

# 7 Steps to create a winning social media marketing strategy

# Introduction

Social media was often seen as the wild child of the marketing department—the place where interns started their careers and brands could say random things with little to no repercussions. But times have changed, and the industry has matured.

Yes, social media is still a wonderful place for brands to have a little fun, but it also has a real and measurable impact on a business' bottom line. Thus, social media can no longer live in a silo; it must be work in tandem with the rest of your business strategy.

To ensure that your social media marketing campaigns contribute to your brand's greater business objectives, we've put together this guide to coach you through the process. We've also incorporated a checklist you can use to make sure you've done it all right. Here are your seven steps to success:

- 01 Ensure social goals solve challenges**
- 02 Extend efforts throughout your organization**
- 03 Focus on networks that add value**
- 04 Create engaging content**
- 05 Identify business opportunities through social**
- 06 Engage instead of ignore**
- 07 Track, improve and market your efforts**

# 01

## Ensure social goals solve challenges

Goal setting is a staple of all marketing and business strategies. Social media is no exception. Of course, with a range of social capabilities, it can be difficult to determine exactly what your objectives should be. For guidance, look to the challenges before you.

- Has website traffic dipped?
- Is customer loyalty low?
- Do you need to do a better job of building a positive brand reputation?
- Do you just need to make people aware that your product exists?

A smart social media marketing campaign can answer each of these questions. Prove your team's worth by tackling them head on. To get you started, we pulled together a few common business obstacles and social objectives that can help brands overcome them.

### Challenge: Low website traffic

The world is online. A brand's website, therefore, is one of its most important marketing tools. Low website traffic can mean fewer customers and lower profits.

To combat this challenge, your social team should focus its goals on creating links directly to the website (whether they're from your own social posts or influencers'). Link to useful content, subpages and company images to position your website and your brand as a resource rather than just another cog in the corporate wheel. This traffic should increase leads and, in the long run, revenues.

## Challenge: Decreasing customer retention

According to The Chartered Institute of Marketing, it costs four to ten times more to acquire a customer than to retain one. To keep your customers around, use social as a tool to support, communicate and engage. A good social relationship with your customers should translate into a better perception and offline relationship with your brand. By developing a strong social bond, customers will be more likely to stick with your brand time and time again.

## Challenge: Poor customer service

People turn to social to engage with businesses. Therefore, it is important for your brand to be ready to help customers on any channel they can contact you through. Arm your social media team with the materials, education and authority to respond to customer questions and issues. When you do so, you'll be equipped to respond to your customers in a timely and accurate way, regardless of how they reach out to you.

## Challenge: Weak brand awareness

Social allows you to reach a broad audience. But honing and perfecting that message takes brain power and time. To create authentic and lasting brand awareness, avoid a slew of promotional messages; instead, focus on creating meaningful content and a strong brand personality through your social channels. Determine relevant hashtags and industry influencers you can engage with, and tap into those resources to extend your brand's overall awareness.

## What are your social media goals?

- Increase brand awareness
- Drive website traffic
- Improve customer service and retention
- Gather quality leads
- Source job candidates

## 02

# Extend efforts throughout your organization

Social has long lived within the marketing department, but that doesn't mean it can't (and shouldn't) have a hand in nearly every business function, from human resources to research and development. To create a fully integrated social media marketing campaign, you'll need to involve and integrate multiple departments, especially if your goals have a direct impact on them. Work with all your teams to determine how you can best support their goals and what key performance indicators are important to them (we've outlined some ideas on both below).

### Sales

Social selling is a term that has grown in popularity since the rise of social marketing. By searching for sales opportunities and then engaging in a helpful and authentic manner, social media can be a great way to prime the sales funnel and find new leads.

↑ **SproutRachael** 2 points · 1 year ago

↓ Hey, Sherhood! I'm going to be real, I work at Sprout but have been using the platform for over 6 years. I actually use Sprout to manage Sprouts own social presence. I'm going to reach out via twitter and try and connect you with the best person who will be able to see how you can get the most value out of it.

Rachael!

Give Award Share Report Save

## Customer service

Social media is quickly becoming one of the most important channels through which companies interact with their current customers. Social is an easy and very public way for customers to air their grievances with your brand. If you aren't responding, it can hurt your reputation and customer relationship.

Building great relationships on social is about more than responding to complaints. For example, Seamless does a wonderful job of Retweeting positive posts from satisfied customers and regularly engaging with all kinds of mentions.



## Human resources

While the HR team probably spends a good amount of its time on social media looking through the profiles of applicants, it can also use social as a way to increase overall application numbers. Showcase job postings on social media and encourage your employees to share them to their networks as well. Beyond just

job postings, social is a useful tool in showcasing your company culture to the world. Highlight some behind-the-scenes images of what it is like to work for your company so you can improve the perception of your brand among candidates.

