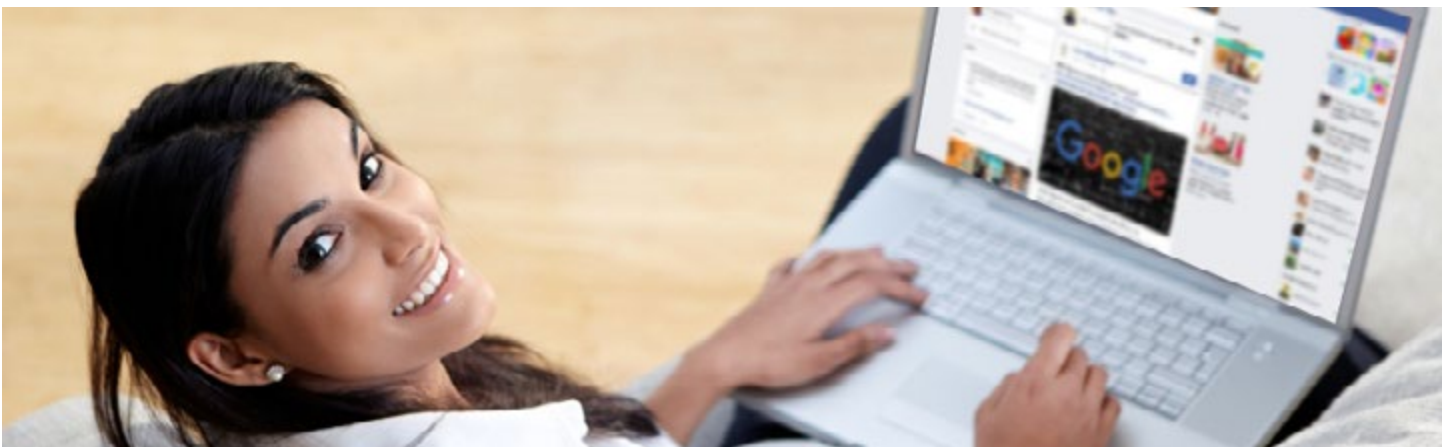
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Why Businesses Need Social Media Marketing

Social media has become an undeniable tool for marketing and customer engagement. Customers are more often making buying decisions through online research, following brands on social platforms, and searching for services on their mobile devices. All businesses, from small Ma-and-Pa shops to large corporations, have an online audience they can engage. Later in this guide, we'll go through an overview of popular social platforms and their user demographics to decipher which are appropriate for a given business. Here are some of the main reasons why social media marketing is imperative for the success of a business in 2016:

1. **Legitimize brand and boost brand awareness:** Every business has its own individual values and culture — social media is an outlet that allows customers to connect with these unique personality traits. The ability to share photos and status updates that go "behind the scenes" or showcase company culture can make customers feel more connected to the brand.

2. **Improve customer service:** Being present on social media gives customers the chance to communicate with businesses via the messaging features on virtually every platform. When customers have questions, comments, or even a photo of a product to share, social media provides a convenient way for them to communicate without having to visit the store or call.

3. **Distribute content:** Social media gives businesses a free advertising platform for new products and promotions. If a business is changing locations, hours, or opening late because of a snowstorm, social media platforms allow them to easily make their audience aware of the latest news. It's also a place to highlight achievements and share content that will intrigue customers.

4. **Boost SEO:** Social media has great benefits for businesses' search engine rankings. Any content that's shared on social media can direct traffic back to businesses' websites. Social media pages also provide direct SEO links to their site. Social media pages themselves have the potential to rank in search, which creates the opportunity to have multiple rankings and monopolize pages of Google results.

Steps for Creating and Implementing Social Media Strategies

REVIEW WHAT IS/ISN'T WORKING, MAKE NECESSARY CHANGE

CREATE A CONTENT PLAN AND EDITORIAL CALENDAR

GET INSPIRATION + CONNECT FROM INDUSTRY

CREATE OR IMPROVE SOCIAL ACCOUNTS

EVALUATE CURRENT SOCIAL PAGES

CREATE SOCIAL MEDIA OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

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Step 1: Create social media objectives and goals

Increase brand awareness, increase traffic to website, convert leads — these are all popular reasons for procuring a social media strategy. The goal of a social media strategy will be to, in some way, advance the client's business.

Step 2: Evaluate current social pages

Has the client claimed its business on Google yet? Do they have a Facebook account that's been inactive for years? It's important to evaluate where they already are on the web, and reactivate or clean up these profiles. If a business does have an active social page, how is it performing? Are customers engaged, what types of posts are getting likes? Analyze its current social pages to figure out what will work and what won't going forward.

