

4

Module 4

Using Social Media

Social media provides great marketing opportunities for businesses of all sizes. It levels the playing field, allowing small and medium professional service firms to compete equally with larger organisations that have greater resources.

You can use social media to:

- promote your brand and business;
- tell customers what you can offer;
- discover what customers think about your business;
- attract new customers; and
- build stronger relationships.

As the world's population increasingly uses social media, the key is to provide high value to your targeted audiences and to cleverly know your online content niche - the topics and news that you uniquely know and can sustainably provide. Social media can consume a lot of resources (money, people's time and attention) so be clear on your goals, create focus and tweak what you're doing regularly to delight your customers and clients.



Part 1: Choosing the Right Platform

Firstly, you need to decide what kind of social media you want to use.

Every social media tool has a different approach, audience reach and set of usage guidelines. Some focus more on personal use. Others, however, are built purely for professional use. It's important to match your business – and your objectives – with the social media platform that's right for your audience.

As a basic rule, companies wishing to engage businesspeople via social media will use LinkedIn. Those wishing to engage a younger demographic may use Facebook and/or Instagram as well as new and emerging social media such as Snapchat.

20 Popular Social Media Sites.

Facebook

The biggest and most recognisable social media network, Facebook has 1.59 billion monthly active users. Businesses and individuals easily connect and share content online, with the ability to comment and interact in an informal setting. Facebook also offers advertising; through Facebook Adverts you can target your posts to a specific audience, location, age and interests.

Twitter

The little 140 character post platform has over 320 million active monthly users; Twitter is more fast paced and transient than other social media. Companies are able to interact with clients, share and retweet information, and use targeted advertising to sponsor posts in users' feeds.

LinkedIn

Businesspeople create their LinkedIn profile similar to a resume or CV to share their experience and career aspirations. Through LinkedIn you can connect with ex-colleagues, current colleagues, industry peers and related businesspeople, and create posts to attract an audience of people interested in what you do. LinkedIn also offers Company Pages to post company updates and relevant news.

Google+

The slightly esoteric cousin of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, Google+ is a must have for small business because of its Search Engine Optimisation value. Owned and run by Google, having a well-executed Google+ page for your business will maximise your visibility on Google searches.

Instagram

People use Instagram to share pictures and videos of their lives – travel, food, pets, fashion, art and the everyday things they love. With more than 500 million active users, Instagram advertising can inspire people to see a business differently, and reach new audiences through targeted advertising and search options.

Snapchat

Snapchat is a popular mobile app where you post videos and pictures which self-destruct 10 seconds after a person views. They can be public or private, or direct to someone via chat. Snapchat allows businesses to create geo-filters that users can use when in the physical vicinity of your business, and creates local stories to gather snaps from users related to a similar topic of interest.

YouTube and Vimeo

YouTube & Vimeo are video-sharing sites that allows users to upload, view, and share videos. You can allow people to follow your account and rate, comment and share your videos. YouTube and Vimeo advertising can also be used to allow users to see a short advertisement before their chosen video, and click through to your business.

The majority of social media sites have cross-platform functionality, meaning that what you post on Instagram can be easily shared to Twitter, or what people like on LinkedIn can be shared with their Facebook feed. Also consider how you wish to integrate social media with your online newsletter and email marketing. Mailchimp, Campaign Monitor are simple to use, highly regarded online newsletter creation sites.

Choosing one platform does not exclude all others! In fact, you may find as you build your social media presence that some sites and apps provide more value than others and will be able to adjust your plan accordingly.

Relevant Tools

Scheduling tools such as Buffer and Hootsuite can save time by tweeting a drafted tweet at predetermined times. Other tools are available to track your social media performance and to help organise your content.

It's important to be up to date with such tools and what is working for your audiences. This often leads to employing a Social Media Manager or Community Manager who is across the tools, techniques, who can create content quickly and is focused on learning and improving the online connection with your customers and stakeholders. If you do not have the resources to do this, consider using expert advice from the market.



Part 2: Getting Started

So now you know your platforms, how do you start building an online presence?

1. Be human

People relate to people, not brands or businesses. So come out from behind your brand and use social media to mingle with other people. Think about how you want people to feel when they use your product or service, and try to build your social media interactions accordingly.

2. Add value

Create content that is of value to your audience. Something that helps, inspires or motivates! It builds trust and rapport, and is one of the easiest ways to get into the hearts and minds of your audience. For example, share articles you've written, content from other sources relevant to your customers, or advice you know will help them gain a small win. People will be more likely to engage with your content, read more, and share with their networks. You can also add comments and advice to other posts, and become a useful contributor to other social media communities.

3. Share the love

1. Recognise others by sharing wins and testimonials from your clients (with their permission).
2. Be magnanimous and showcase other businesses or events you think are worthwhile to your customers.
3. Engage with other people's social media pages.

Don't jump on social media just to sell. Instead, listen to and get to know your audience – and let them know you. Do this correctly, and customers will be much more receptive to your business and what you have to offer.



Part 3: Building a Social Media Plan

Social media can be overwhelming without a clear vision and plan for your business.

