

VIDEO 1: WHY IS SOCIAL MEDIA ESSENTIAL TO INBOUND?

Hi there! I'm Markiesha from HubSpot Academy. In this video we are going to learn about why social media is a key component in helping you grow your business

Now, you might be thinking, "This sounds great, but why should I use social media for my business?"

Simple. It's where your prospects are.

Did you know that 2 billion people from all over the world are active users on social networks?

That's almost 70% of the world's internet population!

Every day, billions of active users are following brands and making purchase decisions based on the information that businesses share on social media. So it's time to get in on the action and help them make the right decisions.

So why is social media essential to inbound?

Because it is a unique tool that can be helpful at every stage of the inbound methodology. From attracting visitors to converting leads, closing sales and delighting your customers, social media can help you do it all.

Let's take a deeper look at the attract phase of the inbound methodology. Social media can help you attract some of those billions of internet users to your website and increase your exposure. Once you've exposed a new visitor to your site, social media can help you convert these visitors into leads by promoting your content.

In 2014, the State of Inbound Report found that more than 80% of marketers and 60% of sales professionals found qualified leads on social media sites. That's huge! Just think, your next sale could result from leveraging your social media channels.

But your job isn't over when that lead becomes a customer. Post-sale, Social media can help you delight your customers.

Delighting your customers through social media is a bit like celebrating with a glass of your favorite champagne. You'll want to create those special moments with your customers so they go on to promote your business and your wonderful customer service.

And that's not all! According to Social Media Examiner, sixty-six percent of marketers saw an increase in leads from social media after spending just six hours per week on their social channels. That's less time than it would take for you to binge watch a season of most TV shows! To think how time flies.

Social media can also be used to build and maintain personal connections through real-time, one-on-one interactions. These interactions provide a personalized service that is visible to users and their social networks. So next time you respond to a customer on social media be sure to keep this in mind.

By now, you understand why social media is a tool to help you grow your business and why it's important to the inbound methodology.

But don't let the learning stop here! In the next videos, you can learn how to develop and execute a successful social media strategy. Even see good and not so good examples of how it's done so that you can be a social media all-star in no time. So, let the learning continue...

VIDEO 2: HOW CAN YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVELY?

If you're feeling comfortable with why social media is important and how it will help you grow your business, let's talk about steps you can take to make it work for you.

Think of social media like writing a research paper. First you conduct research, then you write, and finally you get feedback that indicates how well you did. Social media is pretty similar.

On one hand, there's social monitoring, which should be used during the research stage of developing a social media strategy.

On the other, there's social publishing, where you post content across your social platforms.

Lastly, social reporting helps you to assess your efforts and make changes. Together, these steps will help you create an effective inbound social media strategy worthy of an A+!

Let's talk a bit more about social monitoring -- specifically, the research component.

Social monitoring is a great way that marketers can gather information about their buyer personas. As you know, buyer personas are critical to your inbound strategy. They allow you to connect with the right audience and begin building relationships with people who want to be members of your social network.

Not only can you monitor what your personas are saying about you, but you can listen for industry trends that will help you attract more visitors and grow your business.

Social publishing is the next step in developing an effective inbound social media strategy. Here, you'll demonstrate your newfound knowledge by distributing the content you've developed for your buyer personas. This is a major piece to your social strategy because what you publish and how you publish will determine how your audience perceives your brand.

Similar to receiving a grade on an essay, social reporting provides you with an understanding of how well your efforts rank in comparison with your actual results.

Now, you may be wondering, how do I develop and execute my own social media strategy? Well, don't fret, there are a few best practices for each step that will get you up and running in no time!

Let's start with best practices for social monitoring.

Every good project starts with an end goal in mind, and a good social media strategy isn't any different.

This brings us to the first social monitoring best practice: Determine your inbound goals.

Before you do anything, it's important to set SMART inbound goals. Whether you're looking to increase visitors, convert more leads, close more customers, or even make your customers happy, setting a specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely goal is the best way to drive success.

Now, your social media goals may change as you start building out your strategy, and that's okay. Just be sure to update them as you continue through the process.

Once you've had the opportunity to think through your goals, the next step is to set up social media streams that monitor for the right terms.

Think of a social media stream like a school of fish swimming around on the web, just a group of messages that are pulled together into one list based on something they all share. And you can decide what term or terms these messages should have in common. So how do you know if you're monitoring for the right terms?

Well, you could start by focusing on the words that your buyer personas use to describe your business. These terms can change over time as you learn more about your buyer personas, so don't be afraid to add or delete streams as you become a more skilled inbound marketer.

