

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDE

How to create and implement a plan to deliver
business results from social media

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Social media marketing strategy

Seven Steps to Success Guide

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Introduction

What is social media marketing?

The opportunities of social media marketing

Social media marketing has ‘virtually’ exploded over the last few years with brands truly starting to realise its potential to genuinely reach and engage consumers. Given it’s one of the biggest opportunities we’ve seen in years, we’re very excited, but, if there’s no strategy and/or it’s unmanaged it won’t be as effective as it could be and can even be damaging. So, this guide is aimed at helping you develop a strategic approach towards your social media marketing.

Strategy recommendation 1 Understanding how social media can transform communications with your customers and how they interact with your brand is key to getting the maximum benefits

Sure, you can just use social media to post status updates on your preferred social networks, but using social media to interact and share with your audience will give the greatest benefits.

The excitement about social media comes from the great examples of social media delivering commercial results, but we’ve also witnessed some major PR disasters through mismanagement. Here are some example of when it helped...

- ✔ Develop a start-up into a worldwide leader (Asos.com).
- ✔ An established brand target a new audience (Penguin Spinebreakers).
- ✔ A small outdoor activity company grow awareness through sharing customers’ experiences. (Presliventure)
- ✔ Re-position a brand with an image problem and connect with its customers (Dell).
- ✔ Innovation for a small online clothing retailer innovate its products and services (Howies).
- ✔ Achieve 70 percent repeat purchases amongst a super-loyal audience (Zappos).
- ✔ Re-invigorate an established brand to appeal to new audiences (Old Spice).
- ✔ Support double digit revenue growth for a luxury brand (Burberry).

But we have constant reminders of how social media needs to be managed carefully. It...

- ✘ Sullied the image of a large computer programming corporation through viral videos that are not of relevance to the brand (Cisco’s spoof Old Spice adverts).
- ✘ Damaged the perception of an established car brand through ignoring the ‘tone of voice’ of a brand through lack of employee training (Chrysler Autos choice language on Twitter)
- ✘ Helped to offend a brand’s most influential resource – bloggers! (Ryanair responds to a blogger by calling him an ‘idiot’ and ‘liar’).

Regardless of whether these brands achieved success or failure, they have one thing in common: a social media strategy. For the winners, a planned and correctly resourced approach towards how social media could develop their brands was evident. For the losers, this was absent.

The key thing to realise about social media, therefore, is that social media is not a tactic or a

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channel – it can and should affect all aspects of your brand and communications. That's why we've said 'helped' in all the examples above as social media was integrated and aligned with branding.

What will this guide cover?

This guide covers all the issues you need to think about to create a strategy to deliver business results from social media marketing. Here are our recommended steps to create a strategy:

- ✓ Step 1. How to start thinking about business goals and review how it's working now.
- ✓ Step 2. Creating an outline strategy and a vision to transform your organisation.
- ✓ Step 3. Improving social media listening and reputation management.
- ✓ Step 4. Creating an engagement strategy.
- ✓ Step 5. Creating a communications strategy.
- ✓ Step 6. Implementing social media marketing through looking at common approaches you need to take across the social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter.
- ✓ Step 7. Harnessing insights through social media marketing.

What exactly is social media marketing?

Social media means different things to different people, so let's start at the beginning... social media, that's Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter right?

Well, yes, but creating your own customer communities for service and brand development and tapping into many independent blogs, forums and publishers are important too.

Remember that success in social media is not so much about the different social networks, your tools, but your strategy for how to use them. To apply them effectively for communications, we have to recognise that socialising online is all about participation in discussions and sharing of ideas and content.

What is it? Social media

Social media are digital media which encourage **audience participation, interaction, sharing and user-generated content (UGC)**.

We think the CIPR Social Media panel¹ explains the scope of social media well:

'Social media is the term commonly given to Internet and mobile-based channels and tools that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement.'

This definition shows that the most important feature of these social media channels is that we can encourage our prospects and customers to interact with our brand but also others within our community.

Social media can be the best type of marketing where positive recommendation is concerned as users are influenced by their peers within a community or network.

Social media marketing, therefore, requires us to focus on exploiting the reach and influence these tools and communities can have to help achieve marketing objectives – both protecting

1 [CIPR definition of social media.](#)

and expanding a brand.

What is it? Social media marketing

An integrated approach towards marketing through social media tools to monitor and facilitate interaction, participation and sharing within online communities. Commercial value can be realised by encouraging and managing both positive and negative engagement with a company and its brands.

What are the main social platforms?

In practice, social media are amongst the most popular sites on the Internet² along with search engines. To help you develop a strategy for social media, we've identified these key types of social media platforms, each of which need managing in our social media marketing radar.

We created our Social media platform radar, shown on the next page, so it can be used to discuss with colleagues or agencies which sites warrant or deserve most attention in the different categories. Sites or services which are agreed to be more important, which warrant more resource should be positioned towards the centre.

We have also developed detailed guides to managing each of the main social networks that you can access via the our [Social media marketing hub page](#):

- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ Google+
- ✓ LinkedIn
- ✓ Pinterest
- ✓ Twitter

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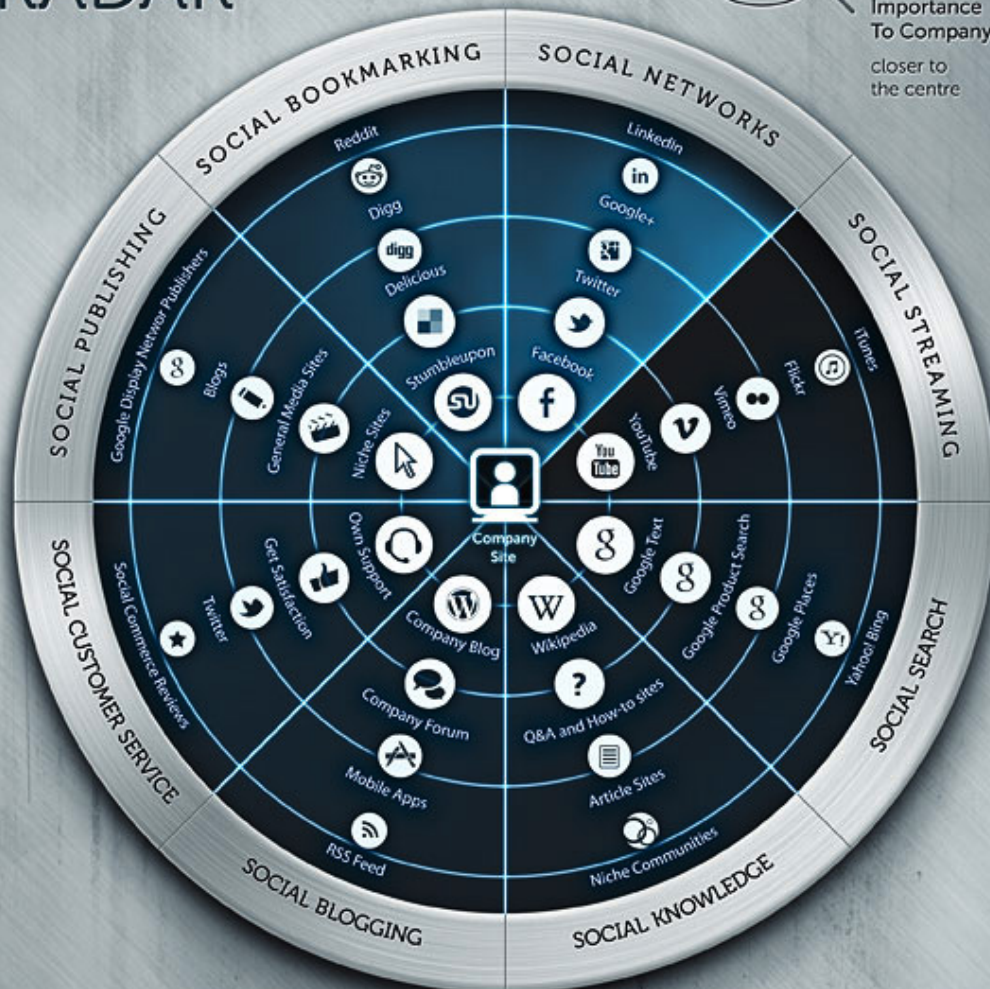
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2 [DoubleClick AdPlanner](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING RADAR



With the growth of niche social media outposts, networks, blogs, platforms and 'vertical' or specialist communities, there's a potential for a more considered and targeted approach to marketing your brand in the social space. Our radar is designed to aid in that thinking, and help you to brief internal and external teams on those decisions. Let us know your thoughts @smartinsights or www.smartinsights.com.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

FIRST10

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Think about how well you're using each of these social media marketing platforms on the Radar now; try to identify some gaps. Start by rating your capability for these types of platforms against their importance to you scored out of ten as shown in the table. Which are your priorities which you will place closer to the centre of the radar for your markets?

Capability	Importance	Type of social networking
		1. Social networks – the core social platforms in most countries where people interact through social networks are Facebook for consumer audiences, LinkedIn for business audiences, Google Plus and Twitter for both.
		2. Social publishing and news – nearly all newspapers and magazines, whether broad or niche, now have an online presence with the option to participate through comments on articles, blogs or communities.
		3. Social commenting in blogs – a company blog can form the hub of your social media strategy and you can look at tapping into others' blogs whether company or personal or through blog outreach.
		4. Social niche communities - these are communities and forums independent of the main networks, although these do support sub-groups. You can create your own community this way.
		5. Social customer service - sites like GetSatisfaction as well as companies' own customer support forums are increasingly important for responding to customer complaints.
		6. Social knowledge – these are reference social networks like Yahoo! Answers, Quora and similar plus Wikipedia. They show how any business can engage their audience by solving their problems and subtly showing how products have helped others.
		7. Social bookmarking – the bookmarking sites like Delicious (www.delicious.com) which are relatively unimportant in the UK except if you are engaging technical audiences.
		8. Social streaming - rich and streaming media sites including photos (Pinterest), video and podcasting.
		9. Social search - search engines are becoming more social with the ability to tag, comment on results and most recently, vote for them through Google +1.
		10. Social commerce - we've left this one until last, because it's mainly relevant for the retail sector. It involves reviews and ratings on products and sharing of coupons on deals.

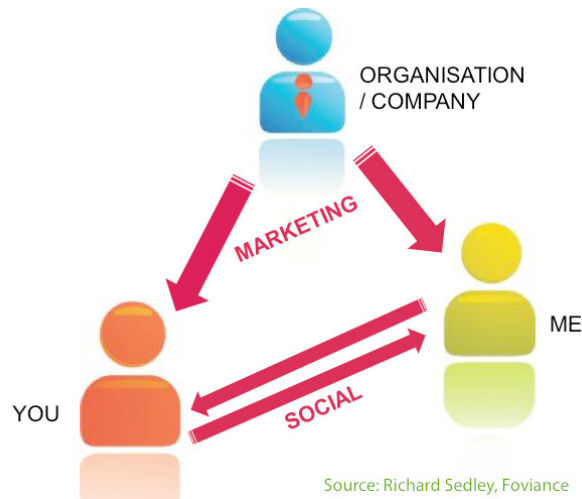


We haven't identified mobile platforms or apps separately since all of these options will be available through Smartphones. However, proximity services like Foursquare are specialist networks that should be considered and we've shown them in the social network section.

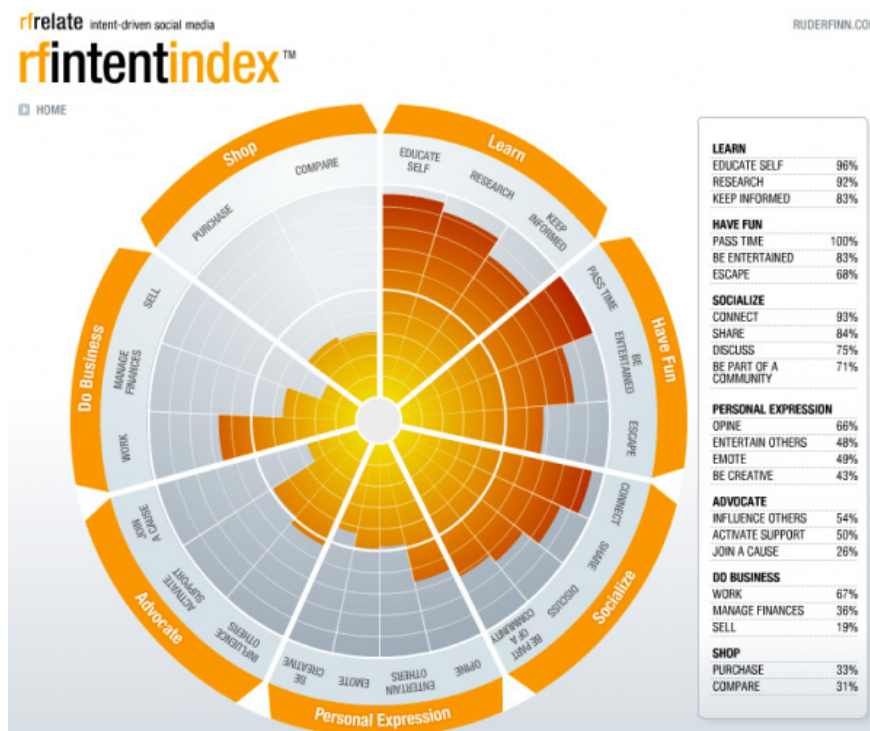
Why is social media marketing important?

Social media marketing – the challenge and the opportunity

The challenge of social media is simple: when we socialise we're hanging out, spending time with our friends, family or colleagues, and probably don't want to be interrupted by ads from brands, as this graphic suggests:



But it's not as bad as it seems. Individuals do also socialise with brands and hang out with others who like these brands. In fact it gets better; the main reasons we go online aren't for commercial activities like to shop and to do business. Rather, we go online to spend time learning, having fun or socialising as the next Intent Index graphic³ shows:



Let's take an example now of how you can engage your audience through their interests as part of an integrated campaign. Princess Cruises used a classic 'blog to win' or 'share to win' campaign⁴ asking readers about their favourite travel destination.

This campaign engaged the audience through their interest in travel destinations and used

³ [Ruder Finn Intent Index](#)

⁴ [Smart Insights: Permission marketing example.](#)

Facebook as the heart of this, but encouraged participation through seeding using other digital marketing channels like blogs and email.

Contests and competitions can be the perfect mechanism to not only capture the interest of the user but also provide an incentive to engage with a brand.

facebook Search

Princess Cruises Countdown to Valentine's Day: The celebration of Valentine's Day is here, and it's all about love. Be sure to put a Valentine in the mail for your sweetheart but all of your loved ones. Did you know the U.S. Greeting Card Association estimates that ap valentines are sent each year in the U.S.? on Sunday

Wall Info **Contest** Photos Princess Blog Bridge Cams >>

The Travel Bucket List Contest

Someone's dream will come true. It could be yours.

Enter now. Click the Contest tab

Add to my page's favourites
Subscribe via SMS

Information

Location: Santa Clarita, CA
Founded: 1965
About: Welcome to the official Facebook fan page for Princess Cruises!

146,960 people like this

Magdalen Kevin Lesa

The Travel Bucket List Contest

What's on your travel bucket list?
Enter to win a Princess Cruises dream vacation.

Submit your story

Details Submit View entries Invite friends Official rules

Your travel story could send you on a dream cruise.

Have you had a memorable travel experience that you think everyone should do at least once in a lifetime? Submit it in our contest and you could win the grand prize: an unbelievable Princess Cruises vacation for you and one very lucky travel companion, including roundtrip airfare! If you win, you'll get to choose from one of eight unforgettable destinations: Europe, Asia, Tahiti, Australia/New Zealand, the Holy Land, Panama Canal, Alaska or South America. Which would you pick?

It's easy to enter!

Starting on January 17th, submit either an essay with photos or a video that best captures your most memorable travel experience. You'll have up until February 7th to enter the contest. All eligible submissions will be posted on our "View entries" page for everyone to see. Voting begins on February 11th and runs until February 25th. That's your chance to encourage friends, family,

Time left to enter contest
0 days: 9 hours: 55 mins.

Share

Another example of engaging through social media, is Ford's '*Fiesta Movement*' campaign, which involved selecting socially vibrant individuals and giving them a Ford Fiesta before the US launch of the new model. Participants were then encouraged to share their driving experiences over six months via their blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube channels.

In this example, Ford assessed their capabilities and importance of platform according to their target audience and used these influential community members to build a campaign around their strengths.

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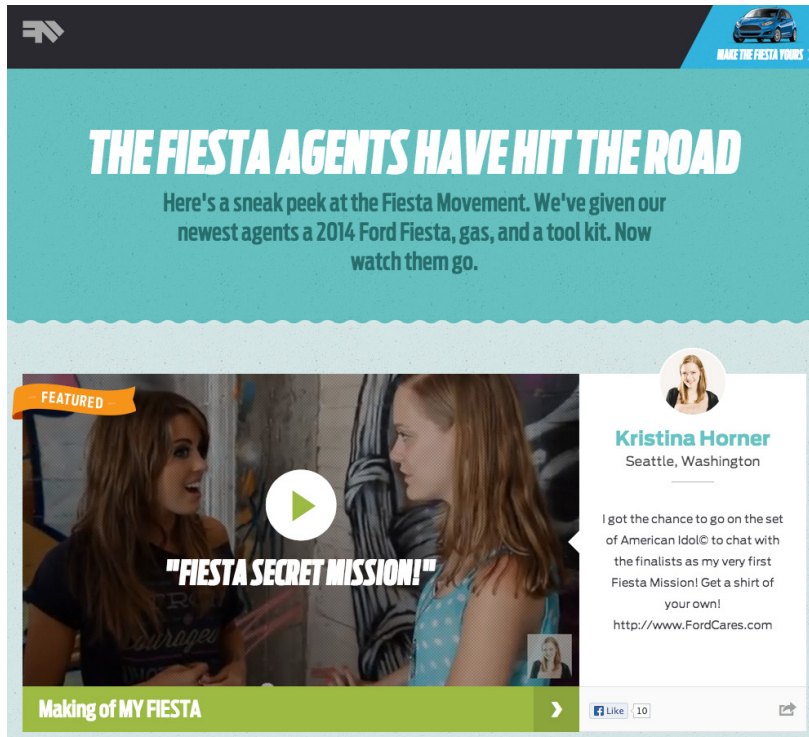
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Developing a structure for your social media strategy

To help you develop a structured plan for using social media, the steps in this guide are based around PR Smith's [SOSTAC®](#) planning system. Steps 1 and 2 focus on Situation and objective setting, Step 3 on strategy development with the remaining steps on Tactics, Action and Control.

It's also useful to consider **POST**, a similar structure for businesses to apply to help them develop a social media strategy first summarised by Forrester in 2007:⁵

- ✅ **People.** Understanding the adoption of social media by an audience is an essential starting point. The Forrester Technographics Ladder we'll come to later is helpful. Of course, reviewing how competitors and intermediaries like publishers and comparison sites are using social media marketing is important too as part of situation analysis.
- ✅ **Objectives.** Setting goals for different options to engage customers across the customer lifecycle from customer acquisition to conversion to retention. Josh Bernoff of Forrester recommends '*decide on your objective before you decide on a technology. Then figure out how you will measure it*'.
- ✅ **Strategy.** How to achieve your goals. Bernoff suggests that because social media are a disruptive approach, you should imagine how social media will support change. He says: 'Imagine you succeed. How will things be different afterwards? Imagine the endpoint and you'll know where to begin.'
- ✅ **Technology.** Finally, decide on the best social media platforms to achieve your goals; we'll review these in a moment.

5 [Forrester POST method for developing a social strategy.](#)

Step 1

Benchmark current performance and set business goals for your social media marketing

Benchmark your current social media marketing performance

□ Q. Have we reviewed the current contribution of social media?

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are no longer new. Likewise, the other social communications platforms we have introduced in the Social Radar are no longer new. Most companies already have some form of presence and customers will be discussing your brand and related interests.

Needless to say, you should start your social media strategy by asking 'what are we delivering now?' How is it contributing to different commercial goals?

Strategy recommendation 2 Review current commercial contribution from social media

Start your strategy by assessing the current situation of what social media delivers towards commercial goals. This can be both externally and internally within your organisation.

It's worth noting that you can't separate this review from also assessing the potential opportunities for social media marketing so you'll actually be reviewing both what you have achieved against what you believe you can achieve for your brand.

Strategy recommendation 3 Start with broad goals, then drill down to objectives

Once you have defined your broad goals you should then do more analysis to set specific SMART goals of what you want to achieve through social media.

At this point it's unlikely that you'll be able to establish specific objectives for your goals. Instead, start with broad business goals with more in-depth analysis as shown in Step 3 to set more specific goals.

Set business goals for social media

□ Q. Have we defined our social media goals?

It's all too easy to go straight to getting your business up and running on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter without thinking of what you want to achieve. Don't be tempted to rush straight into setting your business up on social networks until you have set or reviewed your goals, or you'll find it difficult to measure any success that has been created for your brand.

We recommend using the 5S goals developed by PR Smith in his book *Emarketing Excellence* to assess how you see social media marketing contributing towards your business and the ability to sell, speak, serve or sizzle.

To help set goals, you can also use the table of different social network types from the introduction to score the relevance and use made of different types of social platforms out of 10.

Social media capability review template

Capability level	Management	Sell	Speak	Serve	Sizzle
1 Experimentation	Goals: No specific goals Measurement: Limited Resource: None specific Buy-in: Limited	Uses existing offers	No content hub or editorial calendar Broadcast messaging similar to other channels No network advertising	Limited service support - broadcast approach to messaging	Replicates existing brand Limited reputation monitor
2 Initial management	Goals: Volume only Measurement: Tool-specific Resource: Defined responsibility Buy-in: Recognition	Incentives to encourage engagement Specific channel offers	Basic content hub and editorial calendar Developing dialogue Social sharing encouraged Test advertising	Ad-hoc - specific requests answered	Reputation management tools reviewed Communicating social channel value
3 Integrated	Goals: Optimisation goals Measurement: Dashboards Resource: Defined roles Buy-in: Sponsorship	Cross-channel integration of offers Social-selling (if relevant) e.g. Facebook commerce	Defined content hub and content strategy Influencer outreach Integration of community Social recommendations (transactional) Continuous advertising	Specific support resource. Surveys of performance	Social governance policy in place Developing new forms of brand value
4 Optimising	Goals: Optimisation goals Measurement: Command centre? Resource: Resource for optimisation Buy-in: Committed to optimisation	Offline channel optimisation Social merchandising Social loyalty programmes (if relevant)	Social media optimisation Content offer and frequency optimisation Advertising optimisation	Proactive outreach to customers needing support Continuous research of needs and want	Reputation proactive - outreach Creating new brand experience
5 Integrated and optimised	Goals: Impacting business goals Measurement: Integrated Resource: Dynamic Buy-in: Core capability	New platforms evaluated and implemented rapidly. Example: mobile AB and multivariate testing	Atomisation and Syndication	Crowdsourced new product ideas obtained	Agile response to new channels

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Strategy recommendation 4 Consider business opportunity and contributions from social media marketing using the 5Ss

Set your focus for social media marketing – do you see it primarily as a customer service channel? Does it increase conversion to a lead or sale? Does it promote loyalty and/or sales from existing customers (sizzle)? Or does it provide a mechanism to speak about and raise awareness of your brand?

