



Unit 1

An Introduction to Brand Building through Social Media

Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Define terms related to social media branding
- ✓ Create a strategy for your social media brand
- ✓ Describe various social media platforms and identify what platforms fit your brand

Unit 1

An Introduction to Brand Building through Social Media

What is Branding?

What comes to mind when we say “brand?”

What is a Brand?

- Meaning
- Value
- Information
- Marketing
- Sales
- Emotions/feelings
- Senses
- Making your mark/marketing your territory
- Reputation
- Perception

There are many definitions of a brand, but our favorite comes from Simon Middleton, a British brand expert. In his book *Build a Brand in 30 Days*, he says, “**Brand is about meaning.** Your brand is everything that your customers and prospective customers think, feel, say, hear, read, watch, imagine, suspect, and even hope about your product, service, or organization.”

Add some more of your own ideas of what a brand might include:

What's in a Brand?

Your brand can include:

- A catchy name
- A logo (an image) or logotype (words associated with an image)
- Trademark colors
- Characters
- A particular style, look, and feel
- An attitude
- A set of feelings and values
- Anything you want!

What is Social Media?

What comes to mind when we say “social media?”

What is Social Media?

- The names of specific platforms
- Interacting with others
- Videos
- Audio
- Blogs
- Likes
- Followers
- Friends

Social media is a term used to describe how people interact, create information, share information, and build communities in a virtual environment. Social media in its current state started to evolve with the rise of the Internet in the mid-1990's.

The Rise of Social Media

1960's-1980's

During these decades, the foundation of the Internet and social media began to be established. In 1969, ARPANET was established, followed by the first commercial Internet service (CompuServe). Internet services continued to grow over the next 30 years with the addition of IRC (text-based chat), BBS (Internet bulletin boards), and ListServ (electronic mailing lists).

1990's

During the 1990's, the Internet as we know it today started to take shape. Services like The Palace, GeoCities, Six Degrees, Napster, Classmates.com, and Blogger were all started during this decade.

2000-2010

Social media and the Internet as we know it grew exponentially during this decade. 2003 in particular was a big year, with the introduction of Skype, LinkedIn, MySpace, Plaxo, SecondLife, del.cio.us, and the first version of Facebook. Wikipedia, Twitter, flickr, YouTube, digg, Tumblr, Reddit, and Posterous were also founded during this decade. As well, the first iPhone was launched in 2007, changing the face of the Internet dramatically.

2010-Present

Social media continues to grow. Google+ and Pinterest have joined the list of successful social media networks. App-based social media platforms, such as Instagram and Vine, are also becoming more popular. The mobile device market is growing, too; the first iPad was launched in 2010 and Microsoft released the Surface two years later.

What is Social Media Branding?

Social media branding is about making sure that your brand is the same online as it is offline. It's about creating a constant, consistent, responsive, engaging experience for the customer every time they encounter you on the Internet.

Your social media presence is about building relationships with each customer that encounters your brand. That requires:

- Creating a strategy that supports and strengthens your brand
- Identifying how to provide value to customers in meaningful ways
- Humanizing your brand to build connections with your audience

Building Your Social Media Branding Strategy

Key Ingredients for Your Branding Strategy

Social media marketing is an ongoing process of identifying your audience, engaging them, and keeping them engaged, so that when they need your product or service they think of your brand. There are five key elements to a strong social media branding strategy that will support this process.

What Do You Want the Brand to Say?

To begin, identify what your brand is all about. This includes the things that we discussed in the pre-assignment, like:

- Brand name
- Logo
- Trademark colors
- Characters and icons
- A particular style, look, and/or attitude
- Feelings and values

Now, identify what changes will be made to your brand for social media. (Perhaps you want to be a little bit more casual online, for example.) Keep in mind that in order to maintain your brand's integrity, your online and offline efforts should be consistent with each other.

What is the Brand Saying Now?

