PREPARING FOR DIGITAL MARKETING IS LIKE PLANNING A FLIGHT
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Whether you’re feeling grounded, or you’re cruising along nicely, social media has the power to take your association to new heights, but a lack of planning can bring you back down to earth fast.

We know that the fast-pace of the digital media landscape can be overwhelming. We also understand the unique challenges faced by associations.

This manual has been designed specifically with association communicators in mind and will guide you through the development of a social media plan tailored to support your organization’s goals and objectives.

We’ll cover the basics like selecting your platform and protecting your brand, and get into the finer details of creating content to share. Because the social media skies can be somewhat turbulent, we’ve included plenty of tips to navigate stormy skies – learn how to get management buy-in, establish clear policies and use monitoring tools to listen to what’s being said about your association online.

While social media can feel intimidating at first, once you get your wheels up off the ground it can yield great results. With a great plan in place before you take off you’ll reach your destination in no time.
Social media is a vehicle; you use it to get to a destination, or to achieve an end result. Whether your goal is sales, managing your reputation, raising awareness, education, GR, HR, IR, PR or any other "R", you must never lose sight of this basic fact when planning or implementing your social media strategy. In fact, all your communications must be in sync with your well-defined business objectives.

Should social media pay for itself?

The debate over the return on investment (ROI) in social media rages on, social media purists argue with pragmatists over whether social media should “pay for itself”.

The answer is simple – if it doesn’t pay for itself, then what’s the point? Social media may not directly generate dollars to pay for itself, but it should definitely pay for itself in the form of results. Those results should be trackable and measurable, and directly tied to your communications objectives. If it enhances your brand along the way, that’s gravy, but always remember that your primary reasons for using social media should be driving website traffic and expanding the recognition of your brand.

An integrated social media strategy

Like a good flight plan, your social media strategy needs to be designed with the destination always in mind.

At Communicatto, we always recommend a “hub and spoke” publishing system. In this system, your website is the hub of your online publishing and your social media platforms are the spokes. What does that mean?

Let’s say you publish a new blog post on your website, by adding fresh content, you’re refreshing the hub. That’s great, but how will anyone see that blog post? You need to syndicate it (distribute it around the web) so it can tease people into coming back to your site. That’s where your social media channels come in. Every time you share a blog post, your fans and followers (and others) will see it and be invited to visit your website for the full article. **Content out, people in.**
Hub and Spoke publishing system = content out, people in:

Why is your website the hub?

The reason you want people to come back to your hub is simple – it’s on your own home turf where you can "convert" them. **Conversion** is digital marketing-speak for getting them to do something like sign up for a newsletter, download a brochure or watch a video. Perhaps you’ll harvest email addresses for a continuous “drip” marketing campaign, or get your prospects to sign up for a series of white papers. Ultimately you are warming them up to engage with you on whatever it is that your business relies on.

The definition of success for this basic hub and spoke structure is a stream of qualified web traffic that converts into subscribers and ultimately prospects, then customers or stakeholders.

Like an airplane, there are many moving parts to such a structure and many steps in the journey before that post on Facebook turns into an action. This flight manual describes in some detail the various steps you could take in support of such a program. Because every company, and every market, is different, as they say in the car ads “your mileage may vary”.

**Takeaway**

In the above we’ve provided a quick 50,000-foot view of social media marketing. As we move forward we’ll look at each part of the process in detail, but the things you want to remember are:

- Engagement and conversation matter, but results matter more.
- Social media should achieve a trackable, measurable ROI.
- A hub and spoke publishing system is based on content out, people in.
Everything you need to know before preparing for flight

First, we need to take a quick look at the flight plan to make sure we have a general idea where we’re going.

We start by taking a look at the P.O.S.T. model – People, Objectives, Strategy, and Technology.

1. **People** – who do you want to reach?

2. **Objectives** – what do you want them to do?

3. **Strategy** – how will you get them to do it?

4. **Technology** – what platforms make sense given the above?
We will take a detailed look at these four priorities in a bit, but for now here’s a quick summary:

- **People**: First and foremost, social media is about people, and you need to identify a target audience.
  - You know how easy it is to tune out those airport announcements because most of them aren’t relevant to you? To keep your audience rapt and engaged, you need to make sure you’re chatting up the right people and not just any ole web surfer.

- **Objectives**: Unless you know precisely where your destination is, how can you expect to put together a logical flight plan? Likewise, unless you know exactly what end result you’re aiming for, it will be almost impossible to plan a successful social media campaign – and that means having clearly defined objectives.

- **Strategy**: Now that you know what you want to achieve, it’s time to look at the flight path. What messaging strategy are you going to use to make sure your chosen audience is on board? The content that you put out there will determine the success of your efforts.

