


# 5 Core Concepts for Branded Social Media Strategies



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This isn't an article about how to use Facebook, or what time to Tweet (the  will come later). You've already heard from us about some of the essential truths of social media. Think of this as the next step. This is an introduction to the five key elements of a social media strategy. With these five elements in your grasp, you'll have a deeper, invested, understanding of how social media supports and enhances your brand strategy.

First off, step away from the computer.

You read that right. Take your initial brainstorming offline. Settle in with a pencil and some scratch paper and let your ideas start to form in loose clusters. This is dipping your toes into brand exploration, but it's an important first step toward understanding the applications of social media.

## 1 BRAND

Consider what your brand represents and how the company values are expressed through the brand identity. Describe your brand as if it were a person. What are the defining characteristics? What does it have to offer? Why does it offer those things specifically? These values become your touchstones, the core concepts that fuel how you communicate and your topics of messaging.

Why does your brand want to be on social media? There are many reasons brands have decided to set up Facebook, Twitter, and other profiles: PR, lead generation, community building, marketing. Deciding your brand goals for your social profiles will help focus your messaging and start to build the brand communication strategy.

Determining the relevance of your brand on social media will also help guide you toward the social media platforms that best support the brand. Not every social media channel will be appropriate or useful for every brand. Do you think your audience really wants to see a surgeon using Snapchat with his patients? Or a museum just having a text-only LinkedIn profile? Keep in mind that for many, your brand's social media may be their first introduction to what you have to offer. Make a good first impression. Depending on the brand identity, purpose, and audience desired, a brand's social media "home base" could be LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest, or beyond.

Because of the personal and immediate nature of social media, it's harder to fake authenticity. Many brands find it difficult to establish a brand voice because it breaks many of the traditional marketing rules. People want to see your brand "behind the scenes" even if they're carefully framed photos. Showcase little-known secrets and rarely-seen things around your offices. Be personable and transparent.

## 2 AUDIENCE

The key to digital marketing success is getting your brand messaging in front of the right audiences. With 75% of adult Americans on social media, brands can engage their target audiences like never before.

Identify your primary, secondary, and tertiary target demographics. What does each audience want from the brand? How can the brand demonstrate its value to each? What can the brand offer that sets it apart based on the behaviors and values of these audiences?

Sometimes it helps to create personas for each audience — fictional individuals that embody the attributes, expectations, and purchasing behaviors of their segment. Most social media users don't want to be marketed to in an overt way. Think in terms of more pull and less push.

Answering these questions and understanding your demographics can help gain a deeper understanding of audience patterns and give insight into how a brand can meet them in the middle. In doing so, brands can provide the information their audiences crave and become viewed as a useful source.

Knowing your consumer demographics matters most. Focus your digital marketing efforts proportionally toward the social media networks that attract your target audiences.

Look at feedback and patterns from the existing brand audience. Apply those demographics to a broader section online with data available from reputable sources like Nielsen and Pew Internet. Some general information on how your demographics uses social media and digital technologies can be built into any digital marketing strategy.

## 3 COMMUNICATION

Now that you know who you are and who your conversation partner is, you can look into making sure your communication styles are a match. Successful branded social media is, at its core, a conversation channel, not a conversion channel. This doesn't mean that social media is

worthless if you want lead generation. It does mean that how brands define “lead generation” should be updated to reflect how consumers realistically engage online.

The strength of social media lies in approachability. Brands can have complete control over everything from who sees what post to how they see it. Specific marketing campaigns enjoy additional attention on social media when presented in a fully-realized, visual campaign that includes excellent copy, compelling visuals, and other creative assets like video, or incentives like contests. Social media is an extremely cost-effective way to control public relations in-house.

But what about lead generation? While traditional marketing isn’t the main function of social media, that isn’t to say brands can’t market to their audiences (and do it successfully). Social media allows brands to become personable and form a digital relationship with their consumer. This fosters brand loyalty and adds weight to product recommendations. A social media audience wants to see photos of the brand. They want to be inspired by how the brand can fit into and enhance their lives.

This is the part that can feel the most daunting, but it doesn’t need to. Beat the frustration by planning the types of content that will be shared to each of your branded social media profiles. Organize your thoughts and posts in a strategic messaging calendar. It could be a spreadsheet or a literal calendar, as long as you have a way to map out which types of messages go out on which days, it can help keep your messaging on a regular rotation.

A strong social media presence is built on providing relevant, timely, and timed posts. From the brand touchstones, create calls to action that will resonate with the identified audiences. Understanding how to pivot brand values into consumer action items will form the basis of any social media content. Readers should feel informed, entertained, and inspired to take action. Keep your messaging consistent and focused on these few goals and calls to action to build engagement among your audience.

## 4 INVESTMENT

What sort of time do you have to devote to a social media strategy? Who on your team will be responsible for creating and cultivating your brand voice online? A social media strategy that does not take into account a realistic division of labor will become overwhelming quickly. Similarly, posting infrequently or posting weak content will result in poor engagement and growth. Like most things, a brand is likely to get out of social media in direct proportion to the investment that’s put into it. Set SMART goals based on what you know you can deliver. Adjust expectations accordingly.

Take advantage of mobile apps for your social media channels so that you don’t have to take time out of a busy schedule to sit at a computer and monitor your social media.

Utilize management software like HootSuite or SproutSocial to schedule unique posts to multiple platforms days in advance. If you do choose to queue posts in advance, be sure that you identify an available point person to engage and respond to social media responses.

Sign up for a link shortening service like bitly. This will help you track which links are being clicked on as well as condense them to make them less cluttered and take up a little less space in a tweet.

## 5

### RESULTS

Applying a “give and take” communication relationship with your audience will provide you with useful insights as well as invite more opportunities for new business and staff. Unlike a broadcast-only approach to social media, the listening relationship allows the opportunity to earn more trust and be more approachable.

Social media audiences expect to be heard. Communicating updates as well as engaging in feedback is a great way to cultivate relationships and foster a digital community. Social media gives financial institutions a simple means to stay in touch with the concerns of the community of consumers.

Only a fraction of your audience will be actively engaged and a fraction more than that will be brand loyal but silent. More will be entirely passive. That said, every like, follow, and favorite is an opportunity for a conversation. Brands that succeed on social media approach their strategy as a series of meaningful interactions as well as marketing opportunities. By actively providing useful information, thoughtful insights, and personable engagements, successful brands build relationships on social media. Not every interaction will result in a lead, but every interaction is an opportunity to leave a positive impression. A reputation spreads quickly online, why not ensure your brand keeps a great one by being approachable?

Watch how many shares and comments your posts accrue in addition to total audience numbers. Focus on establishing a dialogue with your audience rather than on collecting a high number of anonymous, and uninvested, followers. True engagement is measured by the quality of interactions.

Pay attention to the posts that engage your audience the most and use that to inform future communication on each platform. Many native social media platforms analytics to help gain insight on your audience behavior. Additionally, standalone services (such as SocialBro’s Twitter analysis) exist for standalone analytics that may offer additional features or depth not found in the native services. These are especially useful for identifying audience behavior and crafting your communications to include the information they find most relevant.



The core concepts of brand, audience, communication, investment, and results provide a stable foundation on which to build a brand marketing voice on social media. Keep your brand message focused, conversational, and in-tune with your audience. Understanding what each concept means for a brand and how to apply it makes creating individual messages easier.

Now that you’ve got these five concepts down, you’re ready to unveil your brand across social media. Still want more tips and guidance? Lucky for you, TOKY’s got your back. Discovery, brand identity, and digital communication are second nature for us. Let’s chat.

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