

## Video 1: Why You Need a Social Media Strategy

Hi, I'm Crystal from HubSpot Academy. Let's learn about why you need a social media strategy!

Creating a promotional plan that takes advantage of social and digital technologies will help you shape the conversation, build loyalty, and attract new customers and partners. Social media shouldn't replace other Inbound promotional methods like email, events or public relations, but instead, should augment them, offering another set of marketing channels for you to explore.

There are many benefits to having a social media strategy. It will:

Help you **expand your other marketing efforts**, so your content has the chance to be seen by a wide audience, and hopefully, the right audience. It will also help you:

**build brand awareness.** Gone are the days when your only way to build that same awareness was through billboards or magazine and television ads. With social media, you have the ability to bring your brand content directly to your customers, partners, and prospects. Now you can be where your audience already is.

Social media is a key driver **for word of mouth**, one of the most powerful ways to connect with your audiences. In fact, [Nielsen reports](#) that 71% of consumers who have had a good social media service experience with a brand are likely to recommend it to others.

Additionally, social media helps you **attract buyers** to your products and services, and it gives you the ability to directly have conversations with those individuals at the time and place of their choosing.

It sounds like a lot of opportunity, doesn't it? In fact, social media is, in many ways, the **ultimate way to do inbound marketing.** That's because it's a one-to-one medium, which gives you and your company the chance to market in a direct, but very human way.

That brings us to one of the most important parts of your social media strategy. It's also the same thing that sits at the heart of your inbound marketing strategy: The **buyer persona**. A buyer persona helps you determine who your ideal customer is. Understanding who you want to reach will guide you in a variety of ways, from choosing the right social media platforms to use, to creating the best mix of content to share, to being able to target advertising to the right audience.

Make sure you understand all the basic demographics about your buyer persona like age, gender, income, occupation, interests, motivations, and objections. But if you can, also go a few steps further and dig into their psychographics – which websites they visit, which online shops they frequent, and which social sites they like best. Social media gives you the ability to be more personal and really hone in on the right type of persona for your products and services, so the more you know, the better you can target social audiences.

There is one other crucial piece of the social media promotion puzzle: Aligning your social strategy to your business objectives. Having business goals and objectives in place will make it easier for you to create social media goals that will transform viewers and readers into buyers. As with your business goals, you want your social media goals to use the S-M-A-R-T method: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.

As an example, if your company has a goal of building brand awareness among college students, one of your social media goals might be to develop videos with content that's helpful or funny for college students, and set an advertising goal of reaching 250,000 college students by the end of the year. Even better, you can set a secondary goal of having the students interact with the content in some way – commenting on it or sharing it with their friends – thus increasing brand reach and giving you a direct way to measure if and how you're meeting your goal.

Being able to articulate your social media goals and plan the impact your goals will have on the company's return on investment, or ROI, is also the key to securing executive buy-in and budget for your campaigns.

Having your buyer persona and business objectives in mind will be helpful as you traverse your way through building your social media strategy.

To build your social media strategy, you'll need to be able to:

**Explain each social media channel and how each one is best used for social media promotion,**

**Understand the impact of social listening and engagement,**

**Develop a social content strategy for your social media plan,**

**Identify ways that metrics are crucial to understanding the success of your digital efforts, and finally, how to**

**Integrate social media into your other inbound efforts, including your website, conversations, and blog posts.**

There are a lot of moving parts in developing this strategy but mapping out the actions you're going to take will get you one step closer to achieving your business goals.

## Video 2: The Social Media Channels Explained

There are a lot of options when it comes to choosing the right social media platform to use for your inbound marketing efforts. To help you decide which channels are the best fit for your social strategy, let's walk through the basics and benefits of each of them.

Let's start with the giant: **Facebook**.