- **Technology**: What social media channels will help you reach the right audience with the right message?
  - The Internet is big and you can’t talk to everyone out there. So don’t try. You need to work out where your audience is hanging out, and how best to reach them. That’s where some solid planning comes in.

**Takeaway**

In this section we looked at the four main priorities for your social media planning:

1. People
2. Objectives
3. Strategy
4. Technology

Now keep reading – we’re going to take a detailed look at each of those four priorities.
Who are you inviting along for the ride?

From the **P.O.S.T. model**, you will recall that our first priority is people. In fact, defining a target audience is pretty much the most important part of a social media strategy. It determines what platforms you’ll use, how you’ll use them and what types of content you’ll share and create. And the more you narrow down your target audience, the more focused and successful your social media strategy will be.

Imagine trying to speak to every person in an airport to provide a flight update. You’d likely go crazy talking to a bunch of people who don’t care, and you’d have a lot of people missing their flights.

How do you find the right people?

The Internet is big (even bigger than an airport!), and you shouldn’t try to talk to everyone. So how do you find the right people?

The answer is to get focused on a target audience. By focused we don’t mean the way traditional marketers identify demographics (females 18-49 with a pulse) – no sir, we digital types want you to create something called “personas” of your typical audience members.
**What is a persona?**

A “persona” is fancy talk for a character sketch.

Essentially, it’s a detailed profile of a member of your target audience. Not a quick scribble like you might get from those demographics, but a precise description of character like a novelist or playwright might do, including such things as age, marital status, hobbies and interests.

Basically, it’s like creating a character for a play. Take it one step further and include the specific pain points or challenges your organization can address.

**Why personas?**

Personas are important because they:

- Allow for precise targeting – just like a parachutist aiming for a bull's-eye on the ground
- Allow you to set clear goals and objectives
- Give you direction on what technologies to use to meet your objectives
- Help you build a measurable and accurate strategy

Once you know whom you’ll be talking to (thanks to a well-defined persona) it’s a lot easier to know what to say on social media! We know you're witty and charming, but how is the target supposed to know that? How can you woo them with content and conversation *they* care about if you’re not exactly sure what that is?

**More emphasis on what they want to hear and less emphasis on what you want to say… that's the recipe for social media success!**
2. Objectives

Where are you headed?

Once you know who your target audience is, you need to know precisely what you want them to do. In other words, what is your definition of success? At this point it’s worth distinguishing between objectives and goals:

Short-term objectives

Your objectives are the results you want to see in the shorter term. We’ve already established that, here at Communicatto, we believe your social media efforts should achieve a measurable ROI. More fans or followers, and more conversation might feel good, but they are vanity measures and don’t give you a direct return. Web traffic is measurable and when you attract new visitors to your website you’re moving them one step closer to take action.

So, web traffic should be your objective. Engagement, conversation and click throughs are the means to that end.

That’s why the hub and spoke publishing strategy that we mentioned earlier is such a powerful tool for integrating your social media marketing efforts. Let’s take a look at it again:

Long-term goals

Goals are the results you want to see in the long-term. As a professional association, your long-term goal might be new members, newsletter subscribers, donations, or whatever it is that supports your organization’s mission. Even while you’re planning a strategic social media campaign designed to achieve measurable objectives, you should always have the destination in mind. Because the traffic you drive to your website must be highly qualified and prepared for the messaging they see there.

Takeaway

If you’re spending time and money on social media it should achieve a measurable ROI. Before you can design a strategy you must be clear on your short-term objectives, as well as your long-term goals.
3. Strategy

What’s the best way to get to your destination?

It’s all well and good that you have objectives, but what next? If you want to bring passengers along for the ride, you need to work out why they would want to come.

That’s where strategy comes in.

You identified your persona, but what motivates them? Without strategy you’ll just be broadcasting endlessly (and pointlessly) on a gazillion social channels – in the vague hope of finding someone who’ll listen.

Before you publish a single post, you’re going to need a messaging strategy, and how that looks will depend on your business type. As a professional association, your strategy might be to educate and inform; while a luxury car company might employ an aspirational strategy. Your research into personas and platforms will help you decide what will work best for you.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself when developing a messaging strategy:

- What are the emotional factors that motivate your target
- What problems can you solve?
- What information does your audience need before they know they’re interested?

A little later we’ll talk about how that messaging strategy translates to content development, but for now it’s just important to think about the emotional shift you’re trying to create among your audience.

Takeaway

Effective social media content is written in your target audience’s language, and it should be based on a well-defined messaging strategy. Some examples might be:

- Aspirational
- Educational
- Curiosity
- Belonging
4. Technology

How are you going to get where you’re headed?

