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6 Steps to Creating a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy. By: Chaney, Paul. Communication World. Jan2016, p1-1. 1p. 1 Color Photograph. Abstract: The article suggests several steps for businesses for creating a comprehensive social media strategy. The steps suggested include tying social media to marketing goals such as building brand awareness, assisting with generating demand for one's product or service, or fostering word-of-mouth, knowing one's audience's interests, demographic makeup, and behavior patterns, and creating a content plan that ties together business objectives and audience interests. (AN: 112162459)

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## **6 Steps to Creating a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy**

The key to using social media successfully for your organization in 2016 is to have a detailed plan that drives your all of your marketing efforts.

This article will outline how to create a comprehensive six-step integrated social media strategy that takes into account business goals and objectives, and that focuses on the needs and interests of your customers.

### **1. Tie social media to marketing goals**

If we are going to approach social media strategically, in a way that relates to your overall marketing goals and objectives, it helps to know the strengths of social.

In my experience, social shines in five areas: building brand awareness, assisting with generating demand for your product or service, fostering word-of-mouth, increasing customer loyalty and promoting customer advocacy.

Think of ways that social media could help your organization, given these strengths (and any weaknesses you can think of). Come up with two or three goals and supporting objectives from this perspective, to start.

### **2. Know your audience**

How well you know your audience--their interests, demographic makeup, behavior patterns, motivations and goals--will determine how you engage them using social media.

One of the best ways to know your audience is to listen to them. Fortunately, there are plenty of platforms you can use for that purpose: Meltwater Buzz, Brandwatch, Mention and Sysomos, to name a few. Free tools exist, too, such as Social Mention, Hootsuite, and even Twitter (advanced search).

Also, you must first define your target audience before you can begin engaging with its members. Segment your customers into individual groups called buyer personas and understand who they are, how they think, and what they want from your brand.

### 3. Create a content plan

Next, create a content plan that ties together business objectives and audience interests.

Here is a simple, straightforward plan that you can use:

- **Establish a home base.**

A home base is your primary website or the place where you hope to build conversions of some kind.

- **Build a media empire.**

A "media empire" is the mix of your blog, podcasts, ebooks, whitepapers, infographics, video content, product data sheets, and whatever other assets you own. Use networks such as YouTube, Instagram, SlideShare, and Scribd to make your content easier to find and share.

- **Engage at the outposts.**

"Outposts" consist of the various social platforms--places like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

In terms of actions, the content plan boils down to this:

- Engage at the outposts.
- Promote your media at the outposts.
- Point people to your home base via your media.
- Sell at the home base (not at the outposts).

### 4. Find ways to integrate social media

Step four is to find ways to integrate social media into your overall marketing mix. There are at least two ways to go about it.

- **Repurpose content.**

Turn a press release into a feature article or blog post, and then distribute it to the "outposts." Repurpose a series of blog posts into an ebook or whitepaper and offer it via a lead-generation page.

- **Use social media as a multiplier**

or amplifier. Don't let anything you produce--unless it's for internal purposes only--go without being shared on social media. Think of social media not merely as a set of channels, but as a layer that integrates with every other marketing activity. Don't create social media campaigns, but make all your campaigns social.

### 5. Choose social media tactics

The fifth step involves choosing social channels and tactics. I won't go into detail here because I assume that you are all familiar with the various channels and how to use them. However, there are a couple of points about implementing tactics that I want to call to your attention.

First, be social; don't just "do" social. Social media are more than a set of tools--blogs, social networks, forums, video sharing sites, and so forth. You need the tools--the "media"--but balance your use of them

with an emphasis on "being social," not just "doing" social.

By that, I mean find ways to make your brand more relatable, more human, through interpersonal engagement with your followers. Help them solve problems, answer their questions, and address their concerns. Think customer service, not just marketing. Seek to put a face on your organization. Feature customer stories, and provide content your customers care about. Place the focus on your customers' needs rather than your own.

Next, determine your organization's capacity. Who will carry out engagement activities? Do you have dedicated staff, or will this be mixed in with your team's other responsibilities? How much time can you commit? Will you need to outsource some of the responsibilities to an agency? All are important questions that you need to address.

## **6. Develop a basis for measuring impact**

Finally, develop a basis for measuring the impact of your social efforts, which you can do by following this process:

1. Gather your business goals. What are your organization's "SMART" business goals, those that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound?
2. Define your social media mission. Figure out how and where you plan to use social media, and where they fit into the organization.
3. Develop goals specific to social media. Keep in mind that not every business goal will be relevant for social media, so choose those that are.
4. Decide on one or two KPIs for each goal. These will help track your progress toward goal achievement. If, for example, your goal is building brand awareness, an appropriate KPI would be the percentage of share of voice (SOV) for online mentions. If increasing the number of leads and sales is the goal, then count the number of conversions coming from social media as the KPI.
5. Choose the social media channels and tactics you want to employ. This is where you determine "how" to accomplish each goal. The key to choosing channels lies in knowing on what social networks your audience maintains a presence. And the best way to figure that out is by listening, using the monitoring platforms mentioned above. Don't assume anything; let data and intelligence gleaned from social monitoring be your guide.
6. Define metrics for each tactic. Choose metrics that are relevant to the tactics themselves, such as social network likes and shares, blog post comments, video views, or website traffic coming from the outposts.

As I said at the outset, the key to using social media effectively is to start at the top, with your organization's marketing goals and objectives in mind, and then find where social media fits into that milieu. From there, take whatever time is necessary to get to know your audience as deeply as possible, and create and share content that appeals to its members.

Beyond that, find ways to integrate social media into the overall marketing mix, making sure that your

campaigns have a social layer built in. Then, choose the outposts where you will participate, taking into consideration your organizational capacity. Finally, develop a measurement and ROI plan that enables you to track progress, and adjust tactics as necessary to accomplish your goals.

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Paul Chaney is currently editor of Web Marketing Today, the oldest marketing resource of its kind on the Internet. Founded in 1995, the site helps local small businesses learn how to leverage the web to grow their business. It addresses topics such as search engine optimization, social media, email marketing, conversion, online advertising, conversion, design, and systems and platforms. Previously, he was principal of Chaney Marketing Group, a boutique agency that provided outsourced online marketing services for small to medium-sized B2B companies.

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