



Practical
Professional
Business Support



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How to Create a Social Media Strategy

What makes social media so exciting right now is that it is continuously evolving and there are no set rules on how to use it. People are finding a multitude of ways to use tools like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to promote themselves and their businesses.

How you use these networks depends on what your goals are for your company and how your customers/prospects/networks use them. If none of your customers or target markets are part of these online sites, then there may be limited uses. However, below is a general outline of how to create a strategy depending on what you want to use it for. Always remember though, that the key goal of social media marketing is not to try and push your product but rather to connect with your customers, friends and peers – connect and become part of the community.

Finding New Customers

- **Direct marketing** - One reason that companies are using social media is to get their sales messages out. You can do this subtly by simply placing your website link in your profile and having people come to you. Most people who visit your page are likely to click on your link and check out your website. If you are targeting people well, this can be a great source of traffic for your site. The second way to get your sales message out is to create messages/updates with your links in them. Get people's attention with compelling headlines about your products/services.
- **New prospects** - Search for companies in your target market who are using social media. Invite them to be part of your network and then post useful information that demonstrates your company's expertise.
- **Promote events** - Use these sites to promote any upcoming events and seminars you may have and solicit participants.

Networking/Building Referral Relationships

- **Networking** - Networking and business relationships are the key to a business' success. Online sites allow you to network with lots of people in your field from the biggest guy to the smallest. Look for companies that provide complimentary services or serve the same market as you and then invite them to your network.
- **Give referrals** - Introduce/promote others in your community or network. Networking is about connecting people. Make sure you give back and support others by singing their praises, providing a testimonial or commenting on a useful page on their website. You can also pass on their useful updates.

Creating a Brand/Awareness

- **Build credibility** - Establish yourself as an industry expert. Publish articles and messages about anything related to your industry. Give free and useful information. This will not only gain you credibility but also drive more hits to your website.
- **PR** - Did you know the media are watching social networks for interesting news ideas? Well they are. So think of catchy headlines that are topical and use these for updates. Find people in the media on the social networks and invite them to be part of your network so they can receive your updates.
- **Successes** - Share your successes. It lets people know you are in business and making progress. This could be a new client, an award or media exposure, for example.
- **Projects** - Share what you are working on. It better explains your services and others may offer suggestions.
- **Announce new products or services** - This lets people know you are continuing to grow your business.
- **Announce promotions** - Let your networks know of any special offers your company has.
- **Give your company more personality** - Some CEO's are using social media to connect on a more personal level with their employees and customers. They post company news and also share personal reflections and interests.

Customer Service

- **Customer service interaction** - Some companies have created websites that allow customers to add, delete and edit content. They list answers to frequently asked questions about each product and let customers add contributions. Other companies monitor information and may interact (fix an issue or maybe just let the customer know that a problem is being addressed) with customers having issues or concerns.
- **Customer feedback** - Some companies aren't as much social media participants as they are social media "listeners". Using search tools on the networking sites are an easy way to keep track of what's being said about a company, its product or the industry.

Professional Development

- **Feedback/Help** - You can ask any question in the world and get an answer on sites like Twitter. You can ask for feedback on a site you're building, ask a question about a program you are trying or even ask a question about your dishwasher. People are just waiting to help you.
- **Newsfeeds/Education** - Find people in fields that you would like to receive updates from or learn more about. Join communities or groups.

If you are going to use social media to supplement your marketing activities, then create a messaging calendar. Determine what your goals are and the types of messages/networks that will help you obtain them. Then build your messaging/activity calendar week by week. You should be doing status updates/messages at least once a week so people can get to know you. Some advocates of Twitter recommend at least one message per day. By having a well thought out strategy and plan, you will maximize your impact and time spent utilizing social media. And again, even if you are not ready to actively participate, at a minimum set up accounts and "listen".

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