All that work you did on your personas will help you figure out where they hang out. There are a gazillion social media platforms (or maybe even a quadrillion!) and you cannot and should not chase them all. The basic rule of thumb is “go where your people are”. If that's just Facebook, LinkedIn and email, that's okay – you can safely ignore Instagram or Snapchat, or whatever the latest flavour of the month is.

So now it’s time to evaluate the social media platforms and decide which ones provide the best way to reach your audience. Remember, the goal isn’t to simply amass followers on obscure sites; you want to drive traffic back to your website and ultimately have your audience do what you want – download a white paper, subscribe to a publication or become a member.

Pick your social media platforms

Picking the right social media platforms from the tens of thousands (or was that a quadrillion?) out there can be tricky. The right platform is the one your target audience members use! Essentially, you want to take your messages to where the people are, instead of trying to lure the people to some social platform they don’t currently enjoy.

Which platforms your target audience use is likely dependent on age. You might be surprised to learn that Facebook skews toward an older audience while millennials prefer more visual platforms like Instagram or Snapchat. Take a look at Communicatto’s blog post on social media age demographics to find out which platforms your audience is using.  
https://www.communicatto.com/generation-social-media/

Also try to remember the hub and spoke system mentioned above – your goal is not to have people hang around your Facebook page, it is to lure them in so they click through to YOUR website. The point is to build your own website traffic.

One easy way to narrow it down is to think of the platforms as being comprised of two distinct groups – storage and conversation.

Storage platforms

Like YouTube for videos, SoundCloud for audio, and Slideshare for PowerPoint and PDFs, storage platforms are easy, low maintenance ways to get started in social media without any conversation.

They provide a low risk point of entry, have numerous search engine (SEO) benefits, and give you professional web-based tools with which to share your materials. It’s a great idea to start with these types of platforms. They provide a natural extension of your offline marketing programs.
For any media type you can think of (audio, video, photos, slides, etc.) there is a dominant platform. The factors to consider when choosing a content storage platform include:

- **How much traffic does it get or how popular is it?**
  The About Us section of each platform will usually have some of those details. For example, here’s YouTube’s info: [https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/press/](https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/press/)
  Measurement sites like Quantcast, Alexa or Google Trends can usually tell you approximately how popular a site is, relative to others in the same category.

- **How easy is it to embed into my own site’s blog posts and pages?**
  Rich media content doesn’t do you much good if you can’t use it to spruce up your website! Remember, the goal here is to lure people back to your website/blog not to have them hang around on YouTube.

- **Does it have a mobile app?**
  Content capture and creation happens out in the real world, and opportunities arise when you’re not at your desk. You want a platform that works easily while you’re on the go with your smartphone or tablet.

- **Does it have easy to use, built-in sharing mechanisms?**
  Most do, so this should be an easy box to tick.

- **Does it have insights, analytics or at least a view counter?**
  That helps assess the long-term audience value of your content so you can do more of what works and ditch the underperforming content.

Storage platforms are the easy conversion points of social media – go for it, where’s the harm? It’s nothing but upside from an audience/SEO perspective and very little extra work. However, these platforms can’t exist in isolation – you’ll need conversation platforms to help your content (embedded on your site from these storage sites) get discovered.
Conversation platforms

Conversation takes quite a bit more effort than uploading your multimedia content. You want to choose conversation platforms based on where your personas are hanging out, but not all conversation platforms are created equal. For example, did you know?

- Though the majority of Twitter users are ages 18-29, it is full of journalists and politicians.
- Facebook is projected to have 1.44 billion monthly active users in 2017, and that number will continue to rise through 2020.
- LinkedIn appeals to college-educated professionals with high net worth.
- Pinterest attracts mainly women; 36 per cent of its users are ages 18-29. However, Gen Xers and Baby Boomers use Pinterest nearly as much as their Millennial counterparts.
- Over 90 per cent of users on Instagram are under the age of 35.

Takeaway

Go where the people are – and not just any people, they must be YOUR people.
Taking flight with a consistent identity

Your flight training is almost over! Now you understand that your social media efforts should rest on four sound pillars (or POSTs!) - people, objectives, strategy and tactics. And that means you’re almost ready to start, but first we’ve got one more acronym for you.

This one’s all about protecting your brand. Use B.U.M.P as a pre-flight checklist before you consider taking flight:

1. **Brand** – establish your standard username and URLs and how they will be used
2. **Understand** – take a course, read a white paper, watch a tutorial video, bring in a trainer
3. **Monitor** – find out what others are saying about you
4. **Policy** – set guidelines
Branding guidelines

Before taking flight and winging your way into the world of social media, you need to make sure you have a consistent identity across all your channels.

