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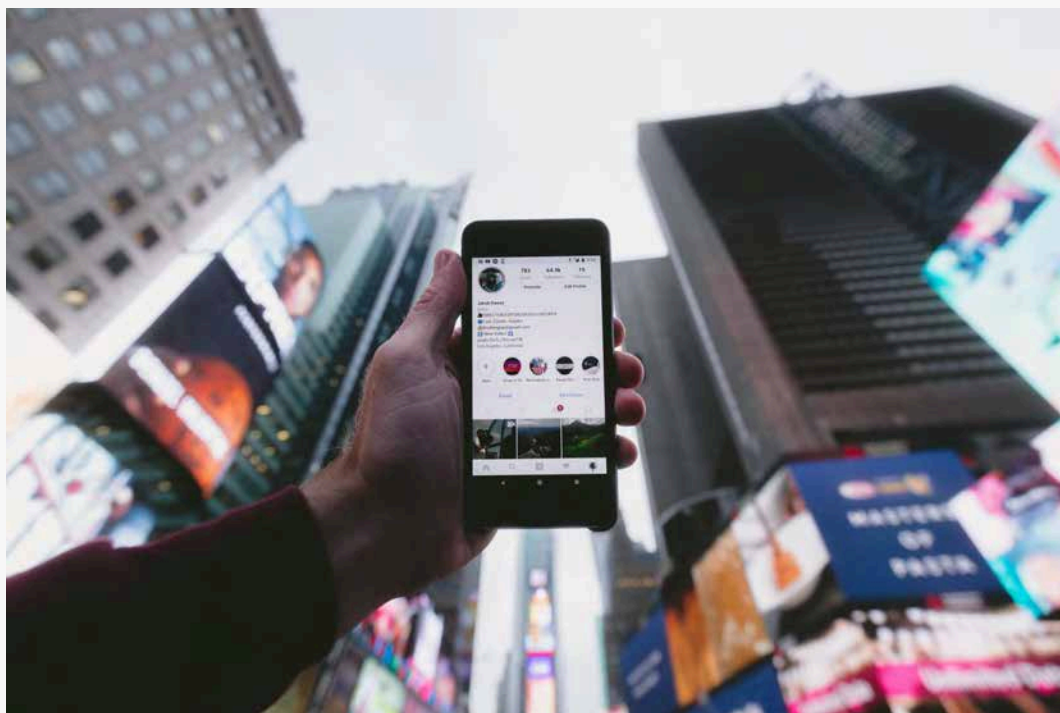
Social Media

— SMART START —

How to Create a
Social Media Strategy for
2021 and Beyond

Thank you for downloading this **Social Media SMART START**

This guide will help you get a better understanding of how to build your brand on social media and connect with your target audience.



The Importance of Social Media for Business

Social media for business is no longer an option, it's a necessity.

Think of your social media marketing efforts as a cog in your brand's marketing wheel. Every aspect of your digital marketing strategy whether it's press release distribution to major news outlets, custom content writing, email marketing campaigns, and more, play a role in your ability to stand out from the competition.

Now more than ever, consumers are turning to social media to discover and connect with new brands and to conduct research that informs their purchasing decisions and who they do business with.

In fact, an ODM Group study found that 74 percent of consumers rely on social media networks to help with their purchasing decisions.

But, beyond the influence, businesses, no matter the industry, should make a pointed effort in 2021 and beyond to create and maintain a consistent presence on relevant social media channels to humanize their brand, create connections with their target audience, build brand awareness, and boost their sales.

Understand your Audience

The benefits of creating and implementing a social media marketing strategy for your business are plentiful, however, perhaps the biggest advantage is the ability to pinpoint and connect with your target audience.

In fact, the better you understand your audience the better you'll be able to create and publish content that answers questions, solves problems, addresses pain points, educates, and entertains.

Finding your social media audience begins with collecting data on your existing customer base including who's following you, interacting with you, and purchasing your products.

Getting this basic-level understanding will help determine who on social media will likely be interested in your brand.

Next, you'll want to employ the power of social listening to improve your marketing. If you're unfamiliar, social listening is the monitoring of social media channels for company mentions and conversations related to your brand and can be used to dig into competitor mentions and industry trends as well.

Both forms of social media monitoring are intended to provide you with the knowledge of your target audience's interests and the types of content they connect with most.



Did you know?

