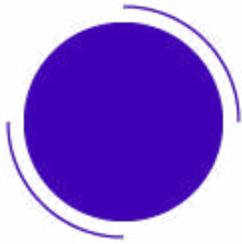




MARKETING RESOURCES

Social Media Marketing



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Maximizing Social Media Marketing

Let's face it: you can't run a business in the 21st century without social media. Social media is how you find your potential customers, interact with them, and convince them that you're their best choice.

It's how you manage your brand, addressing questions and complaints, and delighting your existing customers.

And it's how you start the cycle over again, leveraging your existing customer base and their love for you into new impressions and new leads.

The "last-click" world — where marketers only care about the last click that brought your site visitors to you — is dying out. The modern marketing landscape is all about reaching your customers in as many places as possible (without being annoying), cultivating an impression a little bit at a time.

On this page, we'll give you everything you could possibly need to know about social media marketing. We'll start with the big ideas: who you're trying to reach and why.

We'll dig into the nuts and bolts of strategy, including planning a social calendar and determining what kind of content to post. We'll talk about paid ads, boosting posts, and spending your money strategically.

Once you've gotten going, we'll tell you how to manage your followers, gain insights from your users, and how to tell when your strategies are working.

Let's get started!

Chapter One: Strategy and Building Blocks

Identifying Your Purpose With the Golden Circle

No, not the Channing Tatum movie. The Golden Circle is a concept pioneered by Simon Sinek in his TED talk “Start With Why.” The circle has three layers: What, How, and Why.

The Why is at the core of the circle, and is the most important thing you need to establish for your company. Why do you do what you do? Not profit or recognition; those are results. Why does your company exist?

Without knowing your company’s “why” — and a lot of companies and executives don’t — you don’t know what’s driving you. What’s at the core of your business? What’s your cause? What do you stand for?

The next layer of the circle is How. How are you accomplishing your “why”? Are you solving a problem or addressing a pain point? Are you helping people overcome challenges?

Finally, you end with What. What do you offer? This is the opportunity to talk about the specific benefits and features of your product or service versus your competition.

As the saying goes, people buy with emotion and justify it with logic. If all you’re offering is a “what,” your customers aren’t engaged or interested. There’s no connection. If you start from “why,” the “what” will follow.

The reason we bring up the Golden Circle is that social media is perfectly poised to help you communicate your “why.” With video content, images, links, and other interactive media, you can be more than just a package on a shelf. You can be a brand with a personality, goals, beliefs, and aspirations, just like your users. They’ll see the authenticity in your messaging and respond.

Buyer Personas: Who Are You Trying To Reach?

A buyer persona is a big-picture idea of what your ideal customer looks like. Your entire social media approach will be based not on attracting as many people as possible, but on appealing to the people you most want to buy your product.

Crafting a buyer persona allows you to customize your social media content to what specific groups need. Getting your content in front of the right people is only the first step – getting them to like it, click it, and engage with it is something else entirely.

You'll start small, with one or two buyer personas. If it turns out that your company is big enough that one or two aren't covering your entire customer base, you may need more, but keep it simple to begin with. Don't be too broad! Think about your perfect customer first, then branch out into other niches.

Don't forget about the customers you don't want. Negative buyer personas might not seem worth pursuing, but there are people out there that aren't worth your time to sell to. Maybe they don't purchase often enough, or they're advanced users that don't want an entry-level product. In any case, it's helpful to know that they're not worth as much effort to sell to.

Having clearly defined and distinct personas lets you craft personalized approaches to your entire social media approach to make sure that the people finding your content are exactly the ones you want to sell to.

The Buyer's Journey: How Are Your Customers Finding You?

The buyer's journey, simply put, is the process that a buyer goes through from being unaware that they need a product to, eventually, choosing and spending money on a product. It has three phases – awareness, consideration, and decision.

In order to maximize your marketing potential, you'll need to engage with your potential customers at every step of the journey. Knowing what problems you're solving, how your customers shop, and how they decide on a product can help you learn how to attract their business.

The awareness phase is the earliest phase of the journey. Your buyer has a problem, but can't easily state what it is or what might help. Your job is to help them identify their problem. Using blogs and social posts to show that you're

a good source of information, you can steer potential buyers toward a clearly stated need.

