

Social Media

A Comprehensive Look at What Companies Need

Organizational Social Media for Clients

Any organization that is actively building or sustaining a brand understands that they should be using social media to interact with their customers. But for those who are not, where should a company even begin? Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram . . . the list of social platforms just keeps growing. Social media management can be overwhelming. It's no wonder that a recent American Express survey of small business owners revealed that *social media expert* was the most commonly listed position they were seeking to fill.¹ Companies reach out to agencies for assistance with social media for a variety of reasons: because they do not have the appropriate internal expertise, because they are faced with a crisis, because they are working on a specific project, or because they simply do not know where to begin.

In this chapter, we answer the recurring questions asked by organizations seeking to develop a social media strategy. According to Mike Bal, author of *Marketing Apocalypse: The Brand Survival Guide*, clients want to know:²

- What makes social content different from the other content that companies create, such as websites, brochures, or media alerts?
- What goes into developing a social content strategy?

Objectives

- Explain the different networks and channels that make up social media.
- Describe the function and usage of social media for organizations.
- Understand that an influential social media strategy must deliver a compelling message.
- Anticipate some of the challenges and opportunities for agencies engaging in social media outreach and community building for their clients.

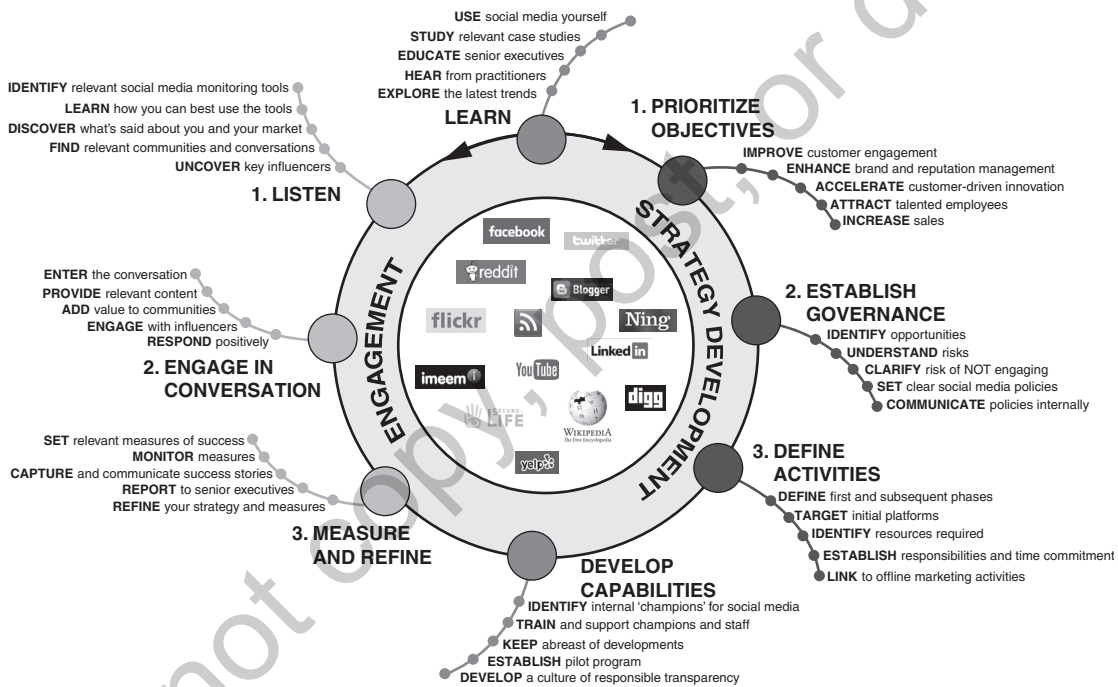
¹ Vanderkam, L. (2014, August 6). Should you outsource your social media? *Fast Company*. Retrieved January 10, 2016, from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3033989/the-future-of-work/should-you-outsource-your-social-media>

² Bal, M. (2014, December 26). How to design a social content strategy that converts. *The Daily Egg*. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://blog.crazyegg.com/2014/12/26/social-content-strategy/>

Tip

Three Critical Content Creation Tips From Cofounder of Blank Label, Danny Wong³

1. Be strategic: Know your goals, which media channels are relevant, and where to promote.
2. Killer headlines: Exceptional headlines garner clicks, are easy to remember, and are especially shareworthy.
3. WOW-worthy images: Add a visual element, such as an infographic, video, or GIF that relates to the content.