You may have heard the adage that if Facebook were a country it would be the largest on earth. That's because it currently boasts over two billion users – far more than the largest country, China, with 1.4 billion people living within its borders. It's likely the majority of people you know are on the social platform. And even more important to your business, it's not just for personal use anymore. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), **more than 67% of Americans are using Facebook as their primary source of news**. Millions of companies use Facebook Business Pages to share organic news, events, talk to customers and manage highly targeted advertising campaigns. This means Facebook is potentially going to be one of the most important platforms to your social media strategy.

There are two types of Facebook pages: a personal page and a business page. You might have heard organic reach is better on a personal page, which is true, but there are several reasons you should use a Facebook business page for your company instead. First off, **Facebook requires businesses to use business pages** and can shut down pages that do not comply with their policy. **Personal pages have a 5,000 person friend limit, whereas business pages can have millions of followers**. Having a **business page also gives you access to analytics (they call them Insights)** and the **ability to correctly categorize your company for search, add a mission statement, a product catalog, awards, and give your customers the chance to give reviews**.

But **the most important reason for you to have a Facebook Business page is for advertising**. Facebook advertising allows you to hypertarget the audiences you care most about, including your own prospect lists so you can directly deliver content of value. You can also use Facebook Advertising across their other services – Instagram, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. Adding a Facebook pixel on your website even helps you retarget those visitors with ads on Facebook.

On Facebook, you can publish a variety of content including text and photo posts, carousel photo posts, and video posts. You can even do live Facebook videos and share "Stories," microcontent designed to disappear after 24 hours, similar to Snapchat and Instagram Stories.

With over 1.3 billion users, **YouTube** is the second largest social network and, interestingly enough, it's also the second largest search engine in the world – behind Google, of course. To give you a sense of its importance, **more than 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute and almost 5 billion videos are watched on YouTube every single day**. It's almost mind boggling to think about! Google reports that 6 out of 10 people prefer online video platforms to live TV, which means, in many ways, you have the potential to reach an even bigger audience for a more affordable cost than on television. On mobile, **YouTube reaches more 18-49 year olds in the US than any cable network**.

When it comes to marketing on the platform, YouTube offers a variety of interesting possibilities. Remember how I mentioned it was the second largest search engine? That means not only does it help with SEO, but YouTube also has some of the highest referral rates of all the social platforms. Also important, the platform has high conversion rates when it comes to paid advertising. If you offer a complex product or service, having great videos can help sway prospects into a purchase. Creating video isn't always easy or free, but the benefits and the statistics far outweigh the cost of not participating at all.

So what can you do on YouTube? Not only can you host original content and have channel subscribers, it's a great place to syndicate content and to consider advertising, including interstitial advertising – short clips that appear before a video. **Approximately 20% of the people who start your video will leave after the first 10 seconds**. All the more reason to consider allocating resources to create great content.

I mentioned **Instagram** already, but let's give it a longer look. It's owned by Facebook, but the audiences and purposes are a bit different. It's the third largest social media platform and the fastest growing. Instagram is a photo- and video-based social network, and users follow individuals and brands to be delighted by interesting visuals. **Instagram is a younger network, with 90% of its audience under the age of 35**, but even that is shifting as more and more individuals adopt the platform. While the primary functionality is sharing photos and videos, there is another feature rising in popularity. Like the Snapchat platform, Instagram **Stories enable the sharing of quick, "instant" photos and videos, often with fun filters and visual features**. Stories disappear after twenty-four hours for viewers but remain stored in an archive for you to see or repost again. You'll want to convert a personal Instagram account to an Instagram business profile to include a phone number and address in your bio and enable the "shop" button. And to do that, you're required to have a Facebook Business page, which you will also need to take advantage of advertising on this channel.

Instagram is important because it has very deep engagement, especially for brands. **Over 80% of users follow at least one brand account**. Forrester tells us that engagement with brands on Instagram is 10 times higher than Facebook, 54 times higher than Pinterest, and 84 times higher than Twitter. That means advertising on Instagram is going to be even more successful for your business. Sounds like a great reason to use Instagram, doesn't it?

