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## Social Media Planner

There is great deal of hype and misinformation about social media today and how it might be used to enhance your business marketing.

Borrowing an important phrase coined by Social Media Consultant Jay Baer, "Social media isn't a conversation, it's where the conversation takes place." In the early stages of discovery and planning, do not get hung up on which social media websites or channels to use, such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, LinkedIn, etc... Those are tactical decisions. Instead, this planner will help you think strategically.

Use this planner to help you decide whether or not a social media marketing strategy is right for your company.

- 1. What are you trying to accomplish?** Understanding what you're trying to actually achieve with your social media presence should be the first step in developing a social media strategy. Choose your primary marketing goal.
  - generate more prospects/leads
  - increase direct sales
  - improve customer relations and support
  - build greater brand awareness
  - shape public relations, brand image, company perception
- 2. Why social media?** Is your audience already there? ...using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Buzz, etc...?  
Do your competitors use social media?  
Do you want to build stronger relationships with customers and prospects?  
Develop authentic two-way conversations with prospects and customers?

Does your company have a blog?

In our opinion, a company blog that is maintained and kept updated with regular entries is often the most effective hub for the rest of your social media efforts.

### **Marketing Benefits of your Blog**

1. Create important backlinks to your website, increasing search engine rankings aka "visibility"
2. Positive reinforcement of your brand
3. Develop a voice or personality for your company
4. Excellent low-cost public relations tool

3. **What kind of social media will help us best achieve our goals?** Do you need to utilize social networking sites, blogs, real-time updates (e.g., Twitter), social news sites, media-sharing sites, review/directory sites, or display ads on social media sites?

In some respects, creating a social media presence is like creating an advertising presence: you must specify your objectives and determine where your time and money is best spent. Revisit your strategic goals in step 1 above. We can help match your social media goals with the right social media websites/channels.

4. **Are we prepared to let go of control of our brand, at least a little?** You can't participate in social media without being...well...social. And that means engaging in a conversation with customers. Once you engage in a conversation, you have to give up some control. Is your company willing to do that?

Social networking implies your willingness to accept criticism of your company and brand as well as complimentary views. Social media gives you an exciting opportunity to answer your critics and defend your company's position in an open forum.

5. **What will we do to encourage participation?** There's nothing more embarrassing than going to a corporate YouTube channel and seeing that the viral video it spent tons of money making has just 127 views. Ditto for going to a company's Twitter feed and seeing that it has all of 11 followers. What are you planning to do to drive people to your social media presence? And do you have the money to do it?
6. **Who will maintain our social media presence?** Participating in social media takes a lot of work. You must have something to say and you must have someone (or a team of people) to say it on a regular basis.
7. **Do we have the resources to keep this up, or will this be a short campaign?** Similarly, unless you specify that what you're doing has a limited duration (such as a Twitter feed based on a particular conference), people will expect you to keep it up. Have you budgeted the resources to continue your social media presence beyond the fiscal year?
8. **How do we measure success? What constitutes failure?** Are you measuring views, followers, comments, or subscribers? What's the threshold for your success metrics that takes them into success territory? What happens if you don't get there?

9. **What will we do less of if we're spending resources on social media?** Chances are you have limited dollars. If you spend more money on social media and other non-traditional forms of marketing, you have to spend less on something else. How will your overall goals be impacted by taking money away from other forms of advertising/marketing and moving it into social media?

**Summary:**

This planner is not intended to scare you away from including social media into your overall marketing strategy. However, our hope is that it gives you some realistic information about what is involved before you launch a poorly-planned, ill-informed attempt on your own. Special thanks are in order to Sean Carlton who composed the original Social Media Strategy Checklist that this planner is based on.

Please call Hallaron PR for an initial discovery meeting to learn how social media can enhance your marketing plan.

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