

How SME's Can Create the Perfect Social Media Marketing Strategy For 2018

When it comes to social media marketing, the worst plan is not to have one. And having no presence is worse than being talked about negatively. In our step-by-step guide below, businesses can get their marketing efforts organised, ready for 2018.

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1. What goals does the business have and what are you trying to solve?

A lot more goes into creating a social media marketing strategy than just making an account on the platform.

All business strategies must have a definitive structure, and this is no different. You need to determine what it is you're trying to do, anticipate the challenges you could face, and what you expect the outcome of your hard work to be.

Things to think about during initial stages of planning:

- What is it you want social media to do for your business?
 - Improve sales, customer service, brand image
 - Improve/grow relationships with your customers
- What are your customers like and what do they want?

- Who is your target market? (There might be a few types of people)
- Look at creating customer personas – addressing demographics, interests, pain points.
- What metrics will you use to measure success?
 - Leads generated, website referrals, conversion rates
- What do you want your goal to solve?
 - Poor website traffic? – valuable content should include lots of links to your website
 - Declining customer retention? – keep customers happy and engaged with your social platforms to build loyalty. Brand image will improve, and people will be more likely to remember your business.
 - Unhappy customers? – remember that customers *want* to contact you via social! Get your social channels – and the team that manage them – equipped to deal with customers quickly and effectively.
 - Low brand awareness? – reach far and wide by creating content that is valuable to all the personas in your target market. Be searchable with relevant hashtags, and [involve precious brand influencers](#) who will push your brand to the public

Don't forget to be S.M.A.R.T!

✓ Specific

- e.g. increasing social media reach: the number of followers on a specific network.

✓ Measurable

- determine how well it's working: measure increases/decreases in followers, and leads generated from the platform

✓ Attainable

- make sure the goal is within reach: be realistic, don't expect 1000 leads from 1000 followers

✓ Relevant

- the goal should correspond to your planned social activity: is there a valid reason for focusing on an activity? Will it help you achieve what you want?

✓ Time-bound

- giving your goal a deadline: a time restraint will help you focus on driving the marketing activity

Example

"We will increase video engagement on Facebook by 12% in a month."

2. Do you have the resources to push a great social media marketing strategy?

When planning campaigns, social media marketers find they must wear multiple hats – ones like: caretaker, SEO expert, data analyst, strategist and comedian. Maybe all on the same day.

Ask yourself:

Do you have enough staff to do this, and do they have the skills necessary to follow through on a well-executed social media strategy?

Consider if they:

- ✓ Can create entertaining, useful, valuable, memorable content (including writing)
- ✓ Can maintain social media accounts and schedule content
- ✓ Have the expertise to respond to customer questions
- ✓ Can develop and maintain a relevant [brand voice](#)

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- ✓ Know how to [listen via social media](#)
- ✓ Can keep up to date with social media trends
- ✓ Can [use analytics data](#) to know when to improve things and what to do differently
- ✓ Are passionate and persuasive enough to make a case to higher level employees when they know something needs to change

What if you don't have people like this? Or, are you the one that needs to step into these big shoes?

Fear no more! Not all is lost!

If you're a capable and flexible individual, which I know all social media marketers are, then you will already possess the most important skills:

The ability to adapt and learn new things.

Hurrah! The majority of skills mentioned above can be *learnt*.

And if you're blessed to work in a team, find out what everyone can do and use the best skills each one brings to the table. But remember to keep your brand voice the same!

3. Carrying out a social media audit

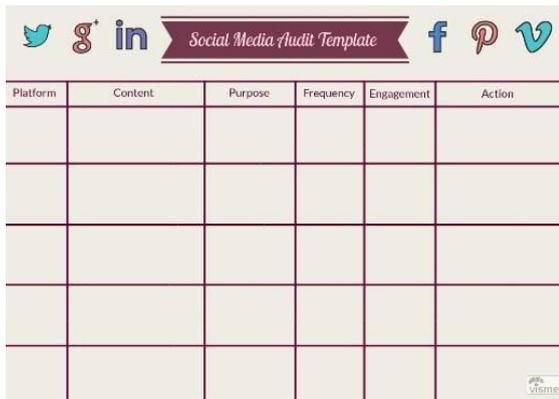
So, what social media platforms do you have up and running already? Who is connecting with you on Twitter and Instagram? How much engagement does your Facebook page have? Do you see many leads?

A massive part of a social media marketing strategy is to assess what you're already doing and determine whether it works or needs improvement.

A social media audit will provide you with answers to the above questions, examine what people are saying about your brand, and also give insight on what your competition is doing. This information will help you establish a deeper strategy for growing your social media presence.

Check out the Social Media Audit Template we created [here](#).

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The image shows a 'Social Media Audit Template' graphic. At the top, there are icons for Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest, and YouTube. Below the icons is a table with six columns: Platform, Content, Purpose, Frequency, Engagement, and Action. The table has five empty rows for data entry. A small 'visme' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the table area.

