

EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES

ROI = RESULTS ON INTERNET

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Effective Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is big and is getting only bigger. Did you know that every second two new members join LinkedIn¹, 80% of Internet users prefer to connect with brands on Facebook, and the number of worldwide social media users will surpass the 2 billion mark by 2016²?

Social media is already an important part of our lives. It is also integral to business. If you are serious about marketing, you should make social media a major component of your marketing strategy. Regardless of the nature your industry or the function of your website, social media integration is no longer optional. When done properly and combined with content marketing and SEO, social media can do wonders for your website and your business. When dismissed or handled poorly, social media could be the reason for losing business to your competition.

This whitepaper is not going to make you an overnight social media marketing guru, but it will give you a head start and will steer you away from costly mistakes. Let's begin.

Common SMM Mistakes to Avoid

“Social media marketing doesn't work,” I often hear. “It doesn't work for you because you are not doing it right,” is typically my response.

1 <http://www.fastcompany.com/3021749/work-smart/10-surprising-social-media-statistics-that-will-make-you-rethink-your-social-stra>

2 http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/social-media-growth-worldwide_b51877

Most companies do not incorporate SMM successfully. In fact, they are following the trend of others and quickly become discouraged by the lack of positive results.

The explosion in social media popularity caught most businesses off guard. SMM is so different from the traditional forms of marketing that many companies simply don't know what they are doing. They are learning on the job. This confusion often contributes to numerous myths, misconceptions and rookie mistakes. Let's look at some of the common ones:

Dismissing Social Marketing as Ineffective

If you believe social media is not right for your demographic or your industry, you are wrong. It is a common misconception that social media is only for teenagers and the tech savvy. That is no longer the case. For example, did you know that the fastest growing demographic on Twitter is the 55-64 year age bracket and that the fastest growing demographic on Facebook and Google+ is 45-54 year olds.³ You will find that other demographics are represented as well. Social media has penetrated all layers of our society. Social media is for everyone.

You must not avoid social media, regardless of the nature of your business or it's targeted demographic. You may have had a poor experience with SMM already. In most cases it is because you didn't have a good plan, you made poor choices or have fallen victim to mistakes outlined in this whitepaper. Regardless, there is no reason to dismiss social media marketing as ineffective. In fact, you should look at it as an opportunity. This is where you can turn your weakness into strength by discovering a method to make SMM work for your business.

3 <http://www.fastcompany.com/3021749/work-smart/10-surprising-social-media-statistics-that-will-make-you-rethink-your-social-strategy>



Consider this simple fact: you are not alone in this struggle with social media. Your competition may also be struggling. If you manage to put together an effective social media strategy ahead of the competition, you will have an upper hand. At the same time, if you are falling behind, this could be a wake-up call to do something about it—quickly.

Not Having a Social Media Marketing Plan

Your social media efforts need to be planned the same way as any other type of marketing. In fact, SMM should be a part of your marketing plan.

Social Media Marketing can be a colossal waste of time without a proper plan of action. Many companies fall into this trap. They sporadically post things to their social media accounts, share some of their content here and there and try to attract followers or fans. That's not social media marketing; that's having no plan.

Social media marketing must be approached the same way you approach your planning for PPC, a direct mail campaign or a tradeshow. You should have specific goals, budgets and a concrete plan of action:

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- How are you going to achieve it?
- How are you going to measure results?
- What resources are you willing and able to allocate?

Measuring the Wrong KPIs

Measuring results is instrumental to any form of business activity. You improve by measuring and making adjustment. Social media marketing is no different.

Unfortunately, when measuring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of your social media marketing, many marketers fall into the trap of vanity metrics. They measure the number of fans on Facebook or followers on Twitter, and if these numbers are growing, they are happy.

In reality, social media marketing is no different from any other marketing channel. You should measure the success, not by the numbers of fans or followers, but by the impact your SMM has on your business. Ask yourself: How many leads did I get from Facebook last month? How many leads from Twitter resulted in sales? If you can't answer these questions, you are not measuring the right KPIs.