Ross Dawson developed the Social Media Strategy Framework to guide professionals through developing effective social media campaigns.

Source: Reprinted from Dawson, R. (2009). Social Media Strategy Framework [Digital image]. Retrieved March 9, 2018, from <https://rossdawson.com/frameworks/social-media-strategy/>.

³ Wong, D. (2014, January 29). 11 critical content creation tips. *HuffPost*. Retrieved December 14, 2017, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/danny-wong/11-critical-content-creat_b_4681265.html

- What tools are needed to be successful?
- How does social strategy evolve through monitoring, evaluation, and research?

Running social media for an organization is very different than managing personal channels. While they may share the goals of a distinct, consistent voice; compelling content; growth in followers and engagement; and participation in real conversations with other users, the path to these ends is very different. Organizations need significant planning and structure to create and maintain a strong social media presence. They need teams of people (often both internally and externally at agencies) balancing the strategic planning, idea generation, content creation, and approval as well as daily posting, monitoring, and responding. The complexities grow when multiple social media channels are added to the mix.

Although many companies hire recent college graduates to bolster their social media teams, fluency in the language of Instagram and Snapchat does not necessarily translate to a successful career managing social media for organizations. To get there, agency practitioners must bring strategic perspective and a desire to stay ahead of the fast-moving nature of social channels and networks. They should cultivate the ability to write exquisitely, to research thoroughly, to understand the approach behind sound decision making, and to nurture the unique relationships of individuals and brands built through social media.



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Content Creation and Curation

Content is the currency of the modern social sphere. Companies use content to earn trust, gain attention, increase engagement, and garner a variety of actions from users around the world.⁴ Organizations accomplish this by generating original content as well as curating content: finding, repackaging, and distributing content created by others. Creating and sharing social content engages fans and customers. Companies should recognize that the primary goal is to develop stronger relationships between an engaged audience and a brand.

In PR, brainstorming brings people together to share ideas, creatively solve problems, and join forces to work toward client goals.

⁴ Bal, M. (2014, December 26). How to design a social content strategy that converts. *The Daily Egg*. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://blog.crazyegg.com/2014/12/26/social-content-strategy/>

Content is everywhere on the social sphere and forces organizations to think and act as publishers rather than as marketers or advertisers. This change in dynamic often leaves leadership frustrated. Companies are accustomed to selling products and maximizing advertising and marketing efforts; after all, it is about the bottom line, right? Developing content that your intended audience is interested in reading, watching, or listening to is drastically different from producing content that you, the company, would like people to read.⁵ It's a different way of thinking, and some C-suite executives are moving to support it. Agency professionals contribute by using their outside perspective to recommend content strategies and tactics reflective of both audience preferences and organizational needs.

Your content is anything that your target audience, clients, and customers see online when they are researching and interacting with your brand. This can be simple text, such as videos, images, **memes**, blog posts, or **GIFs**, or as intricate and detailed as **infographics**, e-books, and white papers. To capture attention, it is critical that your content provides value to social media fans and followers.⁶ This applies equally to original and curated content. Content can be customized and shared across numerous social media platforms, so defining the channel-specific audience and purpose of the message is crucial. A reasonable question to ask prior to content development may be this: *What does the organization want the content to do?*⁷ Develop and link **key performance indicators (KPIs)** for individualized content tracking during implementation.

