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## **Taking Social Media to the Next Level**

**It's all about relationships.**

## **1. Management – Determine how much time you can devote to social media and how to draw on your staff’s expertise to connect and engage your customers.**

Time management is the first step to developing and executing a social media strategy. It’s important not to get overwhelmed, especially at the beginning. Setting expectations for your users is very important.

Do you have a block of time each day or week?

Do you have small amounts of time each day?

Do you have both?

Are you the type to carry around a Blackberry or iPhone and be able to comment anytime any where?

Do you have staff that you can call upon to manage different elements for you?

By determining time, you can then start on your way to developing your plan. Time availability will also help you set the engagement level and help determine the tools you may choose. If you have an hour once a week, then maybe a blog is what you want to use. Your customers will know, say that on every Tuesday afternoon, you will post something to your blog. They may begin to look forward to it.

Do you have staff that can help you? Your staff can be a great advocate for your business. Maybe they love your product as much as you do. For example, maybe you sell outdoor equipment and your staff are all outdoors kind of people. Maybe they are planning a big camping trip and are taking all your products. Why not get them to talk about the planning of the trip. How they chose their tent? Their sleeping bags? Their cooking equipment? And who doesn’t want to tell people about your trip? Ask them to share video, photos or even just little thoughts about where they’ve been and what they saw.

Get you regular customers involved. Ask them to share information and photos about their trips. It’s one thing for you to tell the world about how great your products are, it’s a whole other thing to have your customers do it.

### **Organizing / Structure**

Each business or organization is structured differently and your social media strategy is no different. There is no right way. You may even need to try a couple different structures before you find the one that fits you the best. Some of this is determined by the number of staff.

Five types of organizational structures:

Centralized: one department controls all the social media initiatives. This is consistent but may not seem staged not authentic.

Organic: This grows out from itself, is spontaneous and is not co-ordinated from within the organization.

Coordinated: There is a central hub but departments undertake their own strategies.

Hub or Spoke: This is similar to coordinated but is across multiple brands.

Honeycomb: This is employee empowered but organized.

## **Developing a Social Media Policy**

You need to remember that all your staff, employees and members are marketers for you in the social media world. If they use social media, chances are they talk about their job and the products they sell or services they offer. It's a great idea to use the expertise of your staff but make sure you provide clear rules, guidelines and expectations so that all your staff understands the policies.

Your social media policy should also establish rules and codes of conduct for your fans and followers. This is one of the areas that most businesses and organizations worry about the most. What happens if somebody says something bad about me? What happens if someone leaves inappropriate comments or messages? What happens if people argue?

You don't want to delete every negative comment about your business. In fact, in most cases you should see them as an opportunity to reach out. There are cases where language or comments are unacceptable and as long as you are clear on your policy up front you can take steps to handle the situation, which in some cases means deleting the comments.

Key concepts to include in a social media policy:

- The policy can apply to the personal account of employees who state on their social media accounts that they work at your company.
- Expect the same respectful behaviour online that you expect in day-to-day business dealings.
- Don't talk about the company's private business dealings.
- Staff should be encouraged to act as ambassadors for your business but should not get into arguments.
- In short, everyone should think before they comment.

Make the consequences clear which may be as simple as a reprimand up to firing.

## **2. Strategy and Measurement – Partnering your social media plans with your marketing strategy and establishing objectives and goals.**

Your strategy should always be focused on the relationships not the technology. The technologies are always going to change and go in and out of fashion. That being said, initially relationships will be developed on the social media platforms where you find your customers.

Listening and finding your customers online is at the centre of developing and implementing your plan. These are discussed in more detail in Part 3.

### **Set Your Social Media Goals**

A goal answers the question "What do you hope to gain by engaging in social media?"

Each goal should have its own plan. If your goal includes the word AND, you need to rethink your goal or decide to split it into two.

How to write goals:	How <b>NOT</b> to write goals
1. Increase sales to the next event	Increase sales <b>AND</b> get media coverage
2. Two newspaper or magazine articles	

### Lay Out Measurable Objectives to Achieve Your Goals

There are three different types of objectives.

