



# A Guide to Social Media Marketing for Small Businesses

New York Small Business  
Development Center

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## A Guide to Social Media Marketing For Small Business



NEW YORK SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

April 2020

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### About this Text:

Participants will be introduced to key social media marketing concepts and learn how to create a comprehensive social media marketing strategy. This text includes hands-on activities for exploring audience analysis, goal planning, and content creation. Additionally, helpful material for generating a strong brand identity and voice as well as general content ideas across social media platforms is provided.

Readers can access the PDF version of this text here: <https://www.sbdjcc.org/tip-resources>

### About the Author:

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### About the NY Small Business Development Center at Jamestown Community College:

The vision of the NY Small Business Development Center at JCC is to create economic sustainability for all New Yorkers – one business at a time. The SBDC delivers high quality business counseling and training to clients looking to start a business or improve the performance of an existing business. Services are free and confidential. Call 716.338.1024 or visit our websites: <http://jamestown.nysbdc.org> or [www.sunyjcc.edu/sbdc](http://www.sunyjcc.edu/sbdc) for more information.

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## *Table of Contents*

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Table of Contents.....	1
Section 1: An Introduction to Social Media .....	3
Section 2: This Text’s Approach to Social Media Marketing .....	5
Section 3: Social Media Terminology .....	7
Section 4: Before You Begin .....	9
Section 5: Creating a Social Media Marketing Plan; Step by Step.....	11
Step 1: Assess Your Current Social Media Presence.....	13
Step 2: Research Your Industry .....	15
Step 3: Identify Your Target Audience.....	19
Step 4: Set Social Media Goals.....	23
Step 5: Select Your Platforms.....	29
Step 6: Develop a Content Plan .....	31
Step 7: Measure Success .....	41
Step 8: Monitor and Adjust Your Social Media Marketing Plan.....	47
Section 6: Legal and Ethical Issues Related to Social Media .....	49
Section 7: Developing a Social Media Policy.....	53
Section 8: Additional Resources .....	57
Appendix A: Tips for the Most Popular Platforms .....	59
Appendix B: Share of Voice Report.....	67
Bibliography .....	69

### I. What is Social Media?

Social media (SM) is a broad term for creating and sharing content across digital platforms. Traditional media (i.e. newspaper, radio, television, film, etc.) has typically been a one-way communication interaction. On the other hand, social media is a two-way communication interaction. The key word here is *interaction*. Social media provides the opportunity to respond instantly to the content by posting feedback, sharing with friends, or creating original content and distributing it across social media platforms. Social media content is typically engaging, user-driven, and personal. Today, consumers and businesses alike use social media to connect and engage with one another, but they also use it as a key marketing tool.

### II. What is Social Media Marketing?

The introduction of the Internet has drastically changed the marketing landscape by creating a space where companies and consumers can easily interact with one another. How are they doing this? Through social media platforms. These platforms allow companies to initiate, monitor, and drive conversations related to their products and brand. Consumers can now tell their favorite businesses how they feel about certain products and share this news with all of their friends – a tool that is both dangerous and valuable to the business owner. Using social media platforms as a marketing tool has opened the door for conversations, which opens the door for a higher level of customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

### III. What is Social Media Marketing Not?

Social media marketing is not a be-all, end-all marketing strategy. It cannot be the sole driver for your marketing team, but it can greatly enrich your marketing plan. If social media platforms are specifically designed to create engaging content that drives two-way interactions, then businesses should focus on the interactional aspect of this technology. The main goal of social media marketing is to create genuine, dynamic connections with real people. Therefore, social media marketing is not a podium to stand on with a really loud megaphone constantly shouting, “Buy this!” at anyone who wanders by your business. That doesn’t start a conversation! Instead, think of social media marketing as a way to constantly connect with the consumer by bringing them meaningful content that cultivates an authentic relationship with your brand and product.



