

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

for Small Businesses



INTRODUCTION

Small business owners play many roles, from manager to accountant to salesperson, and yes, even to marketer. With so many available platforms, social media marketing can seem like an overwhelming addition to a small business's marketing strategy.

In reality, social media marketing can be a valuable component because it allows smaller companies to gain exposure, show personality, and interact with customers—even on a limited budget. In this guide, we will address some of the most common questions that small business owners have about incorporating social media into their marketing strategies.

After reading this guide, you will understand the importance of social media for small businesses, what to expect from the different social media platforms that are available, and what to do once you're up and running. Most importantly, you will have a foundation to formulate your own strategy for manageable social media campaigns.

Let's take a look at some frequently asked questions when it comes to social media strategy for small businesses.

Why Do I Need Social Media for My Business?

Social media affords small businesses levels of exposure, reach, and brand awareness that may not have otherwise been attainable due to budget, resources, or other limitations. Think about what you hope to achieve by maintaining an online presence and how it aligns with your business or marketing goals, remembering to always be realistic.

There are many reasons businesses use social networks, and questions such as these help open a dialogue about your goals and what you ultimately are looking to achieve.



First, some questions to ask yourself:

Do I want to spread awareness about my company? A new product or offering?

Do I want to draw people to my physical location?

Do I want to use social to gain credibility and be seen as an expert in my industry?

Am I looking for a new way to interact with current customers?

Are my customers active on social sites and already trying to engage with my business online?

Hint:

Spend some time online researching how competitors and similar small businesses are using their social media accounts. Get a feel for what you like and what you want to avoid.



Who's Your Audience?



Some questions to ask yourself:

Which personas make up my target audience?

Do I want to represent my business on a local level or to a wider audience?

What topics would resonate with my different personas?

What are the social sites where my buyer personas would spend most of their time?

Understanding your target market is the key to any successful marketing campaign and will make it much easier to share content that appeals to your audience.

OWNER OLLIE

Secondary

- Business owner (Founder, President, Partner)
- Small business (1-10 employees)
- Industry expert with no marketing experience
- BA History (University of Illinois)
- 44, Married, 3 Kids (20, 16, and 11)

Goals:

- Deliver on past sales
- Generate new sales
- Keep the business running

Challenges:

- Lack of marketing expertise
- No control over marketing assets
- No time or budget for marketing

Loves HubSpot because:

- Get more sales and leads
- Get control over marketing assets
- Learn Inbound Marketing

The card features a circular portrait of a smiling man with short blonde hair, wearing a light-colored polo shirt. The background is dark with a purple circle containing the word 'Secondary' and an orange circle at the bottom.

Establishing buyer personas is an important step in developing your overall marketing plan and carries over into your social media strategy as well.

Buyer personas are representations of your ideal customers. The content you create or curate and share via your social accounts should align with the personas you have created and appeal directly to them.

Another consideration here is physical location. If you operate on a local scale, social media, specifically Facebook and review sites such as Yelp, are a great way to establish a local presence and create strong connections to your community. Trying to expand your business geographically? Social networking allows you to connect with new audiences around the country and even the globe.

Hint:

Social media and buyer personas work hand in hand. You should tailor your posts with them in mind, but you can also use social analytics to conduct persona research. Facebook insights, LinkedIn groups, and Twitter follower demographics are great places to start. We will talk more about analytics later in this guide.



Here's a quick rundown of the different social media platforms

Facebook

Businesses use Facebook to showcase their personalities, share information about products and services, and interact with customers and prospects via status updates. Facebook is beneficial to a small business's marketing strategy because it helps with brand awareness, improves search rankings, and is cost-effective. Local businesses also have the option to display details on their pages such as hours of operation, physical location, and contact information. Facebook is a good option for your foray into the social media world because it is simple to get started and has a large and loyal user base.

Twitter

Businesses use Twitter to rapidly share information and engage with their followers via brief updates, or tweets. Common business tweets include sales or promotion announcements, helpful tips and tricks, and images that give a peek inside the company. Twitter is also a go-to for businesses to post news, whether their own or shared from another relevant source or industry influencer. Because of the immediacy of the platform, Twitter is great for companies to stay current on what's going on in their industry, but also requires more frequent posting than other social networks.

