 

**Lairg and District Learning Centre**

**Business Start Up Guide**

**Social Media Journey**

**Social media journey**

The five key things a business needs to consider in order to use social media effectively.

Your journey to creating a social media presence involves:

• Setting your objectives

• Choosing your target audience

• Selecting the social media channels you will use

• Creating your messaging

• Managing your social media presence

**Setting Objectives**

Setting objectives is really important. The reason being that once you've got these great objectives, they'll really help you with the following steps.

An objective, which comes before goals, represent what social media will help your organisation to achieve. This might be business conversions, brand awareness, customer experience, online reputation management, etc.

Once an objective is established, your social media goals represent how and when you’re going to achieve it. Goals are all about specifics.

**Use the S.M.A.R.T. goal framework**

When it comes to setting social media goals, we recommend using the S.M.A.R.T goal framework—goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. Let’s take a look at each of the five qualities and how they build on one another.

• **Specific**

Increasing your social media reach, for example, is a great goal. But what does that mean, exactly? Do you want 50 followers, 500, or 5,000? And on which social network? If the goal is too vague, you’ll never really know what you’re working towards. By having goals that are clear, specific, and not open to interpretation, you’ll save on time and effort, and get closer to your ultimate destination.

• **Measurable**

If you can’t measure what you’re hoping to achieve, your goal isn’t specific enough and it likely isn’t really contributing to your business. You need to be able to concretely identify your progress and see whether your efforts are working or not.

Maybe you want to use social as a channel for customer service. How do you know how well it’s working? An increase in tweets? Decreased phone queries and emails over the span of a few months? When it comes to success, the numbers matter. Don’t just know you were successful—know how successful you were.

• **Attainable**

Have your social accounts contributed to this particular metric in the past? Use that information to set goals that are within your reach. If you’ve been able to reach a previously stated goals on, say, Facebook, you know it can be done.

By using previously attained goals, you’ll be able to put your best foot forward on social media and be comfortable, rather than scrambling to attain a poorly chosen mark.

Keep your goals challenging, but realistic. Aiming for 300 retweets a week when you have a 500 Twitter followers just isn’t going to happen in even the best of circumstances.

• **Relevant**

Do you want to use social media to build your mailing list? Social channels are a great way to accumulate qualified leads. But if that’s your goal, it makes more sense to focus on using social media to drive traffic to your website than, say, staying on top of your Instagram mentions. Make sure your goal is relevant to your business’s success.

• **Timely**

Commit to a time frame to reach your goals. By giving yourself a deadline, you’ll be less inclined to procrastinate. It will keep you accountable.

S.M.A.R.T. goal example:

So, if one of your business goals is to drive more product sales—and you are using Instagram to showcase your products—then a simple, S.M.A.R.T. social media goal might look like this:

“We will grow our Instagram following by 50 new followers per week.”

That is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. Remember, S.M.A.R.T. goals are only truly smart if they exhibit all five characteristics. If you’re missing the timeliness factor, for example, it’s impossible to determine how successful a social campaign or strategy really was.

**Track meaningful metrics**

While vanity metrics like retweets and likes can be fun to share and easy to track, it’s hard to prove their real value for your business. Instead, focus on targets such as leads generated, web referrals, and conversion rate. You may want to track different goals for different channels, or even different uses of each channel. For example, you can use paid campaigns to increase brand awareness, but measure acquisition and engagement for organic social posts. Make sure to align your social media goals with your overall marketing strategy. This will make it easier for you to show the value of your work. Start developing your social media marketing plan by writing down at least three social media goals.

Most social media platforms provide their own analytics which will show impression and reach data, however, there are also many apps on the market which will track and display your data for multiple social media platforms in one place, apps such as Keyhole or Hootsuite, or Google Analytics to track website traffic.

**Target Audience**

The definition of a target group is really the intended audience that you want to deliver your product to. Who are you actually focusing your message towards? And who are they? And to actually define that, it's all about figuring out who that person is.

