

6 Step Savvy Social Media Strategy:

How to Accelerate Your Organization's Digital Word of Mouth Communication



SOUNDING
B O A R D

Marketing & Communications

RESONATE YOUR MESSAGE

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, social media quickly accelerated into its role as a highly effective marketing and communication vehicle worldwide. This form of **“digital word of mouth** via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google + and others is frequented by millions of users everyday, and has become an expected means of marketing and communication for businesses and organizations.

In this guide, **Six-Step Savvy Social Media Strategy** you will learn the steps that your organization needs to take to develop a highly effective social media strategy to improve your organization’s marketing and communication via social media. “Social media” is emphasized for an important reason—while social media is growing in popularity, it is just one communication medium among many for reaching your audiences.

Don’t abandon your other marketing and communication mediums! Social media should be used in tandem with other well established marketing and communication strategies.

Some things to keep in mind as you use this guide:

1. **It’s free**—please feel free to share it with others!
2. Social media strategy development is not the result of one person sitting at their desk and typing out a plan. Social media strategy development should and does include others who are involved with deploying the plan. To thoroughly analyze the factors that will guide the success of your organization’s social media strategy, make note of the people who you need to include in this process.
3. This guide can also be used with a single department or for a single program, small organizations, or large organizations.
4. You may also reprint the text contained in this free guide in your own writings — like your website, blog, or newsletter — **as long as you credit Heather McGowan of Sounding Board Marketing & Communications as the author and link back to the website www.sounding-board.net.**

I wish you all the best in a very successful execution of your social media strategy!

If you need any assistance with your plan, please contact Sounding Board Marketing & Communications at 916.673.8868 or hvmcgowan@sounding-board.net.

1. Get Your Social Media House in Order Ensure that your organization's policies support its social media presence.

Establish a social media policy for employee participation in social media on company time and beyond.

2. Know Your Audience

Who is using social media, and which one is the best for your organization? Use surveys and focus groups to ask all of your stakeholders the following:

- ✓ Which social media networks do they use the most?
- ✓ What kind of content would interest them?

Where will you post? Determine in which social media communities you want to have a presence. Don't create a presence in Twitter, for example, if your audiences are not on Twitter and are primarily in a different social media network. You can always change this in the future, if your audiences' needs change.

What will you post? Determine what kind of content you will post, based on your audiences' feedback ... and write to this. If your audience is mainly parents, then don't post employee recognition information that speaks to an employee audience. Instead, for example, write an employee recognition story that describes how the employee helped out students, improved the learning environment, improved service to parents. If your audience is mainly parents, instead of posting random school stories, provide **Weekly School Highlights** to communicate that each district school will be highlighted on a regular basis.

How will you post? Photos and videos are proven to attract more interaction by your audience members...AND, they're a heck of a lot more interesting than just text! For Twitter, use your content to engage partners and followers.

Why will you post? Determine why you are posting certain content—do you want to clarify information? Engage followers? Increase participation? Make sure your content has a purpose.

3. Set the rules of engagement Establish a comments/posting policy — and stick to it!

Resolve to respond to customer service issues within three hours, via social media

4. Stick to your brand

Know your voice: Everything you say on the social web should “sound” like your brand.

5. Plan your content Pick a small number of social media content goals for the coming year. Some possibilities:

Turn your organizational newsletter into an internal blog and give employees the ability to contribute.

Identify which stories will be best shared via video — and work with students and other audience members on creating those videos.

Utilize the rule of thirds:

- ✓ 1/3 of your content should promote your organization (calendar updates, board meetings, other matters that are “organizational business”).
- ✓ 1/3 of your content should be evidence of your organization supporting similar or likeminded businesses/organizations. Identify key partners that can help share your messages — and work with these partners on identifying which messages your organization will share.
- ✓ 1/3 of your content should be related to the “heart and soul” stories of your organization.

Time your content: Create a calendar that spells out what you’re going to say and when you’re going to say it, and align this calendar with organizational activities/initiatives.

6. Measure success

Measuring social media success begins by asking more questions (use focus groups and surveys to measure your success!):

- ✓ Did we learn something about our customers that we didn't know before?
- ✓ Did our customers learn something about us?
- ✓ Were we able to engage our customers in new conversations?
- ✓ Do our employees have an effective new tool for external feedback and reputation management?

P.S. If this seems overwhelming, don't try to do all of these things at once. Pick the ones that are most likely to be possible for your organization to start and sustain.

Most importantly ... have fun!!!