Build a social media plan with your team and have a dedicated internal staff member/s handle implement it, or consider outsourcing to a company who specialises in social media integration.

Tips on creating your Social Media Plan

Set clear intentions, but be adaptable.

It's important to know why you want to create a social media presence, and keep that present as you build your following. As you get to know your audience and how they interact with your posts, be prepared to change your plan as you watch analytics of what works, and what doesn't.

Know your audience

Who are they and who do you want to attract? Where do they hang out online and what technology do they use? What style do they most engage with - videos, pictures, text? Are there times of day when they are more frequently online?

Being able to answer these questions makes it easier to know when, what and on which platform to post to effectively reach your audience.

Brand voice

You need to think about who is managing your content and posts, and what voice they are using to connect to your audience. Is it from the company or an individual? Posting as an individual from the company, or creating a persona for your company, has the benefit of being personalised. You can humanise posts giving them a friendly, approachable, and even humorous tone of voice, and connect more easily with other users on social media. It might pay to have a guide with specific tips and style rules for posting online to mitigate any issues when personnel changes occur.

Content plan

Building a year-long content plan will ensure that your social media posts remain fresh and interesting over time. It also helps you plan launch dates for new products, locations or information your customers need to know about!

Budget

A lot of social media is free, but to really get the edge over competitors and get noticed, using sponsored or boosted posts, or advertising, can really enhance your online presence and engagement. There is a fine line between putting yourself on your audience's radar, and seeming impersonal and cluttering their feeds with unwanted information. Start small, analyse the metrics, adjust your targets and build your advertising wisely!

Tracking your success

The brand awareness and sales metrics used for other business activities can be repurposed, though it may require setting up systems to be able to measure them. For example, sales leads can be tracked via setting up website pages unique for each social media site so that someone from Facebook comes through to a specific website page to buy or contact your organisation. In this way you can see increases in leads.

With social media, common metrics are: reach (the number of people you're reaching) and engagement (how many likes, shares, replies, comments you gain from information shared online).



Part 4: Social Media Advertising

Once you have established social media sites, it's the time to let people know you're there!

List your social media sites on your email signatures and website - perhaps as icons on each page of your website and in your contact page.

Allocate marketing budget to attract new customers through online advertising - this can include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat and other sites' advertising.

It can be helpful to engage experts in each site, such as a Facebook Advertising expert, who can show experience in increasing customers. Always check experts have experience in growing a relevant audience - no sense in gaining Facebook page likes of people you're not targeting - for example, gaining page likes of people from a different geographic area to what you require in your business.



Part 5: Social Media challenges to be aware of

There are three big issues with social media:

1. Social Media can take up a lot of resources

Plan it well and focus your expectations.

Keeping your profile up to date, creating and planning new content, posting, maintaining sites, and managing feedback takes a significant amount of time. If you're time-poor and don't have the resources to do social media for your organisation, consider hiring social media staff, or working with a digital agency so you can focus on gaining results and helping to tweak these online communications.

2. Information spreads fast

The wrong kind of information can spread rapidly and be damaging to your business. Unlike most other forms of marketing, social media is a two-way conversation that you can't always control. Be prepared for negative reviews or misinformation posted by others. See information as a constructive insight to your business. Respond respectfully. Engage social media community managers and/or your Public Relations experts where appropriate to be on call to manage PR risks or issues.

3. Information lasts forever

As soon as you upload content, it's immediately broadcasted to your customers. Post the wrong message, if it is already seen before you can delete and update, it may be difficult to retract. What's more, customers may not always think before they post, leading to negative comments you can't just get rid of. If this happens, you need a strategy in place to manage issues professionally. This is where online experts such as social media Community Managers can help - even to check your approach to potential risks when you are setting up social media.



Part 6: Social Media Trouble Shooting

Managing Negative Feedback

When should you respond to an issue publicly, and when should you talk directly to the customer involved?

- If the feedback contains personal information, it's generally a good idea to contact the customer privately. Provide an email address and ask them to get in touch to discuss the matter further.
- If the feedback is more general, and is visible on platforms like Facebook, it might pay to respond publicly by posting your own comment. Acknowledge any concerns and address the issue in a positive way. This helps customers to see you care, you're not hiding anything, and you're willing to be open and honest.

Moderation Policy

If your website or social media settings allow customers the ability to share comments or reviews, or if you have an open forum for online conversations, it's a good idea to set clear guidelines around what conduct is suitable and appropriate.

A moderation policy is a public statement on your site that explains which comments an organisation will allow to be published and which comments an organisation will remove from an interactive forum that it controls. You might like to consider setting a moderation policy, and then managing your forum according to these rules.

Internal Social Media Policy

An effective Social Media Plan will generally utilise your staffs' existing social media and networks to share, like and recommend posts – especially in the initial stages of growth. In doing so, however, your staff really are the face of your business, and what they choose to share on their own social media may impact how your business is viewed. Staff guidelines for the personal and professional use of social media is a helpful preventative tool in protecting your business's online presence.

A frequently referred to social media detailed policy is from online shoe retailer Zappos: 'Be real and use your best judgment'. There are plenty of examples online - search for 'social media policies' and narrow your search to content in the past year so you can learn from recent examples.

