THE SMART MARKETER’S GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

10 tips you need to build and engage your community
Engaging in social media isn’t an option anymore. So if you’re going to do it, you want to do it well.

In this eBook, we’ve assembled some of our best practices in social media management and community engagement so you can put your best foot forward and make connections online - something that adds incredible value to both your audiences and your company.
1. Know your audience

Your audience is the lifeblood of your business. If you don’t know who they are, you’ll have a tough time reaching and connecting with them - and likely be spending more to market in all the wrong places.

The truth is: Younger audiences tend use social media differently than Gen Xers do, though older adults are using social media in ever-increasing numbers.

The channels and social networks you focus your efforts on should reflect the preferences of your customers and community, but don’t guess at it.

Leverage your analytics tools to figure out who’s talking about you or your competition online, where they’re having those conversations, and tailor your outreach and engagement to meet them where they are.

Traditional tools like customer surveys still have value, too. If you’re not sure where your community wants to interact with you, ask them! It’s easy to get distracted by the next shiny object or up-and-coming social network, but staples like your website or Facebook page can be fundamental to online success in the long run.

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2. Don’t shy away from negative posts

(but don’t feed the trolls, either)

Criticism or complaints online can be painful, but in reality, they’re a gift. Consider critical posts as opportunities to identify weak links in your operations, communications, or customer service processes. Even if you can’t solve the problem immediately, simply acknowledging the issue, apologizing, and communicating what you’re doing to investigate or address the problem can go a long way toward mending fences with an upset customer. Often, the act of communicating and acknowledging the misstep can turn a critic into a fan, simply because many companies don’t do it well (or at all). Also: Don’t be afraid to take issues offline. Twitter can be a great channel to surface a problem, but it’s not always a great place to try and solve it. It’s okay to acknowledge the issue in the channel on which it was brought to your attention, but then move the conversation to private messages or even phone or email to resolve a concern, especially if sensitive information needs to be shared in order to identify a customer or their account.

If, even after you’ve reached out to help, someone insists on being belligerent, confrontational, or argumentative, it’s best to provide a phone number or email where the person can reach you offline, and then let the conversation end. There’s rarely anything to be gained by picking a fight with a customer or community member online, and it can put the brand reputation at risk.

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3. Showcase your brand’s personality

With so many brands and companies vying for the attention of the online masses, it’s the distinctive voices that stand out.

No one really wants to talk to a logo or a set of corporate brand guidelines, but they might enjoy a conversation with ‘Mark the brand manager’ or ‘Susie the community engagement specialist.’

Allowing your teams to add their voice to the brand can give a sense of authenticity and genuine personality that engages and attracts interaction from your community.

You can still balance your brand and messages while giving them life through the voices and distinct characters within your organization. Showcase the human side of your business and you’ll find that the quality of your engagements online will rise.

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4. Use an editorial calendar

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Few tools are as vital to today’s content marketer as the editorial calendar.

The Content Marketing Institute has a host of great resources for learning how to use an editorial calendar to drive your content marketing efforts. If you have multiple contributors and several integrated marketing channels, it’s especially important to align and coordinate your efforts, ensure that your content programs are complimentary to one another, and that you can manage production timelines and contributor roles in a systematic way.

Once you have your calendar laid out, consider investing in a powerful social media management platform that can help you organize, administer, and publish content against that calendar via the entire team. Tools with workflow and governance capabilities are especially beneficial if you’re managing content calendars across teams, offices, or geographies.
In the early days of Twitter, Comcast -- a company who has sometimes struggled with their customer service reputation -- made great headway in defining the emerging world of social customer care through their @ComcastCares handle.

Their signature response to Twitter complaints was always “How can we help?”

Those four magic words are a fantastic way to engage with community members who are asking questions, looking for information, sharing frustrations, or even offering compliments. They demonstrate your willingness to assist, allow your customers to tell you what they need or want and how they’d prefer you work with them.
6. Shine a spotlight on your community

The very best marketers put stories at the heart of their work. Stories of customers, employees, advocates, fans, friends, partners.

Social media is a natural extension of storytelling, and a fantastic vehicle for shining a spotlight on the people that make your business tick.

Whether it’s customer testimonial videos or photos of your latest employee outing, spending time and effort in your social media interactions to celebrate the people behind your brand, or talk about trendsetters and tastemakers in your community matters. Remember: the strongest content doesn’t have to be about your brand and products.

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The social web can be a noisy place. Individuals, brands, and organizations of all kinds are vying for the attention of the same audiences and the same communities.

You’ve probably heard the phrase “content is king,” but only good content can truly reign when it comes to the fast-moving, competitive web.

What is “good content”? Content that gets downloaded, shared, and used in purchase decisions typically fits at least one of these criteria:

It **enlightens** the audience, or gives them information or details they need in order to understand your brand or products better.

