



SOCIAL MEDIA

STARTER KIT

Introduction

You've put it off for long enough, but it's officially time to jump on the social media bandwagon.

If you're new to social media, the whole process of choosing a platform and deciding what to post can be overwhelming. Not to mention social media networks are constantly updating their layouts and guidelines. But social media doesn't have to be overwhelming anymore.

There are plenty of social media platforms to play on, but which one is right for *your* business? In this social media guide we navigate through various social media networks like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, just to name a few.

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START WITH A CONTENT CALENDAR

If you're short on time and resources, not unusual for most small businesses, creating an editorial calendar is a great way to stay organized and keep social media from becoming a dreadful task. Create a content calendar for the week, month or even the whole year to help streamline the content you plan to share on social media and your blog. Set aside some time on a Friday to think about the next few weeks. Don't forget to be flexible. You don't have to plan and schedule every single post down to the exact minute it will publish. Leave one or two slots open for when something fun or spontaneous comes up.

WHICH PLATFORM IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Too many business owners are afraid of missing something, so they try to be everywhere. They spread themselves so thin they end up doing poorly on all platforms. If this sounds like you, STOP! No one will notice if you aren't on Twitter, but they will notice if you do it badly. If you don't have time for Twitter, or Facebook really doesn't fit your industry, opt out. Give yourself permission to pick one platform and do it well by spending more time making a better impression where your customers are most likely to see you.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE?

The short answer is simple, go where your customers are. The longer answer requires you to dive a little deeper and look at your customer, your brand personality and your marketing objectives. To help you do this, take the marketing quiz on the next page.

Read each question. If your answer to the question is yes, place an "X" in each shaded boxes in that row. When you have answered all of the questions simply total the number of "X's" in each column.

If your answer to a question is yes, place an "X" in each shaded box in that row

Is your primary target audience comprised of consumers					
Is your primary target audience comprised of businesses					
Is your customer an experienced professional or executive					
Is your customer a young professional or new graduate					
Is your customer a parent					
Is your customer an unskilled or entry level worker					
Do you have a variety of images and videos to share					
Is SEO a primary concern					
Are your messages primarily business related					
Does your brand have a playful, fun side					
Do you want to be an industry thought leader					
Do you want to connect with others in your industry					
Do you want to spend less than 1 hour a day on social media					
Do you plan to promote events on social media					
Do you sell products online					
Is "real time" engagement and interaction important					
Do you want to run contests					
Do you want to reach specific demographic groups					
Do you want to reach specific companies or industries					

Total:

A B C D E

Once you have answered all the questions, total the number of "X's" in each column. Each letter matches up to a primary social network. To avoid spreading yourself too thin, focus your efforts on the network with the highest score first.

A = Facebook B = Twitter C = Google+ D = LinkedIn E = Pinterest

Now that you know where to focus, simply select the section of this guide which matches your primary network.

FACEBOOK

The kind of products and services that work well on Facebook tend to be the more "fun" or "lighthearted" B2C and nonprofit organizations. More conservative products and services can still build a community if you are willing to share the more personal side of your business.

POSTING 101

When it comes to sharing content on your company Facebook page, you have the freedom to set your own schedule. Facebook doesn't require a ton of maintenance. You can share photos, videos and content as often as three times a day, or three times a week. It's entirely up to you. Find a schedule that works for you and stick to it. Posting consistently on Facebook is important because the platform's ever changing algorithm makes it more and more difficult for your posts to be seen. This means you need to keep a continuous stream of content on your page.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SHARING CONTENT ON FACEBOOK

Getting likes, having your content shared by others and receiving comments on your posts is a little harder than it used to be. Since organic reach for Facebook posts has decreased, you will have to work harder to get the engagement your posts used to receive. But be warned, Facebook will punish your page if you bribe fans to like your page or posts. As part of their new "Like-Gating" rules, you cannot offer fans anything in return for them liking your page or posts.

Stop worrying about likes and focus on starting conversations. A good rule of thumb to use when deciding what type of content to post on Facebook is the 50/30/20 rule.

Allow 50 percent of your content to be fun and friendly. Don't be afraid to post pictures, graphics and videos. Invite fans to comment on your posts by asking questions. This will help start conversations and increase engagement. It might take some time, but eventually people will respond.

Keep the questions simple. Something people can answer in just a few words without a lot of research. If they have to think long and hard before they respond, they will simply move on to something different.

Around 30 percent of content you share should be useful and informative. This is where your company blog posts come in. Share industry information and tips to educate your audience. Sharing informative posts will also create conversations and give people a reason to share your post.

The final 20 percent of content you should be sharing on your Facebook page should be about your business. Promote your brand! Don't be super sales-y about it. For example, avoid "We just released a new product you can't live without! Buy it now!" with a link to your website. That's a tad aggressive. Instead, give your audience subtle calls to action. For example, "Did you know we currently launched a new product featuring x, y and z? Learn more about this product and the benefits it provides by reading this blog post."