1. Output: What are you going to do? – Facebook, blog, news release, email
2. Outtake: What message do you want your audience take away? – definite message, perception, understanding
3. Outcome: What is the desired outcome – sales; quantifiable changes in attitudes, perceptions or opinions; media coverage.

Objectives that are measurable	Objectives that are NOT measurable
<p><b>Output</b> – To create a Facebook Fan page and have 200 fans within 3 months.</p> <p><b>Outtake</b> – 3 positive posts/comments each day.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> – Increase attendance over the previous year by 25%.</p>	<p><b>Output</b> – To create a Facebook Fan page</p> <p><b>Outtake</b> – Media coverage</p> <p><b>Outcome</b> – Increase attendance</p>

### Strategy

What is the approach to achieving objectives and reaching the goal?

### Tactics

What actual tools will be used? What activities will be conducted to carry out specific objectives?

### Case Study: Community Event

**Goal:** Increase attendance at the event by 25% over the previous year

#### Objectives:

Output – To create a Facebook Fan page and have 200 fans within 3 months.

Outtake – 3 positive posts/comments each day.

Outcome – Increase attendance over the previous year by 25%.

#### Strategy to achieve objectives:

Establish a Facebook Fan page to keep target audience connected and engaged.

#### Tactics:

Use the Facebook page to invite target audience to share in specials activities and promotions at the events.

## Measurement

Measurement is key to your social media success. Social media by nature is fluid. You can track weekly, daily or hourly and even by the minute your level of engagement, your positive/negative ratio, and if your strategy is successful. You should re-visit your strategy on benchmark dates. That might be quarterly for a long term plan or more often for a shorter term strategy like an event.

What you measure will depend on your objectives. It can be sales, your number of fans, retweets, increased web traffic, mentions in local newspaper or blogs.

How do you measure? Some measurements are easy to find and follow – Fans/Likes, tweets, website traffic. Some take more time and require the setting up of listen posts – We will talk about listening posts next.

No matter what your goals, objectives, strategies or tactics, you need to measure the results. Not everything is going to go according to plan and probably won't. That is why your plan needs to be flexible. The great news is that unlike other forms of marketing and advertising, social media can be changed on the fly. Something not working, you can change it.

### **3. Listening and finding your customers online – Knowing and understanding who your customers are and finding out where and what they are doing online.**

#### **Understand the different social types/different customers**

- **Watching :** These users visit, read, watch, listen. They use information to be entertained, learn or make decisions.
- **Sharing:** They update status, forward interesting links, support others, show off knowledge
- **Commenting:** They respond to comments by others and rate products, usually offering quick, short opinions.
- **Producing:** They actively creating content and sharing thoughts, ideas and opinions on blogs, podcasts and websites.
- **Advocate/Brand Ambassadors –** They love your product as much as you do. They Will defend; answer other customer questions and concerns. They want to give back and be recognized for their efforts.

#### **Breakdown of social types**

- 90% are Watching, Sharing or Commenting
- 9% are producing
- 1% are Curating/Advocating

Using your understanding of the different social types, and how they engage online, will help you to ensure that your tactics meet their needs and your goals.

1. Learn – All

2. Dialogue – Watching & Sharing
3. Support – Commenting & Producing
4. Innovate – Producing & Curating

### **How do I find out where my customers are?**

- Searches – Twellow pages, Twitter Advanced Searches, Bing Twitter Maps, Facebook Find your Friends / Invite your Friends / WeFollow
- Customer surveys – online and on paper. Find out how people use your product, how they would like to connect with you to share your information.
- Include a signup option on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn accounts, Flickr

If you've been collecting emails from customers, find out about their social media habits. Knowing where the majority of your customers are will help you determine where you decide to focus your attention. If all your customers are on Facebook and no one is using Twitter, then maybe Twitter is not somewhere you need to be right away.

### **What are people saying about you?**

- Google Alerts
- Bing
- Google Search
- #hashtags
- Technorati
- Social mention
- Delicious – how are people thinking about your products/services – tags tell you
- <http://www.howsociable.com>

The CEO of Best Buy has a live Twitter ticker in his office which allows him to react in real time to both good and negative tweets.

