



Social Media Boost

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1. This exercise provides space to reflect on your use of social media in business and how you can ensure you are using social media to meet your business goals. Working through this will provide the basis of a social media strategy for your business. You will need: pen, paper/ Word document.
2. Social media is best used for business if you understand which of its functions will best help you achieve your goals. So to begin with, what are your current goals? Here are some suggested goals at the kind of level that would be useful to think about in this exercise, though you may have another goal or goals not on this list;
 - Launch a new business, area of your business, or product
 - Reach a wider audience
 - Increase profits
 - Improve customer retention
 - Improve customer satisfaction
 - Explore a new market
 - Sell more of a particular product

Action: Jot down your current goal(s). Leave space next to each goal to make notes.

3. Although billions of people worldwide now use social media regularly, not all of them will be people you want to target! Think carefully about who your target audience(s) is and try to forget about any preconceptions you may have about who uses social media. In fact, ignore social media entirely for a second and think purely about the people who you need to target for your business.

Action: add your target audiences to your list of current goals. There may be more than one audience per goal, or all goals may have exactly the same audience. This will be down to individual enterprises.

4. Now we are going to think about all the functions of social media that can serve business purposes. These are;

- a) Communication and PR
- b) Customer service (now the main method of customer service including complaint handling!)
- c) Develop loyalty (build customer relations, trust and likeability with personal touches to appeal to your audience)
- d) Provide user insights via analytics (learn about your users – this can feed back into both social media strategy and also general development)
- e) Create brand awareness amongst a large audience or a specific audience (reach and awareness or targeting)
- f) Networking (finding, making, and maintaining beneficial working relationships)
- g) Online sales (direct sales through social media are limited, however Facebook marketplace is gradually rolling out 'marketplace for business', you can also sell via links to your own website)

Action: list next to each of your goal or goals which social media functions you think can help you to achieve each of your goals (a, b, c, d etc). If you think there are more than two functions that would help you, list them all but highlight the two you think would be most useful, as these are the functions to focus on.

Picking platforms

Not all social media channels are equal, some lend themselves to one function more so than others and therefore more than one social media account may be a good idea. For example, LinkedIn prioritises networking and b2b communication (great for recruitment, b2b PR etc), whereas Instagram is very visual so would best help create brand awareness, loyalty, and could support sales of things like fashion and beauty (indirectly). Facebook and Twitter are 'catch alls' but not so much 'masters of' and are often the go-to platforms for customer service communication and more general content. Also, be aware that different channels = different demographics. Who is your typical customer and what social media channel are they most likely to use?

If you're time-poor or new to social media, it's probably best to pick one or two of the most relevant platforms and concentrate on doing them well.

There is no hard and fast rule as to what to use each platform for and who uses them but there are plenty of online resources that will give you a good idea (and perhaps bust some preconceptions you may have!). Here are just a few:

- <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/communications-division/digital-communications-team/assets/documents/guides/A-Guide-To-Social-Media-Platforms-and-Demographics.pdf>
- <https://www.avocadosocial.com/latest-social-media-statistics-and-demographics-for-the-uk-in-2019/>
- <https://social-media.co.uk/list-popular-social-networking-websites>
- <https://uk.kantar.com/tech/social/2018/how-the-uk-uses-social-media/>
- <https://www.smartinsights.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-strategy/new-global-social-media-research/>

5. So how can your social media use be improved by considering your goal and the functions social media offers and how can you measure your social media success?

Action: For each of the top two functions you have chosen to help you achieve your current business goal(s), consider;

a. How could you best use this function to help reach your goals? What is it within this social media function you could use and how?

There are lots of suggested ideas within each function in the table overleaf, but if you need more help understanding what social media can do within this function then Google search for "using (*name of social media channel eg Facebook*) to (*function, eg develop loyalty*)" for ideas. You may want to take some time over this and have a brainstorming session.

If there are lots of ideas within a function that will help you achieve your business goal(s) then rank these ideas. How you rank them is up to you. If you don't have much time to implement change you may like to rank by 'easy wins'. If you are really trying to ramp up your social media then perhaps you would like to rank by potential impact. The purpose of ranking is so that you don't feel overwhelmed but have a clear plan of actions to boost your social media.

b. Now consider will you measure the success of your new social media plan. This does not have to be a time consuming or difficult task but by having a measure of success you can see over time whether your plan is working or needs tweaking.

