

Social Media Strategy and Distribution Plan

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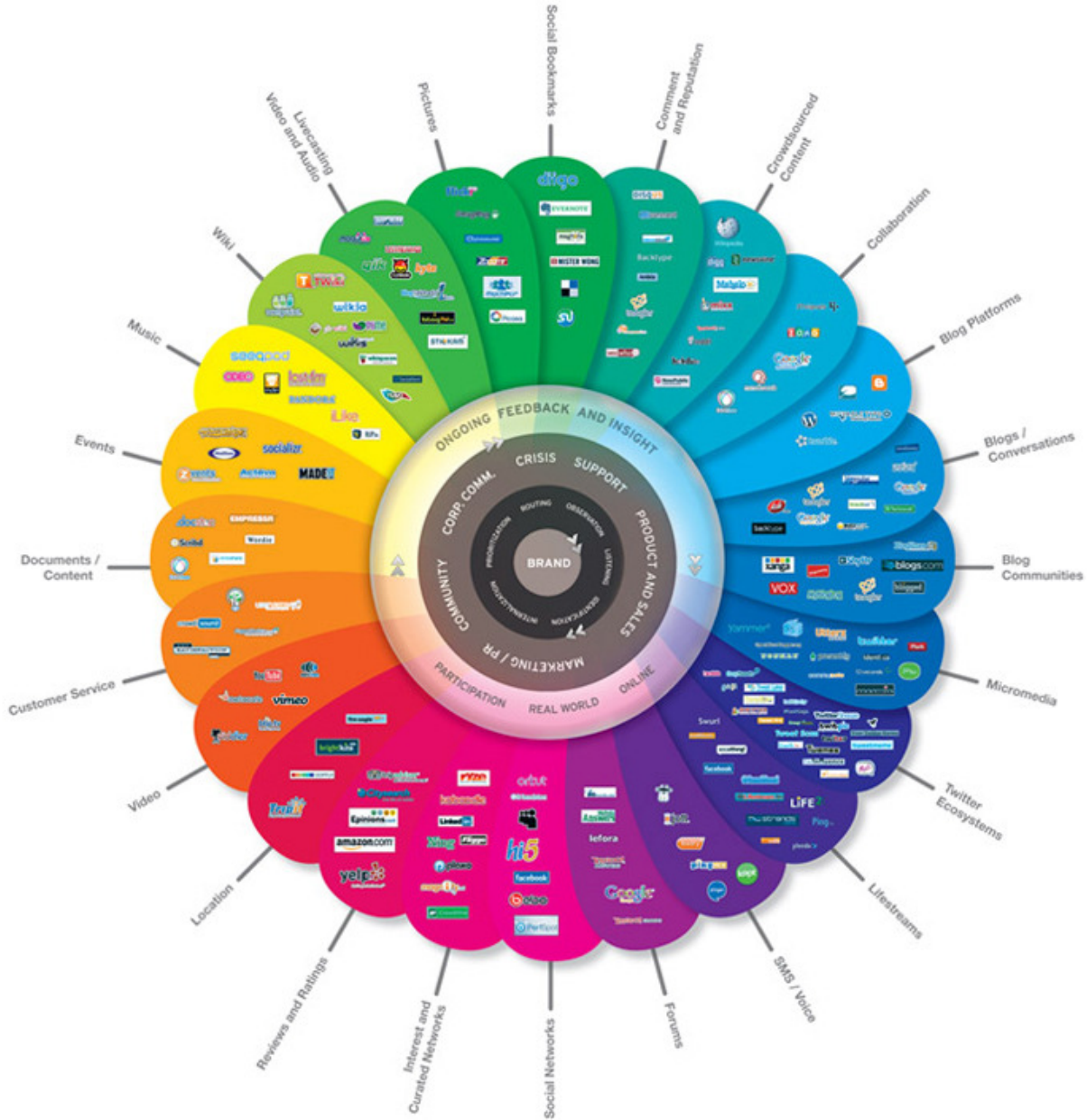


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What is Social Media

Social Media is a broad term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio.

Social Media is a medium to reach out and market to the millions of people who are interacting and having discussions online 24/7.

