



## How to Maximize the effectiveness of your social media efforts.

**Tips to make sure your time is well spent and that you're achieving measurable - and meaningful - results!**

by Linda Pophal

[www.stratcommunications.com](http://www.stratcommunications.com)

You would have to be living in a cave to have missed out on all of the buzz around social media. If you don't have a Twitter account, a Facebook fan page or a LinkedIn profile these days, you're just not with it. But, social media can eat up a lot of time and, for many, the jury is still out in terms of whether that time investment is actually worth it.

It can be – but like any other communication tool, only if it's used strategically. What does that mean? That means, initially, establishing some specific goals and objectives and then developing strategies and tactics designed to help you achieve those objectives.

At first, your goal may be simply to “understand how it works” and that's a valid goal. Practicing and playing around with social media can be a good way to begin understanding how it works and the value that it might hold for you and your business.

But, as you practice, practice with a purpose – and a certain amount of caution. What happens on social media, stays on social media (and the World Wide Web!), forever. Everything you say, everything you post, everyone you follow becomes a reflection of your brand. With that in mind, let's take a look at a number of practical tips that can help you maximize your social media efforts and ensure that the time you're spending online is spent in meaningful – and measurable! – ways.

- **Pick the tools that are right for you and your audience.** Facebook is a very socially-oriented site with much focus on the use of photos. Twitter is a micro-messaging site that lends itself primarily to one-way communication – you tweet, your followers read and, if you're lucky, they retweet your messages. LinkedIn is a business-oriented site that can be useful for job seekers and B2B marketers. And these are just the top three. There are also a [myriad of other, more specialized, social media sites](#) that can help you drill down to connect with very specific audiences.

- **Consider maintaining multiple sites.** Many people maintain both professional and personal social media profiles that target different audiences. You may also wish to have a variety of professional (or a variety of personal sites), each designed to reach a different audience and focus on different key messages. For instance, an organization might have a corporate profile, a CEO profile, a media relations profile, a customer service profile, etc. An independent HR consultant practicing in multiple areas might have a profile focused on training activities, a profile focused on benefits consulting and a profile focused on interpersonal coaching. It's really up to you. Your decisions should be based both on your objectives and the time you have available to maintain multiple profiles. And, speaking of objectives...
- **Follow and friend those that you're interested in connected with or learning from.** This may include thought leaders in your industry, potential clients or customers – or even competitors. Keep in mind that your competitors may also be following you! And, just as when establishing profiles, consider which profile should be following which people. You don't want to use your social Facebook profile, for instance, to follow a key client.
- **Know what you want to get out of your social media activities and maintain a clear focus.** Don't attempt with any one profile to be all things to all people. Having specific objectives will help you maximize your limited resources (primarily time!). Having a specific focus will help to ensure that you're providing value to the people who choose to "friend," or "follow" you. Each profile should clearly reflect a specific brand or identity targeted to a specific audience. Then, as you develop and deliver content you can keep a sharp focus on what that audience expects from you and keep them connected by providing specific, relevant information.
- **Incorporate your social media efforts into your web site as appropriate.** Once you establish a presence on some of these social media sites, you can include little icons on your web site to let people know where they can find you and make it easy for them to connect with you immediately. Here's an example of [how one my clients does this](#).
- **Keep your branding consistent.** If you have a web site for your online gift shop and also maintain a Twitter account and post videos to YouTube, make sure that all these channels are designed with the same "look and feel" to enhance brand identity and consistency.
- **Use analytics to track effectiveness.** There are a variety of things you could track and measure on social media. Number of followers. Number of retweets. Number of clicks through to links you've posted. Because the Internet offers so many great opportunities to track activity you should be taking advantage of this data to help you determine whether or not your activities are worthwhile. What matters? It depends, of course, on your objectives. But be careful to measure what really matters. Ultimately, it may not be the number of followers or the number of retweets you receive that

represent results for you. It may be the downstream impacts of actual referrals, orders, or advertisers you attract through these activities.

- **Cross-pollinate.** Suppose you have a web site, a blog and an eletter that you produce on a regular basis. And you're active on Twitter and LinkedIn. These activities should not be independent. They should be carefully planned and coordinated so that you can leverage the value of your efforts. For instance, in a blog you might reference a topic that recently appeared in your eletter, or refer to a tweet you sent recently. You might reference a relevant blog posting through Twitter and LinkedIn. When you release an eletter update you might notify your connections through Twitter and LinkedIn. Hopefully you can see how this works. Now this could take a lot of time and thought, but not if you develop a specific plan that outlines when and what content you will be producing through all of these venues. Then it's a simple matter of following your plan.
- **Repurpose content to maximize the use of your time.** It is unlikely that all of your connections will be reading all of your content in all of the places it appears. That would be wonderful, but it's just not going to happen. So don't worry about repurposing your content across multiple platforms – a blog post can become an article in your eletter and the basis of a tweet and a LinkedIn update. Your eletter can include links to your blog postings, your web site, articles you've written or places where you've been quoted. Your LinkedIn updates can include a link to a recent blog post, etc. Again, make these activities part of the plan you develop to ensure that your messages are coordinated across all of these channels and aligned with your overall objectives.
- **Get involved.** LinkedIn has a feature called “groups” that allows users to connect with affinity-based listings of people across a broad range of interests and activities. Simply search for the topic or issue you're interested in and you'll find a list of groups in reverse order based on the number of participants. Request to join and the group moderator will approve your request. You may also wish to set up your own groups to initiate conversations and build networks among like-minded individuals.
- **Use tools like TweetDeck and HootSuite** to help streamline your social media activities. These tools allow you to post to multiple sites and profiles, schedule updates and tweets and track the effectiveness of your online activities.
- **Don't be embarrassed or feel “uncool” if you decide that social media is not for you.** It may not be. Just as television advertising is not the appropriate tool for every marketer, social media may not be right for all businesses. The key to determining whether it is or not is considering your audience and your objectives. In any communication endeavor those are always the only two things that matter!

So many opportunities – so little time. Social media communication tools represent opportunities for some (but not all!) businesses. The first step is simply getting involved. Set up some accounts and begin to learn about who’s online, what they’re “tweeting about,” what they’re interested in, and how they’re building lists of active followers. There’s much to learn and much to share. Social media is still in its infancy so there is ample opportunity to become a “social media expert” for all of us!

For more information from Strategic Communications, LLC, about our social media research and insights, visit our [web site](#). We hope this information has been helpful to you and, if it has, we encourage you to share it with others. **Please feel free to forward or post this white paper on your own web site.** And, as always, we’re interested in hearing your social media successes, questions, insights – and, yes, - even missteps! Email us at: [linda@stratcommunications.com](mailto:linda@stratcommunications.com).

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[Strategic Communications, LLC](#), works with clients to maximize their communication efforts through the use of both traditional and new media tools. Strategic Communications believes in planning before doing with a goal of achieving the greatest results with the least effort (time and money). Clients range from small businesses and independent consultants to large, publicly held organizations. When it comes to effective communication, and thanks in large part to the Internet, size really doesn’t matter!