

— SOCIAL MARKETING —

ADVANTAGE



GUIDE 2:

USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR
MARKET RESEARCH

Use Social Media for Market Research

A successful social media campaign is something that any business can benefit from to a massive extent.

That's because social media marketing offers you access to a gigantic network of people and adds tools and features that are ideal for encouraging virality.

But to think of social media *only* in those terms is short sighted. The power of social media goes far beyond giving you a platform – it also gives you an incredible amount of data and a huge amount of insight. What's more, is that it lets your audience communicate *with you*.

Before you launch your own social media campaign then, one of the very best things you can do is to use this tool to collect data and build your own strategy. Use it to see what works and what doesn't, to better know your audience and generally to ensure that you are on-the-pulse.

Twitter for Short Term Research

Twitter has occasionally described itself as being the 'pulse of the planet'. What does it mean by this?

Well, essentially, it means that whatever is trending on Twitter is highly likely to be 'trending' in real life. Let's say that you head outside and you hear a very loud alarm coming from the nearby shopping arcade. You do a Google search and you don't find anything particularly useful on here.

Why not?

Simple: because Google isn't fast enough to keep up with this kind of news. Someone needs to first write an article and then publish it. Then Google needs to 'index' that news with its spiders and it needs to recognize which search terms this is relevant for. After a while, relevant results will start turning up at the top of Google. But it's not immediate.

Twitter on the other hand, gives you a direct line of communication with the local community. Just search the name of that shopping arcade and you'll see people posting about it. Some people will be asking what's going on and likely there will be a security member there who will post the answer.

This is how Twitter can make the claim to be 'the pulse' of the planet.

And likewise, if you look at what is currently trending, you will see longer term topics that lots of people are messaging about. This is the same effect but on a much larger scale. People might be Tweeting about something that happened to a certain celebrity, or they might be tweeting about some political event in the news. Perhaps they are tweeting about a new computer game, new movie, or the latest Game of Thrones episode.

Either way, knowing these trending topics can be very useful for you as a marketer. And the reason is fairly self explanatory! Essentially, by knowing what topic is 'hot' at any given moment, it makes it far easier for you to create posts on that basis that will get searched.

Writing about 'hot topics' in fact is one of *the* best ways to get new followers and viewers. Why? Because the faster you are, the sooner you can get your post on Google or your video on YouTube before they are inundated with similar content.

I recently made a video covering the launch of a new phone. I was fortunate enough to get an invitation to the event and because of this, I could cover that event as soon as the embargo lifted with footage, written content and more.

In the first couple of days it had over half a million views. Content on the same page without this 'new' appeal tends to get a few thousand or a few hundred thousand maximum.

You see the difference?

If you can spot a topic this way, *as it develops*, then you can reach the audience you want to and gain massive traction before anyone else has even landed on the topic!

Likewise, by posting social media content with the right tags, you can also get much more engagement from people who aren't already your followers.

The key in this instance is once again to be early, but also to post content with tags that are popular without being *too* popular. That might sound a little nonsensical – after all, why *wouldn't* you want to post on a topic with the biggest reach possible?

And the answer is that if you choose a topic that is a little *too* popular, then you risk being immediately drowned out by all the other posts on the same subject. This can happen even when you aren't posting about 'trending' topics. For instance, if you post a picture of a sunset with #sunset then you can bet that so too are a million other people. Within the first minute, your image stops showing up in searches.

But if you post 'twilight', then you can be much more successful.

In fact, one of the very *best* strategies in this regard, is to post about local stuff. Remember that alarm situation? If you had Tweeted about it, then that would have been some guaranteed views for you and probably some new followers and retweets.

Or what if you were to attend a big event like a festival and then post *about* that event? Here, you'd have hundreds – maybe thousands – of people posting about that subject and searching for it. But it would never go that much larger than just the people in attendance.

Learning the Niche

What's even more important though, is looking at how a niche behaves in the long term. That means doing your research to see what is hot and what's not, what goes down well etc.

