



Social Media Sense Check

5 insights for sensible social media strategy

When you're building and maintaining your brand's social profile, there are a few things you should be thinking about right from the off.

These questions should act as a sense-check for any social activity, and keep what you're doing fresh, engaging and measurable.

1. Are you spread too thinly?

It's better to do a few things brilliantly than overreach.

80/20

Take a look at the balance between how much you're loving your audience, acknowledging followers, answering their questions and generally being useful or delightful, and how much you're broadcasting about your organisation or business.

It's like conversation – the good ones are those where you listen more than you talk. The 80/20 rule is a good way of thinking about this – 80% of your time should be spent listening, responding and learning about your audience, and just 20% on broadcasting as 'the brand'. The more interesting social media profiles tend to be those most interested in their fans and followers.

Share the load

While it's a good idea to have clear ownership, the most effective social media activity is rarely one person's job. To be effective, a broad section of the organisation should be actively involved; listening to what customers are saying, contributing ideas, content, expertise and opinions. If the only people involved in your social media are junior exec types, something has gone wrong. Agree senior stakeholder buy-in and expectations from the outset and continually measure their involvement.

Never, ever panic

Ensure you have policies, escalation procedures and scenario planning in place in preparation for a crisis situation. If you're not sure what this might be, that's next on the list – what does a 'crisis' look like for your brand on social? You won't know how to handle it until you work out what 'it' is. You can create a simple checklist to help employees decide when to escalate.

Some good questions include:

• Is this new?

Or is it part of the usual social conversation around our brand?

• Are we in the dark?

Do the people talking about it on social media know more about it than we do?

• Does it have potential to scale?

Will people be interested or outraged enough to share and comment on it?

Your ability to recognise and react to a crisis, or not, in the first instance can have huge ramifications on its severity and longevity. Do not then stick this plan in a drawer; regularly review it to make sure they reflect any internal and external changes for the business.

2. Are you measuring correctly and have you set objectives?

Social media measurement is generally over-stated and underdone. Effective measurement doesn't mean counting likes and followers, but knowing what your social media activity is actually doing for the business.

What to measure

There are a plethora of social media measurement tools available, covering everything from sentiment to reach. Before you look at any of them, work out precisely what you need to measure.

Effective questions to ask:

- Do you know your social media business objectives? If not then start here. This can be anything from delivering improved customer service and saving costs to increasing customer preference. Without understanding what business objectives social media is helping you to hit, measuring its effectiveness is moot.
- Do you know what your most popular posts and tweets are - and why? Are those posts contributing anything towards achieving business objectives as above? Have you ever asked your audience what they want to hear from you and what they don't? Do you know what you want to successfully communicate to users?
- Have you got a way to feed back what you've learned into your business? Closing the feedback loop like this, fully linking social activities to business performance, is key to winning support at the top, and engagement across your business.

3. What is your organising idea or identity?

Does your organisation or business have clarity on what theme and tone your posts need to deliver? We call this having an 'organising idea' or a 'conversation platform'. Often social media presences that don't have this quickly descend into 'happy Friday' posts and other meaningless to fill the void.

Go deeper

The best organising ideas go deeper than just talking about your own products and services. They address how your brand can talk about something meaningful and appealing to its fans and followers.

Having a clear organising idea will stop you oversharing, and can help improve your relevance and consistency by providing criteria to help you decide what makes the cut. It's also important as part of your efforts to engage a broader section of your organisation; people will be more likely to participate if they clearly understand what (and why) they're being asked to contribute.

As part of a social media sense check, we advise clarity on your organising idea. Review what your posts are about and be confident you can stick to a clear theme that's relevant, motivating and of value to your audience. Your audience can help you develop this. Ask them what they want from you.



4. Which channels fit best?

When setting up social media profiles for our clients, there's huge value in conducting an audit of where your audience are and what you have to say of value to them in that context, as well as how you plan to use that platform. It's a really good way of working out what channels to use. The temptation is always to work the other way around by picking channels you think your business should be on and setting up profiles before finally deciding what to say.

Doing a quick audit like this can be a useful sense check at any time:

- What content do we have?
- Where can that content be best used?
- Where is our audience?

5. Is there budget?

Finally, and possibly the most important of all, is having budget to support your organic activity with paid media. With declining organic reach on most of the main social channels, social media activity now, more than ever, needs to include paid media.

It comes back to having a clear strategy for how you use each platform – factoring in the pros and cons of each. Using Facebook for reach and Twitter for engagement makes sense, but only if your Facebook content is supported by a level of digital media spend appropriate to your objectives.

The beauty is that the expenditure is relatively small; it can be very targeted, closely managed and measurable so you know exactly what your investment is achieving.



Paul Trueman is Head of Social at the creative communications agency Bray Leino, responsible for strategic digital campaigns across a wide variety of sectors in B2B and B2C.
@paultrueman74

Bray Leino

To find out more about how digital marketing can boost your business objectives, contact:

Austen Donnellan,
Business Development Director, Bray Leino
adonnellan@brayleino.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1598 760700