Platform	Content	Purpose	Frequency	Engagement	Action

This template can be applied to three scenarios:

1. When looking at what your brand is doing/saying
2. When looking at what your customers are doing/saying about your brand
3. When looking at what your competition is doing/saying

An audit lets marketers step back and see whether having a presence on a particular platform is worth the time and effort spent on it. They can examine how their brand looks to its following, and also see whether there are any rogue accounts using their name.

In our template, we address:

- Platform – what social channels are active
- Content – what text/photo/videos/hashtags are being shared, linked, commented on, and what questions are being asked.
- Purpose – why has this content been used/uploaded/made
- Frequency – how many times do you see this content
- Engagement – what is the general feeling being received or communicated
- Action – what can be done with this information, the platform, and your content

*** Don't forget! ***

Every single profile you create on social media must be aligned with your business goals, and the brand voice must be consistent across the board.

4. Getting to know your audience

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Now that you know what your brand is doing in the virtual world, it's time to check if you're effective at reaching your target market.

Go back and look at the personas you've created.

- Where do they hang out online?
- Are they on the platforms you're on?
- What do they like talking about, reading and watching?
- What do they dislike?

Remember!

You should only dish out 20% self-promotion material. The other 80% of content will be:

- ✓ Addressing their pain points
- ✓ Suppressing their boredom
- ✓ Aligning with their interests
- ✓ Showing them that you're their friend

Pew Research Centre has put together [a great fact sheet](#), which shows social media usage over the past few years for Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Twitter. It looks at gender, age, education, income, and location.

When you're thinking about where your audience is active online, [demographics must be considered](#). It's better to have a valuable presence on a couple of platforms, rather than spreading yourself thin across many.

5. Setting up your social media profiles

Your social media profiles now can be created. Or, if you already have them, they need to be brought in line with your objectives above.

If you find it valuable to be on a certain platform, you must dedicate your time and effort to making sure everything is filled out and that your message is clear – including having images and text optimal sizes for the platform you're on.

[Take a look at our guide to setting up each social media platform here.](#)

6. Creating useful content!

Your audience will be on a social media platform for 2 reasons: they like it, and they like the content they can find there. But, from your audit, you've determined that the content you're posting, isn't quite hitting it off.

What do you do?

Nature has given us two ears, two eyes, and but one tongue-to the
end that we should hear and see more than we speak

Socrates

Socrates was right. And it applies to social media marketing too!

Great marketers need to be great listeners.

In a social media context, it means searching for conversations or mentions about your brand, because it's highly likely you're missing what's important – larger trends and themes.

Social listening is often misunderstood.

Marketers think they're listening socially, but what they're actually doing might be some form of monitoring. And while monitoring singular mentions/notifications is important, it's incredibly easy to get swept away with sorting individual issues rather than attacking the source of the problem on a larger scale.

But don't forget: it's not all doom and gloom!

You will want to listen to GOOD mentions too, because this will spur you on! If the content you're creating is blowing everyone's socks off, why would you change it?

"Okay then, so what content can I create?"

Anything you want: videos, photos, tips, competitions, games, guides, articles, short tweets, [AskMeAnything's](#), blog posts, white papers, infographics, stories, adverts, lists, charts....the list goes on!

But, take into account:

1. What you've created before
 - a. What's worked and what hasn't?
 - b. What are your analytics tools saying?
 - c. Is your brand being discussed already – in a good or bad way?

2. Content trends
 - a. What's going on in your brand's industry – even globally?
 - b. What are your customers talking about?

3. Customer pain points
 - a. What problems are your customers facing?
 - b. Can you make their lives easier?
 - c. Can you follow through on questions which might be raised?
 - d. Have your competitors offered any solutions already?

4. Related topics being discussed
 - a. Customers might not specifically mention your brand, but they might be talking about things you can help with
 - b. What can you provide that doesn't directly benefit you (initially) but interests them?

5. What more is there to say?
 - a. You want your brand to be human. Get involved in positive conversations with the public
 - b. [Twitter have scheduled chats](#) that your brand can be a part of if it's relevant
 - c. Humorous posts are great if they are done well. Your brand will have a personality, so make sure humour fits with it beforehand

6. The most important thing!

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- a. Is the content relevant to your business goals and does it align with your S.M.A.R.T plan?

Oh yes, and HAVE FUN and GET CREATIVE!

7. Engaging with your customers

So, you've created some amazing content, and you have customers interacting left, right and centre.

What do you do next?

You must interact too!