Why Should I Care

- ✚ 3 out of 4 Americans use social technology
- Forrester Research, The Growth of Social Technology Adoption, 2008
- ✚ 2/3 of the global internet population visit social networks
- Nielson, Global Faces and Networked Places, 2009
- ✚ Visiting social sites is now the fourth most popular online activity, ahead of personal email
- Nielson, Global Faces and Networked Places, 2009
- ✚ Time spent on social networks is growing at 3x the overall internet rate, accounting for ~10% of all internet time
- Nielson, Global Faces and Networked Places, 2009
- ✚ “Technology is shifting the power away from the editors, the publishers, the establishment, the media elite. Now it’s the people that are in control.”
- Rupert Murdoch, Global Media Entrepreneur

Social Media by the Numbers

- ✚ There are on average about **100,000,000** YouTube video’s viewed per day
- ✚ As of June 2009, **3,600,000,000** photos have been archived on Flickr.com
- ✚ The growth rate of Twitter users increased **1,382%** from January to February 2009
- ✚ There is an average of **3,000,000** tweets per day on Twitter
- ✚ People spend a combined total of **5,000,000,000** minutes on Facebook each day
- ✚ People share around **1,000,000,000** pieces of content each week on Facebook
- ✚ **3 million** online donors contributed **\$6,500,000** to Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign fund through his social networking sites
- ✚ If Facebook were a country, it would be the **8th** most populated in the world, ahead of Japan
- ✚ YouTube is now the **2nd** most popular online search engine, behind Google

Is Social Media Good for Me

- ✚ 93% of social media users believe a company should have a presence in social media
- Business in Social Media Study, 2008
- ✚ 85% of social media users believe a company should go farther than just having a presence on social sites and should also interact with its customers
- Business in Social Media Study, 2008
- ✚ Social media is not just another marketing channel. It is so much more: Public Relations, Customer Service, Loyalty Building, Collaboration, Networking, Thought Leadership and Customer Acquisition

Getting Started – The Social Media Basics

Rule #1 Listen

- ✚ Google Alerts
- ✚ Tweet Deck
- ✚ Social Media Monitoring Tools

Rule #2 Measure

- ✚ Audience
- ✚ Engagement
- ✚ Loyalty
- ✚ Influence
- ✚ Action

Rule #3 Engage

- ✚ Twitter
- ✚ Facebook
- ✚ YouTube

Listening and Measuring Conversations

Setting up profiles and throwing out information is only half the battle of social media marketing. Knowing what to say, who to say it to, when to respond, etc...is the other half. A good social media strategy encompasses both parts and combined, it's broken down into three basic rules: Listen, Measure and Engage.

Listen

The key driver of social media is to get things done. It's to solicit feedback to your audience and hear what their insights, criticisms and praises are. Customers enjoy feeling empowered and they won't hesitate to recommend or suggest ideas that could lead to improvement. It's important to listen to this feedback so we can have all the information necessary to react and form our communication strategy. This feedback will dictate what we speak about next and what content our customers are looking for.

Measure

Believe it or not, social media can be measured and quantified, however the metrics for analyzing social media are significantly different than the metrics for e-commerce. Basic metrics for social media include referrals, page views, unique visitors, visitor loyalty, comment count, members, etc... Custom key performance indicators include buzz index and engagement scores.

The buzz index accounts for the percentage of total conversations that revolve around your brand that is positive. The engagement score is a numerical value assigned to how interactive your customers are with your content. The more people that are engaged with the content by posting comments, sharing it with others, etc...the higher the engagement score will be. If customers only come to read but don't comment or share it, there is no engagement.

The best way to analyze these custom KPIs is through the use of a social media monitoring tool like Radian6 or Techrify's S2M. These are subscription based services that allow you to do keyword based searches across the social media space and return relevant data from these conversations that revolve around your keywords (brand, category, etc...). This method of measuring is very effective, precise, efficient and presentation ready.

Other ways of listening and measuring the conversations include a more manual process of using a slew of free tools such as setting up Google alerts to receive daily emails when a post about your company is created. In addition to Google alerts, social media marketers take advantage of Google Trends, social bookmarking sites and monitoring the various search engines of Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and many, many more that are available. Compiling the data from all of these individual tools helps paint a picture of the buzz around your category. Now that we are listening and have a good idea of who we are talking to, it's time to engage their interests and interact with them using our various social media tools.