What kind of personality do they have? What do they like to drink? What do they do on the weekends? What kind of shoes do they wear? Where do they go to hang out? What restaurants do they eat at? The more you understand about that individual, that target group, the more you're able to tailor your message and your product.

You have to make sure that the product that you're delivering is right for that target group. So try to understanding their likes, their dislikes and also their brand associations.

The more you understanding more about your customer, your consumer, your client allows you to deliver a better product.

Knowing who your audience is and what they want to see on social media is key to creating content that they will like, comment on, and share. This knowledge also critical for planning how to develop your social media fans into customers for your business. Try creating audience personas. For example, a retail brand might create different personas based on demographics, buying motivations, common buying objections, and the emotional needs of each type of customer.

Personas sharpen your marketing tactics. Luxury buyers, for example, might not respond to Facebook ads with sales. But they might respond to Facebook ads with exclusive in-store events to be the first to see a new line of clothing. With personas, you’ll have the customer insights you need to create campaigns that speak to the real desires and motivations of your buyers.

**Gather real-world data**

Don’t make assumptions. Social media analytics can also provide lots of valuable information about who your followers are, where they live, which languages they speak, and how they interact with your brand on social media. These insights allow you to refine your strategy and better target your social ads.

Now that we've identified your target group, it's important to figure out which channels you are going to use to communicate your message.

**Social media channels**

**Facebook** is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs and post links to news or other interesting content on the web, chat and broadcast live video, and watch short-form video. Facebook lets you communicate your message through so many different mediums.

**Twitter** is an online news and social networking site where people communicate in short messages called tweets. Tweeting is posting short messages for anyone who follows you on Twitter. Registered users can post, like, and retweet tweets, but unregistered users can only read them.

**Instagram** is a photo and video-sharing social networking service. The app allows users to upload media, which can be edited with filters and organised with hashtags and location information.

**YouTube** is a video-sharing platform which allows you to create and share videos.

**Set up your accounts**

Once you’ve decided which networks to focus on, it’s time to create your profiles—or improve existing profiles so they align with your strategic plan. In general, make sure you fill out all profile fields, use keywords people will use to search for your business, and use images that are correctly sized for each network.

**Four tips for defining your message.**

When developing content, you should keep a few things in mind to ensure your message has the impact that you want it to have.

1. Defining the subject and topic

2. Determining whether it is relevant

3. Defining the style

4. Assessing the strength of the content

Have you seen something on social media recently which had effective messaging?

What was it? And did why you think it was effective?

**1. Defining the subject and topic**

Now that you have identified the channel and networks, you can start to focus on defining and creating your message. That content is going to be the most important thing on these channels, because it is what people see, read and experience.

2. **Is it relevant?**

Once you have defined the subject and the topic, you have to decide if it's relevant in the current landscape or what's happening in the world today?
Is there some event that's just happened in the world that it relates to? Has something just happened in your area that it connects to? Can you link in to trends that are happening in your business or industry which can help to amplify your brand and product?

3. **Defining the style**

So now that you have identified your subject and theme, you've confirmed that it's topical, it's really important to take a look at the style of the messaging.

How do you want this to be communicated? Do you want the message to be promotional? Or do you want it to be persuasive? Or informative?

Understanding what experience you want people looking at it to have, will help you define that message.

Understanding what response you want, will help you to communicate it in the right way.

4. **Assessing the strength of the content**

The fourth step you want to take is what is called a review. You want to look at the piece of content that you have produced and ask - is it best as a picture? Is it best as a video? Or is it best as a statistic or a question?

Doing this helps you actually pick the right medium in which to communicate that message.

**Selecting and using the right content**

We will look at why different message formats are useful for different purposes, and how your choice of format will affect how your audience interacts with your content.

Think about the brands you follow on social media, what makes you think their content appealing?

