

An Introduction to Social Media Marketing



The social media landscape



Social media has been around and growing in a big way for over a decade. Facebook has over 2 billion monthly active users alone. The average person spends nearly two hours a day using social - that's nearly as much time as they spend watching TV - and more than eating and drinking!

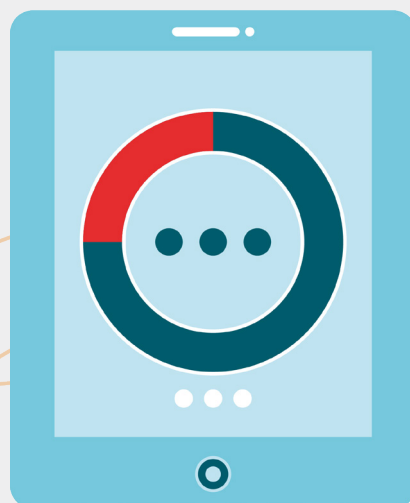
Whether you like it or not, social networking is not going anywhere. For those of us over 30, we can still appreciate how much the internet has changed our lives. For the first time, it gave everyone the ability to publish, uncensored - so everyone had a voice and information could travel across the globe in an instant.

Now that social is an integral part of our daily lives, businesses have realised that it's a huge opportunity to reach their customers and to build relationships with them, listen to them, engage with them and build loyalty.

The rule in marketing is to always go to where your customers are - and in 2018 they are on their phones and laptops connecting with other people and socially networking.

- **74% of UK adults use social media**
- **Most people use between 2 and 5 networks**
- **Over 80% of social networking is on mobile**

But to get involved without a clear strategy will inevitably result in wasted time, unrewarded effort and poor results, so it's essential to develop a strategy that works for your business. We don't believe there's a 'one size fits all approach' - each business needs a tailored strategy that suits their business goals, customers, personality and resources.



A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Our approach to developing a social media marketing strategy is a simple 7 step process. Your strategy should be easy to understand by everyone in the organisation, serve as a useful reference guide and also be reviewed regularly. Your business will grow and develop over time, your market will change and the social media landscape will evolve - and this means that your strategy needs to adapt to remain relevant to your business goals and customers and also to make the most of any new social networking features.



Step 1: Setting Objectives

The first step is to think 'business first'. What do you want to achieve from using social.

There are many opportunities for a business using social including (but not limited to):

- **Engaging with current and potential customers**
- **Reaching new audience demographics**
- **Building brand awareness in the local area**
- **Maximising event attendance**
- **Driving website traffic**
- **Generating online conversions**
- **Building your email database**
- **Letting people get to know your business, people and values**

Your goals will inform your entire social media marketing strategy and keep you focused on what you're doing and why. Goals should be prioritised and then refined into SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) objectives so that you can clearly evaluate the performance of your strategy.



Step 2:

Knowing your audience

Identifying who you want to reach, connect with and engage on social will help you not only find them, but develop relevant content and drive results. Successful social media marketing is not about getting as many followers as possible; followers are a vanity metric. Quality is more important than quantity and identifying buyer personas that represent your current and future customers will ensure that your content and communication is building engagement with the right people that will aid business growth.

Looking at well established brands (in any sector) will help you to understand how having a clearly defined target audience informs how you communicate on social and attract the right crowd.



Step 3:

Choosing Networks



LinkedIn is the obvious channel for B2B marketing as it's the social network that is focused on building professional networks, establishing thought leadership and sharing content related to your industry.

The free version of LinkedIn has a great search feature allowing you to search by email address, name, location, job title and location and more.

Business pages really thrive when employees are encouraged to share content from the page but, without the support of the team, organic growth can be slow.

While many LinkedIn groups are, unfortunately, quite self-promotional, there may be some in your sector that are worth exploring for some professional networking and discovering prospective customers.

Twitter is another great social network for B2B marketing. Focused on real-time conversations, Twitter is a level playing field for businesses of any size and great for discovering others in your sector and like-minded people. It does take a commitment in terms of time to really build your following but you get out what you put in with Twitter. The more social you are, the better results you will see.

Facebook has the largest user base of any network and is very well set up for business pages. Recent algorithm changes support content from friends and family and Facebook encourages building community through groups and events, so businesses need to get creative on Facebook in order to reach the newsfeed.

The Facebook advertising platform is very powerful with sophisticated targeting features so a paid strategy is a sensible option to ensure content reaches your audience.

YouTube, owned by Google, is a powerful search engine in its own right, with over 1.5 billion active users. By 2020, it's argued that over 80% of all social content will be video so investing in video now is a great idea. It's also worth sharing any video content on your Facebook page also, as Facebook favours native video over YouTube links.

The most important thing with regards to choosing networks is to use the networks where a) your audience are and b) which suit your business and the content you can create.

Step 4:

Building a Content Strategy

Consistent visual identity

Starting with the basics, review your channels and ensure there is a consistent visual identity - are the colours, fonts and visual style found on your social networks aligned with your website and other marketing collateral?

