

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA

MARKETING

Social media marketing is the use of social media platforms to connect with your audience to build your brand, increase sales, and drive website traffic.

This involves publishing great content on your social media profiles, listening to and engaging your followers, analyzing your results, and running social media advertisements.

The major social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, and Snapchat.

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING.

Social media marketing first started with publishing. Businesses were sharing their content on social media to generate traffic to their websites and sales. But social media has matured far beyond being just a place to broadcast content.

Nowadays, businesses use social media in a myriad of different ways. For example, a business that is concerned about what people are saying about its brand would monitor social media conversations and response to relevant mentions - social media listening and engagement.

A business that wants to understand how it's performing on social media would analyze its reach, engagement, and sales on social media with an analytics tool - social media analytics.

A business that wants to reach a specific set of audience at scale would run highly-targeted social media ads - social media advertising.

As a whole, these are often also known as social media management.

THE FIVE CORE PILLARS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

1. STRATEGY

Before you dive right in and publish something on social media, let's take a step back and look at the bigger picture. The first step is to think about your social media strategy.

- What are your goals?
- How can social media help you achieve your business goals?

Some businesses use social media for increasing their brand awareness, others use it for driving website traffic and sales. Social media can also help you generate engagement around your brand, create a community, and serve as a customer support channel for your customers.

Which social media platforms do you want to focus on?

The major social media platforms, mentioned above, are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, and Snapchat. There are also smaller and up-and-coming platforms, such as Tumblr, TikTok, and Anchor, and social messaging platforms, such as Messenger, WhatsApp, and WeChat.

When starting out, it's better to pick a few platforms that you think your target audience is on than to be on all platforms.

- What type of content do you want to share?
- What type of content will attract your target audience best? Is it images, videos, or links? Is it educational or entertaining content?

A good place to start is to create a marketing persona, which will help you answer these questions. And this doesn't have to be fixed forever; you can always change your strategy according to how your social media posts perform.

2. PLANNING AND PUBLISHING

Social media marketing for small businesses usually starts with having a consistent presence on social media. Close to three billion people (3,000,000,000!) use social media. By being present on social media platforms, you give your brand an opportunity to be discovered by your future customers and clients.

Publishing to social media is as simple as sharing a blog post, an image, or a video on a social media platform. It's just like how you would share on your personal Facebook profile. But you will want to plan your content ahead of time instead of creating and publishing content spontaneously. Also, to ensure that you are maximizing your reach on social media, you need to publish great content that your audience likes, at the right timing and frequency.

There are now a variety of social media scheduling tools that can help you publish your content automatically at your preferred time. This saves you time and allows you to reach your audience when they are most likely to engage with your content.

3. LISTENING AND ENGAGEMENT

As your business and social media following grow, conversations about your brand will also increase. People will comment on your social media posts, tag you in their social media posts, or message you directly.

People might even talk about your brand on social media without letting you know. So you will want to monitor social media conversations about your brand. If it's a positive comment, you get a chance to surprise and delight them. Otherwise, you can offer support and correct a situation before it gets worse.

You can manually check all your notifications across all the social media platforms but this isn't efficient and you won't see posts that didn't tag your business's social media profile. You can instead use a social media listening and engagement tool that

aggregates all your social media mentions and messages, including posts that didn't tag your business's social media profile.

4. ANALYTICS

Along the way, whether you are publishing content or engaging on social media, you will want to know how your social media marketing is performing.

- Are you reaching more people on social media than last month?
- How many positive mentions do you get a month?
- How many people used your brand's hashtag on their social media posts?

The social media platforms themselves provide a basic level of such information. To get more in-depth analytics information or to easily compare across social media platforms, you can use the wide range of social media analytics tools available.

5. ADVERTISING

When you have more funds to grow your social media marketing, an area that you can consider is social media advertising. Social media ads allow you to reach a wider audience than those who are following you.

Social media advertising platforms are so powerful nowadays that you can specify exactly who to display your ads to. You can create target audiences based on their demographics, interests, behaviors, and more.

When you are running many social media advertising campaigns at once, you can consider using a social media advertising tool to make bulk changes, automate processes, and optimize your ads.