12 KILLER SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

TIP 1: PUBLISH INDUSTRY/TOPIC RELATED NEWS

Our first social media tip addresses 'what to say' on social media. This can be an extremely time consuming job, particularly when you run out of company news and achievements to broadcast. We often wonder how much time is spent emailing colleagues for ideas and browsing the internet for inspiration, only to find that once you post, nobody even replies or re-tweets. Additionally, once you start looking beyond the confines of your own brand, there is always the fear that you might say the wrong thing or be concerned about finding relevant information to broadcast.

So our tip…publish your own industry/topic related news articles.

Why?

Publishing this type of news will help you overcome these barriers and help you find your voice. News is plentiful, it is relevant and it inspires engagement. News is the most shared form of content on social media and, as it never runs out, you'll always have something of value to say.

Creation beats curation

By publishing **your own news**, you become a content creator as opposed to a content curator. A small amount of curation certainly has its place but by only re-tweeting other people's content, you position *them* as the industry authority as opposed to your own brand. See this creation versus curation article.

Examples

A law firm might publish the latest updates to legislation or news about high profile cases in the media. A travel company specialising in trips to Australia might publish news about new tourist attractions in the country. This type of news can move through networks at lightning speeds to reach your prospects, driving traffic to your website.

- 3,600 visits into SellCar-UK.com website from one news story
- 100% increase in visitors into Randstad site through news articles
- 54% of Red Rocket Media web traffic through news articles

Check out this article

For more information on how news content marketing (publishing news articles) works, check out this blog post: News articles: one of the most effective marketing techniques

BUILD AN AUDIENCE

redrocketmedia CONTENT MARKETING

TIP 2: THANK YOUR RE-TWEETERS

Always set aside time to say thank you to your re-tweeters. They have taken time out to read your content and have deemed it valuable enough to share with their own audience. That's their way of saying "great piece, let me spread the word for you" – if they said that in person, you wouldn't dream of not saying thank you.

Thanking your re-tweeters also presents an ideal opportunity to start a conversation. Eg. "Thank you for the re-tweet, do you think this tactic will work?" or "Thank you very much for the RT, have you tried these tips out?" Or, let them know if you have checked out their website "Thanks for the RT, I really like your blog".

Never take it for granted when people spread your content: they have effectively become ambassadors of your brand and this is something that should be cherished. Add them to a private list of tweeters and take time out each day to look at the tweets in that list to see if there are conversations you could participate in or if there are any you'd like to re-tweet. As long as the content adds value to your readers, it's nice to be able to return the favour.

Take time to get to know those people who are sharing your content. They have volunteered to become part of your team so you should try and form relationships with them as you would with anyone else who was endorsing your brand.

TIP 3: WATCH FOR CONVERSATIONS

Use tools such as HootSuite or Tweetdeck to watch for conversations featuring problems you can solve. For example, if you are a travel company, you might look for conversations where people are asking about what to do in certain cities. Providing you have some great content to give to them, it's a fantastic way of adding value to potential customers and this one helpful action could lead to an on-going dialogue and even a lead further down the line.

The LinkedIn answers section on is also very useful. Just type in a search term and offer advice to help readers solve their problems. As well as writing a comment, it's great to post links to your blog or other articles as this drives traffic to your website and is perfect for establishing your brand as an industry authority.

TIP 4: ENGAGE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE

One of the key ingredients which encourages engagement is interesting content. If you've got something interesting to say, people will read it, share it, comment on it etc. Social media and content go hand in hand: content is what gets people talking but social media is the channel you use to get it to them, where they want it, when they want it. You can have awesome content but it's useless if it's not getting to the people it will interest. Likewise, you can have all your social media

platforms set up but unless you're populating it with interesting and valuable content, people will simply browse over you in their social media feeds.

Make your content easy to share with 'tweet this' and 'share' icons. Also, ask for comments at the bottom of your article or blog. People are much more likely to engage with and share your content if you ask them to.

Treat social media like you would a normal networking event. You wouldn't just walk in to a networking event and start selling would you? You'd listen, find points of interest and offer advice to try and help, in the hope that you might be able to provide a solution later on. If you take this approach with social media, and as long as your content is worth sharing, you're likely to enjoy much higher levels of engagement.

