50 SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES *for* UNIVERSITIES

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Social media has changed the communication landscape for universities, and the changes aren't stopping anytime soon.

We know it can be tough to keep up with trends, so the next time you're in a pinch and don't know how to solve a social media problem, consult this list; you might find the answer you're looking for among these 50 social media best practices. We've defined these benchmark tactics based on customer reviews, colleague interviews, and internal research.

The beauty of social media is distinguished by your ability to adopt a unique voice, tone, and approach that suits your institution's brand and audience. Use these 50 best practices as guiding principles to help you refresh or re-imagine your university's social strategy.

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Social Media Listening

Your process starts with social listening.

Social media listening, also known as social media monitoring, is the process of identifying and analysing what is being said about you across the internet. While it doesn't need to be the first thing you do when you wake up or the last thing you do before you go to bed, it should be the first thing you do when constructing a social media strategy. Here are 10 ideas to get started and enhance your social listening plan.

1. RESEARCH WHERE PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT YOU.

The first step in the process is tuning your social antennae to the right channels. You may have an obvious list of places where people discuss your brand; if so, make sure you properly monitor them. Remember that there are numerous places within your social properties where people can talk about you. Facebook pages, Twitter hashtags, and LinkedIn groups, for example, are all potential places where you can learn about social sentiment toward you.

2. GO BEYOND FACEBOOK AND TWITTER.

Remember, major social networks are not the only places on the web where people talk about you. Try using a social monitoring tool to find where people are discussing your brand and look at smaller sites that may not initially come under your radar. Here are few other places you could look:

- Blogs
- YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, Instagram, and other popular social sites
- Review sites
- Social bookmarking sites
- Comment sections on industry and trade publication websites
- Popular mobile apps

3. CREATE A KEYWORD LIST THAT EXTENDS YOUR LISTENING REACH BEYOND PROFILE MENTIONS.

Students and other constituents won't always mention your institution by name when talking about it. They may spell your name wrong, use an abbreviation, or simply talk about universities in general without specifically calling you out. Accurately recording this information will enhance your listening analysis. Put together a list of words people may use to describe your university, departments, sports, and competing schools, and track conversation around those keywords across the social web. There may be some noise you need to filter out, but you'll most likely acquire information you would not have seen otherwise.

4. MAKE LISTENING AN INSTITUTION-WIDE ENDEAVOR.

Whether you've got an engagement team of one person or two dozen, staff in every department and office should be on alert for mentions, both positive and negative. Create a reporting and communication plan for staff. For example, have everyone email online brand mentions to one, central email like socialmentions@yourbrand.com. This will not only give you more information, but could also provide additional places for you to track mentions.

5. LISTEN CAREFULLY TO UNIVERSITY INFLUENCERS.

In every industry, there are those people who have established themselves as influential contributors. They often have large social followings, publish regularly to blogs, and speak at conferences. You want to create a list of these people and closely monitor what they are saying and how people are responding to them. They are in a position to deliver authentic feedback on a consistent basis. Create a listening schedule that includes their blog posts, Twitter chats, Facebook mentions, LinkedIn forums, and so on.

6. CREATE CATEGORIES TO ORGANIZE MENTIONS.

Any number of topics may become part of your social media brand conversation. You'll likely find this information flows into your stream in one large, unstructured mass. By assigning categories and manually (or automatically) moving content into categories, you'll have a far better time reporting and understanding what is being said about your university. Keep your categories flexible to account for any changes you may need to make to your organisational structure.

7. DRAFT LISTENING REPORTS TO HELP SHAPE FUTURE MARKETING ENDEAVORS.

When you're listening to dozens of sources across social media, you'll likely find yourself sitting on a mountain of data. Creating solid reports is the only way you'll be able to extract useful information. Try putting together the following information:

• Sentiment analysis
• Total mentions
• Active networks
• Pain points

Ask data-related questions such as, "Are mentions going up or down over time?" or "Is positive sentiment increasing?" Doing this on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis will help present these insights to your team and shape current and future campaigns. Don't let your university be deaf to the way the public perceives you; you can effect change through social listening.