Encourage fans to visit your website for more information. This will drive traffic directly to your website without being pushy.

FACEBOOK CONTENT EXERCISE

Use the worksheet on the next page to plan a week's worth of content. Remember to use the 50/30/20 rule. Mix questions, pictures, industry information and the occasional call to action.

50% Get likes, shares,
and comments

30% Be useful &
informative

20% About your
business

Entertain, invite conversation,
ask questions, images & video

Industry info, hints & tips,
curate content

Calls to action,
not "buy now"

- 1 **50%** Fill in the blank: _____
- 2 **50%** Question: _____
- 3 **50%** Photos: _____
- 4 **30%** Tip, stat, or fact: _____
- 5 **30%** Link to a blog post: _____
- 6 **20%** Sale, event, or product/service info: _____

TWITTER

Twitter is the most time consuming of the social media networks, but if used properly it can do wonders for your business. Successful Twitter accounts function properly when there is one person behind the account, and only one. This will help you create and maintain the proper voice for your business on the social media platform.

Use Twitter to promote your content, gather ideas for new content, reach out to customers and start conversations with professionals to solidify your business as a thought leader.

Twitter is high volume and low value. That means the main focus of Twitter is how often you are tweeting, not how detailed the information you're sharing is. You should be tweeting frequently throughout the day. Send a tweet at least every two hours to keep your account active. One tweet a day isn't going to cut it. Remember, quantity is key. Use tools like Hootsuite to help you schedule tweets in advance so you don't have to manually tweet every couple of hours. Share links to blog posts, white papers and current promotions. Also share links to articles you find interesting or beneficial to your customers. Ask questions and respond to tweets from followers, friends and fans of your company. Don't forget to retweet other Twitter users who tag your company in their tweets.

SHARING CONTENT ON TWITTER

Use Twitter to promote your business, but make sure you're not solely promoting your business. You don't want your Twitter feed to become one long stream of self-promoted content. Ask your followers questions and share links to interesting articles thought leaders in your community are publishing. Links, statistics, facts and tips are the types of content you should be sharing with your followers. Don't forget to share videos, graphics and photos on Twitter, too. While photos will eat into your 140 characters, they do increase engagement on the platform.

The purpose of sharing content on Twitter is to demonstrate your subject matter expertise with a mixture of content you create or content you curate (with links to relevant articles by others). When you curate content be sure to share why you thought the link was worth sharing.

Take time to interact with others. More than any other platform, if you want to get noticed you need to interact by retweeting, liking and responding to content shared by others.

USE HASHTAGS . . . CORRECTLY

Whether you are a social networking novice, or a master in the art of composing the perfect quip in 140 characters or less, you've seen your share of hashtags. Hashtags belong strictly on Twitter, nowhere else.

Create a hashtag by using the '#' symbol and type text after it. That's it! But be warned, there are some rules to properly using hashtags in tweets.

"Trending" hashtags and topics are prominently displayed on Twitter so it's easy to join in the most popular conversations. You can also search for hashtags that are relevant to your business. Research shows tweets containing one or two hashtags more than doubles the chances of engagement. However, you must be cautious not to overdo it. The same research shows that exceeding two hashtags on a Twitter post actually reduces the chance of engagement by 17 percent. Do not abuse hashtags!

TWITTER CONTENT EXERCISE

Yes, a lot of Twitter is "in the moment," but planning some of the content ahead of time will free you to focus on other things throughout the day. Take a few minutes to plan a few conversation-starting posts using the form on the next page.

Tips:

- Tweet at least 5x per day
- Plan 4 tweets, leave 1 open for something that happens during the day

- 1 Planned** Blog post (created or curated): _____

- 2 Planned** Question: _____

- 3 Planned** Photo: _____

- 4 Planned** Tip, stat, or fact: _____

- 5 Open** Something new you discovered or saw today: _____

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is the platform for growing your company's professional network. Twitter and Facebook are great for connecting with your fans and customers to have a laugh or share lighthearted content, but LinkedIn is all business all of the time. If your company is heavily B2B, or you want to solidify your business as a thought leader in your industry, you need to create a business page on LinkedIn. But in reality, every business should be active on LinkedIn.

Here's why:

- LinkedIn has over 300 million members, with 100 million here in the United States. No matter who you are, you probably know people on LinkedIn.
- 40 percent of users now check LinkedIn daily. So what are they doing when they login? If they are smart, they are posting an update, taking a few minutes to check in on the activities in one or two groups they belong to, looking in on a few competitors and business associates and getting on with the rest of their day.
- LinkedIn is very low maintenance. It takes just a few minutes to reach a wide professional audience every single day which is why 46 percent of people spend less than 2 hours a week on LinkedIn.

PAGE VS. PROFILE

Individuals have a LinkedIn profile. This is an online version of your resume. Save the silly selfies for Facebook or Twitter. Your profile picture should look like you are heading to a job interview. Be sure to include keywords and phrases in your summary and job descriptions because all of these elements are searchable.

