



HOW TO WRITE A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

## STRUGGLING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA?

Know your company should be on social media but not sure where to begin?

Or perhaps you're already on Twitter and Facebook but aren't getting any results?

This document is here to help you implement the best social media strategy for your business, giving the results you seek.



### WHY SHOULD YOU TAKE THE TIME TO READ THIS?

Your social media strategy is just as important as your company's sales strategy, as it can also lead you to finding and securing sales.

**Not only is social media marketing important for your sales strategy, it's vital for your company's overall marketing plan** and will help to establish your brand. And you don't have to spend a lot of money to be successful at social media. Just use your imagination to create a unique campaign.

BlendTec, a relatively small business, last year launched a successful social media campaign where it released videos of

its founder, Tom Dickson, blending anything from golf balls to iPhones in the company's high tech blenders with astonishing results.

BlendTec now has more than 53,000 likes on Facebook and over 24,000 followers on Twitter - all of whom are customers or potential customers.

And growing its customers base is not all BlendTec has achieved - it's also firmly cemented its distinctive brand in the market place.

This inexpensive social media campaign proves that **a little creativity goes a long way.**



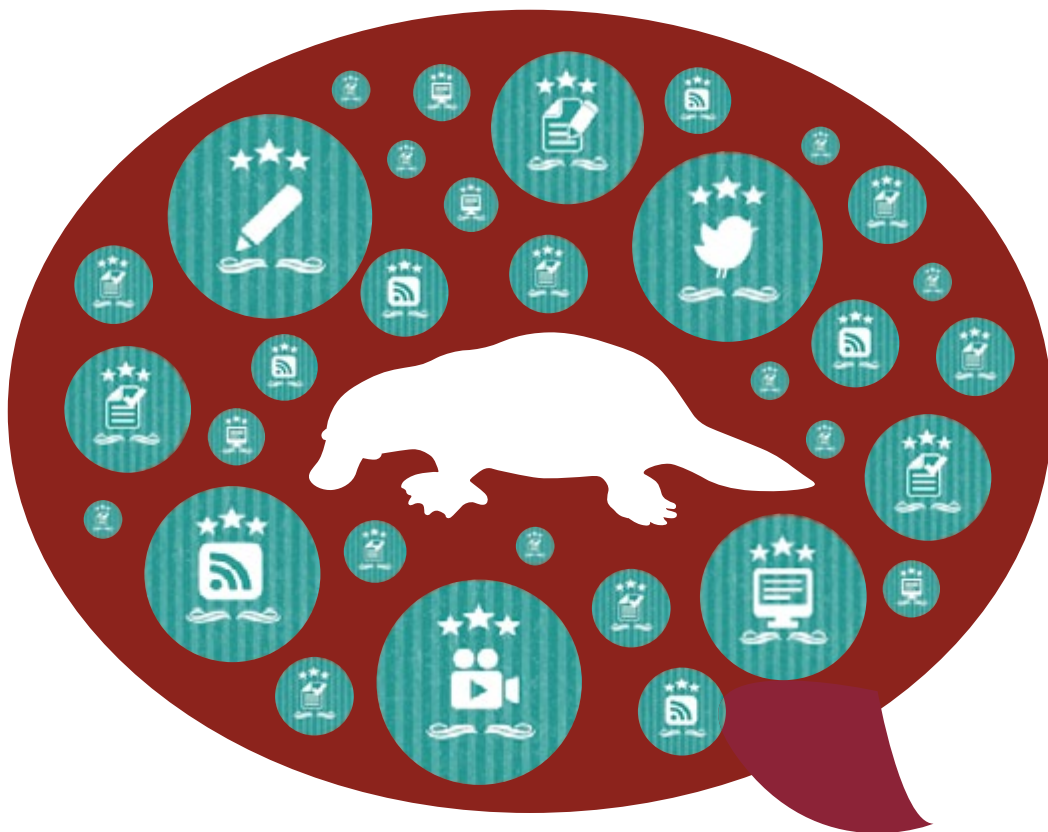
## WHAT IS A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY?

Putting it simply, a social media strategy is a plan for your online communication and **interaction with your customers and potential customers.**

And your customers expect you to be on social media. They expect their favourite brand to have a website and to be on Facebook.