8. CREATE A CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

Have you considered that social media adds a whole new level to the crisis management model? In today's social landscape you may pick up the beginning of a crisis while listening to social channels, and you should be ready to act immediately. Creating a plan requires a lot of coordination and involves many departments within your institution, including PR, legal, student relations, and any number of executives. It won't be easy, and getting everyone in one room to plan for a hypothetical situation can be challenging. But, when the alternative is an evolving crisis and no plan of action, you'll be glad you put something to paper and prepared in advance.

9. AUTOMATE WHAT YOU CAN, BUT DON'T REMOVE THE HUMAN ELEMENT.

The social listening process may be overwhelming depending on the size of your university. Social listening tools can help by automatically tagging certain keywords and assigning mentions to users based on subject matter. These automation steps can improve efficiency and allow you to spend more time engaging with people. But, you can't leave it all to computers. Figure out what automation techniques work for you and allocate human resources where it makes the most sense. You'll be more productive and your staff will be happier doing work that can't be done by a robot.

10. SENTIMENT ANALYSIS IS A MIXED BAG, SO FINE-TUNE THE RESULTS.

Sentiment analysis refers to how you determine the public's attitude toward your brand. Sentiment analysis tactics continue to improve over time, but there are some posts that simply won't be properly tagged. Sarcasm, in particular, really trips up sentiment analysis programs, and for good reason. Keeping this in mind, you should always take a sample of your analysed content when conducting sentiment analysis and make sure it looks properly tagged. Depending on sample size, you may want to manually switch over mentions that are not properly tagged. Note that doing this for every post is not realistic and defeats the purpose of using a tool, but you want to make sure you feel comfortable releasing your results.

Social Engagement

Now that you've set up your social listening program to hear what's being said about your university online, it's time to join the conversation. Engaging with your community, current and prospective students, and detractors is an integral part of a healthy social media strategy.

Here are ways to improve your engagement strategy.

11. CREATE AWARENESS.

If you don't have a highly paid PR team or a big-budget marketing plan, you can still create strong brand awareness. Social media platforms offer the potential to increase your public profile even without purchasing ads. You can create effective awareness campaigns by using social engagement techniques such as:

- Engaging with influencers
- Sharing content from these influencers and staying active in conversations
- Keeping a profile full of updated, worthwhile content
- Offering influencers exclusive access to content and events
- Inviting constituents and the public "behind the scenes" to meet your leaders, faculty, and staff

Always decide what kind of engagement you're seeking, define your strategy, and measure the effectiveness based on your goals.

12. BE MINDFUL OF OVERSHARING.

While it's important to stay in the loop and maintain social relationships, posting too often, whether it's photos, status updates, or frequent tweets, can turn off your audience. Delivering focused, exciting content less often will yield better results than curating fifty 280-character-or-less erroneous messages an hour. Here are a few tips to keep you focused:

- Refrain from posting every time you think of something to say.
- Create a content calendar with a posting schedule and stick to it.
- Think about what will provide value down the road.
- Simplify your messages. Everyone is on a schedule and social consumers appreciate clear and concise communication.

13. DON'T ALWAYS FEEL COMPELLED TO JUMP IN.

Some things are better left unsaid. You don't always have to respond every time someone mentions your university. In fact, it's sometimes better to let influencers or other members of the community interject before or instead of you. If you jump in at the wrong time, you might send the wrong message. So pick your conversations wisely and determine what type of posts you want to respond to and which ones you want to leave alone.

14. BE AS TRANSPARENT AS YOUR INSTITUTION ALLOWS.

Openness can go a long way in social media. Creating a transparent communication model will help your community feel involved in your institution and appreciate the trust you show toward them. They may become interested in your story or stay in touch with updates. That hook may be what you need to build a more engaged community. Here are a few ways to be more transparent:

- Let your leaders loose on Twitter.
- Take your followers behind the scenes. Do a video walk-through of your campus and activities.
- Ask for feedback from your community.
- Introduce your team. Let your followers meet and chat with your staff online.

15. DETERMINE YOUR TONE.

Showing personality and moving away from a formal tone is a great way to interact with people on social media. What you say and how you say it are important to your online brand perception. Try creating an institution-wide style guide to express key messaging and tone. This will give staff, new hires, and leaders a great idea of how to shape your brand online. Your followers should know what to expect from you when you speak, but to make that happen, you need to create brand guidelines and follow them.

