



Marketing  
Expert

Practical Guide

# Planning a Social Media Campaign



## Why is Social Media Important?

Social media is the way that many consumers express opinions and share ideas with their friends, family and colleagues. For a brand, social media allows you to communicate, discuss, share and listen to your customers. It is not just a one-way communication tool, it is a channel for understanding and learning too. Even if you decide not to use a social media channel to communicate, it can still be a valuable mine of information about the interests, needs and behaviours of your audience.

According to 2016 Ofcom research, Britons' spend 45 minutes per day on social media and Facebook alone has over 40 million users in the UK.

For many brands, social is a low cost, but time consuming way of interacting with their target customers. It is a way to share their content and importantly for their customers to share content peer to peer. It is also a very effective way to encourage social media experts who influence their customers, such as YouTubers and bloggers.

## What are the trends?

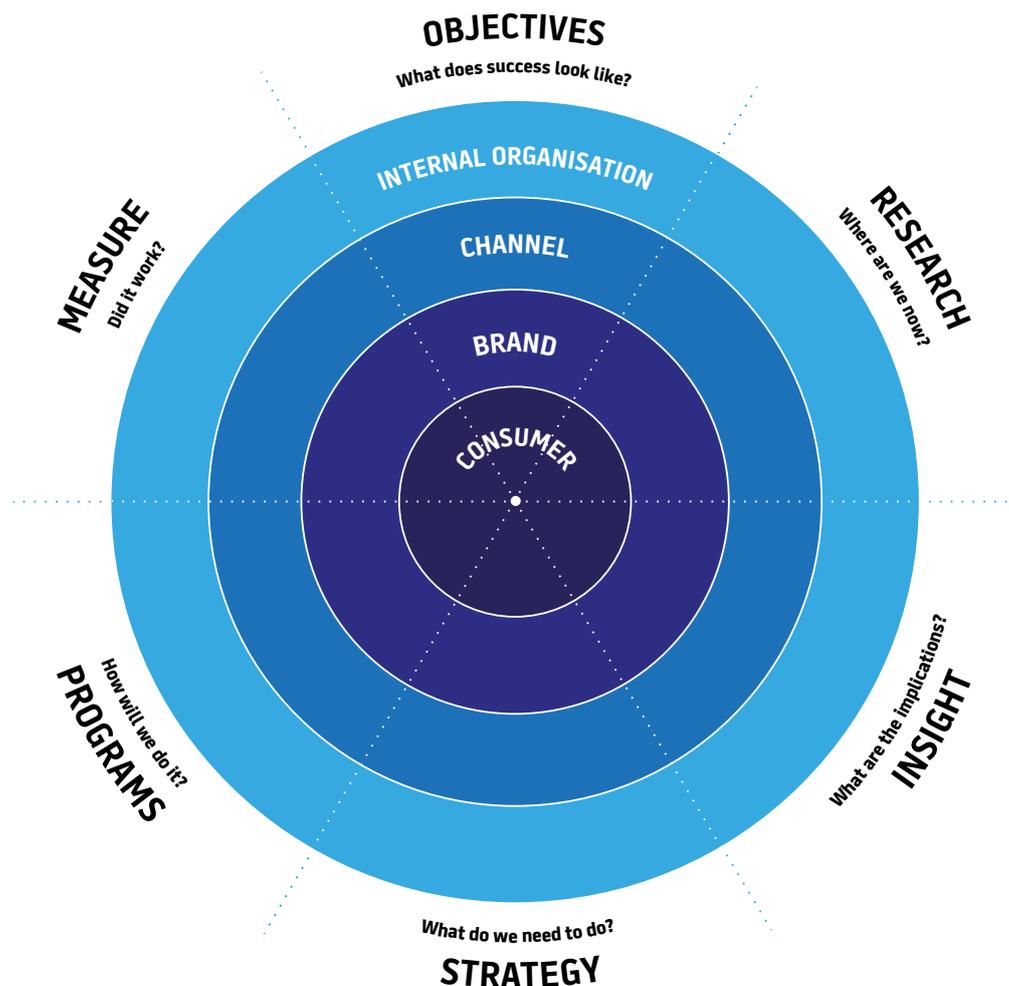
Social media is still growing. Even Facebook which is dominant in terms of active usage, is still growing year on year. Whilst younger audiences and early adopting older adults are certainly using newer channels like Snapchat, Pinterest and Instagram Stories, let's not forget that Facebook is still dominant in the UK and globally. Around the world, we see a similar picture with the large global networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube dominating. However, there are local differences. For example, in Russia, vKontakte is used heavily and in China there is a large range of social channels from QQ and WeChat (which are closer to WhatsApp) to Weibo which is closer to Facebook.