The consideration phase is the phase where a buyer begins to research the options available to them. They don't know what exactly will solve their problem yet, but they're looking for information.

At this phase, your role is to call attention to your own product in a manner that shows buyers that you can solve their problems. Videos, demonstrations, and testimonials are the perfect media to show people that you've solved their problem before and can do it again.

Social media is perfect for this phase. How many videos have you seen on Facebook or Instagram that not only showcase a product, but demonstrate and educate about it at the same time? This is your opportunity to jump into that mix, and target those videos to the exact kind of people who might want them.

The decision phase is where a lot of marketers start, without thinking about the previous two phases. This is the point where your buyer knows what kind of product they want, they just have to pick one out.

If you start here, though, you miss the opportunity to convince unsure customers that you have the answer to their problem in the first place.

Here's an example: let's say you make a smart coffee maker.

The awareness phase is where your customer is starting to recognize a problem. Maybe making coffee takes them too long in the morning, or they forget to set the timer ahead of time, or they've been stopping at Starbucks and it's getting expensive. You'll use blogs and articles to help your buyer clarify their need: I want hot coffee ready when I wake up.

The consideration phase is where your buyer hasn't settled on a smart coffee maker, and is thinking about possible solutions to their problem. Can they make coffee the night before? Start buying instant coffee that doesn't take

as long? This is the phase where you use your videos and demonstrations to show them that a smart coffee maker solves their problem.

In the decision phase, potential customers have decided on a smart coffee maker and it's your job to convince them that yours is the best. Maybe yours has a built-in grinder or the best price point. They might buy yours or they might not, but if you hadn't engaged with your customers during the awareness and consideration phases, they wouldn't even be shopping for a smart coffee maker at all!

Understanding how your ideal buyer comes to a decision and engaging them at every phase of that process is vital to maximizing your marketing power.

Which Platforms Should You Use?

The number of social media apps and platforms just seems to keep going up, but not all of them are actually useful to you or your business. Whether the format is at odds with the kind of marketing you want to do or your audience simply isn't present, it's not worth spending your time or dollars on a platform that isn't going to get you results.

This is where buyer personas and the buyer's journey come into play again. If you took our advice and worked on one or several buyer personas, you should have a good idea what kinds of social media platforms your buyers are most active on. You might love Twitter, but if your buyers don't, you won't reach them that way.

Similarly important is the buyer's journey we discussed above. Do your potential customers ask their friends and family for recommendations on Facebook before purchasing? Do they Google reviews? Knowing your potential buyers' process is key to meeting them at every step of the buyer's journey.

So once you've figured out where your customers are, you'll need to decide where to spend your time and money.

The five biggest platforms in terms of monthly active users are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. Let's look at some pros and cons.

1. Facebook – The World's Biggest Platform

As of the second quarter of 2018, Facebook boasts 2.23 billion monthly active users. You can't ignore an audience that size. No matter who you are or whom you're targeting, a Facebook presence is a must.

On the plus side, Facebook's marketing tools allow you to target your messaging with extreme precision, by interest, location, age, employer, almost any qualifier you can think of. In several instances, [job seekers have even placed ads that only targeted high-level execs](#) at the companies they wanted to work for. This level of precision targeting means you're only showing your ads to the personas you want to sell to, not wasting precious marketing funds on broad campaigns.

Facebook also allows the broadest array of marketing types, from short- and long-form text to photos, videos, external links, even maps and links to real-life locations. You can use a variety of Pages, Groups, and Ads to customize your message even further.

On top of all that, Facebook offers extremely detailed analytics for everything you post. You can even embed a Facebook Pixel in your ecommerce site to track traffic and conversions back to your own website.

On the downside, all these tools need someone to run them. Facebook and its users shift and change so much that you can't just set and forget — you have to be willing to invest the time and attention to keep things running smoothly.

In addition, the very social nature of Pages and Groups means that you have to be constantly on alert for damage control. A single negative comment or review can spread like wildfire, so you'll need to take the time to address the bad and encourage the good.

