

R T R

Rent the Runway

## **SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Brand Identity Statement	3
Audience Analysis	5
Competitor Analysis	6
Goals and Objectives	7
Distribution Plan	8
Sample Content	9
Evaluation Plan	10
Social Media Policy Statement	11
Style Guide	12
Conclusion	15
Sources	16

## ***Introduction***

In a world where we can have our groceries delivered to our door and our Amazon orders at our door in just two days, is there anything we can't do online? Wouldn't it be nice to skip the shopping mall and have your clothes delivered to you at home instead?

As a way to reduce clothing waste and expand your closet, Rent the Runway is an online service that allows you to rent designer clothes and accessories at your leisure. The package is quickly delivered to your door, and after your choice of a 4- or 8-day period, you send it back without the hassle of paying for shipping or dry cleaning the piece(s). How easy is that?

You might ask yourself: How have I never heard of this ingenious company? And a possible answer could be that RTR does not reach enough audiences. Rent the Runway does not advertise and brand their company as well as they could, expanding their target audiences and publics via social media. This is where my social media strategy will lead us in my project to follow.

## ***Brand Identity Statement***

Rent the Runway, established in 2009, is an online clothing service, with pop-up shops in New York City, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other metropolitan areas throughout the country. The rental service provides designer clothes and accessories to customers available for renting purposes to later be returned after wear. The company has nine million customers, over a thousand employees, and is partnered with more than five-hundred designers.

CEO Jennifer Hyman was asked of challenges that face her business right now, and she replied: "I think that one of the challenges is that a lot of the world, especially the tech community, thinks that we're in the business of renting frilly dresses as opposed to the business of disrupting an industry and building out one of the most sophisticated technology companies in the United States. I think the tech and business community has a stereotype that because we are young women who happen to like wearing dresses, that we started the company because we love shopping or because we are obsessed with fashion. We saw a movement toward collaborative consumption across all sectors of the economy and we started Rent the Runway because we want to change and democratize one of the biggest industries in the world."

Women of the RTR community play a large role in the brand's identity. These clothes they wear are not about making rational choices in the mall to buy something you can wear time and time again, but rather the freedom to wear something printed or with a pop of color, knowing that you're paying as low as 10% of the retail price and not having to feel bad about it.

CEO Hyman realized that rather than owning a piece of clothing or accessory, what so many women want is the experimental consumption—that is, the experience of wearing a beautiful gown or bag for a night, rather than owning it forever. So many people want to wear more and spend less, so co-founders Hyman and Fleiss came up with their version of a solution to this. The idea behind Rent the Runway is to reduce fashion wastage and help the costly designers to reach a broader audience which they can afford by renting rather than purchasing.

Over the last decade since its establishment, Rent the Runway's identity and ambition have not changed, but rather expanded and grown to more products and designers. Two years ago, Rent the Runway began offering monthly subscriptions—one for \$89/month that gives members up to four new pieces a month to wear and enjoy, and the other for \$159/month that unlocks endless rotations of clothing and accessory items.

This successful transition to monthly subscriptions now accounts for more than half of the company's total revenue. The new long-term option for subscribing to the service creates a substitution for shopping as a whole, growing and excelling in the subscription model that so many other companies have tried at but failed.

As an online-based business, Rent the Runway relies on social media as a way to transmit messages. The company runs handles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest, in addition to a very active website on which is both informational and helpful. Rent the Runway uses these social media platforms to update their community of followers with new arrivals, subscriptions, and empowering stories from other women of the RTR community— something they pride themselves on. The company clearly displays their products in Facebook and Instagram posts, tagging the exact item so it is easily accessible for renting. On Pinterest, they use their rental items in a written post such as "Your New Year's Eve Style Guide" and "Everything to Wear this Holiday". The variation in both visuals and written context serve as a nice balance for the various members of the Rent the Runway community.

Rent the Runway's model is built on interaction and connection. Digital dialogue is a major part of the company's community, constructed through honest and active communication on social media and through their website.

## ***Audience Analysis***

Right now, Rent the Runway reaches much of their audiences via social media online. The company offers women's items for rental, and thus their audiences consisted of women, until their recent addition of little girl's clothing and dresses in past weeks. This will only barely affect audience demographics, if at all, due to the fact that it is uncommon for young girls to have social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

Via Facebook, Rent the Runway reaches three-quarters of a million people. With 747K likes and 741K followers on their Facebook page, they reach a large number of people with this social media platform. With somewhat less of a following on their Instagram account, Rent the Runway has 280K followers, averaging anywhere from a few hundred likes to almost four-thousand, depending on the post. It is important to note, though, that RTR's Instagram account is the most active of all of their platforms. On Twitter, Rent the Runway reaches 51.3K followers and 10.9K likes, an even smaller number than Instagram. And finally, Pinterest has 37.9K followers and 2.5 million monthly viewers.