The tools that you use to find out what people are saying about you will also be those that you use to measure your level of engagement and success of your plan.

### **Engaging with your target customers, supporter and members**

Understand that you need to connect with your customers where and when they want to. You may have a favourite – YouTube, Facebook, Twitter – but where ever your customers are is where you need to be. Allowing them to interact and connect with you where they are comfortable can provide customers with a sense that you care about them and are interested in them.

Once you find them you need informative, fun, and engaging content to connect. All the planning in the world will go to nothing if you don't have good content. Always be thinking about conversations.

You need to be willing to accept and understand that you do not and cannot control what people are saying, thinking or reacting. YOU NEVER HAVE. All you can do is try to influence.

You do control: Your actions, reactions and communications.

No one wants to be THAT person, the one you meet at a party or function and all they talk about is themselves – “But enough about me, let’s talk about you,.....what do You think about me?” Bette Midler as CC Bloom in the movie Beaches

#### **4. Choosing the tools for your toolbox - Social Networking, Blogging, Micro-blogging, Video and Photo Sharing – What works for you and for your customers.**

When you finally reach this point, you have a lot of information, have a good understanding of what you want to achieve, how much time you have, where your customers are, what they are doing online and are ready to decide what tools are going to work best for you.

The tools can be divided into two groups.

The first are the tools that you will use to connect and engage with your customers. Like Facebook, Twitter, Blogs or Flickr.

The second are the tools that you will use to listen and manage your social media presence.

The listening, managing and analysing tools will differ for everyone. In some cases it’s personal preference. It may have a financial aspect to it. Or it can be a time factor.

Managing: Seismic, TweetDeck, HootSuite, Tweetmeme, Klout, Trendr, Bit.ly

Listening & Analyzing: Trendr, Klout, Paid Services - Radian 6, Buzz Metrics, ScoutLabs

There are people out there who will tell you that you NEED to have a Facebook Fan page, NEED to be on Twitter or MUST have a blog. That is just not the case. The tools you choose really depend on a variety of factors.

#### **The Tools**

##### **Facebook**

- What is it? - <http://www.facebook.com/advertising/?pages>
- Create - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php> - New feature are the Community Pages. It is create and managed by the community.
- St.Catharines and Thorold Chamber of Commerce has a really great how to manual that you can purchase.

##### **YouTube**

- Signing Up - <http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/topic.py?hl=en&topic=16555>
- Setting up a Channel - <http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/topic.py?hl=en&topic=16571>
- Uploading Videos - <http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/topic.py?topic=16547>
- Creating videos – Flip camera – direct upload to You Tube

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## Twitter

- Support & Getting Started - <http://twitter.com/help/start>
- For Business – excellent resource for both business and personal - <http://business.twitter.com/twitter101>

## Blogs

These 3 blog tools all allow for easy integration of Facebook, Twitter and You Tube

**Wordpress** - <http://en.wordpress.com/signup/> - Wordpress is probably the most popular blogging tool and is available as part of most hosting packages. You can choose between free and paid for options. It is very customizable and there are over 1 million plugins that can be added to your site. There are also over 1 million free and paid for themes/designs that you can install. There are also apps available for the iPhone, Blackberry and Android that will enable you to update you site anywhere anytime.

You can also build an entire site using WordPress – [www.wartimehouses.com](http://www.wartimehouses.com) or [www.arnoldimcpherson.com](http://www.arnoldimcpherson.com)

**Blogger** - <https://www.blogger.com/start> - Part of Google services – For many this is a better option if it is a personal journal – Some customizing is possible when it comes to layout and design.

**Tumblr** - <http://www.tumblr.com/> - iPhone and Blackberry app – Does allow for customized designs with both free and paid for templates. For many new users they find the Tumblr backend easier to use.

In the end it comes down to personal preference and what you are trying to achieve with your blog. We are fans of WordPress because of the flexibility and the functionality that it provides.

## Foursquare

- Sign Up - <http://foursquare.com/login>
- Help - <http://foursquare.com/help/>
- For Businesses - <http://foursquare.com/businesses/>
- Websites, Mobile Apps and Plugins - <http://foursquare.com/apps/> -

There are developers out there who are building on Foursquare to create apps that allow you to upload photos on check in, introduce you to people close by who share interests and enable live streaming from your location.