Speaking to your customers through organised social media, broadcasting your blog posts, videos, infographics and any other useful information - whether it's yours or not - will help your customers recognise you as a **thought leader in your field.**

In return you encourage two-way conversation between you and your customers, helping to build trust that results in more sales. It's also a fun way to promote your business!



Some of the reasons why you should be on social media include finding more sales and **creating a 'buzz' around your brand.** We'll discuss this in more depth later.

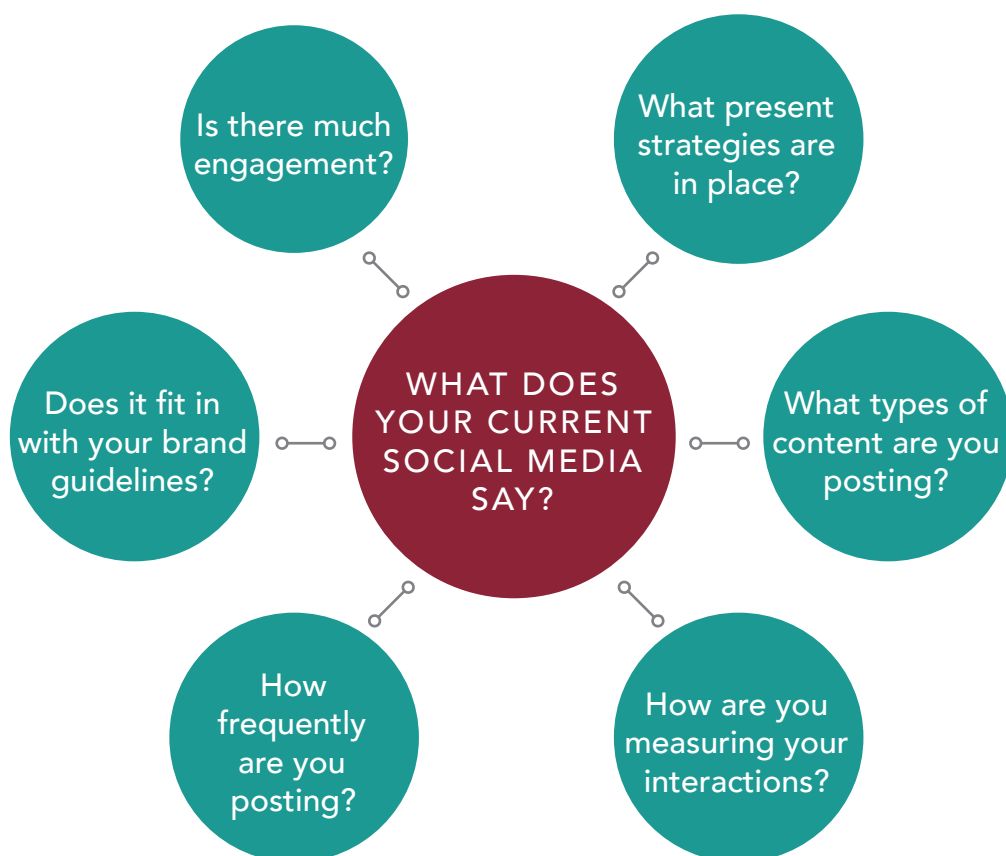
## AUDIT YOUR CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA STATUS

So, where do you begin with creating your social media strategy?

**A good starting point is to audit your current social media channels** if you have any. Find out how many followers you have, what's the frequency of your posts, how much traffic is coming to your website from your social media and whether your customers are engaging with you online.

Take a look at all the About sections on your social media channels and have a look at what they say - are these and your profile pictures consistent with your branding? See if you can **identify any repeated messages** that are being broadcast by your business and tuck this away for further analysis.

Highlight any areas where you've been able to **pinpoint winning customers** or new sales through your social media as these will be good examples to reference in your new social media strategy.



Create a spreadsheet to track all of this information and to highlight any areas that need work. Here's [a good example](#) from marketing expert Deirdre Breakenridge on what this spreadsheet could look like.

## CHECK OUT THE COMPETITION

An important part of this audit process is to check out the competition. Competitor research will help you decide where to focus your social media campaign and give you some good ideas about how to create engagement.

You can check out your competition's social media presence simply by using [free tools like these](#) from Simply Measured.

With these tools you can quickly see how many social media followers your competitors have, how often they're engaging with their customers and what type of content they're posting.