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### Section 2: This Text's Approach to Social Media Marketing

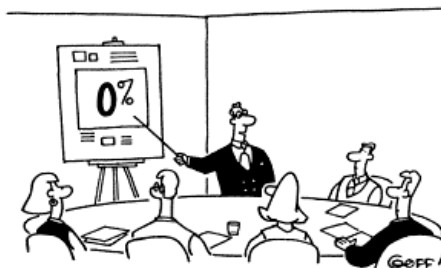
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There are a lot of different approaches to social media marketing. One approach focuses heavily on gaining followers and then using this growth in followers to measure ROI. Another approach focuses on engagement; constantly asking followers to like, share, comment, or follow pages and content. This type of approach relies on a constant “call to action” and connotes content with no engagement as ineffective. Still another approach involves a clean, business-like tone with little brand personality.

While there is a time and place for each of the approaches noted above, this text aims to create a comprehensive and customer-centered approach for your social media marketing strategy that is maintainable and targeted.

A customer-centered approach primarily focuses on the relationship-capacity of social media and prioritizes authenticity. It also recognizes the humanity in your business, which can sometimes be lost in the digital world. These are real people with whom you are interacting; keeping the customer at the center of your strategy takes some of the pressure off of trying to create perfect content. Your focus is on building relationships and trust with your customers. To do this, be authentic to your business and brand and keep your customer at the center of your messaging. Aim for a professional social media presence, constant engagement, and an increase in followers, but also understand that there will be periods with little interaction. This gives you the flexibility to vary your content and be creative in your messaging while also remaining true to your brand and brand voice.

Ultimately, your social media strategy can be as complex or as simple as you want it to be. Be realistic in the time you have available to manage your social media content and plan your content accordingly. Furthermore, it is okay to only focus your strategy on one platform and do that platform extremely well. As you will learn, each platform requires a different strategy, content type, and time commitment.



"Our study concludes that this is the percentage of our customers who will buy from us without any effort whatsoever on our part."

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### Section 3: Social Media Terminology

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The introduction of new technology has brought with it new terminology. Key terms will be identified throughout this guide but here are a few of the basics to get you started. All terminology in this guide is listed in order of importance.

- A. **Platforms:** sometimes referred to as social networks, these are web-based applications that make it easy to create and transmit content. These include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, YouTube, and many more!
- B. **Content:** the physical words, pictures, video, and audio that is created and shared across social networks.
- C. **Post:** the act of publishing content on a platform.
- D. **Engagement:** refers to the amount of interaction (likes, comments, shares, and follows) a post receives. Oftentimes, engagement is used to measure social media goals.
- E. **Reach:** the number of users that have come across your post. This may include your followers as well as any other social media users who have encountered your post from another account sharing your content.
- F. **Feed:** frequently updated content that appears on social media sites. Typically, users scroll through their feeds to gather social information and posted content appears on the feed of a social media platform.
- G. **Story:** content that is shared on the platform for 24 hours but does not permanently appear on a business' page. Stories are primarily used on Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook.
- H. **Influencer:** influential individuals on a social media platform. These are industry-specific trendsetters (e.g. bloggers, spokespersons, etc.).
- I. **Social media ROI:** a measurement of effectiveness of a business' investment in social media and depends largely on the unique social media goals of that business.
- J. **SEO:** short for Search Engine Optimization. SEO focuses on search results rankings, with the primary goal to be featured as high up on the first page of search results as possible. Social media can help SEO by bringing more traffic to a business' website and increasing brand presence on search engine results pages.
- J. **Content Management System (CMS):** also known as Social Media Management Tools; web-based services or apps that connect a user's social media accounts and helps the user be more efficient. These tools are often used to schedule posts to be distributed across accounts, monitor and listen to the social media landscape, and gather helpful data to analyze return on investment. (e.g., Hootsuite, Buffer, etc.)
- K. **Social media monitoring:** a process of monitoring and responding to interactions occurring on social media platforms.