Let's move on to **Twitter**, the popular microblogging network. Twitter is the ultimate by-the-minute news network. It's a place where you can see what's happening in that very moment around the world, whether it's someone feeling an earthquake in China or watching a football game in Boston. Users share messages of up to 280 characters, called "tweets," which can include photos, videos, links, and animated .gifs. To give you a sense of the volume of information shared, **there are more than 500 million tweets sent every day**.

Twitter is a fantastic place for you to discover what's trending with your industry, customers, employees, partners, and prospects. You should be sharing content frequently – more frequently than on other platforms, in fact – and you should be engaging regularly with your audience. **Twitter reports that 80% of their advertisers' inbound social customer service requests happen on Twitter**. It's also a place where people frequently express both pleasure and dissatisfaction about products and services, making it a channel your business can't afford to ignore. Twitter also owns Periscope, a live streaming video channel. **Over 350,000 hours of live video are streamed on the network every day**.

There are several forms of advertising on Twitter, including ads in the news stream, with trending topics, promoted profiles, and a lot more. But one of the best uses of Twitter is the organic networking you can do directly with your audience, engaging in conversation that helps build loyalty and trust.

**LinkedIn** is the platform most business-to-business, or B2B, marketers are familiar with. It used to be a network primarily used for recruiting, but these days it's also becoming a platform to find the latest news and to stay networked with people all over the world. Now users can share status updates much in the same way as they do with Facebook, with photo or video posts that can be shared, liked, and commented on. There are several reasons to use LinkedIn. It's a great way to look up individuals you might be meeting with, or to find out more about a prospect you're interested in reaching out to. Additionally, it's a great place to build thought leadership, to offer value through targeted advertising, to network in groups, and to share content that will drive links back into your website properties.

**Pinterest** is a channel many people think of as only for business-to-consumer, or B2C, but there are a myriad of ways B2B companies can take advantage of the platform. If you aren't familiar with Pinterest, it's essentially a series of shared, often thematic bulletin boards where users can "pin" images, video, and links that resonate with

them. What is unique to Pinterest is **the average life of a pin is over three months**, whereas on Twitter, a post's life is a matter of minutes and on Facebook, maybe an hour. Pinterest pins build SEO with referral traffic – referral traffic that can directly turn into leads and sales. And while women used to make up the biggest audience for Pinterest, that is changing. 40% of new signups are now from men. So, how can your company use Pinterest? Create a board with links to your products and services. Or a board with your blog posts. Or a board demonstrating your company's thought leadership and awareness. Your HR team can benefit from a board detailing great things about working at your company. Consider creating boards for case studies, employee stories, white papers, or videos. The possibilities are truly endless.

**Snapchat** is a channel that lost a bit of market share to Instagram when Instagram Stories launched, essentially copying the Snapchat business model. But it still has a strong user base, and it's moving into areas like augmented reality, which may have exciting applications. Like Instagram Stories, Snapchat stories disappear after 24 hours. There are a bevy of filters users can employ to liven up video and images. Today, brands can advertise with stories more dynamic and longer lasting than personal snaps. The **Snapchat audience skews young, with its largest demographic between the ages of 12-24.**

Whew! There's a lot to learn about all of the social media channels! Do you need to be on all of them? Maybe not, but consider that not everyone gets their news and information in the same way. You might read online newspapers while I am looking at trending topics on Twitter. Everyone consumes information differently, in the time and place of their choosing. You want to be found in as many of those places as possible.

But the good news is that you can start small and focused, then build as your team builds and your resource pool grows. And don't be afraid to create profiles and test out the channels! They can often seem more overwhelming than they are, and once you dip your toe in the pool, the water gets warmer and warmer.

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### Video 3: Building the Foundation for Success – Setting Social Media KPIs

Let's talk about setting social media KPIs. Once you've created a buyer persona and mapped out some S-M-A-R-T goals, you can do a deeper dive and determine what key performance indicators, or KPIs, you should be targeting in your social media strategy. A KPI is a quantifiable measure used to evaluate the success of an organization, employee, or project in meeting objectives for performance. Knowing what your KPIs are from the start will help you make crucial decisions on content, advertising, budget, and other resources you may need.

