

6

STEPS TO
KEEP YOUR
SOCIAL MEDIA
ON TRACK



With as busy as we are, it's often hard to keep up with social media marketing. It can seem like a hungry baby that is never satisfied. If you post right now, your audience will be hungry again in a few hours. It is easy to fall behind. But falling behind might result in a disinterested audience, less exposure, and the impression of disorganization. Your social media efforts are almost worthless if they are not offering value, stimulating conversation, and accumulating followers.

In order to reduce stress, improve engagement, and hopefully drive new business, you need a solid plan of action. Here are six steps you can take to keep your social media on track:

1 MEASURABLE GOALS

Think about what you hope to achieve with your social media activities. What are your top three social media goals, and what's your plan to help reach them? Are you looking to increase your website traffic, build more awareness, increase your search engine rankings, build your opt-in email list, etc.? You may be tempted to set lofty social media goals, but if you are just getting started, you'll need to be realistic about what you can achieve as a social media newbie. When setting goals, be sure to factor in available resources – remember social media is time-consuming. You'll also want to set a realistic timeframe for meeting your goals. Social media experts suggest it will take three to six months before you may see results.

2 KNOW YOUR TARGETS

Think about whom are you trying to reach and what online communities are they involved in. Remember that different age groups use the web differently and are often on different sites online. This means you might need to segment your audience and identify different strategies or channels for the various segments. You also need to communicate with messaging that will resonate with your audience. You will want to select content that is targeted to the audience's specific interests and that they are likely to pass on to others.

3 PRIORITIZE

It is simply impossible to be active on all social media sites (LinkedIn, Twitter, SlideShare, Pinterest, Instagram, Reddit, Facebook, Digg, etc.) and still have time left in the day for anything else. Once you have identified who you're trying to reach, pick a few sites that your target audience uses the most, and stick with those to build a following. Where do your targets frequent? Each site has a different angle. For example:

- » Digg's top audience interest is search engine optimization and marketing
- » One of Reddit's biggest draws is technology
- » The top occupations of Google+ users are engineering, development, and design

» 64% of LinkedIn users are there for business growth

Once you have picked your, say, top three target sites, you need to keep them all updated. An easy shortcut to simultaneously update all of your social profiles is to link them. For example, if you update on Twitter, your posts can also appear on Facebook and LinkedIn at the same time. This cuts your work greatly and provides consistency across sites.

There are many tools that can help you accomplish more with less time. If you need help gathering and automatically sharing content, try Scoop.it, Storify, or Pearltrees. Other social media management systems include HootSuite and TweetDeck.

4 CONTENT

Determine appropriate content topics and vehicles that will attract interest and allow you to communicate information. One great way to keep on track is to build an editorial calendar and coordinate it around other marketing activities like trade shows, association meetings, or new product launches. Remember everyone consumes information differently, so be sure to include a mix of content topics from the following:

- » **Blog Posts** – Promote your blog on other social media sites as you write about relevant topics such as industry news, new products or services, project work, promotions and technical help.
- » **Press Releases** – Even in this age of new media, today's press releases still help companies get media coverage, and they can also provide tremendous SEO benefits. Be sure to include them in your social media efforts.
- » **Videos** – There are a wide range of video formats, and each can be used to draw in different audiences: testimonials, educational, demonstrations, viral.
- » **Special Offers** – Product trials, assessments, upgrades, features, and education can be very valuable to certain target markets.
- » **Marketing Campaign Material** – Integrate your ongoing marketing campaigns into your social media efforts as another outlet to get your message out and get more bang for your buck.
- » **Outside Resources** – Your followers will appreciate being pointed to informative articles about your industry from other sources, and you create goodwill with those to whom you link. It is especially helpful when you are pressed for time.

5 SCHEDULE

With so much to do in the day, it's hard to stay on top of it. Set up times in your day when you will log into your account(s) and update. You can set up reminders in Outlook to stay on task. Remember, if you're the quarterback of this, you don't or shouldn't have to do all the heavy lifting. Lean on internal experts from your team to help out in their areas of expertise. Encourage other staff members to either post directly or pass

along topics, ideas, and articles. This diversifies perspectives while making your posts more diverse and consistent.

Here is a sample updates schedule:

Daily:

» Check your social media sites twice a day including early in the a.m. and after lunch. Reply to comments, Tweets, messages, and update your statuses.

During the Week:

» **Mondays:** Peek into the LinkedIn discussion boards to see if there is a topic or two you can reply to, which can help showcase your expertise.

» **Tuesdays:** Promote a new (or ongoing) offering, promotion, or deal.

» **Wednesdays:** Publish a new blog post.

» **Thursdays:** Look for new clients, colleagues, and friends to connect with to increase your following and expand your network.

» **Fridays:** Check your stats and analytics for the week to see what worked and what didn't.

Additionally, periodically request LinkedIn recommendations from clients and referral sources; for example, after completing a project. Also follow Google Alerts for your company and respond to writers by thanking them or addressing issues.

MONITOR

While social media tracking and monitoring is an entire topic in itself, you want to make sure at a minimum that you are using analytics tools to identify what content your audiences are responding to and not responding to, and in what ways they are responding. For example ask yourself:

- » What content is seeing the most views?
- » What are your audiences "Liking"?
- » What are they not even reading?
- » What do they reply to or comment on?
- » What do they repost?

On an ongoing basis, evaluate what content is valuable to them. If you are putting out a lot of content that's not getting attention, then you need to rework what you are doing. Figure out where you can improve, make changes, and then measure some more. Be sure to revisit the goals you initially developed, and make sure your tactics help you meet what you set out to achieve.

Social media is not a magic bullet, but if done correctly and consistently, you will

start to see results from your efforts. Remember it doesn't happen overnight, so be patient and persistent. If you follow these tips, you'll be on the right path to success. 

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