It is recommended that you prepare a few items before beginning your adventure into the social media frontier. This will make the transition to social media marketing easier and help you optimize your social media tools for success.

#### I. Website

The website is your home base and much of your social media marketing will drive traffic back to your website. As a result, your website should be professional in nature and have similar standards to other businesses in your industry. You will want to link the social media accounts for your business to your website once you have created profiles on these platforms.

##### **Basic Website Tips:**

- Own the domain name (www.yourbusiness.com).
- Have a clear theme; graphics and styles should blend nicely, keep the theme consistent throughout.
- Keep it up to date. This includes basic business information, photos, products, and contact forms.

#### II. Email

By now you probably have an established email address for your business. But since social media is about connecting and interacting with customers, be intentional about your email address. It should include your website's domain name (e.g., email@yourbusiness.com) as this adds professionalism to your interactions, especially if you will be using influencers to enhance your social media content. Your web manager should be able to set this up for you. For managing social media accounts, it is recommended that you create a separate email for use with your social media accounts (e.g., socialmediamanager@yourbusiness.com). This will help you manage any notifications you receive from your social media networks in one location.

#### III. Logo

Your logo is the face of your business. This is the image that most customers will see when they interact with any of your social media profiles. Therefore, your logo needs to be a high-resolution photo (at least 300ppi or dpi). Whoever designed your logo should be able to help you with this. Different social media platforms have different aspect ratio requirements for logo sizes.

#### IV. Photos

Social media networks thrive on photos. Many social media platforms require multiple photos to create a profile, so you will want to gather several photos that represent different aspects of your business and brand. These photos showcase your company and provide a visual introduction to customers. These should be a mix of professional photos (images you may have used on your

website) and candid photos. The images you use on your social media accounts could include any combination of the following: your logo, professional graphics of your products or business, storefront images, employee photos, any other images you have used for print marketing. Again, you will want to use high-resolution images and refer to the required aspect ratios for each platform.

## V. Brand Vision

If you already have a logo and a website then you most likely have a clear brand vision, which needs to be carried out across each of your social media platforms. Consider the color scheme, image aesthetic, and overall company culture that you want to incorporate when using social media marketing for your business. It is important to be consistent across platforms so that customers can easily recognize your business and brand online.

## VI. Brand Voice

*“It shouldn’t be a competition about who shouts the loudest. Your brand and social voice should be one and the same: informative, responsive, and very, very approachable.”*

- Zero to 100,000: Social Media Tips and Tricks for Small Businesses

Social media marketing is about interacting with customers in meaningful ways. This means that your brand and social voice should be consistent and relatable to customers. In the social media world, consumers are connecting with real people in real time – something that you should focus on as you develop your brand voice. Also keep in mind your company culture and overall tone when creating social media content. Distilled, an online marketing company, has a great article that goes more in depth for creating your brand voice: <https://www.distilled.net/tone-of-voice/>.<sup>1</sup>

## VII. Time

Social media marketing takes time. While there are tools to help you do it more efficiently, it still takes time to create, monitor, and respond to social media content. Once you have chosen the most effective social media platforms for your business, you will want to develop and implement a social media marketing plan (addressed in section 5) to help you stay on track. Ideally, you will have a social media marketing leader who manages your platform accounts and generates content. But if not, plan to set aside time each week or day to manage your social media marketing.

Social Media Beginner’s Checklist		
Professional website	YES	NO
Email address for SM accounts, including domain name	YES	NO
High resolution logo in correct aspect ratio for platform	YES	NO
High resolution images related to business, brand, and products	YES	NO
Identified brand vision, including color scheme, aesthetics, etc.	YES	NO
Identified brand voice	YES	NO
Designated time for SM marketing	YES	NO

<sup>1</sup> Hyperlinks throughout this text can easily be accessed in the pdf version available at: <https://www.sbdcc.org/tip-resources>