The main thing to consider is how you can develop actionable goals instead of goals of merely reporting a high result on a vanity metric. And what's a vanity metric? Simply put, a vanity metric is a surface-level metric made up of numbers or statistics that look great on paper but don't correlate to business success. For example, follower count is probably one of the fluffiest of the various KPIs. Having as many followers as possible may look impressive, but if they aren't the right people following you – the ones who will buy your products and services – then that follower count is essentially only a vanity metric.

Mari Smith, Facebook Marketing Expert:

"I would say for about the last decade, there's been a large focus on accumulating and amassing and building the biggest possible audience, and I truly believe that we've been focused on the wrong thing.

I'm a big fan of Kevin Kelly's concept of a thousand true fans. Far better to have an audience of your thousand true fans who rave about you, who buy everything that you offer, who share your content, engage with your content. On Facebook, they have you on see first. They have your notifications turned on. They tune into your Facebook lives. They're engaged in your Facebook groups. It's much better than having millions of fans or followers that don't really engage with you, or they're maybe not even your right target market.

To set the right KPIs, you need to go back to your business goals. If your goal is to increase sales, vanity metrics such as numbers of likes, shares, retweets, followers, and page views are not going to be the most important metrics for you to measure.

But, if your goal is awareness, then those metrics may not just be vanity metrics. Followers, reach, and page views may be more important for you.

Let's break this down a bit further. There are four categories of social media KPIs, and most of your targets should fall within those areas.

- Reach
- Engagement
- Return on investment, or ROI
- Retention and Loyalty

Let's start by looking at **Reach**. These KPIs tend to be the most fluffy and they veer toward what many think are vanity metrics, but if your business goals are tied to company awareness and reaching as many qualified users as possible, then these may be the KPIs you want to measure.

- Follower count: how many individuals follow your social channels.
- Impressions: how often your content is viewed.
- Mentions: how many times your brand is mentioned across social channels.
- Share of voice: how many people are talking about your brand vs. the competition.

**Engagement** is next. These KPIs demonstrate how engaged your audience is and how they may be interacting with your content, which is usually a better indicator than reach when it comes to measuring the success of your campaigns. The following KPIs measure how people are taking action in relation to your brand:

- Likes or favorites indicate that your viewers appreciate the content. This is a simple action and often one of the biggest vanity measures but useful to measure to determine if the content is of interest.
- Comments indicate direct engagement with your content.
- Sharing and retweets demonstrate that your audience cares enough about the content that they want to let others know. This also increases reach and awareness.
- Customer ratings and reviews demonstrate strong engagement and opinion. They are also one of the biggest indicators to other people that a product or a service is worth buying.
- Inbound website links from social media show that your content is interesting enough for your audience to click through to your site.

Measuring **social media ROI** and garnering leads are goals that many salespeople and executives will gravitate toward. While often harder to drive, these are the types of KPIs that can directly affect the business's bottom line. This means that executives may be more open to listening to proposals from your social team when it comes to asking for additional budget or headcount to meet these business goals. Some of these KPIs include:

- Direct sales revenue from social media, such as orders that come in from a coupon or links into your website that lead to purchase.
- Lead conversions from social media campaigns. This may vary from company to company but could include email signups, downloads of materials like an eBook, or activations of trial software.
- Support costs per customer. If your business goal is to reduce customer support call costs, for example, you may want to set KPIs for how many calls you can offset by helping them on your social media channels instead.
- Lifetime value. This is the projected revenue a customer will generate in their lifetime. There are a variety of ways to calculate this number, and how you acquire the customer – in this case, through social media, especially acquisition plays and customer touch points – will affect the lifetime value.