2. Twitter – Real-Time and Social

Twitter has roughly 335 million monthly users. Though not as big as Facebook, that's an audience that shouldn't be ignored lightly. In recent years, Twitter has inked deals with the NHL, NBA, MLB, and NFL to produce live shows and even cover live games in an effort to keep user attention on the site.

Twitter has long had a symbiotic relationship with TV, being the perfect place for viewers to engage in real-time conversation while a game or episode is underway – something that just doesn't happen on other platforms.

One of Twitter's greatest strengths is that it is a completely open public forum. Anyone can link to or embed tweets, and Google includes them front and center in search results. If a tweet becomes popular, its potential reach – even outside of Twitter – is enormous.

Twitter also allows precise targeting on a level similar to Facebook's, by age, location, gender, language, device, interests, behaviors, or even event targeting (i.e. people tweeting about the MLB All-Star game).

Twitter's biggest weakness is ingrained in its format: it's fleeting. Users spend about a minute a day on Twitter, and that's not enough time to absorb many impressions. Unlike Facebook, people tend to open Twitter, send a tweet or read a few, and then leave again.

It's also much easier for fake accounts to thrive on Twitter, meaning that a substantial slice of your followers might not even be real people. These spambots and "eggs," as they're called – named after the default Twitter icon – can muddy your analytics to the point of rendering them useless.

Finally, Twitter tends to be more expensive. According to a comparison done by Aggregate, cost per click was 2-5 times higher on Twitter than on Facebook. Mileage will vary based on your industry and targeting – remember your buyer personas and buyer's journey! – but it's something to keep in mind.

3. Instagram – Visual and Mobile

Instagram is commonly regarded by millennials and younger generations as the alternative to Facebook, and as such is the most popular for that group, boasting just over a billion (with a “b”) monthly active users. It’s also very good at pulling people in – the average user spends almost an hour a day in the app.

The highly visual nature of Instagram is perfect for businesses with visually appealing content, whether it’s photos or videos. This is both a pro and a con – if your product doesn’t have much of a visual draw, or you don’t have the time to produce visual content, Instagram might not be for you.

Instagram also allows you to easily piggyback on big-name brands and reach new customers by targeting followers of your competition.

And finally, Instagram is the head-and-shoulders leader in influencer marketing – letting a famous ([or semi-famous](#)) person do your talking for you.

The downside of Instagram is in the youth of its customer base. Though they’re deeply involved users, younger generations tend to have less purchasing power. If your target market skews older or higher-income, Instagram might not be the place to reach the right people.

4. LinkedIn – Professional Networking and Sharing Expertise

LinkedIn is a professional networking site, and as such isn’t overly cluttered with noise and personal updates like most truly “social” sites. It’s also a great opportunity for companies to engage in B2B marketing, since you can target your marketing to people in certain industries or at certain companies.

LinkedIn also has a robust and busy forum system. By answering questions, connecting with colleagues and people in the same market, and interacting with potential customers, brands can show their expertise and establish themselves as authorities on a given subject.

LinkedIn is also a great place for professional influencers — lots of highly influential thought leaders are active on LinkedIn, so there's ample opportunity to add a voice of authority to your marketing.

On the downside, the LinkedIn community isn't very active — on average, only 25% of its user base accesses their account even once a month.

Spam is also a major problem on LinkedIn, flooding inboxes and drowning out legitimately helpful messaging. Careful targeting can help cut through the noise, but it's still a problem you'll need to deal with.

5. Snapchat - Real-time Streaming Video

With over 10 billion daily views, Snapchat has a robust, incredibly active audience. And data shows that when using the app, Snapchat users are more engaged and attentive than users of any other social media site.

The real-time nature of the app also makes advertising feel more organic than other forms of advertising, fitting seamlessly in with videos from users' friends and family.

The problem is tracking your results. Snapchat offers no data tracking, so generating any analytics or measurable, concrete ROI is nearly impossible. If you do decide to advertise on Snapchat — and some major brands, like Taco Bell, Target, and Major League Soccer are doing so — you'll have to make peace with the fact that you won't be able to analyze where your money goes.

