



**The Inside Social Media Podcast**  
**Episode 8:**  
**Bryan Srabian, Social Media Director, San Francisco Giants**

**Rick:** Bryan I'm really glad to have you on the show today. Welcome.

**Bryan Srabian:** Yeah, thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

**Rick:** Absolutely. So, let's kick things right off here. Can you tell us, as the director of social media for the [San Francisco Giants](#), what is your day to day role for the team and what might a typical day, if there is a typical day, look like for you during the season?

**Bryan Srabian:** Let me start with my role: I manage all of our social media channels - I believe there are seven of them now - so for the most part I'm managing all the content that goes out: messages, photos, information. I work closely with a lot of different departments internally. I'm also monitoring many of those channels specifically when there are games, events or information or news that might impact our business.

A typical day to day when the season starts is really based around our game, obviously. We're just trying to get our fans as close to the action as possible. There's a lot of excitement about the Giants this time, as World Champions. We're kind of going through this golden age of baseball in San Francisco, so it's really exciting to be a fan of the Giants.

It's even more exciting to be managing social media because there's so much chatter and so much enthusiasm and I'm just really kind of keeping on the pulse of what's being said in and around our games and managing all of that content on a day to day basis.

**Rick:** Okay. Well, I mean, you mentioned it there so with the Giants winning the World Series last year in 2012, obviously that brings you huge worldwide notoriety and publicity. Does that make your job as the director of social media harder or easier?

**Bryan Srabian:** Well, I guess it's how you define what's harder and what's easier. I mean, it's definitely busier but my take is that that's a very positive thing. If you work in sports long enough you realize that you go through cycles and there's good times and there are bad times. You need to really enjoy and appreciate those good times and you realize how difficult it is for the team on the field to have success which typically will translate how well you're doing on and off the field.

So, we definitely are very appreciative of the last three seasons' work. We've won two World Series. We have a sell-out streak over 150 games, a lot of activity on our social media network, so for me personally it's extremely exciting. There's a little bit of pressure I guess in terms of how much activity there is, but the notoriety does bring a lot of excitement and in my opinion I mean this is one of those opportunities that is once in a lifetime for me.

I don't know how long it's going to last. I don't know what my future will be, so I think I'm definitely taking a lot of pride in the work that we're doing as a team on and off the field and it's just such an exciting time to be a Giants fan and even more exciting to do my job right now.

**Rick:** Absolutely. I grew up in the northeast as a Red Sox, but living out here in the West Coast I've actually been to AT&T Park a few times and I've been in quite a few parks around the league. It's one of the nicest parks I have been to and it's a great atmosphere with all the fans there, really rabid fan base you guys have here.

**Bryan Srabian:** Yeah. The irony of it all is when we first moved into the park which was 2000, there was a lot of excitement and the stands were filled up, but one of the issues or some of the jokes that came from that was it was a very dot com crowd. Do you remember that time in the 2000s and the joke was that fans are more interested in being on their cellphones than they are at the game?

So now we fast forward 12 years and my job is to engage with all those people on their smart phones and that everyone has a phone now, not just the dot comers. The atmosphere has completely changed. It's definitely more of an event atmosphere. Our fans have taken it to a new level. This team has definitely brought us a new breed of fans and as anyone can see, we have a much younger and energetic fan base because of it, so it's a fascinating kind of culture that we've seen evolve over the last 13 years.

**Rick:** Yeah. And you bring up a good point there – I mean obviously San Francisco is still a very tech heavy city with so many people on their cellphones and obviously they're going to be on their phones during the game. Do you guys interact with them in any way because they're already on their phones? Are you guys looking for ways to interact with them during the game?

**Bryan Srabian:** We definitely are. I mean, there is a balance and – but let's be frank, everyone is on their phones at all times and you can't away from that, especially during the baseball game. There's a lot of downtime. Baseball is a very social sport to begin with. I mean people are having conversations not about the game but about their life, about their families and that's part of it. It's part of that family experience. It's a shared experience.

