

Secrets of Social Media Marketing That Everyone Misses

Social media marketing sounds simple enough to many newbie business owners, but they need to recognize the difference between personal social media use and professional use.

Think about it like this: if you make a good pot of coffee to serve your family, then that's something you can manage on your own. But if you plan on serving 1,000 cups of coffee to peers over the course of a three-day business conference, then that's an entirely more complex matter!

Everything gets more complicated when you move from personal to professional, and the results matter more, too.

Suddenly, you aren't just posting on your Facebook when you feel like it. Nor can you just feel good about the occasional reply and like. Instead, you're actively trying to drive business goals and represent your brand in a likeable way.

The dramatic difference between the two approaches catches many business owners off-guard. To help them out, here are eight secrets the pros use when it comes to social media marketing — and that many small businesses overlook.

Write Down a Policy and Style Guide



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Ask them to tell you what the business's social media policy is, and you're just as likely to get dozens of different answers. In fact, most employees may look you back blankly in the face.

A social media policy guides the brand voice as well as the decisions a business makes when posting. So, if you were trying to pick between two image types, the social media policy could help you decide on the one that aligns better with your social goals.

Set policies for employee social media use, too. Make sure they know they represent the company! Let them know what sorts of offenses could get them in hot water, including [posting extreme political opinions or offensive takes](#).

Creating a [social media style guide](#) can similarly help make posting easier, especially if more than one employee handles the duties. Align everything in your policy and style guide so that your social media accounts can support both your brand and your marketing goals.

Target Your Content and Conversations Towards Personas



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Some small businesses get HUGE social media followings ...of people who would rarely buy anything from them.

There is a big gap between mass engagement and targeted engagement.

You want your posts to speak to a highly targeted audience based on the traits of your best customers. For instance, if you pitch your services to existing IT departments, don't be shy about using jargon. Stay current on any discussion, too, so that your ideas don't seem dated.

But if you want to offer managed IT services to regular businesses, they may not know a CAT cable from a cat collar. Feel free to post basic how-tos, and try to keep terminology approachable.

Decide upon the segments you want to speak to in order to raise your chances of success. Imagine traits of a single person in this segment, including their typical job role, the things they value most, and broad aspects of their personality. This is your "persona" for an idealized version of a target audience group.

You can even name them! That way, before you decide on a post to share or an image to use, you can ask something like: "Would Sarah the retired optometrist care about this post?"

Strategize, Set Goals, And Ditch Vanity Metrics

Always set goals for your social media usage. It should serve a concrete purpose that ultimately benefits your business.

Common social media marketing goals include:

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- Raising website visits
- Generating leads through job quotes
- Helping introduce new products to people
- Getting more participants for events, contests, and things like webinars
- Upselling existing customers
- Reminding prior customers to return again
- Promoting a specific brand value, especially through philanthropy

No matter what your goals are, ensure they actually help your business get more money or improve its brand.

For instance, having a certain number of “likes” or shares from a post promoting your content should not be a goal. These are [vanity metrics](#). Instead, you should monitor the amount of actual visits to the content on your website. Ideally, you will also have targets for the percentage of people converted from social to content to signing up for your related offer.

Carry on Actual Conversations and Engage



Don't just post into the void or post things you, personally, want to read.

Everything you post should be targeted towards the personas you have created and tied towards business goals.

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With this in mind, you want your audiences to feel like your brand is carrying on a conversation rather than just talking *at* them.

Respond to certain positive comments or interesting ideas. Try to see if you can get the full perspective from people who have something negative to say. Make each response feel personal, not canned.

Give your audience opportunities to take center stage. Post a question for them, like “what are your favorite ways to save money?” Ask them if they would like to see more of certain content types, or less of certain post types.

Also, make your social media use broader than just posting on your own page. Use [social listening tools](#) to monitor brand mentions and jump in on messages when you think it’s worthy of a conversation. Find other business pages, and engage with them like you would want others to engage with you.

As Andrew Kucheriavy of web development company Intechnic writes, “[make \[sure\] your interactions are meaningful! Networking is about adding value to a relationship.](#)”

Make Time for Off-Schedule Posting

Many business owners go ahead and queue up an entire month’s worth of content in advance.

This is great! Having a schedule makes the social experience more consistent and professional for your audience.

But you shouldn’t be shackled to this schedule.

New articles and ideas will pop up on your radar all the time. Maybe something interesting happened in your industry this week. Maybe you just snapped a great photo of your team at the office.

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Give yourself the chance to actually share content during opportunities like these rather than hoarding it all until next month. If you set aside, say, an hour each week to make time for unscheduled postings, then you can flesh out your existing content and make your page feel more organic.

Just remember to stick to your policy, goals, and persona guides. Also, proofread twice!

Promote Content Posts to Put Them in Front of Targeted Audiences

Promoting content on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter can be highly affordable. More importantly, [it can grow your audience](#) beyond people who already follow and interact with your pages.

Start experimenting with promoting certain posts and using custom audience building features. Platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook even offer the ability to target specific companies or hyper-local areas.

If you put just a small budget behind a few key posts a month, then you can quickly multiply the number of people who see your messages. You also generate valuable data based on who does and doesn't interact when they see certain posts.

Don't Assume Social Media Marketing Is Easy to Do Yourself

There's a reason "social media manager" is a full-time job at most big companies. Even for small businesses, managing it all and doing it right can be tough.

On top of that, you may not have the time to dig into your data or revisit your strategies and guiding documents.

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So seek out help. Share the burden with others who are qualified and whose judgement you trust.

As [Social Media Week](#) observes: “Long gone are the days when you could rely on an intern to manage your business’s social media accounts. Either hire an in-house expert, or outsource to a social media management firm.”

Crawl Before You Walk, Walk Before You Run



As with anything in business, don’t bite off more than you can chew. Stick to one or two social networks at first. Otherwise your pages could feel like soulless cookie-cutter copies or, worse, ghost towns with nary an update in months.

But if you stay focused on your goals and your principles, then you can start out small to find gradual success. Only once you get the hang of it should you start to scale out and do more.