## Research and Development

Your brand's social audience represents a group that is highly engaged, invested and interested in your product or service. Why not leverage that to serve as an online focus group for your company? Asking for and listening to customer feedback on social media is a nimble and easy way to get instant feedback. Additionally, social media can help expose gaps in a product or service.

## Marketing

The marketing department, specifically advertising and PR, traditionally has a strong role in the social media strategy. But there are always new ways to ensure people are aware of and excited about your brand through social. Whether you're debuting a product, ad campaign or initiative, ensure that social has a strong hand in spreading the word.

### What teams are active on social?

- Sales
- Marketing
- Advertising
- Public relations
- Customer service
- Human resources
- Research and development

# 03

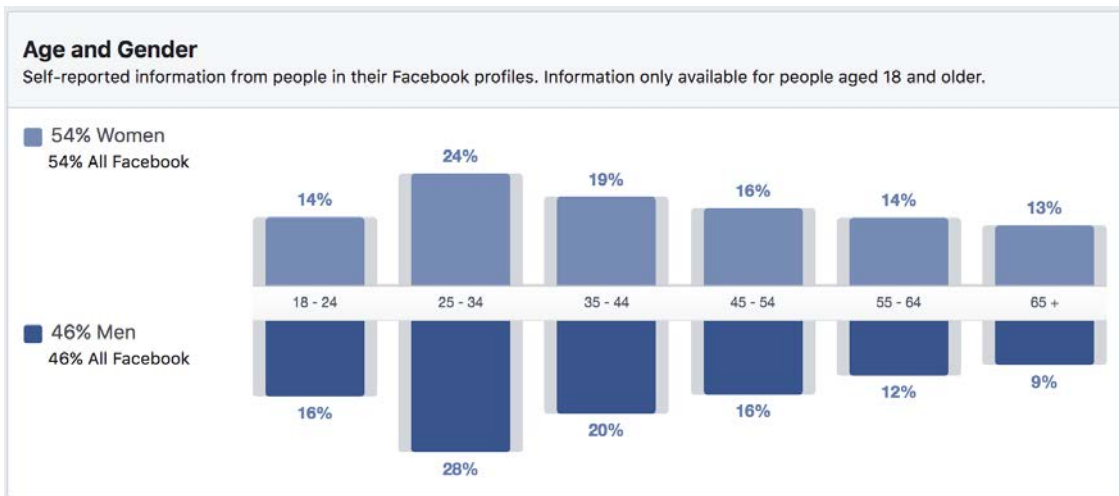
## Focus on networks that add value

Just because a network has billions of users doesn't mean it will have a direct contribution to your brand's objectives. Instead of trying to be everything to everybody, focus your efforts on networks that hold the key to your target audience and objectives.

Each network has its own strengths and weaknesses, and each social media marketer should carefully pick and choose which networks they want to take advantage of. Here are some of the most popular networks as well as what they're best at.

### Facebook

With an audience of 2.32 billion monthly active users, Facebook offers an opportunity to reach a broad range of customers and potential customers. The chart below breaks down Facebook's demographic representation—your target audience is most likely represented in some way.





But how can Facebook contribute to your overall goals? Because Facebook's News Feed is a very visible place for social posts, it's one of the best places for you to distribute your content in order to increase brand awareness, drive website traffic and distinguish yourself as a thought leader. This strategy is even more effective when you take advantage of Facebook's targeting capabilities that allow you to tailor your messages to users with certain interests.

## Twitter

Where Facebook has the volume of users, Twitter has the volume of messages. In fact, there are over 500 million Tweets sent every day. With all those social messages, there is a great chance that someone is either mentioning your company or starting a conversation that you would be interested in joining.

That's why Twitter is best to use as a customer service and business development channel. Monitor the network for inbound messages from dissatisfied customers, and quickly turn them into happy interactions. At the same time, look for prospective customers.

## LinkedIn

LinkedIn has a robust network of over 500 million users, most of whom frequent the site with a "working" mindset. The advantage with this is that LinkedIn is an amazing network for B2B social media marketers. Whereas sites like Twitter and Facebook catch users more or less on their personal time, LinkedIn gives you access to customers when they're at their professional best. Use this to build relationships with future customers.

## Which networks align with your business strategy?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Snapchat

## 04

## Create engaging content

Once you've involved the right stakeholders, department and networks, it's time to start building engaging content for your social channels. This content—whether a video, tip sheet or simple Tweet—should all ladder up into your business objectives.

### Videos

- How-to videos can be a proactive approach to social customer care—answer your customers' questions before they're asked.
- Behind-the-scenes videos give your audience a sense of your company culture and brand personality.

