Social Media Best Practices & Minimum Standards

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Goal: Identify best practices for various social media outlets that a product group has deemed appropriate. Provide insight into the learnings of co-workers who have experimented with social media. This document is primarily a list of actions you can take – not actions you must take. Use Critical Thinking and do what applies to your situation.

A. Why Use Social Media?
1. Social media can open the door to contacting and building relationships with key people who may not normally interact via normal phone or email channels.
2. Social media is a way of making key employees famous and adds credibility to them based on what social media channels they engage in.
3. As much as you detest it or love it, there are companies that love particular social media outlets. So, we should use the technology the key players care about.

B. Overarching guidelines for all social media outlets:
1. You have to determine your outcomes before you dive into a particular social media outlet. Some outcomes include drive traffic to site, increase engagement with industry contacts, increase engagement with customers/prospects, get feedback on products, spark active customers/prospects to take some action like visit a page, and attend an event.
2. For whatever social media outlet, try to be "info-taining" — informational and entertaining. Add your personality to your social media communication.
3. Follow our guidelines and mission regarding appropriateness of content. For instance, we're not controversial in the magazines, so we shouldn't be in social media.
4. If your market or an important segment of your market is actively engaged in a particular social media outlet, then you probably should be too.
5. Keep your static content (e.g., description of events, LinkedIn bio, etc.) up to date. Review, at a minimum, once a month for any needed changes.
6. Fill out your profile — Properly fill out your bio, info, and other information that lead viewers to your website. Use this space to appeal to your direct demographic, and don't just copy and paste content from your website.
7. Add social media links to your email signature.
8. Add social media links to your business card.

C. Facebook

1. In general, creating a business page for your product is more advantageous that creating a personal page. However, one former editor used her personal Facebook page to connect with industry contacts prior to creating her magazine Facebook page. In doing so, she was able to develop close relationships with key industry contacts who felt more comfortable communicating with her via her personal page. She then used those connections to quickly populate the magazine page with fans.
2. Add Facebook logo to your website and e-newsletter page
3. Link Facebook with Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn.
4. Allow people to post on your page, but monitor it on a daily basis to ensure inappropriate content is removed.
5. If you launch a Facebook site, keep it up to date. Post new info/content at a minimum of once a week. Understand your audience; don't ruin all your efforts by annoying your fans with too many inane updates.
6. Provide Worthwhile Information: Provide them with something that will benefit them in some way — actionable information. Answering an industry question, providing a great resource for information, offering advice, and not always providing self-serving messages/links are a surefire way to keep your current fan base. Interact with your fans by being a part of the discussions (e.g., say thank you to valuable content providers) that are started, and don't just regurgitate old information.
7. Pick out a vanity URL for your Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/username.
8. Determine how much interaction you want your fans to have by adjusting the settings for your Facebook page. You can allow or disallow fans to post pictures, video, links, messages, etc. If you don't have the time to continually check up on your page and ensure one of your fans didn't post inappropriate material, disable these features.
9. Take advantage of "page notes." You can use this as an area to create longer posts (i.e. blog) that include keyword-rich content with links to your website.
10. Add content such as articles recently posted on the website, opinion columns, videos, personal review of recent interview, upcoming articles, etc. You should also post items that are not specifically related to your product. For example, you could post general industry stats/research, business growth/stock improvements, or a comparison of business tools such as an iPhone or iPad.
11. Hit the "like" button when reading an article you feel would be appropriate/valuable for your fans, but don't "like" you own articles since that would look self-serving.
12. Reach out to your professional Facebook friends to have them "like" your page.