You must reserve an appropriate username and vanity URL for each channel you intend to use (or park for future use). You need to add the appropriate brand visuals (logo, header, background, colors) to each channel where permitted. Your bio or “about us” on each channel should be complete and consistent and you always need your website URL prominently displayed.

Take some time to educate your executives on social media etiquette – take a course, read a book, attend a webinar or conference. Finally, watch the space for a while before jumping in with both feet. A little time spent just observing goes a long way.

It’s impossible to operate effectively in social media without “having your ears on”. You need monitoring software to tell you when someone’s talking about you, and not just on your own pages/channels – it’s always possible they’re praising or chastising you on some other channel. Tune in or risk being out of the loop and misinformed.

It’s important for everyone in your organization to know what they can or can’t do on social media, both on company and personal accounts, on home computers and company equipment. It’s only fair to be clear about who is permitted to speak where and when, and it allows employees to be brand ambassadors.

Takeaway

To protect your brand, it's important to use the same brand guidelines for every platform, including: usernames, vanity URLs, logos, background colours and images.
**Who they gonna call?**

Where to start? Well, every good airline needs an equally great name. So pick one and use it consistently for all your online properties. Here are some tips on how to do that:

Twitter has a strict 15-character limit for handles, so it’s the platform that will set the format for usernames and vanity URLs for all your channels.

An example you might start with is @YourCompany. Or, if your operation is regional you might go with @YourCompanyCA

Once you’ve selected usernames and corresponding vanity URLs, it’s time to reserve them. First, make sure they’re available on all the platforms you’ve decided to use (or think you might use in the future). To do this, we suggest using NameChk (https://namechk.com/), a free online tool that shows whether a chosen username is available or taken (aka brandjacked) on a variety of social media platforms. Even though NameChk provides information from a vast number of social media and social bookmarking sites there’s no need to reserve your name on every single platform; however, we do recommend registering your name on the most popular platforms (think Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube), even if you’re not planning on using them, to avoid brand hijacking, more about that below.

Like many online tools, NameChk is not foolproof and if your chosen name is reported as taken it’s always worth double-checking. The absolute best way to check if a username or vanity URL is reserved is to type the prefix for each platform, along with your desired suffix into your web browser. Here are the formats for a few of the most popular social media platforms (using our own profiles as an example):

- www.twitter.com/communicatto
- www.facebook.com/communicatto
- www.flickr.com/photos/communicatto
- www.youtube.com/communicatto
- www.pinterest.ca/communicatto/
- www.linkedin.com/company/424064/
Reserving your username is a straightforward process, just follow the steps for setting up an account. Note that on Facebook you’ll need to create your vanity URL separately. Here’s a helpful link that explains how to create a vanity URL in Facebook:

If someone else has your name

Social media is notorious for squatters sitting on corporate names or variations of their names. It’s very difficult to get a name back unless it is a clear infringement of copyright or trademark. We have often seen this with our clients. Your best bet is to try to contact the “squatter” (who may have a semi-legitimate reason for having chosen this username) and try the friendly approach first.

Sometimes the user just gives it up. Sometimes they ask for money – do not comply as buying accounts is against the terms of service of most platforms and thus will get you kicked off and embarrassed. You can, however, donate to a charity of the user’s choice or hire the user on a short-term contract and make giving up the handle a condition of the employment contract. Only break out the lawyers as a last resort – the Internet doesn’t favour litigious companies.

Bear in mind that once a YouTube handle has been taken by anyone, it cannot be released, period. So, unless the person in question is willing to give up their Gmail account, you’re stuck. Best to sit on whatever names you want on the major platforms now to block anyone else from taking the name you want.

Here are a few links to make such claims if you are desperate:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram

Takeaway

Pick a name and use it consistently across all your social media channels. Grab it before someone else does, even if you don’t plan to use that channel immediately.
Looking the part

Whether your goal is to dominate the skies, or excel at using social media to meet your business goals, the old adage of “dress for success” applies.

Like the strict logo specifications and standard flight attendant uniforms of your favourite airline, your social media profiles must consistently reflect your brand – and that starts by ensuring that each of your profiles is properly formatted according to the sizing guidelines of each of your chosen platforms. Keep in mind that these guidelines are ever evolving, so consult with your digital agency regarding the most current sizing information before you continue.

Sprout Social, our favourite social media management system, keeps an updated list of social media image sizes. Our infographic on the same topic was accurate as of May 2017, but you best double check as these change frequently.

