



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINE

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I. Introduction

Social Media is an Internet based ecology and system that enables people to interact and share information and events. It includes numerous platforms for sharing information across the full spectrum of human life, including personal and professional interests, news, research, politics, sports, shopping, socializing and entertainment.



Of importance to business, Social Media has created the power of customers to bypass sellers, share their product experiences and make product purchasing decisions independent of traditional sales and advertising.

It is increasingly important for businesses to know how their customers are engaged in Social Media and discover what is being said about their brands, marketplace, and competitors products. Successful businesses today have a Social Media presence and actively engage with customers in an open way that improves product development, customer services and strong customer advocacy.



This guideline provides an overview of basic Social Media functions, platforms and is intended to aid in the development and management of a Social Media presence.





II. Internet 2.0 – 3.0 and SEO

Internet 2.0 is a broad concept that describes Internet functions that enable users to interact with Web services and contribute to content and transactions. Examples include not only Social Media sites but also blogs, wikis, video sharing sites, hosted services, mashups and web applications. Recent developments include Cloud computing and mobile apps (applications which drive a mobile device, Iphone, Droid, Ipad, etc.). Some pundits mention Internet 3.0 as the next generation of smart Internet services using artificial intelligence and semantic search. It is important to stay abreast of Internet 2.0 developments.

Another subject which impacts Social Media is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) which is a method of optimizing a web page for optimal positioning in search engine results. This guideline is not intended to describe SEO in detail but it is important to understand and use SEO techniques to attract relevant traffic to your web pages and landings pages. Specific aspects of SEO marketing include:



- Key word optimization – tagging your web pages with meta data which will result in higher traffic from search engines. This include analysis and use of “long-tail” keyword which have high relevancy to your subject but less competition. An example is “social media consulting” vs. “consulting”.
- Search Engine advertising, e.g. Google adwords
- Inbound linking – attracting a larger number of links from third parties to your site.





III. The Social Media Community and Planning

From a strategic marketing perspective the whole idea of Social Media is to reflect human society and create a virtual open community of participants who share information and interact.

This has enabled a selling environment where customer advocacy influences the market and where buyers respond to each others' referrals and recommendations vs. advertising and direct selling techniques. Companies need to realize that their customers are already engaged in Social Media and develop effective strategies to compete.



The Social Media Academy (www.socialmedia-academy.com) has develop the following models for developing an effective Social Media program:

- Social Media Assessment (Four Quadrant Model) – Analyze where the four components of your business are in Social Media, including your Brand, Customers, Partners and Competition. This includes assessing their web pages, their use of Social Media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and sentiments (what they are saying in blogs and forums and how you and your competition are viewed).
- Social Media Strategy – formation of a Social Media team, depending on how large your company is, and develop a Strategic Plan for Social Media that is consistent with your company strategic plan.
- Social Media Plan – development of a plan of action to accomplish the strategy.





IV. Social Media Ecology, Platforms, Apps

Social Media is an environmental system and ecology involving many different platforms (e.g. Facebook) and services. As a company you will want to develop a coordinated system of your own within this environment as illustrated below:



Some Basic Guidelines and Functional Relations are:

- **Web** : Have a web site . Have a Call to Action (CTA) Landing Pages, have SEO, include links to your Blog, and buttons linking to your Social Media Platforms, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Youtube, etc.
- **Blog** : Create a Blog if you don't have one (more later) ... post meaningful articles several times a week, auto-post these to your Facebook page and Twitter, etc.
- **Facebook** : Create a good Facebook page (more later), have links back to your web site landing pages
- **Twitter** : Create a Twitter account, use the same keywords (Hash tags) you use for your Blog and meta words for your web page
- **CRM** : Maintain information about the Social Media activity of your customers and partners on your CRM (contact management system), soon to be Social CRM
- **Analysis** : Install Google Analytics or similar system to track usage of your web site, blog, etc. Use Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter measuring tools.
- **Email** : Link your email marketing campaigns to your Social Media platforms





V. Web Page and Blog

Web Page : Most companies now have a web site but with varying degrees of effectiveness. Rather than just a pretty design you need to treat a Web page as an information and transaction service, and as a link to your Social Media presence. Some basic rules about maintaining your web site are:

- Form follows function, keep the design straightforward and make it easy for users to find information and make transactions. Avoid having too many images. Make every page count and serve a purpose, e.g. contact you, order a product or service, find an answer, get news, find your Social Media links.
- SEO, create good meta data and titles.
- Add Google Analytics or a similar measuring system for tracking usage. Use this analysis to continuously redesign your web pages for content that is actually used.

Blog : A blog is how you publish news to your customers and affiliates about your business and developments in the marketplace. It should also become a forum for customers and partners to exchange information and comment.

Some basic functions of a blog are:

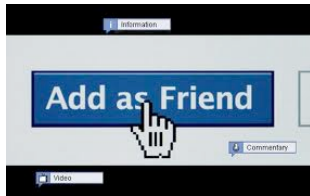
- Use one of the available open software tools for creating your blog, e.g. Wordpress or Drupal. In the case of Wordpress, use Wordpress.org (vs. Wordpress.com) which enables you to use Wordpress software on your own servers and provides more control.
- Create blog postings several times a week. These are generally articles that are of high interest to your audience, e.g. the latest technologies or market developments. Create and use a taxonomy of meta-data for consistently tagging your posts.
- Use a plugin in to automatically publish your posts on your Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts.
- Use Google Analytics or a similar measuring system to track usage and analyze which content is being read and which is not.
- Create links to your Social Media accounts.
- Provide pages which also provide contact information and links back to your web site.





