



Guide: Tips to Create a Successful Social Media Strategy

Prepared by Statistics Canada
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Tips to create a successful social media strategy

This document provides you general guidelines and tips on how to get started to create a successful social media strategy.

Before getting started

Set a goal: Your goal can be as simple as creating awareness for your statistics department, increasing website traffic for a particular month, release new data or recruit new employees.

BE SPECIFIC. The more specific you are when setting your goal, the greater chance you'll have of actually achieving it. **Add targets and metrics when developing goal to gauge performance.**

Choose your platform: What social media platforms do you wish to use to best reach your audience? Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.

Do some research to see what platform your audience is using.

Guidelines and policies

Before you create your account, make sure you are familiar with any communications or social media policy or guidelines that are in effect in your country (if any).

For example, in Canada, our Communications policy requires that we publish the information on our website before we release it on our social media accounts. So almost all messages that we post on social media have a link to our website.

Creating your account or page

Follow the instructions on the social media platform. Don't forget to put the basic information (who you are, what you do, add a profile and background pictures and Rules of engagement)

Creating content

In order to be successful on social media, you need to post information and messages regularly, at least once or twice a day on Facebook and more on Twitter. You also need to add visuals and catchy sentences. Visuals are key to your posts.

Create a content strategy and a content calendar.

- What type of content or data will you post?
- How often will you post content?
- Who will create the content and approve it?
- How will you promote the content?

Your content calendar will list the dates and times you intend to post your messages. Use it also to plan the links and images that you will use.

Useful tips:

- it is preferable to use short URL links. You can use a free tool like Ow.ly
- For images, you can use pictures taken by you or your staff or royalty free images. You will need to pay a small subscription to get these images (iStock, Shutterstock, Dreamstime).
- Shorts clips or videos are also very popular on Facebook and Twitter.
- Keep your posts short and add links to your website or the website where the user can find the detailed information.
- Depending on the messages you want to post, you may want to try different hours during the day to see if it reaches more people.
- Look at other departments, organisations or businesses Facebook or Twitter pages to find inspiration. What are they posting, what is the frequency of their posts, how do they phrase their messages?
- Fun and social stats are very popular. You can link them to special days. For example International Coffee Day, or special events or statutory holidays

Developing a social media campaign

Social media campaigns consist of a series of posts on the same topics stretching on a few days or weeks. It can be used, for example, to create awareness around new data or to recruit new employees.

Timeline: Your campaign should have a start and an end date. Use a calendar to plan out the important dates and actions.

***Tip:** Start with the release date and work backwards and forwards. Post messages a few days or weeks before your release to create interest. For example: The new data sets on population will be released on Nov. 25. Stay tuned for more details!

Do some messages on the release day and some more in the following days or weeks. Use cohesive consistent visuals through the campaign and/or campaign hashtag.

***Tip:** For ongoing campaigns, it's a good idea to create a campaign hashtag. For example: The Census used #2016Census in English. Tagging each post using the hashtag will also help with collecting metrics.

Monitor your page

Once your account is active and you start posting messages, you need to monitor your page and engage with the users. If someone is asking you questions publicly or privately, you need to answer within a reasonable timeframe.

You might want to develop **service standards** for answering questions on your social media account and let your users know.

Rules of engagement are also important. You don't want users to post profanity, inappropriate content or spam on your page. You can avoid this by stating your rules of engagement and adding them to your page.

You may want to create **guidelines for your employees** as well. Let them know what they can and cannot do on your official page.

You will also need to develop an **interaction protocol**. Who will answer the questions? What steps should be taken when someone is not respecting the rules of engagement? Who will approve the content and the replies to the questions?

Engaging with your users is also very important. Do not hesitate to thank them for sharing your message or commenting on one of your posts. The more you engage with them, the more followers you will get.

Tools and metrics

There are numerous free tools on the Web that you can use to schedule your messages, monitor what people are saying about your agency and see all the questions and comments you receive.

Most of these tools also provide analytics and metrics that will allow you to create reports and see how many people engaged with your posts or how many people saw your posts.

StatCan uses Hootsuite. But you can do a quick search on Internet and find a few more.

It is also possible to collect analytical information on the platform itself.

Those data are important. They tell you if your campaign was successful, if the timing of your posts was right, if you should use another strategy for your next campaign.

Tip: Wait a few weeks after campaign end before doing any reports or metrics, as messages keep gaining engagement days after publication.

Promotion

To be successful and reach as many people as possible on social media, you need followers.

So promotion is the key:

- Send an email to your stakeholders to let them know that you have a new Facebook or Twitter page.
- Add a little tag line in your email signature with the address of the Facebook page
- Add a link on your Website
- Use promotional material (bookmarks or others) that you could distribute in schools, libraries, other public spaces.
- Ask your employees, colleagues, friends to like your page and share it as well!

Follow people and organisations:

- Departments in your country
- International statistical organisations
- Other statistical departments (StatCan!)
- Stakeholders
- Partners
- Schools, universities
- Etc.