# Planning a social media campaign

Brands plan for social in many different ways. This simple 6 step process is a model that you could use for planning your social media activity. It was developed by 3 of the CIM Course Directors (Nick Baggott, Marina Lumley and Graham Hansell) for use on their training programmes. It is designed to reflect how they believe the best clients plan and execute campaigns.

The model has 4 levels to it. At every stage, brands need to consider the consumer, the impact on perceptions of their brand, how their sales channel will react, as well as what they need to do internally, to ensure the campaign is a success. The internal audience is important and often neglected. Content for social typically

needs to be written by colleagues who don't work in social media teams, so they need to be encouraged and listened to. Social media teams often need the co-operation of legal, finance, compliance, brand and product development teams, so don't neglect this important audience. The model has 6 stages and they are consistent with other communication planning tools that brands might use for other comms channels.



## Step 1: Setting objectives

Most brands have two types of objectives for social. These can be grouped up into engagement objectives (reach, interactions, sharing, liking, clicking, following etc.) and financial objectives (leads, conversions, sales, revenue, profitability).

When setting your objectives, be sure to include financial and engagement objectives and try to measure against both. However, the data for engagement rates is typically easier to capture than information on the financial impact of social media.

## Step 2: Understand your audience

Social media will allow you to understand your audience in many ways. Quite simply you can start by testing content to see what gets a response or drives engagement. Do your audience respond better to humorous or thought leadership content for example, or do they respond best to information about your products or about the market that you work in? Is curated or brand-created content more effective?

You may want to carry out specific online research. Both Facebook and Twitter have simple survey tools that you can use to ask your audience simple questions. Or you could just ask an open question and read and respond to the comments. You could also add a survey onto your web site or at face-to-face events, such as conferences and exhibitions. Finally, you can use social media analytics tools to help you understand your audience. The core social channels have their own profiling tools which will tell you about your audience (just click on your analytics in the drop-down menu on Twitter, for example). You can supplement this with paid for social media management tools like Hootsuite or SproutSocial.

You may want to segment your audience before you start developing your social media strategy.

B2B customers are more likely to follow you on LinkedIn or Twitter, or read your blog posts, whereas younger consumers are more likely to favour Snapchat and Instagram. If you have multiple audiences, consider using each channel differently with a different tone and content profile to suit those audiences and then let them self-select. A large retailer may use Facebook for “Mums with young families” and Instagram for “Young Couples setting up home”.

## Step 3: Develop insights to create content ideas

Research data will tell you what has happened and what customers have clicked on. But does it tell you why? Most importantly does it tell you how you can change their behaviour in future?

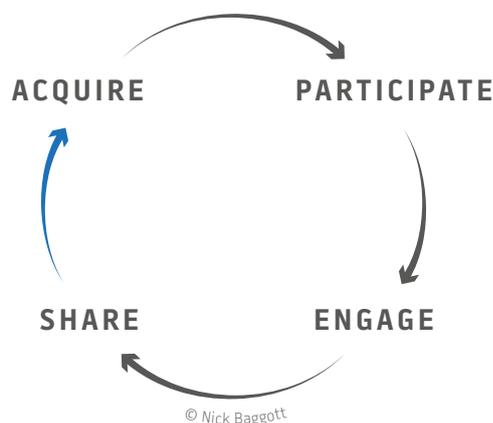
An element of qualitative research is typically needed to turn information into insights. One way to look at it, is to do some qualitative research asking consumers what the barriers are that stop them behaving as you want them to do so. These could be emotional or rational barriers. For example, if you are trying to persuade someone to attend your event, they could have rational barriers e.g. they are unavailable on that date or their company has a travel ban on for budget reasons, or they could have emotional reasons e.g. after the training they will be expected to be an expert on the topic which may increase pressure on them, or they may not want to attend training with people they think may be more expert than them, which may make them feel uncomfortable.