6. Google My Business and Google+ - Not Exciting, But Still Useful

We know, Google+ is basically dead. While technically, everyone with a Google account has a G+ account, [only about 3.5 million people are really using it.](#)

But if you have a Google+ page for your business, you're more likely to show up in search results when a user searches for you, and that's a value that

can't be overstated. No matter what the buyer's journey of your particular audience looks like, a Google Search is probably involved somewhere along the line, and you want to be ready.

Create a Google+ page for your business. Make sure everything is filled out – the name of your business, physical location (if relevant), contact info, and even photos. Once you've done this, Google can generate rich media results for your business, with easy links to directions and your phone numbers. This reduces friction for people to find and contact you, which in turn will generate leads.

Getting your business on Google also gives you a new channel to start collecting reviews. Responding to and re-posting positive reviews lends you credibility in the eyes of new customers, and addressing negative reviews will delight and satisfy existing customers.

Keep Your Messaging Consistent

No matter which platform you set your business up on, make sure your profiles are complete. Nothing says “unprofessional” like missing information, mis-matched or low-quality profile pictures, inaccurate contact info, or outdated cover photos.

Make sure there are no typos in any of your copy, and try to keep your voice and tone consistent. Make a list of the profiles you control so that when you update one of them, you can update them all.

If you're using Facebook, take the time to get [your gray “verified” badge](#), which affirms that the page is authentic. Twitter's coveted blue checkmark is requires a [much more involved process](#), but it's likely to be worth the effort for the added credibility it lends you.

If you don't already, you should probably have a set of brand guidelines. These will tell your social media managers how to talk to people on your social platforms, whether it's fine details like how to format dates or broad guidelines about the tone of your copy.

Make sure your brand uses consistent colors and logos across every channel, from profile pictures to email signatures. And if you're consistently using particular hashtags or slogans, ensure that everyone's on the same page as far as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Chapter Two: Building a Social Content Calendar

Congratulations! You know exactly who you're marketing to and where they spend their time online. Now you're ready to start actually putting out content. But how much is enough? How much is too much? And how do you stay in the front of your customers' minds without annoying them?

That's what a social content calendar is for. A good social calendar lets you plan ahead, keep important dates in mind, and keep your message distributed across your social channels. Lay out your calendar in an actual calendar format to better visualize what's coming up, and plan for special events and holidays well in advance.

How Much Should You Post?

As always, the answer is "it depends." The timing and frequency of your posts will depend on a lot of factors — your audience, the platform, and what you're trying to sell. As time goes on, you'll be able to use your analytics tools to examine how your posts are performing and optimize your strategy accordingly. For now, though, here are some good places to start.

Facebook posts are top-heavy — most of them perform unremarkably, and a few do extremely well. Of those upper-echelon posts, the time of day doesn't seem to matter much. What does that mean for you? It means you should focus on content, not timing.

When it comes to frequency, there's a substantial dropoff in ROI when you start posting more than once a day. Facebook bumps "fresh" content, but doesn't want to overwhelm users with one company's posts, so publishing a lot of posts — especially if they're not getting engagement — can actually be worse for your Page than not posting enough. Try to post 5–7 times a week.

Since you're only posting once a day, make it count — Facebook isn't a place for casual musings, it's a place for your best-crafted content to shine.

Twitter posts don't have an optimal time of day or day of the week either — it probably makes sense to post when your target market is awake, but other than that, don't worry about it.

But where Facebook rewards engagement above all else, Twitter is more chronological. The more you post, the more attention you get. This isn't a free pass to publish poorly thought-out posts, but it's certainly less important to have perfectly polished copy as it is elsewhere. In general, Twitter should be updated 3-5 times a day.

Since LinkedIn is a business networking site, most people tend to use it while they're at work. Site traffic tends to drop off after 5 p.m. or so, so it's a good idea to get your content up before then. The same goes for the day of the week — Monday, Saturday, and Sunday are slow days on LinkedIn, while Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday tend to perform better.

As far as frequency, numbers are similar to Facebook. More than five posts a week and your ROI will start to drop off. This is likely due to a similar algorithm that doesn't want to flood users' feeds with posts from one company, so stick to 5-7 posts a week for your best value.