Twitter

Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to communicate by sending short text messages 140 characters in length, called "tweets", to your friends, or "followers." Tweets that users send are displayed on their public profile page in addition to the public timeline.

The Basics

Twitter is used to quickly share information with people interested in your company, gather real-time feedback, and build relationships with people important to your business. As an individual user, people can use Twitter to engage with you (or anyone else) that they've had a great—or disappointing—experience with your business, offer product ideas, and learn about great offers or events. Twitter helps connect you to your audience right now, in a way that was never before possible.

The conversational nature of Twitter allows you to not only form two way conversations to build and strengthen relationships with customers, partners and others important to your business but also gives these people direct access to employees and empowers them with ways to provide ideas to help contribute to the growth and success of your company. You can spend millions on “experts” to tell you what your customers want, or you can engage directly with your customers through this medium and solicit feedback and hear directly from those you are targeting about what they want.

Best Practices

- ✚ Create a unique, easily identifiable logo to use as your Twitter avatar – this logo is displayed on your public profile and next to each tweet
- ✚ List a complete and detailed name, location and bio to enable followers to quickly identify who they are communicating with and to build credibility to your account. This also enables users to quickly cross check and verify the accuracy of your account.
- ✚ Include in your Twitter background, relevant and key information about your company and the names of those who tweet on that company's behalf. This helps provide a direct face for your followers to talk to – take advantage of creating a custom background.
- ✚ Be a follower – contrary to what you learn in business about always being a leader, use Twitter to be a follower and follow those who follow you.
- ✚ Post relevant updates that are compelling and interesting. Don't always push your agenda on others; periodically engage in casual and light hearted conversation, and ensure your posts have value
- ✚ Engage with others, Twitter is a two way communication medium; it works best when you are posting tweets and replying to other tweets. Feel free to “re-tweet” posts that you like. People appreciate the sharing of their ideas and will likely spread your ideas in return.

More Information

Twitter has developed a comprehensive guide for businesses called *Twitter 101*. To learn more about how businesses can use Twitter effectively, visit <http://business.twitter.com/twitter101/>

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website where users can add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region. Where Facebook becomes valuable to business though is the use of “Fan” pages that allow users and customers to become “friends” with us and we can distribute information to them in a social manner. At its roots, a Facebook fan page is a public profile that enables you to share your business and products with Facebook users.

There are some key elements that really make a successful and compelling fan page:

- ✚ Networking with other platforms – use your fan page to create links to your other social media platforms (Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, etc...). This helps open up your visibility to users who may know of you on Facebook but never knew you were on Twitter
- ✚ Creating a resource – Use your wall to create a conversation feed for users to follow and your info tab to display information about your business, but you can also create custom tabs using FBML (Facebook Markup Language) to display whatever useful information that you want to get out to your customers
- ✚ Creating participation – Use Facebook to get your customers participating, whether it’s a contest or other promotion, or distributing a survey soliciting their valuable feedback

In addition to the above elements, there are other reasons why you should build a fan page:

- ✚ Fan pages are public, therefore searchable by Google to be indexed in their search engine results (Good for SEO)
- ✚ Pages include links, again another benefit for SEO by creating back links to your original website
- ✚ You can send updates to all of your fans directly to their own Facebook Inbox
- ✚ Fans of your page have your news feed posted on their wall too for their friends to see, this helps you spread virally and your network expands exponentially. Fans can “like” or content and share it with others through various social networking sites.

But ultimately, the most important secret to having a successful Facebook fan page is to already have a pre-existing popularity. Big blue chip brands like Nike and Coca-Cola will have no problem attracting fans to their pages as those are iconic brands. The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago is an unknown brand, so by tying in your fan page and connecting it to all your other platforms for easy discovery, combined with promoting it via links in your email signature, business cards, promotional materials, etc...will help grow your popularity and build up your fan base.

YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing website on which users can upload and share videos. YouTube has become a cultural phenomenon and the numbers behind YouTube are staggering in proportion to other websites.

There are more than 65,000 videos being uploaded very day, which is estimated to be about 20 hours of new video uploaded to the site every minute. The site receives 100 million video views per day.

YouTube has quickly become the fourth most visited website on the internet and is now the second largest search engine, behind Google. With these numbers, it's easy to see why it's important to be on YouTube.