There are lots of other resources out there to help you create a consistent visual brand across multiple social media channels. Here are a few:

- [https://makeawebsitehub.com/social-media-image-sizes-cheat-sheet/](https://makeawebsitehub.com/social-media-image-sizes-cheat-sheet/)


- [https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-image-sizes-guide/](https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-image-sizes-guide/)
A word about devices

When it comes to web images, dimensions, resolution, alignment and colour depth can be tricky. Be sure to test your chosen platform pages on Macs, PCs, different browsers, and various mobile devices. You might be surprised how different they can look!

Root out any bad user experiences before you promote too heavily, because your brand depends on your professional image in all channels and on any device. **Don’t allow distorted or pixelated graphics to tarnish your brand!** The best way to avoid this is to have a PhotoShop/design professional create the images in the exact dimensions specified above. Do not resize your logo or images in any consumer or office product. Try not to copy and reuse web graphics unless you really know what you’re doing, as each re-save of a web graphic further erodes the quality (at least when so-called “lossy file formats” like JPEG are used).

**Takeaway**

You’re on social media to get noticed, so make sure that what people are seeing is consistent and professional. Create a consistent visual identity before trying to build an audience – and test it on as many different devices and browsers and possible.
Why the success of any flight depends on the right crew

On any flight crew someone needs to lead, others need to follow. Someone writes the flight plan, others see it through – and of course there’s air traffic control poring over the radar to ensure you’re staying on course. Your social media/content marketing is no different.

The Altimeter Group published a study in November 2010 showing how most organizations set up their social media team in a hub and spoke formation, just like the website hub and spoke described earlier.

Most Corporations Organize in “Hub and Spoke” formation for Social Business

*We found that 82% of companies in this specific formation have self-identified their programs as “Formalized, Mature or Advanced” its*

Figure 5: Five Ways Companies Organize for Social Media

10.8% Decentralized
- No one department manages or coordinates; efforts bubble up from the edges of the company.

28.8% Centralized
- One department like Corp/Communications manages all social activities.

41% Hub and Spoke
- A cross-functional team sits in a centralized position and helps various nodes such as business units.

18% Multiple Hub and Spoke (“Dandelion”)
- Similar to Hub and Spoke but applicable to multinational companies where “companies within companies” act nearly autonomously from each other under a common brand.

1.4% Holistic
- Everyone in the company uses social media safely and consistently across all organizations.

Source: Survey of 140 Corporate Social Strategists, Altimeter Group, November 2010

Source: altimetergroup.com
Specific tasks for specific people

Long before a plane takes off, each member of the crew is assigned a specific role and set of responsibilities. When it’s clear exactly who does what, when, where and how, it’s possible for the group to work together toward a shared goal – reaching the destination. Well, you’ve probably figured out by now that executing a social media strategy works the same way. And that’s where a social media policy comes in.

We recommend that an editor-in-chief, who can tap into multiple departments and even other companies to source great content and ensure it gets widely syndicated, pilot your social media activities. Someone in-house, or an agency can fill this role as long as they are deeply embedded, like journalists in wartime.

Not having the luxury of a large team doesn’t preclude you from marketing on social media. You can still execute an amazing social media strategy when you’re flying solo or with a small team. And some of those social media team members can come from outside the communications department or even from a pool of volunteers. Keep in mind that a clear social media policy becomes even more important when you hand the reigns over to individuals who might not be used to managing your organization’s brand.

A social media policy will make it clear who in your company has the right to publish, comment and interact on which social platforms under what circumstances. It provides clear guidelines to staff regarding what is and is not allowed, when, and by whom. What makes a good policy can be summarized by the acronym P.A.S.T R.I.C.E.:

1. People - who is allowed to use social media on behalf of the organization?
2. Access - what computer access do they have during the workday, from which workstations, with what limits, if any? What are the security/IT implications of such access?
3. Secrets - need to ensure no confidential information is revealed, even inadvertently.
4. Tone - use of a professional voice, diplomatic, ambassadorial. Retreat when appropriate; no “fanning the flames”, no anger.
5. Real job – it’s great to be busy blogging or tweeting, it’s even better when you meet your job goals.
6. Consequences – what happens when someone transgresses? Is it a warning or a firing offence?
7. Existing policy - old rules still apply; this is an addendum.
Social media policy resources

Dave Fleet is Executive Vice President and National Practice Lead, Digital in Edelman’s Toronto office. His free ebook outlines the importance and purpose of a corporate social media policy, as well as what specific aspects (including stakeholders, internal and external audiences) need to be considered as you develop one.


The Online Social Media Policy Database is an exhaustive list of social media policies developed by the world’s biggest brands and agencies, including Apple, the US Air Force and the BBC. These policies have been put up for scrutiny and stand out as examples other organizations can use as templates for their own policies.