Check out one of our posts which lists 5 ways to build and engage your social media audience

TIP 5: SHARE THE WORKLOAD

Usually, it's the responsibility of the marketing person/department to manage social media but there is no reason why certain tasks shouldn't be allocated to other people in the business. You might consider:

- Two people responsible for writing and publishing a blog each per week
- One person responsible for posting more 'personal' posts twice a day
- One person responsible for seeking out valuable tweets to re-tweet, say 5 per day
- One person responsible for contributing to LinkedIn group forums (maybe one person per group if there are several you'd like to get involved with)
- One person to monitor the LinkedIn 'answers' section (see tip 3)

Social media is the voice of the company, not just one person and, as long as you are all singing off the same hymn sheet, sharing the load can make it a much more manageable task.

TIP 6: GO WHERE YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE

There seems to be no limit to the number of social media websites available to you so your best bet is to firstly find out which ones your prospects and customers are using. Just looking at the main ones, as a general rule, Twitter and LinkedIn seem to be better for B2B and Facebook for B2C. That said though, if you operate in a very niche industry, there could be better ones suited to your business.

Best bet: ask your customers which ones they use, whether that's via a survey or just a quick poll on your homepage. Done properly, social media is an extremely time-consuming job so you are much better off spending more time marketing on a couple as opposed to spreading your time thinly across several.

Remember to monitor the stats too: not just the number of re-tweets, shares, comments etc but are there certain times of the day where your readers are more active and which type of content do they interact best with. Once you get a clearer picture of what works, where and when, do more of the same.

TIP 7: MONITOR YOUR COMPETITION

As with all areas of marketing, it is important to keep an eye on what your competitors are doing. In the past, this was much harder to track but with social media you have a wealth of insight at your fingertips. So, a good starting point is to carry out an audit of your main competition to find out how they are going about their social media activities.

- Which social media sites are they active on?
- What offers are they broadcasting?
- What are they saying in their blogs?
- What type of content are they publishing?
- Which content sparks engagement from their readers?
- What is their customer service like?
- Go through their fans and followers to identify any you could follow and engage with
- Set up Google alerts or Twitter searches for the names of your competitors
- Follow your competitors on social media

Once you are laden with all this information and have identified what works and what doesn't, you can use it to make decisions about your own social media activities.

TIP 8: BALANCE YOUR VOICE

When it comes to your social media content, try to maintain a good balance between informative and personal posts.

Yes it's great to publish lots of valuable information to your readers such as topic/ industry-related news or evergreen articles, but it's also important to let the personality and culture of your company shine through.

Generally, people buy into people, not logos so it's important that your readers feel they are getting to know you a little. A couple of 'more personal' posts each day can make all the difference to the perception of your business. Replying to tweets and engaging in conversations is also an ideal way to give your social media a welcoming personality.

TIP 9: MAKE YOUR TWEETS STAND OUT

Particularly in Twitter, if you follow quite a few people, your news feed is constantly on the move and if you're away from your desk for even an hour, you

tend to do a very quick skim through everything you've missed. So, you need to make sure that your posts stand out.

- Front load your tweets with an announcement: Eg. if you are tweeting about an article with some must-have tools, prefix it with "10 MUST-HAVE TOOLS" or if it's your latest blog "LATEST BLOG"
- Use Unicode characters to get noticed: Unicode characters show in Twitter so you can use them to add more visual weight to your tweets
- Use statistics in your tweets: people are always drawn to hard numbers
- Post at times when your readers are most active on line
- Use links in your tweets to entice readers to more information on your website

As ever, our biggest tip of all when it comes to making your posts stand out…make sure your content is entertaining and adds value to your readers. Apparently, there are 98,000 tweets on Twitter every 60 seconds so standing out from the crowd has never been more important!

TIP 10: MAKE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

As we've mentioned in previous tips, social media is a time consuming job but you can make your life a little easier by using technology to automatically post your news and blogs to your social media platforms. It is very easy to set this up on sites like Twitter and Facebook using services such as Twitterfeed, HootSuite and RSS Graffiti, however it is not yet possible on Google+ (no doubt it will be soon). It may be that you set up feeds for, say, Twitter and Facebook, as those ones definitely seem to be the slickest of the bunch, but manually load to LinkedIn and Google+.