**But your competition isn't your enemy.**

**You can look at your competition with a calculating eye as much as you like, but it's important to remember that once you're active online, these companies can be friends.**

**Your competition is made up of thought leaders in your field and you will want to establish yourself among that group if you haven't already.**



The benefit of being friendly with your competition online is that when you link to them, they will possibly link back to you. This results in you both growing your online profiles while potentially increasing your customer bases at the same time.

Just take a look at this [online conversation between Jaffa Cakes, Tesco Mobile, Cadbury and Yorkshire Tea](#). The four British companies are bantering with each other over Twitter, pulling followers into their conversation.

It proves that a little fun with your competition can shine the spotlight on all of you and which is mutually beneficial.

## WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?



Once you've completed a thorough audit, it's time to **ask yourself who your customers are.**

To start, look at your current customers and see if there are any shared demographics. For example, what ages are they? What work backgrounds do they come from?

Then **think about your company's niche** and ask why your customers would be attracted to buying your service or product. What is the common problem they're trying to solve?

**Think about the perfect customer you'd like to attract**, and be specific about their characteristics.

To decide on your 'perfect customer', make sure you **consider your personal knowledge and experience as a business** and match your customer base to this. For example, if you previously worked for a small business and have a background in website design then perhaps you'll make small businesses looking to launch new websites as your target market.

Once you know your customer then it'll be easy to create the next step - your company's social media message.



## WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

You need to make sure your social media is consistent across all your social media and the best way to do this is to **have a honed company message to broadcast**.

Firstly, remember your company's online voice should be human and that it's best to take a conversational approach **so your customers feel comfortable 'talking' (interacting) with you**.

Think of how you talk to your customers face-to-face and convert this tone of voice into your message. Hone this tone of voice and decide whether a quirky, relaxed, formal and humorous tone of voice suits you best, or whether another style altogether is best.

**Your company values should be adequately reflected in your message** to help your customers understand what's important to you as a brand.

For example, Dove values natural beauty enhanced by the use of its products. Dove believes it allows girls to develop a positive relationship with beauty, whilst helping their self-esteem at the same time.

A reflection of these values can be seen in [Dove's successful Real Beauty marketing campaign](#) where it features 'real' women - not models - and depicts them as beautiful in their own natural way.



## DEFINE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS AND GOALS

Now that you've decided on your message and have an understanding of your customers, you need to **figure out what you want to achieve with your social media**.

Pick one metric you want to influence through your social media and decide whether it'll be the same across all of your social media channels or if you plan to change it depending on your platform.

**Some metrics you want to influence could include:**

- ★ Increase traffic to your website
- ★ Find more sales leads
- ★ Increase your customer reach
- ★ Create 'buzz' around your brand
- ★ Get more company mentions online to increase branding
- ★ Grow your subscribers list
- ★ Improve on your customer support

**You need to be specific about your metrics by setting yourself concrete targets and goals.**

An example of a specific metric is wanting to increase the traffic to your website to 100,000 unique visitors a month by December.

This is clear-cut target that describes what you want to do, how much you want to achieve and when you want to achieve it by.



However you have set you metrics and goals, remember that they need to be **SMART**.

**S**pecific • **M**easurable • **A**ttainable • **R**ealistic • **T**imely



## WHAT CONTENT SUITS YOUR MESSAGE

Now get together with your colleagues to brainstorm your content marketing strategy.

Consider all the branches of your business and make sure they are covered by your content. For example, here at Red Platypus, we make sure our content falls into one of four categories - Videos, Social Media, Blogging and Work Tips and Tricks.

Next, **consider all the types of content** you plan on publishing - such as infographics, blog posts, videos, etc - and decide what would work best for your social media message and why.

You then need to brainstorm topics for your content. To help, **think of the common questions your customers have** and what kind of content you could create to help them solve these issues

If you're getting stuck, search LinkedIn Questions and Yahoo Answers to see the kind of questions people in your industry are asking.

Once you've drafted up a list of ideas, **make sure they are all in line with your company's goals and buyer needs.**

The larger the list, the better - essentially you want to have enough topics to cover you for the next year. These ideas can change but it's always good to have a rough plan because then **you'll always have well-researched topics at your fingertips.**

The last thing you need to do before mapping out your content calendar is to **create editorial guidelines and a style guide** to ensure everyone is on the same page to create consistent content with the appropriate style and tone of voice.