- The Online Social Media Policy Database: http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies/

Takeaway

Clearly communicate the company’s stance regarding social media, designate specific tasks for different people, and make sure everyone knows who is authorized to publish what.
It ain’t always what you say – it’s the way that you say it

So now you’re almost ready to take off and it’s time to make sure you’re on course!

They say “Content is king”. It is truer than ever when developing your social media flight plan. Your media mix should consist of paid, owned, earned and social/shared content. What does that mean?

- **Paid** - is bought advertising, whether that’s traditional or digital.
- **Owned** - content from your own blog and social platforms.
- **Earned** - is PR you get from mainstream media coverage and others blogging about you.
- **Social/Shared** - is what people are sending around the social web about you.

Those media types, **Paid, Owned, Earned**, and **Social/Shared** are listed in decreasing order of control. You can buy whatever ads you want but you can’t control what people say about you on the social web. You can, however, influence what they see, say and share, and this is the basic argument for a content marketing plan.
To create a content marketing plan, you need to think like a publisher – pleasing your audience (your target personas) so you marry audience needs with the right message. Simply put, you must attract your target with great content. This will require:

- An editorial calendar with quarterly/monthly themes and assignments
- Punchy headlines to pierce the clutter
- Links shortened in a URL shortening service (like bit.ly) to track popularity of content
- An abundance of rich media – meaning video, infographics, audio and more; not just text
- Wide syndication of content
- Google Search Console and Analytics hooked up for audience/content tracking
- Getting good at the three Rs of content – Recycle everything, Reuse often, and Repurpose what you can to minimize the labour of content creation
- Getting good at the three Cs of social media – creating original Content, Curating content from trusted sources (like other regions or head office) and building Community, because there’s no point publishing to empty channels

Content tips

When it comes to specifics, here are some tips for content that will create engagement and conversation… and of course lead people to your website!

- Speak your target audience’s language if you want to chat them up and lure them into your website.
- Try not to be the social media narcissist who drones on and on with a bunch of “about me” type statements. Try listening so that you can answer questions and provide information that readers are actually interested in.
- Think multimedia. Use video, images, audio etc. whenever possible.
- Don’t be afraid to share your content more than once. Just use a slightly different angle in your posts.
- Test – one platform against another, and one post against another.

You’ll find that the people best suited to manage your content marketing are ex-journalists or recent journalism grads, not advertising types. The reason? Content marketing is storytelling not selling, yet it leads to results when done right.

**Takeaway**

While you can’t control what people share about you, you can influence it by making sure that what they see (your paid content and owned content) is of the highest quality.
Everything you need for a successful flight

When the journey goes smoothly, you can be sure there was a lot of planning and software being used behind the scenes. And you should know it wouldn’t be social media if there wasn’t a little geek work involved! You’ll need a good nerd to hook up the following:

- Your blog - hopefully on the world-class [WordPress](https://wordpress.org) software with easy to search content via archives, categories, tags, meta-data and optimized for search
- [Google Analytics](https://analytics.google.com) - add a code snippet to your website, track almost everything
- [Google Search Console](https://search.google.com/search-console) - helps you troubleshoot your site and track even more, like broken links and missing pages
- Really Simple Syndication and the [Dlyr.it](https://dlyr.it) syndication service to send your blog posts to multiple sites automatically
- Social media management system ([Sprout Social](https://sprout.social) has great analytics, [HootSuite](https://hootsuite.com) is also a strong contender)

Equipment

The best social media stories are happening out and about, not in the office. To gather content you need gadgets so you can record anything and everything. You can always throw it out if you don’t like what you’ve captured! You can likely get away with an iPhone, a sweet reporter’s kit like [this one by Vericorder](https://vericorder.com), and an extra [battery](https://www.batteries.com) or [battery pack](https://www.batterypack.com), but you may find other gadgets useful in creating content, such as:

- iPad (plus accessories)
- Camcorder
- [Audio recorder](https://www.audioengine.com)
- Camera (DSLR)
- Tripod(s)
- Sharpies and portable white boards (instant signs for videos and photos)
Mac computers have made multimedia production easy even for newbies, but PC users can get by too! A craftsman needs tools to do the job right, and that applies to content marketing too – don’t scrimp, you’ll pay for it in inefficiency!

Once you have your tool kit gathered you’ll be ready to push out all that great content you planned for in your editorial calendar (remember your themed calendar?). If it works it will stimulate actions by readers (likes, comments, shares and clicks) and, most importantly, website traffic.

**Software**

Taking flight with all the right equipment is one thing, but the trip sure is easier when you’ve got the best software too.