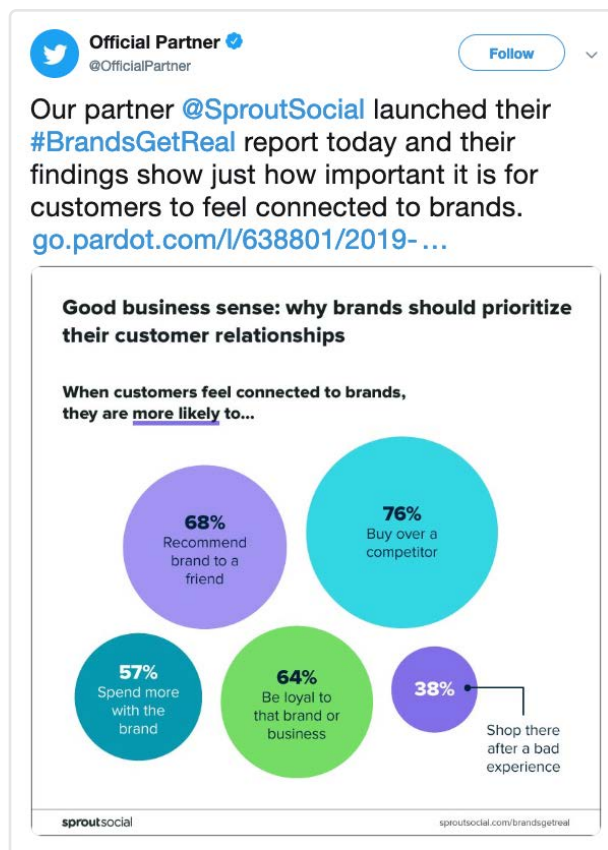
### Guides

- Position your organization as a thought leader and elevate your brand by developing engaging content that speaks to your customers.
- Guides should cater to your target audience, ensuring you're adding value.



## Infographics

- Internal or external data can be turned into a beautiful, insightful infographic.
- When done right, infographics can be some of the most socially shared pieces of content, so make them engaging and resourceful.



## What content can you create with full force and frequency?

- Videos
- Photos
- Ebooks
- Webinars
- Blog posts
- Infographics
- White papers
- Case studies

# 05

## Identify business opportunities through social

With millions of messages being sent across social channels every day, there is undoubtedly conversation happening around your brand. Social media listening, therefore, should be an essential part of your social media marketing strategy.

### Industry trends and competitor insights

Go beyond simple keyword searches to stay on top of what audiences in your segment are asking for. You can get ahead of competitors by noticing emerging trends in your area, and meet customers' needs perfectly by developing features and products that people are overwhelmingly requesting.

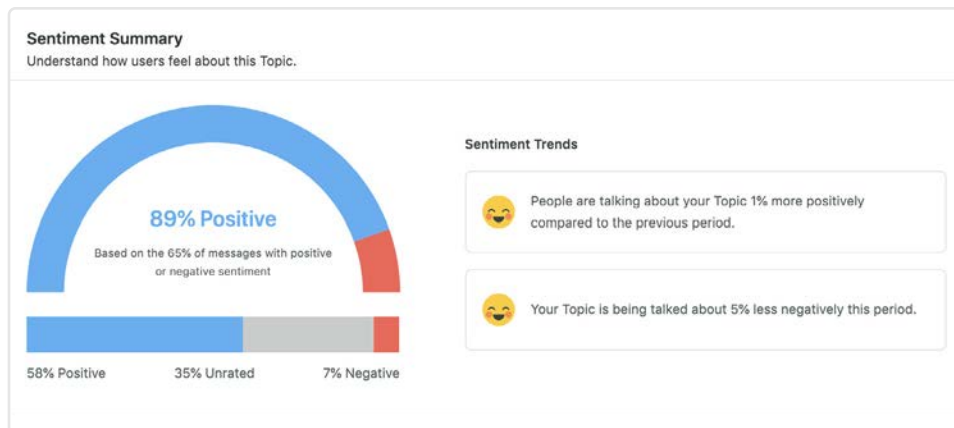
For example, listening can uncover how much of Hulu's audience of streaming TV viewers is starting to expect a download option.



## Social sentiment

Don't wait for complaints to start pouring in directly to your support accounts to find out you have a problem. Sentiment analysis lets you know how positively or negatively audiences are discussing topics related to your brand, helping you uncover trends before they become a problem.

Sentiment impacts more than just customer care—you can use positive sentiment to find out how well your campaigns are hitting the mark, or find out what's going right by learning what your customers appreciate most about your brand.



## What can your brand track with social listening?

- Industry trends
- Competitive analysis
- Brand intelligence
- Product research
- Customer experience
- Campaign success

## 06

## Engage instead of ignore

We can't say it enough: Whether someone is commenting on a post you've made, writing on your wall or mentioning you on Twitter, it's important to always stay engaged. If customers are consistently ignored, they'll eventually ditch your brand all together and look for an alternative.