Last, but definitely not least, is **retention and loyalty**. If your business goals are centered around customer service excellence or on retaining customers, then your social KPIs should be aligned to reflect this. Consider the following:

- Customer reviews and ratings - mentioned previously, these are a fantastic measure of how your customers think about your brand and products.
- Issues resolved demonstrates how well you're doing (or not doing) taking care of your customers through social media.
- Another metric to consider in tandem is your SLA, or service-level agreement. In the social space the SLA usually refers to how long time passes between when a customer reaches out and when there is a response. Note that a response doesn't always mean the issue is resolved--that might be another KPI to consider.
- Time to resolution: How long it takes for a question that comes in from social media to receive not just a reply, but a resolution.
- Customer satisfaction - it's often tracked with a net promoter score (often called NPS), this gives you a sense of whether or not your social customer service efforts are working.
- Sentiment is a tricky metric to measure, but it's important because sentiment tells you what people are thinking and feeling about your brand. Is it negative? Perhaps your KPI should be set to shift that balance to positive.

And lastly, make sure to revisit your KPIs on a six month to yearly basis. Not only does the world of social media change – and fast – but your business changes, too. If your business goals change, then your KPIs probably need to be reworked as well.

Now you have the foundation for developing KPIs that will help you prove the value of your social media efforts.

## Video 4: Structuring Your Social Media Team for Now & the Future

It's not easy to build a social media team, and if you're a team of one, developing an impactful social media strategy may even feel more daunting. But you aren't alone.

A recent HubSpot Academy survey found that nearly 62% of respondents do social media on top of other duties. For those who are dedicated to social media, nearly 37% work on teams of five or fewer. But even small teams should consider how they plan to scale their team structure to drive their business goals.

When it comes to structuring a team, as always, start with your business goals, be it sales, brand awareness, managing reputation, sales prospecting, recruiting, customer service, or something else. Knowing this up front helps you determine what channels you need, what content you need, your campaign possibilities, and the staffing you need to consider.

For example, if your company's goal is to provide stellar customer service, it means that you would put social goals and metrics behind responding to all customers in a certain timeframe, which in turn impacts how many channels you think you can manage, how many people you think you'll need to respond to, and if you need an internal or external team to help.

If your goal is accelerated sales then you would focus on channels where you can build a presence that supports advertising, where you can find interesting ways to collect email or deliver promotional offers. That helps you understand which individuals and agencies you may need to involve to develop content.

Next you need to consider who your business stakeholders may be. What do they care about? Their needs may be your needs. Your PR team may want to connect to social media influencers while your HR team might need your help recruiting via social networks. Having their buy-in may be what you need to convince executives that additional headcount is needed.

Next, are you planning for your social media efforts to be international? Do you need to consider how you'll manage social networks such as Xing and Sina Weibo? There are different languages, social network preferences, and legalities that will figure into your staffing plans.

The biggest challenge that most social media practitioners have is buy-in. Do you have consensus and buy-in from the decision makers in your company? If not, find an executive who can champion your ideas.

Then, outline your social media roadblocks. What do you need to really do social well in your organization? What might get in your way? The most obvious roadblocks for an organization tend to be lack of time and lack of people.

Once you know all of the above, you can create your social media roadmap. This roadmap is your future-state plan, or essentially, how you plan to grow your social media program. As you put it together, you'll want to show how the various stakeholders in your business will benefit. Demonstrate how you see social media changing for your company in the next year, three years, or five years, and the impact it could have on the business.

Once you understand your goals and KPIs, and what you would like the future of your social media program to look like, you can start thinking about how to build a team to get you there. There are several options for

structuring the team.

First consider the types of roles you need how they map to your goals. If customer service is a priority, you may need a community manager. If you are developing educational material, you may want to consider a graphic designer who can develop beautiful infographics, or a videographer who is great at developing live video.

What if you don't think you'll have the means to scale the team in the manner you would like? The good news is that there are options beyond your internal team. Think about how agencies may be able to help you meet your needs, particularly if you are a smaller team. Agencies can be cost-effective when compared to headcount. You might consider using a social or digital agency for a specialized type of role to extend your team, such as developing content or managing engagement.

The structure of your team itself and how it works is also important. A few years ago, analyst firm Altimeter outlined five types of social media team models, and this model still holds up today.