Your business should have a LinkedIn page. When creating your company page on LinkedIn, be sure to fill out all of the information. Leaving areas blank makes your page look unprofessional. Describe your company culture, products and services. Encourage all of your employees to update their profile so they show up on the company page as well.

Add at least one update a week on your company page to show you are interested and active on this platform.

SHARING CONTENT ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is not the platform for sharing photos from the office holiday party, Internet memes or motivational quotes. Definitely do not share motivational quotes on LinkedIn, keep those on Facebook. Give your LinkedIn audience exactly what they are looking for: product or service updates, job opportunities and behind-the-scenes information about your company. Post links to company blog posts, downloads and important industry information.

BLOGGING PLATFORM

In addition to information gathering, LinkedIn is a terrific place to share your professional expertise through their blogging platform. This feature was originally limited to a small group of influencers, but now it is open to everyone.

Think you don't have time to blog on your website and on LinkedIn? Think again. There is no requirement for you to publish original content, so you can publish posts on your company blog first and then share it on LinkedIn later.

GROUPS

Connect with other professionals in your industry by joining a few groups. People who share content and engage in group discussions get four times as many profile views. Again the point is not to join as many as possible, but to pick a few interesting, active groups and participate in the conversation. Not sure where to start? If you want to get noticed, join a

few groups. Not sure which groups are right for you? Check out the 'Find a Group' feature which will help you find groups that are relevant for you based on the keywords in your profile.

LINKEDIN CONTENT EXERCISE

Your content should help position you as a thought leader in your industry. Do this with a mix of content about you and about your industry. Link to articles in trade journals that will be interesting to your audience. Post at least twice a week from your personal account.

Tips:

- Post at least 2x per week
- Share content that's about you
- Post something useful for your audience

1 **About you** Product updates, behind the scenes or recruiting: _____

2 **Useful info** Blog posts, guides or ebooks, or industry news: _____

GOOGLE+

Every business can benefit from using Google+. However, Google+ isn't like a traditional social media network. The sole purpose of Google+ is to help increase your search ranking in Google. If you are actively creating new content for your blog, simply post a link to your blog post on your Google+ page. That's all you have to do!

SHARING CONTENT ON GOOGLE+

Google loves Google. So when you post links to your content on Google+, Google will then reward you by adding value to your SEO. Google+ is very low maintenance. Any time you publish a new blog post press release, make sure you post a link to it on your Google+ page. Fun fact, you won't get punished for publishing duplicate content on Google+!

Share graphics, photos and videos on your Google+ page. YouTube directly links to your Google+ page, which makes sharing videos that much easier. Take advantage of the large cover photo space on Google+ as a great visual branding opportunity. You can post as little as one time a week, or as many as 10 times a week.

Remember, Google features some elements that are different from other social media platforms. For instance, on Google+, you can take advantage of the ability to strikethrough, italicize and bold. With these formatting options, you can make your posts easier to read.

Google+ has replaced Google Places and customers who are on Google+ can leave reviews on your Google+ page regardless of whether you are active there. Using Google, search results for your business will now show the reviews, additional details and photos on your company's Google+ page.

Tips:

- Post at least 3x per week
- Share content your audience will find useful
- Try sharing multimedia

1 **Useful info** Blog post (created or curated): _____

2 **Useful info** Link to industry news: _____

3 **Multimedia** Photo or video: _____

PINTEREST

If you have products to sell, professional photos to share and you want to build brand awareness, Pinterest is a social media platform you should be playing on.

Your Pinterest presence should look exactly like your business. It should evoke the same message you write within your core values and strive to inspire your employees and customers. The only difference is it's not a bullet point list, but rather a visual representation of your brand's values and goals.

POSTING ON PINTEREST

Pinterest doesn't require a lot of maintenance, but it is a social media network you will have to update daily. Spend five to 10 minutes adding or repinning new pins to your boards. It doesn't take a lot of time, but you do need to be consistent. And remember, if you are uploading your own images to Pinterest, they need to be high quality, professional photographs.

Not all your followers will be interested in everything you share. Make a multitude of boards for specific subtopics within your Pinterest. Catchy board titles attract attention and help visitors grasp a sense of a company's style. Individual boards give users a chance to quickly scroll through to see related pins.

Descriptions on Pinterest often get the short end of the stick or are completely ignored. The pictures tell a visual story which will be interpreted by the viewer, but the descriptions clarify your company's voice and brand.

Use your email newsletter to mention your accounts, link to your Pinterest account in a tweet or status on Facebook. It doesn't have to be obnoxious, but you need to make your followers, who are most likely your customers, aware of where they can find you on the Internet.

Tips:

- Pin at least 5x per day
- Pin content that's about you
- Share useful and interesting content

1 **About you** Products or services: _____

2 **About you** Digital assets (guides or books): _____

3 **Useful/interesting** Curated pins: _____

4 **Useful/interesting** Blog post with tips or how to: _____

5 **Useful/interesting** Inspirational Quote: _____
