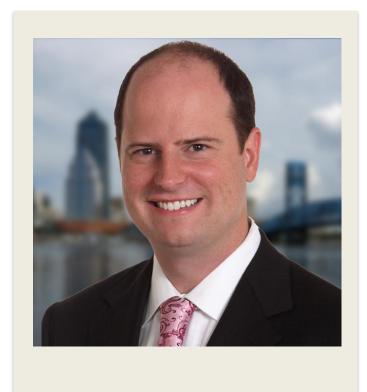


AN IN-DEPTH GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR BUSINESSES

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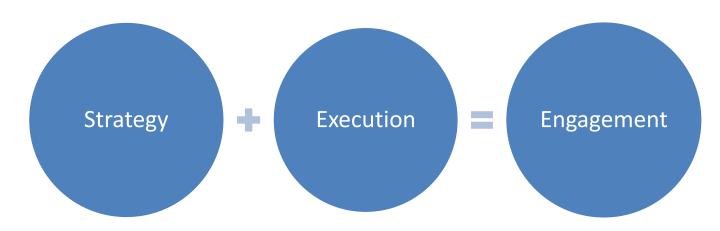
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CHAPTER 1:

Developing a Social Strategy



Social media is a great way to make new connections, build relationships and start conversations with target audiences. The first key to social media success is to decide who those audiences are and what you hope to accomplish by engaging them.

A Social Strategy Starts With "Who"

Who do you want to engage? Is it existing customers or prospective clients? Shareholders and investors? Employees and candidates? Perhaps it's members of the media or even government regulators. Most likely, it's some combination of the above. Knowing who you're trying to engage is the first step toward developing a social media strategy.

"What" Comes Second

What do you want to accomplish with your social media campaign? Do you want to increase brand awareness or encourage referrals?

Some social media channels, like Facebook, lend themselves to sharing your company's story. Others, like Twitter, offer unprecedented opportunities for customer service.

Each social media channel offers its own unique way to reach audiences and spur them to action. Knowing what actions you want your target audiences to take will help you determine your social media strategy.

Where Do You Find Them?



If you want to reach a banker, go to a bank. If you want to reach a fisherman, look for water."

Once you know who you're trying to engage and what you hope to accomplish by engaging them, you need to find out where they are. Is your target audience tuned in to Twitter? Focused on Facebook? Pinned to Pinterest?

The best way to find out is to ask them. Most popular email list clients (like MailChimp and Constant Contact) make it easy to survey people on your mailing list about their favorite social media channels. If you don't yet have an effective email list, websites like SurveyMonkey will allow you to create a survey you can link to from your website.

When to Reach Them

Study statistical data on your target audience to determine the best time to reach them on their favorite social media channels.

For instance, if your goal is to have followers click links posted in your Twitter feed, research shows that the highest click-thru rates occur at noon and 6 p.m. Knowing where your target audience lives will help you refine the timing of your social media campaign. If you're trying to reach the general population of the United States, 48 percent live in the Eastern time zone. Where does your target audience live?

The highest percentage of retweets occurs around 5 p.m.

Source: KISSmetrics – "The Science of Social Timing"

Find the Right Frequency

To further optimize the timing of your social media efforts, tailor the frequency of your posts to match the channel you're using in order to engage your audience.

- ✓ On TWITTER, the highest click-thru rates occur on Wednesdays and on the weekends.
- ✓ On FACEBOOK, users are more likely to share on Saturdays than any other day of the week.
- ✓ On TWITTER, click-thru rates reach their peak when you post one to four times per hour.
- ✓ On FACEBOOK, likes reach their peak when you post once every two days.