The Decentralized model is one in which no specific department manages or coordinates content and strategy. The team shares responsibilities and ideas. A decentralized model tends to be representative of organizations in the early stages of implementing social.

A centralized team is one that stands alone and manages all activities.

The Hub and Spoke model is common in growing companies, in which one team coordinates with other groups within the organization. The majority of companies use this model, including companies such as Red Cross and Virgin.

The Multiple Hub and Spoke model, or "Dandelion" model, is one in which a main social media team works with smaller social media teams in different departments or business units. This is common for companies with international offices, such as IBM, Microsoft, or CNN.

A Holistic model is just like it sounds – everyone is involved. Few companies will end up using the holistic model. It requires great trust and training for employees. Dell, Zappos, Accenture are a few organizations who have used this structure.

Once you know which model you want to adopt for your team structure, you can begin to plan for the future. Design a plan that includes the following:

- First, plan your business and social goals. Plan these goals 1-3 years out, and make sure to consider your stakeholders' needs.
- Second, identify your possible social media roles based on those goals, then
- Third, develop a timeline for reaching those goals and building the team.
- With that complete, you need to allocate or advocate for resources,
- And finally, evangelize your plan throughout the organization. When others can see and believe your vision

they will be more inclined to lend their support.

And that's how you build a social media team. It may seem daunting to think so big if you are a social department of one, but remember, having a vision for the future of your team is one of the first steps in building it.

## Video 5: Evaluating The Best Social Tools for the Job

When it comes to managing your social media strategy, it is often helpful to go beyond the native social media sites and turn to various tools to make your job easier. This is true if you are a small team needing to streamline the amount of time and energy you are spending, or a big team trying to wrangle a massive amount of content and data.

Let's walk through the various kinds of social media software, apps, and services that can help you out. It's not a small number. In fact, every year, Scott Brinker from [Chief Martec](#) and HubSpot puts together an insane graphic of all the marketing vendors in the space. The Social Media Marketing & Monitoring vendor chart is only a small subset of the larger infographic, but as you can see, there are hundreds of vendors out there. The trick is sorting through them and finding the one that is right for you.

There are free tools that many small teams may find are entirely adequate for their needs, and larger, more robust services that provide an ROI on their cost by helping an organization save time, save money, or improve sales through their social features. Many of these tools do more than one job, so keep that in mind – a great social listening service may also have the ability to directly engage and manage your social audience, for example.

First off are the **social listening and monitoring tools**. These tools can be channel specific or in some cases can aggregate networks to help you listen and monitor them all in one place. With these tools you can review comments and mentions, enabling you to follow the conversation about your brand, watch hashtags, and keep track of influencers, customers, and prospects. In particular, if you do customer service in your social networks, a good listening tool is important. Another great reason to have a social listening tool is to be able to easily listen to and monitor your competition.

You can do social listening with free tools such as Google Alerts, Hashtagify, Social Mention, or Twitter's Tweetdeck. There are also a variety of paid social listening tools available, such as the HubSpot social media tools, which are available as part of HubSpot's paid offering. Many listening and monitoring services are bundled into more robust analytics tools such as Netbase, Brandwatch, Sysomos, or Crimson Hexagon, or into community management services such as Hootsuite, Spredfast, Lithium, Sprout Social, and others.

There are also a few tools that help you **manage and discover influence**--not only your own influence but to help you identify influencers and customers who have the biggest (and most enthusiastic) following. These companies can give you a sense of how influential individuals in your audience are, giving you the ability to pivot more quickly when making decisions on how to respond in various situations. Savvy hotels, for example, pay attention to the social clout scores of their guests and will sometimes upgrade them or give them specific perks in the hope that they will share their experience with their wide audiences. Retailers can check a score to

determine if a customer should get a different type of response because they will have a deeper impact as a result of their influence.

