



Developing a Social Media Plan

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Discuss how to create and launch a social media marketing plan

Developing a Social Media Plan

Things to Think About

Social media, like all marketing, is about developing relationships with your customers. It is not a short road to profits. You also need to know (and may have already discovered this while exploring your personal social media networks) that it can take an enormous amount of time if you approach it casually.

We have seven guidelines for developing your social media plan and making the most of time and resources.

Stretch

As you develop your social media plan, you need to work with people who have a deep digital reach. Traditional marketers focus on what they know in order to help you establish a niche in the marketplace. They rely on tried and true methods for design and marketing campaigns. (Think about flyers, brochures, contest entries, or contact forms on a website.) If your usual marketing is not getting you the results that you need, make sure you increase your strength by bringing on expertise that gets you what you need. Don't hire someone to be your social media marketer if they have no knowledge about the areas that you want to reach.

Build a Community

What you really need is to get people talking about you in a way that they promote your brand independently of you. Seth Godin has written about this as **tribes**. The Grateful Dead, a wildly successful band for more than 40 years, focused on providing their fans with experiences at their concerts rather than selling albums. Fans (called Deadheads) went to the concerts because they knew that each one was different from the last. Think of the things that you can do for your customers that are different than what everyone else is doing.

Watch Out for Social Media Experts

Social media is constantly evolving, and it is one aspect of marketing, but it is not all there is to marketing. Marketing consultants who are also specialists in social media understand its fluidity. They can help you navigate and establish your brand in the social stream as one aspect of your marketing plan. However, make sure that they can do what they say they can do. Ask for references and look at what they've done in the past.

Be There

Whichever social channels that you use (and there are more coming out all the time), make sure that you participate **with** your community. Don't ask a question on Twitter, for example, and then not be around or available to reply to people's answers, or you will turn them off. Better still, give them something they have not even thought to ask for yet.

Find Your Customers

When you conduct your market analysis, be very clear about where your customers are. Make sure you reach them and their friends so that they are able to talk about you. This doesn't mean that you need to sign up on every social platform there is, because you won't have time. Focus on methods of reach that work for your customers.

Be a Person

There is a lot of artificiality in social media. While systematizing and pre-planning updates makes sense, you look like a robot if you come off like something that has been automated. Make sure that some of your personality and character shines through the things that you say.

Follow Others

It's not appropriate to be a one-way machine in social media. For example, if you are on Twitter and have 2500 followers, and you only follow 20 people, you will not be able to reply to people who are speaking with and about you. We know you cannot read comments from 2500 people a day, but we also know that you can organize people into categories and lists. That way, you can participate in the community you are trying hard to build, instead of being a sandwich board on the street corner that simply makes an announcement. If you are blogging, make sure that you reply to people's comments on your blog posts and that those posts provide people with information they can use, rather than just writing them as a billboard for your products.

Test your knowledge

Utilization Guidelines

In order to effectively leverage social media, you must have a strategy and establish utilization guidelines. **Utilization guidelines** will help all staff in the company to make efforts that will help the company reach its goals. For example, if staff will be sharing responsibility for updating your company page on Facebook, their messages might also include their name so you know who made the post. You could also have a guideline set up to say that any messages about the company need to be positive, to reflect your brand, and to only release news about the company after an official news release is released. (This way, there are no early releases or information leaks.) Some companies will have a rule that only one person (such as a communications officer or even the CEO) will release public messages.

Test your knowledge

Basic Information

Business Name

Is the social media plan for the entire business or a portion? (If it is for a portion, describe it.)

What does the company sell: products, services, or a combination of both?

Briefly describe the products or services that you sell.

Is there an existing social media plan? If so, are you conducting an update, or creating an entirely new strategy?

Does the company have an existing website, social media profiles, or social media sites? List the URL(s) here.

Does the company have an existing social media presence? What is currently taking place? (Some ideas: blogs, podcasting, or status updates)

Who is the target of your social media campaign: businesses, individuals, or someone else?

What geographical region will the social media campaign target: local, regional, national, or international? Write the details of the range below.

Rank the goals of your social media campaign in priority order, with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important. Each item must have its own number; no ties allowed!

- ___ Building relationships with customers
- ___ Increasing visitors to the web/hub site
- ___ Improving search visibility
- ___ Increasing sales
- ___ Saving money on print advertising
- ___ Increasing customer connection to the brand
- ___ Other (Details: _____)

Campaign Budget

Fill out the table below to create a draft budget for your social media plan.

Category	Amount Per Month
Design and Writing	\$
Photography and Video	\$
Marketing and Paid Ads	\$
In-House Labor (costs and hours)	\$
Programming	\$
Tools and Equipment	\$
Revisions and Changes	\$

Return on Investment: _____% within _____ month(s) / year

Campaign Objectives

Fill out the objectives that apply to you.