Next, you'll want to take time to segment your audience. Ways to consider segmenting are by geographic location, lifecycle stage, or even by content your audience has engaged in.

If you're active on Twitter or just getting started, an easy way to segment your audience is to create a list of your followers who you can classify as leads, customers, or even promoters.

Another example of this would be through the use of a Facebook or LinkedIn group. Facebook groups are easy to set up. You can create an open group for anyone to join, or a closed group that is subject to approval by the group's administrator. You can get customers to join a group on either of these networks by sending them the link in an email or sharing it during a customer-only webinar.

Creating groups on social platforms is also a great way for your company to start conversations that are relevant to your business. You can also choose the content you want to promote and watch as the engagement grows.

This brings us to the final best practice for social monitoring, which is to take the time to use personalized responses.

That sounds simple enough. If you understand where your buyer personas are in their buyer's journey, this should make it easy, right?

A major financial institute (who shall remain nameless) once caused an uproar on Twitter because their social media support team provided nearly identical responses to every customer who tweeted at them. Take a look.

These two tweets are nearly identical. A big customer service no-no. It's important for you to remember that your audience wants to feel special. And it's your job to make them feel this way at every stage in their journey.

Keep in mind, personalized responses aren't all about solving customer service concerns, they can also help you delight customers too.

Take a look at this example: Ashlynn tweeted, "Thumbs up to the cold brew Starbucks!" and Starbucks replied, "Glad you're enjoying it-- perfect for that warmer weather on the horizon!"

Starbucks' response was personal and appropriate. Give this approach a try the next time you're mentioned by a member in your social network.

Alright so there you have it, the research is done! Well, sort of. As you discover new insights about your buyer personas you may decide to make adjustments to your methods. Whether it's setting new goals, changing your search terms, creating new ways to monitor your audience, or even showcasing more of your personality in your responses, it's all an iterative process!

Now, let's explore the best practices for social publishing.

Remember the research paper example from earlier on? Well social publishing is kind of like writing the paper itself. And how does any good paper start? With your name and an introduction of course!

Similarly, the first best practice of social publishing is optimizing your company's profile. So what does that mean?

Well there are 3 key components to an optimized profile. The first is your company logo. You can set this as your profile picture, your header, or even your cover photo. You will want this image to be recognizable to your audience so make sure it's clear, high resolution, and the appropriate proportions for each social platform.

The next component of an optimized profile is a clear and concise company description. This is your opportunity to introduce yourself to future customers, so you'll want to be sure you are clear, concise, and creative. And don't be afraid to use keywords in your profile description. This will make it easy for prospects to find you.

So that leaves the third component: A link to your website.

A link to your website is an invitation for your audience members to learn more about what you do, how your customers or clients feel about your business, and where they can purchase your product or service. Check out this example of an optimized profile.

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Care Dot Com is a company that helps families connect with caregivers, and this is their optimized Facebook profile. You can see they have their company logo as the profile

picture, a clear and concise company description of the services they provide, and a link to their website in case visitors want to learn more about their business.

But, before you start publishing on social media, you have to ask yourself, “How can I unify our social messaging?”

Well one of the most common ways is to create a social media style guide.

A style guide is your social media rule book. These rules will help you establish a consistent way to respond to customers, share content, create posts, and more.

This should answer questions like How many hashtags will you include in each tweet? What will be the tone of your posts? Will all of your posts include images? And what are the rules about attaching links to your posts? By answering these questions, you’ll have a few plays to help take your social publishing to the next level.

So, are you ready to start publishing content to your audience? Then let’s get into it.

This next best practice will make social publishing fun for you and your audience. And that’s to customize the content that you publish across platforms.

Let’s start with Twitter.

Now, if I had to characterize Twitter, it would be a tool for “microblogging,” or posting short updates, comments, or thoughts to the internet.

And so this requires an essence of creativity in order to avoid becoming the elevator music in the background, and be the song that everyone is talking about.

To do this, you want to be sure to use 140 characters or less, and I emphasize less. Twitter limits tweets that include a link to just 117 characters, not including attached photos. So challenge yourself to keep your tweets between 100-110 characters and use images to better communicate your message.

These two examples use less than 140 characters but also include a link and an image.

The takeaway here is to get creative and use images or videos. Always include a link when relevant, and keep it short. So go ahead, tweet your heart out.

Alright, let’s talk Facebook.

With 1.3 billion active users, Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the world. This also means publishing content to Facebook is very different. Say goodbye to

140 characters and hello 250! You want to keep posts to around 250 characters and do your best to use 80 words or less. This can help you showcase more of your brand's personality and engage with a wider audience.

