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What is Social Media?

Rather than define the term '**social media**' using boring jargon, the best way to get a clearer understanding of it is to break it down into simpler terms:

The 'social' part refers to interacting with other people, by sharing information with them and/or receiving information from them.

The 'media' part refers to an instrument of communication, like the internet (while TV, radio and newspapers are examples of more traditional forms of media).

So essentially, 'social media' is a way for people to communicate and interact online. While it has been around since the dawn of the World Wide Web, in the last ten years, we have seen a surge in both the number & popularity of social media sites. It is called social media because users engage with (and around) it in a social context, which can include conversations, commentary and engagement interactions.

It's a broad definition, but keep in mind that social media is a very broad term. Social media is only getting bigger and with more people starting to use it, especially businesses and organisations, it isn't going to slow down anytime soon!



How Do I Know What a Social Media Site Looks Like?

Social media can be confusing at times and unless you know what you are looking for, it can be difficult to determine what a social media site looks like. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest are four good examples of what social media sites look like.

The following list of common features are giveaways of what a typical social media site will look like. If you're questioning whether a site can be deemed as social or not, try looking for at least one of these features:

- **Profile pages:** Since social media is all about communication, a profile page is often necessary to represent an individual. It often includes information about the individual user like a profile photo, their bio, feed of recent posts, recommendations and recent activity.
- **Friends, followers, groups and hashtags:** Individuals use their accounts to connect with other users. They can also use them to subscribe to certain forms of information.
- **News feed:** When users connect with other users on social media, they are basically saying, "I want to get information from these people." That information is updated for them in real-time via their news feed.
- **Personalisation:** Social media sites usually give users the flexibility to configure their user settings, customise their profiles to look a specific way, organise their friends and/or followers, manage the information they see in their news feeds and even give feedback on what they do/don't want to see.
- **Information updating, saving or posting:** If a site or an app allows you to post absolutely anything, with or without a user account, then it's social. It could be a simple text based message, a photo upload, a YouTube video or a link to an article.
- **Like buttons and comment sections:** Two of the most common ways we interact on social media are via buttons that represent a 'like' plus comment sections, where we can share information.
- **Review, rating or voting systems:** Besides liking and commenting, lots of social media sites and apps rely on the collective effort of the community to review, rate and vote on information that they know about or have used. Think of your favourite shopping sites or film review sites that use this social media feature.



Why Does My Organisation Need to use Social Media?

Whether you are running a small business or a global enterprise, the reality is **your customers are online**. They are interacting on social channels with their friends, colleagues, and other brands in search of information, recommendations, and entertainment. If your organisation is not around to answer their questions, a competitor will be.

There are loads of opportunities to add value and even to delight – making that connection can help build a person’s relationship with a company, brand, or representative. Those relationships create the foundation for what can eventually become one of your greatest marketing assets: *customer advocacy*.

What is customer advocacy? This is a specialised form of customer service, in which companies focus on what is best for the customer. It is a change in a company’s culture that is supported by customer-focused customer service and marketing techniques. Through advocacy, your efforts will start to truly scale and grow. It shows that your brand is doing such an amazing job that your customers will want to shout about your brand from the rooftops, sharing their opinions and experiences with their online networks. **That sharing is the best marketing a brand can ask for.**

Identifying potential advocates is a good first step. You can use social tools, site data, customer data, and even your own observations to help you pick out which customers are likely to shout about your brand.

You will want to figure out what is most important to those potential advocates. What are they looking for? Are they excited by exclusive access to news and/or content? Figure out what type of advocates your brand attracts and find ways to recognise them for their advocacy.

It is important to note, that your greatest community relationships will be built organically. While your research and brand knowledge encourages people, and helps you put the right foot forward, relationships take time.

Maybe a better question is, why wouldn’t your company use social media?