Google+

Optimizing your G+ page and content will help your business by boosting SEO, or giving your business's webpage better placement in Google search results. G+ and Facebook can be used much in the same way to share updates with followers and engage them in conversation. Circles allow you to categorize your followers into specific groups, and you can then share content with all of your followers or just specific circles.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is ideal for showing the professional side of your business and connecting with other industry professionals, potential customers, and even job seekers. The platform makes reaching your target market easy by displaying demographic information including industry, company, and job titles of your followers. Sharing on LinkedIn helps with branding and establishing credibility in your industry.

These four social media platforms are generally the most commonly used, but others such as Snapchat and Instagram continue to increase in popularity with businesses that want to incorporate visuals such as photos and videos.

Take some time to research and get a feeling for the level of commitment and difficulty of each. If you don't think that a platform lends itself to your objectives or your business, don't feel that you have to participate; however, always think customer-first. Missed opportunities can occur when your customers and prospects can't find you on a specific network but are able to find your competitors.



Some questions to ask yourself:

- Which social platforms are my customers most likely using?
- How does this platform align with the goals I set out for my business objectives?
- Which social networks am I most comfortable with?

What Do I Post and Where?

So, you have a solid understanding of the social platforms you want to use and have developed your buyer personas. Now how do you reach them?

Your content should be consistent, relevant, and timely, and must be tailored to each platform.

Photos, quick blurbs, and news and links to relevant articles from other sources are best shared on Twitter. All posts must be 140 characters or fewer, so you may have to get creative.

Facebook gives you more freedom and works well for sharing photos and videos, offering special promotions and contests, and starting dialogues. Facebook also makes it easy for your followers to see others' engagement on your posts and, hopefully, join in the conversation. Google+ functions much in the same way as Facebook and impacts your SEO rankings.

LinkedIn is a professional network and is great for posting press releases, blog articles, and other industry-specific content. Continually looking for opportunities to engage your current customers and followers—not just attracting new ones—is also important.

According to Hubspot, five best practices should be followed when posting to any of your accounts.

- #1** Appropriate keywords for your business and industry should always be included in your social media updates in order to make them show up in search results.
- #2** You should “allocate some of the posts you publish purely to engaging with your fans and followers. Ask questions, respond to their comments, and stay involved.”
- #3** In order to help prove ROI for your social initiatives, include content that is focused on generating leads.
- #4** Provide value to your audience. Your posts should be informative, educational, and engaging.
- #5** Regularly engage your followers. Posting regularly gives them a reason to come back and visit your accounts.

Hint:

Quality over quantity. If you can commit to one social network and do it well, that's better than taking on five that you are not comfortable using and, in turn, may end up neglecting





Some questions to ask yourself:

Will you be creating your own content and sharing it, or do you plan on sharing industry-related content from around the Web (content curation)?

Is my content appropriate for the social network I want to share it on?

What tone do I want to convey? Can I maintain it across each of my social accounts?

Another thing to keep in mind is tone.

Social media is a great outlet for showing your business's personality and culture, but keep your buyer personas in mind when determining how you want your company to come across. Do you want to keep it playful? Strictly professional? Middle of the road? Try to maintain consistent voice across all of your social accounts so that your audience identifies with you and knows what to expect.



Also, your business social accounts should be for business only, and all posts should be appropriate for your audience. Avoid sharing personal posts or content that could potentially polarize your audience (e.g., political or offensive posts)

Hint:

Keeping a content calendar provides an easy way to track what you plan to post across accounts and will make your social strategy more manageable.



How Much Time Do I Need to Budget for Social Media Management?



Some Questions To Ask Yourself:

How much time can I realistically devote to social media?

How often do I want to post?

Who will be posting on the accounts?

As a small business owner, your time is incredibly valuable. Social media is not a difficult task, but it can be time-consuming. If you commit to a social media plan, you must be ready to dedicate time to your accounts regularly.

Consistency is important in social media in order to maintain your status online, as well as in your customers' minds. The frequency with which you should post varies based on industry and other factors, but as a general rule, it should be happen multiple times a day, seven days a week.

Tracking your posts' performance will help you determine the best times to post for your specific audience and how often. Part of the fun of social media is being able to experiment with these variables!

Feel like there just aren't enough hours in the day? Social media automation tools allow you to plan and schedule your posts in one place at one time. Track followers' engagement, find best times to post, and even schedule your whole week in advance if you prefer.

“
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”

Hint:

If you decide to delegate posting responsibilities, make sure you designate specific team members to ensure consistent tone and avoid duplicate or disorganized posting



Speaking of Budget ... How Much Is This Going to Cost?



