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Employing a Content Strategy for Social Media

Before we start explaining how to use your content strategy (see <http://rayaccess.com/122/what-is-content-strategy-why-do-you-need-it/>), let us share some compelling reasons why you should want your company to be active in social media. Here are a few quick facts about the role social media is currently playing in the business world, courtesy of the 2012 Social Media Marketing Industry Report:

1. 94% of all businesses with a marketing department used social media as part of their marketing platform.
2. Almost 60% of marketers are devoting the equivalent of a full workday to social media marketing development and maintenance — which includes creating accounts, monitoring the feedback, and posting new content.
3. 43% of Americans aged 20–29 spend more than 10 hours a week on social media sites. This is where you can find and connect with this young demographic.
4. 85% of all businesses that have a dedicated social media platform as part of their marketing strategy reported an increase in their market exposure.

What Is Social Media?

If there is anyone out there unfamiliar with social media, it comprises online social networking websites, which tend to be interactive and even addictive. The top three social media sites in 2012 are Facebook, Twitter, and Google+.

Your website can interact with social media through shared content, links, and promotions. Whether you're considering your website or social media, it still comes to content. You may be paying an analytical company to count clicks, place ads, and analyze the visitors you get on your website. While all that work is valuable — and it will keep you poised to capture the consumers looking for you — it still matters what are you telling them week after week.

Why Content Matters for Social Media

If you plan to incorporate social media, you need a plan. Once your marketing budget is in place and you've developed a [content strategy](#), you still need content to fill all those pages and tweets.

Amazingly, it takes a person only about 1/20 of a second to form an initial impression of your business, based on your content and presentation. If all you post every week are specials and ads, your customers will tune you out until you send out valuable coupons. But if you consistently answer their burning questions, give them new information, and keep them updated on trends, they will seek you out, take time to read your posts, and remember your name when it comes time to buy.

How to Develop Content for Social Media

Developing new content takes vigilance and commitment. You have to take the time from your business to compose fresh content each week — or you have to delegate this task to someone you trust.

Each new page or post needs to include the following:

- **Research.** While you may be the expert in your field, brainstorming to come up with 52 new topics each year takes time and considerable effort. Find out what's trending on Google. Search for the keywords people are currently using. Consider the questions your audience may want answered. When researching, remember that you have to gather enough information to fill a 350-to-450-word article.
- **Writing.** Some successful business people find writing is difficult. That's because writing *is* difficult. But the more you do it, the better you get and the more confident you become. If this is skill you don't have time to hone, then you have to find someone in your organization (or outside it) to do this task for you.
- **Editing.** Content should *never* be published or sent or tweeted before it's been reviewed by another set of eyes — preferably by someone who is not worried about hurting your feelings or possibly being fired. An editor needs to have full autonomy to change your words to make them pop while looking for factual, spelling, and grammatical errors. This sometimes-overlooked step can lead to professional embarrassment, especially if your name is listed as the author.
- **Photos.** The Internet is a multimedia environment. Photos keep your web pages lively while illustrating the meaning of your content. The right photo accompanying your page or post can draw readers in. The problem is: how can you find the right photo? There are millions of photos available from free and paid services, but again, you need time for the search — time away from your business, time you most likely don't have.
- **Commitment.** Most businesspeople understand very quickly that putting all this work into your marketing efforts takes commitment, from you and your organization. Providing fresh content can be the first thing to fall off the priority list when deadlines approach. So commit to every page or post you publish. Realize that you are building a community that includes your customers. With every successful outreach, whether it is a blog post, a tweet, a Facebook update, or a link from LinkedIn — you are building trust.

Tips for Creating Fresh Content for Social Media

In order to create new content on a regular basis, you have to be disciplined:

- **Schedule it.** Time to produce new content has to be on your calendar. You need time to brainstorm titles, research the chosen topic, write and edit the copy, and find photos. Set aside a specific time each week, perhaps after your weekly sales meeting or partners' breakfast. Allow 15 to 20 minutes to come up with four ideas for the coming month. To make it easier to remember, do this on the same date every month.

- **Ask for Help.** Don't be afraid to ask your staff or your friends for help. Get your staff or associates in the habit of noting ideas as they come up during the week. Bounce your ideas off others. No one works in an island. When the time comes, pick four.
- **Pick a Publishing Day.** Set one day during the week on which to publish (or upload or tweet) new copy, according to your content strategy. If you've got a marketing manager, add that to her duties. It's easier to include this task in the regular duties if it's on the same day every week — say, the first thing Monday morning or the last thing Friday afternoon. If you're a B2B business, do it on Monday morning to beat the rest of the business world.
- **Set Deadlines.** Give yourself and others hard and fast deadlines for new content. Make sure the content is turned in on the same day each week. Remember you need time to edit it (and possibly find an accompanying photo) before it gets released.
- **Commit to Your Business.** If you're a one-woman shop, it will be more difficult, but it requires the same amount of commitment. Do your writing on weekends, cranking out one article every Saturday afternoon, for example, so you can turn it over to an editor every Monday morning. Whatever process works for you, follow it obsessively.
- **Use Your Resources.** If you're like many small business owners, you have a person or company who manages your website. Many of these web businesses can easily upload fresh content to your site for little or no extra charge. Tell your web manager that you'll send the new content once a week. Also, if you've contracted with an SEO company to monitor your website for clicks and keywords, ask them to provide you with a list of keywords to include in future content. Remember that these people/businesses are working for *you*.

For more information on providing fresh content on your website and for social media, visit our website at rayaccess.com or contact us at info@rayaccess.com.