5 Reasons Why Every Business Needs to Embrace Social Media

Social media is here to stay. Realistically, this means that all businesses need to have a social media presence. Consumers are used to being able to shop online and interact with their favourite brands on social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. It is not enough to post content at random times anymore. To make social media work for you and your organisation, you need to approach social media strategically. To do this, you need to make sure that you set yourself specific business objectives – what is that you want to achieve? It could be increasing sales, promoting your brand, increasing customer experience, etc.

Here are our five reasons why we believe every business needs to embrace social media:

1. **Building relationships:** Having a social media presence gives you the opportunity to create an online community. Prospects, existing customers and followers will engage and respond to your content.
2. **It gives your organisation direction:** Taking the time to think about your social media will help you determine what your business goals are. You need to identify your weaknesses and think about how social media may be able to help, especially in those areas. Using the analytics from your social media platforms will also give you insights into what is and what is not working.
3. **Improves customer service and communication:** Social media is one of the best ways to get feedback about your organisation. Your followers will talk about your organisation with others, message you directly and take part in conversations with others. Following and responding to these developments will do wonders for your brand, which in turn will form a positive image of your organisation.
4. **It can be cost effective:** You may have a marketing team or individual already within your organisation. If you do, fantastic. If you don't, not to worry! If you are a smaller organisation, there are so many free tools to help you with your social media. Facebook, for example, is now one of the world's largest advertising networks and allows people to target very specific demographics. You can also schedule your content in advance on Buffer for free – up to ten posts at a time!
5. **Don't get left behind:** The social media marketing industry is fast-growing and continuing to grow, daily. By not embracing social media as part of your organisation, you are potentially missing out on promoting your organisation and talking to people about your services. The truth is that social media marketing has already proven its worth and most companies have a social media presence – they could be your competitors.



Social Media Post Ideas for Your Business

Being involved in social media is great fun, very rewarding and it is one of the best ways to market your business or organisation. Do you sometimes feel a little lost though when it comes to new ideas for posts and content? Need some inspiration?

1. **Behind the scenes photographs:** These are used a lot by organisations that want to show that they are a trustworthy and accessible brand. It also 'humanises' your organisation, by showing staff members.
2. **Use an infographic:** Make sure it fits in with your audience. Be sure to include your logo on the image somewhere as well. A picture can be better than a thousand words, so choose wisely and it could be a real engagement tool.
3. **Take a great product photograph:** Many companies find this is a way to gain great exposure for their product (it is in the picture), as well as gain some real social proof.
4. **Showcase case studies:** Case studies are an excellent way to bring variety and a little extra marketing potential to your posts. Case studies need to be done right though, so spend time finding great customers to interview who have lots to say.
5. **Give a little:** If you want to give a little more to your audience, share a great e-book you have read recently. Do this on a regular basis and your audience will love you!
6. **'A day in the life of':** You could become even more creative with your post ideas and link to a 'day in the life' post that you have created. You could focus on one member of your team and get them to write a short post that details their working day. It works a treat for making your company more approachable, and it also allows you to bring even more engaging content to your audience.
7. **Customer testimonials:** Find a customer who has been with your organisation for a long time and arrange for a full, professional video testimonial to be recorded. This is very effective because it has social proof and is engaging to watch.
8. **Start a competition:** This means you can get some real engagement, and if you have a prize you will get a great response. It builds up a sense of community and allows you to have an exciting post on your social media.
9. **Share industry news:** As always, one of the best things you can do is to share industry news that is up to date and relevant to your audience. This makes for a much more engaged audience, and they will start to listen to you on the big topics of the day and latest news.
10. **Won an award recently?** If your company has received an award recently, share the news in a post. Make it a clear and factual post, sharing your great news!
11. **Interview some experts:** Interview an industry expert and post it on social media. This is a great way to build up your expertise level.

12. **FAQs:** Check out your FAQs and think of new questions that you get asked a lot. Answer the question/s or series of questions. Then use these for your posts...you will be answering questions that people will be interested in.
13. **Hints & Tips:** Share hints & tips that will make the lives of your customers better. This is value-sharing at its best.
14. **Look at your analytics:** Look at your social media analytics on a regular basis and work out what is being engaged with the most. This is a classic way to build up even more engagement and produce content that is wanted by your audience.