You need to measure conversions from every social network as well as the ROI. Remember, there is no such thing as “free marketing.” Time is money, and the time you spend on social media is the same expense as PPC or paid advertising. In addition to return on investment, you need to monitor the Acquisition-Behavior-Conversion (ABC) (<http://resources.intechnic.com/analytics-abc>) breakdown as well as Multi-Channel Funnels and Attribution Modeling (<http://resources.intechnic.com/analytics-advanced>) since visits from social media are often preceded or followed by visits through other channels like search or e-mail.

Treating All Social Media the Same

You probably wouldn't speak Spanish in Germany, yet many businesses make the mistake of speaking the wrong language on social media. Every social network has its own customs, language, audience and type of content. Addressing the audience in a way that's inconsistent with the traditions of the social network is ineffective and counter-productive.

What makes social media marketing great is that in addition to demographic criteria, you can reach out to specific audiences as well as target specific professionals, personal tastes and interests. However, in order for your efforts to be effective, you need to account for differences between social networks. It is important to learn how people communicate on every social network. We will focus on common social networks' strategies and differences later in this whitepaper, but as you explore and experiment, keep this in mind.

Failing to Engage in Conversations

Social media is all about communicating, not just posting. If you have time to do only one type of activity on social media, you should engage in conversations on your network. Your one-way posts are useless if no one cares to share them and respond to them. Communication is always a two-way street. This is why your posts and your content should be designed to elicit conversations with your audience. You want comments, shares, tweets, likes and discussions. If you don't get these reactions, your overall strategy and the content should be revisited.

When a person responds or comments, be sure to reply. Failing to respond to customers on social media is one of the cardinal sins in social media marketing. Either positive or negative, every comment a customer posts presents an opportunity to communicate with the

customer directly. Ask them about their experiences, offer assistance and thank them for their patronage. Be friendly and personable; after all, this is what social media is about.

Don't limit your company's social interactions only through the marketing department. Your business consists of many other departments that interact with customers, such as sales, customer service, billing, production, etc. Involve them in your social media strategy to communicate with your customers on all levels.

Connecting as Opposed to Networking

In addition to communicating, social media is just as much about networking. By building and expanding your network, you will gain better access to prospects and other professionals and will increase the exposure for your messages and your content. The size of your network matters, but so does the quality. Interacting with a group of ten followers will simply not produce desirable results. Having thousands of random followers who don't represent your ideal customers and have little to contribute would be just as ineffective. You want to attract and engage prospects, peers or professionals who share same views and interests and who will be instrumental in the success of your marketing efforts.

Many companies believe networking on social media is simply following someone or sharing their content with them. This is another common mistake. Following someone on Twitter or even connecting with them on LinkedIn is not proper networking. Networking is just as much about giving as receiving. It's about adding value to the relationship. You should set aside the time to reach out and write personalized messages, engage in discussions, share and comment on someone else's content as opposed to just pushing yours down everyone's throat. Treat these relationships the same way you want to be treated. By adding value to these relationships, others will be more likely to pay attention to what you have to say.

Making It All about You

How would you like hanging out with a person who only talks about himself? That gets old quickly, right? Well, that's the very mistake many companies make on social media. It's all about them—their news, their events, their products, their projects, etc. Here is the truth: nobody cares.

In order to succeed in social media you not only have to speak the language of the audience, but you have to tell them what they want to hear. The content that you post should be of high quality, of significant interest and be in line with the deeply rooted traditions of the social network and your followers. Make it about them. Make it for them.

Relying too Much on Automation

One of the most common mistakes companies make is relying too much on automatic (canned) posting to their social media accounts. Some go as far as to resort only to automatic posting of their new blog posts. That's not what social media is all about. People use social media because they want to interact with others. If all they want is to read your blog, they will go to your blog.