16. HELP YOUR FOLLOWERS BECOME EXPERTS, TOO.

Your staff has accumulated a ton of knowledge about your university. Share what you've learned with your community. Here are a few approaches:

- **Make an effort to answer every question.** Pay attention to the questions people are asking on social media, and start putting them on the FAQs section of your website. If someone asks a question and it's not part of your FAQ section, use it as an opportunity to add the question and assist others in self-serving themselves.

- **You don't need to sound like an expert** but make sure you ask one before responding to any questions. Be as helpful as you can be and ask for an email address. Sometimes it might be best to take the conversation offline.

17. BE PROACTIVE.

Proactive social marketing requires you to closely monitor general feeds. You can be proactive by listening and contributing to conversations before someone even mentions your brand name.

This will help you gauge the attitudes and trends and cater your messages accordingly.

RESPOND TO NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE FEEDBACK.

Three rules of thumb for responding to positive feedback:

- Thank them. Thank your audience for positive remarks left on your social channels.
- Return the favor. Is a student sharing your original content? If it's relevant, take note of their latest post and share it with your network.
- Add them as a guest contributor. Remember those individuals who really have the voice and passion to contribute something of value that your community will relish.

Three rules of thumb for responding to negative feedback:

- Respond quickly. Social media users have come to expect a rapid response.
- Don't delete. Your audience may view this as a sign your brand is dishonest and trying to hide the truth. Remember, if you delete feedback, it can be posted other places and this will reflect poorly on your brand.
- Don't feed the trolls. Stay focused on the constructive criticism. If someone obviously is out to get your brand and tarnish your name, it's better to not play into their game by reaching out to them via social media. Instead, enable them to contact you directly if they want to have a real conversation.

19. KEEP IT SHORT.

Keep your audience in mind when crafting your social media messages. Don't overload them with long, exhausting content. Chances are, they are seeing your messages during what little down time they can find during the day. Respect their time by crafting short, readable messages they can easily digest. You lessen the risk of losing their interest and your response rates will undoubtedly go up.

20. CONSIDER FOLLOWING BACK.

One of the reasons high school students have a stronger following than you is their relentless pursuit of following everyone who follows them, better known as #teamfollowback. While this may not be 100% realistic for a university, especially the bigger the audience, following those who regularly support your brand is a kind gesture and will help grow your overall following. Keep your influencers happy and show you care about what they have to say–not just that they are listening to you. Additionally, when you follow back, you might get some public responses from key influencers, giving you added exposure.

Social Publishing

The beauty of social networking lies in its two-way conversation value between brands and the public.

There is plenty of room, however, for advertorial communication that comes directly from the brand. There's a lot to consider before tweeting or posting these kinds of messages. Take a look at these best practices for a better approach to social publishing.

21. TREAT EACH SOCIAL NETWORK AS ITS OWN ENTITY.

Try sharing different content on your social properties. Even if you want to share the same thing across mediums, make sure you're using each social network the way it was meant to be used, and to the best of its abilities. For example, a Facebook post doesn't need to be below 280 characters like a tweet, and can include larger image sizes than an Instagram post. Include custom calls to action as each social network has its own ways in which users can interact with your posts.

22. ALWAYS PROVIDE AN OPTION TO SHARE.

One of the most beneficial aspects of social media publishing is the ability for content to spread virally. Viral reach can mean a lot of things; it doesn't have to lead to five million (or billion!) YouTube views. If 20 people with 1,000 followers each retweet a link you post, you've increased your reach by 20,000. Posting to social networks automatically gives sharing functionality, but your web content might not. Make sure you always provide people a way to share to their own networks easily.

23. SET UP PUBLISHING AND APPROVAL PERMISSIONS AND PROCESSES.

Before you start, determine who has what publishing permissions. Establish your team:

- Administrators
- Publishers
- Authors
- Editors

Some social networks, like Facebook, set up permissions natively for admins, while many require the use of a third-party tool. Regardless of how you do it, map out your approval hierarchy to ensure your institution has proper auditing and fail-safes. This will ensure the only people who can publish to your networks are those who should have access.

