

Is your business using social media? You need content strategy

 By [Jo Duxbury](#)

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In case you missed it: If your business is on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or any of the other social media platforms, you are officially a publisher. The barriers to using media to promote your company - or yourself - have been largely removed. And these days, **everyone** is a publisher.

Media is in the hands of the masses. It's no longer reserved for those with big budgets and access to TV spots, radio bursts, print ads and billboards. Anyone - individual or company - can set up a website or blog, launch themselves on Facebook, start tweeting or create a LinkedIn profile. And they do.

The problem is that not everyone knows what publishing is about, or how to do it well. It takes expertise to understand how to use these new channels to engage with vastly diverse audiences. However, many companies don't have a proper strategy in place to manage (a) the content they're putting out there, and (b) the content that's been generated in their direction by their followers, fans, customers and, possibly, competitors.

If you don't have this set up for your business, you need a social media content strategy.

So what is content strategy?

Content strategy is [commonly defined](#) as planning for the creation, delivery and governance of content. I'd add to that: '... in order to help achieve identified business goals'.

Commission a social media content strategy and your consultant should work with you to define:

- Clear positioning of your brand and its offering in the social media context. This is a different environment and your above-the-line messaging is probably not going to be appropriate.
- Your target audience - saying 'everyone on South Africa' doesn't cut it. Which of your overall audience segments are on Twitter? Or Facebook? How are they accessing these platforms? You'll want to be as specific as you can so you can make your content relevant.
- What **your audience** needs, wants and is interested in - and then identifying types (and sources of) content that meets these.
- What **you** want to get out of social media - and then creating guidelines for content that marries this with what your audience wants. (Hint: "We want lots of fans" is not a goal. What you want them to do, once you've got them, is.)
- A tone, language and vocabulary that's in line with your brand - but adjusted to a more social environment. Formal

language and corporate speak is often not appropriate in social media - you'll be conversing with your customers, not broadcasting to them.

- Guidelines and policies for managing user-generated content and your online reputation. How will you moderate your Facebook page? How will you track (and respond to) what people are saying about you on Twitter?
- Content sustainability planning. Social media - particularly Facebook - is not tactical; it's about creating relationships. How will you ensure a constant, consistent flow of good content? Where will it come from? Who is responsible for creating and managing it? A content strategy will also look at content themes and a conversational calendar - what you're going to talk about throughout the year.
- How to assess the effectiveness of your social media activities, through setting benchmarks, measurement methods and regular reviews to measure ROI.

The content you put out on social media needs to be thought through well, planned properly, strategic, consistent and must have a point. Too many brands post fluff like 'Hey, it's Friday! What are you all doing this weekend?' With customers increasingly filtering out feeds that don't interest them, you have to work hard for their attention.

Good content gets results

With a good content strategy in place, your business can build brand awareness, capitalise on opportunities, increase loyalty and sales, handle tricky situations well, gain interesting customer insights, make customers feel valued, and much more.

Content should not be an afterthought. It's powerful. Don't go online without giving it some thought.

ABOUT JO DUXBURY

Jo Duxbury has been providing a platform for marketers to find thousands of industry freelancers since she launched www.freelancentral.co.za in early 2006. January 2010 saw her launch Peppermint Source, which offers a full outsourced marketing strategy and management service to companies that don't have the time, skills or staff to handle their marketing themselves. Jo is also a fine art, travel and portrait photographer - view her work at www.joduxbury.com or follow @JoDuxbury on Twitter.

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