So now we take that to the next level. We are definitely encouraging our fans to share their experiences from the Park. Some very interesting stats came out at the end of last year. One of them was that we were the top check in spot on [Facebook](#) of any sports

venue and we're one of the top five in anything in the world. There's that aspect that people like the show that they're at the game.

There's definitely that vanity and they're probably sharing, you know, who they're with or a photo of it. And we're also one of the top Instagram locations in all the world, so to me that's a very powerful metric because it's basically the word of mouth, you know, times 10 where people are taking Instagram pictures of themselves at the game, the ballpark surroundings, the views, the fans around them, a number of players and they're sharing that amongst all of their networks on Twitter, on Facebook, on Instagram and we're definitely going to encourage that.

We're looking to do even more integration of our social this year in the park and try to encourage it. You know, the scoreboard is something that I used to be very close with. I was a part of kind of the production of the scoreboard and managing the entertainment and obviously one of the things that we had was always to make our fans the star.

You know, we love the fans and dancers, you know, between innings, they kind of let loose and there's the Kiss Cam and things of that nature and fans just love to see themselves. The same thing with social media, we've been chatting with our fans, so we want to feature more of our fan tweets, more of our Instagram photos. We're looking for new ways to do that. We have an exciting project that we're going to be announcing next week that going to – that we think is going to help with that.

**Rick:** Well, Bryan you touched on right there that with so many different social media outlets, you know, you mentioned Instagram, you mentioned Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, it can be really overwhelming for small businesses. With the Giants, you do have a fan base that spans people of all ages who certainly don't grasp social media in the same way, so how do you guys decide which outlets are to be on and then how can small businesses take that insight and model it for their own business?

**Bryan Srabian:** It's a really good question and it's one that I think businesses big and small both debate and evolve their strategies over time often. I think the biggest thing we look at internally is, which network should we spend the most time on? A lot of these networks are we would call free. It's free on Facebook, free on Twitter; so time is the most valuable asset.

We have to really direct our time: where do we gain the most? So, for me and I'll be very honest with you, you know, I opened two small businesses (indiscernible 0:09:26) they are connecting with customers and for me, those things are key. My wife actually has a small business and it's fascinating... I have what you might call a big branch and she has a small business and sometimes we have strategies that are similar in some respect. You want to be where your fans are.

If the majority of your customers are on Facebook, if the majority of them are on Twitter, you definitely want to be there and you want to connect there with them. When a new network comes or a new tool is out, I think you have to be willing to at least dip your toe

in a little bit and innovate and experiment and see if it's right for you. Buying was just, you know, at least a few weeks ago seeing what these people are doing, what brands are doing. If it's right for you, does it match what your brand is, does it match what your company is. I think as a small business, it can have a huge impact if you're connecting with the customers on a one on one level, if you're following with your competitors or what trends are going on in your industry. So, I think any amount of time that you are spending is hopefully efficient and you're getting an ROI not just in money, but more in knowledge, customer service and even putting your brands out there. I think for a business, it's important for you to be able to try different things. For example, if you do a discount or you're trying to reach new customers with a special announcement looking at different ways that you might post on Facebook, on Twitter or Instagram, measuring everything, comparing time of day, type of message within a photo and being able to learn from that.

In the end, you're going to probably spend the most time where you get the most return on whatever that metric you're looking for but I watch a lot of brands. I watch sports teams. I watch small businesses to kind of see how they interact with fans. I think the biggest thing for small businesses is they can really connect with their fans on a one on one level.

Whatever it is that you're selling, you could probably find people talking about that product, that service and at the very least connect with those people just to let them know you are and offer to help them. Maybe it's not an over sale, but I think that probably the most valuable thing is to connect with people one on one and I've seen – you might think it could take a lot of time, but all it takes is one re-tweet or a blogger will find you and write a big blog about you and it goes from there.

The potential is huge for small businesses, so I think it's definitely worth their time to spend as much of that time which they don't have - which I know - but I think they'll definitely see a lot of positives out of it.