Social media can deliver all these, but first you must decide which are most important and adjust resources accordingly.

Best Practice Tip 1 Start thinking how you will use social media marketing to reach your goals

As you write your goals, add 'by' or 'through' to help think how you will achieve it. For example, a retailer with offline stores will write: 'We will achieve incremental sales through social media by offering value deals to existing customers through these channels and attracting new customers through value deals shared by existing customers.'

Set Sell goals

☐ Q. Have we set goals for online and offline sales?

Write down how your social media channels will influence sales and purchase intent by generating leads and sales that are activated both online and offline.

Sell goals are best defined through the Smart Insights RACE framework so that they cover all customer contact points through the customer lifecycle:

- ☒ **Reach** – Use social media to reach new prospects through amplification such as shared mentions in social media streams and advertising within social media.
- ☒ **Act** – Use social content or website(s) and social outposts to encourage interaction leading to increased leads.
- ☒ **Convert** – Increase conversion to sale through moving customers from interaction with our brand to purchase.
- ☒ **Engage** – Encourage our existing customers to act as advocates for our business through sharing and recommendations.

Set Speak goals

☐ Q. Have we set goals for communication?

Write down your goals including these five key areas:

- ✓ 1. Encouraging ongoing engagement (this should come before company messages so that the 'sell-inform-entertain' balance is right).
- ✓ 2. Communicating brand perception and key brand messages.
- ✓ 3. Communicating updates about new products and offers.
- ✓ 4. Encouraging dialogue to find out more about products.
- ✓ 5. Monitoring and managing reputation.

Set Serve goals

- ☐ Q. *Have we set goals for customer service?*

Write down how social media will be used to deliver customer service goals.

- ✓ Providing information to resolve customer service issues.
- ✓ Identifying and resolving discussed customer issues.
- ✓ Encouraging web self-service including collaborative self-service, i.e. queries answered by other community members.

Set Save goals

- ☐ Q. *Have we set goals for cost-savings?*

Cost-savings are a less relevant part of the 5Ss since managing social media has incremental costs from which investment will need to be found. Consider how much budget and reallocation from where here.

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Set Sizzle goals

- ☐ Q. Have we set goals for brand building?

These are closely related to the speak goals.

Write down how your social media marketing will aim to add value to customers through social media.

Review capabilities against goals

- ☐ Q. Have we reviewed our current capabilities against the 5S model?

Now you have thought through the potential benefits of social media for your business, you should review what it's delivering now AND how well the organisation can support it.

The next table is a *social media capability review template*⁶ to help you think through how to do this.

⁶ [Download Smart Insights social media workbook - contains blank version of this table.](#)

If you prefer a simpler way of reviewing the 5S goals, the next table provides this.

Best Practice Tip 2 Prioritise goals

We've seen there are a broad range of goals we can achieve through social media, but they're not all equally important. Prioritise the goals that matter most and then build your strategies and assign resources accordingly.

Table for prioritising your social media marketing goals

	Goal	5S category	Rank or score
1	Improve leads through increased reach	Sell	
2	Improve sales through increased reach	Sell	
3	Improve sales through conversion increase	Sell	
4	Improve sales through customer communications	Sell	
5	Engage customers in dialogue	Speak	
6	Communicate product and offer information	Speak	
7	Gain customer feedback from dialogue	Speak	
8	Encourage customer advocacy	Speak	
9	Collaborate with influencers and partners (E-PR)	Speak	
10	Encourage multichannel actions	Speak	
11	Encourage web self-service	Service	
12	Identify and resolve problems	Serve	
13	Reduce costs	Save	
14	Change brand perception	Sizzle	
15	Add value to customer through improved brand experience	Sizzle	
16	Manage reputation	Sizzle	

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Set SMART objectives for social media marketing

❑ Q. Have we defined SMART objectives for social media?

Before we start setting out the specific objectives, let's think what the objectives need to look like. There is a danger with social media that the objectives can simply be to grow 'Likes' or followers, but the objectives don't link to hitting business goals of leads, sales or awareness and therefore it can be difficult to quantify the commercial return on investment.

You should make sure your social media marketing objectives are:

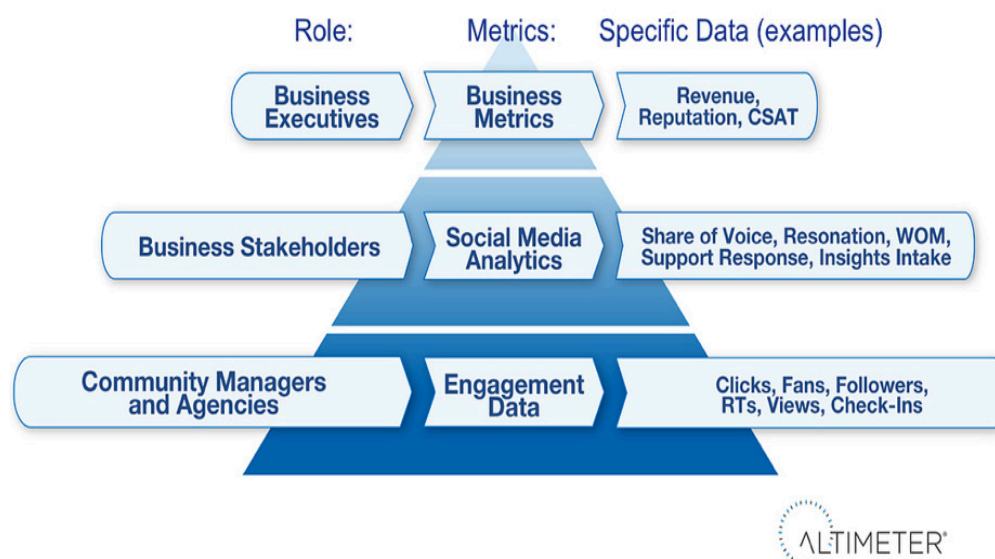
- ✅ 1. Aligned to meeting business objectives.
- ✅ 2. SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-related.
- ✅ 3. Related to goals that can be assigned to individuals.
- ✅ 4. Structured in a framework so that there are groups of objectives for managing activities.
- ✅ 5. Assigned to individuals.

Strategy recommendation 5 Define a measurement framework for social media marketing

A measurement framework enables you to separate business level commercial objectives from tactical and operational objectives and assign them to individuals.

Creating your measurement framework is an essential step as it can then be turned into a practical dashboard to monitor and review the contribution of social media.

For setting objectives we think the Altimeter social media key performance indicator (KPI) pyramid shows the types of objectives set and understood by different levels of management within an organisation using the classic approach of business or strategic measures by a senior manager at the top of the pyramid with operational measures at the base.



Source: Jeremiah Owyang, Altimeter Group⁷

⁷ [Altimeter: The Social media ROI pyramid.](#)

From this diagram you can see that there are three levels of KPIs that you should include in this step: executive, stakeholder and operational.

- ✓ 1. **Business-level KPIs** include hard metrics such as return on investment (ROI) and revenue contribution, whereas softer measures include brand reputation and customer satisfaction (CSAT) developed through interaction.
- ✓ 2. **Stakeholder-level metrics** relate to business benefits, e.g. word of mouth recommendation or customer insight.
- ✓ 3. **Operational-level KPIs** include the scale of interaction such as size of community and level of participation to create and share content.

To put in place a framework you also need to define:

- ✓ Cost of social media marketing activity – relatively easy to define.
- ✓ Outcomes achieved through social media which can occur on your site or offline.
- ✓ Value of outcomes online or offline, i.e. leads or sales influenced by social media.

Work through the roles, metrics and examples from the Altimeter pyramid to ensure that you have defined metrics at levels of the organisation.

Collect insights for setting realistic objectives for social media marketing

- Q. *Have we collected insights for objective setting and reporting?*

Now that you have worked out the metrics you want to track at each level of the organisation, you need insight to set SMART objectives and report on social media marketing using the right systems. In practice, we use traditional web analytics tools and the social listening tools we describe in Step 3, but we also need to think about how we measure the offline influence of social media marketing.

Measuring lead and sales outcomes influenced by social media in Analytics

Before we explain how you can do this, we have to stress that there are many technological barriers to measuring the influence of social media because of the complex way customers behave as they select products. This means you will almost certainly under-estimate the influence of social media but we think it's still worthwhile working hard to increase accuracy where possible if you want to prove the value of social media to colleagues.

To prepare for any questions about these barriers, here are some examples.

- ✗ 1. **The last click wins model.** By default, Google Analytics and other analytics tools measure outcomes based on the last visit to the site, but typically there will be repeated visits before sale. To understand the impact a media has on a sale as an influence within the conversion path we need to attribute these earlier visits where possible using approaches like the assisted conversion report.
- ✗ 2. **Direct visits and branded searches are still common ways to navigate to a site.** If a user is ready to purchase a product and has already decided on the brand or seller, they will often just type their name or URL direct into the search bar. Using assisted conversion reports here can help to understand a truer reflection of the media that played a part in the sale earlier up the funnel.
- ✗ 3. **Attribution is based on cookies. Customers delete and block cookies.** Attribution tracking, however, typically uses cookies to track a visit and therefore if a user deletes their cookies their multiple touchpoints can't be measured.
- ✗ 4. **Multiple device usage.** It's common for people to use multiple devices today so if

a customer becomes aware of a brand or site through social media on one device, but later visits a site using another device it's difficult to relate the two together as a true conversion path.

While these don't really help you to resolve the barrier, they can help you to argue why the levels of leads and sales from social media marketing are lower than you might expect.

Measuring social media outcomes in Google Analytics

Reviewing social media outcomes in Google Analytics is getting easier thanks to recent updates to the tool. Brands are now able to see network referrals, landing pages, conversions and visitor flow – tracked in the same way as other channels.

Our tip – Use the insight gained from your analytics tools to help assess your capabilities and importance.

Basic Channel Grouping		Assisted Conversions ↓
1.	Organic Search	138
2.	Direct	96
3.	Referral	43
4.	Social Network	23
5.	(Other)	11
6.	Paid Advertising	8
7.	Feed	6
8.	Email	2

Measuring offline outcomes

Relating offline outcomes back to social media activity is even more difficult unless you use a specific code for social media offers.

Here's an example of where you can get to at a campaign level, provided by a presentation by Mitchell and Butler who own the Sizzling Pub company. This approach uses voucher redemption to establish value offline.

Sizzling Pubs Case Study



2 Steaks and 2 Drinks for £10.99 – online only offer

- Available exclusively on Facebook in first week (available for 4 weeks in total)
- Then expanded to email subscribers and seeded to sharing websites
- Investment £7k - creative, Facebook tab, voucher, banner and agencies

Activity Results

- Voucher downloads - 45,144
- % Vouchers redeemed - 25.4%
- Investment per Seeded voucher – 8p
- Investment per Email voucher – 8p
- Investment per Facebook voucher – 36p

Return on Investment

- Sales less VAT - £107,039
- Investment per redemption - 61p
- ROI (gross profit – investment)/investment – 549%

Success Indicators

- New Email subscribers 5,498 at an investment of 9p
- New Facebook fans 5,365 at an investment of 55p

Measuring customer engagement for social media marketing

Q. Are our customers using and engaging on social media platforms?

To set SMART objectives around engagement, you must first understand what proportion of active social media participants and type of audience there is for your type of market. Certain sectors are more relevant to social media participation and sharing, for example fashion compared to financial services, but rules are there to be broken. Financial services comparison site CompareTheMarket.com created engagement through its Meerkat character backed up through investment in TV advertising, and energy company npower uses social media as a key part of its recruitment strategy driving traffic to its career pages.

Best Practice Tip 3 Identify the proportion of active social media participants within your audience and markets

Find the proportion of your audience that are involved in creating user-generated content through commenting and sharing.

Forrester provide two of the key tools to help understand how active your audiences are in using social media.

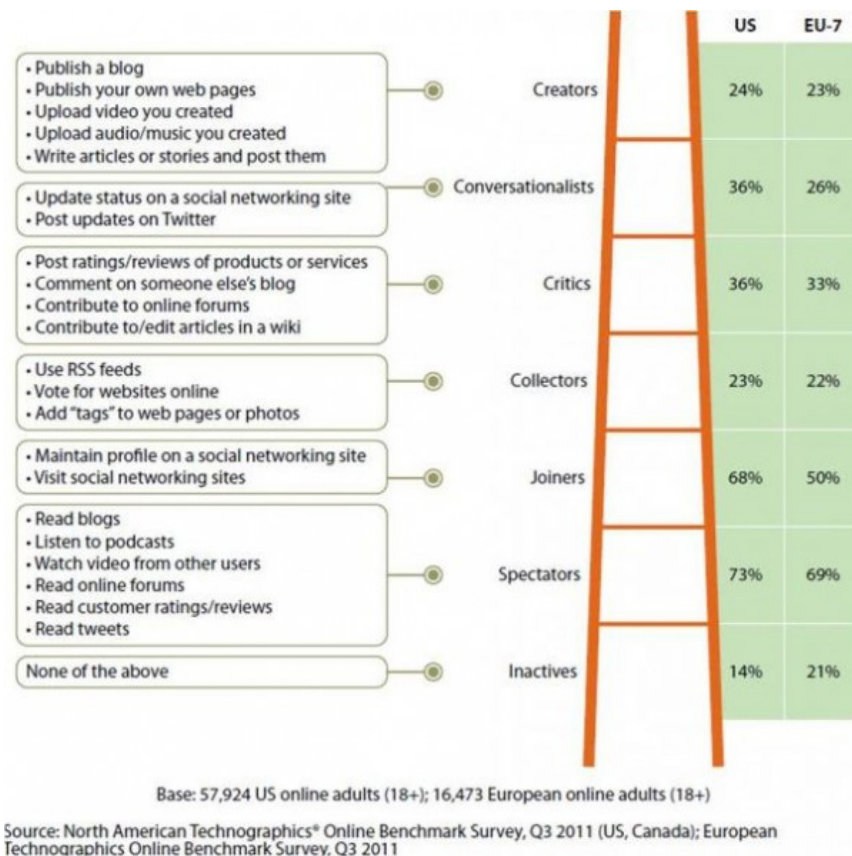
✓ **Social Technographics Ladder** is used to understand what kind of customers a brand has first.⁸

✓ **Social Media Profile Tool** enables a brand to see the different proportion of audience involvement according to customer age, gender and location. There is also a B2B tool.⁹

Their Technographics ladder shows that the three key influencer audiences to understand are the *Creators*, *Conversationalists* and the *Critics* since they will help add to and amplify your message:

⁸ [Forrester Social Technographics Ladder – example of latest available data.](#)

⁹ [Forrester Social Media Profile Tool.](#)



Our tip – Although we suggest focusing on the Creators, Conversationalists and Critics, it's worth thinking about your goals for each of these audiences too. For example, think about objectives to activate each type of person.

- ☐ **Creators** – Encourage them to feature you in their blogs, contribute to your site and then share their content. These are the key influencers in your sector.
- ☐ **Critics** – Encourage discussion in your blog or social outposts.
- ☐ **Collectors** – Share your content through social sharing.
- ☐ **Joiners** – Again start to share your content through social sharing.
- ☐ **Spectators** – Encourage the move to Joiner or Collector.
- ☐ **Inactives** – Encourage the move to Spectator when you're communicating with them offline.

Analysis of your own markets can give the best results. Start by surveying your audience to review the types of contacts who subscribe to and share your updates or those of competitors.

Best Practice Tip 4 Ask customers for their opinions

Asking existing customers about their preferences for different social media platforms and how they'd like to see you using them is a great place to start with setting your objectives and KPIs.

There is no point setting uniformed objectives if they are just not relevant. They'll never be achieved!

You can also see how competitors have fared in encouraging interactions, which brings us to...

Benchmark competitor use of social media

☐ Q. Do we know what our competitors are doing?

To help review, you need to find a standard method of reviewing competitors.

Our tip – create a simple scorecard of how well your competitors are using social media so that you can benchmark them over time.

☐ Q. Do we have a method of benchmarking social media against competitors?

To review competitor adoption of social media, relate back to the Altimeter pyramid and KPIs that you are using to review your brand's social media to review both engagement and reach KPIs.

Reach and influence KPIs

- ☐ *Share of Voice (n, %)* – Number of people discussing brand and category keywords in social media.
- ☐ *Sentiment (discussion polarity, %)* – How many are speaking positively about a brand.

Engagement KPIs

- ☐ *Network size and growth* – The obvious one – The numbers of fans or followers of the main social networks.
- ☐ *Social sharing* – Degree to which content is shared through the network – Retweets on Twitter, Likes on Facebook, Pins on Pinterest, etc.
- ☐ *Percentage engagement* – Through user-generated content on site.

We discuss a more in-depth framework for KPIs for reviewing social media marketing and content marketing across all of digital marketing in Step 4. We also provide blank templates for this tool within our digital marketing strategy toolkit.¹⁰

¹⁰ [Smart Insights: Digital Marketing Strategy Toolkit.](#)

Step 2

Create strategy and plan to manage social media

In Step 1 we looked at how effective your social media is by reviewing and setting goals and KPIs.

In Step 2 we show how to set out an outline of strategies to achieve these goals.

Define core social media activities

☐ Q. Have we defined the key social media marketing activities?

The social media strategy must define the key activities that relate to the core commercial activities of any brand.

These key activities are elements of your strategy that need to be managed in order to make or break the results of your social media strategy.

Five key activities for managing social media marketing

- ☐ 1. Define listening and reputation management strategy.
- ☐ 2. Transform the brand through social media.
- ☐ 3. Acquire new customers and increase sales to existing customers.
- ☐ 4. Deliver customer service.
- ☐ 5. Harness insights to develop the brand using social media optimisation (SMO).

Strategy Recommendation 6 Ensure all activities run continuously and are supported by campaign activity

All activities should run on a continuous AND campaign basis requiring both a content AND a communications strategy which we cover in later sections.

Our tip – Rate each of the five key activities of social media marketing based on their importance in the year ahead and set priorities for improving each.

Activity 1. Define listening and reputation management strategy

☐ Q. Do we know about the conversations about our brand and in our market happening now?

The starting point in developing any strategy is to understand what is happening now.

Review social media usage for:

- ☒ **Your audience** – who they are, how they participate, what they're saying and sharing.
- ☒ **Your activity** – through official social media channels and interactions through your site, but also through employee mentions.
- ☒ **Your competitors** – how both direct and indirect competitors' activities compare with yours.
- ☒ **Online publishers and other key intermediaries** – a form of indirect competitors and

important as influencers.

But listening is just listening, so at the same time you need to develop an approach on how to follow up for positive or negative mentions. Since this is such a key topic in digital marketing we cover listening and reputation management in much more depth in Step 3 of this guide.

Activity 2. Transform the brand through social media

☐ Q. Do we have a plan to encourage customer and employee interaction and sharing?

Make no mistake, to really exploit social media is not business-as-usual. It will require big changes for most companies to their brand, company structure and how everyone in the company communicates.

To deliver this transformation, work through these four steps to:

1. Set scope for social media activities. Understand the intersection of social media business activities and integration with other marketing. It's not about your Facebook, Google+, Twitter or LinkedIn presence in isolation.

Conduct a review of the areas social media is already used by your brand and where you'd like it to play a bigger part in the future, e.g. marketing, sales, customer service, internal communications, etc.

2. Review social media capabilities and priorities. Social media marketing isn't new for most companies, they will already be using social media, but not necessarily to its fullest. Benchmarking where you are now against where you want to be in the future is key to future success.

A reminder that you can use our Social Media Radar from the introduction to determine which tools warrant most attention for your brand. Sites or services that are agreed as more important and require more resource should be positioned towards the centre to ensure they can be managed and invested in appropriately. This can then be used to inform colleagues or agencies during marketing planning stages.

Think about how well you're using each of these social media marketing platforms now and try to identify the gaps.

3. Governance: define who is responsible for social media. We've seen that exploiting social media requires the involvement of many people in larger companies. So we need to decide who does what and how different groups work together. We'll see that in larger organisations a social governance policy has to be created.

Review your business structure to understand who the current 'owners' of social media channels are and whether they are best placed to deliver your objectives. Think about resource, skills, knowledge, expertise, exposure to strategy, etc.

4. Reviewing the personality of your brand and setting a vision. Social media and content marketing gives many opportunities to make your brand more engaging which have to be thought through. The whole personality of your brand may have to be revisited too.

For the last two points, remember the Chrysler Autos example from the introduction where lack of employee training led to a poorly presented tone of voice.

Activity 3. Acquire new customers and increase sales to existing customers

☐ Q. Is there a clear definition of how we will acquire new customers through social media?

For most marketers, the ultimate appeal of social media marketing is to use it to increase

sales through reaching new prospects and converting them to customers. In reality, for most businesses, social media marketing may be most important in serving existing customers or provide service, but you will set priorities according to what you think is important.

Before you can consider acquisition or retention strategies, you first need to be clear on the audiences you will prioritise communications with. The difference with social media is that you're looking to communicate not only with your core customer segments, but also influencers who will engage and share your social interactions.

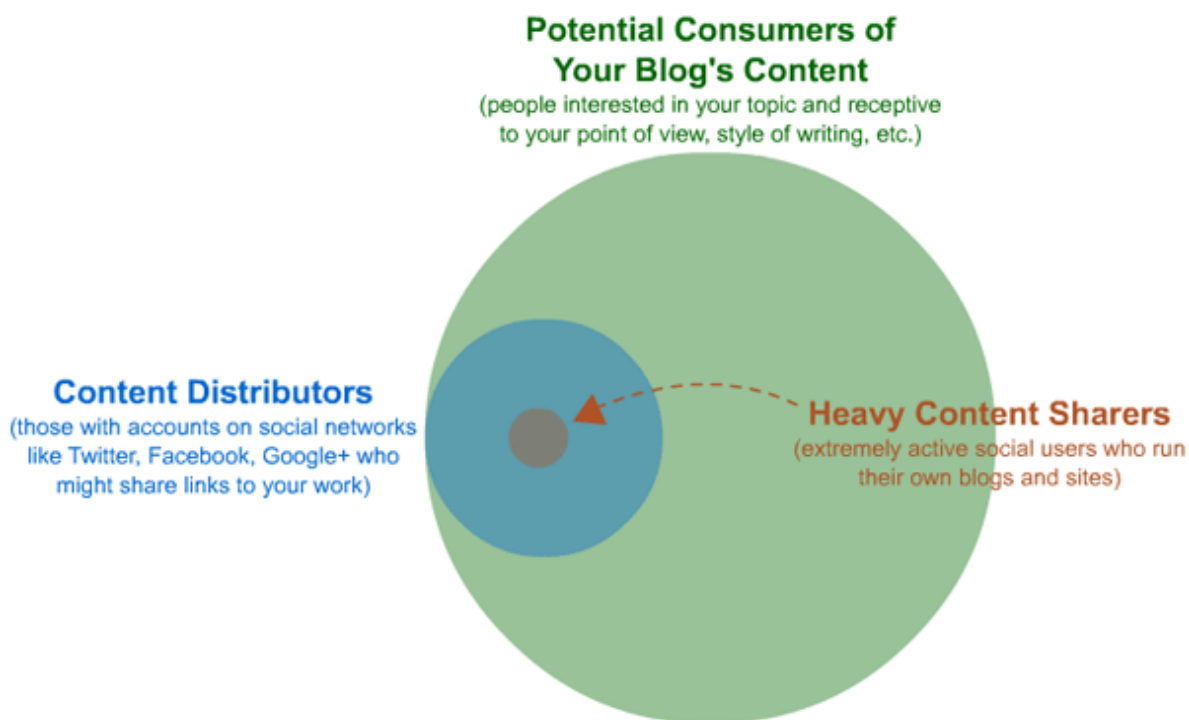
Strategy Recommendation 7 Focus social media segmentation on the influencers

Understand the characteristics of key influencers for your customers, and then identify and reach out to them.