- Number of Visitors per Month: _____
- Number of Downloads per Month: _____
- Number of Comments per Month: _____
- Conversion Rate: _____
- Monthly Sales: \$ _____
- Average Dollar Amount per Sale: \$ _____

List any other objectives here.

Competitive Analysis

Describe your target market very clearly. Use specific demographics, geographic, industry, segments, job titles, etc.

Why should a customer buy from you instead of a competitor? Use this space to clearly describe your value proposition.

List at least ten competitors and their websites, blogs, and related social media pages.

Competitor	Website	Blog	Social Media Pages

Important Notes

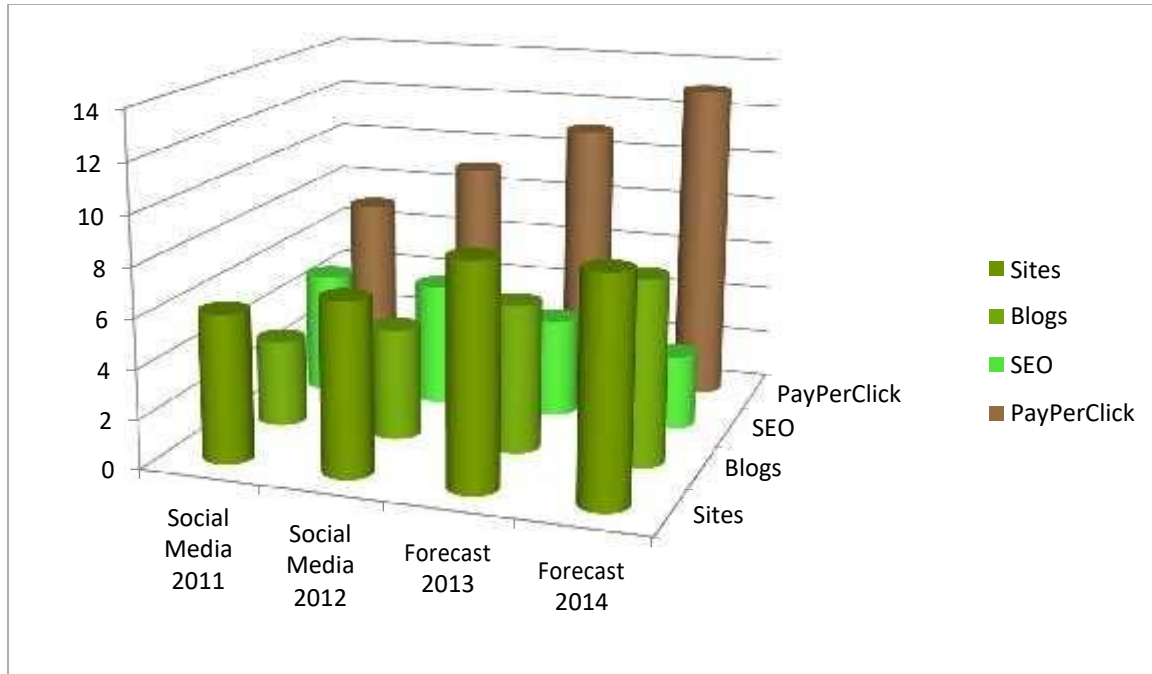
- Costs are generally easier to track in social media marketing than revenues are.
- Be very conscious about your budget. Social media is easy to use and can also be very time consuming. Make sure that you are actually planning, and able to stick to, budgeted resources and time.
- It is unlikely that you will be able to push customers or prospects to a particular social media site or service. You will need to determine where your customers and prospects already are. Then, you can direct your efforts to where they are and encourage them to visit your own sites by offering them a good reason.

What’s the Value?

When you start to calculate what social media costs your company, one of the easier methods is to calculate the **inbound cost per lead**. You probably already calculate what your cost per lead is, so you can incorporate your social media leads into this in many ways. Your goal is to come up with something that is accurate and is a true reflection of what is taking place.

Consider the cost of each lead, whether it is through a social media site, a blog, pay per click and adwords, or a natural search. (**Natural search** is when someone puts a search term into their search bar and your company comes up in the listing because you have a unique name or have optimized your search engine optimization – SEO for short.)

Your **cost per lead, segmented by channel**, could look something like this:



After you have been using, and tracking, your results for a while, you will be able to see whether your planned investment in social media is on target with your budget and resourcing or not. If it isn't, you need to make some immediate adjustments in order to keep your marketing budget on track. Remember: your social media strategy is a portion of your overall Internet strategy, which is a portion of your overall marketing strategy.