**Rick:** Yeah. And that's the big thing for small businesses is that they do get overwhelmed with so many different channels out there and they think it's going to take a huge investment of time when in reality – if you set aside 5 or 10 minutes here and there, they can do their social media, for lack of a better way to say that, it's certainly possible to take advantage of the different channels out there where their fans and their customers are. It doesn't have to take a lot of time.

That sort of leads me to my next question Bryan. So, the Giants have huge and dynamic fan bases on both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) with almost 1.7 million fans on Facebook and about 395,000 followers on Twitter. Many small businesses think that they should communicate the same way on Facebook that they do on Twitter, but you know in reality it comes down to the fact that each platform does have its own unique voice and it's quite different. How do you treat each platform when communicating with your fans?

**Bryan Srabian:** You know, it's something I guess we established a few years ago and there's no right or wrong answer to this. I've seen it all across the board. But for me personally, I think the minute that we started injecting a little personality especially into Twitter, that's when we really saw our numbers start to escalate. When we started talking to people and answering questions and making it a conversation, that was really a key for us and we saw that this could be something special.

We still obviously will send out messages as in, buy tickets here or game time starts here, but we also use it as a conversation tool. I remember when I first started I was reading a lot of different books or blogs on how to do it and often the topic was how many times do you tweet per day and how many times do you Facebook a day and a lot of people had set numbers like you should only post six tweets a day. That's enough. That will overflow your fans.

But I think rules are made to be broken and you often find what your fans want. Obviously, as a sports team we're going to tweet as much as the content allows us to. If we have a message to say, you know, we're going to say it at that time. When is the best time to tweet that? It depends, but yeah if it's around an event it's obviously you have engaged audience at that time.

You want to talk to them, but the biggest thing to me is listening to your fans, too. You can get a lot more by just reading the comments on Facebook, by reading tweets with the hash tag or keywords that are used and learn a lot about what your fans are looking for, answering questions that they have. In terms of Facebook, we use that differently.

On Facebook, obviously we're going to post a lot less, especially during games. We're previewing games. We're recapping games. We're giving a lot of follow up on video on Facebook. That works well for us. To me it's a very visual thing and I think fans are not checking Facebook for "real time results" although we'll try to get it as close as possible whereas Twitter is a more instantaneous real time communication tool, so there's a different fan on there.

We also realized that they're not just following the Giants, so we can't flood them with a number of things. Your timing has to be down as well and we experiment with that. So the way we post - the types of things that we post, how we post - it's all calculated. It's all been measured and experimented and we think we like it a certain way and then we tinker with it a little differently and try something else. During the Playoffs we started to do some things a little differently and the pictures got bigger and the words got smaller and we thought that is a little more effective for us.

And obviously people change too and the behaviors change. I'm always trying to study the trends that are happening. What are some of the bigger brands? What do they do? What are other sports teams doing? Are we always doing the right way and most importantly like I said, this is for our fans. You should keep measuring everything. You should do the same (indiscernible 0:18:34) rate as much as possible and I think you don't need an expensive piece of software if you have someone who's dedicated to this and

pretty much has the instincts to understand the relationship between your brand and your fans.

**Rick:** Yeah. I mean, how do you guys measure your social media efforts? I know that that's one thing that can seem overwhelming for small businesses. They think geez, number one I have to be on social media but then they don't quite understand to what extent they're able to measure what they're doing. How do you and the Giants measure your social media efforts?

**Bryan Srabian:** Well, it's a great question. I often struggle with this, too.

**Rick:** It's the million dollar question.

**Bryan Srabian:** It is. I think it depends on what you're measuring, per se. I mean, first and foremost I'm measuring just the value of engagement. How many people are talking about us? Not so much how many people are re-tweeting our messages, but the amount of – we spend a lot of time educating our fans to use our hash tag, #SFGiants. So, we want our fans using that hash tag and we want them to use our [@SFGiants](#) Twitter handle as well, so along this we're in a lot of what's being said.