VI. FaceBook and LinkedIn

Facebook is an important presence for companies because of its international reach and ability to segment interest groups. Facebook is good for building a community of fans, customers and partners and creating a social interaction for sharing information and events. Facebook has been important for Business to Consumer marketing and increasingly for Business to Business.



Some important aspects of building an effective Facebook page are:

- Facebook accounts are established for individuals, not organizations. This you have to have a personal account to be able to access Facebook.
- Fan Pages are special pages that Facebook enables an individual to set up on behalf of an organization or celebrity. The person establishing the Fan page becomes the administrator and can add other individuals as administrators.
- Facebook periodically redesigns the display of Fan Page information and the administrator should be actively involved in maintaining this.
- A Fan Page(s) should include not only the main “Wall” page which displays the postings of friends and connections but also an “Information” page which should include comprehensive information about your business, including contact information and web links. Other important pages include “Events”, “Pictures”, and ...
- It is important to keep your content fresh by automatically linking your blog postings to your “Wall” page. You can also make individual comments.
- Facebook advertising can become an inexpensive way to add fans and also to promote your CTA Landing pages on your web site. You can target users by demographics, geography and special interests.
- Facebook provides detailed analysis of usage and users.



LinkedIn is targeted for Business to Business marketing and connecting with your business customers and partners. It is popular for building your network and providing a forum for questions and answers.

(More to come)





VII. Twitter

Twitter is a platform for publishing short news announcements and links to current articles and events of interest. Twitter is sort of an instantaneous press release forum (micro-blogging) and is important because you can communicate promotions and events real-time to your customers and partners. For example, you can promote special deals and discounts that are available only for a limited time.



Twitter is easy to set up and maintain:

- Twitter accounts are set up per email account so you can use a general administrative email account to set up your company Twitter account.
- Generally you want to Tweet several times a day. These can be original announcements, promotions, re-Tweets and automatic Tweets generated from your blog.
- Tweets are limited to 140 so you need to optimize your message. You can include links to another web page but it's important to use a service such as bit.ly to truncate the web page URL.
- Another feature of Tweets is to include "hash" tags which are meta-data preceded by a "#" sign, e.g. #socialmedia.
- The use of "@" in front of your Twitter name has special significance. Tweeting @whitehouse for example followed by a message will send your tweet to the White House. You can also use @yourname as your signature on your own Tweets.
- "Lists" are an important feature of Twitter as they enable people to organize Tweets into selected groups of followed Twitter names based on special interest, e.g. "Social Media". For example, if you are following 1,000 users then you can group them into lists for different interests, e.g. "politics", "sports", "news", etc.

One of your goals is to identify and attract "Followers", other accounts who follow your Tweets. One strategy for doing this is to identify Twitter users who are in special interest "Lists" of importance to you, e.g. "geneology". Then you use a tool such as Socialloomph or directly follow a large number of

- such users and a number of them will follow you back
- There are a large number of Twitter tools you can use for automating tweets, auto-following, and analyzing your Twitter traffic. Some of these are included in Appendix i.
- You can also post your tweets automatically to your Facebook account and to your LinkedIn account.





VIII. Groups, Forums and Reviews

One of your goals should be to participate in active Internet groups and forums where your customers, partners and competitors can post their questions and answers and follow a discussion. This is frequently where you find comments about your products and services including likes, dislikes, problems and solutions.

For example, if you want to research best practices for quality control, you can search LinkedIn answers, Yahoo groups on business, and Quora.



Of particular interest is what customers and partners are saying about your products and services. You can research this directly using search services such as Google Blog Search or by using one or more of the many “sentiment” analysis tools such as Sysomos or Alterian’s SM2.

It is also important to begin to participate in groups of interest without being a blatant sales advocate of your company.





IX. Content

Content and the ability to easily find it is the most critical element in a successful Social Media presence. Content can take many forms and can be present in many different platforms but it's main value is to assist customers in their own business through education, answering specific questions and sustaining their interest and recurring usage. Excellent content, communication and transactions are the main reasons users engage online.



Types of content include:

- News articles
- Blog articles, Wikis, FAQs
- Directories of people and organizations
- Podcasts
- Youtube files
- Slideshare files
- Numeric data
- Etc. etc. etc.

Indexing and Search : As the amount of meaningful content grows it is important to add an effective indexing and search capability. For example, in a Wordpress based blog you can sort articles into categories and provide an archival search.





X. Measuring and ROI



Just as with any online service it is critical to measure and analyze what users are doing with your web and Social Media services and to track this over time. Many web site owners do not track or evaluate their traffic and frequently have a high “bounce rate” of users who click on their site and leave instantly without further viewing.

Examples of Traffic measuring tools:

- Google Analytics
- Quantcast
- Native Facebook and Twitter data

Examples of Sentiment and application measuring tools and techniques:

- Radian6
- Alterian SM2
- Lithium
- RowFeeder
- Google blog search with advanced features





XI. Organizing and Managing

An effective Social Media presence requires organization across your company and continuous maintenance and management. It is important to know what works, what doesn't and how to optimize your efforts.

Organization : Your Social Media team can be one or two people or twenty or more depending on the size of your organization and your Social Media needs. Typically you would cover the following functions:

- Web manager, oversees and maintains web site operations, quality, tracking and linking.
- Social Media Platform account management
- Community Manager(s) – individuals who participate actively in Social Media communities and follow NCP (networking, contribution and participation)
- Technical support – support for technical development and reliable operations
- Teamwork for assessment, strategy development and Social Media planning and implementation. This can be cross-organizational involving individuals from corporate planning, marketing, customer services and IT.



Social Media Calendar – Maintenance includes ongoing tracking and participation

- A Social Media calendar covers a schedule for blog posting, community Q&A, Tweeting, Facebook posting, etc.
- Someone should also produce a tracking and analysis report for regular ongoing review.