Source: KISSmetrics – "The Science of Social Timing"

Make a Plan

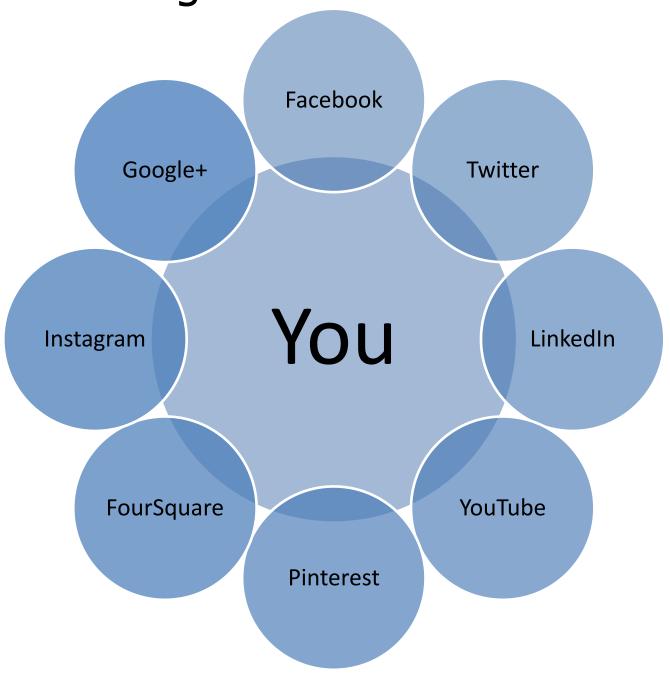
Once you know who your target audience is, where, when and how to reach them and what you want them to do, the next step is to develop a detailed social media plan for executing your strategy – a content calendar that incorporates every element of your social media strategy.

Make a Plan

| Week of: | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|------------------------|--------|--------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Campaign Topic | | • | ific focus o, add it l | s to your so here. | cial medi | a campa | ign for |
| Resources Available | | · | | nd other re | | | ease |
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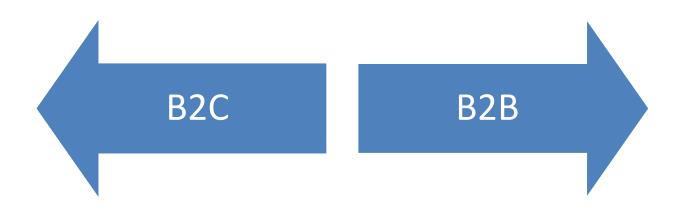
CHAPTER 2:

Choosing Your Channels



Choosing the right channels to reach your target audience requires you to know who they are. It also requires you to know who you are. Is your company's focus primarily business-tobusiness or business-toconsumer? Will your company's social media be handled primarily by yourself or a staff member with other assigned duties; or do you have the resources to create a social media team? Or, will you outsource your social media management?





If you do business primarily with consumers, the range of social media channels available reach to vour target audience is extensive. target demographics Your help you will determine which channels will be most effective. Are most of your customers women? Do you sell luxury items, durable goods, consumables professional services? How old is your target audience?

Targeting a B2B audience is a bit more tricky. If you're small-business targeting owners, the range of social media channels available is almost as large as for B2C. But if your target audience middle managers and purchasing agents at 500 Fortune companies, your options are more limited. Targeting the Csuites at those companies reduces your options further.

You Don't Have to Do it All



Instead of trying to adopt as many social media channels as possible, choose only the ones that offer the best opportunity for engaging your target audience – and only as many as you can effectively manage.

If you're trying to manage social media by yourself, that may mean choosing only one social media channel.

One well-managed Facebook page or Twitter feed will be more effective than five poorly-managed channels.

CHAPTER 3:

Best Practices: Facebook

Broadest reach (40x as many followers as Twitter)

Small time investment to maintain (optimal post frequency is once every two days.*)

Allows photos, videos and location marketing

Offers advertising, including paid promotion of your posts

Large time investment to establish (Attracting "likes" to your Facebook pages requires time and commitment.)

Potential for negative feedback (if a customer is unhappy, he/she may post on your Facebook page for all to see, depending on your settings.

*Source: KISSmetrics – "The Science of Social Timing"

With its massive reach (approximately 1 billion users) Facebook is the 800 pound gorilla of social media channels. If your company operates primarily in the B2C marketplace, a Facebook page is almost as important as a well-designed website to your online success. In the B2B marketplace, its usefulness diminishes as the size of your target audience's companies increase the larger the company and the more important your target audience's role is in that company, the less likely you are to reach them via Facebook.