**Publishing and community management** are two other social activities that can be easier if you have a service or tool to help you manage the task. This includes:

- Managing multiple social services in one place (rather than going to each platform)
- Scheduling content
- Cloning posts for resharing
- Managing multiple users who need access and publishing rights

Currently Facebook is the only network that allows you to natively schedule posts, and only with a business account, otherwise you'll need to work with a third party. Services such as Buffer, Oktopost, Post Planner, Tweetdeck, Social Oomph, Spredfast, Likeable Hub and of, course, HubSpot, can help you manage, schedule, and publish content.

In recent years, a number of tools have come to the rescue of social media marketers who need to **create content** for social media. No longer do you have to be a graphic designer to whip up a social post. Now you can design images and graphics with inexpensive services such as Canva, BeFunky, Infogram, and Stencil. There are a number of services that also allow you access to free or lowcost photos, such as UnSplash, Pexels, and Pixabay. If you use HubSpot, you can use the free Shutterstock integration to find images that will correspond to your posts.

For video, you can use Vidyard, Soapbox, or Loom for on-the-fly screencasts that incorporate video. Placeit even gives marketers creative templates that allow you to create video without ever having to turn on a camera.

Finally, there are the analytics tools. Each of the social networks has analytics that are accessible and free to use. However, if you want to pull all of those metrics into one location, there isn't an easy option. But there are some tools that help you get a better sense of it all, including Sysomos, Keyhole, Brandwatch, Netbase, Radian6, and others.

As you saw from the earlier vendor chart, the services and software that I mentioned are by no means the only options. You'll need to do a bit of research, but how do you decide between them?

There are a few things you need to think about, and as I have often said, it all goes back to your business goals and what you want to measure.

If engaging with your customers is the most important goal you have, then you should focus on a tool that will enable you to easily find the right people and facilitate ongoing conversation. You'll also want the right tool to help you track the effectiveness of your engagement.

On the flip side of that, let's say you're a company that's just starting out and you want to really understand the landscape first. You may want to consider a social listening tool to see how people are talking about your brand or to monitor industry conversations and your competition.

Most of the tools I mentioned are priced on a monthly or yearly basis and may increase pricing based on the number of social media channels and the number of employees you want to use the tool.

Being super focused on your business goals will help you narrow down your needs. Determine what you want a tool to help you do to achieve those goals, and begin your research based on that goal criteria.

Social marketing company, Buffer, suggests three tips to help you narrow down your choices of a social media tool.

1. Write down the 25 most important social media features that you think you might need.
2. Review the list and circle your top 5 features.
3. Use these two lists to evaluate potential tools.

Once you have identified these features and how they could help you achieve your business goals, you can hone in on a few different options for social tools and services that will help you meet those goals. Prepare an analysis of what you can do without the tool, and what you could do if you had the tool to help you do the job. Approaching it in such a fashion can help you justify costs to decision makers, especially if the price initially seems out of budget.

## Video 6: Developing a Budget and Garnering Executive Buy-in

When the world of social media first hit its stride, it was a fantastic – and free – way to capture the attention of an audience, and to find new prospects and to turn those prospects into leads and customers. But is anything really ever free? And that's the case now. Free, organic reach from social media has greatly dwindled, and social media platforms have put a number of systems in place to make sure they are monetizing brand efforts to reach a wide audience and to capture click-throughs. That means you have to think about how you create more engaging content and how you advertise that content. Which means you'll need a budget. But how do you gain the executive buy-in to fund that budget? Let's dig in.

A budget is best developed after you have your social media plan mapped out. Once you do, you'll need to consider the following:

- What social content do you think you'll need to create?
- Can you do it in-house or will you need to hire freelancers or an agency?
- What is your ideal mix of organic and paid advertising? How much advertising do you think you'll require?
- Are you considering paying influencers to help you promote your products?
- Do you have the right staffing for your plan?
- Which services or tools do you think you need? How much will they cost?

Next, gather industry data and competitive information to backup your plan. As an example, if you think that advertising is a solution to a business goal, to provide justification, you could look for data that shows how brands are being affected by Facebook's organic reach.

