

THE *art* OF LEVERAGING CONNECTIONS

How to put social media to work through strategic planning, implementation, and best practices



Purpose of this Guide

Anyone can post social media, just like anyone can sign up for a blog and publish content. That doesn't mean it's quality or it provides value for your viewers. How do you get people to come back to your area of social media or the web? **Give them value.** That's what this guide will help you do.

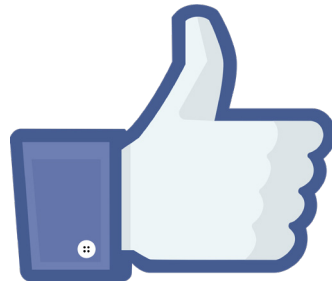
The Power of Social Media

There is no denying it: **We are a social society.**

Facebook, the world's largest social media site, now sees 69 percent of adults, according to the Pew Research Center.

YouTube has matched and exceeded that reach, bringing in 73 percent of adults.

Social media is the mass communication tool of multi-generational audiences.



Meet the Audience Where it is

We can no longer rely on legacy mediums — print, radio, and broadcast — to communicate messages and tell our stories. That's not where our audience lives. Instead we need to meet them where they are: The social sphere.

That means:

- Facebook is necessary to all marketing campaigns, particularly due to its high relevance and use among adults
- Instagram is the preferred way to bring visual content to the masses
- Twitter is helping us have conversations in real-time for robust customer-service experiences

Social media isn't an afterthought, instead:

- It's a way to build community
- Its brings long-term ROI (Return on Investment) by allowing engagement in between purchases of goods and services
- It opens a channel for instant communication with those we serve

Consistency is Critical

In order to be successful in delivering social media messages and engaging with audiences, we must be consistent in our approach.

“For your audience to recognize your brand, you must be consistent. Being consistent in your brand allows you to grow in audience engagement and reach. From the tone of voice used in messages to the aesthetics of your profiles, you need to be recognized to gain traction among your intended audience,” according to Lauren Payne of Auburn Advertising (bit.ly/socialconsistency).

This includes:

- Keeping voice similar
- Posting consistent content (i.e. posting certain content on the same day)
- Having regularly-scheduled posts or a calendar to inform content push
- Creating regular content features (which can be scheduled)
- Understanding lack of consistency is a detriment, not a creative choice

Key Elements to Planning a Campaign

Implementing a social media strategy means considering the following areas:

- **Goals:** What are our goals as a company? How do those business objectives support social media objectives?
- **Target audience:** Who are we trying to reach? Who are we trying to make aware of our brand?
- **Platform choice:** Which platforms best serve that target audience? Are there opportunities for expansion to other platforms? Can content be shared?
- **Planned engagement:** What type of posts will you be creating? What tone will you use? What images will represent you and your company? Will you be sharing content? Or using a formula such as the 60/30/10 (60 percent engage, 30 percent shared content, 10 percent promotion)?
- **Other considerations, including crisis communication:** How can we be prepared for the unexpected? What happens when conversations go awry? How can our campaign be made stronger by anticipating these areas?



Best Practices for Social Media Posts

KNOW YOUR TARGET

The target audience is called out here: parents. Those who aren't parents know the content may not be relevant to them. You are not ostracizing. This directed greeting allows readers to engage or disengage based on their preferences.

INCLUDE AN IMAGE

Research from various social media thinktanks and marketing firms has shown posts with images do better. Images that provide additional information are more shareworthy than those without. Messages move when audience members share them with their friends list. Aim for that.

BE LIVELY

A strong voice selection helps viewers connect to the content. Don't be drab. Be upbeat. Use catchy phrasing.

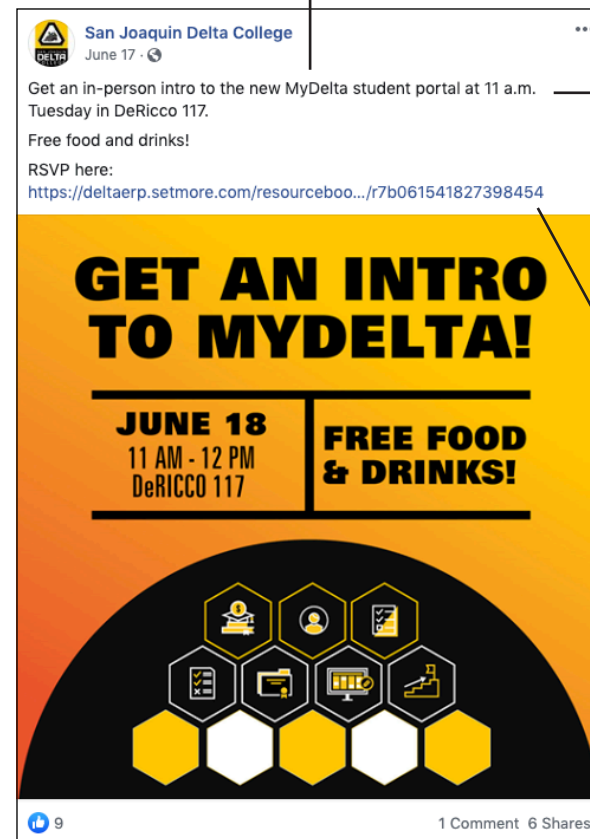
GIVE DETAILS

Don't make the viewer search for basic event details. Provide ample information. This may include defining words or concepts.