Here are some helpful hints for creating great content:

★ WHAT TO DO	WHAT NOT TO DO ★
<b>Use images so your content is visually appealing.</b> Images leave a lasting impression and give a visual clue as to what your content is about	<b>Forget the hard sell.</b> You want to interact with your customers, not bombard them with sales talk
<b>Make sure your blog intros are captivating.</b> This will determine whether your audience reads on or not	<b>Don't write large blocks of text.</b> Make sure your paragraphs are one or two sentences long so they are easy on the eye.
<b>Consistency is key.</b> Make sure all your blog posts are formatted consistently to make them appealing	<b>Don't hesitate to link to your old blog posts and other industry influences.</b> This will help increase your traffic
<b>Put a lot of effort into the headline.</b> A dud headline will limit your reader numbers	<b>Never, ever copy another blogger's content or use copyrighted images.</b> This could find you in big trouble

## CREATE A CONTENT CALENDAR

Now you've got your content ideas on hand, you should be ready to map out a content calendar, which will be key to your social media strategy.

First of all, **decide how often and when to post**. It doesn't matter if you don't get this perfect right away as you can check responses to different post times via Google Analytics once your social media strategy is up and running.

As a rule of thumb though, you should try and **post new content on your website at least once a week**. Any less than this and it'll look as though your company isn't all that active. And if you can manage two to three times a week, that's great!

Make sure you **have a good think about what social media channels to use** and don't spread yourself thinly trying to maintain a presence for all of them. Some channels are probably better for your business than others. For example, the majority of Pinterest users are women so if females are your target market then you might want to focus your efforts here.

Also **delegate a place where your content calendar will be kept**, so everyone involved can access it easily and make changes if need be. You could use Google Docs, or for a more sophisticated method try employee software [Basecamp](#) or [Podio](#).



**Now you're ready to create your calendar, and the following should be included:**

★ **TOPIC**

State your topic (and mention what company category it falls into.)

★ **HEADLINE**

Make sure your headline is catchy. 80% of readers never make it past the headline so give a lot of thought to yours. Here are some great (and free) e-books from Copyblogger on [how to create magnetic headlines](#).

★ **SUMMARY**

What is the post going to be about? Summarise in three sentences or less.

★ **WHAT TYPE OF CONTENT**

Outline whether the content is to be a blog post, infographic, video, white paper or something else.

## ★ KEYWORDS

Make sure your keywords are easily found when people search for your content's topic online. The best way to ensure you're choosing adequate keywords is to use the free Google Adwords tool. All you have to do is enter the keywords you think would work well for the content and then check the level of competition and how many people are searching for it. It's better if there's lower competition for your keywords (meaning not that many people have created content with these keywords previously) but a high number of searches.

## ★ AUTHOR AND SUB-EDITOR

Delegate the content and make sure there is someone scheduled to proof read it. Remember that publishing blogs with spelling mistakes or factual errors will reflect badly on your company.

## ★ DUE DATES AND POST DATES

Deadlines are essential to make sure there's time for the content to be proofed. No proof, no publish!

## ★ TARGET AUDIENCE

Which customers are targeted in this post? Being mindful of your targeted customer profile will help you to create content that satisfies them.

## ★ CALL TO ACTION

What is the call to action (CTA) at the end of the content? Perhaps it'll be for the reader to comment, subscribe to your newsletter, make a purchase or download a white paper.

## ★ SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS TARGETED FOR PROMOTION

On which social media channels will the content be broadcast? Perhaps it'll be promoted across all of your channels, or perhaps it's more suited to just one.

If you want further help with the creation of your content calendar, [Hubspot has created a free blog editorial template](#) which you can implement as the basis for your plan.

## THE POWER OF A STORY

Customer support app company Groove tested two blogs online - one that had a story at the beginning leading gently into the main reason of the blog, and another that cut straight to the point. The blog post with a story was 300% more popular than the one that didn't.

Why is content told like a story more popular?

Because **humans feel the emotion stories and become more involved** in what they're reading than if they're told straight facts.

Sharing stories with your readers makes them more engaged in your content, meaning **you're providing them with more value.**



## SCHEDULING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CONTENT PROMOTION

Now that you have your stories in place, it's time for you to begin creating content! And once this content is published, you need to put a plan in place for its promotion.