24. BUILD FOR MOBILE.

We're a society glued to our phones and tablets. Mobile is, increasingly, the way people access digital and social content. With that in mind, it's your responsibility to build your brand assets with mobile top-of-mind. If you're building a website, make sure the design responds easily to mobile and any additional capabilities, such as social sharing, work across mobile devices. Ease of use is key. The less work people need to do on their phones to access your content, the more willing they'll be to engage with you.

25. DON'T FORGET ABOUT NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS.

You might work Monday through Friday from 9-5pm, but if you're recruiting internationally, your community is global, spanning time zones around the world. Think about all of the times throughout the week when you check your Twitter feed or watch a YouTube video. Including nights and weekends enables you to make your content stand out when many other brands aren't posting. Find a way to schedule content regularly throughout the night and weekend to take advantage of times when people may have longer attention spans. Additionally, if resources allow, consider adding a team member in another time zone to expand coverage.

26. USE YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKS TO PROMOTE EXISTING CONTENT.

Distribution is one of the biggest benefits of building a large social network. You've got a ton of great content you want to share, so use your social networks to do so. Experiment with different headlines and post types to find what is most effective to maximise traffic. Re-purpose content that is just laying around the stock room or media office. For example, go through your last 3 months of tweets and use student inquiries and questions as blog topics. Just be careful not to overdo it. If you're always posting your own content, people may grow tired of your act.

27. USE YOUR DATA TO DETERMINE WHAT WORKS.

Everyone can tell you something different when it comes to the best times to publish, the best content, the best post types, and the best calls to action. But, only you have the data to make that decision for your brand. Do some A/B testing with your publishing strategies, and then assess what worked best for you after you have collected a large enough sample size. Never stop experimenting and develop your own best practices.

28. SET A CONTENT CALENDAR THAT SYNCS UP WITH OTHER MARKETING OBJECTIVES.

Your university may have a few different marketing calendars. There may be an overarching marketing calendar that covers broad marketing campaigns or an editorial calendar to cover department-relevant topics. Additionally, you may have a content calendar to map out blog posts and large-scale content objectives and one for social publishing. Make sure these calendars aren't isolated from one another. Your social publishing calendar should reflect other marketing objectives. They don't have to match up exactly, but you don't want to stray too far from the rest of the institution, or you'll have a hard time accomplishing your goals.
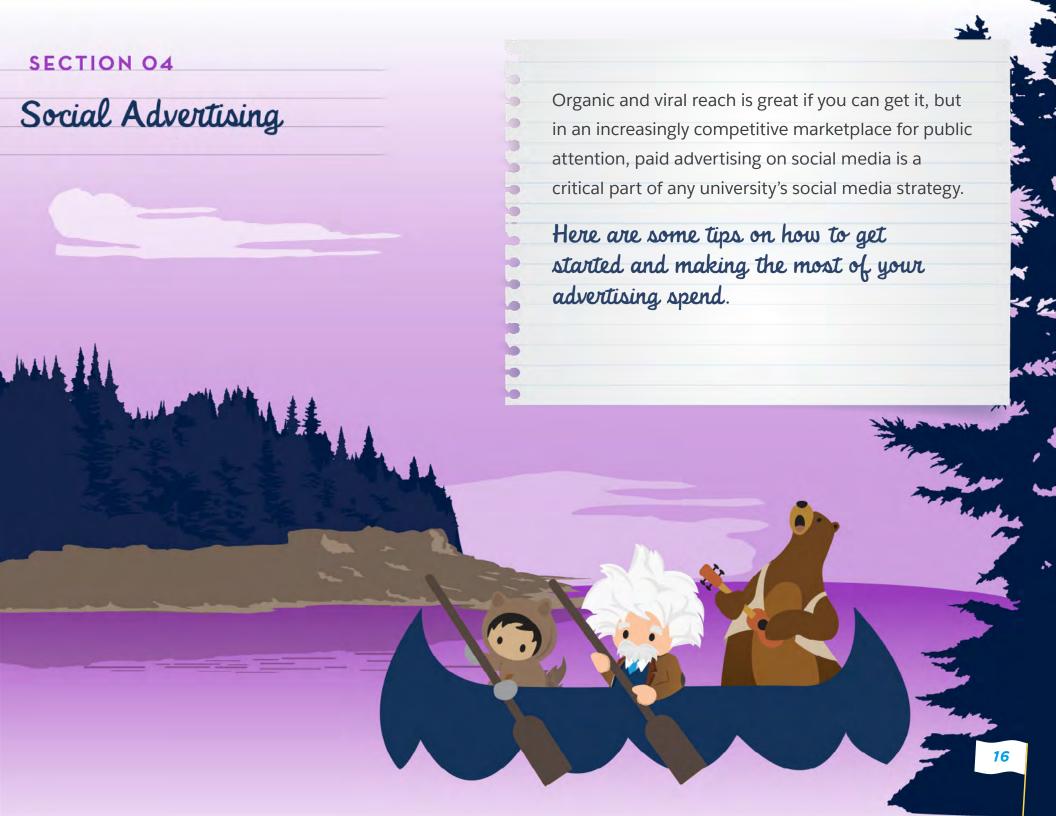
29. IMPLEMENT TRACKING CODES ON LINKS.

