



# **2015 Social Media Strategy Guide**

Asking the Important Questions to Help Your  
Organization Navigate Uncharted Waters

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## INTRODUCTION

It wasn't so long ago that businesses could afford to think of social media as a nice frill – something to participate in, of course, but not a significant piece of a serious business plan. Now it is clear that any business that fails to engage in smart and strategic social media planning does so at its own peril, running the risk of being left behind by customers who demand real-time engagement.

Unfortunately, “social media” is something few executives really understand, and that can easily translate into lost opportunity.

If you think of social media as a means to have your message reach everyone for free, you'll end up reaching no one effectively and wasting a lot of time along the way.

Facebook has more than a billion users, and they are bombarded by trillions of messages, on social media and through traditional marketing channels. This extreme volume of information creates noise and clutter on a level we've never seen before ... and it's only getting worse. The secret is knowing how to get your message heard by the right people.

This strategy guide provides an overview of the most important goals and tools available to help your organization navigate these uncharted waters.

## ARE YOU TARGETING THE RIGHT AUDIENCES?

Even the largest brands in the world cannot reach all 1.3 billion Facebook users. That is where the smart brands utilize the true benefit of social media: its ability to identify and reach very targeted audiences based on location, demographics and psychographics.

When users are bombarded by an excessive amount of messaging, they pay attention only to the content that is most relevant to them. To make a real connection with every audience you want to reach, the best approach is to develop numerous communities or divide your primary community into multiple sub-audiences, and broadcast a variety of personalized messages.

You can now reach, say, 34-37-year-old mothers in the Tallahassee area that lean left politically and enjoy gardening – and them alone. That level of refinement has forced more traditional media channels, like television and print, to invest in new targeting technology and systems, but they remain many years behind social/digital.

### *Takeaway Questions:*

- What are you doing to get in front of the right people?
- What traits describe your top customers – those most likely to buy your product/service or act on behalf of your initiative?
- Who would act as your optimal brand evangelists, capable of sharing your messaging with those likely to buy or act?
- Are your social media efforts crafted specifically to reach those audiences?

## ARE YOU MAXIMIZING YOUR REACH BY DELIVERING OPTIMIZED CONTENT?

Now you know how to locate the people you want – so how do you get their attention?

For the last 50 years, most advertising was disruptive, distracting you from what you actually wanted to be seeing or hearing. That age of disruptive advertising is coming to an end. These days, it is not uncommon to glance around the living room during a commercial break and see family members staring at a computer, tablet or smartphone rather than the TV screen. These are multi-screen consumers – and they are the new norm of 2015.

According to a [recent Google study](#), users are watching TV on average for 43 minutes per session, but 77 percent of that time they are simultaneously using another device, such as a smartphone or tablet.

Want your messaging to actually reach and resonate with your target audience? Make that content valuable, contributing to make audience members' lives better. Create content that improves their image of your brand and opens their eyes to what's possible in your industry or area of experience. Then ensure that it reaches them where they are looking during the commercial breaks: their social media feeds.

It is important to understand that only a small percentage of your Facebook fans, typically 5 to 20 percent, will actually receive your posts in their News Feed. This varies by Page and post, but the battle to gain traction in a user's News Feed is becoming more competitive. The difference between reaching 20,000 fans, instead of 30,000, with each post can mean tens of thousands of dollars in lost earned media value monthly.

In order to determine who receives what content, Facebook uses an algorithm called EdgeRank. EdgeRank prioritizes content based on a person's previous relationship with your Page, the amount of engagement with the piece of content you've shared and the amount of time since the content was published.

But why doesn't Facebook show everything to everyone who has previously Liked your Page?

According to a [Pew Internet Study](#), the average Facebook user has 229 friends. Women average 42 updates to their Facebook status per month while men average 12. Your brand has to compete with approximately 206 other posts each day – and that doesn't include other Pages they've Liked!

If you want to reach that Facebook user, your content must have a high EdgeRank priority value. This is attained through the sweet science of News Feed Optimization. It's like speaking the Facebook dialect – exclude one word from a post, or publish that post at slightly the wrong time, and you may lose out on reaching thousands of current or prospective customers.

*Takeaway Questions:*

- Who are you competing with for your target audience's attention? Friends? Family? News outlets? Brands?
- Are you reaching your maximum potential with "free" organic content?

## ARE YOU USING PAID PROMOTION TO AMPLIFY THE REACH OF YOUR CONTENT?

Even if you understand News Feed Optimization, or employ someone who does, it will only get you so far. In 2015, paid promotion is the sole method guaranteed to get your posts into the News Feeds of the right audience. Paid promotion (such as Facebook Promoted Posts, Sponsored Stories and Twitter Promoted Tweets) provides an added lift to ensure that your content is reaching exactly who you want to reach.