One of the best ways to do this is to **use a social media scheduling app** to organise all your social media posts in a timely manner.

We've written a blog post about some of the best social media scheduling apps in the industry, which you can read here.

Whatever app you decide to use, take the time to understand how it works and link all the profiles of your company to the one app to make sure all bases are covered. **Remember not to promote only your company's content.** For every piece of content you've created and shared, you should share about four to five stories from other companies.



## INTERACTION IS INVALUABLE

Once your content goes live, it's important to encourage interaction with your readers.

According to [New York marketing agency Mr Youth](#), companies only respond to half of all brand page post comments. Your aim is to be better than that, so you can truly stand out as a business that cares about its customers.

### BUT WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO ENCOURAGE INTERACTION WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA?

It's important to be reactive, responding to queries and questions as soon as humanly possible.

Businesses have also found creating a human face to their brand while not taking themselves too seriously has proven to be very successful.

For example, [Dr Sinkin](#), a dentist based in New York City, decided to actively engage with his Twitter followers by using the channel's search function to find people who have dentistry-related questions. If someone is complaining about a tooth ache on Twitter, he will offer his advice to help cure the pain.

Rather than self-promote like many in his profession are doing, Dr Sinkin takes a more proactive approach to his social media and this is giving him results - he has nearly 6,000 followers.

Reaching out to people this way might not lead you to your 'perfect customer' straight away, but every new follower has the potential to 'spread the word' even if they're not in your ideal target market.

Having a large number of social media followers - especially when you're a small business - provides credibility but also takes time and resources. You may not generate sales immediately from your social media efforts but if you're getting a large number of leads then you do have the potential to see a return on your marketing dollars.

What we've witnessed with social media for small businesses is that their fear of negative comments or scrutiny is holding them back. Don't let this fear control you! If you're worried, have specific guidelines in place on how to respond to online negativity, as this helps build confidence within your team's abilities to communicate on social media.

**If you don't get interactions from your customers straight away - negative or positive - do not despair. Establishing yourself as a thought leader online can take awhile and there's no magic overnight fix. ★**

## ANALYSE, ANALYSE, ANALYSE!

The last thing you want to do is implement your social media strategy and then walk away. Your social media strategy should be seen as a basis for your company's growth, but it will need to be nurtured in order to grow.

Going over your analytics is vital in ensuring your social media strategy succeeds. Analytics enable you to see what does and doesn't work and helps you focus your attention on the effective elements of your strategy.

**“Without big data analytics, companies are blind and deaf, wandering out onto the web like deer on a freeway.”**

- GEOFFREY MOORE, AUTHOR OF CROSSING THE CHASM & INSIDE THE TORNADO



Google Analytics is the best way to track the data that's coming to your site, enabling you to revise and change your strategy if it's not working.

Firstly, put your company goals into Google Analytics so you can see whether you're meeting your targets. For more information on how to do this, read this [blog post](#) from [Razor Social](#).

- ★ Next, you want to track your analytics on a monthly basis, looking at:
- ★ Total unique visitors
- ★ Top sources of social media bringing visitors to your website
- ★ Average visitor duration

Comparing these results on a month-by-month basis will help you see what needs tweaking and which social media sites need your focus/attention.

This [e-book by Steve Scott](#) goes into more detail about this method and provides some great examples on how to build your website traffic.

## STAY IN THE KNOW

There's no doubting your social media strategy is vital, but you should also expand your social media knowledge by reading extensively.

Follow social media experts like [us](#), [Jenn's Trends](#), [Copyblogger](#), [Top Dog Social Media](#) and [Chris Brogan](#) to keep abreast of what's happening in the industry. (Do you have another expert to add to this list? [Let us know](#).)

It's also helpful to set Google Alerts for phrases such as '[Twitter / Google Plus / Facebook] updates'. This will help you access any recent important social media industry news.

Facebook is the social media platform with the most updates that could affect your social media strategy. Thankfully, the Social Media Examiner has put together [this great list](#) to stay ahead of any changes Facebook decides to make.

Finally, make sure you inform your team of any social media changes so they can keep updated too. Perhaps include a social media notice section in your company's internal newsletter.





— article provided by —

*Red Platypus*

# Thank You

We hope you found this social media strategy information useful. If you feel you'd like more help in implementing your strategy, or help with drafting one up, feel free to contact us. We will be happy to answer any nagging questions you might have.



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