Marketing

With the enormous growth in popularity for YouTube, it has become an essential and effective marketing tool. The biggest benefit; it's free. It would cost millions to display a commercial on cable but you can create and upload educational and promotional videos on YouTube to be viewed for no cost.

Another key benefit of using YouTube as a marketing tool is that you can reach a global audience, which is good for attracting international patients and getting information about RIC out to them.

You can also interconnect YouTube with your other social media platforms. Visitors can share your videos by posting them to Facebook and Twitter. A good video can spread virally quickly. Additionally, you can create links to your own Facebook and Twitter pages along with the RIC website.

YouTube is owned by Google, by including keywords and other tags, Google will index your videos and properly optimized videos will rank high in Google's search engine results.

And finally, you get to create your own account or channel and customize it to your brand. Visitors can then subscribe to your brand and be notified every time you upload a new video. These subscribers are already loyal to your business and present your key target audience. These subscribers are the one who will spread and promote your business. These are the people you want to listen to and interact with.

Developing a Social Media Strategy

At this point, all the social media profiles are set up and branded to your business. Each profile is interconnected. This interconnectivity will allow visitors of one social media platform to discover your other social media platforms and share these with their friends.

Additionally, the online presence should be supported with offline materials. By including the social media links in print advertising, links on your company website, email signature and business cards, and word of mouth, this helps promote awareness of your online social presence.

These two steps combined will make you discoverable and build up a target audience. Without fans and subscribers to talk to, all we are doing is talking to thin air. It is these fans and subscribers that will disseminate our materials to their networks.

Building Trust

It's time to develop content and start talking to our eager listeners. There are a few questions though to ask:

- ✚ Is it appropriate for us to join a particular conversation and if so, when?
- ✚ How do we inject usefulness into that conversation without being overly promotional?
- ✚ What value can we provide in terms of knowledge to a conversation?
- ✚ How can we earn a person's trust?
- ✚ When we earn their trust, how can we best ask for their input?
- ✚ Under what circumstances is it proper to point the conversation towards our product?
- ✚ Can we say or do something to invite someone else to point the conversation towards our product?
- ✚ How shall we apologize and regroup if we overstep our audiences comfort level or they accuse us of violating their trust?

These are just a few of the key questions that will need to be asked internally and questions of which policy will be created around. With social media, the key is not to develop talking points but to create parameters of conversation. People want to be talked to, not sold to. Early on, while we are gauging our audience's interest and earning their trust, it's always better to err on the side of caution and listen more than engage. Most importantly, don't be afraid to just ask questions when curious, the audience will provide you the answers to most of these questions.

With social media, transparency is key. It's important to divulge who is speaking on the companies behalf. It's important that any information and resources you divulge can easily be researched and tracked back to the original source, your brand or company. People will cross-check and by being transparent and helpful, you will build credibility and trust.

Social media is not a salesman, social media is a friend

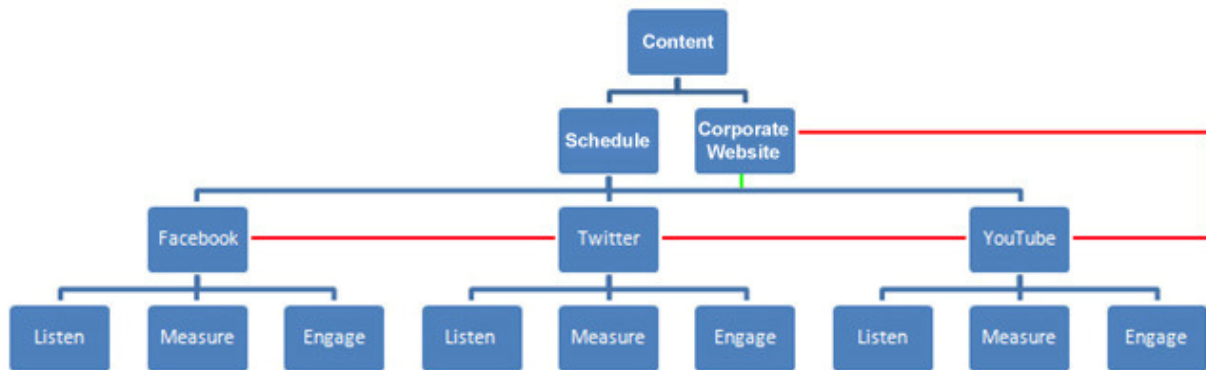
Defining a Plan

Next, it's time to outline the steps to create a social media strategy. Below are some key strategy questions and solutions behind them:

