

Social Media Planning Guide



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Like it or not, social networks are here to stay. Your potential customers are talking online, recommending services and following their favorite brands. The rules of communicating with customers are changing as more and more individuals and businesses participate in social media, ask their network friends for referrals and search for local businesses online instead of browsing Yellow pages. The statistics are hard to ignore:

- There are 500 million Facebook users, meaning one in every 14 people on the planet has now signed up to the online social-networking service.
- Twitter boasts about 65 million tweets per day, and one of every five tweets mention a product or a brand.
- There are 550,000 groups on LinkedIn across 150 industries.
- 45% of small businesses participate in one or more social networks.

According to the April 2010 ROI research commissioned by Performics to study Twitter behavior around brands,

- 33% of Twitter users share opinions about companies or products at least once per week.
- 32% make recommendations
- 30% seek guidance and direction
- 53% state that they would recommend products/brands as a result of online connections.

According to another recent study conducted by Chadwick Martin Bailey along with iModerate Research Technologies,

- Individuals who follow brands on Facebook and Twitter are 51% and 67% respectively more likely to buy a product since becoming a fan or a follower.
- Facebook and Twitter users are 60% and 79% more likely to recommend a brand as a result of the engagement online.

Social media for business requires proper planning. With the right strategy, social media can help you maximize your marketing efforts, build long-term, trusting relationships with your clients and prospects, boost your visibility and credibility, while you share your expertise and valuable experience with the growing audience. You can develop good friendships and business alliances and have fun in the process.

Without the right strategy, social networks can waste time and resources. They can also be annoying, distracting, boring and irrelevant. They can even damage your reputation and cost you business.

Before you venture into social marketing, it's important to develop your social media strategy. Here are some questions and key points to help you get started and see

how your business can leverage these new channels of communication and customer engagement:

1. Social media purpose: What objectives do you want to accomplish through social media?

Do you want to:

- extend your brand and grow your customer base?
- research your target market needs and trends?
- monitor customer feedback and your online reputation?
- increase traffic to your company website?
- build stronger relationships with existing customers to boost loyalty and referrals?
- improve customer service and buying experience?

Your objectives will drive the choice of social networks, your online content and tools to measure your social media impact.

2. Your Social Network: Who should you be talking to?

- What is your target market?
- Which social networks do they belong to?
- How do you find your target market online? (Check out Twellow <http://www.twellow.com>, Twibes <http://www.twibes.com>, Facebook and LinkedIn groups).
- Which experts, colleagues and possible referral partners in your field would you like to follow with an eye towards learning, collaborating, forming strategic alliances and joint ventures?
- Who is your competition and what are they doing in social media?
- Which of your local contacts are also in social networks? How can you nurture your existing relationships through social media?

3. Market research: What would your target market want from your social media content?

One of the big mistakes companies make in social media is constant pitching of their products or services. Social networks are more like coffee shops where people gather to have conversations than highways with rows of billboards alongside.

Here's a list of tactics and tools that can help you take a peek into the heads of your prospects and customers to better understand their needs:

- Listen to the conversations that are already happening in your area of business. Join in, comment, and share when appropriate.
- Use Twitter Search (<http://search.twitter.com>), FriendFeed (<http://friendfeed.com>), Google Alerts to monitor conversations around specific topics.
- Pay attention to the words people use to describe their needs when they complain, ask for help or advice.
- Ask people questions. Invite your friends and followers to participate in the polls and surveys you create.
- Follow and learn what your competition is doing in social media.

4. Social media content: How do you plan to educate, entertain, engage, and influence your audience?

David Meerman Scott said, "Think like a publisher, not a marketer."

- What messages do you want to communicate to your target market and why?
- What content types and formats will be used?
- How will you integrate your web content with other information channels you may be using, such as email marketing, press releases, ads, social media, etc.
- How will you organize your content?
- How will your audience find your content?
- What is your schedule for producing, updating and maintaining your content?
- What's your editorial process?
- How do you measure the usefulness of your content to your business and your customers?

5. Your social media capacity: What resources does your business have to implement your social media strategy?

- Who will set up your social media profiles?
- Who will design your pages?
- Who will create the content? Will it be original, aggregated, user-generated, or a combination?
- Who will manage your social media activity and maintain your social media profiles?
- How much time do you plan to spend on setting up and managing social media, generating content, participating in conversations, responding to feedback?
- What systems will you create to ensure that your social media campaigns run smoothly?
- What's your social media budget?

6. Social media tools and resources: What social media tools do you want to use?

There are plenty of social media tools and resource out there, but it doesn't mean you need to use as many as you can. Your choice of tools depends on your business objectives, target market needs, content strategy, your social media budget and available resources.

Here are some examples of social media tools you may want to consider to create your own blend of technology and social interaction:

Social networking:

Facebook <http://www.facebook.com>

LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com>

MySpace <http://www.myspace.com>

Ning <http://www.ning.com>

Blogging:

Blogger <https://www.blogger.com>
WordPress <http://wordpress.org>
TypePad <http://www.typepad.com>
LiveJournal <http://www.livejournal.com>

Microblogging:

Twitter <http://twitter.com>
Foursquare <http://foursquare.com>
Posterous <http://posterous.com>
Tumblr <http://www.tumblr.com>

Podcasts:

Audacity (open source software for recording and editing sounds):
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>
Audio Acrobat: <http://www.audioacrobat.com>
OurMedia: <http://www.ourmedia.org>
HipCast: <http://www.hipcast.com>
PodBean: <http://www.podbean.com>
LibSyn: <http://www.libsyn.com>