Usually it's in response to what's happening on the field or something that happened off the field: a trade, a player gets called up or something like that. A player is injured. We announce a new event. I'm obviously measuring that. In terms of what's effective or what's not, you know, it's often the basic metrics are re-tweets, favorites, how many times that something was clicked. We often look at those, but you know we're also looking this year to perhaps partner with a sponsor of ours on getting deeper analytics, understanding more so about the spikes.

When do people talk more about us? What are other keywords? We're always looking for new ways to measure and of course at the end of the day, we're definitely looking at new ways to connect with our customers to sell. We have to hit three million tickets a year and we're in a great spot right now because we have a fantastic season ticket base.

Tickets are in high demand, but there are still a number of games that we try to sell and the goal is to sell out every game. We measure how effective those sales channels are using Facebook and using Twitter. And in one instance, it's a powerful channel because the Vice President of Ticketing can call me and say, "Bryan, we have a ticket offer that needs to get out ASAP," and I can get that out in a matter minutes and track it versus the old fashioned way of having to produce a radio ad or a TV spot which is so much lead time.

So, it's all part of the overall market sell. It's not to say that it's going to replace marketing. It definitely has proven that more people are on their phones or on their tablets or on their computers throughout their workday and are connected to us and if we hit the right marketing message to them, we can sell a product to them, but that's not the only measurement. It's only a small percentage.

**Rick:** Sure. You brought up a good point there and this comes up in a lot of the conversations I'm having here on the show. That is, when it comes to an organization or a big brand that social media shouldn't sit in a silo. It's part of the overall marketing and strategy that goes into the marketing of a business and that's – you just brought up a really good point that your social media team does not sit by itself, that it interacts with the ticket sales team and the marketing team with an overall strategy for the marketing of the club.

**Bryan Srabian:** Yeah. I think each year I've seen it evolve even further to the point where I think it's really going to change the way that we operate. Almost every facet of our organization uses social media in one way or another, and it's just fascinating to see kind of that evolution.

Sports teams are a little more traditional than regular businesses, so the press conference, press releases, the way that we disseminate information is still very traditional and I think that needs to stay, but obviously social media has helped with connecting to those fans that don't watch the 6:00 o'clock news or read the newspaper. What's really interesting is that blogging or bloggers per se have become a huge part of the communication with fans. A large number of our younger fans get their information from blogs, whether it's a sports blog, a Giant's blog or just more of a local blog.

That's how they're getting information and it's definitely changed the way that we communicate now. My thought is also to connect and find those different blogs and find out where our fans are and how we can continue to connect with them. Also, what are the trends are moving forward? The organization comes to me to provide that. Whether we choose to do something or not, it's a fascinating kind of evolution of the way sports are using social media. We continue to integrate social into all parts of this.

**Rick:** Now, Bryan in my mind being the director of social media for a sports team can have its own unique challenges because, not only do you have an organization to represent, you also have individual players who are on social media. So, of course, social media is all about being open and two-way conversations, but can you talk a bit about how you might use social media to handle situations where a player maybe says something that's not in the best interest of the team or maybe an embarrassing meaning? Do you try and control that message that's put out there at all?

**Bryan Srabian:** Well, I don't think we try to control it. I definitely think we coach our players, and most teams will have some sort of media training, especially at the beginning of the year. You're seeing an emphasis on the social media training because more and more players are really involved in Twitter, mainly, with some now using Instagram as well. I think the idea is that when you're in front of a press conference or there's a camera and a reporter, you could kind of have your guard up and you can avoid saying something if the reporter is trying to bait you or you know you might be able to cool down after a game if you're not happy.

But social media is kind of when your guard is down, you know; it's when you're alone in your hotel room or you're out with friends and someone says something to you and you might respond with a knee jerk reaction. I think that's where I've seen some instances, not with our team, but there are obviously some popular things that have happened with players and interactions with fans.

