

## **SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

### **Eight Steps to a Social Media Plan for Your Small Business**

If you own a small business, having enough inhouse marketing resources is always a struggle. However, an important part of getting your company in front of people—and often the most cost-effective way—is through social media.

Handling social media efforts is a full-time job, but even if you can't afford to bring on a full-time (or even part-time) employee, you can still find success by doing it yourself. The key is concentraing your efforts on one or two social media channels. Here are some key elements of a social media plan to help you get started.

#### **1. Determine your goals**

What are you trying to accomplish with social media?

Do you want to increase brand awareness?

Do you want to drive more people to your website or blog?

Are you selling a product or service?

Establishing the right goals will help you select the best social platforms to use to generate leads.

#### **2. Define your audience**

You should have a good idea of your target audience. Once you know who you're targeting, you will want to research what social platforms that particular community is spending time on.

### **3. Choose your social platforms**

To start, it might be best to create two to three social profiles. One of the worse things you can do is create profiles on several platforms, only to neglect them and rarely post content.

When trying to decide which platforms you should be on, think back to the audience you're trying to attract. Pinterest and Instagram are visual platforms, so if your business creates great images then you should consider having a presence on these platforms. For consultants, twitter is a wise choice for building your credibility and interacting with potential clients or other people in the industry. B2B companies often find success on LinkedIn and use it to generate sales leads. Having a Facebook presence is often a safe bet since it's the largest social network where you can reach the most people.

Once you've created social accounts, make sure your profiles are completed so people know what your company is and what kind of content they can expect from you.

### **4. Create a content plan**

Prior to writing your initial social posts, it helps to create a content plan. Decide how often you want to post on each platform, the key topics you want to post about, and how much of that content will be original vs. re-shared from other sources.

### **5. Create a content calendar—and post**

Use a simple Excel spreadsheet and create a content calendar to help you plan out content and post frequency. The key elements of a content calendar are the following: social platform (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), date, post copy, link, and image/asset description.

## **6. Visuals are important**

Finding good images to use with your posts can be hard. But, images are often the most important aspect of creating good social content. There are tools to make it easy, especially for non-graphic designers. If you don't have Photoshop and need to make quick edits to your images, Pixlr is a great tool.

## **7. Share and Engage**

If you want to be successful in social media then you need to do more than just publish your content and hope that people will see it. To build a following and gain authority, it's important to engage with the community you're trying to attract. Here are a few ways to help you engage:

### **a) Find relevant sites and blogs and follow their social profiles**

Like, comment, and share content from those sites' and blogs' social profiles. People (and companies) appreciate it when others share their content. It also lets people know that you're on social media, engaging and sharing content they may find relevant.

b) Create Twitter lists to stay on top of what important people in your industry are talking about.

c) Use Tagboard to search for conversations around relevant hashtags.

d) Look into software like Hootsuite or TweetDeck to monitor activity on your social channels, including people mentioning you or leaving comments.

## **8. Measure and optimize**

Most social platforms have analytics that you can access for free (i.e. Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics). Make sure you take advantage of the data available to you so you can see what content has the most engagement (likes, comments, shares, retweets, etc.) and URL clicks. Understanding what your followers are responding to will help you create better content.