

—SOCIAL MEDIA— MARKETING



PART 1
MARKETING PLAN AND RESEARCH

1.1 Develop Your Marketing Plan

So, you want to build a massive brand and you think that social media is the way to get there?

Well good news: you're on the right track! Social media is indeed a *highly* powerful tool for building a massive audience and connecting with that audience in a way that many brands and companies never will.

But before you can start posting media and content, you first need a *plan*. What, you thought you could just dive in without any strategy?

Your social marketing plan is essentially the strategy and the series of steps that you plan to follow in order to take your website or business from a small name or tiny blog; into massive, self-sustaining, professional organization.

It sounds impossible for many people but the fact of the matter is that this has worked for countless brands before yours.

Take a look at *any* of the biggest names in your industry, and you can almost guarantee that they started out where you are right now and that they used social media - possibly alongside other tools - in order to grow and to become something bigger.

While many people will fail to emulate that success story, that's because they followed the wrong trajectory - or because they had no *strategy* to begin with.

That's what we're going to look at here. We're going to look not only at how you can go about creating a blueprint based on other highly successful sites but also how to make sure that you tailor that strategy to suit your brand, your mission statement and your audience.

The plan is the single most important part of your entire campaign. So, get ready and let's do this!

Goals and Objectives

The first thing to do is to identify what the goal of your social media plan is. You'd be surprised how many brands will jump into their social marketing without even considering this incredibly fundamental concept!

A lot of creators and businesses will look at you blankly if you ask them what their plan is, or answer that it's 'to be more successful'.

This isn't helpful because it doesn't provide us with a destination, meaning we can't come up with a road map. So instead, ask yourself what success means for your business.

Maybe you're just trying to make lots of sales quickly?

Maybe you want to establish yourself as an authority within a small sphere of influence?

Or *maybe* you want to reach a massive audience and be considered a thought leader within a specific niche.

Whatever the case, this is going to subtly alter the way you go about things. Likewise, you should also look at your budget, you should look at your timeframe and you should look at the number of hours you can commit to this plan.

If you can build a whole social media department in-house as part of your business then *great*. But if in reality you're only likely to be posting one or two status updates a day maximum, then be honest about this fact and build that into your plan.

It's better to have a moderate plan and to stick to it than it is to have a highly ambitious plan but then give up on day one!

Branding

The next thing you need to think about is your branding.

And I'm going to be brutal with you now: there's a very strong chance that your site and business needs a complete rebrand. Sorry!

The fact of the matter is that your social media success is going to hinge *massively* on your branding.

If your branding is bad, then you won't be able to win over your followers and visitors. The whole point of your social media is to create positive interactions with an audience so that they consider signing up and subscribing and so that you build their trust and they consider buying from you in future.

If you post regularly and with high quality content, but your page has an ugly logo or no real branding to speak of, then you are going to drive away your visitors.

A strong brand will instill trust and authority right away. People should look at your logo and instantly know what your site or channel is all about and whether or not they're likely to like it.

At the same time, they should see your branding and they should instantly feel that yours is a professional outfit and one that they can trust to produce high quality products and content.

That's why you should hire someone to create a logo for you and then make sure that you use this *consistently* across all your channels and that this helps to create more synergy between your various accounts.

Target Audience

Your branding should be directly influenced by your target audience.

What do I mean by this?

Essentially, depending on your brand and your business, you are going to have a specific target audience. That might be middle aged businessmen, it might be pizza shop owners, it might be young, stylish women or it might be martial artists.

Whoever your target audience is, knowing and understanding this audience is *critical* to your success.

Ultimately, if you try and create messages and branding that is appealing to everyone, then it will unintentionally end up being appealing to *no one*. It will be too generic and brand.

What's always better is to go after a small segment of the web but to have them completely on-board with everything you're saying and selling.

And to do that, you need to first identify them.

You can do this with market research. Ideally, that means surveying your current audience or customers and finding out how old they are, what their hobbies and interests are, what their beliefs are, what their passions are, where they spend their time...

All this information will help you build up a picture of someone and know precisely who you're going to be marketing to.

You can also do this by looking at your competition. Who spends time on their social media pages and websites? Who are they targeting? What can you learn from them?

