Best Practices in Social Media

Think Tank 2010

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Why is social media so popular?

• Focus on conversation
• Sense of ownership
• Sense of belonging
• Sense of community
• You can even cut loose and have fun
Three stages to a strong social media presence:

1. **Build** a plan
2. **Join** the community
3. **Sustain** your presence
STAGE 1: BUILD
What’s your goal?

• More than just “We need to be on Facebook and Twitter!”

• What do you want to achieve?

• Be consistent
  – Revisit your department/college/institutional objectives & make sure your social media goals contribute to at least one of these.
Audience

• Web = individuals who each have their own capabilities, behaviors & desires. Understanding your audience is crucial to success.
  – What capabilities & behaviors do they have?
  – What sites do they visit?
  – Web-only? Mobile?
  – Do they contribute or do they lurk?

• ‘Primary’ and ‘Secondary’ audiences
For Example

- **Admissions** uses social networking to connect primarily with prospective students & keep them informed. Secondarily, they provide information to parents of prospective students on deadlines and key dates in the enrollment process.
Before you start, *listen*

- Listen to:
  - Your target audience
  - Your peers & competition
  - Your gut

- Listening makes for better conversations
  - Social media is just that … social. It’s not a bullhorn or a bully pulpit.
  - To join the conversation, you first have to know its nature & its boundaries.
Social Media Landscape
Select your Tools

Average age distribution across social network sites

Age distribution on social network sites
United States, data sorted by average age per site, youngest at the top

Data source: Google Ad Planner (United States demographics data)
Demographics: Social media users

- 25% of major social media users are between 35 and 44.
- 32% are 44 and older.
- Avg. social media user is 37.
  - MySpace: 31
  - Facebook: 38
  - Twitter: 39
  - LinkedIn: 44

Knowing this, what social media tools do you think would be most effective for your message?

Source: Pingdom.com
STAGE 2: JOIN
Prepare

• It’s a waste of time using any tool if your audience doesn’t use it, too. That’s why Stage 1 – audience research – is so important.

• Once you know who you’re talking to, creating content is much easier.
  – Gather / re-package / create the required content.
  – Add social tools to your website
  – Determine & allocate resources toward social networking
  – Create accounts
Find your place

• Social media complements, not replaces, your communications strategy.


• You’re the host of an ongoing conversation. Treat everyone as an important guest – like a bartender.
Find your voice

• Create a presence
• Content, not announcements: Updates must have value
• Engage in conversations
  – People relate to **people**, not institutions
  – Speak with, **not at**, others
• Identify your place
  – Number, tone of updates
Be brief

• Clarity and simplicity win
  – Add URLs to more detailed content. If you’re a trusted source in your social network, your followers will click through to learn more.
Good or bad?

The five finalists for this year's program have been announced! [http://bit.ly/cseObB](http://bit.ly/cseObB)

10:07 AM May 31st via Facebook

The five finalists for this year's One Book – One Lincoln

huskerextra JerryWorld or bust: Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe made official what has already been reported Friday when he said ... [http://bit.ly/kWHB5](http://bit.ly/kWHB5)

about 2 hours ago via twitterfeed


9:10 AM May 28th via Facebook

Saltdogs at the Library: Meet Homer the Haymarket Hound & players from the team [http://bit.ly/bAOcOb](http://bit.ly/bAOcOb) 6/11, 1030am @ South Library #LNK

8:48 AM May 28th via API

View all 9 comments
Reaction to content

• Moderating comments
  – What types of updates or comments are off-limits?
  – At what point does audience engagement turn into putting out fires?

• Censorship
STAGE 3: SUSTAIN
Expand!

• Don’t be afraid to fail
  – Losses are minimal or non-existent
• Go with the flow, dude
  – Social media communities were there before you. Don’t reinvent the rules of the conversation.
• Don’t turn your back on your investment
  – Keep content interesting & regular.
  – You’ll see better results than those who just move on to build their next profile.
  – Build a foundation, then expand on it.
Evaluate

• Facebook Insights
  – Measures user exposure, actions & behavior relating to your Page. It helps you understand activity and performance, fans and trends.

• Twitter evaluation tools
  – Twitalyzer

• Best evaluation is direct contact with others

• Be sure to share social-media insights with others in your workplace!
STAGE 3: SUSTAIN

Evaluate

All Fans of University of Nebraska–Lincoln
All Fans Over Time Learn more
Choose a graph: Total Fans / Unsubscribed Fans

Total Fans 9,403
Total Fans on Jun 05
Total Fans on Jun 04

Male Female
13–17 5% 6% 11%
18–24 16% 16% 32%
25–34 12% 13% 25%
35–44 8% 10% 18%
45–54 3% 5% 8%
55+ 2% 2% 4%

Top Countries
United States 8,774
Top Cities
Lincoln 2,055
Top Languages
English (US) 8,986
Review: Do’s and Don’ts

• **DO** know your audience.
  – **DON’T** create a presence without knowing who you’re trying to reach.

• **DO** listen to what others are saying & add to discussion properly.
  – **DON’T** over-post & dominate the community.

• **DO** understand how social-media platforms differ.
  – **DON’T** choose a tool that your target audience doesn’t use.

• **DO** bring a personality and a voice to your updates.
  – **DON’T** use institution-speak.

• **DO** establish a rapid-response plan for problem posts that focuses on being interactive.
  – **DON’T** censor or over-moderate.

• **DO** constantly evaluate your effectiveness in the social realm and make changes quickly.
  – **DON’T** have inflexible parameters on how to use social media.
It’s happy hour!

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