Content to Publish and Share

A common and understandable mistake that many people make as they are creating content for social engagement, is to limit their content to promotional updates. This is reflective of the traditional marketing world, in which all outbound push messaging is just that, but things have changed. Now, we build our marketing efforts on trust, engagement and community.

There is of course, a time and place for marketing and promotional messages, but don't limit yourself. Consider broadening your scope a bit – there is so much you can write about! This will make your content more appealing and provide a wide variation of subjects for people to enjoy. Some options for different types of updates may include:

Adjacent content: If someone is following you on social media, the chances are they are interested in your organisation and/or what you offer. It is an even safer bet to say, their interests don't stop there. Share content that is tangentially relevant to your business or something involving common interests of your audience. For example, if you are a clothing retailer, you could post about 'up and coming' beauty trends or news from a popular designer. These topics directly align with the interests of your audience.

Hint and tips: Add value to the conversation by sharing content that will make your customers' lives easier. Hints and tips are a great way of showing that you are sharing not only relevant content, but much needed content and your audience will love you for it!

Non-promotional company information: If your company participates in amazing volunteer work within your community, don't be shy about sharing it! Giving a sneak peek into the culture and community within an organisation goes a long way to building relationships, by humanising your organisation. If you have won any awards recently or a staff member has had a baby, share this news!

Job openings: Social media channels can be an incredibly fruitful place to find new talent and advertise job openings. Job seekers are increasingly using social media as a way of learning about companies and their open positions. It is a match made in internet heaven! Get those listings out there and be sure to highlight the most important ones.



How to Develop a Social Media Policy

Trying to develop a social media policy for your organisation? Struggling to understand where to begin and what to include? Look no further! We are here to help and here is how to create a social media policy. Grab a cup of tea...it's a long read!

Key Points

- **Work out a policy:** An employer should set out in writing what it regards as acceptable behaviour, in the use of social media at work and what is not acceptable. It should also give clear guidelines for employees on what they can and cannot say about the organisation.
- **Draw a line between private and work lives:** An employer should be clear throughout its policy in making a distinction between business and private use of social media. If it allows limited private use in the workplace, or in any way connected with the organisation, it should be clear what this means in practice.
- **Advantages:** The benefits of a social media policy can include helping an employer to protect itself against liability for the actions of its workers and line managers to manage performance effectively.
- **Be ready to adapt:** A policy can have many benefits, but an employer should make sure it is written in a way that can accommodate alterations, so it keeps pace with the continuing evolution of social media.

What should the social media policy cover?

- **Network security:** To avoid viruses and malware, most organisations will have controls on the downloading of software. Technical security features, such as firewalls, will usually be managed by the IT department or Managed Service Provider.
- **Acceptable behaviour** and use of –

Internet and emails: If personal use is allowed, state what is allowed.

Smart phones and hand-held devices: Employers need to regularly review and update their policies to cover the new and evolving ways for accessing social media.

Social networking sites: Employees should regularly check the privacy settings on their social networking profiles, as they can change.

Social media and data protection

- **An employer** should cross-reference its social media policy to its bullying and harassment policy.
- **Blogging and tweeting:** If an employee is representing the company online, set appropriate rules for what information they may disclose and the range of opinions they may express. Bring to their attention relevant legislation on copyright and public interest disclosure.
- **Business objectives:** As well as setting clear rules on behaviour, many employers are integrating the use of social media tools into their business strategy. Social networking can be used internally to encourage employee engagement with the organisation, and externally to help promote the organisation's brand and reputation.
- **Disciplinary procedures:** An employer should try to apply the same standards of conduct in online matters, as it would in offline issues.
- **To help an organisation respond reasonably,** the employer should consider the nature of the comments made and their likely impact on the organisation. It would help if the employer gives examples of what might be classed as 'defamation' and the penalties it would impose. Further, the employer should be clear in outlining what is regarded as confidential in the organisation.