It’s **entertaining**, giving readers or viewers something they enjoy or that captivates their attention for a while.

It’s **educational**, or teaches people something they didn’t know before. It doesn’t have to be specifically about your products or services, but maybe a topic related to what you offer, like a home improvement store offering “how to” videos for DIYers.

It **evokes** an emotion, and helps the community see themselves in the story you’re telling, and the problem you’re trying to solve.

The same goes for your short form posts on social channels: seek to provide value to the communities that you want to be part of, and ensure that you’re contributing as a member of that same community.

“**What is good content?**”
Helping people keep pace with the changes on the web and the new tools and platforms can only make your job easier in the long run.

If you have a digitally-savvy company, you’re going to have people engaged on social media that aren’t doing so in any kind of official capacity. It’s just the reality of a connected workforce.

As a social media manager, you want to be sure that everyone in your organization is putting their best foot forward online. Even if someone isn’t managing a brand-owned property, their association with your company is still real, and can have an impact on your reputation as a company [yes, even if they put a “these tweets are my own” disclaimer on their bio].

Take the time to draft some common-sense social media guidelines for your team members that can help them understand:

- Basic dos and don’ts of online etiquette
- What to do and not do in response to negative comments
- Who in the company can post to official channels
- What to do if they have questions or concerns about a post

Don’t forget to hold training and Q&A sessions for people in your company, too. Simply publishing the guidelines sometimes isn’t enough. Keep in mind: helping people keep pace with the changes on the web and the new tools and platforms can only make your job easier in the long run.
Sure, measurement helps us make smarter, better decisions, but no one gets a prize for creating a report.

So rather than trying to build huge, complicated dashboards full of metrics and pages and pages of graphs, find 3-5 key metrics that can realistically help you determine the success of your social media efforts.

Those metrics will be different depending on your goals - sales, awareness, advocacy and engagement - but they don’t have to be complicated to help you see whether you’re moving the needle in the right direction.

Looking for more awareness? Downloads, views, shares and a growing audience size are some good starter indicators. Want to drive sales? Leads, conversions, inquiries, or correlating purchase data and campaign efforts are where you want to look. Trying to improve advocacy? Look for referrals, repeat purchases, lifetime customer values, and content creators.

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The best social media programs - and the measurement of them - isn’t worth much if you don’t use your learnings to go back to the start of the cycle and improve it.

Social media is especially great for things like community feedback loops. Are you capturing input, recommendations, and requests and getting them to your product teams for consideration?

How are you using your social customer care data to improve your processes and make them more customer friendly? Can your content performance tell you the challenges your customers have and help you better solve them through your offerings?

For extra bonus points, take that information and tell your community what you’ve learned from them. There’s nothing more gratifying for a customer than to know their feedback is being used to make things better, easier, or more valuable for them.
Above all, don’t let social media become an island in your company that’s relegated to marketing campaigns and clever videos.

Social media is only one mechanism in our overall communications efforts, but it’s a really powerful one due to its customer-driven, real-time nature. Unlike the marketing vehicles we’ve used for generations, social media flips our marketing models on their heads and gives us unprecedented, direct access to the customers we’re trying to reach.

Meet your customers where they are, and harness the power of this new era of expectations, one where technology and communications collide to give us better insights, clearer actions, and more agile businesses than ever before.

Bonus Tip: Don’t leave social on an island
About Sysomos

Sysomos is a world leader in social intelligence, offering a suite of powerful products that help companies measure and articulate social media success, harness the power of community and influencers, and find the conversations and topics that matter most to their business.

With nearly 2,000 customers and 10 offices worldwide, Sysomos gives businesses the power to turn actionable insights into bankable intelligence, and equip today’s social customer with the information, products, and services they need, in real time.

Learn more at sysomos.com

Our Portfolio:

**MAP [Research & Analytics]:** Tap into billions of conversations spanning 189 countries and 186 languages with up to two years of historical data

**Heartbeat [Listen and Monitor]:** Capture the precise moment when content goes viral or when a crisis breaks with minute-by-minute analysis of spikes, dips in chatter, and buzz

**Expion [Content & Relationship Management]:** Manage content discovery, planning, publishing, moderation, and analytics all from a single, easy-to-navigate platform

**Influence [Key Influencer Engagement]:** Identify and engage with the top experts and influencers, and see who’s driving the most important conversations about your brand

**Optimize [Targeted Ad Campaigns]:** Increase the reach and relevancy of paid Twitter campaigns by zeroing in on and engaging with the right audience at the right time

**Scout [Facebook Topic Data]:** Gain access to and analyze Facebook data like never before

**Gaze [Brand Monitoring]:** Find images of your brand across social channels and bring them together in one place