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More than 70 percent of your audience will see your Facebook updates first on a mobile device.

- ✓ Use short, personal copy to quickly engage your audience (no more than 90 characters).
- ✓ Include a link in your first 90 characters. Lead viewers to your website or blog for more information.
- ✓ Include bright, bold photographs (of people, not products) cropped to a square at least 300 pixels wide or include a short video for easy one-click access on a mobile device.
- ✓ Post updates once every two days. More often and you may risk losing your audience. Less often and your page may begin to look tired and dated.
- ✓ Boost your update as a sponsored story to increase the number of fans who will see your post in the first 24 – 48 hours.
- ✓ Be the first person to comment on your own update. Ask a question designed to increase engagement.

The Facebook audience is approximate ly 60% female and 40% male. The average user is 40 years old.

Source: Royal Pingdom – "Report: Social Network demographics in 2012"

Tips:

Place a Facebook icon with a link to your Facebook page on the homepage of your website (placing it in the header or footer of your site is even better) and give your visitors the opportunity to "like" and share each web page and every post to your company blog.



Designate a member of your staff to monitor your Facebook page and respond to posts. Do not turn your page over to an intern or someone whose only qualification is they "grew up in the social era." Choose a trusted professional who can represent your company in a professional manner.

If a customer posts a complaint about a product or service on your Facebook page, address the complaint directly – either by rectifying the issue on Facebook or by directing the customer to your support email. Do not delete negative user comments unless they contain profanity. Even if you must delete a negative comment, it's important that you publicly respond to the comment.

Optimize Your Facebook Page:

Choose a cover photo that represents your brand. Take advantage of available applications to allow visitors to subscribe to your newsletter and to deliver ebooks and white papers.



CHAPTER 4:

Twitter

Real-time engagement allows both you and your target audience to provide instant feedback

Popular with members of the professional news media

Easy to create links to online content – and helps with search engine optimization

Opportunity for thought leadership by answering others' questions

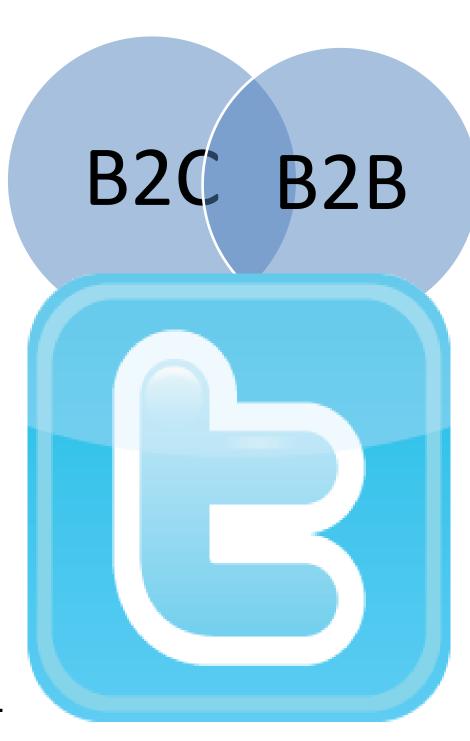
Posts limited to 140 characters

Potential for negative tags and posts

High spam content, including fake followers

Early on, Twitter experienced record growth (+1,000 percent year-to-year), and it continues to experience robust growth. Unlike Facebook, Twitter's use is growing among younger consumers. This year, the average user is 37 years old,* two years younger than the average user two and a half years ago.

Twitter is the one toptier social media channel that is equally effective in both B2B and B2C marketplaces.



*Source: Royal Pingdom — "Report: Social Network demographics in 2012"

Speaking The Language Of Twitter:

✓ HASHTAG: Any word or phrase preceded by the # sign (#twitter4business). Hashtags help organize conversations. Clicking on a hashtag leads to search results for that phrase.

✓ MENTION: You can bring a Tweet to someone's attention by including his or her @username in the Tweet. All of your followers will see the message, and if they click on the @username will be directed to the profile of the person mentioned.

