



USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTEGRATED MARKETING TO PROMOTE YOUR SERVICES

BY JOHN FOLEY, JR.



Social media use has continued to grow over the last decade, making it one of the most important channels for reaching customers and prospects. According to social insights firm We Are Social, there are 3.196 billion social media users as of 2018.* And Marketing Sherpa reports that 58% of consumers they surveyed said that they follow brands on social media.**

With social channels playing such a large role in many consumers' day-to-day lives, it's becoming even more essential that companies include a strong social media strategy in their integrated marketing plan—and print shops/in-plants are no exception. A good social media plan can:

- Build awareness for your company
- Drive traffic to your website
- Generate interest for your products and services
- Develop likeability and loyalty
- Position your company as an industry leader
- Provide customer service
- Find prospects
- Learn what your audience wants and needs
- Demonstrate expertise
- Communicate with customers and prospects on their favorite channels

The key word, though, is “strategy”—because today's consumers don't want to hear about just your products and services. They'll tune you out if you don't approach your social platforms the right way.

If your previous attempts to include social media in your integrated marketing plan have fallen flat or you're trying to start from scratch, here are some tips and guidelines to get you off to a successful start (or restart).

* <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

** <https://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/chart/demographics-why-customer-follow-brands-social-media>

HOW DOES INTEGRATED MARKETING WORK? AN ILLUSTRATION

Integrated marketing is a way to unify your company voice across marketing channels, including social media, email, direct mail, your blog, and any other channels you're using. It also allows you to get maximum mileage from a piece of content, since you can repurpose it to fit in various channels.

For example, as a digital printer you want to clearly show the benefits of digital color over any alternatives. You create a white paper that describes the digital color process and its benefits to your customers. Instead of stopping there, you can use an integrated marketing approach:

- Preview the white paper on your blog (laying out the high points for readers and sending them to the download page).

- Add teaser text in your email newsletter that entices readers to click through to your website and download the white paper.
- Post “sound bites” on social media that, again, get your followers to click through and download your white paper in exchange for their email address.

If you're using a strong integrated marketing automation tool, you can track interactions with each of those pieces—and, even better, send more targeted messaging based on their activity.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Your first step in getting a handle on your integrated marketing communication efforts is to map out your goals. Are you planning to expand into a new market a few months from now? Want to introduce/launch a new product or service?

Figure out when these goals need to be accomplished, and then plan your social media and integrated marketing strategy to support them. For example, if you're launching a new service in three months, you can plan several social media posts to go out every day leading up to that launch. You can even plan these in stages—tease a new product coming soon, then highlight an exciting benefit for your customers, and so on.

Another important part of the planning stage is deciding the channels on which you're going to focus. It does you no good to post several times a day on Facebook if none of your customers or potential customers hang out there. You may need to conduct customer surveys and analyze your marketing results (more on that later) to figure out which channels work best for your audience.

Also keep track of what messaging you're sending to various channels, like direct mail, your website, social media, and other marketing materials. You'll want to keep your voice and messaging consistent across these channels.

Finally, come up with a master list of keywords people may use about your industry, your company, and your competitors. Sprinkling these keywords through your social media posts can help boost your visibility—and don't forget to experiment with hashtags, especially on platforms like Twitter and Instagram.





TACTICS AND BEST PRACTICES

Once you've got your initial planning down, it's time to get into the nuts and bolts of social media posting and tracking as well as fitting it into your larger marketing plan.

Your CRM software can be a big help here—integrate your social media into it, so you'll have up-to-date information about your customers. Keep track of things like demographic data, customer pain points, and preferences and dislikes. This information is crucial when it comes to segmenting your audience and personalizing your marketing, both of which will significantly improve your success.

Part of your social media strategy should focus on **what** to post; the other part is **when** to post.

When it comes to what you should be posting, the most crucial piece of advice is *don't just talk about yourself*. Many businesses are still taking the traditional marketing approach of focusing on themselves and the services they offer. If your company's social feed is nothing but promotional content, your followers will tune out. Instead, concentrate on posting relevant, helpful content that's related to your industry and useful to your followers. Answer common questions you get, share tips and tricks, and, above all, engage with followers who post or tweet at you. Also consider incorporating storytelling into your posts to showcase how clients are using your products or to highlight your staff. When you use storytelling to humanize your business, you'll see an increase in awareness, sales, and engagement. Don't forget to use social media to

show that you're not a robot. Don't be afraid to have some fun and show off your company's personality. Express yourself and be creative.