Instagram's algorithm is a subject of much debate, but its half-life — the amount of time in which a post gets half of its views — seems to be about 72 hours. That means that in order to stay on people's news feeds on Instagram, you should be posting at least once a day. Of course, if your engagement is high, you can bump those numbers — some brands post more than once an hour — but keep in mind that you'll have to produce enough content to keep up.

How Far In Advance Should You Plan?

Planning out your social calendar is a bit of a tightrope walk. If you don't plan far enough ahead, your designers and writers will constantly be

scrambling to create content on short deadlines. If you plan too far ahead, your content might be stale or irrelevant by the time it actually posts. Your timing will depend on the nature of your business. Weekly, every other week, and monthly are all acceptable time frames for planning, but you probably shouldn't go shorter or longer than that.

In general, be as proactive as you can. Plan, create, and schedule your content well in advance of actually publishing. This goes double for major holidays or scheduled sales events. On the other hand, be prepared to react to real-time events that people are talking about.

During Super Bowl 47, for example, the lights went out in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome for 34 minutes in the middle of the game. Within minutes, Oreo had tweeted "Power out? No problem." alongside a picture of an Oreo cookie with the caption "You Can Still Dunk In The Dark." The tweet garnered 15,000 replies and 20,000 likes on Facebook.

How did they do it? Oreo had a 15-person team on standby during the Super Bowl, waiting for something noteworthy to happen. While they also planned ahead — Oreo prepared congratulatory posts for both teams so they'd be ready no matter who won — their ability to be spontaneous generated huge buzz.

Chapter Three: Determining What Content To Use

Determining what content to use is an exercise in experimentation. At first, you'll just have to use your best judgement, based on what you know about your industry and your potential and current customers, to put up the content you think will work.

After that, it's all about analytics. Most social media sites offer detailed analytics data, as do email clients like Mailchimp and web building and hosting sites like Wordpress. Google Analytics is especially useful for tracking links across sites and platforms so you can see how people get to your site and where they go afterward.

Keep Track of What's Working

Take a look at which of your blog posts, photos, and social posts are performing the best. What do they have in common? Do people like numbered list formats or FAQs? General questions or topical stories?

The same goes for landing pages. You want to collect enough info to generate useful leads, but not ask for so much of your visitors' time and information that they're turned off from sharing anything at all. How much you can reasonably ask for will vary, so it doesn't hurt to create several different types and layouts of landing pages and see which ones perform best.

Remember, web pages are essentially free — you can always add more. If you notice in the data that certain groups of people or users of certain sites are more willing to share their info, it might be useful to create a few specialized landing pages for them, directed from those sites. As long as all your data is going to the same customer relationship management (CRM) software, it's ok to fragment the landing pages themselves.

Boost Interest With An LTO

Keep limited-time offers (LTOs) and short-term promotions in mind. Used especially in the food industry — think McRib or Shamrock Shake — LTOs can be a great way to drive sales and renew interest.

Even though an LTO is, by definition, limited, it takes a lot of work and planning to set up. Make sure you've prepared your promotional materials — social posts, ad copy, print collateral, website banners — well in advance. And if you're offering a discount or a coupon, be sure you can afford it financially.

Mix Things Up

As far as the actual content itself, you need to strike a balance. Too much branded content and you just become an infomercial, constantly touting yourself. Too little, and people will forget what your brand is all about.

Post content that's interesting and relevant to your customers, whether it's news articles about your industry or blog posts that address common concerns, but mix in offers and updates, as well as reminders of who you are and why you do what you do.

Remember the Buyer's Journey

Keep every stage of the buyer's journey in mind when you create content. Remember, you're not just trying to convince people that you can fill their needs, you're trying to help them realize that the need exists in the first place. Tailor your content for each of the three phases – awareness, consideration, and decision – to make as many points of contact with customers as possible.

For customers in the awareness phase, you're just trying to help them realize and express their needs. Write blog posts and white papers that address common problems and concerns you've found surrounding your product and industry.

Once they reach the consideration phase and know exactly what problem they're trying to solve, your role is to show potential customers that you're capable of solving that problem, and you have before. Post videos of your product in use and user testimonials to add credibility.