✓ REPLY: Click on the reply button to respond to a Tweet. Like a mention, replies are visible to all of your followers, but only to followers of the user you're replying to that also follow you.

✓DM: A DM (direct message) is a private message that you can only send to users you follow who also follow you.

✓ RETWEET: Click the retweet button to share someone else's Tweet with all of your followers.

✓ LINK SHORTENING: Twitter will automatically shorten a link of any length to 20 characters to more easily fit it into the 140 character limit.

Social Media Marketing Guide

Twitter says that more than 60 percent of its 140 million active users access the service using mobile devices.

- Quality content is essential for increasing and engaging your Twitter following.
- ✓ For optimal results, tweet four times per hour.
- ✓ Alternate actively engaging followers with less direct quality content like links to online stories likely to interest your followers. Limit direct pitches to no more than one out of every 10 tweets.
- Monitor hashtags, mentions and direct messages related to your business.
- ✓ Immediately respond to complaints and negative comments with concern and an offer to help. Remember that your audience is not just the person with the complaint, but potentially everyone – including customers, potential customers and the news media.
- ✓ Follow people and companies who are members of your target audience and look for opportunities to engage and interact with them.

Like Facebook, Twitter's audience is approximate ly 60% female and 40% male. **Tweet** activity has increased to 400 million per day.

Sources: Royal Pingdom – "Report: Social Network demographics in 2012" and Twitter4Brands Twitter now allows users to customize both the background and header image of their profiles. Choose images that support your brand.



CHAPTER 5: LinkedIn

Targeted toward a professional audience

In addition to company pages, LinkedIn offers you the ability to create and join networking groups focused on specific industries and interests.

Users are searchable by specific industries, job titles and skill sets, allowing you to find and communicate with very specific target audiences.

Updates can be targeted to all your connections or followers or to members of groups.

Connections are limited to people you know or who know you. Inviting strangers to connect to you can lead to complaints and restrictions on your ability to connect.

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While Twitter and
Facebook have been
hogging the spotlight,
LinkedIn has been
quietly building its user
base. More than 100
million people now use
LinkedIn to connect with
other professionals.

LinkedIn's users tend to be older on average than those on the other leading social media sites. The average LinkedIn user is 44 years old. Seventy-nine percent of users are 35 or older. *

LinkedIn is a giant in the B2B marketplace, but B2C companies that provide goods and services targeted toward working professionals and companies looking to attract top-tier job seekers should consider building a presence there as well.



*Source: Royal Pingdom – "Report: © 2012 Axia Public Rel Social Network demographics in 2012"

CHAPTER 6: Google+

Because it is a Google property, Google+ may carry more weight in Google's search results than other social media channels.

Structured similar to Facebook, so duplicating efforts on both sites is easy and not time-consuming.

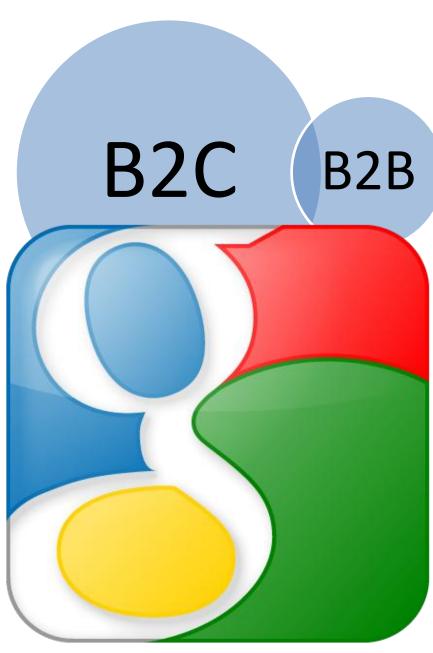
Users can share your content directly from search results on Google.

Facebook has approximately 10 times as many active users as Google+, and most Google+ users are also active on Facebook.

Unfortunately, there was no data on Google+ in the Google-owned DoubleClick Ad Planner tool used for the demographics data* on the previous social media sites.