Your audience will vary in their importance in two key ways:

- ✓ *Commercial relevance* – content to drive customers closer to purchase
- ✓ *Amplification relevance* –content to motivate sharing and amplification of your brand

This diagram by Rand Fishkin¹¹ shows this simple concept well.



To understand the engagement of your audience, start by understanding the influencers. It's important to realise that in many markets relatively few people will create social content or comment.

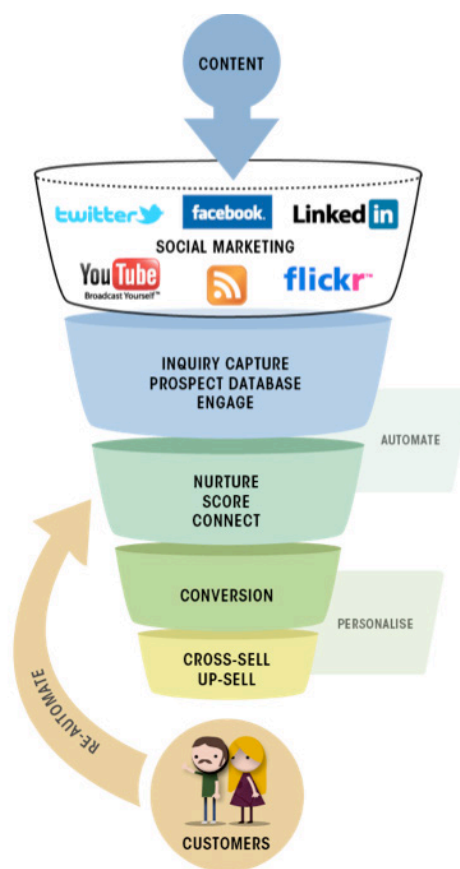
Focusing on the audience most likely to amplify your message for you is most likely to give the best return on time and effort rather than trying to appeal to everyone.

¹¹ [SEOMoz: Target your content to an audience likely to share.](#)

Objectives to acquire new and leverage existing customers through social media marketing works best if you apply all aspects of our RACE framework. For both acquisition and retention you need to ask these questions:

- ✓ **Plan** – following this document, you will cover this one.
- ✓ **Reach** – how can we use social media to reach new prospects?
- ✓ **Act** – which approaches on our website(s) and social outposts will encourage interaction?
- ✓ **Convert** – how can we create sales through moving customers from interaction with our brand to purchase?
- ✓ **Engage** – which marketing activities will encourage our existing customers to act as advocates for our business?

This conversion funnel gives a visual representation of this cycle.



Our infographic of the inbound marketing funnel, shown on the next page, suggests how you should think about specific KPIs for each of these stages of the funnel and then develop strategies based on the type of audience, how to reach them and the types of content which will encourage them to interact and share.

Activity 4. Deliver customer service

Another key aspect of engaging customers is delivering customer service. This is often neglected in relation to the promotional aspects of social media.

Ian Creek, Digital Marketing Director at BHP Information Solutions explains:

‘Many businesses believe they can just do the marketing bit of social media, however this is very rarely the case. The fact is, once you go public with your social media campaigns you

will undoubtedly encounter customer service requirements. Customers and prospects will ask questions and ask for help solving any issues they have.

It is vitally important to consider how you will deal with these requests, simply ignoring them will only come back to haunt your business. It's a good idea to have clear standards set out and, if required, canned responses ready to use. Think about including guidance on dealing with customer service requests in your social media policy, communications plan and where relevant your brand guidelines.'

The importance of not neglecting service can be seen from a 2012 report¹² which suggested how many people do complain or try to resolve a problem online. Over 44 percent of adults now use the web to share grievances about products, with customers expecting to interact with companies online and get a speedy response.

The report recommends the following be considered for your brand so that you are aware how social media could transform your customer service:

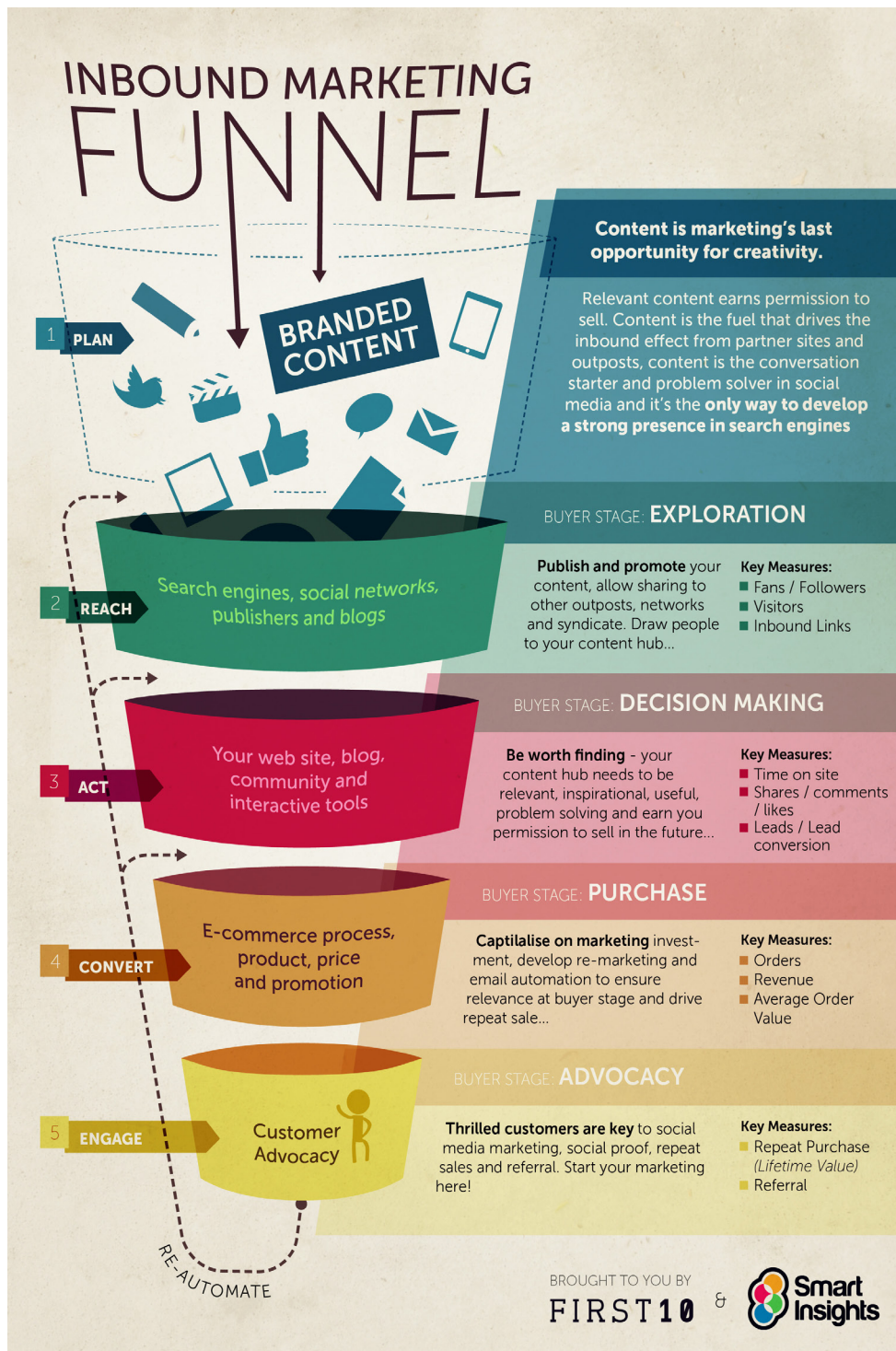
- ✓ 1. Appointment of an executive team to oversee the transition to social customer relationship management (CRM), comprising representatives from a cross-section of the enterprise.
- ✓ 2. A detailed audit of the social customer to understand where conversations take place that currently encompasses and influences the company's brand.
- ✓ 3. Identify platforms on which the company needs to establish a presence, adjusted for legal and regulatory obligations.
- ✓ 4. Create a multichannel strategy for customer service, taking into account capabilities of the existing operation.
- ✓ 5. Update staff training and communications guidelines to incorporate desired best practices relating to customer engagement via social media.
- ✓ 6. Review opportunities to strengthen and streamline connections between the customer service operation and key business units.
- ✓ 7. Define the operational specifications of social CRM, incorporating results of Steps 3–6, as a basis to identify a shortlist of suitable vendors.
- ✓ 8. Evaluate the cost and features of chosen vendors, including their ability to integrate media monitoring and/or community management platforms.
- ✓ 9. Consultation period with chosen social CRM vendor to plan for the process of implementation and staff training.
- ✓ 10. Define metrics to assess the performance of social CRM in terms of customer satisfaction and operating costs.

We applaud all of these, but opportunities to use social CRM to learn about new product/service requirements, develop advocacy aren't emphasised.

What is it? RACE content marketing model

This funnel shows how content marketing combined with social media marketing can be applied across different stages of purchase decision making to help achieve your goals.

¹² [Smart Insights: Social media via Customer Service report](#)



Activity 5. Harness insights to develop the brand using social media optimisation (SMO)

- ☐ Q. Have we developed an approach for collecting and reviewing insight for social media optimisation?

Once you have established your social media, it's worth thinking more carefully about measurement and SMO, which we cover as Step 7 in this guide.

What is it? Social media optimisation (SMO)

A systematic approach to improving content effectiveness in attracting visitors and leads, and engaging existing audiences through testing techniques to increase the visibility, participation and shareability of content.

Social media strategy management template (page 1)

Business Goals	Specific objectives: SMART KPIs	Strategy: Initiatives needed	Tactics: Do what?	Tools to help: Software & services?
1 Improve leads through increased reach (Sell)	n, %, quality of leads by social channel	Lead/engagement strategy Social media optimisation (SMO) Social network advertising	Develop lead generation content and offers Facebook info page lead campaigns	Network advertising platforms Social sharing tools
2 Improve sales through increased reach (Sell)	n, % of leads by social channel	Social sales strategy Social media optimisation (SMO) Social network advertising	Differential channel offers Encourage amplification of content through sharing Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn Ads	Network advertising platforms Social sharing tools
3 Improve sales through conversion increase (Sell)	Conversion rate to lead and sale by social channel	Social media optimisation (SMO) Social commerce (transactional sites)	Integrate testimonials Implement reviews and ratings (if applicable)	Social commerce platforms Reviews and ratings tools
4 Improve sales through customer communications (Sell)	n, % of leads by social channel	Ecommunications strategy Customer preference research	Create/improve content hub Editorial calendar	Content hub platforms E-communications platforms
5 Engage customers (Speak)	n, quality of interactions on social presence	Customer preference research Social media optimisation (SMO)	Communications encouraging dialogue Cross-channel social engagement Newsletter recruitment to social	Social sharing widgets
6 Communicate product and offer information (Speak)	n product and service alerts	Ecommunications strategy	Create/improve content hub Editorial calendar	Content hub platforms E-communications platforms
7 Gain customer feedback from dialogue (Speak)	n, % interactions by channel	Create customer feedback programme and panel	Regular surveys about communications and products and services	See http://bit.ly/smartfeedback
8 Encourage customer advocacy	Amplification and network growth RTs, Shares	Develop links to other customer loyalty programmes	Customer advocacy offers	Loyalty management tools



Social media strategy management template (page 2)

Business Goals	Specific objectives: SMART KPIs	Strategy: Initiatives needed	Tactics: Do what?	Tools to help: Software & services
9 Collaborate with influencers and partners (E-PR)	n, quality of influencers reached Share of voice Sentiment polarity	Influencer identification E-PR initiatives	Segment and target influencers Resource and process for outreach programme	Influencer identification See http://bit.ly/smartlistening
10 Encourage multichannel actions	n, offline influence	Multichannel integration	Offline communications Channel incentives	Coupon tracking tools
11 Encourage web self-service	n, % web self-service Service quality levels	Management of social service channels Define service levels	Create, resource and manage social service channels	Web self-service tools
12 Identify and resolve problems	% negative product mentions % fix completion	Social customer service strategy	Customer service outreach	Social listening / reputation management teams
13 Reduce costs	Cost of managing social media against returns	Define responsibilities for managing social media Staff usage policy Social governance policy	Management of staff usage	Collaborative internal tools
14 Change brand perception	Net promoter score and advocacy rating	Brand personality strategy	Transform brand personality	Campaign development
15 Add value to customer through improved brand experience	Net promoter score and advocacy rating	Competitor benchmarking	Campaign integration	Campaign development
16 Manage reputation	Sentiment polarity against share-of-voice	Social governance policy	Mention response management	See http://bit.ly/smartlistening



SMO is simply the process of making it easier to find and share content based on understanding of what motivates others to interact and share.

Summarise how you will align strategies and tactics to business goals

After you have reviewed your options for social media marketing, it's time to select the most important and summarise them. This is at the heart of your social media marketing. We suggest the format available in our social media marketing workbook.

Transforming your business

☐ Q. Have we created a method of change management?

After you have identified the main social media marketing strategies and activities as shown in the management template, the next crucial area is to think through how you will make the change needed happen. This is where many companies fail to commit fully to social media since this change, as with all major business change can only come if sponsored from the most senior managers as they buy into it. So in the final section for this step we'll go into this in a bit more detail.

Strategy Recommendation 8 Plan how to manage the business change needed for effective use of social media marketing

Success in social media will require major changes, so your strategy needs to define a way of managing this change.

To help manage change, these are some key areas of delivering this transformation we recommend be considered:

1. Set scope for social media activities to communicate to staff.
2. Review social media capabilities and priorities.
3. Governance: define who is responsible for social media.
4. Review brand personality and vision.

Transformation factor 1. Set scope for social media activities to communicate to staff.

Our tip – Explain to your employees that social media is about more than just Facebook and Twitter.

☐ Q. Have we defined the scope of social media strategy?

Teams within your business need to understand that social media is more than just a digital channel. To really make the most of the opportunities it presents, your strategy needs to involve the whole business, wherever communications are involved.

Strategy recommendation 9 Set and communicate the scope of social media

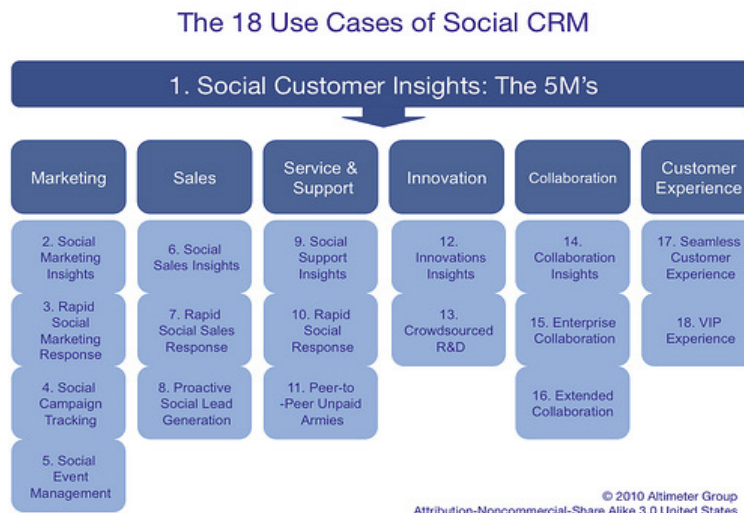
Social media is more than a channel. You need to define and communicate business activities it affects.

Develop a social CRM or customer engagement strategy that addresses the full range of activities affected by social media marketing.

The concept of social CRM or the social business has been developed to help show why the

wider management of social media marketing is important.

Work through this diagram from Altimeter¹³ to understand the scope of social CRM:



Transformation factor 2. Review social media capabilities and priorities

□ Q. How do our social media capabilities compare to best practices?

Once you have a better understanding of the scope, your capabilities and your objectives relating this to best practice can be useful. We like this assessment developed by Paul Fennemore of ViaPoint with Prof Moira Clark (Henley Management College) and Dr Ana Canhoto (Oxford Brookes), which shows three stages of social media incorporation.

Eight Business Competencies	Experimental	Tactical	Strategic
	Leadership/ Direction •Compelled involvement •Delegated	•Cautious •Centralised	•Visionary •Distributed •Y Gen mentality •Involved/ownership
	Strategy •Ad-hoc •Departmental	•Planned but tactical •Short term	•Social Commerce •Organisational •Aligned to business •Business value/KPI's
	Integration •Separate function •Uncoordinated	•Marketing campaigns •Limited integration	•Systemic/multi-functional •Integrated & interactive •Aligned to all programs •Intranet/extranet/internet
	Culture & Governance •Assumed/Tacit •Fear re loss of control	•Censored/blocked •Highly moderated •Prescribed policy/Official	•Federated/everybody •Self regulating/enabling •Open /transparent/trust •Consistent Tone of Voice
	Resources •No ownership/No budget •Informal/part time	•Assigned ownership •Skilled •Minimal funding	•Community & conversation team •Digital marketing skills •Multi-functional •Financed against RoI/KPI's
	Community building •Random postings •Limited engagement •Reactive	•Listening •Pro-active •Engagement/Supporting •Segment push approach	•Network weaving /viral/WoM •Merging audiences •Adding value & responsive •Segment pull strategy
	Content generation •Not user generated •Overt promotions/display ads •Uncoordinated	•Over corporate/official •Broadcasted/limited media •Limited value to community	•Multimedia /mobile/rich/creative •Community/staff generated •Mix of owned, bought and earned •High frequency/contributing
	Data: CRM monitoring & managing •Manual. Not integrated •Using few tools •Not applying analytics./ No KPI's	•Some CRM correlation •Using mixed tools (free) •Applying analytics •Monitoring outcomes	•Using sophisticated tools •Improving outcomes/KPI's •SEM/SocialCRM/CRM integration •Used for segmentation

Source: ©Paul Fennemore, Viapoint 2012

13 [Smart Insights: introduction to social CRM.](#)

Compare your company to the diagram for each of the eight business competencies and review against the objectives set out in Step 1.

Transformation factor 3. Governance – define who is responsible for our social media

☐ Q. Have we defined the scope of our social media strategy?

We've seen that exploiting social media requires the involvement of many people in larger companies. So we need to decide who does what and how different groups work together.

Strategy Recommendation 10 Define clear social media marketing responsibilities for each business function and each role

Define how each business area contributes to improving social media marketing and the responsibilities they have. Define overall management of strategy, monitoring and improvement.

This is more of an issue for larger businesses, so do skip this part if you work for a smaller company and there are only a small number of people who need to 'get it' and agree an approach.

The many governance issues for social media to be considered are summarised well by the 7S's of McKinsey:

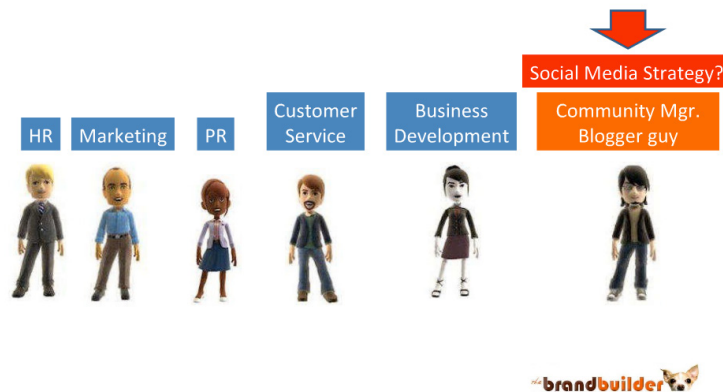
- ✓ **Strategy** – Following this guide will complete this step.
- ✓ **Structure** – Is a separate team (or resource) in a smaller company needed?
- ✓ **Systems** – Are new ways of working, new processes required? These types of changes are arguably the biggest requiring looking at process of new product development, customer service, marketing campaigns and brand development. Less important systems can refer to new tools.
- ✓ **Shared values** – How are cultural shifts shared?
- ✓ **Skills** – Are new team skills required?
- ✓ **Style** – Do we need any changes to organisation culture?
- ✓ **Staff** – Do we need any changes in roles?

US-based social media consultant Olivier Blanchard (*The BrandBuilder*) recommends that social media management must be designed to plug into all business functions from market research to customer service so that they each have a role.

He suggests the approach shown in the graphic below¹⁴ is the wrong model, instead every business function should own their own relevant part of social media strategy:

14 [Olivier Blanchard: Social media marketing strategy presentation.](#)

One Social Media role cannot properly serve all of an organization's needs.



There does need to be a single point of control of the strategy and resources for managing activities, as suggested by the graphic, but there should be clear goals and responsibilities for social media marketing for each team:

- ☐ **Sales** – Use to support lead generation, increase purchase frequency and category penetration.
- ☐ **Customer Support** – Deliver immediate feedback and response, positive impact in public forum, cost reduction.
- ☐ **Human Resources** – Managing employee social interactions, more efficient recruiting, online monitoring of employee behaviour.
- ☐ **Public Relations** – Manage online reputation management, partner outreach to encourage advocacy, improved brand image via customer advocacy.
- ☐ **Marketing** – Understanding customer needs, managing social communications, encouraging social sharing, harnessing insight.

Even in smaller companies, where there isn't a separate function for each, someone needs to make sure these happen.

Define or refine social media governance policy

- ☐ Q. *What is our governance policy?*

Whether unleashing your workforce on social media as part of the brand or just letting them participate in social media on a personal level, having a governance policy in place allows everyone to take part but within parameters set by you.

The debate has long raged about social media in the workplace and how it enables businesses to grow against how it potentially distracts employees and reduces productivity. Whatever your view, the facts are that we are an ever-connected world; whether at a computer or through mobiles employees can and will have access to the online social world.

A social media governance policy is a suite of policies, processes and educational resources to empower and manage your employees.

Best Practice Tip 5 Review other social media governance policies

We recommend this database of social media governance policies where you can learn from approaches defined by others: <http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies.php>.

Key areas to ensure are covered as part of your social media governance policy:

1. Training and education

This is the most fundamental area to any social media governance. Empowering employees with knowledge will prevent issues and also create new opportunities.

Our tip – Build regular training sessions into your strategy to share examples of how staff in other businesses have both helped and hindered the business and to explain social monitoring tools.

2. Do's and don'ts

Creating a top-level list of do's and don'ts will help staff understand the boundaries of their social media activity in the workplace.

Restricting and blocking access to social media sites doesn't necessarily mean increased productivity. Staff can still access sites via mobile phones.

3. Brand guidelines

Most large brands have a set of guidelines or books on how to communicate to represent the brand.

Our tip – Ensure your social media policy is in these guidelines and that training and management make sure it is understood and followed.

Transformation factor 4. Review brand personality and vision

☐ Q. How can brand personality be refreshed?

This is what we have always called the brand essence and positioning, but we now apply it to what people engage with and want to experience. We think brand personality is a great way to think about it. For Jay Baer of convince and convert it's 'Your One Thing'... you seek to communicate.