According to Doreen Olson, owner of Social Imagineering, much of the content that companies will either create or curate for social media profiles will be classified in one of three categories: goodwill, audience centered, or call to action.⁸

Goodwill

Goodwill arises when companies curate and share thoughts and ideas from other profiles, businesses, or industry influencers. This process also helps strengthen industry relations. Content sharing is contagious, and camaraderie is built between organizations when information is disbursed. Readers appreciate when a business shares content other than their own. Social Media Examiner contributor Jamie Beckland wrote that “when you reference someone else’s content, you’ll credit them, driving traffic back to the original source material. Promoting other people’s great work is the best way to make the people you respect into your newest fans.” Peer advice,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Brown, R., Waddington, S., & Wilson, R. (2013). *Share this too: More social media solutions for PR professionals*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

⁸ Olson, D. (2016). Social media archives—social imagineering. *Social Imagineering*. Retrieved January 10, 2016, from <http://www.socialimagineering.com/category/social-media/>

affinity networks, circles of trust, consistency, and strategic advocacy are crucial when spreading goodwill and establishing formidable, trusted relationships.⁹

Audience Centered

Natural and meaningful conversations conducted within the social sphere should reflect conversations in real life. Over time in our non-virtual lives, relationships develop and trust is earned. A similar occurrence happens on the web. When we listen to what others are talking about, we build and deepen connections with them—the same principles should apply to online relations.¹⁰ When brands adopt a likable, friendly rapport with an audience, a trusting, two-way relationship begins. Every company needs likeable content in order to engage the audiences that they would like to get to know most. Richard Sedley, author of *Winners and Losers in a Troubled Economy: How to Engage Customers Online to Gain Competitive Advantage*, defines the purpose of this interaction between a business and its customer: “Strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand.”¹¹ Likeable social media content draws from a clear organizational voice while anticipating and responding to an audience’s expectations, needs, and desires. It is relevant to broader news and conversations of interest to followers and should be engaging and valuable for them.

Call to Action (CTA)

Call-to-action (CTA) messages are a critical component of digital content that an organization can create and post on social media profiles. CTAs are targeted phrases that encourage an audience to act.¹² They may include downloading a white paper, following the company on Twitter, registering for a webinar, signing up for an e-news blast, or sharing company content with a friend or colleague. By developing and incorporating CTAs, the audience has the opportunity to further engage with the organization. When consumers are given the option of learning more, signing up, or sharing with others, they often do so. For example, at the end of a blog post, you might consider including a CTA that directs readers to download a case study. An example might look like this: *For more ideas, examples, and case studies exploring the ups and downs of event planning, download Michelle Weaver’s*

⁹ De Clerck, J-P. (2014). Developing a content strategy for customer engagement. *ISCOOP*. Retrieved January 11, 2016, <http://www.i-scoop.eu/content-strategy-customer-engagement/>

¹⁰ Brown, R., Waddington, S., & Birch, D. (2013). *Share this too: More social media solutions for PR professionals*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

¹¹ Perks, M., & Sedley, R. (2008). *Winners and losers in a troubled economy: How to engage customers online to gain competitive advantage*. London, UK: CScape.

¹² Deshpande, P. (2013, July 17). 5 tips every content curator needs to write better calls-to-action. *Content Marketing Institute*. Retrieved November 5, 2017, from <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2013/07/tips-content-curator-write-better-calls-to-action/>

Event Planning Essentials. To make your company's CTAs as effective as possible, identify the objective as, for example, downloading an e-book or template, sharing a post, or registering for an event. CTAs should be short and actionable.

While they are important, CTAs generally represent a small percentage of content. Much like a friend who only asks for favors—and never seems to worry about what you need—brands should include CTAs thoughtfully alongside the other two content types. Therefore, most content does not include a CTA, but when it does, it should be strategic and purposeful. The correct balance is different for every brand. Consider the following useful tips from authors Rob Brown, Stephen Waddington, and Robin Wilson of *Share This Too: More Social Media Solutions for PR Professionals* to strike the appropriate mix when developing content:¹³

- **Be remarkable:** Attempt to produce content that is compelling and targeted toward your audience but also contributes to company objectives.
- **Be valuable:** Think about the audience and what they will find useful. Get out of the habit of simply posting what the company wants to post.



