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How to Create A Social Media Content Strategy

BY KIM KELLEY, FRBMA



A few years ago, social media marketing was like shooting fish in a barrel. Audiences were readily available and return outpaced effort. You couldn't go wrong.

Leaping forward from a time when your audience was easily accessible, listening, and interested in what you had to say, and less discerning about choosing their social associations, now you actually have to think about how to connect with your target audience. Being heard above the sheer volume of content available on social media and algorithms that have severely interrupted organic reach requires planning to be able to consistently deliver relevant, on-message content, and to reach business goals.

In my experience, most companies don't have a solid social media content strategy or fully understand the amount of effort necessary to be successful in social media marketing, let alone the willingness to invest or the availability of resources to enact a social media plan.

To develop a social media content strategy, you'll need to identify information that fits into these categories:

- Who your customer is, their behavior, and what their process is for making buying decisions
- Success metrics that will demonstrate a return on your efforts
- Social networks that will help you reach your goals
- Content types that will engage your target audience
- A content calendar with delivery timelines
- Resources for staying consistent in your efforts
- Intervals for measuring and adjusting efforts

Consumer behavior

To provide a great customer experience via social media, you have to go further than knowing basic demographics about your customers. Learn which sources they turn to for gathering information when they are in need of a service, and what

types of questions they ask themselves—specifically when they are in a position to affect where and when they receive those services. This can be done by creating buyer personas of your customers. You can learn more about buyer personas from an RBMA Bulletin article in the November/December 2014 issue titled, “Your Customer Has Changed.”

Success metrics

The number one and two reasons marketers use social media is to increase brand awareness and engagement. The top success metrics for these two goals are follower count—both for growth and retention, impressions, likes and shares, and mentions (being tagged in a post). When your customers engage with you on social media, it helps to build a trustworthy brand and a positive perception of your brand. The algorithm for Facebook and Instagram give priority in news feeds for posts with higher engagement. Knowing this should encourage you to participate in a two-way conversation with your followers.

Choosing social networks

Choosing to be on more social media networks is not necessarily the right answer.

Knowing the demographics of users will help you decide which one is the best fit, as well as which network will bring the greatest mutual benefit. Don't forget to be mindful of your limits and participate in only the number of social networks you can manage well.

Creating or curating content

Now that you have learned more about your customers and have decided which social networks to use, you're ready to engage your audience. Content that you choose to share should be timely, relevant, and informative and should avoid too much self-promotion. No one participating in social media wants to read content that repeatedly comes across as a sales pitch. You can curate content, which means look to industry-related, relevant sources of news and share their content, create original content, or pull from preexisting content, otherwise known as evergreen content.

Your content calendar


The content you choose to publish on your social media networks should be driven by your business goals and your marketing efforts. Topics that are important to your practice and in your local area should lead social media marketing. Next, organic search efforts should play a large part in helping you choose topics based on the keywords and phrases that you want to rank well for. From this, tie your blog topics to your social media posts for a cohesive and well-rounded effort. Visually, your content calendar should include at a minimum month/date, topic and type of content (e.g., blog, post, infographic), and keyword focus.

Consistency

For your practice to become established as an authority in your market, you need to engage in two-way, on-topic conversations. Use social media as a tool to build trust with your customers by pairing relevant content with a high response rate.

Measure success

The final step in your social media content strategy is to measure your success. You need to know if your efforts are paying off when compared to the success metrics mentioned earlier in this article. There are numerous tools and dashboards that can help you determine success—such as native Insights and network analytics, and dashboards such as Hootsuite, Sprout Social, and Google Analytics integration, just to name a few.

A social media content strategy is a solid step toward using social media effectively and helping your business thrive. 



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