Your social media presence must have a personal touch. If people can tell that your posts are automated, or if they feel the exchange is impersonal, they will distance themselves to your brand. In extreme cases, if you spam them with too much irrelevant automatic content, you will start losing them. Be careful not to alienate your audience by posting content automatically and instead think of ways to delight, entertain and inspire by posting content that is personalized and authentic.

Having Too Many Accounts to Manage

There are thousands of social networking websites out there. Many businesses make the mistake of jumping on every social network possible, setting up accounts and trying to manage them all only to realize that they are stretching their marketing resources thin and producing very little results in the process. In my experience, one dedicated marketing professional can effectively manage no more than 2-4 social media accounts. If your organization's social media strategy is in the hands of a single team member, you should focus your resources and energy on the "Big Four": [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Google Plus](#). You then should further prioritize your efforts on the social network that produces the most results for your business.

Not Having a Social Media Policy

Not having a company-wide social media policy is clearly dangerous and can often result in unexpected public embarrassments. Regardless of who manages your social media accounts, you should adopt a policy outlining what is and is not acceptable. For most companies content that is sexist, racist, religious, offensive, obscene, sexually suggestive, derogatory or discriminatory in any way is off limits. Make sure that all your employees know the policy and adhere to it.



Be sure that the same policy covers the creation and management of "official" company accounts. As new social networks and features within those networks emerge, you want to be in full control of any content that officially represents your company. There should be rules regarding opening such accounts.

Finally, keep access to these accounts restricted and maintain a list of all accounts, usernames and passwords. Make sure that credentials are

different for each account, and change passwords regularly, especially with employees who leave or change their roles. A single post by a disgruntled employee could be a PR nightmare for your organization.

Proven Social Media Marketing Tactics

Social Media Marketing remains an uncharted territory for many businesses as far as a proving it as a successful marketing strategy. Many are confused and overwhelmed by the abundance of social networks and the saturation of content. They don't know where to start or how to focus their efforts. The 10-Step SMM strategy below will help you get started towards producing tangible results.

Hire a Knowledgeable SMM Partner

Just as with search engine optimization, social media marketing requires a great deal of time and expertise. You simply might not have the bandwidth to manage your social media accounts effectively. You might also not have the experience required to know what works and what doesn't. Instead of sporadically posting content here and there, poking around and learning from your own mistakes, why not hire a professional? An experienced SMM partner can help create and implement an effective social media strategy: from choosing the right social networks for your business to helping produce the content. With systems in place, you can then run on their own or have them continue managing it for you. Either way, chances are it will take less time and cost less money, and it will produce better results.

When selecting an SMM partner, make sure they can demonstrate previous results, particularly in your industry. Another option is to reach out to other professionals in the industry for recommendations. Remember to always perform due diligence before hiring a vendor that will represent your company across social media. You want to make sure that they are experienced, reputable and that they know what they are doing. Ask for a specific plan of action before committing to anything. Your web developer may be a good starting point to finding a reliable an SMM partner.

Go Where Your Customers Are

The first order of business for you and your SMM partner will be to determine where your customers are. Marketing 101 is going where your customers are. With the abundance of social networks out there, you should primarily focus your efforts on social platforms where your customers and prospects are most active. This largely depends on your demographic.

I recommend starting with the “Big Four”: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Google Plus](#) and analyzing each to see if it is a good fit for your business. One way to determine which platforms are the best is by researching what your competition is doing and where they are most active. Pay attention to not only their activity, but more importantly the responses and the engagement that they get from their customers and followers. If it works for them, it will probably work for you. One of the safest and quickest marketing strategies is adopting successful strategies adopted by your competition and improving upon them.

Produce and Curate Valuable Content

Just like all other forms of Inbound Marketing, effective Social Media Marketing requires quality, useful, relevant and engaging content to unlock the potential of what SMM can do for your business. Revisit principles discussed in for tips on how to produce amazing content that you can use throughout your social media channels.

One of the obstacles in producing quality content is the level of content saturation, so it is rarely possible to produce original content. The workaround for this obstacle is content curation. Content curation is the process of collecting, organizing and presenting content in a way that it is useful and informative. It is an art of improving on someone else's

content, usually from multiple sources, by researching, arranging and presenting it in a way that is efficient and easy to digest.