The majority of Rent the Runway's audience holds women from 16 to mid-thirties. High school girls scroll the site and troll the store for events like Homecoming and Prom. Women in their mid-twenties and early-thirties are searching for a gown and bag for a special event, such as a gala or work party of some sort. There is something for all ages, but not all of these audiences know this yet.

## ***Competitor Analysis***

Realistically, Rent the Runway does not have any large competitors for women's designer clothes and accessories available for rental unless it is one that is smaller and local, and thus still would not be considered a competitor for my nationally-recognized brand. In accordance with renting formal wear in general, a considerable competitor is a men's tuxedo rental, where men have rented formal suits for so many years. Men's tuxedo rental companies have served to be a successful business, making it understandable why Rent the Runway is doing so well serving as the women's counterpart.

Like tuxedo rentals, I think there is a chance that men's designer clothing and accessories would also do well on Rent the Runway if they decided to expand in the near future, and this could be a potential audience of young- to middle-aged men the company can reach, thus working toward the goal of broadening Rent the Runway's followers, customers, and community.

Many times, a tuxedo rental company is local to an area, but two examples of national associations are Jos. A. Bank and Men's Wearhouse. Looking at these competitor's brand and presence on social media, Men's Wearhouse is a verified account on Instagram, meaning they have a blue check next to their name to identify that the account is indeed the real one associated with the company/brand. They have a following of 74.8K and get a few hundred likes on each photo posted. The aesthetic and theme are not as nearly put together and visibly appealing as Rent the Runways, although it is important to note that men are a different demographic. For Jos. A. Bank's Instagram that is also verified, they hold 27.2K followers with a few hundred less likes than that of Men's Wearhouse. If Rent the Runway were to expand to men's dress wear, it would become a prime competitor for tuxedo rentals like those just mentioned.

## **Goals and Objectives**

*Goal: Broaden Rent the Runway's audiences to reach more age groups and bring these new publics awareness of the brand's position*

Objectives:

### *1. To increase awareness of brand's identity and initiatives to broader audiences*

With only a small age range in which Rent the Runway reaches, the brand wishes to expand awareness of the company to more audiences. Through social media, Rent the Runway will post more frequently to both Facebook and Instagram, my two intended social media platforms. More stories posted to Instagram and a promotional video uploaded to Facebook are tactics in the strategy that will likely be shared and encourage more tagging of friends to reach more people. We will offer special promotions to new members in which we will advertise via Facebook and Instagram in an attempt to reach these new audiences. For customers who refer a friend, both the tentative and returning member will receive a special offer, promoting those who are already members and believe in the company to find others who will as well.

### *2. To generate acceptance of the brand's position as one that empowers women and the freedom they have to express themselves through fashion and style*

A major initiative behind Rent the Runway focuses on recognition of women as both equal and powerful. As a fully-female rental service as of now, Rent the Runway works to appreciate and honor women because we are worth celebrating, and CEO Jenn Hyman wants her viewers to know this. Self-confidence is important to the people behind the company. More inspirational quotes will be posted to the Instagram and Facebook, specifically to Instagram stories, in addition to a promotional video that honors women of all sizes, sporting RTR designer rentals available to all. In the video they will hold up inspiring words/messages from real members of the RTR community, showing viewers how they perceive themselves confidently through their fashion rentals.

### *3. To generate acceptance of the brand's position as one that works to reduce material waste*

With Rent the Runway's initiative to replace the purchasing of clothing items and accessories with renting them instead, the company aspires to reuse these designer clothes time and time again. With this, Rent the Runway will send out surveys every few months to monthly-members, asking the number of items they rented through the company and also how many other clothing items/accessories they purchased that month. Rent the Runway will track these numbers with individual customers, in addition to in general to see how renting each month decreases the amount of purchases one makes for the betterment of the planet.



## ***Distribution Plan***

In inventorying my media assets for my brand Rent the Runway, I have planned to distribute my social media strategy of broadening and expanding RTR's audiences through organic media and shared media, in addition to sponsored media if my budget were to allow for it.