Once you know this, you can decide how best to design your logo and other aspects of your brand in order to best attract that audience.

The same goes for writing any copy that is going to go on your page such as your 'about'.
Now you know *who* you are appealing to, you can decide how *best* to appeal to them.

A Personal Brand

Something that more and more businesses should consider, is using a personal brand.

A personal brand means that you're not going to create a logo in the traditional sense or give your business a name. Even if you do, that is going to play second fiddle to your own name and your own face which *become* your brand.

This can work incredibly well, because by having a personal brand, you allow your visitors and followers to feel as though they can get to know you. In return, this then helps to build trust and familiarity.

Would you be more likely to buy off of a friend, or a stranger in the street? Using a personal brand allows you to put yourself somewhere in between those two points.

At the same time, a personal brand can also be used to promote a value proposition, a lifestyle and a 'dream'.

The idea is that you *live* the life that you are promoting. If you have a fitness brand all about eating well, feeling confident and breaking personal records, then you can post images of yourself training, go live on Facebook Live and more - showing yourself doing the things that your audience want to do.

This can be very inspirational when handled correctly and can motivate more people to follow you, to consider following your brand and to buy from you!

This also gives you a near limitless supply of images, videos and other content you can share on social media.

Platform

It's only once you've settled on all these things that you can then decide on which platform you're going to use.

That's because the best platform is going to depend partly on your brand and the message you want to convey.

What is the best way to get this message across? For instance, Facebook has the largest audience with 2 million users.

This makes it fantastic for reaching the widest possible demographic, which includes more of the less 'internet savvy' groups such as older markets.

It is great for sharing content, for live video, for discussion on the wall and for PPC advertising if you have some budget to put into that.

On the other hand, Instagram is the second largest market with around 700 million monthly active users.

That's still an awful lot but what's interesting is that proportionately more of these users are women and are slightly younger.

What's more, is that the visual nature of Instagram makes it great for selling a lifestyle and a value proposition. It's also great for promoting a product.

The 'stories' aspect works very well in particular with a personal brand.

Better yet, the ROI is supremely low.

Posting a few images to Instagram takes barely any time during a day if you have a good camera in your phone and you genuinely do practice what you preach – but it can build a massive following and gets lots of reshares, likes and more!

Plan

Finally, you can now come up with a plan. More specifically, you should try and come up with daily, weekly and monthly plans.

In other words, what are you going to do on daily basis to get to the point where you want to be in one year, two or three?

This will usually involve making regular posts of some sort, but in particular, it will mean doing that in a way that is sustainable for you and that fits into your routine.

In an ideal scenario, you would post as often as possible for all the major social media platforms and other that skirts the definition:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Reddit
- Google Plus
- Tumblr
- Pinterest

- Snapchat
- Periscope/Meerkat

And any others you can find!

This will help your brand to be 'everywhere' and maximize exposure. And by posting regularly, you will have a greater chance of your posts being seen.

There's a saturation point at which you can start to overwhelm your followers but even this can be avoided by setting up 'sister' brands to help promote yourself.

So, there's not really an upper limit. The only upper limit is set by how much you can accomplish regularly.

And this is also going to be affected by other aspects of your marketing, such as your content marketing for instance and any video presence on YouTube.

Thus, your marketing plan is likely to be somewhat limited. Start then by focussing on one channel primarily whether that means Instagram or Facebook. Make sure you at least have a strong showing on the top three.

Think as well about the regularity with which you can post content to your site and where you're going to share that.

Again, promoting content on the three big platforms is always a good idea (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and you should also look at sharing in online communities like reddit and Google Plus communities.

Finally, look into the different tools you can use to make this process easier and to reach an even larger audience.

This will likely mean using things like Buffer or IFTTT in order to automate posts when you don't have a chance

to do anything yourself and it could also mean hiring additional services to help you.

Through the rest of these reports you'll learn more ways to grow your social media faster and reach an even bigger audience, so read the whole set and you should be able to come up with an ideal social media strategy to reach a massive audience!

1.2 Use Social Media for Market Research

A successful social media campaign is something that any business can benefit from to a massive extent.