So, before you start to develop content ideas, first consider what behavioural change you are looking for from each target audience and then what the emotional and rational barriers are that you need to overcome. If you know that, developing ideas should be much simpler.

## Step 4: Develop social strategy

Your strategy will include deciding: who your target audience is, what your proposition is and how you will reach that audience. Since, we have outlined steps for understanding your audience and developing content ideas, this section will focus on media selection.

If your objectives include increasing engagement, you will need to be able to measure it using a simple model. One option is Dave Chaffey's RACE model (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage). Another option is Nick Baggott's Customer Engagement framework:



Nick Baggott's model looks only at engagement as the purchase could happen at any stage of the relationship. You may purchase before you engage (think of an impulse purchase of a new product at a supermarket), but for more involved purchases (B2B or more complex items like holidays or cars) you will typically research before you buy, which means the purchase is more likely to be during the engage phase.

The four stages are:

1. **Acquire** (their attention) – Reach people for the first time
2. **Participate** – Get them to respond to you, visiting your brands owned media (web site, blog, event etc.)
3. **Engage** – Continue to interact through social media, email or mobile apps, etc.
4. **Share** – Become a brand advocate, sharing this content with their peers (typically on social media)

From a media planning viewpoint, if your focus is on Acquire, then think of Google Search, influencing influencers or social media ads (sponsored tweets, sponsored Facebook stories, LinkedIn ads etc.) Then participate is all about where you send them and how you get their permission to carry on the dialogue (sign up to receive emails, or opt-in, or follow you in social) on your landing page.

## Step 5: Execute the campaign

Now you have decided who to target, through which channels and with which message – you are ready to start executing your social media activity.

Here are some considerations to think about:

- What tone of voice is consistent with your brand values? Will you try to be expert thought leaders or humorous? Will you be safe or more controversial? Will you only talk about your company or the wider business environment that you operate in?
- Will you experiment with newer live formats? This is a key trend in social as tools like Facebook Live, Twitter Periscope, Instagram Stories become more popular. These formats are great for engaging with consumers, training and making live announcements, but they are more risky as they are conducted live.
- How will you deal with comments and questions? Will you monitor and respond 24 hours a day? Remember, you should respond to criticism, but take this dialogue off-line and do not have a public fight with customers.
- Who will manage your activity? Will you have a dedicated social media team? Will you out-source to an agency?

## Step 6: Measuring success

Measurement is crucial, as it will enable you to understand what is working and what is not. Each social media channel has its own free measurement tool, that will tell you what is happening in relation to your own posts. Some will also tell you who your audience is and what their interests are. This is a good start, but it only tells you about your activity. A common goal for marketers is also to understand what people are saying about their brand on social media away from your brand's page. Sentiment Trackers allow you to do this. Some are free and many are paid for on a subscription basis. They will tell you how many mentions you are getting in each channel and try to show whether the posts are negative or positive about your brand. The sentiment element is in its infancy and is not 100% accurate, so be wary. Think of these tools as giving you useful information rather than 100% factually correct information, due to the complexities of understanding language and the way we talk on social media. Software is not good at spotting sarcasm, for example!

If you want to measure the financial aspects of social media, this is more challenging. Unless you have a click-through to purchase model, where customers can buy from you online. You could test social media impact by comparing the financials in markets where you use it against where you don't, or you could try using promotional codes in your posts.



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