Social attribution is a great way to prove the return on investment (ROI) for social publishing. We'll talk more about ROI in the measuring section, but with publishing, it can be helpful to post links that have a tracking code built into them. This tracking code will then feed back into an overall database, helping you track what social networks are driving the most traffic. Use this data to guide your posting strategies for big content and marketing campaigns moving forward.

30. DON'T BE AFRAID TO EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT PLATFORMS AND CONTENT.

Social media is always changing and giving us new ways to engage with your audience. Social networks are constantly tinkering with their platforms, and new networks seem to pop up each month. While you should avoid throwing a ton of resources at shiny new objects, don't be afraid to take a chance and find a way to make new platforms work for your institution. By doing something creative, you may find yourself garnering media attention for the way you were able to turn a new social network or social network feature into a boost for your brand.

Social Advertising

Organic and viral reach is great if you can get it, but in an increasingly competitive marketplace for public attention, paid advertising on social media is a critical part of any university's social media strategy.

Here are some tips on how to get started and making the most of your advertising spend.

31. SET YOUR ADVERTISING GOALS FIRST.

Unlike other forms of social media marketing, paid advertising involves money. This seems obvious, but it means there is more at stake if you aren't getting results; namely, your advertising budget. So before you get started, think about the reasons you want to advertise on social media and what you want to get out of it. With clear goals, you can make better adjustments if things aren't working and better understand success or failure.

32. CREATE BOTH DAILY AND LIFETIME BUDGETS FOR YOUR CAMPAIGNS.

Depending on the social network you're advertising on, payment works differently. Facebook, for instance, uses a bidding system in which the most competitive bids will earn the right to display ads to users. Setting your budget for both the entire length of a campaign, as well as on a daily basis, will help you decide which ads to run when. It will also allow you to roughly look at your day-to-day requirements, while simultaneously matching them up with your overall spending capabilities.

33. FIT YOUR SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER MARKETING INITIATIVES.

There may be times when you want to run social media ads separate from other marketing initiatives, and that's fine. But, most likely, your social media ads will coincide with other paid media initiatives. To create cohesion, make sure your creative, messaging, and targeting coincides with the rest of your traditional advertising. This may seem obvious, but different departments or media-buying agencies may lead different advertising aspects, so it's important to get everyone in the same room to share plans and assets.

34. RESEARCH THE SOCIAL ADVERTISING PLATFORMS.

Each social network has different advertising capabilities based on the unique features available to users. For instance, a video campaign makes sense on YouTube or split up on Snapchat, whereas a link to a new brochure may be best as a link within a promoted tweet or LinkedIn update. Regardless of the best platform for your campaign, familiarise yourself with your options so that you can make the best decision.

35. MATCH AVAILABLE TARGETING OPTIONS WITH YOUR ADVERTISING OBJECTIVES.

Part of the allure of social media advertising are the available targeting options. Putting your content in front of the right people has never been easier or more accurate. But, before you get started, consider what you want to accomplish with your targeting. Do you want to target prospective students who already show an affinity toward you? Would you prefer to attract new leads? Are you looking for a certain demographic? Or maybe you're running a promotion in a certain country and want to look to prospective students in that area. All of these options, and more, are possible with social media advertising.