Further Resources:

If you want to build an effective and engaging social media strategy, these resources may help. All information was current at the time of writing.

Great blogs to follow to keep up to date:

Blog.bufferapp.com/content-marketing-strategy - How to create a content strategy.

Blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-templates - Social media plan template, metrics tracking and loads of tips here. Search around this Buffer blog too for rich Social Media insights.

Econsultancy.com/blog - Fascinating digital news, case studies, statistics and tips.

Convinceandconvert.com/blog - Learn how to create engaging content for your social media sites.

Linkedin.com/today/author/0_1ZkJz3peVDNpufX8Hw2sIR?trk=prof-sm - Audience growth expert Gary Vaynerchuk's insights are direct, concise and proven.

Slideshare.net/wearesocialsg - Social Media global statistics each month, showing the number of users per social media site.

Mashable.com/?geo=AU - Australia social media news.

Socialmediaexaminer.com - Rich site full of social media tips and updates.

Sites User guides

[Hubspot.net](https://www.hubspot.net) - Use the search to learn new information on the social media site you're interested in.

[Facebook.com/help](https://www.facebook.com/help) - Get started on Facebook - start up an account, share photos, news, information, start or join a group and create a company page.

[Socialmediaexaminer.com/?s=facebook](https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/?s=facebook) - How to set up a Facebook Page for your business.

[Sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-advertising-guide](https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-advertising-guide) - Get started on Facebook advertising to reach more people. It's always worth engaging a Facebook Ads specialist as the Facebook algorithm (and how often you're being shown to your market) can change regularly.

[Support.google.com/youtube](https://support.google.com/youtube) - Learn how to upload, view, and share videos on YouTube.

[Youtube.com/user/GoogleBusiness](https://www.youtube.com/user/GoogleBusiness) - YouTube tips for businesses.

[Vimeo.com/help/basics](https://www.vimeo.com/help/basics) - Vimeo basics.

[Vimeo.com/business](https://www.vimeo.com/business) - Learn how to setup Vimeo's business product.

[Support.twitter.com](https://support.twitter.com), [Mashable.com/guidebook/twitter](https://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter), [Socialmediatoday.com/content/twitter-101-beginners-guide](https://socialmediatoday.com/content/twitter-101-beginners-guide) - Twitter basics.

[Blog.twitter.com/advertising](https://blog.twitter.com/advertising) - Twitter advertising insights.

[Support.google.com/hangouts/answer/3115553?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en](https://support.google.com/hangouts/answer/3115553?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en) - Start using Google Hangouts.

[Help.instagram.com](https://help.instagram.com) - Instagram basics.

[Business.instagram.com](https://business.instagram.com) - Great case studies and insight to using Instagram in your business.

[Support.google.com/plus/?hl=en#topic=6320376](https://support.google.com/plus/?hl=en#topic=6320376) - Learn how to use Google+.

[Learn.wordpress.com/get-started](https://learn.wordpress.com/get-started) - Get started on Wordpress. If you don't have a blog on your website consider adding one so you can provide news, or get blogging or start a website here.

[Help.linkedin.com/app/home](https://help.linkedin.com/app/home) - Learn how to use LinkedIn, develop your personal profile, add your IP/presentations, connect with business contacts, share updates and join relevant groups.

[Business.linkedin.com](https://business.linkedin.com) - Get the most out of your Company page, see best practice case studies, how to best do personal and company updates to engage your market and how to do LinkedIn Advertising.

[Blog.bufferapp.com/linkedin-company-pages](https://blog.bufferapp.com/linkedin-company-pages) - Tips for great LinkedIn company pages and what to share.

[Help.pinterest.com/en/guide/all-about-pinterest](https://help.pinterest.com/en/guide/all-about-pinterest) - Pinterest basics.

[Business.pinterest.com](https://business.pinterest.com) - Learn how to display useful information for your market.

[Campaignmonitor.com](https://campaignmonitor.com) and [Mailchimp.com](https://mailchimp.com) - Online newsletter creation.

[Medium.com/@dolectures/23-crazy-simple-tips-about-how-to-build-a-high-growth-newsletter](https://medium.com/@dolectures/23-crazy-simple-tips-about-how-to-build-a-high-growth-newsletter) - Tips to build your online newsletter.

[Oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-resources/all/](https://oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-resources/all/) - Online privacy fact sheets to protect your customers and your business.

[Digitalbusiness.gov.au](https://digitalbusiness.gov.au) - A general guide on some of the legal issues that may arise, like spam and copyright, when your business is operating online.

[Support.snapchat.com/en-US/article/getting-started1](https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/article/getting-started1) - Learn how to start on Snapchat.

[Dummies.com/consumer-electronics/smartphones/droid/how-to-use-snapchat](https://dummies.com/consumer-electronics/smartphones/droid/how-to-use-snapchat) - Step by step, simple Snapchat guide.

[Huffingtonpost.com/gary-vaynerchuk/why-snapchat-matters-for_b_8938354.html](https://huffingtonpost.com/gary-vaynerchuk/why-snapchat-matters-for_b_8938354.html) - Tips for creating your Snapchat strategy.