We like the way Rohit Bhargava describes it as personality:

'Personality is the unique, authentic, and talkable soul of your brand that people can get passionate about.

Personality is not just about what you stand for, but how you choose to communicate it. It is also the way to reconnect your customers, partners, employees, and influencers to the soul of your brand in the new social media era.'

Source: Rohit Bhargava (www.personalitynotincluded.com)

Review whether your brand personality needs to be changed to maximise its appeal through social media.

A vision for the future

☐ Q. Does our vision state how social media and social CRM can contribute to the organisation?

Here we're not talking about an overall vision or mission statement, instead, to get others on board, you need to show how social media can transform your organisation as it's integrated

Set business goals

Create strategy

Social listening and reputation monitoring

Content and engagement strategy

E-communications strategy

Practical advice for core platforms

Social media optimisation

2

with other channels.

This example¹⁵ from CEO Angela Ahrendts shows this perfectly we think. She says:

1 *'We have a vision – to be the first (fashion) company that is fully digital end-to-end.'*

2 *'The experience is that the customer will have total access to Burberry across any device, anywhere...' '...they will get exactly the same feeling of the brand, feeling of the culture, regardless of where, when and how they were accessing.'*

3 *'To any CEO who is sceptical today about social enterprise, you have to be totally connected with everyone who touches your brand...' '...if you don't do that, I don't know what your business model is in five years.'*

Chief Creative Officer, Christopher Bailey of Burberry has also spoken about the importance of digital media. Speaking to Mashable when explaining how they used local Twitter takeovers for their recent 2011 'Tweetwalk':

4 *'Burberry is now as much a media-content company as we are a design company.'*

5 *'A brand is not just about product, it's about experience as well, and experiences need to come from the center of a community...' '...I get excited about using all of those platforms to communicate to all of our different communities around the world about what we're doing.'*

Set business goals

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15 [Video of Burberry CEO Angela Ahrendts explains the Burberry social media vision.](#)

Step 3

Social media listening and online reputation management

❑ Q. Are we monitoring and responding to conversations about our brand?

Introduction to social listening – how are we doing now?

In this step we cover how to put in place the people, process and tools needed for effective listening.

Score your brand now before we go through the details:

Social listening activity	We don't do this	We plan to do this	We are doing this?
	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2
Q1. The need for structured, resourced social listening is agreed?			
Q2. We have someone responsible for social listening?			
Q3. Defined keyword groups for market, brand, competitors and products exist ?			
Q4. Effective social listening tools are in place?			
Q5. Reporting and KPIs are in place for conversation volume, share and sentiment?			
Q6. We have a social governance policy defining how to evaluate and respond to negative and positive mentions?			
Q7. Customer concerns are identified through social listening tools and responded to accordingly?			
Q8. Potential influencers and partners are identified through listening tools and acted on?			

If you mostly score 2s, with some 1s, you have a good approach in place already. If not, there is room for improvement in how you use people, process and tools to listen and respond to online conversations. Read on to discover more on the tools and techniques.

What is it? Social listening services

Software or services to review social networks, blogs and other sites for new mentions of keywords, particularly within user generated content. More sophisticated tools will also report on conversation volume and sentiment for a brand compared to its competitors.

Why social listening matters – convincing others of the need for social listening

'Listen First!' is the advice most social media consultants and agencies give when discussing the creation of a social media strategy. We agree! Improving the way you listen to conversations will help you through improving your insights on:

Set business goals

Create strategy

Social listening and reputation monitoring

Content and engagement strategy

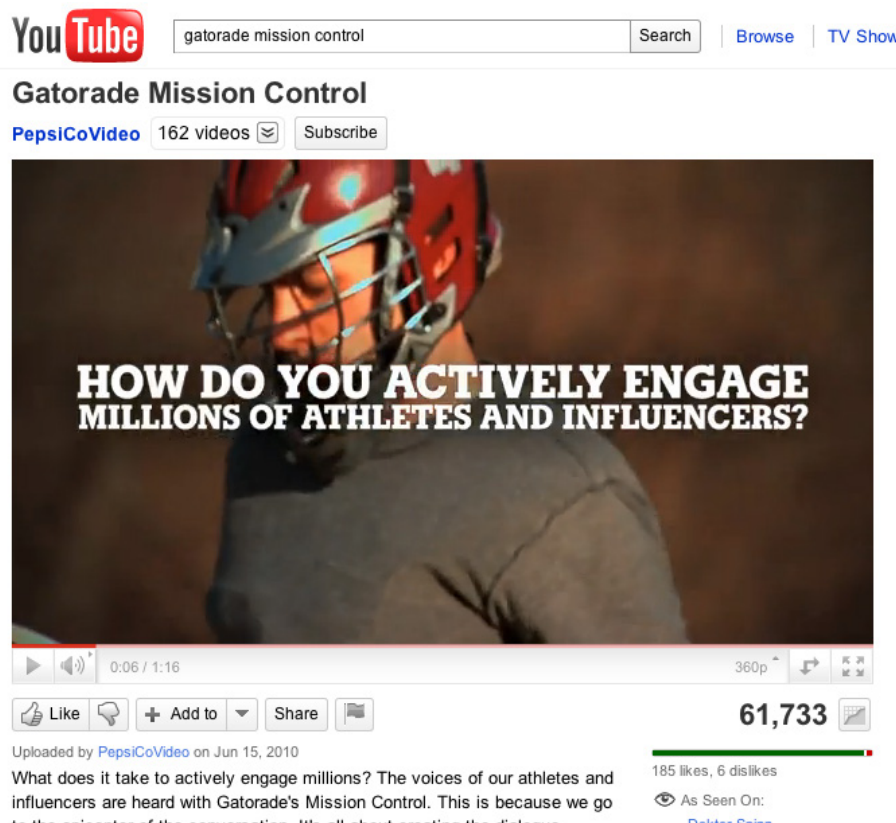
E-communications strategy

Practical advice for core platforms

Social media optimisation

- ✓ **Market understanding.** Understanding issues that your prospects and customers discuss to identify types of conversations that are interesting to your audience. This way you can stimulate and participate in topics of interest and also feed into new product development plans.
- ✓ **Brand mentions.** How popular is your brand compared to competitors (share of voice)? Which issues are discussed around your brand? What is the 'sentiment polarity'? This jargon means the proportion of positive to negative mentions compared to competitors.
- ✓ **Negative comments.** Managing and responding to negative comments about your brand.
- ✓ **Sales opportunities.** Identifying leads and sales opportunities – particularly important for social media marketing.
- ✓ **Partner development.** Following up on other types of comments to form relationships and participate in discussions.
- ✓ **Product and service development.** All of the above can help you understand customer needs.

Watch this video for a great example of how one brand uses social listening not only to monitor, but to engage and influence too¹⁶.



There are two types of online listening, defined best by Stephen Rappaport¹⁷ (Author of Listen First!):

- ✓ **Social monitoring:** Tracking online brand mentions on a daily basis for PR, brand protection, operations and customer service outreach and engagement.

¹⁶ [Dell and Gatorade Social Media Command Centres](#)

¹⁷ [Listen First: Stephen Rappaport.](#)

- ✔ **Social research:** Analysing naturally occurring online categories of conversation to better understand why people do what they do, the role of brands in their lives and the product, branding and communications implications for brand owners.

Each form of listening has a unique purpose. Social monitoring is continuous to enable reporting on conversation volume and to respond to events. For example, dealing with negative feedback or upset customers is one example of an outcome from social monitoring. Social research is more strategic and ad hoc and is used for campaign planning, new product development or improving the online experience.

A third type of social listening

There is also a third type of social listening, which is where you proactively ask existing customers or site visitors for their feedback in a structured way. We've identified five different types of online customer feedback tools to help you select the right tool:¹⁸

1. **Voice of customer website feedback tools and software.** These provide a permanent facility for customers to feedback by prompts on every page, e.g. exit surveys or follow-up feedback emails such as Feefo or BazaarVoice.
2. **Crowd-sourcing feedback tools and software.** Put simply, this is crowd-sourced structured social research. The example below from Userve shows how a brand asked selected customers to make recommendations of improvement to the brand.
3. **Simple page or concept feedback tools.** Get feedback on a website or visual design concept.
4. **Customer intent-action tools.** Assess the success and satisfaction with website visits.
5. **General online survey tools.** These are surveys that you encourage completion through email marketing.

Take a look at our recommendations and then write a review of the tools that you have in place currently and those that you plan to implement in the coming year (as well as resource to manage).

You may know the Dell Ideastorm site where Dell gets ideas for improvements to products from users and then feeds back to them. Using tools such as Userve to complement social monitoring and social research offers amazing insights into your business from a customer's perspective. The beauty of tools such as Userve is it not only allows you to put customers in the driving seat of your business but you can also keep them informed on the progress of their ideas/feedback by updating the status.

¹⁸ [Smart Insights: Listing of examples of types of 5 feedback tools.](#)



How can we improve our TEFL training courses?

Forum

Log in or Sign up | English

Had a great idea for a brand new TEFL module? Spotted something that you're sure shouldn't be happening? Here's your chance to let us know!
Below you will find some suggestions from fellow students on improvements and products we should be doing... please vote and make your own suggestions!

I suggest you ...

-enter your idea (new training course, new feature, fix bug, etc) -

Search

top ideas | hot | new 3 | accepted 8 | completed 8

351 votes

vote

Get I-to-I course recognized by ACTDEC

ACTDEC is a big accreditor. And it will look good for I-to-I to stand by some other well known TEFL/TESOL schools by being accredited through ACTDEC.

by kalenfranchise | 4 comments

Status: started

Thanks for suggestion. Developing our accreditation is one of our top goals at I-to-I HQ - we hope to have some fantastic news on this for you all soon!



229 votes

vote

do another weekend course where I can just practice teaching

I love the practice sessions at the end of the weekend course, can we do just a weekend of these?

by anonymous | 5 comments

Status: planned

"Practice, practice, practice!" That's what my mother always used to say, and that motto is just as relevant in TEFL as it is when trying to learn 'Greensleeves' on the piano! We're currently exploring several avenues on how we can provide our TEFL students with teaching practice, more to come on this soon!



10 votes left!

What happens if I run out?

How can we improve our TEFL training courses? activity feed

Forums

How can we improve our TEFL training courses? (42)

Where would you like to teach? (43)

Set business goals

Create strategy

Social listening and reputation monitoring

Content and engagement strategy

E-communications strategy

Practical advice for core platforms

Social media optimisation

What should we listen to?

A simple question, but it needs to be asked. You can't listen to everything and the tools aren't clever enough to do this automatically, so you have to set the scope of conversations you want to listen to. This means, that to start, you need to think about social media keyword analysis.

Social media keyword analysis

☐ Q. Which keywords should I listen out for?

The best approach to listening is to define a limited set of trigger words contained within phrases to listen out for.

Best Practice Tip 6 Define a competitive set of keywords to review

The competitive set should include your brand, competitor brands and terms related to services often used in the marketplace.

We suggest three main types of keyphrases with these corresponding types of mentions:

- ☒ **Brand conversations about you.** Your brand name and sub-brands.
- ☒ **Competitor conversations.** Your competitor brands.
- ☒ **Market conversations.** Products and services you offer.

In addition to specifying keywords in these categories, check to see where keywords aren't relevant to use. These are similar to the 'negative matches' in Google AdWords. For example, if you're looking for phrases related to sportswear, but you don't offer ski clothing, you should exclude this.

Best Practice Tip 7 Specify negative keywords

Be sure to specify negative keywords you don't want included.

☐ Q. Which type of KPIs should I use?

For each keyword you can then review these measures:

- ✓ **Conversation volume.** Conversation across all competitor brands (and or market terms).
- ✓ **Share of voice.** The percentage of terms as a proportion of the whole.
- ✓ **Brand sentiment.** The percentage of positive (sometimes called conversation polarity) mentions of all mentions.

Best Practice Tip 8 Compare your level of conversation to competitors

You should use share of voice measures to compare yourself to competitors.

Appropriate listening and reputation management tools selected

☐ Q. Have we reviewed and selected the best reputation management tool for our needs?

Before embarking on selecting and configuring your social listening tools, you first need to be clear on your objectives/requirements. Start by listing your requirements per listening area as outlined above. Relate these requirements back to your business objectives.

Our tip – It may be that at the moment only social listening is relevant and social research/customer research can wait. It really depends on your team sizes, budgets and business objectives.

A review of the three main types of social listening tools

1. Search engines

Great, simple, free tools for top-level analysis. Requires that a process is in place to extract the insights and set up the appropriate action.

- ✓ Free: Google Classic, Blog, Discussion, Alerts, Reader
- ✓ Free: Twitter Advanced Search

Advantages

- ✓ Free!
- ✓ Keeps it simple (great for people just starting out)
- ✓ Large coverage
- ✓ Simple interfaces and process

Disadvantages

- ✗ Difficult to filter (i.e. remove the noise)
- ✗ No analytics over time
- ✗ No sentiment analysis

Considerations

These tools require a tight process, so ask yourself:

- ☐ What specifically are you monitoring?
- ☐ How often are you going to check these tools?
- ☐ How will you filter the results to ensure you see what you need?
- ☐ What is the process for reacting to insights?

2. Social media monitoring and analysis

This type of listening tool varies a lot in terms of features and therefore potential uses. These tools generally offer some social research features as well as monitoring features meaning you can usually extract more value from them by tweaking the configuration.

- ✓ Free: Whostalkin.com, Social Mention. [Topsy](#) and [Followerwonk](#) are recommended for identifying the most influential
- ✓ Paid (cheap): Viralheat, UverVu, trackur
- ✓ Paid (slightly more expensive): Radian 6, Alterian SM2, Sysomos

We have a comprehensive listing of 35 of these tools at <http://bit.ly/smartlistening>.

Advantages

- ✓ It's the primary use of the tool (unlike above)
- ✓ Simple interfaces
- ✓ Easy to scale through the tools to meet objectives/requirements
- ✓ Configuration is easy and filtering is generally built into the services
- ✓ Consultancy teams usually exist to help as well

Disadvantages

- ✗ Introduces a new cost (for most)
- ✗ Easy to get lost in data (as with all analytics-led processes)

Considerations

Ask yourself:

- ☐ Who is the owner of the listening process?
- ☐ What is the process for reviewing and responding?
- ☐ Use the support teams where possible to help speed up initial configurations
- ☐ Be clear on what you are monitoring and why

3. Customer communities:

Currently, there are relatively few tools in this category. The two primary tools in this area are Userve.com and Usercho.com because they are based on crowd-sourced ideas and feedback, which is different to Kampyle, and the likes that are much more 'score our business' orientated. These tools operate solely in the structured research area but compliment other listening tools.

- ✓ Paid: Uservoice, userecho.com
- ✓ Paid Alternative: Kampyle

Advantages

- ✓ Allows the community to influence key business decisions
- ✓ Creates focus and prioritisation
- ✓ Increases likelihood of success
- ✓ Creates a new business culture, one led by the people that buy/use the business

Disadvantages

- ✗ It can distract from current strategies
- ✗ You have to check that sample is representative and of sufficient size

Considerations

- How can you 'direct' your customers, be specific about what each area is for. For example is it a product ideas topic or website design/communications topic, etc?
- Think how you can integrate your tool into the way the business works to ensure that departments and teams are active and use the service

Selecting the right tool for you

Consider the following 10 points before deciding which tool(s) is most relevant for you. Ensure when reading the items below you come back to your objectives/requirements.

- Q1. *What's included in the data sets?* Does it cover blogs (via RSS feeds or crawlers), Tweets, Facebook likes, reviews, comments, forums, etc?
- Q2. *What are the data sources and how does harvesting occur?* Is the data taken from third-party providers or is the data collected in-house through a crawler (similar to the way that Google crawls the web). An important point to consider is if the provider offers the ability to go back in time over 30 days or six months as data is regularly dropped out by third-party providers and thus provides a diluted view of days gone by. This is particularly important for identifying influencers over a longer term and comparing trends.
- Q3. *How is the data cleaned and prepared?* What process does the provider go through to manage duplicates, spam, forum threads, etc. You want to avoid double-counting or duplicating responses to customers.
- Q4. *How is the data organised or segmented?* Is the remaining content relevant to the business questions being asked? What are the base, volume and discussion sources being included for classification? How is the data being segmented so it contains the most pertinent consumer discussions around your specific area of interest?

Best Practice Tip 9 Ensure data can be grouped or segmented in a meaningful way

The way data is grouped should help answer business questions.

Key ways of grouping or filtering information are:

- ✓ By brand

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- ✓ By product category or type
- ✓ By country

Basic tools will only report against individual keywords or long lists of keywords. Grouping is essential to compare products. For example, Radian6 enables grouping of product-related keywords in its setup and separate profiles for competitors.

- ❑ Q5. *How is the data being analysed and are actionable insights delivered?* Is sentiment purely done by automated technology or by human analysis, or both? Can the system help you determine what the important topics are that lead volume or drive a particular sentiment? Does the system use an influence index of some sort to identify key persons around sectors/conversations?
- ❑ Q6. *Can key influencers be readily identified?* To decide how to escalate a negative mention you need to see how important the site is. Tools vary in the way they assess influence and they don't all link to other systems like Klout. Mentions on Facebook or Twitter typically show the number of fans or followers. But for blogs it can be harder to assess their influence – this may be based on Google PageRank, number of comments or number of links.

Best Practice Tip 10 Review method of assessing influencer importance

If there are negative brand mentions you need to know the size of the sphere of influence; likewise, if there are positive brand mentions you will want to know if it is worthwhile contacting the person or site owner to work further together.

- ❑ Q7. *How actionable are the insights and how should they be implemented?* Is there a consulting service so that information and data can be transformed into insight? Consumer-generated media is a vast and ever changing form of media and many organisations need to rely on the expertise and experience of a well-seasoned research team. While data can be informational, consumer-generated media insights are powerful building blocks that can be used to transform and prepare an organisation for the changing digital landscape.
- ❑ Q8. *What workflow support is there?* Related to making the tool actionable, the better quality tools enable you to manage follow-up through forwarding conversations to others in sales or support for action and then their action taken and outcome is included in the system.
- ❑ Q9. *How much will it cost? What is the payment model for the service?* Most listening tools have a pay-per-use service model based on number of queries or searches done. This can make it difficult to evaluate the cost until you have done the keyword research. It will depend on the number of keywords you have defined in your category and how popular the competitors are. If Apple or Nike are your competitors expect to pay.
- ❑ Q10. *What are the hidden costs?* Configuring the keywords to monitor and custom reports are often not quick to complete. There may be additional costs for training or report configuration you should compare for different suppliers. Without these set up, the tool is effectively worthless and won't be used.

Strategy Recommendation 11 Review total costs carefully

Hidden costs of system configuration, training and consulting can be considerable, so be sure to understand these.

Define approach for responding to brand mentions

Q. Do we have an approach to manage mentions?

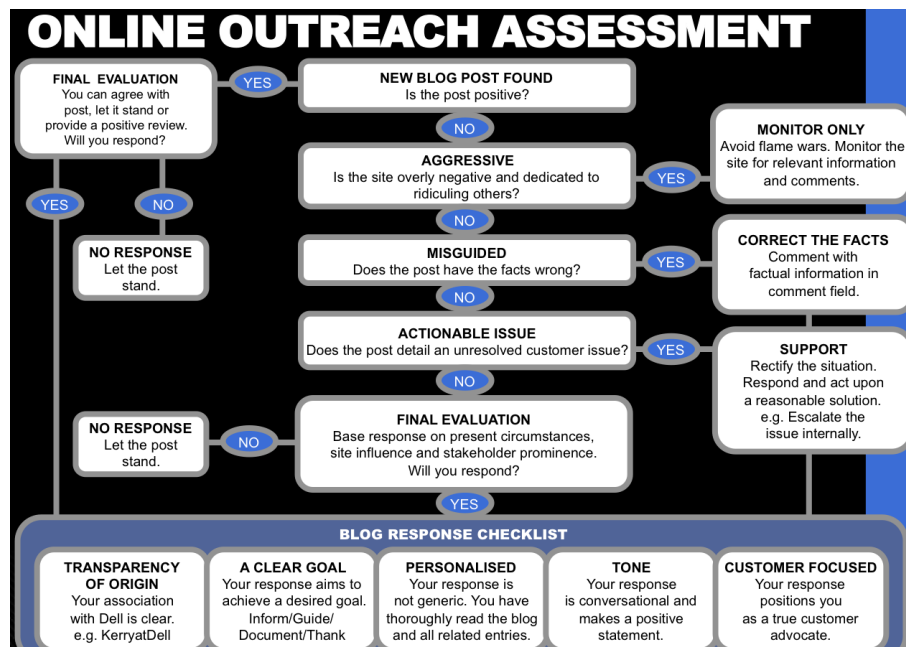
An obvious follow on from social listening is responding. If you are listening and alert to customers' feedback, responding is a fundamental output in ensuring you are active and respected by your audience.

This could be responding to negative feedback or participating in active conversations and should be part of your customer service strategy, as you'll find that users tend to freely share bad experiences publicly.

Strategy Recommendation 12 Define brand mention follow-up process

A mention of your brand online can be both an opportunity to partner or a threat to your reputation, so you need a method to follow up and to respond accordingly.

A company that learnt a lot (the hard way) in the early days of social media is Dell. Dell have since created a process which aligned to their brand guidelines allows them to manage their social media presence as shown here:



Source: This was presented by Kerry Bridges of Dell at an Econsultancy Masterclass.

Another great example of a useful process for responding to social activity, from the United States Air Force PR agency.¹⁹

Building on these flow diagrams and aligning to your brand guidelines is a key element to both becoming an active brand in social media but also in empowering members of the business to be active on behalf of the brand.

Define relevant influencers

Q. Have we defined the top influencers in your market?

Influencers are core to your social marketing strategy; they help spread your brand to

¹⁹ [Smart Insights: social governance policies.](#)

outposts beyond your current network. They give you instant reach, credibility and are often cheaper and more cost effective than media spend in reaching your audience. An influencer could be an industry blogger with great content and good site traffic or a regular Twitter member with a large following.

Use the tools mentioned at the beginning of this section to identify the key influencers in your industry and using the steps below look at how to utilise them appropriately.

Here are five short steps to building an influencer strategy:

1. Identify your influencers

Influencers are a combination of popularity and expertise (perceived or real). They may have reach, credibility or both.

Our tip – Go for the ‘magic middle’ between A-listers and the long tail. Identify them using the 80-20 rule, since you cannot ‘focus’ on all influencers, at least initially on limited resources. Also, remember that the automatic influencer finders like Klout or PeerIndex aren’t automagic, they’re just based on an algorithm and that can sometimes be misled by people using auto-follow bots. As this example shows, ‘Influence is more than just a score’.²⁰

2. What’s their in it ‘for me’

Consider what you can offer influencers. This will depend on where they are at in terms of your brand – inactive or already an ambassador?

Our tip – Consider a means to engage and increase the influencer’s involvement with you, and seek for them to provide value to you.

3. Set goals and listen

Work out what you are trying to achieve (traffic, word of mouth, product launch, better conversion) before defining the right influencers to work with and how best to engage them.

Our tip – Be clear on the ambitions of your influencer programme and then know what your audience is saying about your brand or market, where they are saying it, and whose message resonates with them to identify the most appropriate influencers.