Step 3: Create or improve social accounts

After the initial evaluation, it's time to create and improve on any current social pages. Keep user-names and passwords organized in a place that all admins can access. See the Overview of Popular Social Platforms on page 7 for the set-up requirements of various social platforms.

Step 4: Get inspiration + connect from industry leaders, competitors, clients

For inspiration on what types of posts to create, it helps to first do some research. For example, if your client is a small craft brewery, then take some time to explore what big name breweries in your area are doing online. The social platforms they use and the content they post is great source of ideas. Connect with these leaders and clients. Scroll through the competitor's followers and take notice of their interests, and even try following them.

Step 5: Create a content plan and editorial calendar

Decide how frequently you want to post on each social platform and what type of posts they will be. There are various rules of thumb social media posting: 2/3 company culture posts and 1/3 business promotions; the 80/20 rule, 80% of posts should be fun and interesting to your audience and 20% should be blatant brand promotion, and countless other suggestions you can find on Google. Over-all, if your posts are strictly blatant brand promotions, the audience will lose interest and trust. Depending on the client's audience the type of posts they'll respond to best will vary. Make a calendar or schedule for when and what you will post.

Step 6: Review what is/isn't working, make necessary change

Many social media platforms (Facebook, Pinterest, etc) offer built-in analytical tools to get a sense of how your profile is performing and what types of posts your audience is responding to. There are many other software options for analyzing performance data (Hootsuite, Google Analytics, Social Sprout). In the most basic sense, see what posts are getting likes and take note of the content and timing, and focus your efforts to continuing what's driving traffic.

Your Client's Role In Their Social Media Strategy

The client's level of enthusiasm and willingness to be involved with their own social media strategy will vary greatly. Perhaps your client enjoys posting to Facebook, but not Twitter; maybe they want to approve each post before it's published; or, quite possibly, they don't want any part in their social media strategy whatsoever. No matter howinvolved they want to be, there are a few necessities they need provide you with in order for you to do your job and help their brand succeed on social media.

Requirements from the client to set up and manage their social media accounts:

Images

The client will need to provide you with a bank of business-relevant images (this can be through Dropbox, Google Images, etc.) for you to create rich interesting content. These images should include short descriptions/titles to help your social media coordinator better understand the context of the photo and create a worthwhile post about it.

Credentials

In the set-up phase of a social media strategy, the client needs to decide if they want to be an admin to a social profile, have no part in the profile, or have you utilize their prefered credentials for their profiles. For clients who want to be admin access, they will need to connect with you or their company's profile in some capacity depending on the platform.

Updates

Clients should keep you updated on special events, sales, and promotions they have going on. If they keep an events calendar, it should be shared with you as soon as possible so you can plan out your social media promotions.

Social Media Rules of Thumb

Use Images: Colored visuals increase people's willingness to read a piece of content by 80% content with relevant images gets 94% more views than content without relevant images

Tag people and places: Always tag the people and brands in your photos and geotag the location of your photos. These practices help you to get involved with your community and get your posts seen by more people.

Write for the reader first, then for SEO: Don't let the usage of keywords impede on the quality of your content, viewers will lose interest and trust.

Add Social Icons to Website: Every social media account that a business has should be linked on their website with an image of the platform's logo.

Use relevant hashtags (when appropriate): Hashtags allow your content to be viewed by users who search your hashtag, it can be a great way to attract traffic and new followers. It's important to not use any offensive hashtags, and not to go overboard. For Twitter, use no more than two hashtags. Don't use hashtags on Facebook. Use up to 30 hashtags on an Instagram post caption.

General Post Ideas

Behind the scenes

Highlight services or products

Calls to action (CTA)

Shout out to clients or community

Product reviews

User-generated content

Company Culture

Inspirational quotes

Share/Retweet content and articles from relevant pages

Overview of Popular Social Platforms

Google My Business

Overview: Every business needs to claim its Google My Business page for optimal SEO results. Google favors businesses who have been verified through its my business platform and allows them to rank higher in search. Your Google page will include basic information about your business, photos, and customer reviews.

Timing: There is no posting function for Google My Business. Its primary function is to verify your business and help in terms of SEO. Encourage customers to review you at any time, these reviews will be permanent and can be viewed at any time. If ever you change your location, phone number, or hours, edit that information on Google My Business as soon as possible.

Account Set-Up Notes: Requires a gmail account to set up/manage. Can have multiple admins. Upon the creation/claiming of a business on Google, a postcard with a verification code will be sent by mail to the business address you supply.

facebook

Overview: Mostly likely, you're familiar with Facebook. It is a social networking website with 1.44 billion active users.

87% of adults 18–29 use Facebook.
73% of adults 30–49 use Facebook.
63% of adults 50–64 use Facebook.
56% of adults 65+ use Facebook.

The sheer amount of diverse users is undeniable: You need an established business Facebook page with company information, reviews, and status updates to have a successful social media marketing strategy.