D. LinkedIn (LI)

1. Change the settings on your profile to "Full View" so your profile can be fully indexed by the search engines.
2. Don't try to connect with people you don't know directly. You can connect with industry acquaintances, which may lead to connecting with higher-up executives. Check the connections of the people you are connected with at least quarterly to see if any other opportunities for key connections exist.
3. After an event, check LinkedIn for profiles of the people you met at the show and ask to connect at that time.
4. Link to your profile**.** If you have a website, blog, Twitter account, or other social media profiles, at least once a month link to your LinkedIn profile from them. If possible, use your name in the text of the link. This helps the search engines find you and helps boost your rankings in the search results.
5. Include a LinkedIn logo on your website and e-newsletter page
6. Start a LinkedIn group
   a. Include important industry-related keywords in your group's name to improve the likelihood of the people you want in your group joining. For example, BSM changed the name of its groups to include the word "VAR" and significantly increased the number of people who joined. Note: LinkedIn limits the number of times you can change the name of your group.
   b. Invite your connections to join your group.
   c. Start discussions on the most popular industry-related groups (and your own group). It's a good opportunity to be seen and have you stand out in the crowd.
   d. At least once a month you should monitor who you accept as a member of your LinkedIn group(s). Set your settings so you can review all members, don't accept all.
   e. Start discussions on your own group. For example, post links to articles in the magazine to your group. The frequency of posting your own discussions could depend upon the activity level of your group. With no discussions, you are missing an opportunity to engage your audience.
   f. You should review your group's discussions on a weekly basis.
   g. Conduct a LinkedIn Poll and share results with group members
   h. Enable news feeds to populate LinkedIn, such as a separate tab for your Twitter posts.
   i. Investigate the "Answer" section of LinkedIn and post questions whenever needed (such when you need a story idea).
7. Join groups that are similar to your industry/missions/etc.
8. Use the events function to find new contacts at companies or schedule appointments at shows.
9. "Follow" companies in your industry by choosing the companies tab at the top of your profile and entering the names of the companies you are interested in.
10. Use LI "questions" feature as well as group discussions as the basis for a blog.
11. In order to endear yourself to an industry association, you could post info/announcement that the LI group would find valuable. However, be creative. For example, if you are mentioning a webinar sponsored by an industry association, don't just post the date and time, tell why you think it will be important to the LI audience or ask for a question they would like to ask of a panel at show.

E. Twitter

Identifying Who To Follow
1. Identify the people you want to build a relationship with, and follow them on Twitter.
2. Manage your followers on a monthly basis by making sure you have no inappropriate followers.
3. Follow your customers.
4. Search germane terms in your industry, and follow the related businesses and people.
5. Look at who is following other players in the industry and then follow those companies, too. Review this on a quarterly basis.

What/How To Tweet
1. Find out common industry-specific hashtags (e.g., #pharma, #BDM, #cloud) and use them whenever possible to increase your exposure.
2. If you want your tweets to automatically post to your Facebook page, add the #FB hashtag to the end of the tweet (you must sign up for this app).
3. Understand your audience; don't ruin all your efforts by annoying your fans with too many inane updates.
4. Establish the right voice. Twitter users tend to prefer a direct, genuine, and of course, a likable tone from your business, but think about your voice as you Tweet. How do you want your business to appear to the Twitter community?
5. Don't complain in your tweets.
6. Don't tweet socio-political statements or anything that could inflame or offend your followers and hurt our business.
7. Don't make your tweets all about you, but make some personal when possible/appropriate.
8. Give a glimpse of developing/upcoming blog posts and/or and events.
9. Tweet photos from events that you take.
10. Tweet updates about special offers, discounts, and time-sensitive deals.
11. Tweet subject matter experts stories
12. Ask questions of your followers to glean valuable insights and show that you are listening.
13. Respond to compliments and feedback in real time.
14. Demonstrate wider leadership and know-how. Reference articles and links about the bigger picture as it relates to your business.

Retweeting
1. Respond to retweets (e.g., "Thanks for the retweet!")
2. Only retweet information your readers would find valuable.
3. Retweet and reply publicly to great tweets posted by your followers and customers.
4. Retweet even from competitors (maybe not direct ones)

Setup/Maintenance Issues
1. Add Twitter logo to your website and e-newsletter page
2. Add Twitter link to your email signature
3. Invite e-newsletter subscribers to follow you
4. Use tools such as Hootsuite or Oktopost to manage your tweets and monitor your followers. Using the "lists" function within Hootsuite also can help to monitor your followers.
5. Regularly monitor the comments about your company, brand, and products.
6. Use a face for your profile if appropriate since more people will follow a person rather than a logo.
7. Include handles and hashtags of companies in articles (especially news features)

Using Twitter At Events
1. Find out specific hashtags for conferences/seminars you are attending and tweet at events (See H. Using Social Media With Conferences/Events). For example, you could pre-tweet a number of general messages prior to attending a show ("Heading to closing party," "getting ready for keynote…") and use your smartphone at the show to tweet about appointments or a speaker you're listening to. This also endears you to the show that created the hashtag.
2. Add a feed in Hootsuite to follow the hashtags of a show you're attending.
3. Use the results of your show hashtag feed to create content (e.g., "some of the most insightful tweets from the show.")