Daysha Veronica, formerly of Buzzfeed, now the founder and chief creative for of Yes Queen:

"So I know some people can find producing videos to be pretty daunting, because they think it's pretty expensive. They think about big crews and big budgets, but I would actually say in the digital space it is very, very different from the way that traditional Hollywood crafts their videos. In the digital space when I worked at Buzzfeed for three and a half years, out of the 100 videos that I made, most of them were made with a \$300 budget or less with a lot of them actually being free. Digital video is a very budget friendly space and people kind of expect that you're not going to necessarily be using the most high-tech gear. It really does depend on the type of content that you're producing, but the cool thing about video being such a trendy thing that people are trying to hop on more to, is that there are companies like Adobe that are creating products to meet those needs. So, Adobe has a really great program called Adobe Spark that pretty much has all of the templates that you would need to make very quick, easy, fast, and professional looking videos for the internet."

If you've been connecting your social media goals to your business goals, then developing an argument to sway your senior leadership should prove much easier.

That's because senior leadership in an organization may not think like a marketer does. They aren't going to care about click-through rates, sentiment, or how many likes a post might have. What they will care about is a few core things:

- New avenues for revenue
- Cost savings and efficiency
- Competitive advantage
- Protecting brand reputation, and
- Customer satisfaction.

Back in a 2009 TED talk, motivational speaker and marketing consultant Simon Sinek famously shared one of the secrets to this buy-in process that you need to embrace. He said,

1. People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.
2. The goal is not to sell to people what you have, the goal is to sell to people who believe what you believe.

Then, Simon gave an example of this, in how Apple markets. They don't tell you how awesome their products are. Instead they tell you *why* you want and need them.

Instead Apple essentially says, "Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use, and user friendly. We just happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?" The Apple tagline for the iPad Pro, for example, is "Anything you can do, you can do better." And who wouldn't want to do things better?

So let's think about this, because it applies not just to products but also to gaining buy-in for ideas. Senior leaders care about what will make them money or save them money. And you have a program that will help them do that. Rather than tell them **WHAT** you are going to do, tell them **WHY** your plan is going to help them achieve their business goals.

Tell them why your plan will make or save them money. Demonstrate projected ROI. Show them statistics to back up your claim.

For example, let's say you want to build a world class social media customer service program. Perhaps you have determined that this program, to run optimally, will take new headcount, specialized software, and potentially the help of an agency that performs around-the-clock moderation. You've also calculated the cost, which is significantly higher than the budget you've been given.

Start by looking at what you already know. Let's say you have found that you can solve a customer service problem in social media by sharing a link to a pre-made video, or by answering questions directly on Twitter, and in a fraction of the time that a call into the call center might require. Calculate the deflection cost and then project that out for a year. If you can prove that your program might cost \$200,000 but will save the company \$1 million, that's a powerful argument.

But what if you have no idea how much money to spend?

We asked Dennis Yu, CTO of Blitz Metrics.

"Facebook would probably tell you as much money as you have. Our answer is whatever is the most profitable. But how do you know that until you test, and that's the chicken and the egg. We would like to start with a dollar a day. If you have nine pieces of content that you put in that three by three grid, then you're spending up to nine dollars a day as you're testing. If you find that it works, and it's generating you more profit, you can bootstrap that money into paying for more advertising, and small businesses know that if I'm making profit off of something, I'm willing to take that profit and reinvest it, but I'm not willing to willy nilly put \$10,000 into something sight unseen. So, you start with one dollar a day."

If you don't have any program in place yet and you are arguing for the money to start the project, position it as an experiment or a pilot. Develop a plan that starts with the business goal, then your hypothesis on why social media can help meet that goal. Demonstrate how you will test that hypothesis and for what duration. Most importantly, explain how you will share the results with the leadership team. In this case, you may want to ask for a modified budget for the experiment to prove value first.

Developing a variety of future scenarios can also be helpful. Create a plan that shows what you can do with current resources, a plan with some resources, and then your ideal plan. When you can demonstrate to executives the possibilities of social media to transform their business, they will be more likely to sit up and listen and to add a line item into the budget for you and your social program.