Timing: Facebook can be accessed via desktop or mobile. There are bound to be users on at any given time of day, but here are some suggested prime times to get more traffic on your posts: Saturdays and Sundays from 12–1 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays from 1–4 p.m., and Wednesdays at 3 p.m.

Account Set-Up Notes: A Facebook business page needs to be created and managed by an admin, this can either be you, the client, or both - multiple people can be FB page admins.

For an admin to add another admin:

1. Click **Settings** at the top of your Page.
2. Click **Page Roles** in the left column.
3. Select the person you want to add:

a. If the person is your Facebook friend, begin typing their name and select them from the list that appears.

b. If the person isn't your Facebook friend, type the email address associated with their Facebook account.

   i. *Note: If they aren't a friend and you don't have their email address, but they have "liked" your page, you can go to "people and other pages" in the left hand column, find them, and click the drop down icon to the right of their name to assign a role.*

4. Click **Editor** to select a role from the dropdown menu.
5. Click **Save** and enter your password to confirm.

Instagram

Overview: Instagram is a mobile photography app with 300 million (rapidly rising) users. It has surpassed Twitter and Facebook as having largest ratio of young users with 53% of whom being between the ages of 18-29. The 30-49 age group follows at 25% of its user base.

Timing: You can only post to Instagram via a mobile device. Instagram posts can be viewed on desktop or mobile. Users tend to scroll through their feeds frequently throughout the day, but some suggested prime times are: Mondays and Thursdays at any time other than 3–4 p.m., post videos any day between 9 p.m.–8 a.m., and Wednesdays at 5pm.

Account Set-Up Notes: Requires names, email, password, and a username of no more than 30 characters

Overview: Linkedin is a professional networking social platform. Business can create a "page" and post information about themselves as well as their hours, location, contact information, and provide company updates. Frequent company updates (news of events, promotions, and "sharing" of relevant content from other pages) appear in its followers' newsfeeds.

Timing: LinkedIn is for professionals, and they tend to use it around work hours. Suggested prime times: Tuesdays at 10–11 a.m; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 7:30–8:30 a.m., 12 p.m., and 5–6 p.m. Not as much traffic on the weekends.

Account Set-Up Notes: Much like Facebook for Business, LinkedIn company pages are pages that are created and managed by personal accounts (admins). Ex: If your client wants you to create their company's LinkedIn from their personal account then you will need their personal Linkedin login credentials. After you

set up the page on their profile, they can make you an admin too. An admin must be personally "connected" with you on LinkedIn for them to make you an admin.

To add an admin:

1. Move your cursor over **Interests** at the top of your homepage and select **Companies**.
2. Click the Company Page you want to edit from the **Manage your pages** section on the right.
3. Click the blue **Edit** button in the upper right.
4. Scroll down the **Overview** page and find the **Company Pages Admins** section on the left. This is below the **Company Description** and **Default Language** fields.
5. Under **Designated Admins**, start typing the name of a connection that you want to be an admin. You must be connected to the new admins through LinkedIn before you can add them.
6. Click **Publish** in the top right of the page.

Overview: Pinterest is a social network that allows users to visually share, and discover new interests by posting (known as 'pinning') images or videos to their own or others' boards (i.e. a collection of 'pins,' usually with a common theme) and browsing what other users have pinned. Its user base is mostly women, but the number of male users has been rising: 42% of online women use Pinterest, 13% of online men use Pinterest. Pinterest users tend to have more disposable income: 34% of adult internet users making over $75,000 use Pinterest.

Timing: For optimal success on Pinterest it's recommended to post 5-30 pins a day (these can include re-pins). Some suggested prime times are: Saturdays at 8–11 p.m, Any day 2–4 a.m. and 2–4 p.m., Fridays at 3 p.m.

Account Set-Up Notes: Go to Pinterest sign up page, select "continue as a business" at the bottom. Requires business name, email, and password.

Optimizing for Pinterest Analytics: Pinterest offers free analytical tools for businesses. To get the most out of Pinterest Analytics, you'll be prompted to confirm your business's website, and add a Pin It button to your website.

twitter

Overview: Twitter is primarily a mobile app, but it can also be used on a desktop. Users can post 160 character blurbs, links, and photos that appear on their followers' news feeds. Twitter is primarily for younger generations and tech savvy adults: 40% of users are 18-29 and 25% are 30-49.

Timing: As a primarily mobile app, Twitter users are likely to scroll through their news feeds on their phone during their down times: lunch breaks, commutes, etc. The optimal times to tweet are 12–3 p.m., with a peak best time at 5 p.m. During the workweek is the best, though some niches might have more active audiences on the weekend.

Account Set-Up Notes: Requires name, email, password, and username no more than 15 characters.