In issuing strategy through organic media, our official social media platforms will post aesthetic, eye-catching material via Facebook and Instagram to attract more people of various ages. Facebook posts will be informational about our brand and possible ways to rent, where Instagram will focus more on displaying these ideas for audiences to see. Tagging the designer brand of all pieces available for rent will allow followers to explore the designer's page in addition to ours, giving our audiences the resources to search out these brands to trigger their realization how great it is to rent a piece for as low as a-tenth of the retail price.

With shared media for my social media strategy, our current audiences and followers will aid in distributing our message to a wider range of people. By encouraging followers to tag their friends in the comments of our posts, we hope to pop up on more screens across all age ranges. And with a promotion that encourages the sharing of posts and links on Rent the Runway, this will further the sharing of RTR content through members of the RTR community that already believe and trust in the company's initiatives and motives.

The promotional video posted to both platforms, Facebook and Instagram, will hold women of all sizes, encouraging other women to feel confident in themselves. It is important to dress in a way that makes you feel good, and RTR has so many styles and pieces that allow for this. If the budget allows, this video will also be sponsored to show on Instagram feeds and explore pages, in addition to Facebook pages if the budget allows for this.

In terms of a timeline, the Instagram stories and Facebook posts will be updated every 2-3 days, if not daily. It is likely the posts to Instagram will be slightly more frequent than Facebook. We will begin to look for real members of the RTR community who are willing to be featured in the promotional video as soon as possible, in hopes that the video will be finished and ready for release in the next few months. Surveys on clothing waste that ask about purchasing items versus renting them will go out every four weeks to our members. With this, we hope to generate data that tells us how much our company is aiding in cutting back on material waste.

Sample Content



epesetsky9





epesetsky9 Rainy days are better in [@giginewyork](#)







epesetsky9





epesetsky9 Tag a friend who has 'nothing to wear' for 20% off their first monthly membership! [#IHaveEverythingToWear](#)

36 SECONDS AGO







epesetsky9





epesetsky9 What have you done for our planet by [#renting?](#)

4 SECONDS AGO







epesetsky9





epesetsky9 A pop of color just brightens our Monday mood!

4 SECONDS AGO





## ***Evaluation Plan***

To see the progress made from the social media strategy, I will take the metrics of my social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram, in addition to the number of customers/RTR members at the beginning of the project before implementing any tactics. Doing this, I will be able to track the specific outcomes of the strategy through this project.

After the strategy has been put into place for some months, we will check again the metrics of the social media platforms, specifically using the app Iconosquare to track our demographics and statistics from where we started compared to now. Not only will we measure the number of followers gained on both platforms, but also number of likes and comments on each post, aiming to have increased engagement with followers by responding to their comments in a timely manner and answering any questions.

Numbers on these platforms in addition to any growth in the RTR community will tell us whether we succeeded or failed with this social media strategy. Upon becoming a member of Rent the Runway, we ask users of their age range if they are comfortable with revealing this. Specifically, this age range given will be monitored and analyzed to see if we indeed reached new and expansive age ranges with the social media strategy.

## ***Social Media Policy Statement***

Basic principles:

- Rent the Runway promotes healthy and honest communication with their clients and followers
- Rent the Runway respects and values their followers
- Rent the Runway understands that confidentiality is important and will not post anything without asking permission prior to posting their content
- Rent the Runway aspires to act responsibly and ethically on all social media platforms no matter what

What you should do:

- Check with colleagues that any and every photo/caption/comment posted is appropriate
- Double- and even triple- check spelling and grammar
- Be positive in the posts/comments are never negative in any way
- Ask customers and followers for permission before reposting any of their content
- If you share something that a follower has posted, tag them to ensure they are receiving the credit they deserve
- Check all social media platform accounts and passwords weekly to ensure that they have not been hacked or given any virus that results in unidentified posting

What you should never do:

- Involve controversial topics of any sort in any way, such as religion, politics, etc.
- If you think there is a chance the post/comment is going to cause backfire, refrain from posting it
- Share personal information about yourself (the person running social media) or any other RTR employees
- Tag any followers or competitors in a mean or malicious way
- Post on the social media without checking with at least one other employee of RTR (preferably check with multiple resources to ensure it is appropriate and portraying the company's brand/voice properly)

## **Style Guide**

Social media profiles:

- @RentTheRunway on Instagram
- @RentTheRunway on Twitter
- @RentTheRunway on Facebook
- @RTRconnect on Snapchat