36. TEST, TEST, TEST.

Universities that focus on advanced targeting of their social ads also use A/B testing to improve their results. The best way to determine the success of something is to have two small test groups and show them different versions of the same promoted content. The one that performs better is the one that is used on the balance of the list. Make sure the variable is limited to one element, like the headline, image, or call to action, but not all three. You can create your groups by targeting, but you need to make sure you have a big enough audience to make the time and effort worthwhile. Try not to get too granular with your targeting. This will severely undercut your ad's effectiveness by limiting the number of people who see it.

37. AUTOMATE WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

Recruiters and marketers have become comfortable with automated algorithms running many types of online ads, such as pay-per-click and Google banner ads. The next stage for using social ads is to utilise a platform that makes optimisation decisions based on performance. If an ad gets a lot of engagement and clicks, the budget can be increased automatically. An under-performing ad can be turned off the same way. You don't have to worry about a campaign going out of control in the middle of the night. In addition to showing the right ads at the right time to the right people, automated social ads provide better data and analytics. This gives you more actionable insights from your campaigns and ultimately improves performance of the social ads.

38. DON'T FORGET ABOUT TIME OF DAY AND SCHEDULING.

Just as it's important not to forget about nights and weekends when publishing, timing can be everything for your social ad effectiveness. Some testing is required to figure out when your ads are most effective. Look at the times and days where people are most engaged with your ad and devote more of your budget to those times once you feel your sample size is large enough.

39. DETERMINE THE METRICS THAT WILL BEST REPRESENT YOUR CAMPAIGN STATUS.

Social media ads give you a wealth of results data. Because social networks can track so many different actions taken by users, they often create robust analytics reports that will help you determine the effectiveness of your advertising campaign. Create a list of metrics that are most important to you before you get started so that you can monitor them more closely; this will tie in to the advertising goal you set before you get started. As your campaign progresses, either make changes to optimise the results of these metrics, or determine whether these metrics are actually the best indicators of your success.

40. ESTABLISH YOUR ANALYTICS RHYTHM.

Advertising campaigns are living, breathing processes that require constant monitoring and fine-tuning. But, the only way to determine needed adjustments is to look at your results on a regular basis. Schedule a regular meeting with your necessary stakeholders to go over the performance of your campaign. Even if things are going according to plan, it's good to have everyone on the same page. Getting in a rhythm will also make internal sharing a lot easier, as those involved will have regular updates on the campaign performance.

Social Measurement

41. ALIGN YOUR OBJECTIVES WITH YOUR METRICS.

An effective measurement strategy should align directly with your objectives. Those objectives should follow the SMART methodology, first introduced by Peter Drucker in his 1954 book, The Practice of Management. The acronym stands for a Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timed definition of your goals:

- **Specific:** Establish objectives that are specific to your desired results. For example, if your objective is to increase brand awareness, try a more focused approach such as, "Increase brand awareness by 10% in the next six months through a targeted social media campaign."

- **Measurable:** Use consistent metrics in your review process to verify the effectiveness of your efforts. Outlining your specific objectives helps you assess your results and decide how to move forward in the future.

- **Achievable:** Often, a goal of 90% audience satisfaction is more attainable than a goal of 100% audience satisfaction. The same is true for your social media plan, so consider what's feasible when setting your objectives.

- **Relevant:** Your goals should always support your institution's big-picture plans. Goals that are worthwhile, align with other internal goals, and champion your team will always receive better support.

- **Timed:** Incorporate a time frame into your objectives to make yourself accountable for their fruition. Utilise tools like content calendars, review and edit timelines, and analytic checklists to make your objectives more real and tangible.

42. PICK A GOAL.

As the saying goes, "If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time." Good social media goals are usually in line with the greater goals of your institution. Here are some popular ones:

- Increase awareness
- Generate recruitment prospects
- Drive attendance at events
- Raise funds

Pick a goal. If you have the resources and the time, you may pick all of these goals. However, it's much better to execute well on one of these goals than to dilute your efforts.