But given Google+'s similarities to Facebook, it's likely its users are similar to Facebook's and probably slightly younger (as is common for new-adopters of all social media sites).

If you have the resources to focus on Google+, you should, if only because Google search traffic is so important to any company's online success.



*Data from Royal Pingdom — "Report: Social Network demographics in 2012"

CHAPTER 7:

Pinterest

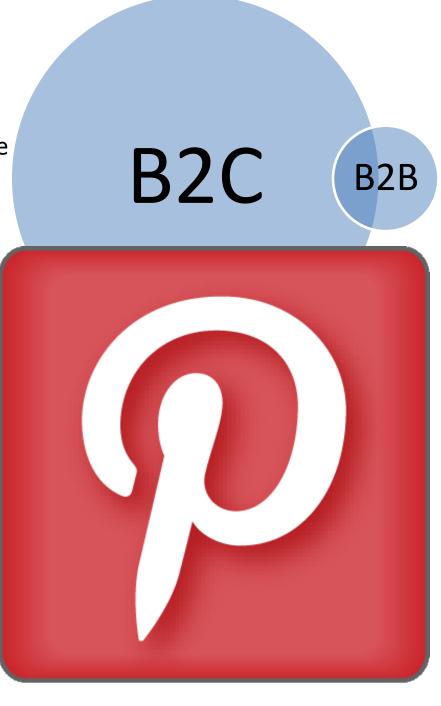
Highest percentage of female users

Updating is simple thanks to a "Pin It" toolbar addon

Search engine friendly and helps drive search traffic to site where photos were originally posted Updates limited to photos and a very small amount of text

Social Media Marketing Guide

Pinterest's users are primarily women. In fact, it is the most female dominated major social media site 79 percent of users are women. Sixtythree percent* of users are 35 or older. Businesses that have found the greatest success on Pinterest are B2C companies selling products that lend themselves to list-building wedding supplies and services, home decorating and travel, for example. Users can "pin" photos of products they want to add to their wish lists to their own boards and then refer to those lists as they progress through the buying stages.



*Source: Royal Pingdom – "Report: Social Network demographics in

CHAPTER 8: YouTube

Broad creative control: videos can range from testimonials to how-to instructions to value statements to full-blown commercial productions.

Search engine optimization: YouTube is owned by Google and YouTube videos are easier to rank on page one of search engine results than any other type of content.

Content is transportable and mobilefriendly. Videos can be embedded in websites, blogs and even in other social media channels. Video productions can seem daunting and may be expensive.

Low quality productions are more acceptable in social media yet may reflect poorly on your brand.

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More than 800 million users visit YouTube each month and watch more than 4 billion hours of video. In 2011, YouTube had more than 1 trillion views. Globally, more than 20 percent of views come from mobile users and traffic from mobile devices tripled last year.

Five hundred years of video are watched on Facebook every day and more than 700 YouTube videos are shared on Twitter each minute. Clicks on the "like" and "dislike" buttons on YouTube have doubled since the start of 2011 – 100 million people like, share or comment on YouTube every week.



Source: YouTube

How to Use YouTube

- √THOUGHT LEADERSHIP: Record and upload presentations given by company leaders to employees, clients, shareholders and others.
- ✓ DEMONSTRATIONS: Produce videos showing your products or services in action. Record a how-to video to help customers use your products.
- ✓ TESTIMONIALS: Record and upload video testimonials from satisfied customers.
- ✓TOURS: Record a video tour of your offices and facilities and introduce your staff to potential clients and existing customers.
- ✓ MARKETING: Upload professionally produced commercial videos about your company, its products or services.
- **✓ COLLABORATION:** Record videos of works-in-progress to share with clients for their review and approval.
- ✓ CROWD SOURCE: Record videos demonstrating proposed new products, services or marketing efforts and ask the public to review and vote for or against their adoption.