An experienced SMM partner will be able to assist you with producing and curating quality content that is not only optimized for social media but also for the very social networks that you decided to target. Together, you can experiment with content to see what works and what doesn't on various social networks. Keep an eye on what kind of content entices the best responses from your customers.

Integrate Your Social Presence

For best results, your social media should be tightly integrated into your other marketing channels. SMM often provides a support role and acts as a stepping-stone toward converting or closing a visitor as well as to delight and support existing customers. That's why it is important for SMM to be consistent with other forms of marketing and be part of the overall experience. Consider integrating your social media marketing the following ways:

- Promote and link to your social accounts from your website, your e-mail signatures, mailing lists and offline materials.
- Add social media badges to your blog or any other pages on the website where you feature engaging quality content to help promote and share it across social media.
- Many social media accounts allow you to connect and integrate them with other social networks. Make use of this to entice people to follow you across social networks.
- Integrate your social presence with live or virtual events. For example, ask people to RSVP for events on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

- Check out the list of the tools at the end of this whitepaper to help automate many social media management tasks and deploy your efforts across multiple social networks at once.

Make the Most out of Social Media Accounts

Each social network has numerous features and capabilities of which many companies fail to take full advantage. Some of the more common ones have to do with customizing and branding profiles. Almost all social networks give you the ability to customize your avatar, header images to support and solidify your marketing messages. At the very least, that should be changed from default and made consistent with your branding and marketing guidelines. Ideally, you should treat your social media profiles the same way as your website. They should have the same value propositions, customer-centric messaging, calls to actions, etc. For every social account, you should be creative and make your presence stand out. An experienced SMM partner will help here.

Another part that is often overlooked is the company bio. Many companies put in the basic information or skip this step completely. Include your website's URL, your mission statement, your locations and contact information. Take the time to provide as much information as possible; it will come in handy for your fans or followers, as well as benefit you for SEO purposes. Finally, take time to learn capabilities and features of every social network to see how you can make the best use of your account. The best way is to read up on network-specific tips and suggestions as well as to research what the competition is doing.

Build a Social Media Audience

Social media marketing is all about building and expanding your social audience. Let's focus on universal tactics you can apply to grow your network.

As we previously discussed, the quality of your network is more important than its size. That's why it is very important to know from the beginning the type of the audience you want to attract and how you are planning on growing your network. Here are some ideas you might find useful:

- Make an effort to seek out social media presence of your clients, prospects, vendors and business associates continually. Connect with them and follow them. Many will follow you back.
- Consider allocating small budgets to pay to promote your accounts within social networks at least initially to grow it to a critical mass. For example, you can pay to promote your Facebook page to potential prospects or to promote your LinkedIn page.
- Run contests, sweepstakes and giveaways to create brand affinity, show appreciation for existing customers and engage potential prospects.
- Offer exclusive content that is highly desired and valuable but is only available to those who follow you on social media.

Network with Influencers

Some of the more valuable connections in social media are influencers. Influencers are users with large followings and voices in the industry such as renowned writers, celebrities or business leaders. They are power users who influence others. Having a single influencer endorsing your company or sharing your content could produce an Oprah Winfrey effect.

Connecting with and engaging influencers should be an important part of your networking strategy. Of course, connecting with Oprah Winfrey may be a long shot, but many others may be within your reach. Here is one tactic that may be useful:

- 1. First, find your industry influencers on each social network where you have a presence and start following them. Focus on influencers whose views are aligned with those of your company. Interact with their content by commenting, sharing and liking, but be authentic and don't overdo it.
- 2. Then, utilize an "ego bait" strategy to engage them. Quote them on social media and in your blog and mention their name in a positive context. You would be surprised the results this may produce. Influencers might share your mention with their audience, and they may link to your content or follow you.
- 3. If that fails, try another tactic. Reach out to them directly. Compliment them on their content and ask if you could commission an article for your blog. Yes, this may cost you some serious money, but it will be more likely to get their attention. Having even one article from an influencer will be a huge credibility boost and will help attract others.

