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Is Your
Organization Due
for a Social Media

Health Check

By Cyrus Mavalwala

■ Perfect ■ Good ■ Normal ■ Bad

The business benefits of social media are widely documented and today almost every organization, regardless of the industry, has leveraged social channels to improve their bottom line through communication, marketing or sales. When adopting social media channels, the department in charge is often required to outline a detailed strategic plan and jump through hoops of fire just to open up the first corporate social media account.

A GREAT PLAN on Day One means just that, on Day One. However, in just one year a lot can change. Internally, new employees with different skill sets can take over the social channels or business objectives can evolve. Externally, the competitive landscape or economic conditions can change. If time isn't taken on a regular basis to stop, review and then adapt the social media strategy to incorporate new conditions, the chances are good that the monthly investment in social media isn't providing maximum return on investment.

Assuming your organization adopted social media to solve a relevant business need, ask the following questions to help determine if you need to conduct a Social Media Health Check.

- Are your business objectives static or have they evolved along with your organization?
- Has technology and measurement provided your team new opportunities?

- Are you achieving the expected outcomes from your social media efforts?
- Have you validated your in-house team's social media actions within the last 12 months?
- If an agency is managing your social media, do their reports cover the business metrics that truly matter and do they paint the entire picture? Although it's important to celebrate successes, the most valuable learnings come from focusing on where improvements can be made.

If you answered no to one or more of the above questions, your team may benefit from taking a systematic, analytically based assessment specifically designed to add value to your current social media strategy.

From working with public and private sector organizations across North America on social media audits, monitoring, strategy, execution and training, we've developed the following six critical phases to help organizations maximize the ROI of their social media efforts. Execute each phase to ensure your current social media investment is fruitful.

Assess the Foundation

It will take valuable time, but it's important to revisit your strategy and business objectives for investing in social because over time sales goals, target audiences and even business directions evolve. What may have been a key performance indicator last year might not be one today. If



there are no resources to reassess your entire marketing strategy, do take the time to evaluate the three most critical components: business needs, objectives and target audience. Are your social media objectives as relevant today as when they were first developed? If you've already achieved them, have new objectives been established? Are the objectives measurable? Focus on developing S.M.A.R.T. objectives that have a clear benchmark to measure social media performance against.

Review the Landscape

Because it's so easy to open new social media accounts, it's common to have eager employees push forwards and inadvertently not follow company protocols. It is important to periodically review the landscape and take inventory of all existing accounts.

This process can be as simple as developing a chart with all the social media accounts, citing which ones are active and non-active, as well as owned and not owned. Also track the account



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admins and passwords so disgruntled employees or people who have left the company can't take control of these corporate communication channels.

One quick way to search for corporate social media accounts without expensive social media monitoring software is to use tools such as knowem.com. This free online database enables checking for the use of brands, products or usernames instantly on over 500 popular and emerging social media websites.

Optimize the Platforms

Because setting-up a social media account can be done so quickly and is often done by junior

staff, sometimes corporate brand standards aren't followed. In addition, the content posted to each account needs to be optimized so that opportunities are taken to drive qualified traffic to a relevant destination on the corporate website for that particular audience.

Analyze the Content

With the attention span of an average human maxing out at 8.25 seconds, Statistics Brain's research concluded that a goldfish has a longer attention span than a typical sales prospect. Compounded with the fact that we're bombarded by thousands of messages before we even eat lunch, means we need to elevate our

corporate content to attract and hold the attention of our target audience.

Unfortunately there isn't just one magic metric and trying to pick that bullseye will only lead you to false conclusions. Think like a data scientist and use the free, powerful Google Analytics in addition to the built in analytics within the various social media platforms. For more robust insights there are several paid offerings such as SproutSocial, Salesforce Marketing Cloud Social Studio, Meltwater Buzz and others.

Verify Community Building

Let's not forget that the "social" in social media should remind all content creators to focus on building community rather than pushing out branded or advertorial content. Although it may be easier for organizations to measure vanity metrics such as followers and likes, these metrics don't validate audience engagement.

Successful content producers ask "How can I be of service to my audience and deliver a valuable experience?" As author Michael Port said, "Consumption is king, not content." Taking this audience-centric approach to content will provide your organization greater return on investment.

The checklist below will help determine if your content is simply adding to the noise or actually leading your target audience to take valuable action. Is your organization:

- Sharing relevant content for your target audience?

- Balancing promotional tweets with nourishing editorial content?
- Commenting or replying to others or just broadcasting content?
- Leveraging the best practices of the particular social platform?
- Using visual content to enhance understanding and increase sharing?

Let the Insights Inform Strategy

If your organization is committed to achieving business objectives and leverages social media as one of the marketing channels, then consider closing the loop on your social media efforts and performing a social media audit. Conducting an annual Social Media Health Check will not only mitigate corporate risk by exposing outdated practices, but keep your social team aligned to the business strategy, elevating their performance.

If done correctly with the right tools and techniques, you'll benefit from deeper insights that will lead to more informed decisions about maximizing your current investment in social media. **CBJ**

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