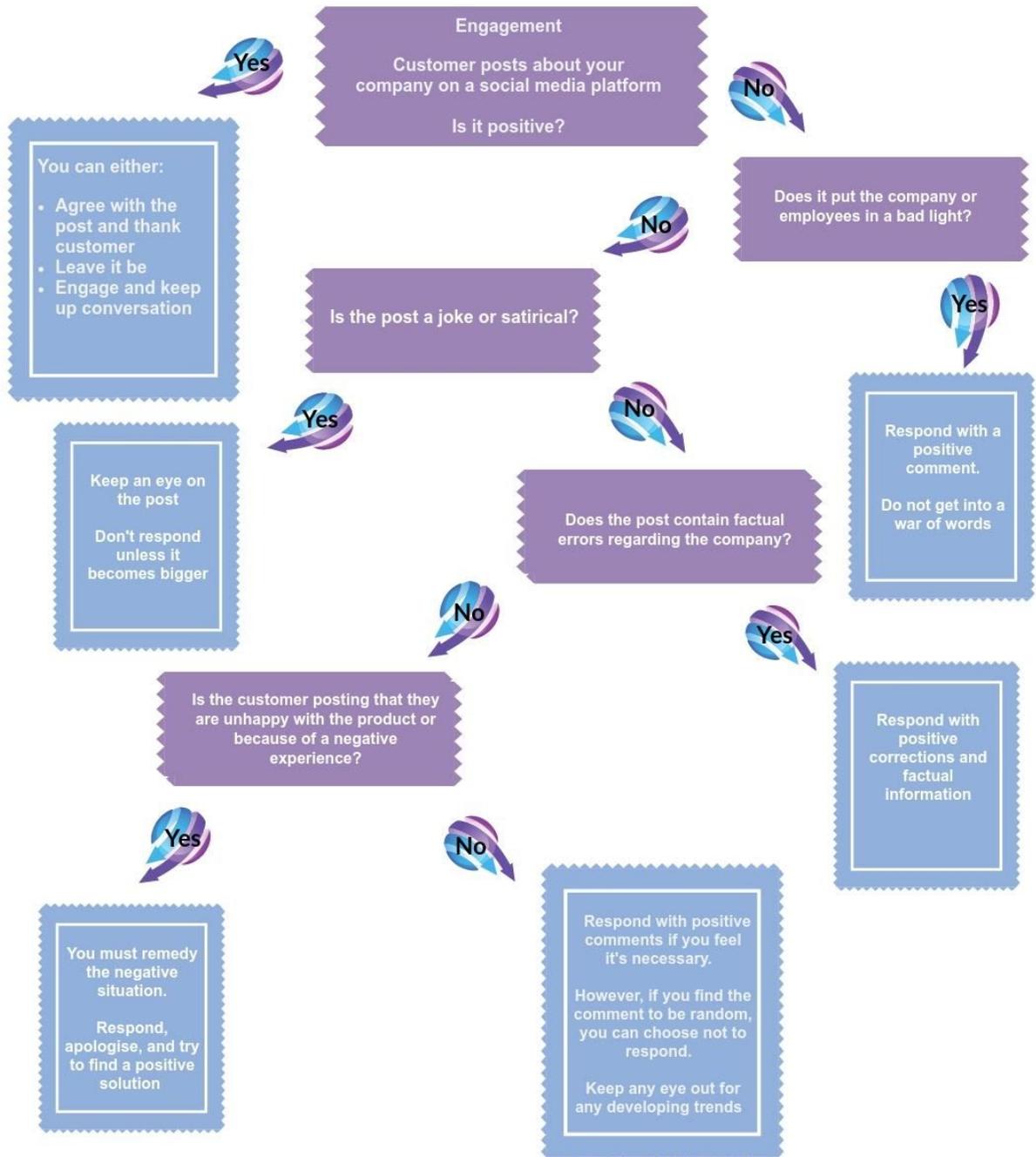
A shocking number of customer engagements are being ignored by brands. And this is a dangerous habit. You've put so much effort into getting customers to interact with you, and when they do, they're falling by the wayside. It seems only right to put in the same amount of effort AFTER you've got them to engage.

And that goes for negative feedback, too.

No one likes to hear anything bad about their business or brand, so it's all very tempting to want to delete negative comments or sweep them under the rug. But, again, this is very dangerous and will destroy precious relationships you've worked so hard to cultivate.

Remember!

Interacting gives you the power to turn negative experiences into positive ones. Check out our flowchart below on what to do when a customer engages.



8. Creating a schedule to stay consistent

Your social media plan of attack needs a calendar to keep your everything organised.

Keep track of:

1. Who's going to post what?
2. Which social media platform for that particular day?

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3. How often will you post?
4. What time of day will you post?

A lot of [research has gone into the timings of posts](#), which tends to vary across the different social media platforms in order to gain the most reach.

And remember that 80:20 rule!

9. Testing and improving your social media marketing strategy

Now that you have everything set up in your social media marketing strategy, and you have put into practice what you've learnt, it's time to take a step back to oversee all your hard work.

What is working and what isn't?

- Track the number of clicks you're getting
- Use social media analytics to track your successes and your reach
- Use [Google analytics](#) to see what content is bringing the most customers to you
- Send surveys to your followers, to your email list, and to your website visitors

Record everything!

Don't be worried if you have to go back and change things!

Your social media marketing plan will be fluid, changing to fit:

- New platforms being brought out
- New challenges your business might face
- New goals and targets
- New social media trends

As long as you stick to this guide, implement a detailed strategy each time changes occur, and inform your staff of adjustments, you won't go far wrong.