4. Develop relationships

Find out where your advocates congregate and open a dialogue – it takes time and persistence to get on their radar. Be sure to consistently participate and offer information and insights that add value to the conversation. Read their discussion threads, blog posts and any other information you can lay your hands on. What are they saying, how are they saying it and why? What are their motivators? You want to appear human and accessible to any customer you encounter online, step it up for the influencers that matter. Send them products, pitch ideas and ask for their opinions. Leave comments on blog posts. Send @ replies on Twitter. ‘Like’ a status update on Facebook. Again, focus on the primary influencers – the ones that get you traction and remember that for each influencer you need to choose the right way to start building a relationship.

Our tip – Engage with influencers in their environments. Don’t try to bring them into yours e.g. if they are Twitter savvy but don’t use Facebook, keep it that way and try to link up in their platform.

5. Avoid self-promotion or direct marketing

Some influencers are ready and willing to further your cause and are happy to agree a

20 [Media Post: Influence is More Than A Score.](#)



commercial arrangement to achieve this. For example, if you offer them products, insight or information they're more likely to value what you give to them and share it with their own audiences, particularly if they believe your product or business can benefit their audiences. Others will accept payment to promote you.

Best Practice Tip 11 Add value to communities. Don't link-drop

Make sure you add value to conversations in influencers' communities and blogs, through asking and answering questions rather than dropping backlinks as this will reduce potential for partnerships.

Use customer concerns and feedback to inform marketing

Q. Do we know how we will use what we hear?

Informal insights collected through listening to customers should not remain within the social listening tool, even if they don't need responding to. The insight obtained can also feed into new product development or give ideas to develop marketing campaigns. We have also seen how structured surveys and feedback from customer panels using tools like Userve can be used proactively to gain customer knowledge.

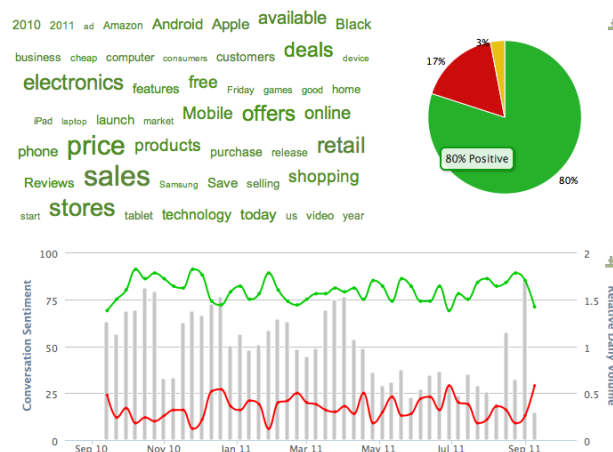
Using monitoring tools can help you find new customers

Social media monitoring tools (SMMTs) give fantastic insights to help you grow your business. Although they are often thought of as a way of tracking the sentiment of brand mentions for a company and its competitors, with a little lateral thinking they are really powerful in finding new customer segments or routes to market.

In this section, we will look at the questions you need to ask to find new ways to reach customers online and how you can use social media monitoring tools to help answer these questions.

Q. What are the conversations your audience is interested in?

Social media monitoring tools are great for getting inside the minds of customers to find out what they like discussing and sharing. More advanced services will identify terms discussed in relation a brand. For example, for a retailer like Best Buy, you will see keywords like deals, offers, free which are a key part of their discounting strategy. Through drilling down using the SMMT you can then find out where these conversations are starting and spread, and then plan how to seed the communities with the latest compelling offers.



Source: [inefegy](http://inefegy.com)

Our tip – It's often best to filter out keywords in conversations mentioned with positive sentiment.

☐ *Q. Where are these conversations happening?*

To help develop a strategic approach to social media listening, think about where conversations may be happening. The social media marketing radar we introduced at the start of this report will help you think about the type of places conversations are happening and how you can identify target partners to work with.

For each type of platform for conversations whether it's a social network, a mainstream media site, a blog or a specialist forum, you should rate them for their potential for seeding and partnerships. Successful social media marketing is more about building relationships with people than anything else.

☐ *Q. Are there other ways to reach an influencer's audience?*

Since encouraging influencers to be direct advocates for your products may be challenging, you should think laterally to see whether there are other ways of raising awareness through their sites. These may all be options:

- ☒ Advertising on the Google Display Network if they participate (this can be targeted to an individual site).
- ☒ Advertising in their enewsletter.
- ☒ Advertising in their RSS or Twitter feed.
- ☒ Advertising against an advocate's brand name in Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter.
- ☒ Writing a guest blog post or supplying another content object they may share.

☐ *Q. Which of your competitors are creating buzz?*

You can learn a lot from the leaders in your sector. Once you know who is effective in generating buzz, particularly positive buzz, the next step is to find out how they're generating this buzz. Our next steps look at this.

How to do it: Monitor share of voice amongst your top competitors and see who is generating the most amount of buzz. The current amount of buzz will, of course, depend on many things like market share, live campaigns and how much their audience is involved in conversations.

Our tip – Don't just review your main traditional competitors in terms of offline market share, since nimble start-ups are often best at exploiting social media and inbound marketing. Think laterally and use your SMMT to identify non-traditional companies that are making a buzz.

☐ *Q. Which social objects get shared the most by your audience?*

So what's a social object? Well it's any piece of content that gets talked about whether it's a product, offer, video or simply a piece of news. You can use SMMTs to find out which types of social objects work best for you and your competitors and then think about how to reach new customers through developing similar objects. It's a key component of the inbound or content marketing idea developed by Hubspot.

☐ *Q. How to do it with SMMT?*

Set up specific monitoring to find which types of content related to your products and services are discussed for your competitors. You'll need to brainstorm keywords to monitor, but consider including product categories features, vouchers, deals, advice or guides, videos,

stories.

☐ *Q. Who are the most effective influencers to reach new customers?*

Once you have devised the content to engage and share within your audience you will want to approach the most influential within your market to find ways of working together. These won't necessarily be the biggest influencers by audience. You also want to identify influencers who are active in discussing your products or services and are authoritative, i.e. others will follow and amplify their recommendations.

Our tip – You may want to check the key influencers in influencer rating tools like Klout or PeerIndex to see if they are a good fit for your brand in terms of the topics they discuss or opportunities to reach other influencers.

☐ *Q. Can we find new types of customer groupings and preferences?*

Most companies will say they have a good understanding of who their customers are in terms of demographics like age, gender or location, but social media can find new segments that share an interest in your brand.

For example, cognac brand Hennessy found through social listening on forums that there was a preference for the brand within an African-American audience developing recipes, wallpapers, downloads and even Hennessy-branded invitations to parties.

Our tip – Find the specialist sites with most mentions related to your brand, products or services and also see backlinks to your site from niche forums or sites.

☐ *Q. Can we reach out to help customers involved in the buying process?*

Listen for customers looking for recommendations on new products and reach out to them with advice on how to choose the product, maybe linking back to buyers' guides on your site.

Our tip – Some tools have features to identify leads based on sentiment or you can devise groupings of keywords which indicate advice is sought, e.g. 'recommendations on X'.

☐ *Q. Can we help customers dissatisfied with their existing supplier or product?*

You need to be a bit more careful with this one, but if you find customers raging about their current utility supplier you can maybe contact them via Twitter or Facebook or their blog and talk about your service levels or offer them a deal. It will certainly help you see what your service priorities should be and, of course, you should check your own dissatisfied customers to avoid these sort of problems yourself.

This type of outreach may not sound scalable but a company as big as Dell manages it. They monitor around 30,000 brand mentions a day and have a way of following.

Our tip – Introduce a good process to follow up on social media mentions that may lead to sale. Many companies have a way to follow up negative mentions, so why not leads?

☐ *Q. What's hot?!*

Social media conversations are often about the here and now. Breaking news and ideas are often those that are shared most online. Through finding out the up-to-the-minute interests and concerns in your market, you can get an edge on competitors through getting involved and shaping these conversations through your own blog posts.

Our tip – Keep an eye on the trending topics on Twitter or tools such as tredsmat.com or Google Trends to identify topics that can shape your content strategy.

☐ *Q. How can SMMT help with our SEO?*

Search marketing is still one of the best ways to reach customers with around 25 percent

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of all visits to sites still coming from search.²¹ Back in the day, search engines used to favour content that included the right keywords, but today success in search is all about the content that attracts the most links from other sites and is shared the most. So search engine optimisation (SEO) and content marketing work best together when they are part of a planned approach to content or inbound marketing.

☐ Q. How to do use SMMT to support SEO?

- ☒ Find the content that is most shared and then create blog posts around them to attract new visitors.
- ☒ Find influencers and reach out to them to link to your site.
- ☒ Referencing or embedding influencers' content on your site should make them link back to you. Write a review or give them kudos.
- ☒ Hot topic blog posts will likely be more widely shared and pick up search traffic!

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²¹ [Smart Insights: How balanced is your Traffic Mix?](#)

Step 4

Develop the content marketing and engagement strategy for your brand

We believe that before asking if your brand needs a social media strategy, you need to ask whether you have a customer engagement or content strategy which controls the way they manage customer communications.

Steps 4 and 5 will go through this approach, looking at how you engage customers across channels.

Develop your content marketing strategy

Q. What is our content marketing strategy?

Our coverage of developing a content marketing strategy in this guide is relatively brief, since we have an in-depth content marketing guide for Smart Insights Expert members.²² In this guide we'll highlight some of the key issues to think about with reference to social media marketing.

First, content or inbound marketing is so important it warrants an in-depth review of how well it's working for you now. So make sure you have a planned and managed approach for it...

Strategy Recommendation 13 Create or refine your content marketing strategy

Content marketing is at the heart of how you reach, convert and engage audiences through social media, so ensure it is managed coherently.

In most cases, a good level of conversation in a community won't happen organically, the conversation needs to be led. Content and seeding are what feeds the conversation. In Step 5 we will review what's needed to communicate the content you feature but in this Step we focus on the content marketing needed to engage your audience.

Why is content marketing important?

If we start with a definition of content marketing, you'll immediately see how important it is to social media.

'How a brand creates, delivers and governs original or curated content to attract and retain customers, positioning the brand as a credible expert and, ultimately, motivating a change in behaviour.' (Joe Pulizzi, Content Marketing Institute)

What is it? Content marketing

Managing content as an asset to achieve marketing goals of reaching, converting and engaging target audiences.

We discuss how to develop a content strategy in-depth in our 7 Steps Guide to Content Marketing, but the essence is that you need to create a content mindset and resource to create a content publishing machine based on these principles:

- ✓ **1. Content must have intrinsic value.** Content is a key part of your online value

22 [Smart Insights: 7 Steps Content Marketing guide.](#)

proposition. You must define its relevance to customers – help them live their lives, do their work better.

- ✓ **2. Understand what content customers value.** You need to do the research to understand the value.
- ✓ **3. Content marketing strategy may completely or partially replace traditional advertising and marketing.** You need to prove the relative importance of content marketing within your budget, for your market.
- ✓ **4. Get your customers to participate.** Yes, interaction is the name of the game online – don't just push, engage and share – comments, polls and surveys all help.
- ✓ **5. Make it easy to buy.** Content must fit with your ultimate goal in investing in content.

Define how content supports your brand marketing needs

- *Q. Have we defined how content supports the brand and audience needs?*

Today content is an integral part of many brands, so identifying the sweet spot for content to engage your audience and add value to them is crucial. Start by answering these questions:

- *Q. Do we have an overriding purpose for our content to deliver commercial goals through delivering relevance for the audience?*
- *Q. How do we differentiate from the bland pack by having a perspective, a position or, if appropriate, a real attitude?*
- *Q. Can we develop a personality that can shine through your online content, but really irrespective of the media?* This one is a key opportunity to engage your audience to comment and share your content. A great reference is Rohit Bhargava's book '*Personality not included*'.²³

Create personas for content marketing

- *Q. Have we created personas to review content effectiveness of brand?*

Experts increasingly emphasise the importance of knowing who your consumers are to increase relevance of products. The concept also applies well to understand customer content needs and can be used to assess the relevance of content to different audiences.

Strategy Recommendation 14 Develop customer personas to support content marketing

Personas are a study of the characteristics, needs, motivations and environment of typical site and platform users. Download our [Customer Persona Toolkit](#) for examples and good practices for creating personas.

This is an essential step so that you can relate content that appeals to your personas.

Our tip – Research your users to devise personas of consumers who are active in social media, participating in conversations and amplifying your message. You will find it easier to plan content if you can visualise your audience groups.

Define social media content strategy

- *Q. Do we understand the value of content?*

To develop a content plan, you have to go back to basics, asking what content is used now by you and your competitors and for what purpose? You can then go on to look at particular formats and topics.

²³ [Personality Not Included site.](#)

Set the purpose of your content

☐ Q. What is the purpose of our content?

Here are the key questions to ask based on Joe's Pulizzi's book 'Get Content, Get Customers', to help you develop a purpose for your content:

- ☒ Q. What do our buyers really need to know about our products, about information and anything relevant to what we have to offer? There's what you want to say (or sell) and what the audience are looking for to make a decision.
- ☒ Q. What's the intersection between our expertise around the products or services and the information or entertainment needs of our consumer? Map them to reveal the sweet spots.
- ☒ Q. How does what they need to know align with our unique expertise to create the best content? What are the priority areas where there's a really great fit?
- ☒ Q. How do we position content for maximum impact and what media types will be most relevant? Think back to personality and being authentic in how you communicate, it has to be natural too.
- ☒ Q. What will provide our consumers most benefit personally or professionally? Your aim is to add maximum value.

We think it's interesting that to answer these questions satisfactorily, requires varied types of quality content which support product purchase decisions, customer service and customer engagement. So let's now take a look at the content.

Review how content fits with your inbound marketing funnel

☐ Q. How does content support our lead generation funnel?

We created this infographic to show how content can best support customers towards purchase. We recommend reviewing current and potential use of content using this tool.



Audit content effectiveness and identify gaps

☐ Q. Have we audited current content effectiveness and content gaps?

Auditing your current content and its effectiveness is the starting point on the journey to making content more effective, and it can also be crucial for senior managers in proving the value of investment so far in content marketing.

Best Practice Tip 12 Define content gaps and priorities

The output from your keyword research and competitor analysis should show the scale of your opportunities.

If your audience has a particular set of problems or issues that is clear from the content gap research that your product or service can address, then you'll want to focus there. Maybe there are immediately clear opportunities to help your product or service become more buyable, assuming your current content does not meet those needs already. It's a not so simple case of listing those priorities for the audience against what content you already have that is either missing or is available but not being used well enough. Perhaps you have content, but in the wrong media format, maybe it's not findable on the site or just isn't resonating with your audience at all in communications terms.

Recommended resource? Managing content marketing guide

Use our [managing content marketing guide](#) for guidance on auditing current use of content marketing and to identify the best types of content for your business.

Content types (formats) to fuel content campfires

☐ Q. Have we defined different potential content types?

Content formats vary and it's dependent on your story and the position that you want to take and, of course, how your target market would find it easiest to consume as to what can work for your brand. Logically, it's best to have content in a range of formats which work for different audiences. The key really is to be efficient with the media chosen and start with tangible and useful topics that your audience can understand.

For example, Hubspot uses a range of content types, e.g. best practice guides, videos and downloads to encourage users to find, link and share the content.

Rather than simply reposting content across several platforms, recreate fresh, supplemental content that answers questions and/or spurs discussion on a topic or idea in new ways.

Our tip – Here are some of the major content formats that we'd recommend you can feature and seed within your social media marketing. Check them for relevance. Each can be used for consumer or business audiences, but some work better for B2B:

- ☐ Video – Recorded and edited video including animated or explainer videos.
- ☐ Ebooks or shorter guides including article content (web page, or short documents) and whitepapers.
- ☐ Podcast and audio shared for iPod or mp3 player consumption. Think about the audio from videos for mp3 consumption as well as turning the audio to transcripts.
- ☐ Webinars which can be recorded and streamed media.
- ☐ Infographics – A flexible, shareable way to tell a brand story or explain concept.

❑ Q&As and FAQs.

Suitable formats to consider, with examples you can learn from within the digital marketing content area are:

- ✅ Short-form news updates or opinion pieces (www.clickz.com or www.sethgodin.com).
- ✅ Long-form blog posts giving 'expert' guidance (www.viperchill.com or www.kaushik.net).
- ✅ Video blog posts (www.bannerblog.au, www.garyvaynerchuk.com).
- ✅ Image posts with statistics (www.wearesocial.net).
- ✅ Infographics (www.kissmetrics.com).
- ✅ Compilations aggregating other sites' content as a useful summary of statistics or tools (www.wearesocial.net, www.smartinsights.com).
- ✅ Ebooks, whitepapers and guides (www.hubspot.com and www.eloqua.com).
- ✅ Podcasts (www.boagworld.com).
- ✅ Surveys and polls (www.econsultancy.com and www.smartinsights.com).
- ✅ Questions and answers (www.linkedin.com).

Define KPIs for content media marketing to review and improve performance

❑ Q. Define KPIs to review and improve content marketing performance

We've already looked at broader goals for social media in Step 1. So here we're looking at specific KPIs to review content marketing performance.

To help you define your KPIs, we've designed these KPIs which are relevant for different markets in the table below. We've taken three types of KPIs we think you need to cover here, so you've got the full range of measures covered from hard sales to softer engagement metrics:

- ✅ **Commercial measures:** These are the harder business or commercial measures and what usually takes the longest to be demonstrable. These are the measures for the senior managers although they may well also need to know about Likes! Think audience share, sales, leads or at least clear indicators from people such as satisfaction ratings or percentage that fed back. Remember that these need to be *incremental* and ideally attributable to your content marketing.
- ✅ **Tactical measures:** These include the views, clicks and interactions with your content – so involves the social shares such as Likes and Tweets. You might also use link shortening tools to help measure. At Smart Insights we use PostRank rating and also metrics from Facebook Insights. These are hard indicators that your content is visible and worth sharing – so very key.
- ✅ **Brand measures:** These are easier for bigger brands or where there's less competition, simply because the tools seem to work better in that space. Think brand or keyphrase mentions, sentiment, share of market mentions over competitors and certainly site traffic. These are the bigger needles to get moving and often require a bit more momentum.

Here's our recommended KPIs based on the RACE framework, mark the ones which are most relevant for you. You'll see that since the measures are commercial they apply across the whole customer lifecycle and across digital marketing activities. That's why we provide blank templates for this tool within our digital marketing strategy toolkit.²⁴

24 [Smart Insights: Digital Marketing Strategy Toolkit](#).

Metric	Reach audience	Reach audience	Convert to sale	Engage customers to retain & grow
Tracking metrics	☐ Unique visitors ☐ New visitors ☐ Visits ☐ Conversation volume	☐ Online opportunity (lead) volume ☐ Offline opportunity (lead) volume (online influenced)	☐ Online sales volume ☐ Offline sales volume (online influenced)	☐ E-mail list quality ☐ E-mail response quality ☐ Transactions
Performance drivers (diagnostics)	☐ Share of audience compared to competitors ☐ Share of search ☐ Brand / direct visits	☐ Bounce rate and duration measures ☐ Macro-conversion rate to opportunity and micro-conversion efficiency	☐ Conversion rate to sale ☐ Email conversion rate	☐ Active customers % (site & e-mail active) ☐ Active social followers ☐ Repeat conversion rate
Customer Centric KPIs	☐ Cost per click and per sale ☐ Brand awareness ☐ Conversation polarity (sentiment)	☐ Cost per opportunity ☐ Customer satisfaction	☐ Cost per sale ☐ Customer satisfaction	☐ Lifetime value ☐ Customer loyalty index ☐ Customer advocacy index ☐ Products per customer
Business value KPIs	☐ Audience share ☐ Share of conversations	☐ Goal value per visit ☐ Online product requests (n, £, % of total)	☐ Revenue per visit ☐ Online originated sales revenue and profit (n, £, % of total)	☐ Retained sales growth and volume ☐ Revenue per 1000 emails sent



With the content strategy developed, we will now build on this to work through how to communicate this effectively.

Step 5

Define social media communications strategy

☐ Q. Have we defined our social media communications strategy?

You *can* use an ad hoc, reactive approach to communicating through social media and you will see benefits of interaction and sharing, but with a more controlled approach, wider opportunities will be greater.

To gain this extra control, we recommend you structure your social media strategy around the areas of our PRACE framework. Tackling it this way will help you keep your focus on the activities that matter:

- ✓ 1. **Plan.** Management of social media marketing including reputation management and defining a content strategy.
- ✓ 2. **Reach.** Increase the reach of your content as it is shared.
- ✓ 3. **Act.** Encouraging interaction and participation within your own blogs and sites and within social outposts.
- ✓ 4. **Convert.** Transitioning from customer brand engagement with social media to generating more leads and sales.
- ✓ 5. **Engage.** Ongoing communications with consumers.

You can see that content or customer engagement strategy underpins all of these, which is why we have set this out at Step 4 as the foundation to your communications strategy.

Creating a social media communications strategy

☐ Q. Is there a social media communications plan?

Once your content marketing needs or rather those of your audience are clarified, then you can turn to how these are communicated. We believe that some form of communications strategy is needed to use this content within social networks.

Strategy recommendation 15 Update your digital communications strategy to manage sustained content sharing and dialogue

To maintain a strong voice online requires commitment to continuous creation and distribution of content. But there is also a need to encourage conversation and dialogue to maintain interest and sharing.

Many larger companies will already have customer communications guidelines, so you can expand upon these to include more within social media communications.

Work through the key questions set out below (taken from the social media workbook) to cover both decisions about the types of content, how it is published and how the process is resourced.

Social media communication strategy questions	We don't do this Score 0	We plan to do this Score 1	We are doing this? Score 2
Q1. E-communications strategy defined including...			

Social media communication strategy questions	We don't do this Score 0	We plan to do this Score 1	We are doing this? Score 2
Q2. Regular content update frequency defined (including syndication of content to off-site)?			
Q3. Content value: types and formats defined?			
Q4. Editorial calendar used to manage content formally including integration between media?			
Q5. Content hub platform to manage publication and syndication of content selected?			
Q6. Defined internal resource to create and manage content and discussions in place?			
Q7. Options for external sourcing of content reviewed?			
Q8. Content syndication to other platforms managed?			
Q9. Outreach to other sites managed?			
Q10. Effective communication through advertising, PR and email marketing of social media/community proposition of content proposition to existing customers and prospects?			

Let's now look at what's involved to answer each of these 10 questions. The starting point is that the core audience and business goals have already been defined as part of the customer engagement strategy we reviewed in Step 4.

Before you define your social media communications strategy, ask yourself:

Content marketing strategy questions	We don't do this Score 0	We plan to do this Score 1	We are doing this? Score 2
Q1. We know the goals we want to achieve through our content?			
Q2. Business case for creating content established?			
Q3. KPIs and tracking for reviewing content effectiveness in place?			
Q4. Requirements of content for main audience types (personas) defined?			
Q5. Categories of content needed to engage audience defined?			

As before, if you mostly score 2s, with some 1s, you have a good approach in place already. If not, there is room for improvement in how you use people, process and tools to listen and respond to online conversations. Read on to discover how to define these.