Watch out, though – if you use paid promotion through Facebook's on-page default tools (“Boost Post”) to reach anyone outside of your Page’s fans, you will likely reach the wrong users. Facebook’s default non-fan advertising lacks targeting and is typically displayed to users who other advertisers exclude from their ad sets.

An effective Facebook paid promotion strategy will require using a third-party platform, the [Facebook Ads Manager](#) or [Facebook Power Editor](#). The Power Editor provides advertisers with the ability to place posts in the News Feeds of only the people most likely to engage, most likely to buy your product or most likely to take action on behalf of your cause. Most significantly, it allows the advertiser to pay to reach these people and no one else. This is not merely limited to reaching your current fans, but the friends of their fans or completely disconnected audiences – providing a way to reach previously unreachable potential consumers.

The Power Editor also allows brands and organizations to target a post to a specific device. Want to reach users while they are out and about, not stuck behind a desktop computer? Reach them on their mobile device and only pay for that opportunity. Want to reach users with a history of giving to charity? Use the Power Editor’s partner category targeting to get your message in front of those high value users.

Twitter recently rolled out its [Promoted Tweets](#) to businesses through a self-service system. Instagram and Pinterest have been testing Sponsored Stories and Promoted Pins through large advertisers and will likely roll out small business advertising products soon. Content distribution sites like reddit and StumbleUpon have offered paid promotion products for years.

Paid promotion, also known as “Native Advertising,” gained significant traction in 2014 across many platforms. The cost associated with social promotion is going up in 2015, but is still more affordable than most other forms of advertising. The ability to micro-target makes this addition to your brand's marketing mix a no-brainer.

*Takeaway Questions:*

- Have you set a 2015 budget for paid promotion / native advertising?
- What websites would provide your brand with the best social promotion services?
- Are you using the right tools or top agency partner to implement your paid promotion strategy?



## ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE RIGHT DATA TO EVALUATE RETURN ON INVESTMENT?

In 2015, social intelligence is becoming more and more important as the gap narrows between success and failure in social media. If a specific social strategy or tactic is not reaching its full potential, change is necessary. Only by setting the right metrics and monitoring accordingly will you have the knowledge to make those real-time decisions.

Consider judging the effectiveness of your social media campaign based on reach, post impressions and/or engagement. Reach and post impressions show who you actually reached with your messaging, while also providing context to compare with other marketing efforts. Engagement metrics show how many people have actually interacted with your messaging, typically by showing their support or sharing with their networks.

Re-examine your metrics for 2015 and make sure that your content, channels and tactics are developed specifically to accomplish those objectives.

### *Takeaway Questions:*

- Are you over-emphasizing Likes and Followers?
- What metrics are being relayed/emphasized to the executive suite and top stakeholders?
- Are you looking at the right numbers?

## ARE YOU INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA INTO THE OVERALL COMMUNICATIONS MIX?

Up to now, many agencies and organizations have treated social media as the red-headed stepchild of their communication strategies. In 2015, it is imperative for social media to be integrated into your comprehensive plan of action in order to make the most of your opportunities.

The [Altimeter Group](#)'s Jeremiah Owyang describes it as the [Converged Media Imperative](#) – merging paid, owned and earned channels to maximize collaboration and reduce issues that may arise between social media, advertising, public relations and digital silos. This level of cross-integration must occur throughout the communication process – during strategy development, organization, production and analysis.

By effectively integrating social media into the overall marketing mix and ensuring that it has a strong voice at the communication table, organizations can drive results by utilizing new tactics like social promotion of branded content, sponsored customer messaging and brand requests for shared content.

### *Takeaway Questions:*

- Is social media working independent of other marketing tactics and objectives?
- How do your social media objectives contribute to overall organizational goals?

## CONCLUSION

Social media is not getting any easier in 2015. We will hear stories ranging from large brands to small businesses that have failed miserably in the social space and don't see the gains once expected by all.

A select group of brands and organizations, though, will use the techniques described above to knock social out of the park and see quantifiable results that drive sales, positive sentiment and brand awareness on a more affordable scale than ever seen before.

That's why there is one key point that cannot be stressed too much: If you and your management team are not sure how to get the most out of social media, or even why you should bother – recruit someone who does, and make them a key part of your team.

### **Guide Developed by: Sachs Media Group**

Sachs Media Group is a leader in building effective public outreach, awareness and marketing campaigns, and is routinely ranked as one of the top 100 public relations firms in the nation. In 2011, the firm was named the "PR Agency of the Year" nationally in the prestigious Bulldog Awards. With exceptional experience and results in public affairs, online, social media, branding, and crisis communications, the firm combines cutting-edge engagement strategies with unparalleled relationships, news judgment, messaging and storytelling ability.

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