\*If any of these were to be unavailable for use, shorten the full name to 'RTR' and make the account with this abbreviation

Brand voice:

- Fun and playful writing, yet still serious and relatable to all audiences
- Positive captions and commenting, empowering women of all ages, sizes, and shapes, making the account a creative outlet for all things fashion and style
- Consistent writing style to establish stability and credibility
- Professional delivery, even if the tone is light and sprightly

Grammar and terminology:

- Casual and informal with exclamation points in most or all posts to emphasize excitement and positivity
- No more than two exclamation points in a row
- Full sentences for Instagram captions are not necessary (e.g. do not need to put a period or punctuation at the end of everything)
- Start captions with a capital letter
- Capitalize any and all brands being mentioned in the post appropriately

Post formatting:

- Links to specific clothing pieces should be at the end of a post/caption, with link shortened as much as possible
- Hashtags acceptable, 1-2 per post
- Emoji usage is fine depending on the post, but the use should be limited to refrain from solely aiming at young audiences
- Acceptable emoji examples include the fire emoji to express something is new and hot, the finger emoji pointing down (or really in any direction) at a link or tagged brand/follower, and the camera emoji to give proper photo credit
- Keep captions as short as possible for those scrolling quickly, we want them to catch key words and phrases for our brand

#### Hashtag usage:

- Possible hashtags include the designer/brand of a clothing or accessory in the picture
- 1-2 hashtags per post, but only use when necessary and definitely not for every post
- Only hashtag things that are relevant to the photograph/post
- Hashtag examples include brands being shown such as #Reformation, or other relevant ones like #ReadyForSummer or #Vacay

#### Visual guidelines:

- Aesthetic is key, minimalist photos with the focus being on the clothes and accessories available for rental
- Use Preview app for Instagram to see how photo posts look once posted to ensure aesthetically appealing and cohesive theme; this application allows you to see how a new photo will fit in with the already aesthetic theme of the page for consistency
- Profile image will be the same across all platforms, with a simple graphic 'RTR'; depending on aesthetic theme, possibly a pale pink background with vibrant red 'RTR' for something that is eye-catching and recognizable, yet simple

#### Handling competitor interactions:

- If there were to be competitors of any kind, the company's platforms should not ignore them, but rather be friendly and accepting
- Want to establish consistent brand voice and personality that is friendly, welcoming, positive, fun, and playful
- Any negative commenting with competitors would disestablish our brand's voice and identity, which we condemn

#### Legal concerns:

- Much of the photos being posted to RTR's Instagram will be customer's photos wearing RTR, so be sure to always ask permission before posting someone's photos/content
- Respect the company's privacy, along with that of customers and followers
- If someone asks for us to take down their photo or untag them in a post, always comply immediately without question

Responding to questions:

- Quick, consistent responses to followers/customers
- Always tag the user in the response to their comment
- Through the responses, portray the friendly, positive brand voice, even if the original comment is negative or condescending
- If there is something that we do not wish to comment publicly, respond to the follower/customer telling them to check their platform inbox (e.g. tagging that user and saying: "Check your DMs!") rather than ignoring the comment

Customer personas:

- As RTR only serves women at the moment, we are targeting women of all ages, using inspiring, cheerful message, with vibrant and eye-catching photographs on Instagram to draw them in
- Specifically, for the older audiences who we are targeting in this strategy, we will use vivid and colorful photos on Instagram and Facebook to attract their attention to our social media
- For younger followers such as those who are already interested and following the company's social media, message content such as "Tag a friend who \_\_\_\_" or "Tag your bestie" will promote these believers in the brand to tag their friends, bringing more attention to more audiences across our platforms

## ***Conclusion***

In establishing a plan to broaden Rent the Runway's audiences by increasing awareness of the brand's identity and initiatives and reach more age groups, this social media strategy attempts to create a stable and consistent voice for RTR. In doing so, members and those who are considering membership can recognize a strong brand that aims to empower women, reduce clothing waste, and give women the freedom to wear what they want without the hefty price tag.

Rent the Runway's social media strategy aims to draw in customers from wider age ranges than the majority of their demographics now, which are mostly 16 to mid-thirties. With proper dissemination on the chosen social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram, in addition to promotions for referring friends and special new-member prices, the demographics of ages of RTR community members should begin to expand to new ranges, bringing Rent the Runway new customers and members for life.



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