5 HABITS
OF SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS

A guide by sproutsocial
Introduction

Social media managers, especially solo superheroes, live minute-by-minute in a world that often seems like a circus juggling act. Not only must they maintain engagement, they’re required to stay on trends, manage multiple networks, be strategic, connect business goals and oh, by the way, have a bubbly online personality to boot. Something’s gotta give, right? Wrong.

Duke University reports that social media marketing budgets are projected to increase 21% over the next 5 years\(^1\). Good news for the industry, but as a manager if you still feel overwhelmed: stop, breathe and reboot. Consider these five habits of successful social media managers—and adopt them as your own. You’ll be glad you did.

Learn the latest tools, but don’t act impulsively

When you lead the social media charge, you likely keep your finger on the pulse of new and shiny tools. However, there is a big difference between understanding the marketplace and knowing when to leap into the latest platform. You probably dread when your boss frantically says, “Why aren’t we on insert-latest-social-network-here?!”

Knee jerk reactions and bandwagon jumping may get your boss off your back in the short-term, but it’s better to have a long-term (albeit potentially difficult) conversation on the merits of new social networks. To manage expectations—and time—create a checklist to evaluate new platforms.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- Is this new network a fad or does it have potential longevity?
- Does the purpose of the network align with our brand and social identity?
- Is our current or potential audience on this network?
- What content and tools do we need to successfully manage on a daily basis?
- Will we see a return on investment/energy if we join this network?

A brief internal Q&A session like the above, along with a gut check on viability, will weed out the wannabes and reveal the rising networks that matter most. Take that list—and supporting rationale—to your boss for more productive banter.
Set a strategy and stick the landing

Social media is no longer just a micro-segment of marketing. Think beyond the basics and take into account your company’s general business objectives, fiscal plans and sales goals, then align your strategy to that agenda. If no metrics currently exist—be proactive! Establish benchmarks, create metrics, track progress and merchandise appropriately.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Do my social goals support greater business goals?
- Are the social strategies and tactics outlined attainable?
- What is our brand voice and how do we adapt that for social?
- What resources, human and technological, do we need to flourish?
- What processes are in place to test, learn and adjust as necessary?

Universal social media success metrics are far from marketplace defined so, if you’ve entered the ring, take the proverbial bull by the horns and show your colleagues you mean business. Don’t set a strategy in January, check the box and abandon it by Valentine’s Day. Track, analyze and report on results to prove ongoing value and return for the company.
Play nice in the company sandbox

You managed to master the bubbly online personality, but don’t have time to tempt teammates with the same witty repartee? Think again. If everyone thinks they’re a marketer (which they do), then everyone and their mothers think they’re social media experts. The proliferation of personal brands and individual social prowess means your colleagues may bring an “I can do what you do” mentality to the table. Don’t fight it.

Social now permeates an entire organization, from communications and customer service to IT and sales, and the folks in those departments probably have strong opinions. Smart social media managers see this growth as a benefit and create a collaborative, participatory environment.
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who should participate in content generation for our social networks?
- How can I align with key stakeholders in various departments?
- Who should have admin access to our social networks?
- Does it make sense to create a social media policy for our company?
- What boundaries should I set for social participation?

As a leader in your organization, create strategic alliances and set the tone for compelling social behavior. Without your care and consideration, social behaviors will be left to wild abandon. Your opportunity is to meet, nay surpass, the needs of the entire business and strengthen the online voice of your company.
Brand evangelism runs 24/7/365. Your body does not.

Many social media managers do a great job not only at the office, but also live and breathe their role all day and all night. Literally, why do brands tweet at 3 am? Stop the insanity! Unless you’re hawking a nightclub or an insomnia medication, you’re missing the mark. While brand evangelism is 24/7/365, many social managers run themselves ragged in an attempt to match and pace this “always on” medium. The result is sloppy posts, irrelevant content and a disjointed experience for fans and followers.

Sure, get 110 percent behind your business, be excited and understand that timely responses for customer support and sales are essential. However, set realistic expectations about bandwidth and optimal engagement levels.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are the best days and times to engage our brand’s audience?
- How should our content vary based on day, time & season?
- Should we use technology that provides automated and optimal send times?
- Do we use tools to collaboratively monitor, engage and respond?
- Are there reliable teammates who could help me manage our communities?

Successful social media management requires you to be focused and be present. At the same time, if you also handle the strategy and content portion of your social presence, time off to recharge is essential. Know when to ask for help and train fellow team members to pitch in when necessary. A collaborative effort will keep content fresh, customers happy, and yourself sane.
Know when it’s time to pull the plug

It’s not you. It’s me. But, really, it’s you. Breaking up is hard to do and, just as you stay in tune with the latest and greatest, you must also regularly assess your current relationships. Consider a break up with networks that don’t give your brand the lovin’ you deserve.

Unlike a bad boyfriend, data doesn’t lie. Take a look at historical data, downward trends and other factors that influenced the change in performance. The most successful social media managers analyze metrics and know when to double-up their efforts—or cut the cord.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

• Did we devoted enough resources, human or technological, to make it work?
• Is the audience on this network still appropriate for our brand?
• What factors caused the decrease in performance/engagement?
• Do we utilize proper content and voice for this particular network?
• Are there residual benefits to a lower profile presence vs. total elimination?

To be clear, communities like Facebook, Twitter and Google+ are here to stay, so it’s unlikely those relationships should ever be doomed. Yet the fact is there are dozens of new social sites popping up every day. After a fair and honest assessment, either renew efforts to turn the relationship around or create a plan to remove a secondary networks from your plan.

Social media management can be sexy, seductive and professionally satisfying. It can also be daunting, daring and downright brutal. To stay on top of your game, focus on these five habits and you will undoubtedly reach new levels of success. If all that fails, you’re probably well suited to pack up and join the circus.
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