In the decision phase, customers know what kind of product they're looking for and are trying to decide which one they want. This is where you can talk about the specific benefits of your product over your competition's.

Chapter Four: Strategically Making Use of a Paid Ads Strategy

As much as we'd like to go viral and become the next big thing by word of mouth alone, the fact is that the web is a big place. In order to get off the ground and get in front of the right people, you're going to need a little help. That's where paid ads come in.

What Do You Boost?

Much like content, boosting ads is an exercise in experimentation. In the beginning, you'll just have to start boosting a few ads here and there to see what sticks. Start small, see what works, and keep doing it. Simple, right? Here are a few other things to try.

A/B testing is when you run two versions of the same post, so that half your audience sees version A and half sees version B. Facebook has this functionality built in. You can test whatever you want this way – different graphics, photos, copy, whatever you want to learn more about – and get detailed analytics back about how each one did. Whichever post gets the most engagement, take notes and boost posts like that more often.

It's also a good idea to boost posts based on historical success. Look through your highest-engagement posts from recent history. Do certain types of post work better for you? Boost more like that!

Upcoming events are another good reason to boost your content. If you've got a major sales event or holiday promotion coming up, you want as many people to know about it as possible. Start boosting roughly a month out, longer if it's a huge event. Boost a few times between the first reminder and the event to make sure you're getting the word out to people who missed the first ones.

Finally, boost what's already working. If you post organic content that catches on and starts to spread, give it a little extra help! You already know people who see it are engaging with it, so get it in front of more people with a paid boost.

How Do You Set A Budget?

Start small. When boosting posts or tweets, put less than \$100 into each one and wait to see what numbers you come back with. Tools like Facebook's analytics, the Facebook Pixel, and Google Analytics will give you a good sense of how well a boost is working.

If it goes well, boost more! The success of a boosted post will depend on the post itself, the number of followers or likes you have, and the breadth of the audience you selected to send it to.

You'll have to experiment with posts to get a sense of how much you can put in, but if you continue to see success, keep boosting. Experiment with both amount and duration to see what works. Eventually you'll reach a point of diminishing returns, but there's no way to find out where that is until you try it out.

Sometimes, more is more. If you run an e-commerce site, you can get very concrete numbers on the kind of sales numbers you're generating from boosted posts. You might be loath to spend hundreds of dollars boosting a single post, but if it's generating sales, it's worth it.

Who Is Your Audience?

Unlike organic posts, ads can be targeted to a specific set of people. That means you need to decide who to target in order to get the best engagement on your posts. Here are some things to consider when building your strategy.

First, think about your buyer personas. We've mentioned them several times, but that's how important they are. You should have a detailed image of your ideal buyer in mind when you create and publish content, and many social media sites allow you to target your audience to those exact parameters.

Whether it's by age, interests, or even your competitors' customers, you can be as specific as you want to be to target new customers.

Depending on your business, especially if you run a brick-and-mortar location, you might want to restrict your advertising to a specific location. While many web-based businesses these days don't really have physical locations, it still might be worth restricting your business to the state or country of your primary operation.

Age is another consideration to keep in mind. While your buyer persona probably already has an age range in mind, there may be legal considerations in mind as well. For example, any alcohol-related promotions are wasted on viewers too young to drink, so restrict your advertising accordingly.

How Do You Set Advertising Goals?

If you're going to evaluate how your advertising dollars are being spent, you'll need to have goals. While [your specific goals](#) will depend on the type of business you run and the current state of your business, it's important to establish those goals before you start your campaign.

Traffic to your site is a common metric, especially for businesses just starting out and looking to make a name for themselves. Facebook Pixel and Google Analytics provide very detailed data on where your traffic is coming from. You can even use specific UTM codes in your links to break traffic down by campaign and specific posts.

Sites focused on increasing revenue might want to focus more on conversions or sales. If you're getting plenty of traffic, but not turning those visitors into leads, you might want to focus more on conversion than on pure traffic numbers. Google Analytics can help with that too, telling you whether visitors from your ads are making a purchase or filling out a form on a landing page.