Wikis:

Wetpaint <http://www.wetpaint.com>
PBworks <http://pbworks.com>
Wikia <http://www.wikia.com/Wikia>

Events:

Meetup <http://www.meetup.com>
Eventbrite <http://www.eventbrite.com>

Social bookmarking:

Delicious <http://delicious.com>
Google Reader <http://www.google.com/reader>
StumbleUpon <http://www.stumbleupon.com>
Digg <http://digg.com>
Reddit <http://www.reddit.com>

Photo sharing:

Flickr <http://www.flickr.com>
Photobucket <http://photobucket.com>
Picasa <http://picasa.google.com>

Video sharing:

YouTube <http://www.youtube.com>
Viddler <http://www.viddler.com>
Vimeo <http://vimeo.com>

Livecasting:

Livestream <http://www.livestream.com>
Skype <http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/home>
Ustream <http://www.ustream.tv>

Music and audio sharing:

ccMixer <http://ccmixter.org>

MySpace Music <http://www.myspace.com/music>
ShareTheMusic <http://www.sharethemusic.com>
The Hype Machine <http://hypem.com>

Presentation sharing:

scribd <http://www.scribd.com>
slideshare <http://www.slideshare.net>

Product reviews:

epinions <http://www.epinions.com>
MouthShut <http://www.mouthshut.com>
Bazaarvoice <http://www.bazaarvoice.com>
Yelp <http://www.yelp.com>

Community Q&A:

Askville <http://askville.amazon.com/Index.do>
WikiAnswers <http://wiki.answers.com>
Yahoo! Answers <http://answers.yahoo.com>

Virtual worlds:

Active Worlds <http://www.activeworlds.com>
Second Life <http://secondlife.com>

7. Social Media Metrics: How do you measure your social media impact?

In addition to your social media objectives and an implementation plan, you need to know if your social media efforts help you achieve your business goals and be able to adjust your strategy as needed.

What to measure and how to measure is a big topic in social media. The list of metrics across several categories below can help you start thinking about your appropriate measurements:

Outreach:

- Number of posts and updates
- Number of new and returning visitors to your blogs and websites
- Number of friends, followers, members, RSS subscribers

Influence:

- Repeat visitors
- Followers of followers – If your follower retweets your update, how many people can see it?
- Inbound links to your content from other websites and blogs
- Directory listings
- Referrals from social networks
- Number of republished links
- Retweets
- Technorati authority for blogs

Market research:

- Analysis of audience feedback for neutral, positive and negative attitudes and emotions
- Analysis of keywords that people use to tag your content on bookmarking sites

- Analysis of keywords people use to search for your content, products or services
- Customer reviews
- Surveys
- Complaints

Engagement:

- Number of bookmarked links or items saved to wishlists
- Content ratings, likes, favorites
- Time spent onsite
- Number of comments
- Number of questions
- Number of downloads
- Number of views
- Usage of widgets
- Click-through rate (CTR)
- Number of email subscriptions
- Number of RSS subscriptions
- New member registrations
- Number of purchases
- Number of recommendations

Social media measurement tools and resources:

Google Analytics <http://www.google.com/analytics>

Retweet Rank <http://www.retweetrank.com>

Twitalyzer <http://twitalyzer.com/>

PostRank <http://www.postrank.com>

Attensity <http://www.attensity.com>

Statsit <http://www.statsit.com>

Sysomos <http://www.sysomos.com>

Omniture <http://www.omniture.com/en>

Webtrends <http://www.webtrends.com>

ABOUT ANASTASIA PRYANIKOVA:



Anastasia Pryanikova, M.A., J.D. is a lawyer, linguist, coach, and the founder of E-Studio, LLC, a coaching and training company that fuses social neuroscience insights and social media capabilities to help business leaders develop communication and content strategies to captivate, engage & influence their prospects and clients.

From a linguist exploring the language of advertising, to a corporate lawyer working internationally, to a U.S. Small Business Administration legal adviser counseling small business leaders, Anastasia has been in the business of “changing people’s minds” to facilitate high-stake conversations and decisions across borders, cultures, and industries.

Now, she combines her passion for communication and technology to empower teams and individuals to develop compelling social media and client education content to maximize their marketing efforts, build long-term, trusting relationships with their clients and prospects, and boost influence and visibility.

You can learn more about Anastasia’s work, read her blog “The Brain Alchemist,” and subscribe to her brain-captivating newsletter at <http://brainalchemist.com>.



WHAT’S NEXT?

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If you want to use social media as a powerful and cost-effective way to extend your brand, attract clients, improve customer experience and loyalty, connect with your tribe of raving fans, you need to develop a strategy for that. You need to know how to communicate your brand effectively and to produce compelling online content on a consistent basis, measure its impact and make adjustments that support your business objectives.

1. If you are intrigued by what you have read and want to learn more, I invite you to visit my website <http://brainalchemist.com> and [subscribe](#) to my free blog “The Brain Alchemist.”
2. If you have people in your organization responsible for developing online content or managing social media, feel free to share this report with them or anybody else for that matter, provided you share it free of charge. You can also refer people to my website where they can download their own copy.

3. I've shared a lot of information in this special report. But it's one thing to know WHAT to do as a strategy and another thing entirely to know HOW to do it as a consistent process. That's where I come in. If you'd like to explore the possibility of us working together, please **e-mail ana@brainalchemist.com** or call **(203) 354-9808** to schedule an exploratory session.

To Your Brilliance,

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