Don't ignore negative feedback about your brand on social. Staying engaged with these customers, as well as responding with openness and transparency, can win back frustrated audiences.

Slack turned a service outage into a positive for the customer, who ended up praising their social team and Liking their responses.



### How are you responding to your followers?

- Dedicated social team
- Shared social responsibility across departments
- Social tools with built-in customer relationship management capabilities

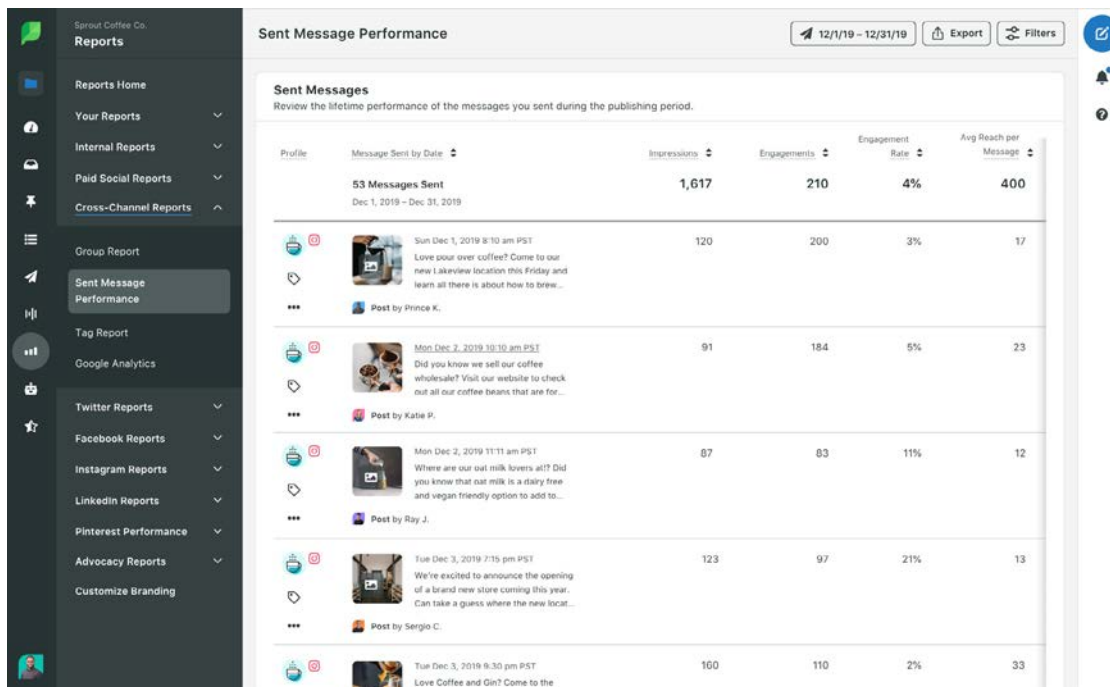
# 07

## Track, improve and market your efforts

You won't be able to really begin analyzing and improving your efforts until you've successfully got steps 1–6 operational. This final step is actually a step back, letting you figure out what's working and what's not.

### Use a tool to track success

Sprout was created with social media marketing in mind. Sprout offers a full suite of social media analytics, which help you pinpoint exactly which of your messages perform best. You also can use tools like Google Analytics, which integrates with Sprout, to see which of your posts are driving traffic, conversions and overall revenue.



## Build on success

Once you have a good understanding of which content is driving the most engagement, site visits and conversions, you can use that knowledge to increase your success. Write content and social media posts that are similar to the ones that have worked in the past. This is an ongoing process that will help you hone your unique social voice.

## Share your success

The last step is to let the company know about the successes you're finding—especially those who have a stake in the strategy. This allows you to prove the worth of social media and showcase its broader implications across your entire enterprise.

Plus, it doesn't hurt to show off how hard you've been working.

## Are your efforts metrics driven?

- Analysis: Assess which posts were successful and which were not—and why.
- Reporting: Showcase your results with streamlined, visual presentations.
- Improvement: Optimize what works and scrap what doesn't.





# Social Media Engagement, Advocacy & Analytics Solutions

Sprout Social offers social media management, analytics and advocacy solutions for leading agencies and brands, including Hyatt, GrubHub, Microsoft, Uber and Zendesk. Available via web browser, iOS and Android apps, Sprout's engagement platform enables brands to more effectively communicate on social channels, collaborate across teams and provide an exceptional customer experience.

Bambu by Sprout Social, a platform for advocacy, empowers employees to share curated content across their social networks to further amplify a brand's reach and engagement.

Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Official Partner, Facebook Marketing Partner, Instagram Partner Program Member and LinkedIn Company Page Partner.

Get your team set up at [sproutsocial.com](https://sproutsocial.com).