Social media happens in real time and without the proper tools you could be caught off guard. With that in mind, here are some suggestions for the software and hardware you should include in your social media cockpit, broken down by category:

**Account management**

Account management applications allow you to manage multiple social media accounts including Facebook Business pages and Twitter accounts. Most allow multiple users to manage the accounts (paid version required) from their own accounts.

- **Sprout Social** – [https://sproutsocial.com/](https://sproutsocial.com/)
  - This offers exceptional analytics and reporting functionality
  - Available for desktop and iPhone
- **Hootsuite** – [https://hootsuite.com/](https://hootsuite.com/)
  - This platform offers the same general functionality as Sprout Social
  - Available for desktop, iPhone, iPad and Android
  - Screencast Saturday video on how to use Hootsuite: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmppkJWikysY&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xycyRpeeUhdQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmppkJWikysY&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xycyRpeeUhdQ)
URL shortening

While URLs no longer count against Twitter’s 140-character limit, URL shortening software is still useful for tracking purposes and vanity URLs. It also provides data as to click through rates and traffic sources.

- **bit.ly** – [https://bitly.com/](https://bitly.com/)
  - Sprout Social is compatible with bit.ly
  - We recommend using bit.ly (open source) because it integrates with almost every other web service unlike other shorteners (HootSuite’s is closed and proprietary)

  - Hootsuite uses ow.ly. While perfectly adequate within HootSuite itself, it simply cannot be used outside its own app, unlike bit.ly, which connects to a plethora of web apps and dashboards
  - Check out this Screencast Saturday video on URL shortening services, including ow.ly: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBa7O5xhMIE&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xcyRPeelUhdQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBa7O5xhMIE&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xcyRPeelUhdQ)

Syndication

Syndication tools give you the ability to automatically broadcast the content you create on various platforms to maximize reach and frequency without too much manual re-posting.

- **Dlvr.it** – [https://dlvr.it/](https://dlvr.it/)
  - Automatically pushes blog content to platforms like Twitter and Facebook

Content creation kit

Gadgets to consider buying to enable content production:

- Digital camera - normal specs/buying, point ‘n shoot
- Smartphones for all of the *core team* not currently using a smartphone
- Mini-camcorder – separate from smartphone
- Microphone – capture high-quality sound recordings for your videos
- Skype account(s) for core team to record phone interviews
- Headsets for computers that have Skype or are doing multimedia production
- Photo/graphics editing software: Paint Shop Pro software for PCs, Pixelmator for Macs
- At least one Mac computer for multimedia production, with iMovie and GarageBand for video and podcast production respectively

All of the above items are at or under $200, so a maximum budget of $5,000 should suffice, depending on how many smartphones you need to purchase.
Going the extra mile

Some of you uber-competitive types might be asking yourselves “What else can we do to drive that web traffic up?” Funny you should ask! While that’s not quite in the scope of this manual, it’s worth mentioning that a mix of search engine optimization, paid digital advertising (Google AdWords, YouTube ads, Facebook ads and promoted posts, etc.) and something called conversion rate optimization (a science that helps you squeeze more “buyers” out of a web page by playing with the user interface) will help you create the perfect blend to fuel an extended trip. Those are the tools that combine to increase your coverage qualify your audience and convert prospects to web visitors.

Takeaway

Starting your social media activities with the right equipment and software will help ensure your success.
**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

**Reviewing the trip**

At the end of every journey we all want to sit back, enjoy the pictures and decide if it was all worth it. To be really effective at social media and content marketing, you need to watch the numbers.

That starts with your website stats, via Google Analytics. Visits, visitors, pages/visit, time on site, bounce rate – all these are indicators of the health of your website. Learn to love them. Visit your dashboard often. You don’t want to publish to no one, do you? You also don’t want to drive useless traffic to your site that just bounces off!

In addition to website metrics, you’ll want to track content and other metrics. Social media expert [Jay Baer of Convince and Convert fame](https://www.convinceandconvert.com/) wrote about four types of content marketing metrics that matter – **Consumption, Lead Generation, Sharing, and Sales**.

At Communicatto, we like a social media dashboard like Sprout Social or Hootsuite to give us these types of insights, there are many other tools that can help you evaluate more specific aspects of a campaign (like how many retweets your hashtag got in your last Twitter contest – tool of choice for that? [Tweetreach](https://www.tweetreach.com)). Most platforms also have their own built-in insights and analytics for you to learn how your content is performing.
### Monitoring tools

Social media monitoring tools allow you to track how your brand is doing online. This includes tracking mentions on social media, overall sentiment (positive, negative, neutral), influence and reach. An effective monitoring tool will offer you regular, easy to digest reporting.