Some Questions To Ask Yourself:

How does social media fit into my marketing budget?

Do I have the time to manage a social media advertising campaign?

Will everything be written and created in-house, or will we need to outsource services?

Determining a budget for social media should be done at your own discretion—you can spend thousands per month or you can spend zero. Aside from time and resources, costs associated with in-house social media marketing can include images and design, prizes for contests and giveaways, and social media automation and analytics tools.

Every social platform also has the option for paid advertising. You must decide if this is something you can afford, financially and timewise. Running a paid advertising campaign requires maintenance outside of your regular social accounts. Be mindful of your costs and check in regularly to make sure you are staying within your budget and that your ads are performing the way you want them to.

“ Determining a budget for social media should be done at your own discretion—you can spend thousands per month or you can spend zero. ”

Hint:

If you are not ready to commit to spending on a paid campaign, there is nothing wrong with doing the basics. Strategically posting in a timely and consistent manner will also yield results.



So, Now What?

You now know the different types of social media platforms, answers to common questions surrounding them, and how to manage and maintain a successful social strategy. What are the next steps?

Management of your social accounts within your daily routine is a best practice. Even if you decide to use an automation tool, monitoring and responding to engagement on your social networks is important. Here are a few things to consider now that you are up and running on social:

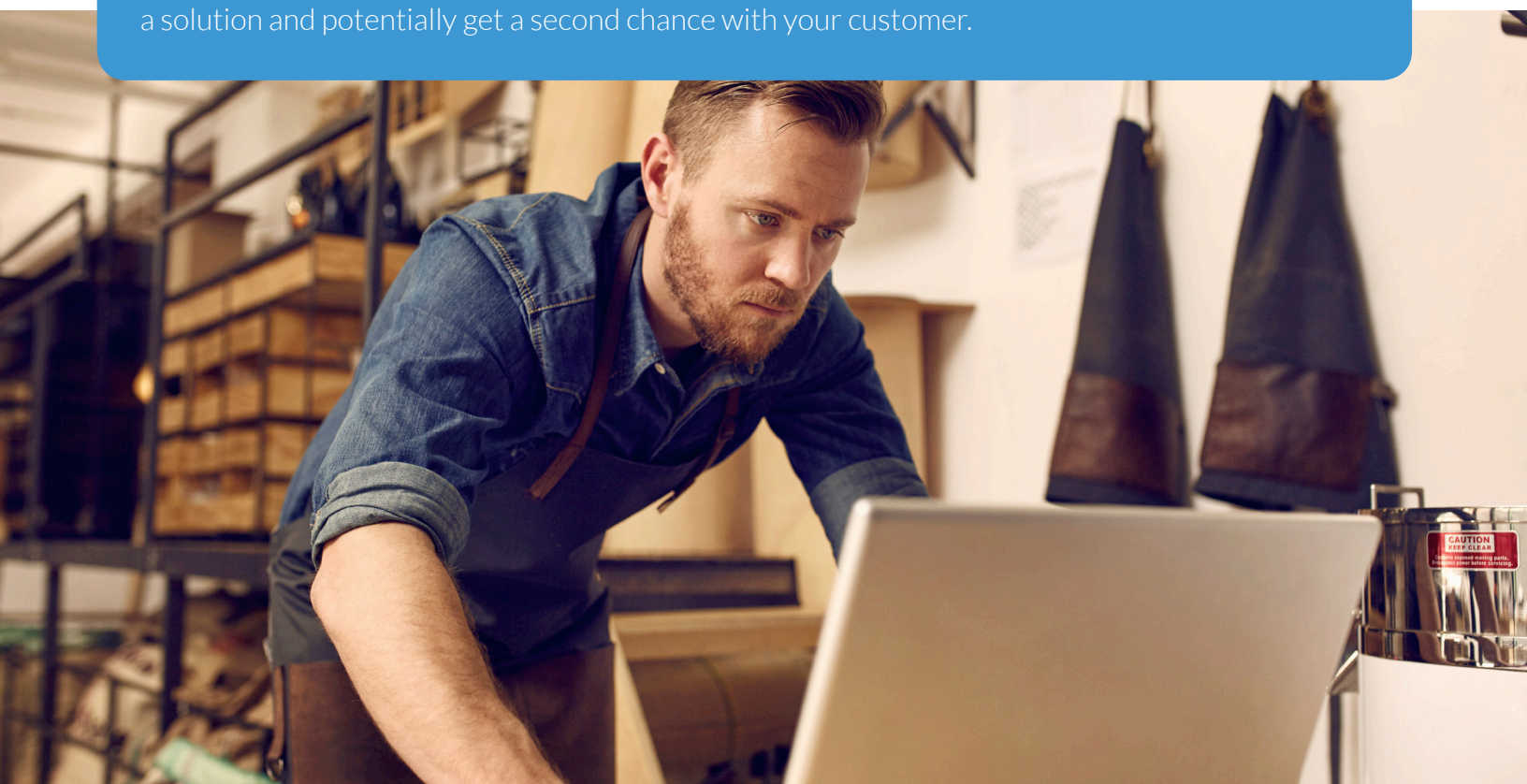
How will people find me on social media?