ANSWER QUESTIONS

Understand your audience may not be familiar with what you do. Give directions, such as DeRicco is near the Pacific Avenue entrance to campus.



BE EXPLICIT

A new viewer to your social media channel may not know what myDelta means or why it should matter to them. Don't assume everyone comes to your social channels with the same knowledge. Give insight to help viewers understand why your post matter to them.

SHORTEN URLS

Yes, a URL will turn into a hyperlink. But what happens when social media turns into word-of-mouth marketing for you? Viewers may not remember long URLs, but they remember bit.ly or tinyurl.com links. Bit.ly allows for customization, where you could turn the link here into something more verbally digestible, like bit.ly/mydeltaintro.

Free and Inexpensive Resources to Create More Shareable Content

CANVA

canva.com
A free, web-based WYSIWYG resource to build eye-catching social media images for posting.

FREEPIK

freepik.com
This site provides copyright and royalty-free images and graphics for use online, most require attribution.

HEADLINER

headliner.app
An inexpensive multimedia editor allowing for audio-gram, story-to-social, and video creation.

HOOTSUITE

hootsuite.com
A free, web-based social media management system allowing for pre-scheduling and advanced metrics.

HASHTAG GENERATOR

all-hashtag.com
Pair your content with hashtags already being used by searching for what's out there.

BIT.LY

bit.ly
URL shortening service that allows users to customize end of bit.ly for better verbal sharing.

Defining Campaign Goals

Let's consider first what our company goals are, then ask ourselves: How can we align those goals with social strategy? Goals for campaigns need to examine how we can meet the needs of our customers.

Our goals also need to be SMART: Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound.

| S | M | A | R | T |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Specific | Measureable | Attainable | Relevant | Time Bound |
| We need to have an idea of what we hope to accomplish. | Measuring gives us motivation and allows us to see how we are doing. | It helps no one for us to think pie-in-the-sky. Goals should be realistic. | Goals should relate to the company, specifically our business goals. | Beginning and end dates serve as benchmarks for us to evaluate. |

Choosing a Target Audience

In developing goals, we need to consider who we are aiming to reach. And no, we can't just say we're trying to reach everyone.

We should consider the following demographics, according to **Sprout Social** (bit.ly/targetaud):

- Age
- Gender
- Profession
- Location
- Income or educational level

There are more, but these are good starting points. Narrowing down who we are trying to reach helps us best serve the group, specifically as we ask: How can we provide value?

It helps again evaluate what your goals are and match those objectives with who you are trying to reach through our content.



Selecting Platforms

Choosing the right social platforms is important for success. **Consider this:** Different people use different channels for different reasons. So where are you most likely to reach the audience you intend with the message you are trying to provide?



Facebook sees in a large chunk of the social media using population. It is popular among 18-24-year olds, but also 50-64 and 25-29 year old age groups. It encompasses a large swath of the population, making it a solid platform choice for any campaign.

Instagram and **Snapchat** pull in significantly younger demographics. Seventy-five percent of adults 18-24 have used Instagram, according to a Pew Research Center study (pewrsr.ch/2MfjX7).

This demographic information helps us determine whether we will be able to reach our target audience. It's not likely you would start a social campaign about a 30th high school reunion on Instagram. Your audience may not be there. Instead, you'd set up a Facebook page, build an internal community, and fuel the conversation there, because that's where the audience will already be.

Other Considerations

Social media interactions can change intent quickly. Sometimes for funny reasons, such as Kim Kardashian West's calling out of Jack in the Box for a "serious complaint" that garnered attention of competitors Burger King and Wendy's.

It pays to have social media policies in place prior to interactions, even if basic. Take into account how we will respond to a crisis or negativeness. Some suggestions to follow for interactions:

- Respond professionally
- Stay customer-service oriented
- Be calm
- Don't instigate further arguments

Better yet, establishing clear community rules upon launch of pages is an early best practice. You are allowed to set the tone for interaction on your own channels.



Analyzing Metrics for Goal Achievement

After establishing goals and putting a plan in place, we can track how we're doing with implementation through the use of metrics. Many social platforms now include embedded tools to serve this function for analysis of Return on Investment, even if the investment is only time.

Facebook offers an insights panel for pages, that includes: page views, page previews, page likes, post reach, and post engagements. Profiles do not have these metrics.

Twitter allows all users access to simple metrics, including: tweet impressions, profile visits, and mentions.

Instagram also includes an insights panel, where business account owners can examine activity, content, and audience.

A **Hootsuite** setup, where multiple accounts can be scheduled, can also look at metrics based on the content flow from your account. It is recommended a single account be setup on Hootsuite, where all social channels feed in for use.

Best Practices and Recommendations

Avoid having your posts fall into a social media void where no one is liking, loving, or sharing, by doing the following:

- **Set realistic goals:** If your Instagram account only has 25 followers, you likely won't be able to get to 1,000 in a few weeks, barring a sudden spike in popularity. Consider audience increases by percentage, or long-term building goals for possible campaigns.
- **Use social channels properly:** A business should have a Facebook page, not a profile. The difference is that a profile requires "Friend Requests." Anyone can "Like" a page. Pages can also have multiple owners, a best practice suggestion so no one person is locked out.
- **Have a plan:** This guide has suggested it, but it bears repeating. You or your organization need to know what you want to accomplish on social media in order to understand how it provides value to your viewers.
- **Understand social takes time:** One of the biggest misconceptions about social media is that anyone can do it and it's easy. Being active and building a community takes time. Don't expect amazing results unless you can invest time into the process.