Here are some suggestions for ways you can measure and monitor social media success, but you can also think of your own measures and they can be as simple or complex as you require:

- If you want to measure awareness, then use metrics such as volume of page visits, and reach of posts. These should be easily accessible from within the apps themselves.
- If you want to measure engagement, then look at retweets, comments to your page, replies to your posts and how many people are participating.
- If you want to measure traffic to your own website, track URL shares, clicks and conversions. Are people moving through social media to your external site and what do they do once they're on your site? Google Analytics is a tool that can do this for you.
- If you want to measure your use of social media for customer service, look at your average response time to messages and posts and record the conversations that are resolved.

Remember to record your measures including before you begin with your new social media strategy, so you can see how they change.

Now you can put your plan into action. Give your new strategy a go, measure success, see what works, and build on your successes!

Social media functions that can serve the goal	Implementation ideas
Communications and PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and follow/connect with leading social media accounts in your sector – the followers of these accounts are your key market so interact with these accounts in the best way for your social media channel. • Write a great 'about' section • Have a relevant and engaging cover photo • Think about the 50/30/20 rule for content: 50% news with non-competitive content from sites that are similar to your industry. 30% personality with content that puts a person/people behind the brand and tells a story. 20% business, tasteful branded and promotional information. • Using the 50/30/20 rule aim for at least 5 posts per week • Consider the best times of day and days of the week to post that will reach your audience. You can research this online but there's no substitute for trial and error!
Customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond quickly to posts on your page – if you are not always logged in then set up email notifications so you're alerted when someone asks a question. • Provide regular updates for existing customers especially if there is any disruption to your service/supply • Flatter your customers and respond to reviews • Encourage feedback and respond to it (even the negative!) • If you do receive any negative comments/feedback, respond politely and quickly, and take the conversation out of the public domain as soon as possible eg email/DMs.
Develop loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain goodwill with engaging content, special offers for followers, exciting info eg 'our soc media followers will be the first to hear about xyz product' • Initiate conversation beyond your own social media pages • Follow your followers back • Personalise your content, have a person or people and a story behind your brand • Allow direct messages and respond to them • Think about how you are posting about your brand's journey and how you can use language, engagement, videos and other content to make your followers feel like they are part of that journey, 'looking back' and sharing past posts, and special engagement at key points in your journey will help. • Ask questions of your users and respond and engage in the ensuing conversation

User insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Facebook review your reach, engagement and posts using the insights menu • On Twitter use analytics to measure a range of analytics • Use Instagram insights for activity, content, and audience.
Create brand awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your logo and colours consistently across all channels • Create a unique voice as part of your brand and show yourself/your employees • Find brand influencers within your industry, follow them and pay attention to what they are talking about • Blog, and share your posts across all social media channels • Make good use of all relevant hashtags to get your posts in front of the widest possible audience • Find groups that are relevant to your industry and contribute (without making it obvious you are there to sell, just generally engage but also mention your brand where it is suitable to do so). • Make videos, even if they are not specific to your enterprise if they are funny/creative/interesting they are likely to get shared – just make sure there is clear branding and brand ownership of the video. • Boost posts that are already doing well to make the best use of paid functions with content that has proven engaging. • Share your corporate social responsibility or any good deeds but stay away from anything overly political unless relevant.
Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections beyond your known networks – don't just add your existing friends/colleagues/stakeholders. • Research where your competitors have an online presence and join in • Don't excessively self-promote but offer supportive/helpful posts and others are more likely to do the same back. • Take opportunities to reach out directly to someone who you think would be a particularly useful contact
Online sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting customers who have visited your website but not completed a purchase to bring them back (paid advertising) • Promote a specific product with a targeted social advertising campaign. By choosing between cost per click or cost per conversion, you'll be able to determine the marketing costs associated with selling more products. • Consider using relevant influencers to endorse your products, with direct links to purchase.

6. And finally ...

The possibilities with social media are endless but by trying to take a more strategic approach you should be able to use it to meet your objectives in a much more efficient way – hopefully working smarter rather than harder or longer!

If you feel that you'd like more support with any aspect of growing your business, the Devon Community Learning Academy provides lots of high quality, accessible training courses on a wide range of topics. Visit www.devoncommunities.org.uk/courses and browse the Business and Marketing Support section for the latest training opportunities.