If you're working with a small budget, you'll want to know what you're paying for your ads and if you're getting a return on that investment. That's where metrics like cost-per-click (CPC) or cost-per-mille (CPM) – a fancy term for cost per thousand impressions – come in handy. You can track exactly how much attention your advertising is getting for your dollar and double down on the channels that are working the best.

If you're preparing for a specific event, then metrics like event signups and attendance are a good place to focus your attention. If you're having people sign up on your website, you can send them there with tracker links that

Google Analytics can trace back to specific promotions.

Chapter Five: Community Management

Where a social media manager is responsible for being the voice of the brand on social media, a community manager's role is more subtle. They create a social persona of their own and venture out into the online community, boosting awareness among those who may not have heard of the business they work for.

Why Do You Need A Community Manager?

A community manager can research industry trends and past performance to optimize future blog topics, source images, create internal links, and respond to reader comments to boost engagement. Doing so can elevate your blog from a digital wasteland to a thriving source of info for current and future customers.

Once content is posted, a community manager's job is to maximize its reach. This includes posting the content to your various social media profiles, responding to comments, questions, and complaints, and curating content from other sources to maximize your authority.

In addition to promoting your own content, community managers can create strong connections with other businesses. They can reach out to create promotional exchanges like guest posting on related websites and joint venture sales partnerships.

When complaints come up online, and they will – [one study showed an eight-fold increase in social media complaints between 2014 and 2015](#) – you'll need someone to answer them. While this can be a job for sales or social media people, they have their hands full. It's worth having someone with the interpersonal skills and brand knowledge to address customers head-on.

Prepare For Responses Ahead Of Time

To save time, set up a "responses" document. This doesn't mean that you

should send canned responses — customers can see through them, and the occasional “Dear [[FIRSTNAME LASTNAME]]” mistake is worse than not responding at all — but it will help you to prepare ahead of time.

Try to think of situations or complaints that might arise, based on common pain points in the industry. If your product requires some level of education to use, anticipate what questions you might face and prepare to answer them. It’s a good idea for everyone at the company to be on the same page before the questions arise in the first place.

Preparing a responses document will also help you plan how to respond to customers in a manner consistent with your brand’s voice and tone. You’ll be able to respond more quickly, defuse situations, and avoid escalating a situation.

Respond quickly, and respond well. A lack of a response is a response in itself. It says “we’ve heard you, and we don’t care.” Ideally, you’ll respond to each comment in under an hour. Pre-drafted responses can really help you stay on your toes.

And remember, it’s not all about the negative! You should have responses ready for the positive comments too, even if it’s just a simple “thank you!”

Chapter Six: Tracking Your Success

How do you know if your social media efforts are working? Your goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) will vary, depending on where your business is in its development, but there are several metrics you can keep an eye on.

Are you getting more click-throughs to your site from your social posts? You should be able to tell where your traffic is coming from, based on your analytics, and an uptick in traffic is a good sign that your posts are resonating.

Even better, are those clicks turning into conversions? It’s one thing to get visitors, it’s another thing to convince them to buy something. That’s where

all your work on the buyer's journey comes in, so that by the time people find their site, they're already convinced that you're the right choice.

In more obvious terms, any time a post goes "viral" is a win. You expect a certain amount of reach any time you post anything, and that goes up when you pay to boost it. But when your organic reach and engagement are going through the roof, despite not boosting any extra, you've got a good post.

If engagement with your accounts is going up, you're posting things that people like and want to hear more of. An increase in likes, shares, comments, or followers is much more valuable than simple views alone.

If part of your business involves events or a brick-and-mortar location, ask people how they heard of you. If their answer is "through social media," you know you're getting somewhere with your promoted posts.

Multi-Touch Attribution

New analytics from Google and other sites aren't just interested in the last page you came from. Through cookies and other trackers built into most sites, they can tell a much broader picture of your browsing history and lay all that data out for you.

What that means is that even if a customer didn't click directly from Facebook to your site, as long as social media was one of the points of contact along the way, it deserves some credit.

Maybe they read an article about your new pair of shoes, then saw a promoted post on Facebook about it, and finally were served an ad for the shoes on a news site they frequent. A few days later, they found your site through Google and made a purchase. Every point along that journey is equally important, so don't let any opportunity go to waste!