- ✚ **What are we trying to accomplish?** This is a subjective question that is different from company to company, but common goals are to establish greater brand awareness, position yourself as an expert in your industry, engage in conversations with customers and other people important to your business, and promote news and interest stories that showcase your companies strengths.
- ✚ **Why social media?** There are a lot of people that use social media and the numbers discussed earlier paint a big picture that being in social media will prove to be a big benefit for your company and improve their presence both locally and globally. Social media isn't the answer but is designed to complement existing marketing activities to develop a complete online and offline marketing strategy.
- ✚ **How will we encourage participation?** Setting up social media profiles alone won't automatically draw visitors and fans to your conversations. Additional work to encourage participation by promoting social media sites through offline activities such as displaying links in email signatures, business cards and print advertising is needed. These will all be done in an effort to promote your social presence and draw visitors to your social media platforms.
- ✚ **Who will maintain the social media presence?** Once social media has fully taken off, participating in it will need to be a full time job. Initially the marketing and/or communications department will most likely have a joint roll in getting social media moving but eventually a dedicated position will be needed to handle all of the content and questions raised by it in addition to constantly monitoring what is being said in order to protect the company brand.
- ✚ **Do we have the resources to keep this up?** Social media is only effective as long as you are always engaging with your customers. Just like at a party, if the band stops playing, the room will empty out. Once the band resumes, they are playing to an empty room; people will filter back in but it won't always be the same people as before. Your company should dedicate people to continuously develop content and key messages to be communicated regularly in order to keep your audience engaged.
- ✚ **How does social media integrate into our overall marketing/communications strategy?** The social media efforts by your company will be complemented with the other marketing and communication efforts by partnering online and offline activities to refer to each other.
- ✚ **What will we do less of if we are spending resources on social media?** Budgets will ultimately dictate your social media strategy. You will need to re-evaluate current marketing spend on activities that may not be performing as expected and devote those resources to social media. The great thing about social media is to execute the basics requires little to no cost other than personnel time.

Distribute Content

The basic **Social Media Distribution Plan** is laid out in a simple flow chart, utilizing the three common social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). Everything starts and ends with the content.



1. Once the content is ready for distribution, it is pushed out to corporate website as a News Release
2. It is released on schedule to be pushed out via the social media platforms
3. Depending on the media, the content is distributed to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
 - a. All of the content on the social media platforms links back to the original content on the website.
 - b. Your website includes links to social media platforms to encourage visitors to connect. The website also will have a social media distribution link on every page to allow web visitors to share a particular web page with the world via one of many social networking sites.
4. Once the content is distributed, actions need to take place
 - a. Listen to the feedback from visitors
 - b. Measure their reactions
 - c. Engage in conversation through replies and take action on criticism if necessary
5. Repeat again with new content

Throughout this plan, the importance of interconnecting the social media platforms was discussed. This flowchart easily shows why. With this distribution plan in place, the content takes the visitor through a continuous loop to easily discover all social platforms that your company has to offer.

What Needs to Happen?

At the end of each content release that gets pushed out to social media, links to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube need to be placed at the bottom of each story. The reason for this is simple, if a Facebook fan reads your content and clicks to read the full story on your website, they will see that you are also on Twitter and YouTube, therefore gaining another fan if you didn't already have them on those platforms. Now they check out your YouTube site and subscribe and also follow your Twitter feed. You

now have a new engaged audience member to reach out to so they can spread your message to their network.

Promote Yourself

The final step in the social media strategy is to promote yourself. A bulk of the sharing of your social media content will be handled by those that follow you on the various social media platforms, however you don't have the control of if they share the content or not. What you do have control of is your own self promotion.

