

4 Key Considerations for Every Social Media Marketing Campaign

Throughout my career, I have developed and outlined numerous internal company process, policy and strategy documents. With experience and practice, it became evident that a process will not withstand time and change if it's not scalable and replicable. The same principles hold true for a Social Media Marketing Strategy; it must be a process that can adapt to growth over time and change.

New social media channels are popping up left and right, especially for niche social networking communities and geo-targeted business networks. In order to reach new prospects, you'll need to continuously expand your reach across the appropriate new networks. With each expansion, whether you are launching your initial social media marketing campaign or launching into a new social network or space, there are four key considerations. This article does not address the details for your social media game plan to include your business strategy, goals and actions required to make it happen, but rather offers a repeatable approach that can be applied throughout the lifecycle of your campaign.

1. Start Small

If you are just venturing into the social media world for your business or deciding it's time to get serious with your social media involvement to truly take advantage of this incredible marketing opportunity, take a step back, focus and start small. It is easy to get caught up in the possibilities of social media marketing and quickly jump into too many areas at once. This will not only be overwhelming, but will water down your campaign. Do a little research or hire a specialist who can advise you to pick two or three social networks that are most applicable to your business. Setup your profiles, identify your target audience, and start to build your presence in those select networks ensuring you stay aligned with your business strategy.

2. Get Comfortable

Developing comfort and familiarity with social media forums and technologies is very important, especially if you are new to the social media space. You need to be comfortable with not only how to use the technology, but in engaging with your target audience. Your interactions should be natural and personable. A key benefit of social networks is the ability to talk "with" your audience and not "at" your audience. You are sharing ideas and providing value to your prospects and to leaders in your industry. There are countless ways to connect with your audience based on your business and area of expertise. A little trial and error is fine. Test the water, try different approaches and be sure to track and measure the outcomes so you can determine what works best.

3. Establish A Routine

This can be a difficult area for many businesses. Yes, it takes some discipline but once you establish a routine that works for you, you will have consistency which is essential to social networking. If you only post an update on Twitter once a week, an article on your Facebook page now and then and respond to a discussion on your niche social network once a month, you're not gaining visibility. The more you contribute, the more visible you are. Staying active and providing value will lead to return on influence

or brand recognition which in turn will lead to return on investment. What routine works best will be different for each business and will depend on whether you are running the campaign alone or with help from colleagues or a social media specialist. For some, it's best to group social networking activities together at one time during the day in order to focus on other tasks through the remainder of the day. For others, building in small amounts of time throughout the day to focus on a specific social network is easier. There are some great tools to schedule your posts in advance across multiple networks such as Hootsuite (my personal favorite) and Tweetdeck. This can save you time and help you maintain that consistent level of interaction. Not all updates and post should be pre-scheduled but incorporating some that are scheduled is a good practice and also a great way to utilize the services of a specialist. By delegating some social media marketing activities you will have more time to personally interact with your target audience replying to comments and responding to discussions on a routine basis.

4. Expand

Once you have fine-tuned this process for two or three social networks, you can expand into new networks but first, do your research. You need to determine the best social networks or social media space where your business should have a presence. Maybe this time you want to reach out to niche communities. Perhaps it's time to venture into video marketing, a truly exciting space in internet marketing with such possibility for going viral if you do it right. You may be ready to start your own social network. There are readily available tools to make this happen. Decide what social networks should be next on your list and begin the process to build upon your existing strategy starting back at number one.

Whatever direction you take your campaign, by remaining within the framework of these four considerations while you build out your strategy, you will maintain control and consistency which are key to the success of every social media marketing strategy.

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