E-communications strategy

- ☐ Q. *Is our social media communications plan integrated into a broader communications plan?*

We have already covered two of the key areas of strategy for social media communications, where you definitely need a planned approach to respond to brand mentions as part of social media listening and response. These are:

- ✓ '45 Define approach for responding to brand mentions.
- ✓ '[Deliver customer service through social channels](#)' on page 45

In this section we will look at communications strategies to manage proactive posting of content such as status updates and blog posts as part of inbound marketing.

A communications strategy will be very familiar to marketers. One key difference here is that you will be communicating much more frequently than with traditional press releases or newsletters, so you will have to source more content and develop an efficient publishing process that maintains quality but isn't too much of a time sink.

Strategy Recommendation 16 Update your e-communications strategy to manage sustained content sharing and dialogue

Maintaining a strong voice online requires commitment to continuous creation and distribution of content but also encouraging conversation and dialogue to maintain interest and sharing.

Make sure you factor both into your plan.

To create a powerful, sustained stream of quality content you will need to define as a plan or at least have clear in your mind, the following:

- ✓ Q1. *Guidelines for regular content update frequency?*
- ✓ Q2. *Guidelines for content value: types and formats?*
- ✓ Q3. *Create and update your editorial calendar?*
- ✓ Q4. *Create a hub to manage publication and syndication of content?*
- ✓ Q5. *Review internal resources options for creating and sourcing content?*
- ✓ Q6. *Content syndication to other platforms managed?*
- ✓ Q7. *Outreach to influencer audiences managed?*
- ✓ Q8. *Communicate your content marketing proposition?*
- ✓ Q9. *Invest in participation?*

We will look at how to decide on the best approach in the following sections.

Q1. Regular content update frequency defined (including syndication of content to off-site)

- ☐ Q. *Do we know how frequently our content will be updated?*

Deciding the frequency of content updates on your social media hub is a difficult challenge. You will decide the right frequency based on a balance of what your audience needs and expects; what you need to meet your objectives and what's practical with the writing resources you have.

Strategy Recommendation 17 Define the best balance of content update frequency

Monitor engagement with your content updates to identify the sweet spot for required frequency.

Remember that this will vary by platform!

Our tip – Don't feel as though you should try to publish new content in lots of different formats every single day, but do publish on a consistently regular basis in relevant formats and content types.

Here is a sample of different strategies for content frequency update for your hub. Which of these will work best for you? It will depend a lot on your market:

- ✅ *Multiple content updates per day* – Typically for a news organisation with many channels and many writers. It's also likely to be needed for a clothing retailer making constant changes to its collection and promotions. You will likely need a separate editorial team to create this. Think Mashable (www.mashable.com).
- ✅ *One-two content updates per day* – This is the sweet spot for many organisations with a blog in a market which is dynamic – a retailer offering technology products for example. It's also the right frequency for communicating through social media – it will keep your followers/fans interested. Of course, your updates can provide additional comments, dialogue and links to others' content. Creating content at this frequency can help provide sufficient content for a weekly newsletter. This is the approach we use on SmartInsights.
- ✅ *One-two content updates per week* – This frequency may be right for you if you are posting occasionally to social media, but it's not a primary channel for you. It's also likely to be the right frequency if you have a monthly newsletter since it will help you develop sufficient content for this. Think corporate blogs like Bill Marriott of Marriott Hotels (www.blogs.marriott.com).
- ✅ *One-two content updates per month* – This frequency may be better for smaller companies with limited resources, a niche that doesn't warrant so many updates, or perhaps in the build up to a campaign. Think Viperchill (viperchill.com) or Avinash Kaushik (www.kaushik.net).

Best Practice Tip 13 If you have less frequent updates, ensure you have sufficient depth to encourage engagement and sharing

In-depth, rich content will work best for you if you publish less frequently, e.g. changes in financial service products.

Strategy Recommendation 18 Ensure content update frequency is sufficiently high to meet your goals for reach and growth

Higher frequencies of content publication will help you reach more people more rapidly since each piece of content has the potential to reach more people.

Our tip – If you adopt one of the shorter frequencies, remember that there is less potential for your content to be amplified. Higher frequencies tend to be best for growth of reach. However, there is a maximum frequency. Research by Dan Zarrella shows that optimum content frequency for Facebook seems to be about once per day.

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Q2. Content value: types, formats and proposition defined?

☐ Q. Have we reviewed content formats?

The next step in developing your e-communications strategy is to work through what are the right types of content for you. Once you've selected the best approach, you'll then need to communicate this strongly on your blog, social outposts, in your email marketing *and* offline.

There is a tendency to get stuck in the rut of one format, but this works well for some who become known for the format such as long-form or video blogs. But it can limit the appeal of the publisher. For example ClickZ.com tends to focus on short, limited length posts. The Digital Buzz Blog just publishes case studies. These will engage, sure, and it's useful to have a format you're known for, but it may not appeal to a range of audiences, so could limit your reach.

Best Practice Tip 14 Use a range of formats or become known for repeating one format well

A range of types and content and formats have the potential to engage different types of people. However, a single format can have more impact and will be more memorable.

Great content solves problems for your audience, largely so they can make a decision about something (*you likely want the decision related to a future purchase of something from you, at some point*). This should be self-evident from a visit to your hub or reading your content, but to drive people to the hub from elsewhere on the web or offline it helps if you have well thought through messaging explaining how the content will help solve problems.

Strategy Recommendation 19 Communicate your content value proposition

Once you have your content types identified, develop messaging that shows the benefits of your content.

Our tip – Through your social listening phases create themes of questions your community are asking and develop blog ideas around these themes and create a content calendar to deliver them.

Q3. Has the editorial calendar been used to manage content formally including integration between media?

☐ Q. Have we defined our content calendar?

An editorial calendar helps both develop the right types of content and schedules content production. Without an effective editorial calendar and a person to control it, content quality will definitely suffer or become ad hoc.

Strategy Recommendation 20 Create a sound editorial calendar and a person to manage with sufficient authority

An editorial calendar is essential to an effective social media strategy to plan for future quality resources from a range of writers. The person managing the challenge to deliver against publication deadlines will need sufficient resource and power within the organisation to deliver it.

Our tip – Ensure content is written to appeal to the audience but also includes keyphrases and search terms that users might query.

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Best Practice Tip 15 Ensure coverage of target keyphrases within the editorial calendar

When planning your editorial calendar, note target keyphrases to be included so that optimisation is not forgotten at the expense of the writing style.

An integrated editorial calendar

Getting your content organised will help keep your audience engaged. You may also find our editorial calendar template useful²⁵ for ideas, although this should be specific to your brand and audience.

Work through our ideas to build your content calendar on the most relevant frequency.

Daily

- ✓ At least one (ideally three) new blog posts
- ✓ Tweet updates and ideas
- ✓ As above, for Facebook if that's relevant
- ✓ Respond to others' blog posts and comments on your own
- ✓ Keep up to date with the news
- ✓ An article, maybe a how-to
- ✓ Get involved off-site somewhere (at Smart Insights we use LinkedIn for that)
- ✓ Maintain any outposts or web assets you use in your marketing
- ✓ Summarise key news and updates in an enewsletter.

Monthly

- ✓ Produce a webinar
- ✓ Create two how-to or interview-based videos from an event
- ✓ Write a meatier blog post, maybe two or three if you can
- ✓ Create several strong customer case studies
- ✓ Most importantly – produce/create third-party content, maybe a guest blog post on an influential third-party website.
- ✓ Create and post presentations to Slideshare
- ✓ Organise a Twitter chat around a topic of interest
- ✓ Host a Hangout on Google+ to bring together community members and influencers.

Quarterly

- ✓ Publish an e-book, guide or whitepaper (distribute it!)
- ✓ Attend one big event and interview people
- ✓ Produce a video series of four to five items
- ✓ Tie in a promotional mechanic, maybe a simple contest where UGC might feature heavily.

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²⁵ [Smart Insights: Editorial calendar download.](#)

Q4. Have we selected a content hub platform to manage publication and syndication of content?

☐ Q. Do we have a content hub?

A content hub is a place around which you can grow a network of interested individuals, a *place where interaction or engagement with your content and your brand can take place*. This interaction will happen because of the quality of your content marketing.

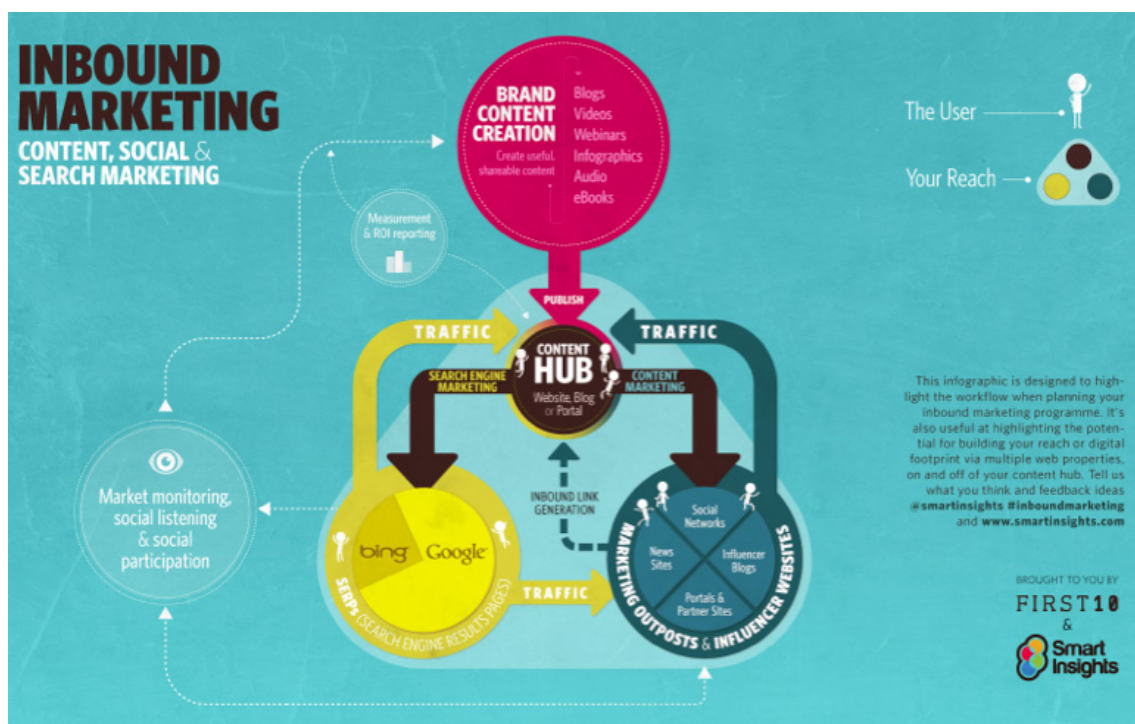
What is it? Content marketing hub

Ideally this is a central branded location where your audience can access your content marketing and interact with it. It should integrate with your other content.

Think of the hub as the home for your content, a place for feedback and dialogue and the connector to a number of out-posts where your brand is present (Facebook, Slideshare, etc.) and being shared and discussed. You can increasingly use a social network like Facebook as the place to build your hub, but Facebook is not an asset you can truly own in terms of features and functions so that is risky (you never know!). Facebook also remains external to your main brand presence, so we'd suggest that a hub is the bridge between your commercial or main website, and external out-posts like Facebook.

A good example is the [White House Social Hub](#) which pulls together blog posts and social network interactions.

Here's a visual showing how a hub fits in with other communications:



At a physical level of a site the content hub can be:

- ☒ A blog – effectively the home page
- ☒ A customer magazine

✓ Your online news section

✓ A resource centre.

Our tip – What you call your hub will depend on the audience. In B2B ‘Blog’ or ‘News’ is the best approach whereas consumers may not be so familiar with a blog so a magazine may be the best label. A good example is www.asdamagazine.com. This uses the Wordpress blog platform, but is positioned as a magazine:

Q5. Do we have a defined internal resource to create and manage content and discussions in place?

□ Q. Do we have internal resource for the creation and management of content in place?

We have separately identified internal and external resourcing, since we don’t believe content creation for your social hub is a task you can completely outsource. You will have to decide which of the tasks are managed externally. In a small company, all tasks would typically be internal.

Work through the tasks below to consider if you can manage internally or enlist some external help.

- Define communications strategy: Define content frequency, types and formats
- Define editorial calendar
- Create content – write copy, record videos, create infographic
- Review content
- Publish content on content hub
- Publish and syndicate content to other outposts
- Manage hardware platform
- Review results to improve performance.

Mark the ones that you think should be internal or external for you.

You will see that some of the content types above involve creation of original content and some are adding value or curating existing content by summarising and/or aggregating it.

Best Practice Tip 16 Balance creation of original content and content curation

You can create engagement through content curation, but original content tends to be most engaging and most shared.

Creating your own content

Originating your own content is the most effective but most expensive way to create content, and it should really represent an absolute minimum of 20 percent of what you generate. In time it should become the majority of the content that you share.

As a strategy it’s much more proactive, focused on being a resource – giving your brand the best chance in both SEO and social marketing programmes. The reason we say this is that you are establishing yourself as the source, not only for your audience, but other influencers seeking content that they can curate and share – so it’s so powerful for reach.

Our tip – If you think you have ‘nothing to say’, review your customer service feedback and social listening phase to identify problems or needs your audience has.

Content co-creation

This is where a number of contributors come together under one brand to publish for mutual gain and is a great option for quick or first tentative steps into content marketing. You could say – ‘that’s just guest blogging’ and you’d be right, but it’s a more systematic way of doing this.

What is it? Content co-creation

Creation of a content resource using different authors from across different companies or departments.

You could include your CEO and other key stakeholders to create engaging posts to attract comment and participation.

Two of the best examples of co-creation are Mashable or the American Express OpenForum.com website. The brand is leveraging lots of experts to create a site that benefits everyone in terms of business and personal brand building. Of course you’re relinquishing some control over message, but it’s overall a good win.

You could say content co-creation also involves getting customers to create long-form user-generated content, so this is worth considering too.

Best Practice Tip 17 Identify trusted partners and customers who can support you in your content generation efforts

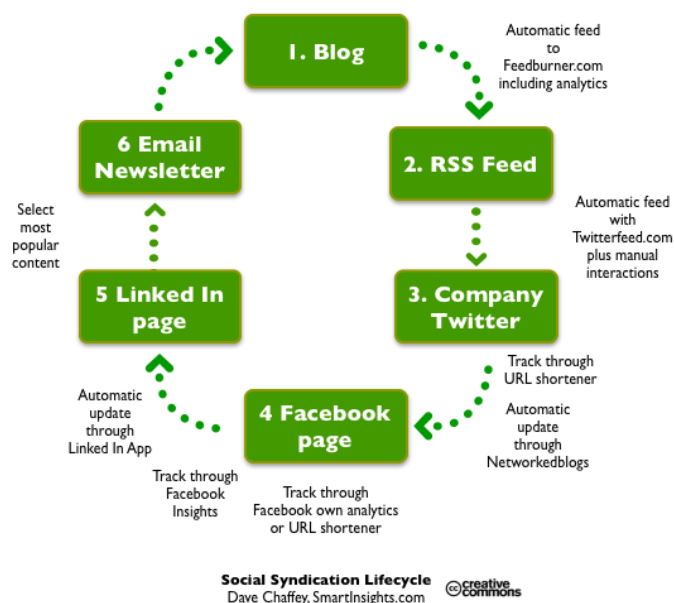
Through having a range of authors you can add variety and reach as they promote their content. But you may have issues of managing content consistency and quality.

Q6. How are we managing content syndication to other platforms?

☐ Q. Are we managing content syndication to other outposts?

This will be a combination of automation, e.g. RSS feeds and manual interactions.

So when new content is created it is automatically syndicated to the different social channels using the tools shown here:²⁶



26 [Smart Insights: Content syndication.](#)

Strategy Recommendation 21 Use tools to automatically syndicate your content to the main networks

Use tools to distribute your content, but ensure you have personal participation too.

Although we're advocating saving time here by syndicating, we need to be careful not just to push or SHOUT – the beauty of social media is that it's a two-way street enabling conversations and dialogue. So manual interactions with each of the social networks to ask and answer questions is also recommended as we've said before.

Q7. Are we managing outreach to other sites?

☐ Q. *Is blog outreach to key influencers managed in a structured way?*

There's a tendency to put the bulk of your personal time and the bulk of your budget and resource into your site but reaching outwards is more important and more challenging.

As mentioned in Step 4, great content will spread naturally, but will reach more people through investing in key influencers.

Seeding works best if you put resource into managing and communicating with your key influencers but influencers will vary in importance and value, so as with working with other partners like affiliates, it's important to segment your influences and lavish more attention on the most significant ones.

Strategy Recommendation 22 Identify key advocates and influencers and manage them separately from other social media contacts

We have seen that many 'spectate' or 'lurk' without commenting or sharing, so you need to identify those who share.

As an example of this need to prioritise, Nokia has a community of advocates in each country who are managed through a specialist agency with updates formerly centred around a special blog for influencers, Nokia Connects blog, but now folded into the [main Nokia Conversations Official Blog](#).

Check back to Step 3 to identify your influencers.

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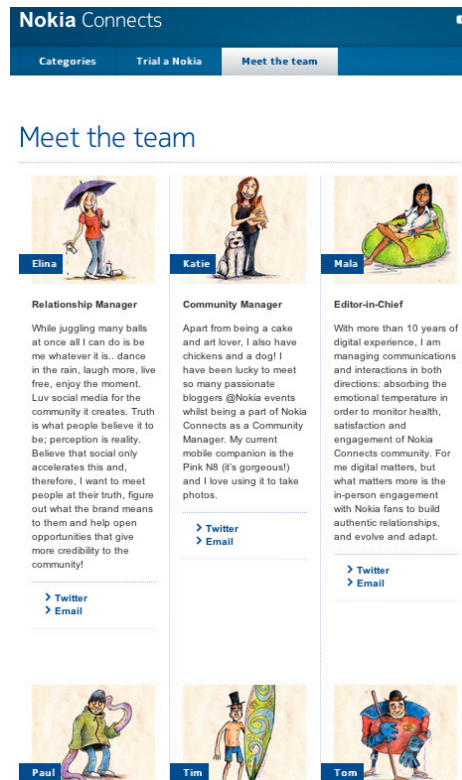
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Q8. Are we communicating clearly through advertising, PR and email marketing of social media/community proposition of content proposition to existing customers and prospects?

☐ Q. Is our communication or proposition clear?

This final planning issue is arguably the easiest to manage. It's about clarity and consistency of messaging to present your brand in a favourable, shareable way through social media.

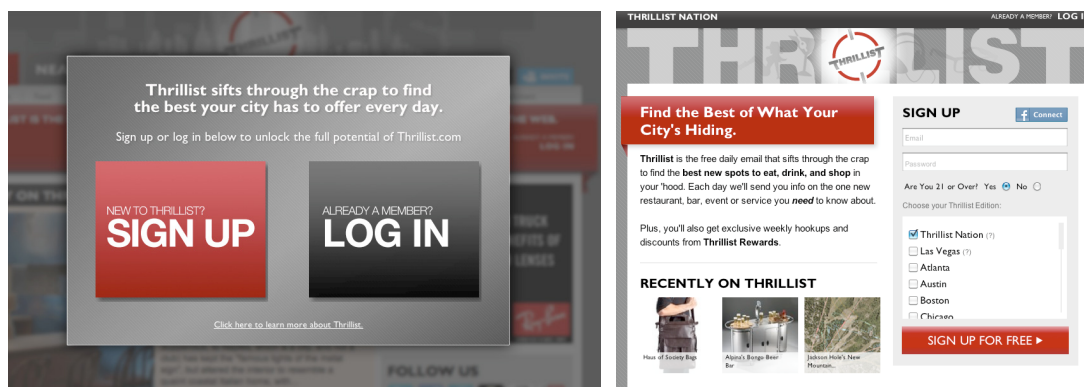
Ensure that you:

- 1. Demonstrate uniqueness.** It must be your story, something that no one else could tell. Work your story to create a distinct 'voice' and point of view – your personality is your differentiator. Don't aim to be the same since you are then a part of the noise. Think about what your ideal product story sounds like – the components that make it a good story for your business – then figure out how you build on that. Stand for something, polarise the market and above all be honest and genuine. People buy that.
- 2. Keep it relevant.** Relate back to your audience, their perspective, what they talk about, and what they're anxious about. Address those concerns by demonstrating that you 'get it'. Tell stories of ways your products relieved customer anxieties and demonstrate social proof where you can.
- 3. Demonstrate value.** Incorporate specifics to make your story credible and believable. Discuss results and benefits that are directly relevant to your target audience's needs.
- 4. Make it memorable.** Connect with the target audience on an emotional level. Be remarkable, inspiring even. Create something that is easy and fun to gossip about and, importantly, share-able. Remarkable can be as simple as changing to a video blog for valuable expert interviews once each month; it can be that you're co-creating content with a non-conflicting super-brand or celebrity, who knows.
- 5. Incorporate your brand.** Be sure to build on top of your brand tone of voice, brand is a

bit vague so specifically: your core promise, expectation, personality and how you aim to make people feel – the bit they have the relationship with.

6. **Be human.** The Cluetrain Manifesto stated this over 10 years ago. We're all human, so be that way. Be a little controversial, polarise the market, avoid jargon, break a few rules. You are also serving and solving problems in order to sell, so become a reliable and valuable resource. Of course, we have to be appropriate for your own audience, just push the boundaries – write differently, since words matter.

Here's a great example of a human brand voice. Not for all by any means, but it makes for a powerful message:



Hinge content around a 'big idea'

The concept of atomising content is that these are all a part of a bigger whole, an ecosystem, the small parts all form the whole – in this case they form the 'big idea'. The big idea concept comes from David Ogilvy back in the 60s when he suggested marketing needed a single core message, or big idea, in order to be understood by and motivating to the consumer. Content marketing needs the big idea, or core message, to be powerful enough to fuel a number of different content ideas at the tactical level, so as an example:

Based around a big idea, a 60-page whitepaper or ebook can be atomised and re-developed for:

- ✓ 20 blog posts, all referencing the whitepaper
- ✓ Several webinars
- ✓ Video on key concepts or how-to's (with a related audio podcast version for mp3)
- ✓ Articles (probably with a third-party site)
- ✓ Real-time social chat, e.g. Twitter chat and Google + Hangout
- ✓ Several infographics to be pinned on Pinterest.

The thinking here is that a key piece of content based upon your big idea (like an ebook) provides the basis for a lot more content in different shapes and sizes, not cut and pasted directly but with some simple re-development along a theme. And, each piece of atomised content, used on or off your website, provides a reason to link back to the main piece, the original ebook.

It may be easier and less daunting to maintain the big idea but start small when implementing it, developing blog posts first, running some interviews or webinars and then grow it into the bigger piece. This will keep costs down too.

Your core audience segments will differ to the masses, as will those influencers with the largest propensity to share, this means they're easier to connect with than you might think. You probably already know a few blogs, forums, websites and or social communities where discussions and content are being posted on your topic (and if you don't a Google search

will).

Q9. Participate to share ideas and content with your audience and peers

☐ Q. Are we investing enough time with participation?

