

6 Tips on How to Engage Your Customers Through Social Media Strategy

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Once upon a time, the only online presence a startup needed to worry about was a website. Not long after, a Facebook business page became another virtual necessity. Next came Twitter, where news is so often reported – and even *made* – before anywhere else. And there's more: Nowadays, if you're a business that relies on visual branding, an Instagram account is a must. Moreover, if your customers are B2B, LinkedIn is a platform that's only growing in importance.

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An effective social media strategy can be a boon to virtually any startup or business. But, where do you start? Based on my experience advising entrepreneurs on how building an effective social media strategy can increase the value of their online business, here are six tips to get your social media strategy on the right track.

Stick to a publishing schedule.

When it comes to developing a successful social media strategy, consistency is essential. Entrepreneurs are busy

people. It can be easy for you to let days, or even weeks, fly by without publishing a new Facebook post or tweet. That's why a commitment to scheduling is so important. If your audience members can't count on your business to deliver relevant content in a timely manner, you'll find it difficult to keep them engaged.

Luckily, there is an abundance of social media manager apps out there to help keep your content calendar on track. Two of the most established and powerful are Hubspot and Buffer. Both handle scheduling across a number of platforms and offer "forever free" plans so you can get your social media calendar up and running at no cost.

Maintain a consistent voice.

For an effective social media strategy, timing is not the only area where consistency is important. Vital to your brand's health is uniformity in voice and messaging across all your channels. The brand persona on your website – in emails and on social media – needs to be kept consistent; otherwise, you risk confusing and alienating your audience.

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Maintaining a consistent voice may be easy when you're a solopreneur or you're working with a small team; but as your business grows, you need to be vigilant to ensure your brand stays on message. This is particularly true when you look to outsource your social media and content marketing.

Karl Kangur, managing director of MRR Media, a content marketing agency for SaaS businesses, places a strong emphasis on the importance of consistency: "I stress to each of our clients when they come on board how important it is to have a clearly defined brand persona," he told me. "We work together during the onboarding process to achieve this."

“This is vital to our mutual success, as the brand persona informs every piece of content we create: from blog posts and tweets, to Facebook posts and email marketing.”

Show your (brand's) personality.

Consistency is important, but “consistent” doesn’t have to mean boring. Posting on Twitter, Merriam-Webster has even found a way to make the dictionary entertaining. Of course, your own brand’s personality needs to be tailored and authentic to the audience you are trying to reach. Consider giving your followers a peek behind the scenes of your business. Introduce your team members and show customers who and what makes your company tick.

Another strategy that works well for many brands is to have a “corporate” Twitter account that is informational in nature alongside the founder’s and team members’ personal accounts. While still promotional, what you write there can be more opinionated. An excellent example of this strategy in action is content posted by Elon Musk and Tesla.

Content is king.

When it comes to social media marketing, the temptation may be to focus too heavily on quantity and lose sight of *quality*. While apps like Buffer and Hubspot make it easy to schedule posts and tweets, don’t give into the temptation to just plug them into your content calendar and have them shuffle and repeat.

For your social media strategy to be successful, your audience members must feel they have an *authentic* connection to your brand. To achieve that kind of connection, there is simply no substitute for sharing high-quality, fresh and engaging content in a timely manner.

Be selective.

Creating quality content consumes significant time and resources. With that in mind, don't feel obligated to have a presence on every platform. Focus on crafting superior content for the platforms most closely aligned with your business's customer segment. While Facebook and Twitter might be considered almost mandatory at this point, think carefully about which additional channels you want to take on.

The reason is that each platform you add to your social media strategy means additional responsibility to create high-quality content unique to that channel. If you're a fashion brand, perhaps you can't do without Instagram or Pinterest, but do you need to be creating content for LinkedIn? Focus your efforts on the platforms most relevant to your business.

Listen; don't just speak.

One of the unique strengths of social media is that it gives brands a platform to engage in a *dialogue* with their audience. This is a big part of what makes social media *social*; listening to your audience is just as important as speaking to them.

Many businesses discover that their customers won't hesitate to share their experience with a brand – positive or negative – on social media. How a brand responds to customer compliments, questions or complaints will go a long way toward determining how successfully they manage to engage their customers through social media.

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Final thoughts

Whether you're an established social media maven or your

business is just now embarking on its social media journey, evaluating and reconsidering your strategy using the six tips outlined above will help set the course for an effective social media strategy.

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