

5-Step Social Media Plan

This is our 5-step guide to getting your company into social media. If you have a partner who can help with some of the technical stuff or have someone inside your organization who understands social media, you should be able to achieve it on your own following these steps. In those cases, you would simply do the parts listed as “what Yaffe can do” yourself. If you don’t have that capability available and would like The Yaffe Group to help, we’ve outlined some of the things we can help with.

Why social media?

The latest figures show that nearly 90% of companies in the U.S. are now involved in some form of social media, over half of those only started doing it in the last 4 months. This makes now the perfect time to jump in. Now is when momentum is building and many companies are learning the ropes at the same time. Wait much later than this and you’ll be behind the curve.

Social media is a research tool that allows you to know what your customers and potential customers are thinking about you, your product, the competition and general issues in your category. Knowing what they are looking for and what’s bothering them allows you to help them achieve their goals in a way that’s beneficial to both you and them. It allows consumers and brands/companies to participate in new ways that allow for positive business results.

Social Media adds a “pull” media to your traditional “push” media lineup. Marketers are used to pushing their messaging at consumers via traditional media. But, the Internet, social media and mobile devices have allowed the consumer to take much more control, to seek out answers to what they want, to get other’s opinions on products and services. If you feed this need, you will benefit. You can’t control the push media, but you can participate in positive ways.

How to make social media a success for your company.

- You need to listen to the consumers to understand their needs .
- You need to design good experiences into your digital/social media.
- Every Interaction and experience with the consumer needs to be taken seriously, because in this realm, everyone is an influencer.
- Every interaction counts. You can’t know who will be a big influencer and when they will be relevant.
- One person’s bad experience can be related online and grow exponentially in importance, same for a glowing review.
- Focus on gaining influence by providing good experiences and positive messaging.
- Involve all your departments, tear down the silos. Social media can be marketing, PR, customer service, research and many other things. When a customer reaches out through social media channels, need to make sure the right person is connecting with them.
- Part of the job of social media is to create a personality for the company. Make sure you know what that personality should be.

STEP 1: LISTENING

Your brand is the sum of the conversations about it. The first thing you want to do in social media is to listen to what's being said. Seek to understand both the process and what's being said – monitor and analyze. What is the sum of conversations about you? What is everyone saying about issues in your broader universe? What about the competition? What about delivery? What about furniture or home décor or decorating and any other issues related to your business? Listen to the conversations so you can help at a point of need instead of pushing your message at people who aren't interested at this time.

If Domino's pizza wasn't listening to what was on the web, they wouldn't have known about the video two idiot employees put on the web doing gross things to the food until it broke in national news. They were able to react quickly because they were listening. And they used social media channels to combat the problem at hand.

Set up things like Google alerts to send you emails on a regular basis, of any online mention of your company name, brand, product or any other keywords related to your business. Then set up accounts in Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, etc... and do weekly searches.

What Yaffe can do for you in Step 1:

Yaffe can set up social media monitoring for you and give you weekly reports on what's being said in general news on the web, in articles, in blogs, on Facebook and Twitter, plus what photos or videos are being posted about you.

STEP 2: RESPONDING

What's the goal of listening? It's not just to gather data. It's a way to build a relationship with your customers and potential customers. Learning the art of conversation is part of listening. In order for this to work, companies need to become more transparent. You need to be willing to give of yourselves. Responses need to come from someone inside the company, who understands both the issue and the inside corporate culture, as well as the actual answers needed. That doesn't mean you have to do it all yourself.

What Yaffe can do for you in Step 2:

We can set up the appropriate social media channels for you (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube Channel, LinkedIn, Flickr, etc...) and monitor the conversations on them.

Each day (or maybe less until they get up and going) we'll pull out what needs to be responded to and who should respond. We will send the appropriate person in your organization the posts that need to be responded with and how we think you should respond to them. But someone on your end would write and post the actual response. That way there is authenticity to what is said and someone there understands what's going on. But it's minimum amount of work for you and maximum teaching/hand holding from us.

We will also find and post news articles and blog posts that would be of interest to the people in your online community, general topic stuff, items that relate to your general industry and the areas of concern/interest of you customers, etc... Any news from your company can either be given to us to post or we can assist someone within your organization to post them their self with our help until they're comfortable with it.

STEP 3: PARTICIPATING

At this point you broaden your field of listening and your engagement to your industry beyond just your brand. You take an interest and participate in conversations that are important to your customers. For instance, if you sell mattresses, you start listening to conversations about people who have trouble sleeping rather than just conversations about beds and mattresses. You want to see what your share of conversation is. Initially, it will be low to non-existent. As you tap into their conversations and listen to what they're talking about, you figure out how you can help. The more you help, the larger the share of the conversation will grow.

What Yaffe can do for you in Step 3:

We can then broaden the listening parameters we used in step 1 and send you more thorough reporting, including where to post what or who to talk to about what and where. Or there are some very sophisticated social media/blog scraping research tools that can be employed to get very deep & sophisticated information. These, of course, come at a higher cost.

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR STORY

This is the point where you are now ready to create outlets for telling your story in a more in-depth way, based on a foundation of listening, responding and participating. It's at this stage that you would create your own blog, add videos, stories, pictures and more that tell your story in interesting ways, that are helpful to customers in a "Pull" medium format rather than pushing your message on them. That's not to say that providing coupons and special incentives only available to your social media community isn't a way of helping, it is. It's just a matter of sharing it rather than pushing it.

What Yaffe can do for you in Step 4:

We can help you start and maintain your blog. We can give you ideas for creating promotions in a pull format. If you have someone videotape mall events with a simple digital recorder or shoot photos with a digital camera, we can edit them or weave them into a story and post them for you in the appropriate social media channels. In general, we help you craft your story the right way and place it in the right places.

STEP 5: CONTRIBUTE VALUE, BUILD COMMUNITY

At this point, you know you are maximizing your social media presence. This is where you add value by creating content which helps customers achieve their goals, overcome issues, enrich their lives, find things they need/want. You are finding new ways to widen your community and be helpful to those within it.

For instance Charmin bathroom tissue created an app for the iPhone that people within their community could download. It would help you find the nearest public restroom to where you were at that moment. Chances are you wouldn't find Charmin in that bathroom, but you were creating good will and brand loyalty within your community by being helpful. And it was in a way that at least tangentially related to their product.

What Yaffe can do for you in Step 5:

We can create content for your community and ideas to strengthen and grow your community. It can be as complicated as creating a mobile phone app or online widget or as simple as creating helpful web videos or expert advice columns.