Take a look at these two examples. HubSpot on the left, and Care.com on the right. Both use less than 250 characters but also ask the audience a question about their content. This encourages engagement from the audience.

Also, like Twitter, you'll want to use photos, videos, and links, but on Facebook you can take it even further. Make it personal! Share company selfies if you want. No matter what, be sure to have fun!

Now there's a time and a place for fun, but when it's time to get serious, there's a network for that too. Enter, LinkedIn.

LinkedIn takes the term "social network" to a whole new level. It's a great place for professionals to connect and a great network for your business to share rich, thought-provoking, long form content. Go make announcements about your business or share an article about the evolution of your industry. Just be sure to keep it professional.

Now this brings us to the next best practice: share relevant industry content. Not only does this require you to think about the structure of your posts, but also the type of content you publish and how you'll remain relevant to your audience.

This content can mention the state of your industry or trends that your buyer personas should pay attention to. As a result, this will help you establish thought leadership and become a trusted source of information, not just to your audience, but to other industry leaders as well.

The last and final best practice for social publishing is to publish on a consistent basis.

Publishing on a consistent basis across networks can be challenging and a lot to keep up with, so the first thing you want to do is create a publishing schedule that details what content will be published to what networks at what time.

Take a look at this example: You can see that there is a lot of social media posts that need to be published - sometimes up to six times a day! Creating a schedule can help you stay organized and keep your followers engaged.

So just, how many times a day should you publish to each social media platform? The simple answer is, it depends.

However, here are a few benchmarks for each channel:

If you're just starting out on Twitter: 4-6 Times a Day is a good post frequency. If you would like to leverage Facebook, it would be best to publish at least twice a day. LinkedIn and Google+ require less attention and so posting two times a week to both networks is a great start.

So there you are. The 5 Best practices for Social Publishing:

Remember to optimize your online profile in order to be found by prospects, and use a social media style guide to establish consistency across social media platforms. Be sure to customize your content for each network and set yourself apart from the pack by publishing relevant industry content. And finally publish on a consistent basis.

So we've talked a lot about social media best practices and before you move on let's take a moment to do a quick self-check

Fill in the blank: Social media monitoring is used for all of the following except:

- Responding to messages
- Segmenting Audience Members
- Publishing New Content Offers
- Keeping Up With Industry trends

Take the next 5 seconds to come up with an answer. Ready? Go. Do you have an answer? Let's see how you did.

Well it isn't A, because Social media monitoring can be used for responding to messages. Remember social media keyword streams? Well when an audience member matches these streams, it's your job to craft a personalized response.

Social monitoring can also be used to segment your audience, so choice B is incorrect.

Lastly, social monitoring should be used to keep up with industry trends that your buyer personas may be interested in.

So that leaves us with C. social monitoring is not used for publishing new content offers. In fact, content offers should be distributed through social publishing.

So how'd you do? If you had any trouble, now would be a good time to review the previous content.

Alright, so let's move onto social media reporting. Do you recall that research paper you were so diligently writing? Well the actual writing is done, and now it's time to get your results.

With this in mind let's answer the question, "How do I Measure my social media efforts?"

Earlier on you set some SMART goals. Maybe your goals were focused on attracting more visitors, or increasing your social media reach.

No matter the case it's time to see how you did.

But, before you start looking at metrics and pulling together graphs you'll need to establish some benchmarks.

Benchmarks are performance metrics that allow you to compare your business results to other businesses in the industry. Now you can scour the web in search of industry benchmark data, but my advice is to rely on historical company data and allow those to serve as benchmarks. If you're a new company who doesn't have any historical data, no worries. There is no time like the present, so use those freshly minted results as your first piece of benchmark data.

So, now that you've determined some benchmarks, it's time to jump into the next best practice and calculate your return on investment, or ROI.

When measuring your ROI it is important to make an assessment of how your time was spent as well as what the numbers reflect.

For example:

If one of your goals is to attract 50% more visitors to your website from social media this month than last month, you'll need to spend time distributing content across your social media platforms. At the end of the month you'll ask, did it work? Calculating your ROI can help answer this question.

If you are looking to attract visitors, you will be interested in metrics related to Content Consumption. These metrics will help you answer the question: How many people viewed or clicked on this piece of content? This is an easy metric to track on social media because every network with analytics shares information about clicks, likes, or views.

If you're trying to increase your visitors, pay attention to your social sharing metrics. These will help you understand if your content is engaging and if it resonates with your audience. The metrics you want to pay attention to here are engagement rate, shares, and retweets.