Let the world know that you've arrived. Promote your social accounts on your website and vice versa. Place icons on your website and other offline promotional materials. Drive traffic to your website by posting linked content on your social accounts. Hold contests and surveys—they can be as simple as a photo contest or a bigger giveaway if you have the budget for it.

Another great way to drive traffic to your website from your social accounts is via a blog. If you feel that you can afford it timewise, create a blog on your website and share your posts on social. Also, be sure to always include social promotion around your attendance and participation at events, trade shows, and so on.

How do I address questions, comments, and reviews?

Good or bad, always make sure to address inquiries, comments, and reviews—and in a polite and professional manner. Not only does this show that you are involved, but it also gives you another way to engage with your customers. In the case of a negative situation, it also allows you to offer a solution and potentially get a second chance with your customer.



What Do I Do With All of These Numbers?

Each social platform has its own set of metrics to analyze performance, thus allowing you to track what is working and what isn't, and to make adjustments as necessary. This is just a brief overview. Full analytic information and tutorials can be found on each platform's website. Using this information will be a big help in creating posts that will resonate with your audience and elicit the best response.



Facebook offers “page insights” that shows you likes, reach, visits, posts and people.

- Likes:** How many people like your page and the number of new likes
- Reach:** How many people like, comment on, and share your posts
- Visits:** Which section of your page people are responding to most
- Posts:** How many people are responding to your posts (with clicks, likes, and so on)
- People:** Demographics (age, gender, and location), the times people are looking at your page, and how they found it



Google+ is a little different, as it ties into your company's Google business dashboard, displaying analytics for more than just social.

- Google+ posts:** How many people commented on, shared, and +1'ed your posts, as well as the post types that were most engaging and the average number of actions visitors took by type of content
- Google+ followers:** Number of new followers plus demographic information including age, gender, and location
- Google + My Business:** Number of views, clicks, and reviews from Google search results



LinkedIn shows you the performance of your updates, information about your page visitors, and demographics for your followers.

- Updates:** Number of times your updates were seen, liked, clicked, commented on
- Page visitors:** Number of page views and unique visitors
- Demographics:** Broken down by seniority, industry, function, and company size



Twitter gives you a dashboard that displays information about your followers' and your own Twitter activity.

- Followers:** Number of followers, growth, and demographics (language, gender, location)
- Tweets:** Number of impressions and engagements for each tweet.
- Engagements:** Number of likes, retweets, replies, and clicks (photo, video, link, profile)

Social media is a crucial component for growing your business online. Learn how to get your brand out on the most relevant social media platforms—especially in a way that aligns with your other marketing and sales strategies.



About the Author

Kristin is an Associate Consultant at SmartBug Media. She has experience as an in-house B2B marketer, focusing on inbound marketing strategy and implementation, and holds a BBA in Marketing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

About SmartBug Media

SmartBug Media is one of a handful of HubSpot Diamond partners in the world and is the highest-rated agency in the history of the HubSpot ecosystem. We also boast the highest ROI documented from any HubSpot partner—3,558% and 14,500% ROI on a six-month and three-year campaign, respectively. At Inbound 2015, SmartBug Media was the most recognized agency, having won or been named a finalist in nine awards.

SmartBug Media is one of first HubSpot partners to implement growth-driven design and was an inaugural member of the HubSpot COS Advisory Board.

For more than seven years, SmartBug Media has been helping businesses increase sales leads, close more customers, and enhance the reach of their brands. From building comprehensive online marketing programs to designing new websites, driving leads through social media or sales enablement, we're an extension of your marketing team that delivers.

For a free inbound marketing or Web design consultation, or to learn more, visit <http://www.smartbugmedia.com/> or call 949-236-6448