Alongside creating and defining your message, it's really important to think about the format in which it will be delivered. It's also really important to take into consideration how your audience will actually interact with that message.

There are several different formats of communicating a message. You've got text, audio, image, and video. When we start looking at these a bit more in-depth, let's start off with text.

If you're creating a tweet, you've got 280 characters, and those letters become extremely precious. But if you're writing a blog, you may have 500 to 1,000 words.

Understanding whether your audience is going to consume that information while they're travelling or while they're actually at work or whether they're doing it in their social time will help you to frame that message effectively. If you want people to grab things while they're on lunch, tweet is probably the best avenue of 280 characters being used wisely. If you want to actually communicate a big report, or maybe a new research study, then actually a blog may be best suited.

There are many different forms of social media and depending on what you are trying to communicate will depend on which type of social media you will choose.

Audio, these days, is most prevalent or famous in terms of podcast. It is important to try and understand when your audience is going to listen to it, are they going to consume it while they commute into work or just before they go to bed, or it may even be while they're at the gym. It is likely that they'll be doing another activity while they listen to this audio information.

So think about what are your audience actually going to be using or interacting with it? If it's a time when they're usually going to be doing something else, audio's the one for that.

Video is a fantastic form of communication if you want people to feel an experience, if you want them to engage with an emotion and tell them a story. If you want to take people on a journey with you, you will want to use a video. It is important to note that video shouldn't be too long. A 30 seconds to two minutes will have an impactful view on your audience and help you to get that effect across.

Images are great for grabbing instant moments. Whether it's happiness an emotion or whether it's a great new finding, those moments are best captured by a picture. So ensuring that those pictures are taken to the right quality is also very important.

If you run a business which has a lot of visual content, that can be used to attract your customers. A store with physical products or B&B or hotel could share images of the area, food etc and the photo-sharing platform Instagram would be worth considering.

Previously we looked at the format of your content and how that will be delivered. It's also important now to take a look at how it's actually going to be accessed and interacted with by your audience. From your audience's point of view, there's three key important things for them.

**Accessibility**

The first one is accessibility. Can they access the information in the place and the time that they want to?

Making sure that the access point is open to your target audience is extremely important.

**Interaction**

The second thing to look at is whether your audience can actually interact with the information and interact with your content. Do you want them to be able to comment on it? Do you want them to be able to like it? Do you want them to be able to tag other people in it? When you show them this content, it's extremely important to remember what's right for your audience and right for your brand.

There are certain YouTube videos for example, that block comments, while others leave it open to all.

The settings you place in your content are extremely important. Whether it's shared across one network or three networks, it's important that you clarify this and categorise this well.

**Property rights and privacy**

There are two other things that must be considered - property rights and privacy.

Do you need permission share the content? Is it original and belongs to you, or do you need to source it? It's really important to make sure that content is certified to be shared under your brand name and in terms of your products.

The second thing is privacy. Are you sharing any sensitive information, any confidential information about your clients, your customers, or your business that actually is not for viewing for the extended audience? Make sure that the privacy settings are correct in this area because any mistakes could potentially cause a lot of trouble for you and your business.

**What to Post on Each Social Media Platform?**

Not all content needs to be shared everywhere, and not all content is suitable for every social media platform.

It’s all right to post entirely different things on different platforms. In fact, it might even help you to boost your engagement.

Content and posts do not transfer from one social media site to another cleanly, so even if you are putting the same content up on each site do not auto post, for example from Facebook to twitter.

Many businesses may use a different platform to target different user groups, as every platform has its own audience. And each audience has their own expectations for the things they want to see on the platform – and this can affect how well your social media posts perform.

**Facebook:** Videos and curated content

**Instagram:** High-res photos, quotes, Stories

**Twitter:** News, blog posts, and GIFs

**LinkedIn:** Jobs, company news, and professional content

**Pinterest**: Infographics and step-by-step photo guides