When To Tweet
1. Tweet at least twice a week.
2. Schedule your tweets over time; don't send a large burst of tweets. Spreading out your tweets gives the impression that you are more active on Twitter; followers see (in their Twitter feeds, such as on Hootsuite) your name/company name icon on a regular basis rather than just occasionally.
3. Some of our product groups have experienced success tweeting each article 3 times, 3 days in a row, with different headlines and on the weekends.
4. BSM has seen good responses from tweets posted on Sunday.
5. Schedule to send multiple times over the course of several days.

Twitter parties/Tweet Chats
1. Both of these are live Twitter events, usually moderated and focused around a general topic. A hashtag is developed specific to the event, and each event has a start time.
2. Don't host one of these before you participate in at least one first in order to get a better feel for how they work.
3. Pick a topic that will engage your audience; don't use these as marketing opportunities.
4. Participating in these can increase your recognition within a network or community.
5. These can be a good resource for content ideas and opinion columns.
6. Find these events through Google searches or ask through tweets.

    a. When hosting a tweet chat/party:
        i. Create hashtag
        ii. Promote the event days prior
        iii. Use authors/bloggers/subject matter experts with strong followings to build up interest prior to the launch
        iv. You can build it the event off of subject matter from other chats/parties

F. YouTube

YouTube is one of the largest search engines, but that doesn't mean it is effective for all of our products. If you're creating a lot of video content and using a YouTube channel, make sure you are measuring the effectiveness (page views, traffic back to our site) of posting videos on this site and adjust your long-term plans accordingly.

1. Include a YouTube logo in your website and e-newsletter page
2. Create a channel and add videos from events you attend (see video guidelines).
3. Disable the commenting function to avoid the need to constantly monitor the page.

G. SlideShare.net

1. SlideShare is like YouTube for presentations. You can share PowerPoint presentations and webinars for free (with the basic subscription).
2. SlideShare, like many other social media sites, ranks high with Google, so it can become a source of direct traffic to our sites.
3. Some example of where SlideShare could be useful include posting:
   a. FAQs regarding your products — use your marketing content
   b. Pitches & proofs
   c. Webinar presentations
   d. Conference presentations

H. Using Social Media At Conferences/Events
1. Develop a pre-show plan for tweets/posts
   a. Find hashtags related to the event before you leave for the show.
   b. Before you leave for the show, preschedule some "live" tweets/posts. These should be general rather than specific messages (e.g.,, "Looking forward to hearing what XYZ keynote speaker has to say about ABC technology," "Impressed with education tracks at this year's #ABC show," "Heading to closing party,"). Doing this bolsters your social media presence at a show and endears you to the show's organizers. But these should not be your only social media actions from an event. Use these prescheduled tweets/posts *in conjunction with* your live posts.
   c. Learn if a show has any special social media activities happening during the event. For example: contests for the person who tweets the most with the show's hashtag, exclusive social media giveaways, or special meetings coordinated only via social media.

2. Compile a list from a show
   a. Some examples include "Top Tweets From XYZ Show," "Best Quotes From XYZ Show," "Top Tweets/Quotes From Particular Speaker At XYZ Show."
   b. Creating this list is a valuable way to quickly generate original content (e.g., a blog, FB post, etc.).
   c. This kind of content drives conversations.

3. Take advantage of opportunities to get your voice out there. This helps promote our brand/image.
   a. Post pictures of sessions/speakers/slides
   b. Promote quotes from sessions
   c. Retweet posts from other high-value people at the show
   d. After an event, check LinkedIn for profiles of the people you met at the show and ask to connect at that time.

I.   Reports/Metrics
1. Google Analytics – As you engage with Google Analytics, you will learn which data is helpful to you. You will need to interpret the data — the reports won't tell you everything on their own. Review the following monthly:
   - Total unique site users
   - Users from social networks
   - By source
   - Which content is most popular
   - Real-time statistics – e.g., watch visitors to your site and what they are viewing as it happens.
2.   Hootsuite and Oktopost data and reports
3.   Klout