I think we have a really good group of guys that we're consistently open with and we check in around them. The message we give is, you don't have to respond to every fan request because there's obviously some examples where you don't even know if they're a fan of yours or not; sometimes they say things that are less than respectful, if you will, and especially after a big game, you'll get something.

I mean, these guys are representing us at all times. When they go out to dinner with their families, when they're just walking around town, they're always representing us whether they are on the field or away from the field. So, I think we give them that same trust when they have a Twitter account.

Now, we don't control anything that they say. What they say is their opinion and we even tell them, we support you if you want to say things that you fully believe in and for the most part our players keep it very light. But I think you want the players to understand the power of social media. I like to focus more on the positives than the negatives; some of our players do use it to talk about their charities, to talk about their faith and it's definitely given them the chance to connect further with their fan base. Some players don't want anything to do with social media and that's fine, too.

So, I think our goal and our jobs are to help those players and give them the tools or education if they need it, and for others, we're not going to push anything that any player isn't comfortable with. It's definitely becoming an area where more and more players are coming up. The young ones are already very fluent in using Twitter and social networks and it's not so much a technical training, but more of a, "OK, here's how we do it at the Giants. If you need any help, we're always here."

**Rick:** Got you. Okay. Well, listen small businesses obviously don't have the kind of marketing and social media budgets that large brands do, so let's bullet this out for us, if you would. With that in mind, what are the top three tips that you give to a small business or an online entrepreneur trying to grow their business using social media?

**Bryan Srabian:** Oh, that's a great question. And by the way, our marketing budgets are not as big as you might think, So, my top three tips for using social media for marketing. Well for one I think – I mean I think, you know, a budget – well, let me take a step back. I definitely think that small businesses, a lot of them, might tend to think they don't have time for social media and they might hire someone to run it for them and that might be a solution, but I definitely think that the beauty of social media is that you're able to kind of be true to your brand and give a personality and I would almost say model yourself after a brand that you think is bigger than yours – if you're running a coffeehouse, look at how other coffeehouses are doing.



If you're a clothing manufacturer, look at some of your favorite clothing manufacturers. And you're going to see this across the board. I'm not saying that Starbucks isn't the end all, be all for coffeehouses - they do a really good job. But Dunkin' Donuts, there's a lot of local coffeehouses that have done some interesting things. Learn from examples.

That's the beauty to me of social media is that there are a lot of case studies out there but you can just notice once you open your eyes and notice it, you're going to find these real examples that you'll say, I could do that. Restaurants, food trucks are fantastic resources for really innovative creative ideas of connecting with fans and becoming close to their customers. I've probably given a few tips. One of the most important tips is, don't stretch yourself out too thin. Don't think you need to be on every channel just because you think everyone is out there. If you only have time for one channel, find out what that channel is. A lot of people are going to say Facebook is the place to be because it's the most popular. It's where you're going to get a lot of interaction with businesses. You're going to get your messages out. You have the chance at viral.

Twitter to me is also very important as well. It might not have as many fans or followers, but I think the communication and connecting with people will be very important as opposed to listening. So, you could get on both of those channels without spending any money at all and then you have the ability - if you do have a marketing budget, dabble a little bit with it, especially with Facebook ads.

It's a very powerful way to get your message out there and at least learn how many fans of a certain demographic live in a certain metropolitan area that you may be interested in and it's fascinating from that standpoint. You can often compare it to your competitors as well. I would also say that the other side of that is understanding where your fans are and being unafraid to pursue that and just say I'm only going to be on one channel and I'm not going to focus my time on any others until I build up enough of a strategy that I can really connect.

I would also invest in a smartphone that - an iPhone or Samsung Phone -- that takes great pictures that can help you multitask. To me, the biggest trend right now is photos and you don't need to be a photographer per se. You don't need to have a very fancy camera, but telling your story and photos is so powerful especially for small business and today smartphones take beautiful pictures.

There are a lot of apps for free that can help you. Instagram obviously is very popular and I'm a big fan of that, but learn how you want to tell your story. Often photos are a great way to do that. I think video will be interesting as well. Vine is very interesting - it takes six-second videos. It allows you to share this video through Twitter and Facebook.