When all fails, don't be discouraged and focus your efforts on other influencers who may not be as hard to attract.

Become an Influencer

The ultimate goal of your SMM strategy should be to become an influencer yourself. An influencer status will do miracles for your social media marketing as well as your own career.

Working toward earning an influencer status is a long journey that starts with producing amazing content, continuously improving it, networking tirelessly and working your way up to earn the respect and trust of the industry.

By networking and interacting with other influencers (see the previous tactic) you can learn a great deal about becoming one yourself. Here are some suggestions:

- As an aspiring influencer, you have to be ready to contribute by producing and curating a lot of quality content.
- Discover where other influencers contribute their content and pitch some of your best material.
- Be prepared to be rejected at first. Use the criticism to improve on your content, and don't give up. Practice makes perfect.
- Participate in discussions and conversations. Respond to all comments; engage others by discussing their content across multiple platforms.
- Join Tribes (lists of influencers). In particular, join Triberr (<http://triberr.com/>) home of influencers.
- Associate all of your posts with your Google Plus account by requesting an authorship status (<http://plus.google.com/authorship>).
- Be ubiquitous by applying your name and face to every piece of content that you produce. It's all about building recognition.
- Post frequently across multiple social networks. Use automation tools to help schedule your posts.

- Utilize your personal social media accounts and channels to distribute your content as well as to receive feedback.
- Be helpful to others by offering advice and assistance. Helping others grow will grow your network as well.
- Be active offline. Attend networking events, seminars, conferences; try to land some speaking engagements or interviews. Anything that will help to get your name out there.

Allocate Realistic Budgets

Let's address the elephant in the room: social media marketing is not free. Successful SMM costs money. You should expect fixed costs such as staff salaries, training, cost of producing and curating content, subscriptions and licenses for various software and tools. Variable costs and unplanned extra expenses will also occur.

Set aside an adequate budget for social media marketing. The difference between successful SMM and lack of traction is often measured by the size of your marketing budget and its application. Sometimes a small paid campaign to promote content that you spend a ton of money producing is worth the investment. Without it, you may not get the traction you need.

Measure Performance

You should continuously measure the performance of your SMM campaigns. Measuring is what will allow you make educated adjustments and improvements. Let's look at some of the KPIs you should look at monthly:

- **Visits through Social Media** – How many visits are you getting from social networks? Which social networks are sending the most visitors? How do the numbers compare to the previous month? Are they growing, the same or declining? (Google Analytics: Acquisition > Social > Network Referrals)
- **Content Visits** – What content or pages on your website have attracted the most traffic? Compare the number of visits. Are there any content that is unexpected or developing trends that you noticed? Can you produce follow up content to ride on this wave? (Google Analytics: Acquisition > Social > Landing Pages)
- **Engagement** – How engaging was your content? How many likes, shares, tweets or pluses did you get? Which content was most engaging and on what social networks? Can you repeat this success? (Review insights and analytics from within each of the social networks)
- **Conversions**– which of the social networks have resulted in most conversions? What's the conversion value? (Google Analytics: Acquisition > Social > Conversions)
- **ROI** – What's the return on investment when it comes to your time and the SMM expenses you incurred?
- **Audience Growth** – How many new fans have you acquired on Facebook? How many followers on Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn? How does it compare to the previous period? Is your audience growing? Review new followers' profiles. Are you attracting the audience you want? (Review insights and analytics from within each of the social networks)

Recommended Further Readings:



Complete Guide into Facebook Marketing Strategies

<http://resources.intechopen.com/facebook>



Complete Guide into Twitter Marketing Strategies

<http://resources.intechopen.com/twitter>



Complete Guide into LinkedIn Marketing Strategies

<http://resources.intechopen.com/linkedin>



Complete Guide into Google+ Marketing Strategies

<http://resources.intechopen.com/google+>



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