Other developers are taking the data that Foursquare provides and building on it to send out invites to lunch, tell you what's hot in and what's not near you or a site that integrates all your badges and pins.

There is also a recently launched site called Snacksquare. It's a paid site that allows businesses to promote themselves with coupons. Users just need to sign up for the service and when they check in the coupon comes up. It includes detailed statistics.

## Gowalla

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- Sign Up - <http://gowalla.com/>
- Help - <http://feedback.gowalla.com/gowalla>
- Trips - <http://gowalla.com/trips> - There are featured trips, but also you will see the trips your friends create

Businesses cannot claim their locations like with Foursquare. Also, at this point businesses cannot add their own pins/badges or attach incentives to check ins.

Also at this point it only has apps for iPhone and Android.

We also would like to briefly talk about three tools that we use but that you may not have heard of or tried.

**Posterous** – <http://posterous.com/> is part blogging, photo sharing, document sharing, video sharing, audio sharing and community builder.

What makes it different than the other sharing/blogging tools: You don't need to go online and create your account. Posterous is linked to your email account and to get started you just email [post@posterous.com](mailto:post@posterous.com). You can do this from your mobile phone.

Posterous accounts can be private, groups or can be public allowing anyone to add content. Last summer it was one of the hottest summers on record in Austin, Texas and the Statesman newspaper created an account call Austinheat - <http://austinheat.posterous.com/> and asked readers to upload photos and stories about how they were handling the heat.

Instead of having readers create accounts, passwords and sign up for yet one more thing, all Statesmen readers had to do was email [post@austinheat.posterous.com](mailto:post@austinheat.posterous.com) attach their photo and comment and in an instant the content was added.

This may not be something you use every day, but if you have an event, it's a great way (and very cost effective) to get your visitors involved.

You can visit our posterous account at: <http://arnoldi:mcperson.posterous.com>

**Delicious** – Social Bookmarking Tool – Have you ever read something online and thought that your customers or clients would find it helpful?

Social bookmarking allows you to do just that. You also can create your own tags or key words that you can customize for your business or customers.

We have a client who is a massage therapist and she is always reading about wellness, nutrition and all sorts of health issues and she wanted to share them with her clients. She signed up for a Delicious account - <http://delicious.com/> and then added the Add On to her browser. We added the Delicious bookmarks to her website and right away she was providing all her clients with some interesting reading and great tips.

This is a simple but effective way to share and provide value-added information. And because Delicious

can be built into your browser, it is a simple click to add them. Your account can also be integrated with Twitter, so a tweet will go out every time you bookmark something.

You can visit our account at: <http://delicious.com/arnoldimcpherson>

Delicious Tools - <http://delicious.com/help/tools> - Here you will find the browser buttons, how to add your bookmarks to your site and more.

### **this Moment –**

- What is This Moment? - <http://www.thismoment.com/home>
- Sign Up - <http://www.thismoment.com/register>
- Facebook App - <http://www.thismoment.com/moment/view/43631/thismoments-new-facebook-app> - allows you to create Moments within Facebook

thisMoment allows people to save and share their life's moments in a slide show. By incorporating everything people already do on the Web and on mobile devices - photo- and video-sharing, blogging and social networking - thisMoment allows people to easily and spontaneously capture meaningful moments in a rich, visual presentation, as well as share and collaborate on those moments with their family and friends.

This Moment is probably not a tool you will use every day, but it is a tool that you can not only have a lot of fun with, but it allows you to tell a whole story by including text, photos, audio and video.

Businesses and charitable organizations that are using This Moment:

- NY Time Travel uses it to feature their “36 Hours” travel series,
- The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation used it to highlight and feature various moments in their 26 year history
- This Moment partnered with dogtime.com to help raise money for homeless pets by getting people to share photos and stories of their pets.

You can see my account at: <http://uglyshirt.thismoment.com/>

This presentation and lots of resources are on our site:

<http://arnoldimcpherson.com/site/resources/workshops>