This sounds obvious – so where and how might you participate? Perhaps take a look back at our social media marketing radar where we asked [What are the main social platforms?](#)

This is mostly down to your audience segments and where they are online, see point 2. Here are some more ideas:

- ☒ **Guest blog or re-share content.** Find related and influential sites (or site owners) and connect with them. Focus your efforts though, only right for the most relevant bogs. Make sure you approach with ideas and a great example that's ready to publish – make it easier to get a yes.
- ☒ **Comment in others' blogs.** As above, choose carefully where you invest that time. Have a consistent name, picture and profile – we recommend setting this up in Disqus.com²⁷ which is the default standard across many blogs, in order to best build your brand reputation. You can find top bloggers in Google's blog search, for example as well as Follower Wonk.
- ☒ **Social sharing through Reddit and StumbleUpon.** The golden rule is to add value, share what you like as well, your content should not be majority. So don't spam with links and work hard to be relevant and leverage your great content to best effect (point 6).
- ☒ **Use Q&A sites.** Gold so far as rich interactions around things people want to learn. How can you position your content to make it genuinely useful and in turn ensure strategic opportunities, and so links, back to your website? Examples include, LinkedIn Q&A, Answers.com, Quora, Yahoo! Answers and Beppl.com.

Remember that the web is alive and driven by linking. So don't be afraid to always link back to great sources of information that you're referencing as well as your own content. The benefits are, of course, two-fold – you drive traffic via the link as well as tell Google how important that content is if it's a followed link.

Maximising your communications strategy for action

By this point, you have identified and built into your plan your audience, influencers, communication and content strategy so it's time to look at tactics to encourage interaction on your website or social outposts.

Think of these interactions as a means of:

- ☒ **Starting a dialogue on your site** – This eventually giving rise to a user registration, sales lead or transaction.
- ☒ **Generating user-generated content** – This can boost conversion through social proof and help with SEO.
- ☒ **Encouraging the sharing of your brand** – In the form of content, in the social networks.
- ☒ **Sparking interactions between people** – Facilitating the discussion.
- ☒ **Supporting buyer decision making** – The site visitor learns or realises something of value, something inspiring ideally.

In line with content formats consider:

- ☐ **Engagement devices** – There is a tendency for calls to action to focus on generating leads and sales but softer calls to action encouraging interaction have their place too.

27 [Disqus.com](#).

In the social world these devices should encourage participants to share their results with others. For example, LinkedIn uses its Maps application to encourage interaction and sharing.²⁸ Devices will include a lot of the ideas you developed through your content strategy.

- ❑ **Blog interactions** – A simple way to gain interaction. Aligned to your content calendar, insert polls for example, encourage comments within the post, ask for feedback and link to other pages on your site and forum pages, etc. Ensure every post is designed to do something.
- ❑ **Gamification** – To engage consumers, social gaming can be a great way to encourage interaction and so reach. The WildFire Promotion builder²⁹ shows the types of engaging promotions that can be created in the social networks such as Sweepstakes, UGC contents, coupons, Pick Your Favourites, Trivia and Quizzes, Instant Wins and Voting around topics.
- ❑ **Growing your communities** – Today you will have several communities on your preferred social networks or a community integrated into your site. Think about how you use messaging on the site and within email to encourage these.
- ❑ **Social sharing widgets** – Make it easy for website visitors to find your social networks using embedded widgets and a page devoted to social networks.



- ❑ **Social network integration** – Integrating commenting on other networks into your site

28 [LinkedIn Maps](#).

29 [WildFire App Promotions](#).

is becoming more popular through social sign-on³⁰ through the Facebook API and tools such as Gigya and Janrain. These are independent tech web services that act as an intermediary between your domain and multiple social networks. Sears have created an impressive social commerce integration you can read about in our post 'Why social sign-on matters.'

- ❑ **Product reviews and ratings** – Another forum of social commerce. The popularity of TripAdvisor, Amazon reviews and retail site Reevo show how we love to give our opinion. This form of user-generated content is fantastic in terms of assisting conversion and contributing to SEO, so it's a must-have for retail sites. Think about how you encourage and share comments. We think Firebox is a great example – they offer spot prizes for 'amazing' contributions and these days all comments are on Facebook to encourage amplification.
- ❑ **Enewsletters and other email offers** – We know many consumers and business people alike will subscribe to email if it offers unique value or convenience to them. Email is a great way of encouraging participation in many of the types of site or social network engagement we've described above. Make sure you make the most of email contact to encourage social interactions and drive traffic to the hub.

Converting engagement to results

How can social media actually drive sales? This is a key question since we know social media can encourage interactions, but how do we encourage sale?

First, start with an evaluation of your current online lead generation process and figure out how well it's working through your website.

Once clear, look at ideas to boost leads and sales. Here are our recommendations:

1 Define the leads you're looking for

- ✅ **Create buyer personas** – Revisit the personas devised in Step 4 and share target persona information with whoever is developing content for your social media channels to ensure this is as targeted as possible.
- ✅ **Be useful** – Develop content that answers the questions or needs of your audience and create call to actions that aim to convert leads. Hubspot offer a great deal of resources to digital marketers available via download, but first a contact form must be completed including a question of what the biggest challenge is to give insight for any follow-up activity.

2 Your blog or 'social hub' is key to generating leads

- ✅ **Prioritise subscription** – An email subscription is step 1 in lead generation, yet often overlooked in lieu of offering a blog RSS feed. RSS is fine but it'll do next to nothing for helping you gain permission marketing. Email subscription must be front and centre with the benefits clearly explained – what would the user receive via email? A weekly or monthly round-up of your best content with the latest offers?
- ✅ **Clear calls to action** – Every blog post should include a relevant call to action that is related to what the post is about. It could be that you want to deepen engagement with subscribers and step them towards engaging with your products or services in a softer way, a webinar for example, and/or ensure that there's clear information about how to buy, the next steps for those that are interested. If you don't ask, you don't get. Ensure you've optimised landing pages from the email so that you can appreciate the user's journey with appropriate messaging.

30 [Smart Insights: Why Social Sign-on matters.](#)

- ✓ **Use ad space** – A common tactic with big publishers is to have formal ad containers in blogs and emails and then define the value of engaging with them. This supports the call to action and you're not sending mixed messages by virtue of using a well-established protocol of driving sales leads from content interest.
- ✓ **Test javascript pop-ups/lightbox subscriptions** – Although many don't like the intrusion, there's so much evidence to say it works and so is worth testing. Emotionally many of us will feel that it's the interruptive hard sell that damages user experience and it's not worth it, but the fact is that if conversion increases can be believed it may be worth trying. Include rules in the session cookies so that users aren't repeatedly bombarded once they've said 'no', and keep the communications clear and fun.

3 Have great, shareable landing pages

- ✓ **Respect the process** – It's important to have landing pages showcasing your shareable content marketing 'objects' that are dedicated to convert visitor to lead, not sale, and in turn lead to sale. Here, the communications are totally different. You're focusing on a part of the process at any time, not all of it.
- ✓ **Keep focus** – When thinking about lead conversion, keep the communications on a landing page short and focused, don't data capture because you can, data capture can be based on what will improve the relevance and quality of any future communications. You're data capturing for permission at this stage, not sale.
- ✓ **Test it** – A landing page is a key part of the conversion process and it's shocking how the art of button sizes, colours, images and messaging impact a click conversion – don't under-estimate it. Apply tools like the Google Website Optimize to test different versions of the page and its elements.

4 Clear brand messages and tone of voice

- ✓ **Purpose** – Retaining that clarity on your brand's compelling purpose is a fundamental. You also need to be clear why your brand exists, what value it adds and then demonstrate that in your content, assets, web services and social interactions. Inspire commitment from a user to become a lead in the truest sense when even just creating a blog post, just as you would in your product or service.
- ✓ **Just be human** – There's an old adage 'people buy people' and the whole point of social media marketing is building relationships. Companies like Zappos are famed for this very human way of interacting, real people at Zappos will interact with customers via the customer Twitter service.
- ✓ **Listen and respond** – By having a Facebook page, brands create expectation that they are actually awake and interested in conversing. Responding is a minimum, but also as mentioned earlier, listening to conversations is a must too. See the Asos example 0 1-2-1 style advice.
- ✓ **Develop a consistent brand attitude** – Guy Kawasaki's book (Enchantment) talks much about having a positive, can-do attitude within social media. It sounds obvious, but if you've one person loving their job and one not then you're going to get 50 percent success at best. Social media is people based.

Step 6

Define approaches for the core social media platforms

Throughout this document we've concentrated on getting the plan together before launching into social media marketing, but have also referenced that you're likely to already be making use of brand pages on the main social networks like Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn or Twitter.

We've also asked you to score your competence and importance for each type of social networking but in this section, we will show in greater detail how you can review your existing presence, or issues to consider when creating a new presence on each of the networks.

Each social media platform can serve a different purpose for the individual, business or organisation. You will find that for each brand, the platforms tend to attract different users and offer different features to engage them. The tone of voice used and interactions are quite different too, so a 'one-size fits all' communication strategy for each platform is definitely not the way forward. There are, however, common issues to managing use of these platforms that need an agreed approach and also common tools to help communicate with your audience through each of these platforms.

Recommended resource? Managing social network guides

We have detailed guides on managing each of Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Twitter in our members area. These give many more examples of the communications approaches best suited to each network.

Review your strategy for brand-related communications across social platforms

☐ Q. Have we reviewed a common approach?

The secret to success for making effective use of each social media platform is to work out which common approaches you can use across platforms and which approaches need to be unique for the platform. Some of the common issues will be defined in your communications strategy that we covered in Step 5, that is:

- ☒ Value provided through content of status updates.
- ☒ Timing and frequency of updates.
- ☒ Communicating the proposition to encourage people to follow or interact with the brand.

When you consider these in detail, there will be nuances for each platform in tone and style, for example Twitter tends to require more frequent updates than Facebook and the interaction and content can differ, for example, more support related.

Select the social media platforms to prioritise

☐ Q. Which social media platforms are priority?

You will find that each social platform will naturally differ in its importance to your business, so the first question to answer is where are the priorities now and where to focus in the future.

Work through the following questions to help answer this:

Which social platforms are delivering the most site visits and outcomes now?

☐ Q. Do our analytics show reach, value and engagement delivered by different platforms?

We saw in a previous section how you can track visits from social networks to help assess outcomes generated by social network – see 18 Collect insights for setting realistic objectives for social media marketing.

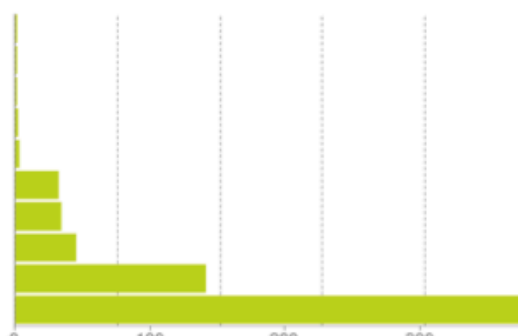
Other social media analysis tools can also suggest the relative value of networks – for example Hootsuite will show the relative importance:

Ow.ly : Clicks by Region



Region	Clicks
United Kingdom	44.4% (284)
United States	6.6% (42)
Germany	4.4% (28)
European Union	3.9% (25)
Netherlands	3.3% (21)

Ow.ly : Top Referrers



Referrer	Referrals
Direct Click	380
facebook.com	141
twitter.com	45
hootsuite.com	34
linkedin.com	32

However, analytics for a website doesn't assess value generated within the network, so it's also worth reviewing the level of sharing and engaging through comments in each network.

Do users of each channel have different preferences for content and interactions?

☐ Q. Have we reviewed platform and content preferences?

Social networks are so important that it's worth doing extra research beyond the numbers from analytics to find out user intent – what do users want from the network? These can be simple 'tell us what you want' network updates or links to surveys posted as status updates or delivered through email marketing.

Best Practice Tip 18 Ask social network users what they want, what motivates them to follow your updates

Go beyond the analytics to find out the type of content and interactions that users are looking for.

What is the profile of our social audience?

☐ Q. Have we profiled our audience to review intersection with our target audience?

The analytics also generally won't tell you much about **who** your audience are. To determine this, use surveys as described above or take a sample of members to assess their demographics.

Best Practice Tip 19 Profile your audience to identify their value to you

Select a sample of users and review their profiles to determine their potential value.

Take a sample of 50-100+ users from each network and you should be able to determine their potential value to you by comparing to your typical demographics or personas, i.e. group by:

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Location
- ✓ Seniority and company types (B2B).

After completing this analysis, your ideas on the most relevant networks for you may change since networks that are important by volume of fans or followers, may not be so relevant in terms of potential value.

What is the proposition for our social outposts?

☐ Q. Is it clear?

It's simple, when someone arrives on your brand pages, they will decide whether to engage based on the experience you can offer them through the visuals, messaging used plus the quality of the conversation evident in the wall or list of status updates. So these require urgent attention if they're not right.

Visuals and messaging showing the value of your social channel need to be consistent with the audience needs established from your research since audience will vary by channel. Think about whether yours are:

- ✓ Differentiated – from what others offer or your other channels.
- ✓ On-brand – consistent with the brand.
- ✓ Visually appealing – to get cut-through, this is as important as in TV ads.

We believe that the proposition for your social outposts are similar to those you offer through enewsletters – they are both a stream of updates. The only (big) difference is that interactions and suggestions by your audience are much more important within social networks.

Best Practice Tip 20 Define and communicate value of your status updates

Explain your proposition for social updates based on this mnemonic of how you deliver value to subscribers, for example, through:

- ✓ **Saving time.** By providing a single, up-to-date source.
- ✓ **Learning.** Increasing knowledge and solving day-to-day problems.
- ✓ **Saving money.** For instance, through regular, exclusive offers or deals.
- ✓ **Entertaining.** Regardless of the brand, social updates can and should be fun for their audiences – this is not only the preserve of consumer newsletters.
- ✓ **Sizzle.** Adding value to your brand through new ways of engagement and experiences. Burberry are brilliant at this through replicating offline experiences through the social networks.

Getting the sell-inform-entertain balance right

Remember the intent index from one of the early sections in this guide on [Why is Social Media Marketing important?](#) This showed that visitors to the web and social outposts are mostly not looking to buy or do business. Instead, they are looking to learn, socialise and have fun – this is what the savvy brands deliver – the right balance of communications.

For us, getting the correct balance between using your social media outposts as a sales tool and adding other types of value is key to their success. In fact, if you over-sell you will fail – that's why we say consider the sell-inform-entertain balance in your communications. Think how this differs for your audience. Thinking generally about the difference between B2B and B2C there are some common features. Work out which are key for your audiences...

How you add value and engage will vary by audience, but there are some common features that many are looking for:

B2B Proposition	B2C Proposition
Make my work easier	Make my life easier
Help me develop	Help me learn/have fun
Make me look good	Make me look good
Give me a great deal	Give me a great deal

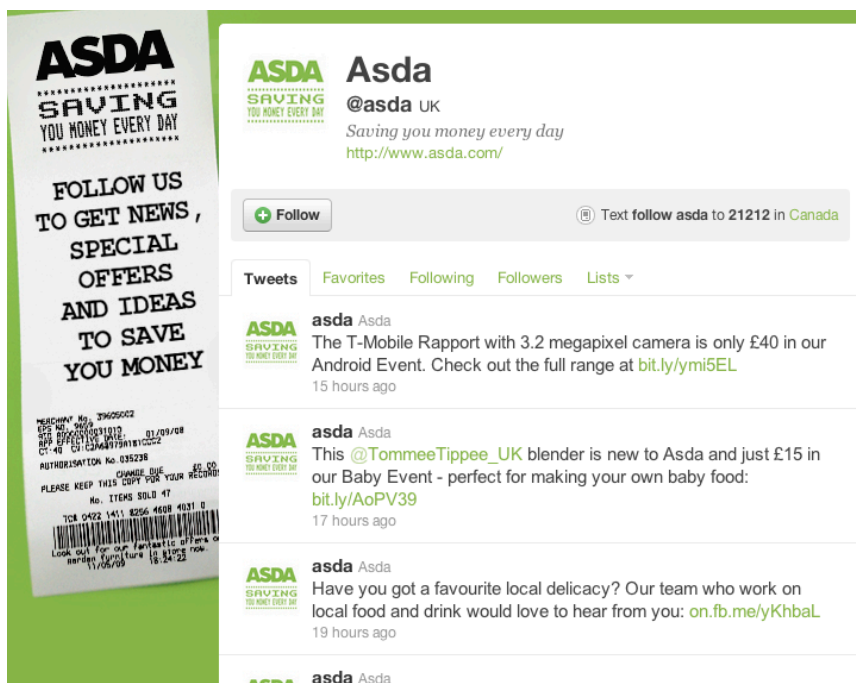
Having clear goals around the types of value you want to offer through your updates will help staff managing social media focus and can also be used on the social network to encourage signup. This is part of the communications strategy we covered in Step 5.

Remember it doesn't have to be original content – you can still add value by alerting, aggregating and distilling – see content curation in Step 5.

Let's take one example from retailer Asda of how to encourage interaction with a channel.

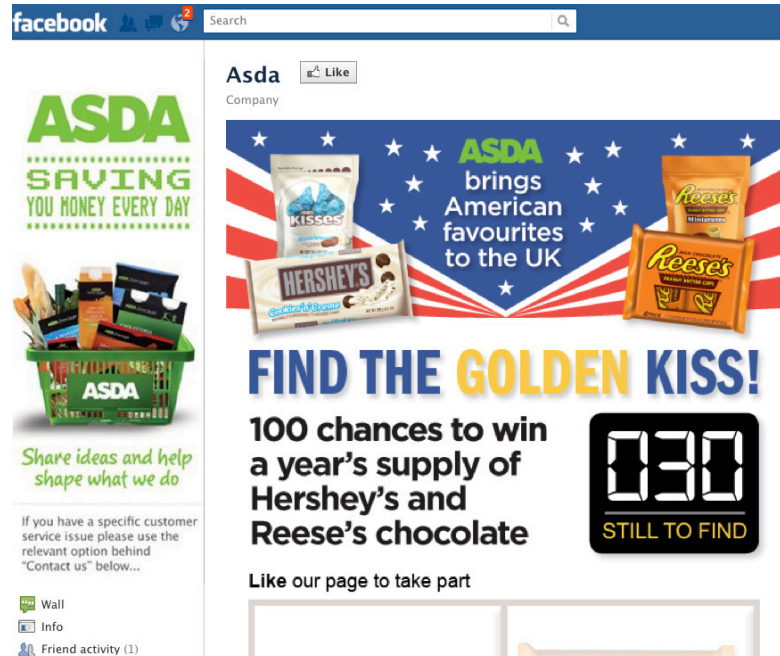
Twitter

Twitter now offers the ability to personalise the header of brand pages as well as profile wallpaper and bio to explain a brand's proposition. Asda has not taken full advantage of this, using only imagery in the left sidebar and a limited bio to persuade users to follow.



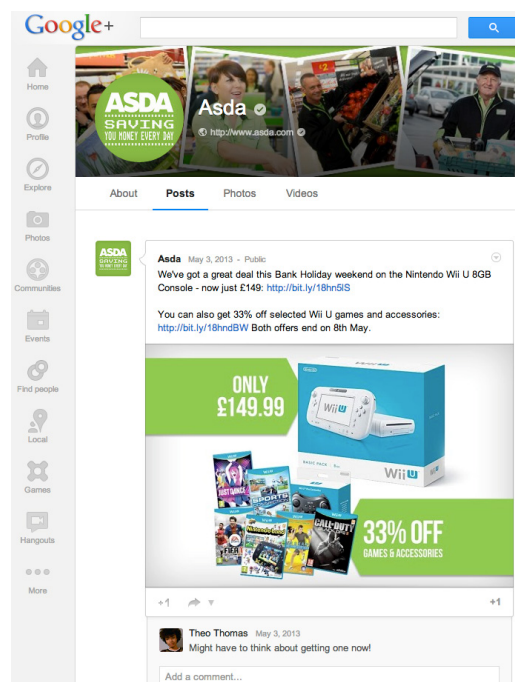
Facebook

Facebook pages offer more opportunities to explain your proposition through tabs and menu options. The use of a 'Gated Like Page' is another way to show the proposition and encourage buy-in. The Asda Facebook page shows these options well including a link to shop online, contact details and cooking apps.



Google Plus

Google Plus is a relatively underused resource by brands, but examples from H&M and Cadburys show how it can be used to engage a sizeable following. Asda is present on Google+, but limits its updates in line with its limited following .



Creating an editorial plan for social channel communications

☐ Q. Are we managing and scheduling the right type of content across platforms?

In Step 5 we discussed the need for an editorial calendar with reference to all social media content to deliver the proposition. In this step we are looking at common approaches to managing social channels.

To summarise these are our guidelines of what we've covered so far in this section.

Checklist – social media streams

- ☐ **Q. Do our social messages add value to the audience?** This is the very first question since your content has to make a difference to those who are following you if they are to continue to engage and share your content. Your posts have to inform, entertain or contain great offers otherwise you won't get cut-through...
- ☐ **Q. Is each channel offering its own unique value?** Online users like customers everywhere like exclusives, so think about social channel specific offers or deals – such as a Twitter competition or a Facebook gated page campaign. ASOS.com has produced some fantastic versions of these. Of course many messages communicated by channels will be similar, but it's worth having some differences.
- ☐ **Q. Are our profile pages communicating this value?** Of course to gain subscribers, it's important that your profile summary shows why you're worth listening to AND interacting with.
- ☐ **Q. Is our profile findable?** Naturally the benefits of your social profiles should be communicated on your site, other profiles and in offline communications. Offer choice and subscribers will choose the channel that suits them best, or maybe more than one. There are some options for getting listed on directories which will give your channel some search benefit, if you're near the top of the list, may gain you some new subscribers too.
- ☐ **Q. How valuable are our messages compared to competitors?** You can only answer the first two questions by checking out what the other guys are doing, so you audit these – we recommend setting up competitor auditing on another channel. It also suggests the need for good old-fashioned customer research. Ask them what they want through surveys or get them to feedback on how you stack-up against the competitors.
- ☐ **Q. Are we interacting?** It's all too easy to go into broadcast mode on social channels, particularly if you use tools to facilitate this. So check that you are interacting, which means as a minimum replying to questions, but better also to reach out and interact with others – some following, some not.
- ☐ **Q. Is the frequency right?** The right frequency is about getting the balance right between too many and too few messages and considering the resources needed to create content and send messages to alert subscribers to the content. You'll need to test this, it varies by channel. For example, some recommend one message a day via Facebook, others say this is too few. Certainly on Twitter you would expect a business profile to be more active, if you have something worthwhile to say.
- ☐ **Q. Is the timing right?** This also needs testing. You will find times when your audience is more active and when your message is more likely to be read and shared. We have found that with our audience, first thing in the morning and just before lunch is effective.
- ☐ **Q. Do we send reminders about the good/important stuff?** As with many other media, reminders about key messages are worthwhile. This is particularly the case with social

Set business goals

Create strategy

Social listening and reputation monitoring

Content and engagement strategy

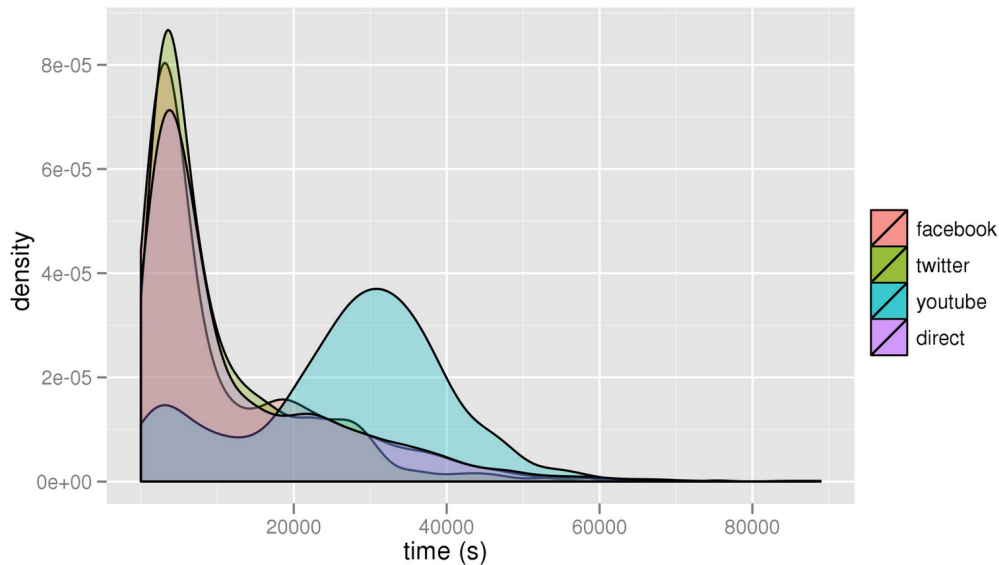
E-communications strategy

Practical advice for core platforms

Social media optimisation

6

media since there is such a short half-life ³¹



- ❑ **Q. Are we using the facilities of the network for a viral effect?** In Facebook, the Likes should happen without prompting if the content is good. Likewise the Shares or + in Google Plus. In Twitter, some recommend adding a 'Please RT', but we're not personally a fan – it looks desperate unless it's for an ethical cause. In Twitter also there are hash tags you need to include these to extend your reach, but not always – they work best for breaking news, campaign names and niche topics we think.
- ❑ **Q. Are we integrating channels?** If you like the logic of offering something different via each channel, then it makes sense to communicate when these offers are available since people may want to follow you on more than one network. But don't overdo it since people will have their preferred channels.
- ❑ **Q. Are we using the unique benefits of each network?** Each network has its own style, its own vibe, its own etiquette. If we always send the same message across each network we're missing out on interactions for sure.
- ❑ **Q. Are we using the right tools to make us efficient?** Using a common social communications tool that enables messages to be sent across all the networks is smart, essential really. There are many other advantages too, such as common tracking, scheduling and the ability to share workload between team members.
- ❑ **Q. Are we using the wrong tools/approach?** With a management tool, it's all too easy to just broadcast – too many identical messages across all the channels.
- ❑ **Q. Are we responding to customer comments?** Research suggests that many companies don't have the resource or process to respond to customer comments in social media channels. So make sure you can respond as appropriate.