Aaron Orendorff @iconiContent · 4 May 2017
 Writing #content is only 20% of the job; the other 80% is promotion, says @TaliaGw. buff.ly/2p1gvwc via @CMiContent



- **Build trust:** Foster relationships by treating your audience as human beings. This includes acting with transparency (such as agency practitioners disclosing when they are sharing client content through personal channels) and with a genuine desire to build mutually beneficial relationships with audiences.
- **Talk with consumers, not at them:** Respond to interactions on your social channels and let your customers know you are listening and are interested in engaging with them. The organic nature of social media rewards content of real value and interest to audiences and buries messages that are narrowly about an organization.
- **Avoid the hard sell:** We all work with the boundaries of business objectives and return on investment (ROI) demands, but no potential

Content creation is about balancing organizational messages and audience engagement. PR professionals should cross-promote social media content among multiple channels.

¹³ Becklan, J. (2011, April 1). How to grow a following with other people's popular content. *Social Media Examiner*. Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/content-curation/>

customer wants “BUY NOW!!” messages filtering through their social feeds. This is a turn-off and customers will go elsewhere.

Many of the standard planning practices apply for agency professionals building social media content strategy for a client. Consider overarching organizational goals, what your customers care about, and how your brand wants to interact with the audience online. Developing a strategy that integrates these key elements will go a long way in cultivating rewarding relationships. Combining strategic planning with an agency’s perspective connects social media outreach with a core objective: multiplying and improving relationships with stakeholders.

Building the Right Relationships

Organic Social Media Versus Paid Social Media

In the early days of social media development, networks were purely organic. If an organization wanted consumers to interact with content, they only needed the content to be interesting, informative, or newsworthy. Today, most social networks contain some degree of sponsored content that allow organizations to advertise to additional social media users.¹⁴ Most organizations can benefit from utilizing a mix of boosted, paid, and organic content, depending on the message, time line, and objectives.

Organic social media maintains customer loyalty, resolves customer issues, and provides a connection between a brand and its followers. According to Krista Neher, organic social media assumes that you have to earn your way into the newsfeed using great content that will resonate with a target audience.¹⁵ Most organic social media posts stay away from directly selling products or services, as touting an organization’s goods rarely drives engagement. The premise of organic social media content is permission based, meaning that your social posts must be good enough for people to opt in and want to hear more.

When handled well, organic social media permits brands to recruit ambassadors and cheerleaders, also known as influencers, who have the ability to reach more people and add more credibility than with paid efforts. Organic content continues to play a significant role in social media, but paid strategies are seen as a way to maximize a company’s content reach while at the same time generating actions that lead to revenue. A variety of options for paid social media provide a growing array of selections for organizations to target their efforts and expand their followers.

¹⁴ Comcowich, W. (n.d.). Paid, organic and sponsored: The social media marketing trifecta. *CyberAlert Blog*. Retrieved January 12, 2016, from <http://www.cyberalert.com/blog/index.php/paid-organic-and-sponsored-the-social-media-marketing-trifecta/>

¹⁵ Neher, K. (2014, October 27). The future of social media: Paid vs. organic. *ClickZ*. Retrieved November 5, 2017, from <https://www.clickz.com/clickz/column/2377715/the-future-of-social-media-paid-vs-organic>

The main objectives governing paid social media reside with the creation of posts that both grab attention and stand out in the cluttered social media landscape but, more importantly, also build a company's brand.¹⁶ According to Ryan Schram, chief operating officer of IZEA,

whether a company calls it “paid social,” “native advertising,” “content marketing,” “influencer marketing,” or “sponsored posts,” the paid social media category has redefined what digital word-of-mouth—sometimes called “word of mouse”—can be for public relations practitioners and their clients. Consumers are not only forming business relationships with the brands they love, but they are also creating and sharing brand-sponsored content with their personal social following. The ramifications of this trend are astonishing, and highly transformative, to the over-arching landscape.¹⁷

According to research conducted by The Halverson Group and The Right Brain Consumer Consulting, paid social media continues to demonstrate its value within the social sphere and among influencers. Their findings note that 52% of companies now have a stand-alone sponsored social media budget for their brand and find sponsored social media as one of the top three most effective marketing investments that they make.¹⁸

The Evolution of a Company's Social Media Strategy

In today's cutthroat corporate environment, the success or failure of any organization's social strategy hinges on the strength of the strategy itself. A company cannot create content without a plan, but the plan must also be revisited and revised regularly. Social strategies are malleable and evolve over time. The fact is, new social channels pop up frequently. As a result, so do new approaches to reach key company stakeholders, investors, consumers, employees, and members of the community.¹⁹

¹⁶ Neher, K. (2014, October 27). The future of social media: Paid vs. organic. *ClickZ*. Retrieved December 14, 2017, from <https://www.clickz.com/the-future-of-social-media-paid-vs-organic/29078/>

¹⁷ Schram, R. Personal communication, November 15, 2015.