Your logo should be clear and recognisable. Remember that most social use takes place on mobile devices - so if your profile pic on Twitter includes words, are they legible in a Twitter feed on a phone?

Images must be crisp and good quality. Header/cover photo dimensions vary across networks so ensure you use the appropriate size and that no key information is cropped off.

Develop a brand voice

Because social media is fundamentally a communications channel, and brand 'voice', style of language is also key. Too often, businesses slip into generic 'marketing' copywriting and this isn't always the most engaging.

If several people contribute to your social media copywriting, it's essential there is some consistency so that a recognisable 'personality' of your business is present.

Think about how you want people to perceive your brand. Do you want to be considered formal, professional, authoritative or informal, personable and funny? Or somewhere in between?

Some of the following questions will help you to identify your brand voice and the style of language you will use across your written, visual and audio assets.

- **What are your values?**
- **Why was the business founded?**
- **How formal or informal are you when you talk to your customers in the office, on the phone or over email?**

Engaging subject matter

One of the best ways to start thinking critically about what makes content engaging is to think about what stops you scrolling past and gets your attention on social media.

There is a lot of content published every day and to stand out, we need to ensure that our content speaks our audience's language and adds value to their online experience.

Break your content plan down into topics to work out a good balance and that you're not becoming purely promotional and are still adding value and helping your customers and potential customers.

These questions may help you to start putting a content plan together:

- **What is different about your business?**
- **How can you solve problems and help?**
- **What products or services do you want to focus on?**
- **Are there any areas that require a particular focus?**
- **Is there something you really want to shout about?**

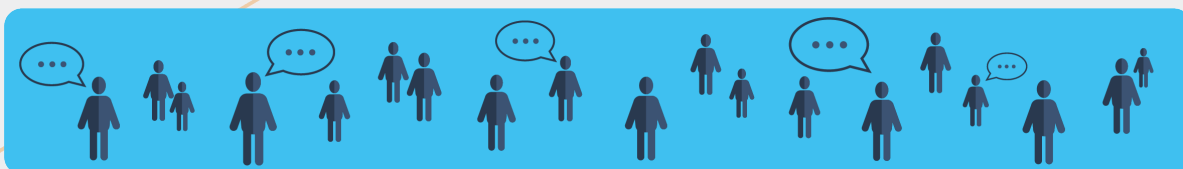
To help get the balance of content you want in your feeds to maximise engagement, plan both created content (original content) and curated content (sharing someone else's content). Both Feedly and Pocket are useful tools to help with content discovery and will save you time. Sharing others' content is social, promotes thought leadership, builds credibility and helps to build relationships with other publishers who may even reciprocate in the future.

A great first step to develop a strategic and balanced content plan is to use the pie chart method. Calculate roughly what percentage of your content will be taken by the different topics you identify and use this as a starting guide.

Social media algorithms

Algorithms are becoming more and more important across all social networks but all are built on the theory that engagement leads to a better experience for the user. So the content that generates most engagement will tend to reach more people. And those that engage with you or your business the most are more likely to see what you publish.

To help increase social media engagement, add value, use great visuals, use your audience's language and be social.



Step 5: Community Management

Social media management doesn't end once you've published content. Good communication is a two-way thing and you'll build more relationships if you're responsive. Part of your social media strategy should outline how you'll monitor interactions with your content, answer any questions you are asked on social and reply to any messages you receive.

People value timely responses on social media. 41% of people expect a response from a brand on social within 24 hours. If you pride yourself on excellent customer service and being better than your competitors, being responsive on social is how you can differentiate yourself and show this.

If you decide to actively use social as a customer service channel and have a dedicated feed, people's expectations are higher - nearly two thirds of people expecting a response within an hour, and a third of these within half an hour.



Step 6: Planning Resources



You could spend a few hours a week on social media or a few hours a day but this time has to be factored into the other operations within your business. Assign a certain amount of time and people to work on content creation and publishing as well as community management, reporting and reviewing the strategy.

Answering the following questions will help you to outline this part of your strategy:

- **Who is accountable for social media marketing?**
- **How much time do they have for managing all aspects of social per week/month?**
- **Do you need to invest in training or a consultant to provide them with the skills and support they need to succeed on social?**
- **Which tools and software will you use and do you need to evaluate any internal processes to streamline communication with regards to social? (e.g. sales, marketing and customer service department)**
- **How much budget do you have to allocate for content assets (e.g. video/design) and for paid social advertising?**

Step 7: Measuring Success

Measuring performance will tell you if your strategy is working. If one of your objectives is to drive website traffic, use Google Analytics to measure which channels are most effective at doing that. And use Facebook, Facebook Ads Manager, LinkedIn or Twitter analytics to understand which content generated the most link clicks.

Recording key metrics each calendar month will help you to identify trends and to learn more about what is working and what isn't.



Useful tools to support your social media marketing strategy

- **Social Brighton's content pie chart worksheet**
- **Social Brighton's brand voice worksheet**
- [Feedly](#)
- [Pocket](#)