That's because social media marketing offers you access to a gigantic network of people and adds tools and features that are ideal for encouraging virality. But to think of social media *only* in those terms is short sighted.

The power of social media goes far beyond giving you a platform – it also gives you an incredible amount of data and a huge amount of insight. What's more, is that it lets your audience communicate *with you*.

Before you launch your own social media campaign then, one of the very best things you can do is to use this tool to collect data and build your own strategy.

Use it to see what works and what doesn't, to better know your audience and generally to ensure that you are on-the-pulse.

Twitter for Short Term Research

Twitter has occasionally described itself as being the 'pulse of the planet'. What does it mean by this? Well, essentially, it means that whatever is trending on Twitter is highly likely to be 'trending' in real life.

Let's say that you head outside and you hear a very loud alarm coming from the nearby shopping arcade. You do a Google search and you don't find anything particularly useful on here.

Why not?

Simple: because Google isn't fast enough to keep up with this kind of news. Someone needs to first write an article and then publish it.

Then Google needs to 'index' that news with its spiders and it needs to recognize which search terms this is relevant for.

After a while, relevant results will start turning up at the top of Google. But it's not immediate.

Twitter on the other hand, gives you a direct line of communication with the local community. Just search the name of that shopping arcade and you'll see people posting about it.

Some people will be asking what's going on and likely there will be a security member there who will post the answer.

This is how Twitter can make the claim to be 'the pulse' of the planet.

And likewise, if you look at what is currently trending, you will see longer term topics that lots of people are messaging about. This is the same effect but on a much larger scale.

People might be Tweeting about something that happened to a certain celebrity, or they might be tweeting about some political event in the news.

Perhaps they are tweeting about a new computer game, new movie, or the latest Game of Thrones episode.

Either way, knowing these trending topics can be very useful for you as a marketer. And the reason is fairly self explanatory!

Essentially, by knowing what topic is 'hot' at any given moment, it makes it far easier for you to create posts on that basis that will get searched.

Writing about 'hot topics' in fact is one of *the* best ways to get new followers and viewers. Why?

Because the faster you are, the sooner you can get your post on Google or your video on YouTube before they are inundated with similar content.

I recently made a video covering the launch of a new phone.

I was fortunate enough to get an invitation to the event and because of this, I could cover that event as soon as the embargo lifted with footage, written content and more.

In the first couple of days it had over half a million views. Content on the same page without this 'new' appeal tends to get a few thousand or a few hundred thousand maximum.

You see the difference?

If you can spot a topic this way, *as it develops*, then you can reach the audience you want to and gain massive traction before anyone else has even landed on the topic!

Likewise, by posting social media content with the right tags, you can also get much more engagement from people who aren't already your followers.

The key in this instance is once again to be early, but also to post content with tags that are popular without being *too* popular. That might sound a little

nonsensical - after all, why *wouldn't* you want to post on a topic with the biggest reach possible?

And the answer is that if you choose a topic that is a little *too* popular, then you risk being immediately drowned out by all the other posts on the same subject.

This can happen even when you aren't posting about 'trending' topics. For instance, if you post a picture of a sunset with #sunset then you can bet that so too are a million other people. Within the first minute, your image stops showing up in searches.

But if you post 'twilight', then you can be much more successful.

In fact, one of the very *best* strategies in this regard, is to post about local stuff.

Remember that alarm situation? If you had Tweeted about it, then that would have been some guaranteed views for you and probably some new followers and retweets.

Or what if you were to attend a big event like a festival and then post *about* that event?

Here, you'd have hundreds - maybe thousands - of people posting about that subject and searching for it. But it would never go that much larger than just the people in attendance.

Learning the Niche

What's even more important though, is looking at how a niche behaves in the long term. That means doing your research to see what is hot and what's not, what goes down well etc.

For example, if you were to create a site about fitness, then you might think that it's perfectly fine to just *know about fitness*. You would think! But the reality is quite difference. The topic of fitness can

be split into numerous smaller camps and even 'factions'.

Almost everyone in this niche and this industry has a horse in the race. They all have strong opinions about what is the right way to go about losing weight and what is not.