¹⁸ Murphy, T. (2015, November 15). *The 6th annual “state of sponsored social” report shows sponsored social posts as effective as TV commercials*. Retrieved November 5, 2017, from <https://www.slideshare.net/tedmurphy1/2015-state-of-sponsored-social-54686207>

¹⁹ Matthews, L. (2010). Social media and the evolution of corporate communications. *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 1. Available at <http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/research/02matthewsejspring10.pdf>

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT

SITE	LINK	PROFILE NAME	FOLLOWERS	DATE OF LAST ACTIVITY	FREQUENCY OF POSTS	MONTHLY REFERRAL TRAFFIC	% OF CHANGE (LAST YEAR)	% OF CHANGE (LAST MONTH)	CLICKS PER POST	CLICKS PER POST (LAST MONTH)	CLICKS PER POST CHANGE	FACEBOOK REACH	% OF CHANGE (LAST WEEK)	FOLLOWERS (TODAY)	FOLLOWERS (LAST MONTH)	FOLLOWERS CHANGE	
f FACEBOOK												0					0
Instagram																	0
TWITTER																	0
LINKED-IN																	0
GOOGLE+																	0
SNAPCHAT																	0
PINTEREST																	0
TUMBLR																	0
YOUTUBE																	0
OTHER																	0
OTHER																	0

Social media audits should be conducted to assess which platforms are working and where an organization can improve. Tables can help to quickly organize and present the results of an audit, as well as to track ongoing progress.

An early step in building an organizational social strategy is identifying the correct channel or channels. Companies must pick and choose the social media platforms that best match their audience, their content, and their communication goals. As internal and agency teams always have limited time, they must balance the needs of channel monitoring, content creation, content distribution, and organic engagement and participation. Successful agency practitioners focus on the channel(s) they can execute effectively rather than attempting to build a presence everywhere. Organizations should only take on the project of creating a presence on a specific channel if they have the resources and time to maintain it. In addition to guiding these decisions, a significant part of an agency practitioner's role is to stay informed about and engaged with emerging social media platforms. Through this work, they can constantly evaluate and reevaluate whether specific platforms add value for individual clients and their audiences.

A social media strategy presents businesses with the opportunity to earn trust, showcase expertise, and meet potential customers.²⁰ When businesses lack a clear social media strategy, they struggle to garner the desired customer engagement levels, insights, and conversions that they are looking for. Every comprehensive social media strategy needs to include the following:²¹

1. an audit of the existing social media presence
2. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) social media objectives
3. development of a content creation strategy, calendar, and process
4. ongoing measurement and refinement research
5. proper review and adjustment of the overarching strategy

²⁰ Create Social Media Strategy. (n.d.). *Hootsuite*. Retrieved January 15, 2016, from <http://socialbusiness.hootsuite.com/rs/hootsuitemediainc/images/Social-Media-Strategy-Guide.pdf>

²¹ *Ibid.*

Only after an organization identifies the topics that will resonate with their audience and support their objectives can they begin to adjust their social media strategy accordingly. Tweaking a social media strategy should be a continuous process that clients frequently request of their agency partners. Evaluation happens through the execution of a social media campaign. As is often the case, agencies will leverage analytics and feedback to guide their clients through these updates.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Discuss the differences between *content creation* and *content curation*.
2. What are the three areas in which most practitioners will curate content?
3. Every comprehensive social media strategy should include which elements?
4. The chapter outlined methods for creating strategic and purposeful content. What were they and why were they so important?
5. If you were hired at an agency to run the social media for clients, how would you organize yourself? What did you learn from this chapter that would assist you in becoming an exemplar social strategist?