Schedule your posts

You can use this technology to schedule your posts. In Twitterfeed and HootSuite, you can stagger the release of your posts which is really helpful if you tend to dip in and post lots at certain times of the day. There is also a website called http://www.bufferapp.com/ - you simply post to Buffer and it releases them at the times you have specified. You can also use automation to re-post old articles so that they don't just disappear into cyberspace never to be seen again.

Whilst such technology will obviously save you some time, on the flip side, the good thing about manually loading is that each time you do so, it prompts you to get involved in conversations or reply to messages which you might otherwise forget to do on busy days.

Whatever you decide to do, don't forget that your social media streams should be about more than just broadcasting information. You need to interact with your readers too – see tip 4.

TIP 11: MEASURE ROI

This is quite a lengthy topic to talk about so we'll just touch on a few of the main points. As with all marketing activities, it is important to measure the return on investment of your social media activities but it is an area that many companies struggle to monitor. One of the main reasons for this is that often businesses try to measure social media as a 'channel' as opposed to the marketing activities they carry out through it.

For example, you probably wouldn't ask 'what is the ROI of the telephone?', you would ask 'what is the conversion rate of our telesales campaign?'. So with social media, instead of asking 'what is the ROI of social media', you might ask 'what is the ROI of the Christmas campaign we ran on social media?'. Making sure that everyone in your business understands this is a good place to start. So, what next…?

Identify your objectives

First and foremost, you must identify what you actually want to achieve through your social media activities. Maybe you want to increase brand awareness, reader engagement or traffic to your website? Take time to understand what each department in your business hopes to achieve as no doubt the sales department will have different objectives to the customer services team.

Choose your metrics

Once your objectives are outlined, choose relevant and realistic metrics by which to measure them. Eg. If you want to increase brand reach, you might measure the number of re-tweets or shares. Or if you want to increase reader engagement, you could measure the number of comments you receive. What's important here is that you choose metrics which measure 'activity' as opposed to, say, the number of followers you have. After all, 500 fans who brush over you in their news-feeds are never going to be of much value to you.

Longer term, you are naturally going to want to put a monetary value on your social media efforts. Using Google Analytics, you can set up goals (such as download conversions) which can be linked to traffic sources. You can then track any which convert into sales further down the line.

Monitor

Keep an eye on what type of content/campaign activity increases your metrics. Do particular platforms perform better than others? Are there particular topics which incite higher levels of engagement? Do certain headlines drive more traffic to your website than others? Set up a Google alert for mentions of your company name to see if people are talking about your brand. Once you know what works for your particular metrics, use this as a guide for future activity.

TIP 12: REVIEW YOUR CONTENT

As you've probably noticed, there has been a common message running through all of our tips, that being: quality content is absolutely key for social media success. Without it, you'll be lucky to even get off the starting blocks.

So our final tip is to carry out a full review of your content portfolio:

- List each type of content you produce ie. blogs, whitepapers, press releases, videos, newsletters etc
- Map your content against your prospects' buying cycle. Check out this buying cycle article which explains which type of content works best at each stage
- Identify areas in the buying cycle where you are lacking content
- Assess the messages in your content: in the first 75% of the buying cycle it should provide commercially-neutral solutions to your prospects' problems whereas in the last 25%, your readers are more open to receiving 'self-promotional' messages.
- Assess the quality of your content: Is it well-written, informative and interesting? Would you share it?

Once your content is in order, you can feel confident about sharing it through your social media websites.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

As we have stressed throughout this article, high quality and original content is the crucial element in building a strong social media presence. Social media is the 'channel' through which you build and engage your audience but your success will come from the content you choose to broadcast.

At Red Rocket Media, we have a team of qualified journalists who are skilled at writing content which thrives in social media environments. We write industry/topic related news and evergreen articles which get people talking, sharing and coming back for more.

Let us demonstrate how the content we write can create a strong, thought-leading social media presence for your business:

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