How to communicate your social media policy

- **Consult:** An employer should talk with their employees in determining what will be in the policy. This will help ensure it is fair and it will also help make it relevant to the organisation's needs. For example, if your employees handle sensitive and confidential information on members of the public, the policy will need to reflect this.
- **Use of social media:** A high proportion of employees do not know if their employer has a policy on internet use. Technology is evolving so quickly that many policies soon become out of date, so they need to be reviewed regularly. Social media channels can be an effective way for an employer to raise awareness of its policy and any changes.
- **New staff:** An employer's induction programme is a good way to make clear to new starters the boundaries for use of the internet. Each organisation will have its own culture and standards of 'acceptable behaviour', but it is best to be clear about these from the beginning.

Legal considerations

- **The Human Rights Act 1998** gives a '*right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence*'.
- **The Data Protection Act 1988** covers how information about employees and job applicants can be collected, handled and used.



Top 9 Social Media Jargon Busters!

For many people, social media terms are part of their everyday lives and think no more about it. Although for many people out there, it can be confusing, especially with some of the terminology they use around social media.

For those head-scratching moments, here are our top 9 jargon-busters regarding social media marketing terms:

1. **Algorithm:** An algorithm is a set of formulas developed for a computer, to perform a certain function. Algorithms on social media are used to control and filter the content we see on our feeds, based on our behaviour.
2. **Bio:** A bio on social media refers to a short bit of text that explains who the user or/and organisation is.
3. **Click Through Rate:** Click through rate is a common social media term used to represent the number of times a visitor has clicked through, divided by the total number of impressions a piece of content receives.
4. **Engagement Rate:** Engagement rate is a popular social media term used to describe the amount of interaction with likes, shares and comments for a piece of content created.
5. **Follower:** In the world of social media, a follower refers to a person who subscribes to your account to receive your updates.
6. **Retargeting:** Retargeting is an online marketing and advertising technique that allows marketers to display ads to people who have visited their website or are part of their contacts database.
7. **Search Engine Optimisation:** Search engine optimisation is the process of improving the volume or quality of unpaid traffic to a website from search engines.
8. **Webinar:** A webinar is an online seminar or presentation that is hosted by an individual or a company. Most often, the host requires attendees to fill out a form before granting them access to stream the audio and slides
9. **Viral:** Viral is a term used to describe an instance in which a piece of content, for example -YouTube video, blog article, photo, etc., that achieves noteworthy awareness. Viral distribution can rely heavily on word of mouth and the frequent sharing of one piece of content all over the internet.



Marketing Is Just a Small Part of It!

The community engagement that social media allows is beneficial to every part of your organisation, from the sales team, HR and more. To get you started, here are a few areas that see the most obvious value.

Content creation

By using your traffic data, social media site engagements and your social media presence, this can help you determine what people are looking for. This makes it easier to create content that fulfils their needs, not to mention giving you a wonderful way to share that content once it's available. The topics for your content may fall into these three categories:

- **Learn and improve** – This type of content is designed to optimise your customers' tasks or workflow. You are attempting to make their lives easier by fully utilising your product (feature education, etc.), or even by offering assistance. The main goals of this content type are to show expertise, create connections, and increase engagement.
- **Explore and discover** – Customers wanting to get creative and find new ways to use your product are looking for this type of content. For this group, building relationships is going to be key and these relationships will build your online community.
- **Question and answer** – This type of content serves to meet customer support needs – something has gone wrong and customers seek a solution. This can range from a detailed forum thread on resolving a technical issue, to a simple question & answer on how to make a product return. Your main goal is to provide answers and show yourself as an expert in your industry.

Also, don't overlook the content that can be generated within your own community. User-generated content can be amazing—a gift even! Your users can help write what your audience finds interesting, relevant, and useful. The possibilities are endless!

Using analytics tools, you can measure the conversations you are having on social media and provide ideas for your content creation ideas.

Remember – members of your community are openly talking about what they want. To reap the benefits of those conversations, all you need to do is listen and provide great content.