For example, if you were to create a site about fitness, then you might think that it's perfectly fine to just *know about fitness*. You would think! But the reality is quite different. The topic of fitness can be split into numerous smaller camps and even 'factions'. Almost everyone in this niche and this industry has a horse in the race. They all have strong opinions about what is the right way to go about losing weight and what is not. There are ideas that are new and totally accepted. Ideas that are partially accepted and ideas that are already considered old-hat and defunct.

For instance, if you head over to the r/fitness subreddit, you'll find a community of people that *very much* believes in counting calories and measuring 'macros'. Their dogma is that this is the only way to lose weight and the admins there come down heavily on people who promote ideals such as going paleo, or such as low carb diets.

Conversely though, there are corners of the web where paleo diets are considered the absolute cornerstone of a healthy eating program.

You see the problem? You can't simply dive in with your eyes closed and start posting about 'fitness'. If you do, you'll likely unintentionally step on toes and upset people. You won't know who is really your target audience and you might well be completely unfamiliar with the terms that people throw at you like IIFYM (If It Fits in Your Macros) etc.

The point is, you need to immerse yourself in the niche and learn the ins and outs. There's nothing wrong with going against the conventional wisdom – in fact these can be the most powerful and effective posts. The issue is simply that you can't afford to not *know* the landscape and you can't afford to jump in blindly.

That's why all brands and all creators should spend time learning their niche, they should spend time in these communities and they should do their reading and their research prior to getting started.

This way, you can write a post that is new, that doesn't look outdated and that is only confrontationally if that was your intention. You'll know which communities are likely to react in which ways and you can post in the correct forum for the best response.

Note

This is also a very easy way to find content that you can share with your audience. There are numerous tool you can find that will allow you to see popular posts with lots of likes and shares in your niche. All you then need to do is to retweet these or reshare them to your audience, and now *you* will benefit from that popularity. As proven commodities, this is a strategy that is almost *impossible* to fail! (Almost!)

More Data Collection

While you're at it, there is much more information to be gleaned from social accounts.

For one, this is a great way to check out the opposition and to see what is working. Chances are that whatever niche you're looking at entering, there will be some established big brands that will already have quite the foothold. Very clearly, these brands have done something right.

Your objective should not be to try and copy these brands of course but rather just to see what worked for them and what didn't. At the same time, try to look at what people are *saying* on their pages.

What is missing from this campaign? What is it that people would like to see that they haven't seen yet?

This is a fantastic place to get clues and ideas regarding niches and audience members that aren't currently being catered to. Then you simply swoop in to help!

At the same time, doing this can *also* give you some excellent opportunities for marketing. You might find some other brands for instance that you could work with in future. Or you might find an influencer – a personality on social media with a big audience that might be willing to do a shout-out for you.

There are tons of potential opportunities like this and doing your research beforehand can help you to learn where these are. In fact, it can allow you to come up with an entire strategy and then to decide precisely who to contact, when to contact them and how to get the most from them.

Finally, use this to gain a better understanding of your target audience. In other reports as part of this package, you can find information on the importance of having a 'buyer persona'. This is the ideal target audience for your product.

But how do you know who this is? Guess work is not the right strategy as you may have guessed (ironic!), so instead you need to look at who is following your competition, you need to look at who is reading and sharing the kind of information that you are sharing. And you need to decide, based on this information, where the best place to market is and how you should design your brand and your content.

Surveying Your Audience

As your number of followers grows and as you gain more and more traction, your options for promoting yourself and for market research also grow.

One of the best things you can do for instance, is to simply *ask your own audience* what they want to see. It sounds so simple and yet it is something that a lot of companies never think to do!

In short, you simply post a question on your forum asking something like: 'what type of content would you like to see more of?' or 'what would you like to see for our next product?'

Something as simple as this can be a fantastic tool for making sure that your content is on-point and it can help you to grow your brand. Not only does this ensure that your content is right for the audience you want to read it, but it also gives your audience a sense of ownership over your content and makes them feel valued and as though they belong. This is hugely beneficial and it can even extend to a large range of other uses.

For example, how about using your social media to poll your audience on your new logo? Let them vote for their favourite one!

This is called 'crowdsourcing' and it opens up a ton of doors for a more synergistic relationship between content creator and audience.

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