

Questions You Want to Answer Before Jumping Into Social Media

What is my strategic message?

Before taking the plunge into social media marketing, it is essential that your branding and marketing teams hold a meeting with management to refine and/or develop your brand's position and philosophy in the digital landscape. Too often, brands dive into social media and lose sight of their differentiation strategies and personality when representing themselves in social networks. Considering the vastness of the web, it is easy to do. If you take the time to articulate the values and personality of your brand to your team, your social media strategy will not only be more succinct, but so will your company culture.

Tip: Visioning sessions and open discussion generate some great results in team branding.

What are my goals for getting involved with social media?

Setting goals are the most essential step in achieving them. After your brand identity is clearly established, setting goals will help your team put your social media efforts into perspective. Setting goals anywhere from "Likes," "Followers," and "Comments" to sales numbers and ROI are pivotal to letting your team know how integrated your social media strategy will need to be, and what kind of research and resources you need to accrue to get you there.

Tip: Set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Sensitive

How are my competitors engaging their clients via social media?

The great thing about social media is that everything is public domain. That includes your competitors' social media strategies. By actively listening to the conversations and observing the interactions between your competitors and their targets, you can start to get a grasp on where your efforts need to be, and what strategies you should employ. Eavesdropping may be considered a less than desirable habit in society, but not social media!

Tip: Blogs, facebook, twitter, and LinkedIn profiles are public and can easily be viewed for research.

What social networks are my target demographics using?

Networking for leads is a great practice, but enveloping research about your network and targets is THE practice. When you network, try to find out how you can reach out to your network and what social networks they are actively using. This continued practice will not only help you develop your social media strategy, but also help you leverage it for better results when it is finally in use.

Tip: Ask your existing clients for their social networking information.

Which social networks support my marketing endeavors?

There are countless social networks available to business marketers. However, this does not mean that you need to be on ALL of them. When deciding which social networks to employ in your social media strategy, you should keep one rule in mind: Only start as many conversations that you are equipped to EFFECTIVELY handle. Selecting a social network that simulatenously allows you to articulate your brand's personality and reach your target is one of the most crucial elements of building a social media strategy. Maintaining genuine and resourceful conversations is what will differentiate you in various social media channels, not mere presence in several social media channels.

Tip: Check out LinkedIn Answers for forums regarding which social networks may suit your company.

Do I have the resources I need to be effective in the social media landscape?

Building a solid strategy is contingent upon you team's resources. Spreading your team too thin over several networks is a lot less effective than focusing on maximizing a few. When building your social media marketing strategy keeping in mind the amount of resources and staff necessary to do it effectively is recommended. Your team is your brand, and your brand is your strategy. Maximizing your resources to build both will prove to be a social media best practice.

Tip: Start slow. When assessing your resources, allocate them toward one social network at a time.