43. SEGMENT AND TREND.

Key performance indicators, or KPIs, help you determine your social campaign successes. It may take some time to narrow down your KPIs as an institution, so until then, keep slicing and dicing your analytics. For example, if you're trying to figure out if your new Facebook efforts are driving awareness you might look at:

- New visitors from Facebook
- New visitors from Facebook with more than three pageviews
- New visitors from Facebook that purchased a deal or used an offer

Lastly, you'll want to look at how your KPIs trend over time. For instance, did your recent Twitter ad buy increase your awareness metrics over the prior month?

44. TRACK AND MEASURE SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ACROSS DEPARTMENTS.

You can track impact in different ways depending on your institution. Many universities find ways to tie their social platforms to various recruiting, student success, alumni engagement and even sporting efforts. Regardless of the focus, make sure to track the impact that is coming from social media.

45. MEASURE COST SAVINGS.

Sometimes the value in an endeavor isn't about what goes up (like student leads), but what comes down (like costs). Social media can have some very clear efficiencies, most notably on the student service side, but also in areas like training or communications. In particular, this is great for tracking savings that come from using social media for student service. You'll cut down on call center volume by answering inquiries on Twitter and other social media platforms. This strategy plays to the public's desire for instant gratification, and simultaneously frees up service staff to handle more complex issues over the phone.

46. CREATE A CENTRAL DASHBOARD TO BRING IN DISPARATE METRICS.

One of the big problems with measuring social media campaigns is that data is all over the place. You may have some data directly from social networks, some from third-party tools, and some from internal analytics teams. This can make analysing a campaign incredibly frustrating. Try compiling all this data into one central dashboard for easy viewing. You can use numbers, charts, graphs, and so on, but putting everything in one place ensures you aren't missing anything while removing redundancies and superfluous information. It makes presenting data at a meeting a whole lot easier.

47. DETERMINE HOW YOU'LL DEFINE ROI.

ROI is and will, for quite some time, be the magic three letters in social media marketing. Everyone wants an answer to the question, "How do I track ROI on my social media efforts?" Many are understandably frustrated when there is no single answer to this question. Social media gives more information than your other marketing efforts, but you have to know what to do with it. Even if you aren't driving directly to a conversion page, it's important to decide what series of actions a user could take that eventually would benefit the institution. Once you have this data, you can figure out how to track it before you start your campaign.

48. BE PREPARED TO PIVOT ON EVERYTHING.

Flexibility is a definite advantage of social media; if you suddenly want to change the direction of a campaign, it requires very little time and effort. That's why regularly conversing with those who have a hand in your social media campaigns to go over metrics is critical for your success. These meetings may lead to a change in a direction, tone, or even the actual metrics you're using to define success. Constantly reviewing whether you're looking at the right data is as important to your success as looking at the success of your content.

49. CONSIDER EVERY AVAILABLE MEASUREMENT TOOL.

Using all your available resources to calculate and field data is the best way to track your successes. Whether that means using pre-populated spreadsheets from third-party tools, looking at social network analytics sections, or even whipping out a calculator and crunching numbers the old-school way, don't skimp out on measuring your data. It's the only way to know whether you're on the right path with your social media efforts, and can greatly impact the way you operate moving forward.

50. CLICHÉD METRICS AREN'T FOR EVERYONE.

We all know the usual social media data points:

- Likes
- Shares
- Comments
- Retweets
- Click-through rate
- Conversions

These can be great and useful pieces of information based on your campaign goals. But, don't feel compelled to look at these metrics just because everyone else is doing it. In fact, it's possible the best metrics for you are not presented in network analytics or third-party tools. Do what you need to do to get the most out of the available data, and don't feel the need to limit yourself to the popular crowd of social media metrics.

This list of 50 social media best practices is here to help enhance your existing strategy. Don't overwhelm yourself or immediately overhaul your entire social marketing plan with these tips. Try one or two of the suggestions from each section, run your tests to see whether they work, and then hold on to or move away from each best practice. We hope this list gets you thinking differently about the ways you approach your social media efforts. And if you've got your own best practices, keep up the good work!

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Thank you!