No matter the platform, use the native search function to conduct searches using relevant keywords to your business and industry (you can even search the names of your competitors). Doing so will help you uncover **who** makes up your target audience and **what** they're talking about.

Pinpoint Platforms

Which social media channels work for your brand?

This is a question that doesn't have a one-size-fits-all answer.

In order to be successful on social media, you need to meet your audience on the platform(s) they spend the most time.

Research and social listening will help determine where to focus your attention. To build on that, here are three questions to ask yourself that'll help you choose the right social media channels for your business:



- Does your audience respond better to quick updates? If yes, then Twitter would be a good platform to use.
- Does your audience engage more with high-quality pictures and videos? If yes, figure out how to use Instagram to form a connection.
- Does your audience like to stay informed about what's going on in their industry and with their professional peers? Turn your attention to LinkedIn and find ways to create content for your audience on this platform.

Create a Social Media Marketing Strategy

Setting relevant and realistic social media marketing goals is a crucial step in the process. Think of these goals as your North Star that'll guide your social media marketing strategy. From there, reverse engineer your efforts and highlight what you'll need to do in order to achieve success.

When building a social media marketing strategy, start by recording your baseline metrics. This will be the follower counts on your channels. Though they might not be impressive to start, you'll be able to look back month-over-month and see if there's an increase, decrease, or plateau and adjust accordingly.

With a baseline in mind, the next step in creating a social media marketing strategy is focusing on the tactical items that include:

- **Posting cadence** - The number of times a day/week you'll publish content to social.
- **Content types** - This can be video, audio clips and imagery.
- **Content themes** - These are overarching categories of topics that align with your brand and audience's needs to help you consistently create relevant content.



Tip: Identify direct competitors in your space and look at what they're doing on social media. Take inventory of the platforms they're using to connect with your target audience and pay attention to the buzz and engagement on their content. This information will help you build a presence on the platform and create content that's unique to your brand and that resonates with your target audience.





Tip: Head back to the native search function on the platforms of your choice and search for relevant hashtags to your business and industry. From there, engage with people who have used the hashtag by leaving a thoughtful comment on their post or start a dialogue.

Focus on Social Media Engagement

Just as creating a content distribution strategy is important, the time and effort you put into engaging with your audience and online community is just as important to your social media success.

Responding to comments, direct messages, and leaving thoughtful comments on other users' content will help humanize your brand on social media. When engaging with others on social, avoid trying to sell your product and instead focus on being personable and conversational to build a rapport with your target audience.





Content and Context

Once you've mapped out the content themes and topics, you now have to respect the platform.

What works on Instagram might not work on Twitter and vice versa.

When it comes to social media marketing, context is key to creating and implementing more effective social media marketing strategies as users approach every network with a different psyche.

For instance, when users open the Facebook app, odds are they're expecting to see updates from friends and family. Now, when that same person logs into their LinkedIn account, they'll view it through a professional lens as they look to connect with other individuals in their industry and beyond.

With this in mind, you'll need to get creative and tweak your content to fit the context of the platform. This could mean an update to the language of the caption or swapping out the creative to align with each platform.

Think of it this way, don't make the platform fit your content. Make your content fit the platform.

Review Your Social Media Strategy

Social media is all about tweaking and testing your ideas to get a better understanding of what works and what doesn't.

At the end of each month, review the data and analytics of how your content performed. A good starting point is identifying the posts that received the most engagement (pay attention to comments and shares).

From there, dig a bit deeper and ask yourself additional questions to uncover why they performed well.

- What style of posts performed the best (video, lifestyle shots, quote images, etc.)?
- What were the topics of these posts?
- Is there a commonality between the top performing posts?
- What day/time were these posts published? Do posts tend to perform better in the morning, afternoon, or evening?

Getting into a routine of looking back at the previous month's content performance will help you optimize your social media strategy for the month ahead.



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Get help with your **social media strategy**

Not sure what you need from a distribution partner or where to start? **NewsWire's** team of expert PR Strategists can conduct a **free**, comprehensive needs analysis to determine the right solution to help you meet your needs. In addition to earned media options, **NewsWire** offers additional distribution and marketing communications support through the **Earned Media Advantage Guided Tour**.

Let's Get Started

EARNED MEDIA ADVANTAGE GUIDED TOUR

Distribute the **Right Message** to the **Right Audience** at the **Right Time**

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