You need to know what your brand looks like online right now. This includes:

- Seeing what people are saying about your brand on every social network
- Googling your brand
- Establishing benchmarks for any existing social media tools (e.g. how many Facebook likes you have, or how many visitors your website has per day)
- Using analysis tools like Google Analytics and Facebook Insights to provide in-depth data

From this information, you can create a picture of what your brand currently says via social media. This should include its public perception, the values it embodies, and its persona.

How Will the Brand Come to Life?

Now, you can create a plan for how you will create your desired social media brand. This will include building an audience profile, creating a budget, identifying what platforms and tools you will focus on, creating a strategy for building a presence on those platforms, and crafting engaging messages that bring your brand to life.

What Resources Will We Have?

It's important to be realistic when creating your strategy. Identify the technical resources, budget, and people that you will be able to leverage for your branding campaign. (This information should come from your marketing budget.) Make sure to identify any training or upgrades that might be required, too.

How Will We Evaluate Our Progress?

Finally, develop a plan for checking in on how your brand is doing. This might include:

- Setting up tools like keyword alerts, Google Analytics, or social media tracking software (like HootSuite or Radian6)
- Identifying what metrics to track and how often to track them
- What changes will indicate significant progress or cause for concern

Pre-Assignment Review

Identify the elements of a brand from your organization (or of a brand that you are familiar with). Consider these questions in respect to that brand:

- What is the brand name?
- What does the brand's logo look like?
- What colors are associated with the brand?
- What characters, people, or icons are associated with this brand?
- How would you describe the attitude or feel of the brand?
- What values does the brand espouse?
- Is there anything else significant about this brand?

Provide your answers in the space below:

Now, consider these questions the following questions in light of that brand:

- What social media presence does this brand already have? (Consider things like Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and hashtags, YouTube channels, websites, and blogs.)
- What social media areas are doing well?
- What social media areas could be improved upon?
- Identify how each brand element will translate to the social media brand.

Identifying Your Social Media Audience

Building an Audience Profile

Your first step in your branding strategy should be building a detailed profile of your target social media audience. This will help you choose the right forum and messages for your brand, ensuring that it connects with customers and sends the right message.

Building a social media audience profile is very similar to building a traditional customer profile. You will want to find out:

- Who wants, needs, and buys our product or service?
- What do these customers look like, in terms of age, ethnicity, religious preferences, political preferences, ideology, etc.?

- Where do these customers shop, work, live, and play?
- What social media networks do our customers participate in?
- What kinds of activities do our customers do on social media?
- What other online activities do our customers do (e.g. reading blogs, watching videos, shopping)?

Use the space below to provide answers for these questions. This will help you begin to understand who your online audience is.

The Key Social Media Platforms

Choosing the Right Platform for Your Brand

Now that we know who we're going to target, and how much money we have to spend, we can start identifying the forums that we're going use to bring our brand to life. Most social media platforms have a unique focus, so consider this in your planning. Here is a brief list of the most popular social networks at the time of publication.

Facebook

Facebook is currently the world's most popular network, with about 1.2 billion users in 2014. Businesses can create pages, post status updates, share pictures and videos, and communicate with customers. Facebook has also recently added support for hashtags to help users find information and connect with their interests. As well, Facebook apps can add functionality to buy products, request samples, and participate in contests right from the site. Your Facebook page should be an integral part of your social media branding strategy.

Flickr

Flickr is a photo and short-video-sharing site that is owned by Yahoo. Their focus is on making photos accessible and giving users ways to organize them. You can use Flickr to strengthen your brand by uploading images, tagging them appropriately, and linking back to your website.

Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based social network. Users check into locations on their phone, earning points, unlocking badges, and receiving coupons. Users can also leave tips and recommendations for others.

Google+

Google+ is one of the newest social networks, although previous social media efforts by Google (such as Orkut, Wave, and Buzz) date back to 2004. Google+ allows users to organize people into circles and then share information with each circle. Google+ also includes Hangouts, which allow users to video chat with each other. Many companies have used this feature to connect with customers and create a casual, friendly, approachable brand.