Tips:

- 1. Enhance your videos with special features like YouTube's annotations.
- 2. Promote your videos using YouTube Promoted Videos and Google's AdWords.
- 3. Include your company name, website, phone number and email address in every video.
- 4. Add call-to-action overlays to your videos.
- Add your YouTube channel URL to your other social media profiles and marketing content.
- 6. Post links to videos on Facebook, Twitter,
 LinkedIn and other social media channels.
- 7. Embed videos on your website.
- 8. Track your videos' performance using Google Analytics.





CHAPTER 9:

Turn Your Employees Into an Army of Brand Ambassadors

Many of your most valued employees are already using social media, so why not encourage them to share and promote the values of your company on these sites? At the same time, you must help ensure they're protecting the privacy and integrity of your company. Company policy should apply when your employees are engaged in social media for work purposes and at work, but also during their own personal time.



What Should be Prohibited?

Employees should be prohibited from engaging in any discussion that pertains to discrimination, sexual harassment and company or client secrets. Employees should avoid participating in any discussion that belittles or ridicules the value of the company's product or service, or any discussion that involves name-calling. Remind employees that any abuse of company policies, both online and offline, may lead to termination.



What Can Be Positively Discussed Online By Employees?

The company should encourage employees to participate in social media. It's a great medium to promote your service, product, brand and workplace. Companies can use social media to talk to potential customers, while customers can use it to share their experiences. It's also a useful venue for customers to share experiences. It's a great place to find the people who like your company. Consequently, employees must respect the people they're talking to. They must be knowledgeable and courteous when discussing the company. They must also be transparent by using their real names and stating the name of the company.



What If All My Employees Don't Understand Social Media?

If you don't already have a "social media director," we suggest that you ask a qualified professional to teach your staff about social media. A class on social media can be a great morale booster for the team.

Should the Social Media Policy be Pertinent to Every Social Media Channel?

Yes, and it's a good idea to specify what those channels include and to frequently update the list of approved sites. Currently, the most popular mass-appeal channels include blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter Google+ and Pinterest. Your employees and customers are likely using many popular social media applications, which encourage the sharing of conversations, texts, images, slides and videos.

What are the initial steps to take when developing a policy?

The first step: Don't call it a policy. Call them "guidelines." The next step is to invite your staff members who are engaged in social media to help you formulate the guidelines. Get their advice and suggestions. Ask them what they want and tell them what you need. Employees adhere better to guidelines they've helped develop.

Will the company be monitoring employees' posts and profiles?

Since there is no privacy in the social media arena, the company should plan to "listen in" on all conversations about the company through the various social media monitoring programs that are available. This is a good business practice that enables the company to participate in the conversation with customers and potential customers.

How long should the company's social media guidelines be?

There is no rule. Some of the best guidelines are the shortest. The most important factor is that everyone understands them and that the guidelines encourage participation and discourage any negative actions that would bring harm to the company or its employees.

Should companies allow participation in social media for personal use at work?

You'll have to set your own rules on this one. Some business categories restrict or limit "personal social media." Some businesses, such as restaurants, may not allow videos taken of the kitchen. The best way to tackle this issue is to meet with your staff and have them help you set the guidelines.

If my staff is participating in social media at work, on behalf of my company, what should they be "talking" about?

It's important to make sure your staff is engaging in interesting and valuable discussions. Without sounding like a commercial for the company, they may post about product benefits in "everyday situations," special offers and interesting facts; share tips and tricks, as well as respond to questions and invite suggestions.

Some of my staff members are "social media gurus." How can I tap into their expertise?

Simply talk to them. The generation utilizing social media has an open perspective on global communications. Brainstorm to explore ways to grow your company using social media management. Get customer feedback and build and maintain a community of fans.

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...give your employees clear guidance about what kind of online behavior is encouraged and what kind of online behavior is prohibited."

By creating social media guidelines, you'll take an important step in navigating this changing media landscape. You'll give your employees clear guidance about what kind of online behavior is encouraged and what kind of online behavior is prohibited. By empowering them with this information, your employees can become online ambassadors for your brand and company.



Download our free template to help create your company's social media management guidelines.

http://axia.net/inbound/wp-content/c33rt/Social-Media-Employee-Guidelines-TemplateC73vv6g.pdf



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