



Social Media Strategy Guidebook

Maximizing Your Reach with Best Practices

Are there any fears keeping your company from engaging with its customers using social media?

Whether we are afraid to engage or not, the choice to extend our brands using social media is not our own. Customers, employees, and employee prospects are going to talk about our businesses either way, and in doing so, they might spread misinformation, tear us down, criticize, celebrate, promote, or refer others. Regardless of what people say about our businesses on social media, if we refuse to join the conversation, at least one thing is clear: We leave a void that will inevitably be filled. We can choose to be in control of our story or allow social media users to write our stories for us.

There are four key benefits to effectively stewarding social media for our businesses:

- 1. Humanizes the company:** Our audiences don't want to have conversations with a corporation, but they do want to have conversations with people. When we engage people on the platforms they enjoy, it allows us to personalize the conversation to individuals, moving us from merely completing transactions to forming long-term relationships.
- 2. Connects you with customers:** A key objective of any marketing department should be to form strong connections with current and future customers. When we engage in the conversation, our companies become accessible and demonstrate that we care about every customer's experience.
- 3. Drives recruitment:** Just as there are numerous social media platforms, there are just as many, if not more, job-sharing platforms and websites, all of which claim to offer advantages, tools, and networks to help businesses add the best potential employees to their teams. But even with all these sites available that are dedicated to finding job candidates, our best tool may be social media.

4. **Shares the Gospel:** In addition to the three business benefits mentioned above, it's important to remember that engaging on social media allows your company to share the gospel of Christ with a significantly larger audience. The day-to-day ways we interact with customers and prospects tangibly display our mission and values. While they are used internally to drive decisions, they are seen publicly by the way we treat others.

Where Do We Begin?

Whether we have been engaging with various social media platforms for years, or are just getting started, we should review some fundamentals for making the most of our social media endeavors. Define the status quo before jumping in. Identify your objectives: What are you hoping to accomplish, and how are you going to measure success? Based on the life cycle of your company, each leader's goals will look very different. Don't try to replicate what everyone else is doing; work toward goals that make sense for your company, in your industry, and with your customers.



Listen to Your Target Audience

Everyone has a voice, but not everyone has a vote. When we go social, we open up the possibility of hearing from a variety of people we normally don't hear from, some of whom are not part of our target audience. Focus engagement on those who matter to your company's success. Pay close attention to what our audience is saying and where those customers are saying it. But we can't stop there; it's not enough merely to listen. If our key audience is giving us feedback, track it and make changes based on their needs and desires. Social media is all about engagement and conversation; it is not a one-way digital radio platform but rather an arena for building loyalty, trust, and lasting relationships.

Create Engaging Content

While a business's content should be interesting to its target audience, that shouldn't be our primary goal. We want to publish content that will encourage others to participate in a conversation that's important to our businesses. Without interaction, we can't learn from our stakeholders. The type of content that evokes a positive response will differ based on our target audience. We must be very intentional about who we are trying to reach, what platforms they are on, and the type of content they want to talk about and potentially share as a brand ambassador.

Measure, Measure, Measure

What we measure tends to improve. Linking your marketing goals to social media key performance indicators (KPIs) will keep us focused and engaged for the long haul. If we don't measure, we are more likely to fulfill our fears of social media efforts becoming a

waste of time and not worth our energy. If you are going to engage, measure the results so you can use them to drive improvement. Whether a B2C or B2B company, here are common, useful metrics to begin tracking social media activity.



Getting Started with Policies

While we do our best to hire employees whose personal values match the values of our business, employees don't always think they represent the company at the same level leadership does. Though this may be the case, when we encourage employees to be brand ambassadors, we are increasing their voice and in some ways, increasing our risk. This doesn't mean we should limit the number of voices, however. Given the stats and trends regarding social media use, it would be foolish to ignore that the vast

majority of our employees are using at least one social media platform. Instead of trying to limit their use or expecting them not to engage, we must proactively shape the strategy and expectations for how to appropriately represent our brands digitally. Let's equip our teams to be brand ambassadors who have clear boundaries within which to operate.

Social Media Best Practices

As you consider either how to get started or how to evaluate your current social media strategies, consider these ten social media best practices:

1. **Be consistent with Christian principles:** Every post, comment, and conversation should support engagement as an extension of the company's culture.
2. **Deputize people throughout the organization:** Spread engagement to employees beyond the social media team. Open the platform to anyone and everyone. Encourage employees to tap into social media to get work done. To scale engagement, make social media part of everyone's job.
3. **Centralize coordination:** Engagement should spread throughout the organization, but it shouldn't be a free-for-all. Depending on company size—it may be one person or an entire division—someone should be leading the charge and coordinating social media efforts for the company.
4. **Find champions who can explain and mitigate risk:** Social media is a vast arena, and it's constantly changing and growing. Connect with others inside and outside your company who can help the business avoid pitfalls and steer clear of danger.
5. **Strap in for the long haul:** A few posts or tweets are not going to make a difference in your online presence or marketing strategy. Consumers want to see a consistent presence over a long period. This builds trust and a history of dialogue that can pay long-term dividends.

6. **Be conversational from the start:** View engagement as a conversation, not merely as marketing or sales.
7. **Pick channels carefully:** Not every company should engage in the same social media platforms or in the same way. Industry demographics differ, and so does social media involvement. Before getting started, evaluate which channels your customers are engaging in and join the conversation there.
8. **Modularize and synchronize content across channels:** While you won't always use every platform for every piece of content, be creative in communicating similar information in different ways.
9. **Make social media part of the job, just like email:** If you want employees to engage, build it into their expectations, and give them the training and incentives they need to participate regularly and at a high level.
10. **Identify the right KPIs:** Emphasize quality, not just quantity. If we are going to engage, we must measure. But not every company needs to interact the same way or measure the same things. Based on company size and industry type, right-size your activity and use KPIs to measure the success of your company's specific goals. Mastering social media in the appropriate ways for your organization can drive growth, engagement, influence, and optimize a variety of core functions. Where do you see opportunities to own with integrity the social brand of your business? Review the list of best practices and discuss your strengths and opportunities. What additional best practices would you add to the list?

Leverage the power of peers.

The advice and counsel of other Christian CEOs and executives will help you transform your company to achieve business excellence while also impacting lives and honoring God by how you run your company. Visit joinc12.com to learn more about membership in a local C12 Business Forum.