But I definitely think that, for any small business owner who really wants to get into social media, having a smartphone like that can be a huge advantage for you. It makes your life a lot easier, but it could be very addictive as well. Most people have a smartphone, but it's important to learn how to use it correctly and get the right apps to

help you. Not to mention the fact there are some great apps out there that can help you schedule tweets so you don't have to sit and post. When you want to post you can sit and tweet things out but be sure to come back to it and monitor it to see what's being said. I know time is probably the most valuable commodity for any small business owner, so having the ability to measure that and to monitor that is important as well.

**Rick:** Yeah, and everything that you just mentioned there Bryan - I mean aside from if someone doesn't have a smartphone with the ability to take a picture, there's a cost there - but everything else that you just mentioned there is free, with maybe a little bit of a learning curve to learn how to do some of those things. Those are all great examples.

**Bryan Srabian:** You know, the interesting thing is I grew up and I went to school as a marketing major per se, and most of my post-collegiate work had nothing to do with social media, but more of marketing and understanding and now social media comes around.

So, there was no school for social media. It's a lot of basic fundamentals that all of us have, and we're learning new tools and how to apply them and obviously there's a way of doing that. I guess my point is that you might think that you don't know anything about social media, but you probably know how to talk to your customers. You probably know a little bit about storytelling because that's what all of us are.

We all are entrepreneurs to a point. It's just learning how to use Twitter, how to use Facebook. There are a lot of great blogs. There are a lot of interesting books. A lot of this access is all free. It just takes time. But you don't necessarily need to "hire a social media specialist." You very well could, but I do think that some people are intimidated by this and think oh gosh, I just don't have time.

I'm just going to go hire someone to do it all for me, which is fine and that's an option. But I do think that you could put a little bit of time in learning just the basics and practice and learn it yourself. It seems overwhelming at first, but then it becomes very natural and I think that the end all stories, you know, you're being authentic. You're just telling your story to your customers, your fans, in your own way. There's no right or wrong way of doing that. You might pick up a certain style, but it's such a powerful way for small businesses to connect with their customers.

**Rick:** Yeah, I totally agree. Bryan, that's a great place to wrap this up. You shared some great information and I really appreciate it. How can people connect with you as well as the San Francisco Giants on social media if they like to?

**Bryan Srabian:** Right, right. Well, yeah, opening day is a few weeks away, so fans get on to Facebook at [facebook.com/giants](https://facebook.com/giants). On Twitter, we're [@SFGiants](https://twitter.com/SFGiants), that's the at symbol and SFGiants. On [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/SFGiants), I try to post a few pictures a day and we're going to have more to come on [@SFGiants](https://twitter.com/SFGiants). Let's see if I can think of all my networks. We're on Pinterest. You could follow us on [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/SFGiants), on [Tumblr](https://www.tumblr.com/SFGiants), on [Google+](https://www.google.com/+SFGiants) and on Vine. So

that's the Giants. The easiest place for fans to follow me is on Twitter: I'm [@srabe](#) and that's spelled S-R-A-B-E, short for Srabian. @srabe on Twitter.

**Rick:** Awesome. You guys are everywhere, I love it.

**Bryan Srabian:** We're everywhere, too many places, crazy.

**Rick:** Bryan thanks so much for being on the show. It's very much appreciated, great information today, and I look forward to talking to you soon.

**Bryan Srabian:** As you could tell I love talking about this stuff and it's an exciting subject and we're all learning every day. I guess I love talking about this to people like yourself, so thanks for giving me the opportunity and I hope to see you at a Giants game soon.

**Rick:** Absolutely.

**Bryan Srabian:** Let me know if you want to come. We'll change you from a Red Sox to a Giants fan. That's my goal.

**Rick:** I will take you up on that.

**Bryan Srabian:** All right.

**Rick:** Thanks Bryan, appreciate it.