- **Sysomos** - [https://sysomos.com/](https://sysomos.com/)
  - We recommend using Sysomos for your social media monitoring because in our opinion it provides the most value for the money. For as little as $550/month you can have your “eyes on the field” with Sysomos monitoring every platform for mentions of your name or keywords. It can alert you in real time (like if a troll is tweeting unwarranted things about your company) and tell you if they are influential or not. An add-on module allows you to better control Facebook pages too.

- **SalesForce Social Studio (formerly Radian6)** – [https://www.salesforce.com/products/marketing-cloud/social-media-marketing/](https://www.salesforce.com/products/marketing-cloud/social-media-marketing/)
  - Amazing, enterprise class (and cost) software from Salesforce.com

### Measuring Twitter

We prefer a combination of a social media dashboard (Sprout Social or Hootsuite) Twitter report and Heartbeat analytics supplemented by these tools that give you access to important metrics like audience reach, influence and click through rates:

- **TweetReach** – [https://tweetreach.com/](https://tweetreach.com/)
  - Answers the question, how far did my tweet (or hashtag) go?

- **Twitter Analytics** – [https://analytics.twitter.com/about](https://analytics.twitter.com/about)
  - Answers the question how well are we engaging and influencing on Twitter?

### Measuring Facebook

**Facebook Insights** - [http://www.facebook.com/help/search/?q=insights](http://www.facebook.com/help/search/?q=insights)

Facebook Insights allows you to measure your page’s performance. With this tool, you’ll be able to access valuable information like the demographics of your fans and the performance of the content you post. Knowing this enables you to better target and engage your audience.

Screencast Saturday video - Basics of Facebook Insights: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbmeqCdoQZ0&feature=c4-overview&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xycyRPeeUhdQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbmeqCdoQZ0&feature=c4-overview&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xycyRPeeUhdQ)
Measuring your website and blog

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a critical tool to evaluate your digital publishing efficacy. Website visits and views, time spent on site, bounce rate, referrer source, entrance and exit paths are but a few of the metrics that help you diagnose the health of your digital publishing. Google Analytics answers questions like "Do people come to our site from Twitter and stay to watch the videos or "bounce" away to another site immediately?"

Screencast Saturday video - Google Analytics Basics:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKo9E_kmMW4&feature=c4-overview&list=UUG6SMkzMOCd4xcyRPeeUhQ

Takeaway

Once you start reaching out to your audience, engaging and creating conversation it's important to make sure you're listening to, and answering your audience. There are many monitoring tools out there to help you keep track of the conversations.
DEALING WITH NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Avoiding turbulence

Unfortunately, there will almost certainly be times when you find negative comments on your social media channels. So, what do you do when that happens? Fly straight into the storm and you'll come out sooner at the other end, right?

Not so much in social media. Safely navigating turbulence takes some strategy and finesse. The best course is to choose your responses carefully and get negativity offline as quickly as possible. Imagine you had a very angry person in your office. Treat digital like that – calm them down, be diplomatic and get them off Facebook and onto email or a phone call as quickly as possible.

The only thing worse than a fiery response is no response

Silence is deadly in social media, particularly during an incident or crisis. When you see a comment about your company, no matter where, no matter whether it is positive or negative, you really need a system to decide how to deal with it.
Fortunately the US Air Force has created just such a response matrix and made it available for all to reference. If they can use this in war zones, we're pretty sure anyone can use it under more peaceful circumstances. Here's their flowchart at the right.

Notice how even positive comments require some thought before you gush all over the web. It's important to be genuine in social media and not too much of a braggart.

On the negative side of the ledger you must learn to differentiate between misguided people or unhappy stakeholders (with whom education and restoration is possible) and trolls and ragers, who really just want attention. Try not to feed their rage, but do help those misguided or unhappy folks as promptly and pleasantly as possible.

And if it gets unpleasant, take it offline, pronto!

**Takeaway**

Never ignore negative comments – deal with potentially explosive situations quickly, and with tact and diplomacy.
Now that you’ve reached cruising altitude it’s time to review your flight plan and make sure that you’re still on course. One of the greatest parts about social media is the ability to continuously check-in to see what’s working and course correct what’s not. This definitely isn’t a set-it and forget-it communications plan. Review your plan and your metrics regularly to make sure that your social media efforts are helping you reach your overall goals.

And if they’re not? It may be time to bring in the big guns. Communicatto offers everything from digital advertising and content marketing planning to social media management, performance evaluation, search engine optimization and website audits.

Visit our website https://www.communicatto.com/ to schedule a free, 30-minute web consultation.
Your digital marketing team. We are a little nerdy, super friendly, pretty funny (so we think), and we probably curse more than we should. We are defending our clients from Internet trolls, after all. We aim to be the digital marketing team you always wanted but couldn’t have until now.

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