- ✚ Your employees can spread your content through their own social media platforms – you should encourage your employees to embrace social media and distribute your social content through their own Facebook accounts, Twitter feeds, and share your YouTube videos to their networks.
- ✚ Do some guerilla social media marketing – the social media team will promote the social content through various social bookmarking sites such as Digg, Technorati, Delicious, Yahoo Buzz, etc...
 - Digg is a social news website made for people to discover and share content from anywhere on the Internet, by submitting links and stories, and voting and commenting on submitted links and stories. Voting stories up and down is the site's cornerstone function, respectively called *digging* and *burying*.
 - Technorati is an Internet search engine for searching blogs and social media. Technorati indexes 112.8 million blogs and over 250 million pieces of tagged social media.
 - Delicious is a social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks. Users “tag” a web page and doing a search on Delicious pulls up all the pages that were bookmarked with that tag. Delicious has a homepage which contains a “hotlist” or most popular and most recent pages.
 - Yahoo Buzz is a community based news article website, much like Digg, except operating on Yahoo with the most popular stories appearing on the Yahoo main page.

These are just a sample of the types of social media communities that allow people to share, vote, submit and tag content they find on the web. While other visitors who read our content are likely to do so themselves if they like the content they are reading, by creating your own accounts in these communities, you can promote your own content as well.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the goal of social media is to build awareness, increase exposure, encourage participation and interaction, and become a resource to the community while positioning your company as an expert in your industry.

Do a simple Google search for “social media”. You will get thousands of results over pages and pages of people providing their input and advice on how to create social media strategy. You can easily find answers to your commonly asked questions. Just approach with caution as there are some so called “experts” who will advise you that social media is difficult and there is a unique science to it that only they know about so pay their fees, etc...Social media isn't difficult, but it is time consuming and it is only effective if you integrate with existing marketing activities, dedicate time and resources to social media communications, and monitor and analyze the conversation space. And remember, the web is always looking for the next best viral thing – anybody can get their quick 15 minutes of fame by creating a viral video, but the next day, there is another big web fad – that's why social media can fail just as quickly as it can succeed without committing time and resources to ongoing social media marketing.

Through this strategy and distribution plan, your company can expect to see increases in fans across your social media platforms and will have a direct and effective method to distribute content and analyze the conversations around it.

TOP 10 GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION

As an employee who creates or contributes to blogs, wikis, social networks, or any other kind of social media, these guidelines will help you fully unleash the power of social media marketing.

Whether you log into Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikipedia, or Facebook pages, or comment on blogs or mainstream media stories — these guidelines are established to help you most effectively be a social media contributor and use social media effectively.

Following these guidelines when using social media yourselves and recommending social media tips to clients will help you feel confident you are providing yourself and your client with the highest level of social media marketing services. Not all of these guidelines will apply to each and every situation but by keeping these general guidelines in mind will help you build and create an effective social media marketing campaign.

1. Be transparent and state where you work (or if doing social media services for a client, state that you work for ABC Company). Your honesty will be noted in the Social Media environment. If you are writing about ABC Company, use your real name, identify that you work for them and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in what you are discussing, be the first to say so. This all helps build

credibility and trust and people will listen to you as an expert in your field instead of just another sales pitch or gimmick.

2. Never represent yourself or a client in a false or misleading way. All statements must be true and not misleading; all claims must be substantiated and easily verifiable. It's best to back up facts and statements with links back to a company blog or landing page.

3. If replying to a Twitter message or a blog post or other social media comments, post meaningful, respectful comments — in other words, no spam and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive.

4. Use common sense and common courtesy: for example, it's best to ask permission to publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to your company. Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate company's privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines for external commercial speech. Be sure to keep your public relations, legal and human resources teams in the loop regarding your social media content.

5. Stick to your area of expertise and do feel free to provide unique, individual perspectives on non-confidential activities at your company.

6. When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that looks as if it's becoming antagonistic, do not get overly defensive and do not disengage from the conversation abruptly: feel free to ask a PR colleague for advice and/or to disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner that reflects well on your company.

7. If you want to write about the competition, make sure you behave diplomatically, have the facts straight and that you have the appropriate permissions.

8. Please never comment on anything related to legal matters, litigation, or any parties your company may be in litigation with.

9. Never participate in Social Media when the topic being discussed may be considered a crisis situation. Even anonymous comments may be traced back to your or company's IP address. Refer all Social Media activity around crisis topics to the public relations or legal department.

10. Be smart about protecting yourself, your privacy, and your company's confidential information. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Google has a long memory.