Instagram

Instagram is a mobile app that allows users to create, edit, and share photos and short videos via Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. Businesses can use Instagram to visually promote their brand and create awareness.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social network for professionals. Users and businesses can create pages and connect with each other. You can build your brand's trust and credibility by hosting groups, answering questions, and creating a page that provides value to readers.

Pinterest

Launched in 2010, Pinterest is among the most popular social networks. It allows users to pin websites, recipes, photos, and maps to virtual pinboards. These boards can be accessed by other users via a feed or search, or boards can be kept private. For businesses, Pinterest offers the opportunity to showcase products, share ideas, and provide incentives. Companies like Etsy, Kraft, L.L. Bean, Lowe's, and Nordstrom have been particularly successful in using Pinterest to promote their brand.

Quora

This question-and-answer website is crowdsourced, providing a great opportunity for businesses to establish credibility and provide value to its users.

Snapchat

This mobile app allows users to create “snaps” of photos, videos, and text and share them with recipients. These snaps are only available for one to 10 seconds before they are deleted. If you want to establish a brand as young, hip, and fun, this is the place to be.

Tumblr

Tumblr allows users to share whatever they want (photos, music, videos, text, etc.) from the Tumblr website or mobile apps. It’s a great tool for establishing brand awareness since pages are highly customizable. It also gives users a central place to share things from.

Twitter

The world’s second largest social network allows users to post 140-character updates (“tweets”) which are shared with their followers. Businesses can use Twitter to post news, share links, answer questions, interact with customers, and much more. Hashtags allow users to organize information and find information that they’re interested in. Twitter should be a part of your branding strategy.

Vine

Vine is a mobile app launched in 2012. It is now owned by Twitter. It enables users to record and share six-second videos. Brands like Dunkin Donuts and Columbia Records have used it to connect with a younger demographic.

Vimeo

Vimeo is a video sharing site that focuses on high-quality, creative videos. They were the first video sharing site to support high-definition videos. They also offer more video customization and editing tools than other video sites (such as YouTube).

YouTube

Owned by Google, YouTube is the world’s second largest search engine and the biggest video site on the Internet. It allows users to upload and view videos on virtually any topic. Videos are an essential part of

Facebook

- Showcase logo with profile picture
- Showcase key products with cover photos and albums
- Strengthen image of brand as family-friendly with stories, photos, and videos from families enjoying our product
- Strengthen image of brand as fun with offbeat questions and polls that engage target demographics

Google+

- Create vibrant, fun landing page that matches landing pages on other platforms to ensure brand integrity
- Give posts a more adult feel to focus on young professionals
- Focus posts on healthier options and community projects to enhance brand image

Instagram

- Engage younger demographic with pictures of people enjoying our food and activities in our communities
- Use custom and popular tags to establish brand values
- Link to Facebook and Twitter to enhance demographic reach and brand impact

LinkedIn

- Create company page that highlights our employees' achievements to promote company brand
- Offer support and advice to leadership and entrepreneurship groups to create trust for the brand
- Encourage employees to link to us

Quora

- Enhance brand's family focus by answering nutrition questions (not necessarily those that promote the product)
- Increase community presence by answering tourism questions for the areas that we serve

Twitter

- Create vibrant, fun landing page that matches landing pages on other platforms to ensure brand integrity
- Use custom and popular tags to establish brand values

- Be active in following and retweeting others

YouTube

- Create vibrant, fun landing page that matches landing pages on other platforms to ensure brand integrity
- Create and share videos of people enjoying our food and activities in our communities (particularly fitness activities)
- Create and share videos showing people how to make some of our recipes at home

Further Reading:

- ✓ Deckers, Erik, and Kyle Lacy. *Branding Yourself (2nd Edition)*. Que Publishing, 2013.
- ✓ Gioglio, Jessica, and Ekaterina Walter. *The Power of Visual Storytelling: How to Use Visuals, Videos, and Social Media to Market Your Brand*. McGraw-Hill, 2014.
- ✓ Godin, Seth. *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*. Penguin, 2008.