There are ideas that are new and totally accepted.

Ideas that are partially accepted and ideas that are already considered old-hat and defunct.

For instance, if you head over to the r/fitness subreddit, you'll find a community of people that *very much* believes in counting calories and measuring 'macros'.

Their dogma is that this is the only way to lose weight and the admins there come down heavily on people who promote ideals such as going paleo, or such as low carb diets.

Conversely though, there are corners of the web where paleo diets are considered the absolute cornerstone of a healthy eating program.

You see the problem? You can't simply dive in with your eyes closed and start posting about 'fitness'. If you do, you'll likely unintentionally step on toes and upset people.

You won't know who is really your target audience and you might well be completely unfamiliar with the terms that people throw at you like IIFYM (If It Fits in Your Macros) etc.

The point is, you need to immerse yourself in the niche and learn the ins and outs.

There's nothing wrong with going against the conventional wisdom - in fact these can be the most powerful and effective posts.

The issue is simply that you can't afford to not *know* the landscape and you can't afford to jump in blindly.

That's why all brands and all creators should spend time learning their niche, they should spend time in these communities and they should do their reading and their research prior to getting started.

This way, you can write a post that is new, that doesn't look outdated and that is only confrontationally if that was your intention.

You'll know which communities are likely to react in which ways and you can post in the correct forum for the best response.

Note:

This is also a very easy way to find content that you can share with your audience.

There are numerous tool you can find that will allow you to see popular posts with lots of likes and shares in your niche.

All you then need to do is to retweet these or reshare them to your audience, and now you will benefit from that popularity.

As proven commodities, this is a strategy that is almost *impossible* to fail! (Almost!)

More Data Collection

While you're at it, there is much more information to be gleaned from social accounts.

For one, this is a great way to check out the opposition and to see what is working.

Chances are that whatever niche you're looking at entering, there will be some established big brands

that will already have quite the foothold. Very clearly, these brands have done something right.

Your objective should not be to try and copy these brands of course but rather just to see what worked for them and what didn't.

At the same time, try to look at what people are *saying* on their pages.

What is missing from this campaign? What is it that people would like to see that they haven't seen yet?

This is a fantastic place to get clues and ideas regarding niches and audience members that aren't currently being catered to.

Then you simply swoop in to help!

At the same time, doing this can *also* give you some excellent opportunities for marketing.

You might find some other brands for instance that you could work with in future.

Or you might find an influencer - a personality on social media with a big audience that might be willing to do a shout-out for you.

There are tons of potential opportunities like this and doing your research beforehand can help you to learn where these are.

In fact, it can allow you to come up with an entire strategy and then to decide precisely who to contact, when to contact them and how to get the most from them.

Finally, use this to gain a better understanding of your target audience.

In other reports as part of this package, you can find information on the importance of having a 'buyer persona'.

This is the ideal target audience for your product.

But how do you know who this is?

Guess work is not the right strategy as you may have guessed (ironic!), so instead you need to look at who is following your competition, you need to look at who is reading and sharing the kind of information that you are sharing.

And you need to decide, based on this information, where the best place to market is and how you should design your brand and your content.

Surveying Your Audience

As your number of followers grows and as you gain more and more traction, your options for promoting yourself and for market research also grow.

One of the best things you can do for instance, is to simply *ask your own audience* what they want to see.

It sounds so simple and yet it is something that a lot of companies never think to do!

In short, you simply post a question on your forum asking something like: 'what type of content would you like to see more of?' or 'what would you like to see for our next product?'.

Something as simple as this can be a fantastic tool for making sure that your content is on-point and it can help you to grow your brand.

Not only does this ensure that your content is right for the audience you want to read it, but it also gives your audience a sense of ownership over your content and makes them feel valued and as though they belong.

This is hugely beneficial and it can even extend to a large range of other uses.

For example, how about using your social media to poll your audience on your new logo?

Let them vote for their favorite one!

This is called 'crowdsourcing' and it opens up a ton of doors for a more synergistic relationship between content creator and audience.

For the others modules of this course please visit the **South African Chamber of Entrepreneurs** (SACE) at the link below:

<http://sa-chamber.co.za>