If you're striving to increase your conversion rate, you may be interested in how your social media efforts are helping to drive lead generation. This can be a tricky metric to measure, but never fear. A key indicator of how well your content is converting on social is to calculate the conversion rate using tools like google analytics or buffer, heck why not HubSpot? The conversion rate will tell you how often people become leads after first seeing your content.

Now if you're using social media as a sales tool then you're going to be interested in tracking what content led to closing a customer and generating revenue. There are a handful of tools out there to help you track any of these metrics. HubSpot has a user friendly reporting dashboard that makes measuring your ROI easy, but you could also use simply measured, Google analytics, or Hootsuite if you're looking to get started right away.

After you've pulled all the numbers and have reviewed your results calculating your ROI should be relatively easy.

The last step of analyzing your social media results is to check them often.

Now you shouldn't obsess over this stuff or check it every hour, but you should be sure to check at least once a week. Make this step easy by setting a weekly reminder to check in on how you're doing. I would suggest adding this to your calendar for Thursday or Friday since you can use the results to inform your marketing in the week ahead.

Let's review:

Setting benchmarks is important for you to understand how you measure up against those in your industry, or your former self.

Remember, social media requires time and effort, which is why the results are not only about the numbers. So be sure to keep this in mind when you're calculating ROI. And don't forget to check your results often. This is critical to future success.

Join me in the next video where we'll walk through some social media examples that follow these best practices.

VIDEO 3: WHAT DOES AN INBOUND MEDIA STRATEGY LOOK LIKE?

It's time to take a look at how fellow inbound marketers are applying, or not applying best practices to their own social media strategy.

Let's take a look at the first example: Care Dot Com.

Earlier I showed an example of Care Dot Com's optimized Facebook profile.

Here are two additional examples from their social media profiles: On the left, a screenshot of their twitter feed, and on the right, an example of their Facebook feed. Do you notice any social media best practices being applied?

It seems to me they have done lots of things right! But let's focus in on their publishing strategy.

From what you can see, this example highlights the importance of customizing your content for each social media platform. In this example, Care.com uses Twitter to tell followers to tune in for the question of the day every Tuesday, which takes place on Facebook. They are sure to keep the tweet under 140 characters including an image and a link to drive traffic to their Facebook page.

When a visitor arrives on their Facebook page they are encouraged to engage with other care.com community members by answering the question of the week.

The Facebook post has less than 250 characters, and instead, uses an image to display the question. The image is optimized for Facebook, which makes the text easy to read. This approach appears to be more attractive to audience members. If I had to take a guess, I would say they've included these publishing practices in their social media style guide, and it seems to be working (Wink, wink).

So let's review the social publishing best practices.

First, be sure to optimize your social media profiles. Also, create a style guide for a unified approach on social media. Next, is to customize content across platforms, which is a best practice Care Dot Com has done so well and, don't be afraid to share relevant industry content. Lastly, publish on a consistent basis.

Alright, now let's take a look at another example:

Fifth Season is a fictional business that HubSpot Academy uses for training. They provide off site employee team building exercises and great family vacation packages. Their business goal is to delight their customers by sharing relevant content with those who match their twitter social monitoring stream.

This is an example pulled from their twitter feed. Take a look. Do you notice any social media best practices being applied?

Here you see they did exercise a social monitoring best practice by personalizing the response.

They also mention a TripAdvisor travel guide, which would be a great social publishing best practice because not only is the content relevant to the travel industry, but the travel guide is also relevant to this buyer. Unfortunately they didn't attach a link to the guide when responding which could've been really helpful.

Which is why this example is not in line with social media best practices.

Here's another example.

Yale Appliance is a local home appliance store in Boston, Massachusetts. Their business goal is to convert more leads, so they've set up monitoring streams to help them achieve this.

Here you see an audience member tweeted, "My oven died, FINALLY, and I'm debating between a GE and Electrolux induction range. Anyone have any experience with either brand?"

From what you gather? Are there any best practices being applied?

Well do you recall when Gary pointed out the importance of joining the conversation, rather than butting into the conversation? Here, you can see that Yale Appliance did just that by joining the conversation with a personalized response and a piece of relevant content. Another social media best practice Yale appliance has done well is segment their audience.

Here they chose to filter their streams to include only people in their geographic location, which in this case is Boston. These are some great first steps towards converting this lead into a delighted customer.

These were just a few examples of how social media monitoring can help your business. So let's review these best practices. For starters, be sure to set your inbound goals. Then, with these in mind, you'll be ready to set up your social monitoring streams and start monitoring for the right terms. Yale appliance proved that segmenting your audience is a best practice that can help you achieve your inbound goals, and that personalized responses are a great way to delight future customers.

There you have it. Everything you need to know about social media to make it an effective component of your inbound strategy.