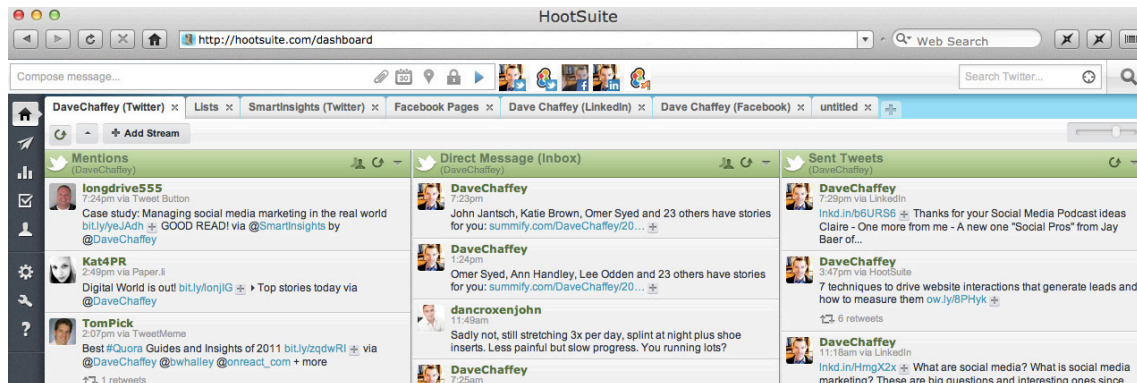
Define a method for managing content across social media platforms

- ❑ **Q. Do we have a method for managing content across platforms?**

If you're manually adding status updates and responding to comments in the social forums, this is going to take a LOT of time.

31 [Smart Insights: post comparing the Half-life of email and social media channels.](#)

Try using a tool which enables you to schedule across all of the main networks. Our current preference is Hootsuite as this has great functionality to schedule and assign content – even on the free version!



Is tracking for social platforms defined?

☐ Q. *Is tracking across social platforms defined?*

We've described the details of tracking social media in Step 1 of this guide – see '19 Measuring social media outcomes in Google Analytics. In this section we summarise the main types of tracking you can use.

1. Track social mentions (keywords used and sentiment)

☐ Q. *Are our mentions on social media sites monitored and responded to?*

We explain how you can tackle this in Step 3 Social media listening and online reputation management.

2. Track visits to your site from social networks

☐ Q. *Are our site referrals from social networks tracked?*

Some users of social networks will click through to your site from your status updates or the site itself. These can be measured with the right use of tracking codes. These need defined tracking codes to measure and you should group them within your analytics into a single segment.

3. Track interactions on social networks

☐ Q. *Are interactions on social networks tracked (where practical)?*

Additional insights may be available from the social networks themselves or through tagging with Google Analytics. The latter is only possible within Facebook through an IFRAME – this is the code you need and how to generate it.³² Facebook also has its Facebook Insights. LinkedIn has a similar facility. Twitter has a tracking product if you are using sponsored ads, and Pinterest for business now has an analytics solution to track interactions.

32 [Raven Tools: Google Analytics Configuration Tool.](#)

4. Track click throughs to social networks from your sites

☐ Q. Are we tracking referrals from our site to social networks?

This is where you evaluate integration of your site with social networks. You should have buttons or pages linking to the social network. You need a way to track these, within Google this is achieved through the social actions feature or through event tracking. We described event tracking in our Google Analytics guide where we explained how to set up event tracking as follows.

To create an event that will be recorded in Google Analytics is relatively straightforward. It involves taking the hyperlink reference and adding a Javascript 'onClick' function which has a specific order of parameters as shown above, i.e.

- ☒ Categories (required)
- ☒ Actions (required)
- ☒ Event labels (optional)
- ☒ Values (optional).

In our example, we are just using the first three parameters:

```
<a href="http://www.twitter.com/smartinsights" title="Follow us
on Twitter" onClick="_gaq.push(['_trackEvent', 'Social media',
'External link', 'Twitter']);" >Follow us on Twitter</a>
```

Step 7

Social media optimisation (SMO)

This final step is a key part of your social media marketing strategy.

Once you have put your plan in place, optimising it is a logical next step to improve its effectiveness. Throughout the previous steps we have referred to the need to analyse the impact of your content to define what it should include and the frequency, but now we take a more in-depth look.

Strategy recommendation 23 Make sure you practice SMO

If you follow an SMO approach you'll get the best from your content marketing, but this requires commitment and the right approach to test, learn and refine.

So what is SMO? People have different views on what SMO involves depending on whether their background is more in SEO or social media marketing. We prefer to think of SMO as a structured approach to improving social media through a 'test-learn-refine' approach. We need to use social media to help people find our content, participate in conversations about it and then share it.

Since SMO centres on the distribution of social objects and their ability to rise to the top of any related search query, it's closely related to content marketing and SEO.

Brian Solis believes that:

SEO + SMO = Amplified findability in the traditional and social web³³

We think that's a great way to summarise it (but only if you're a fan of jargon).

At the centre of a SMO programme are social objects. Social objects represent the content we market via social media, i.e. what you define in your content plan. It follows then, that the goal of SMO is to measure, monitor and improve the visibility of social objects as a means to connecting with individuals who are proactively seeking additional information and direction.

Social objects are contextualised through keywords, titles, descriptions, and/or tags.

The questions to consider about your SMO are based on the four areas of our RACE framework.

Work through the table on the next page to check which of the areas of SMO you are working on now and which you could use more in future.

Set business goals

Create strategy

Social listening and reputation monitoring

Content and engagement strategy

E-communications strategy

Practical advice for core platforms

Social media optimisation

7

33 [Brian Solis: SMO is the New SEO.](#)

Social media communication strategy	We don't do this Score 0	We plan to do this Score 1	We are doing this? Score 2
Reach more: ☐ Q. Increase amplification of message through content quality ☐ Q. Improve use of outreach to influencers ☐ Q. Optimise use of advertising to promote networks			
Act more: ☐ Q. Encourage more prospects to become members of community on social network ☐ Q. Improve ease of sharing on site through integration of content ☐ Q. Improve use of buttons for sharing ☐ Q. Increase number of comments and other interactions on content			
Convert more: ☐ Q. Signposts and promotions linking social media usage to sales ☐ Q. Use of promotions, advertising and retargeting to encourage sales ☐ Q. Sales offer optimisation ☐ Q. Use of cross-channel promotions to encourage sale (e.g. coupons)			
Engage more: ☐ Q. Encourage customer use of social media using email integration or offline media? ☐ Q. Improve integration of social media channels and offline channels ☐ Q. Improve use of social media for customer care and customer feedback			



Review the key social media optimisation activities

Q. What are our main SMO activities?

So what does SMO involve, what activities need to happen? We think it's useful here to look at the five new rules of SMO³⁴ developed by Rohit Bhargava of Ogilvy New York.

As we run through each area, we'll add our recommendations on which SMO issues we think are important to consider. You will notice that several of these recommend looking at analysis by Dan Zarrella, the self-styled 'Social Media Scientist'. It's worth subscribing to his blog³⁵ if you're a specialist.

- 1. **Create shareable content.** As we have said before in this guide, this is fundamental content marketing, so in SMO, it's about determining the content that your audience prefers to share across different social media platforms.

Best Practice Tip 21 Review which types of content are most shareable

Do this for your existing content and also competitors – to see what the gap is. Ask whether there are specific content formats or topics that would work better for you.

You can learn from what Dan Zarrella has found through his analysis³⁶ of the most shareable topics on Facebook:

- ✓ **Web users like to learn about the most popular topics** – 'most', 'big' and 'best' are popular – these are often used in blog list posts which we know are popular.
- ✓ **Help readers learn and develop** – 'how' and 'why' are some of the most popular terms.
- ✓ **Make it personal can help engage** – include 'you' in the headline – email copywriters will know this also works well in the body copy.
- ✓ **Some content types are a turn-off** – the analysis also shows that 'poll', 'review' and 'v' are not shared so widely.

Dan has also taken a look at Twitter,³⁷ where he has found there is both an optimal length and place for click-through rates as shown below.

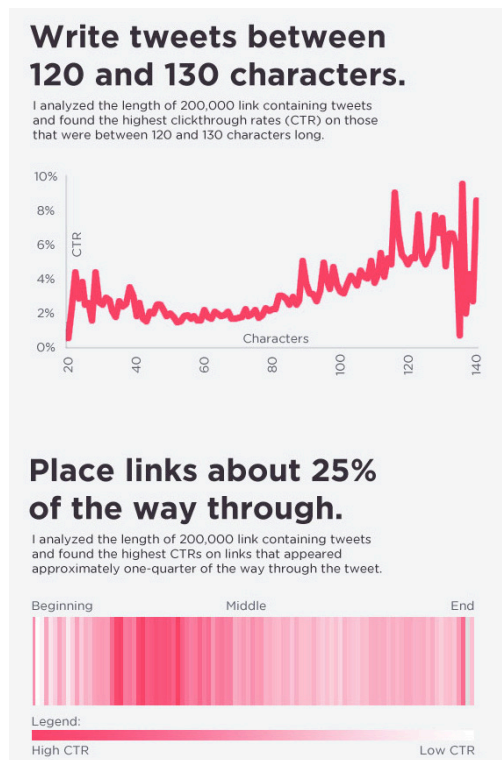
- 2. **Make sharing easy.** Embed buttons and other widgets to encourage sharing, recommendation or bookmarking within your site and blog. SMO analyses the best placements, formats and messages to do this – think about how you can improve your social sharing.

34 [Rohit Bhargava: The 5 New Rules of SMO \(2011\).](#)

35 [DanZarrella.com.](#)

36 [Dan Zarrella: The Most Shareable words on Facebook.](#)

37 [Dan Zarrella: Guidelines for using Twitter.](#)



This is straightforward. The main services are:

- ✓ AddThis.com
- ✓ ShareThis
- ✓ Native service plugins, e.g. from Facebook or Twitter.

We recommend the third approach since the top two tools, while easy to use, do not update to show shares from other sources such as social media management systems like Hootsuite or Tweetdeck. Using the native services of Facebook, Twitter and so on will check in real-time to see what the latest number of counts are. Plugins are available for CMS such as Wordpress. We use the Yoast 'Social Buttons'³⁸ since they use the native widgets and are flexible and include tracking in Google Analytics and GetClicky.

- ❑ **3. Reward engagement.** It's commonplace now to reward 'Liking' or 'Tweeting' through a promotional or content offer, e.g. giveaways when the fanbase reaches a target. Rohit also says this should look at a longer-term of encouraging deeper engagement and conversations.
- ❑ **4. Proactively share content.** This covers the process and format for sharing beyond your central hub. This can include syndicating articles to other partners or platforms like Slideshare or Scribd. Some also create their own widgets or use ad widgets for embedding or sharing on other sites (atomisation).
- ❑ **5. Encourage the 'mashup'.** Rohit says that this is encouraging folks to take and remix your content, so it becomes user-generated content. This activity can effectively be built into campaigns.

We think these rules are really useful for reviewing your approach to integrating social media marketing into a website, but think there's more to it. Other options to test and refine content

³⁸ [Yoast: Social Button instructions.](#)

through analytics and AB/multivariate testing include:

- ❑ **1. Test effectiveness of sharing and content types on business outcomes.** Ask which sharing activities and types of promotions lead to business results, leads, sales or changes in brand preference?
- ❑ **2. Review how well your content marketing supports SEO.** This is determining how content marketing and social media can support SEO activities since it's a ranking signal and through encouraging backlinks.
- ❑ **3. Review preferences of different audiences using different social media platforms to convert and share different type of content and offers.** In Step 5 we talked about the types of content you should include in your content plan, so this Step asks you to review whether content on certain platforms is more effective than others. For example, the Financial Times reported in 2011 in New Media Age that its analytics showed that Facebook users are three times as likely to subscribe compared to those from other sources such as search. LinkedIn users were six times as likely to subscribe.
- ❑ **4. Find optimum frequency for initiating sharing.** Again in Step 5 we looked at how often you should share content, which also varies by platform. Review your engagement on the relevant platform and test different frequencies to find the optimum for influence on conversion.
- ❑ **5. Identify influencers and seeded content.** As advised throughout, reaching out to other sites and influencers is a key success factor for content marketing, so it's good to examine how effective you are in this.
- ❑ **6. Review approaches to integrate sharing of content through different social platforms, web, mobile and email channels.** Work out how you can engage your audience across different channels by linking between them. With the popularity of mobile apps for the main social networks, this is increasingly important. Facebook suggest that 100 million people actively using Facebook from their mobile devices every month, and with the launch of the new 'Facebook phone', it is likely to become an even more integrated element in social media marketing.
- ❑ Ensure that any content shared via Facebook (in this example) is compatible with mobile and tablet operating systems as it is likely that the end action e.g. to view it may take place via one of these devices.

Ensure that you are visible

By now we realise that content is the base for getting a good position in the search engine results pages (SERPs) and content is what is shared in social and ultimately also appears in search results. The more relevant content you have, in the more relevant places, the more likely you are to be found by prospective buyers at the right time.

Review your content to ensure that it is optimised so that any content shared will connect and benefit both your SEO and social strategies.

How do you make content go viral?

There is no short answer for this. Viral is usually a happy accident because you cannot *make* people fall in love with your content. You can focus on creating great content in the right format – the rest is up to the consumer of the content. So, the question isn't what's wrong

Set business goals

Create strategy

Social listening and reputation monitoring

Content and engagement strategy

E-communications strategy

Practical advice for core platforms

Social media optimisation

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here – the question is ‘How do I make my content awe-inspiring and then shareable in order it has the best chance to go viral?’

‘The most important word on the internet is not “Search”. The most important word on the internet is “Share”. Sharing is the driver. Sharing is the DNA. We use Social Objects to share ourselves with other people. We’re primates. We like to groom each other. It’s in our nature.’

Hugh Macleod

How can you increase sharing and social referral traffic?

We believe that there are three key factors at play here:

- ✓ How fascinating, valuable, informative or entertaining your content is?
- ✓ How easily shareable you have made it (hint: not just for Facebook!)?
- ✓ How much time you are spending interacting on third-party sites and social networks sharing your story and interacting with your current and potential current audience?

If you can inspire someone then their friends are more likely to be interested in the same thing (‘birds of a feather fly together’), so you’re likely reaching and then leveraging a well-targeted audience.

First, we believe that it’s important to remember that great marketing is born from great ideas, not tactics, tools, widgets or technology platforms – so with that in mind, here are our five tips:

1. Tagging, bookmarking and sharing

- ✓ Before Facebook became so ubiquitous, widgets were the primary tool that allowed others to grab your content and share it on their blogs, Facebook profiles and social bookmarking sites. Examples of these widgets include the Share This or Add This plugins.
- ✓ Each social media site has its own range of share buttons and badges, they are very similar to widgets though focus on one application of course, for example Facebook’s ‘Share’ or StumbleUpon’s ‘Stumble’³⁹ – and ReTweet!
- ✓ According to social sharing plugin AddThis, Facebook is far and away the number one place where people share content through their widget, [taking 39 percent](#) of the pie, Gigya recently claimed it was 44 percent on their blog as well. The point is to consider that around 60 percent of shares are being made outside of Facebook – so at least include Twitter and maybe two others.
- ✓ The AddThis data shows that its toolbar (which displays just the major networks) performs 40 percent [better than its regular widget](#). The AddThis widget has functionality that shows different buttons for each visitor based on what sites they share to the most.
- ✓ Gigya has [this tool](#) that allows people to share to multiple networks at once without leaving your site.
- ✓ Remember that Google sees the value of those links and activity from those social networks.

2. Enable others to help your content travel further

- ✓ The fact is that great content gets shared – back in the day it was pretty much forwarding by email – now it’s wider: RSS subscribers, content syndication, email newsletters, status updates, social bookmarks, Facebook promotions and tweets – they all improve reach and need to be employed with the big idea in mind, and as you create the content.

39 [Smart Insights: Is StumbleUpon worth another look?](#)

- ✓ You will have heard no doubt the idea of encouraging people to mash-up, or augment and curate, your content – this further increases the reach and appeal of what you've done and drives traffic back. The classic example here is YouTube's cut and paste web code to embed video (your video) into any web page. So, encourage re-use and sharing – it will all flow back to you, the originator.
- ✓ How far your content travels will, logically, be related to how well it meets the needs of the audience.

3. Form a connection

- ✓ You want to attract visitors and you really want the visitor to register in some way – why? Connected visitors tend to engage more than anonymous visitors and they've already engaged once by registering. You will most likely see more time on site, more page views, lower bounce rate and, if you're operating an e-commerce site, increased sales.
- ✓ However that traditional long and cluttered registration form is a bit of a pain in the neck for users, and most may not really know you. Step up social sign-in as an option to help solve this.
- ✓ Social sign-in can cause duplicate records on larger sites already capturing user data, advanced implementations can check when a registrant may already have a conventional account, and asking those users to sync the accounts with Facebook or Twitter, for example.
- ✓ Gigya reports that 46 percent of users sign in with Facebook, beating Google as the preferred social profile for making connections to other sites. [Echo](#), a multi-platform sign-in module you can use, reports that [Yahoo is number one](#) (34) for sign in, ahead of Facebook (25 percent) on the top 10 sites they serve.
- ✓ Whatever the data, it's clear that providing choices for just the major networks can increase your chances of registration success.

4. Encourage interaction

- ✓ A user leaving a comment on your site is great, sharing that comment with their social network is going to drive traffic. Today, through software like Echo, Facebook, Gigya and Disqus, you can easily encourage people to share their comments more broadly.
- ✓ Since Facebook 'Likes' show up as one line of text, and 'Shares' show up as a link with a comment, advanced marketers are seen encouraging Shares immediately after someone presses the Like button.
- ✓ It's more obvious how to do this for a news site or a blog, for other site types it's a case of figuring out where to implement social commenting and where to implement social plugins such as the Facebook 'Like' button on. Get it right, test it – it can drive traffic whilst providing social proof that your content might be for 'me', too.
- ✓ Ensure content as 'handles' according to Chris Brogan, so others can pick it up and use it, this harks back to the notion of social objects. For example, this might include an interactive quiz widget, a game or maybe just a simple PDF or Slideshare presentation.

5. Remember the real purpose

- ✓ What are you setting out to do at the business level? Build sales, influence or credibility maybe?
- ✓ Align those business goals with the customer needs and ensure that manifests as relevant content, specifically for your audience (not everybody).
- ✓ Get involved, online conversation is at the heart of social, not just 'listening'.
- ✓ Take on new challenges to keep fresh, test new tools and help spark interest with your user base.

- ✓ Be the go-to resource, even link to competitors and cement your position as a trusted and valued reference.

Our tip – Think of it like some kind of content/social karma. You've got to give to get so just concentrate on doing an honest to good job of providing what your market really, really values. Is this not what you wish some brands would do for you? Of course be real and even a bit humble in the process – most of us value that authenticity.

Think small for accessibility and mobile content

With the smartphone and tablet markets growing at a prolific rate, the concept of accessible content for devices beyond a desktop PC is important for broadening reach and maintaining brand relevance. So, design your content for a busy and mobile lifestyle:

- ✓ **Less is more for mobile.**
- ✓ **Consider media choice.** Select content that makes best use of mobile phones' small screen size. Use alternate content formats such as video and audio to conserve space
- ✓ **Take a short cut.** Create shorter 'content bursts' from your existing long-form content, and cut the jargon in the process: Keep copy tight and to the point.
- ✓ **Create content for mobile needs.** Consider what types of information your audience wants and needs to access, especially when they're out and about.
- ✓ **Lighten file size.** Images and other large files can impact accessibility and download times, so use them wisely and in moderation.
- ✓ **Encourage sharing.** Mobile audiences are tech savvy and avid sharers, so make it easy for users to involve their friends and share content.
- ✓ **Design for finger surfing.** Remember that users are navigating the screen by pinching and zooming, rather than clicking.
- ✓ **Opt for longer pages.** Scrolling is much faster than waiting for multiple pages to load, so limit the number of clicks required to fully engage with your content.
- ✓ **Choose one size fits all.** Different devices have different screen sizes and resolutions, so create an interface that 'scales to fit' different devices.
- ✓ **Seamlessly route users to the right site.** Auto-detect for devices and serve up the appropriate interface so that the experience is smooth whether a laptop, smartphone or tablet is used.
- ✓ **Know the limits.** Be mindful of technologies that aren't recognised by certain mobile platforms (e.g., Flash on the Apple iPhone/iPad).

Listening for improvement

Don't forget your listening phase. Regularly review the findings of your definition and tools from Step 3 and use the insights to improve your content.

Finally, to bring all these ideas together here is a summary of all the areas you can work on as part of SMO. Good luck!