Darryl Villacorta

Darryl Villacorta is the social media manager at Sprout Social. He has a background in digital media and loves all things related to tech, social media, and video. Outside of the office, his favorite things include acting, songwriting, and writing teleplays. Sprout Social is a platform for social media analytics and a software tool used by many public relations agencies; it is tasked with offering social media engagement, advocacy, and analytic solutions for leading agencies and brands, including Hyatt, Uber, Zendesk, Microsoft, and Zipcar. Sprout's

social media engagement platform enables brands to more effectively communicate on social channels, collaborate across teams, and provide an exceptional customer experience. Bambu by Sprout Social, a platform for advocacy, empowers employees to share curated content across their social networks to further amplify a brand's reach and engagement.

In the article, "Complete Checklist for Social Media Managers," originally written for *AdWeek*, Darryl suggests breaking down the management and curation of social media by

developing daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly strategies:²²

Daily

- Respond to inbound social messages.
- Monitor and respond to brand mentions.
- Create conversations with brand advocates.
- Find and engage with potential customers.
- Research the social media industry.
- Preload your social editorial calendar.
- Post three to six times on Twitter.
- Post one to two times on Facebook.
- Post one to three times to Instagram.
- Post one to two times to LinkedIn.
- Study your products and services.
- Monitor the competition.
- Work on a personal blog post.

Weekly

- Engage with thought leaders.
- Engage with marketing partners.
- Discuss tactics with your team.
- Run your social media analytics.
- Encourage sharing through employee advocacy.

Monthly

- Audit your strategy.
- Attend local events.
- Detox from social media.
- Collaborate with other departments.

Quarterly

- Assess key performance indicators.
- Adjust quarterly goals.
- Gauge team needs.

Having had the opportunity to interview Darryl further, he also offered these insights:

Imagine you are student right out of college and you've just landed yourself a great job in the social industry. What should you expect? How should you prepare?

Expect to hit the ground running right from the start. Responsibilities will vary by role, but the one constant across the board is the organization's trust in your social knowledge and expertise. Set guidelines and educate your cohorts that trial and error is part of the job. Another way to prepare is to learn to say "no." Individuals can maximize their efforts (and keep their sanity) by working smarter, not harder. Lastly, keep the lines of communication

(Continued)

²² Villacorta, D. (2015, July 1). A complete checklist for social media managers. [Infographic.] *Adweek*. Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <http://www.adweek.com/digital/a-complete-checklist-for-social-media-managers-infographic/>

(Continued)

open. Social media within an organization shouldn't live in its own silo.

What goes into strategic social media campaigns?

A lot of planning! Before starting any campaign, it is essential to identify specific goals and target audiences. Also, prepare for the unexpected with ample resources before, during, and after any campaigns—it's better to be safe than sorry!

What is the best and most effective way to manage and curate social media?

Have a streamlined workflow that can be scalable. There isn't a right or wrong way to manage and curate content for social media consumption; however, the process should be able to be replicated by others in a manner

that is streamlined to generate maximum efficiency.

What is your opinion on organic social media versus paid social media? Pros/cons? Why should a company care about both/either/neither?

I've said this before and I'll forever keep saying it: social media has never been free. You may own your time and content, but you're working on rented land. Simply relying on organic methods can only take you so far. If you're a serious marketer, you need to ask yourself which social networks provide the most benefit to your brand.

Any final thoughts to share?

This can be applicable to any industry: "Never stop learning."

Top 5 Characteristics Every PR Professional Should Have

1. Great improvisational skills
2. Close attention to the details
3. Up to date with current social trends/pop culture
4. Great time-management skills
5. Sociable online and offline

Top Must-Haves

- **Must-download app:** Feedly! It's a great app for staying up to date with news from all industries. Also, it is customizable and integrates with many social media management tools.
- **Must-read book/blog/news outlet:**
 - **Book:** *No Bullshit Social Media* (Erik

Deckers & Jason Falls)

- **Blog:** Sprout Social Insights, Social Media Examiner, The Next Web, TechCrunch, SocialTimes
- **Media:** Entrepreneur, Inc.
- **Must-use tool:** Sprout Social—I'm obviously biased.