The content of your social media post is one important component—the other is the visuals you use. With billions of individual pieces of content on the Internet, your content has a lot of competition for people's attention. People also process visuals 60,000 times faster than plain text[▲]—so great graphics are essential if you want your message to stand out and be remembered. Social media posts that include images generate 650% higher engagement than text-only posts.^{▲▲}

Speaking of engagement, it's one of the most missed opportunities in social media. It's important to respond to people who comment on or share your posts—but it's equally important to follow those people back and engage on their posts. This goes much farther toward building a relationship with prospects than the "Me! Me! Me!" strategy many marketers use on social media.

You can pull all these pieces together for your team and keep them on track by coming up with a list of best practices for your social strategy. This should include the channels you'll use, the mix of messaging you'll send (like the number of promotional posts you'll sprinkle into a larger number of other posts), the process for engaging with followers and prospects, and a loose style guide to keep your voice consistent across channels.

[▲] <https://www.fastcompany.com/3035856/why-were-more-likely-to-remember-content-with-images-and-video-infogr>

^{▲▲} <https://www.inc.com/larry-kim/visual-content-marketing-16-eye-popping-statistics-you-need-to-know.html>

EXECUTION

You've identified your company or department goals, conducted customer surveys to choose your social media channels and posting times, and come up with an overall plan/best practices you'll follow. There's just a bit more important planning you need to do to ensure your success.

Here are a few questions you'll need to answer:

- Who can post to your social channels? Which of your employees will have access?
- Who will audit the content posted to make sure it conforms to the best practices you've outlined? Who's in charge of turning other marketing messaging (from email, blogs, etc.) into teasers to post on social channels?
- What kinds of information/posts are your employees authorized to share? What kinds of posts need more permissions before publishing?

You can also use scheduling tools to send posts at regular intervals. This helps you keep on track without forgetting to post every day.

Try to incorporate images and/or video into your social posts. According to HubSpot, four times as many people prefer to watch a video about a product than read about it, and infographics are liked and shared three times as much as any other type of content.♦ Business Insider predicts that video

will make up the majority of the Internet by 2021. Tweets with images get 150% more retweets than text-only tweets.♦ These stats make it worth looking into what kinds of images you can include with your social media posts to grab more attention.

Any calls to action on your social media posts need to be mobile-friendly. Most people visit social media sites via mobile devices, and a link or form that looks great on a computer screen might provide a frustrating experience on a smartphone. Be sure to test on both Android and iOS devices so you know your customers will have a smooth path.

Tracking URLs will help you monitor which social platforms and posts are driving traffic, engagement, and purchases. These URLs have unique codes that tell you exactly where that visitor came from—a powerful tool for adjusting your social strategy on the fly.

One final point to remember: everything you do online affects your Search Engine Optimization (SEO)—the content you post, keywords you use, stories, pictures, and more. Your SEO strategy needs to take into account the content you're pushing in your marketing plan. Site hits that come from content shares need to be integrated into that plan—and the best part is, they're all measurable.

MEASURING ROI

ROI for social media can seem confusing—but it's really a matter of deciding what metrics are important to you and your company or departmental goals. Which user actions are the most significant to you—click-throughs? Form submissions? Providing an email address so you can continue the conversation that way?

The ROI for your social media strategy shouldn't look the same as that for another company because you want to measure things that are meaningful to *your* business. So, instead of focusing on the number of likes or follows, keep track of more important metrics like the number of leads, conversion rates, engagement with your other integrated marketing channels, and brand or product/service awareness.

For example, you could use social media to help you build your email list. Offer a free report, white paper, or other piece in exchange for an email address—and promote it on your social channels. At the same time, encourage followers to let you

know what they think of the piece. This is a great way to keep engaging with your followers while also moving them deeper into your sales funnel. And now you've got a specific metric to track your ROI: number of email signups.

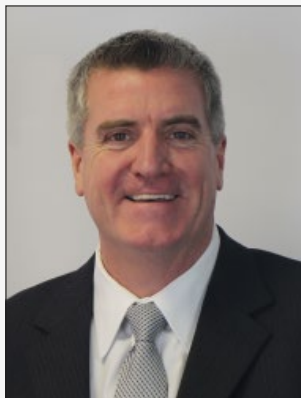
With a solid plan in place—a plan that takes your specific company goals and customer needs into account—you can greatly improve your social media success. By tapping into the customer information you already have and “listening” to the social media conversations about your company and industry, you can grab your customers' attention where they are.

Even better, by tying ROI to specific goals you can nail down a metric that's elusive for many marketers and be better able to adjust your social strategy as needed.

Above all, come up with best practices and metrics that work for you and your goals so you can see your progress, without feeling adrift in a tidal wave of marketing channels.

♦ <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/visual-content-marketing-strategy>

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