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# How to Create a Killer B2B Social Media Strategy

A CALYSTO COMMUNICATIONS WHITE PAPER



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## Executive Summary

Think social media is only effective for consumer brands? Think again. The B2B marketing landscape has evolved dramatically over the last 10 years. The advent of sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn have completely changed the way we cultivate brand awareness, secure sales leads and communicate with target audiences.

Although 84 percent of B2B marketers use social media in some form ([Aberdeen](#)), many are still clueless when it comes to creating and executing an efficient and effective social media strategy. With social media still in its infancy, it's no wonder most B2B brands haven't gotten it figured out. Sales has been around since the Stone Age, and marketing since the early 1900s. These tried-and-true methodologies we understand. Social, not so much.

As for the 16 percent of B2B marketers that still aren't convinced they need a social strategy, a [study by IDG Connect](#) reveals 86 percent of IT buyers use social media in their purchase decision process, proving that no B2B organization can afford not to engage socially.

This white paper will walk you through the steps of creating a killer B2B social media strategy.

### STEP 1:

## Define Goals

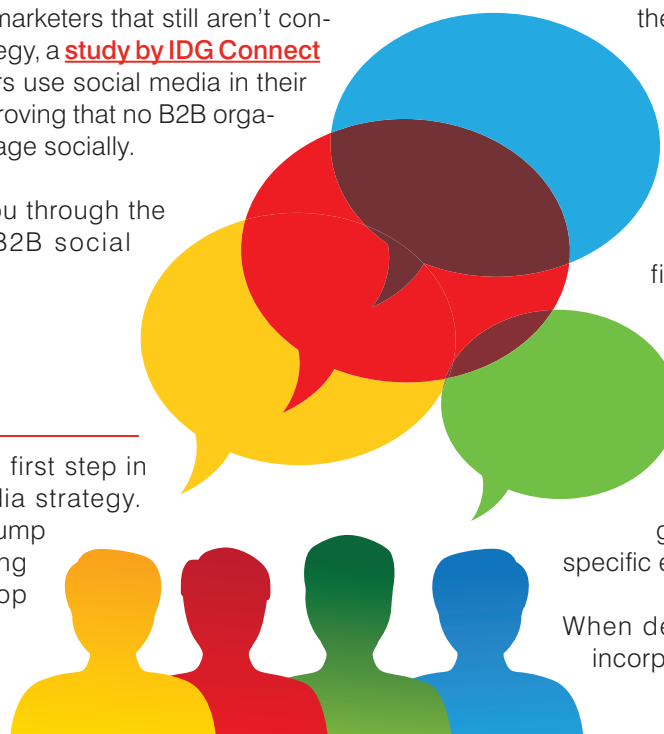
Goal setting is an important first step in developing your social media strategy. While it may be tempting to jump right into the deep end, failing to plan is planning to fail. Top social media goals include:

- Reputation management
- Thought leadership
- Brand awareness
- Increase sales leads
- Increase web traffic
- Brand ambassadorship
- Market insight understanding

Defining what you seek to gain from your social media program will have a large impact on your chosen strategy. If your main interest is in gaining market insight, you'll likely have very different conversations with your audience than if you were focused on thought leadership. In the latter, for example, you'd do more talking than listening.

However, it's likely that you will have multiple goals for your social media program. That's great; most companies want a combination of a few—or all—of the above. It's critical to ensure all of those goals are aligned, and that you have a clear understanding of what types of content can help you meet which goals. In some cases, you'll see a direct relation from one goal to another. For instance, increasing web traffic will also help to increase sales leads in many cases. It might also help with brand awareness and thought leadership. Make sure you've fully baked your goals—just putting them down as another bullet point isn't really defining how those goals will be achieved. Nor is it specific enough.

When defining goals, make sure you're incorporating people and products, not



just the company, into your goals. While a company can be a thought leader, it's the people behind the company that customers can relate to.

### STEP 2:

## Listen in

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While this is a step that most marketers skip, it's an important one because the decisions you'll make in step three are dependent on it. Before you post, listen. While it may seem like social media is all "like us", "follow us" and "please share", smart marketers will first take the time to assess the situation. What are people already saying about your brand? Where are they saying it? What questions are they asking about your industry? What complaints are they making? Listening is important for five main reasons:

1. To discover the current sentiment toward your company, product or service
2. To discover what social networks your customers are participating on
3. To gather insights that can help you understand a market for your new product or service
4. To perform competitive analysis
5. To respond to customer requests and complaints

After listening, you may find that you need to tweak your brand message. Perhaps your audience has some misconceptions about your product that you need to address. Quietly listening in on a LinkedIn group that is discussing the pros and cons of your service may help you to highlight your strengths more in your sales literature while working on correcting your perceived weaknesses.


### STEP 3:

## Select Channels

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An omni-channel strategy is extremely important in today's marketing landscape, creating a seamless brand experience at each touch point along the customer journey. With that said, don't feel pressured to be everywhere, spreading your resources too thin. It's far better not to be on Twitter than to have a Twitter feed that hasn't been updated in a month.

B2B marketers use, on average, six different social networking platforms. The most popular are LinkedIn at 91 percent, Twitter at 85 percent, Facebook at 81 percent and YouTube at 73 percent ([Content Marketing Institute](#)). However, focus less on what's popular and more on what's best for you and your specific audience. There's no point in investing time and money into Facebook if during the listening step, you discover the majority of your customers are on LinkedIn and Twitter. And make no mistake, in the B2B arena, LinkedIn and Twitter are the most important

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places to be. A recent [study by Twitter](#) found that Twitter users visit B2B tech brand sites at a higher rate (59 percent) compared to average Internet users (40 percent), illustrating the strong presence of a B2B audience on Twitter. For the majority of B2B brands, posting selfies on Instagram and Pinterest is a waste of time and resources. Meet your audience where they are.

### STEP 4:

## Assign Roles & Responsibilities

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Now that you have the beginnings of a solid plan in place, it's time to figure out who's going to do what. Be realistic about who has the time and discipline to consistently feed your social media machine. It's important that busy executives make social a priority or delegate it to someone who will ghostwrite on their behalf.

A majority (70 percent) of B2B marketing leaders admit they are concerned about brand integrity and execution in social media, and 60 percent said they are seeking younger employees who understand new technologies. Yet just less than half, 47 percent, say they can't find people with the right skill sets, and 28 percent are finding it impossible to fill important positions ([Business Marketing Association/Forrester Research](#)).

Here's a scary statistic – a [Gallup poll](#) found that only 40 percent of U.S. workers in the technology/information services field agree with the statement "I know what my company stands for and what makes our brand(s) different from our competitors." It's important to quickly get the other 60 percent on board, but even more so when it comes to the people executing your social media strategy. Make sure whoever is publicly representing your brand knows their stuff.

If you're serious about social, hire someone for the role. It may be easier and less expensive to pass off the responsibility to someone within your sales, marketing or customer service teams, but if you're just piling that duty atop a mountain of their existing duties, social media will likely fall to the wayside. It's a good idea to select someone internally, but allow them enough time to really do the job.

Don't be afraid to get your senior executives on board, not necessarily for the day-to-day activities, but for content, themes, etc. This helps develop their individual voice as it represents the company. If thought leadership is one of your social goals, this step is key.

#### STEP 5:

## Develop Quality Content

Social and content go hand in hand. Interesting content is cited as one of the top three reasons people follow brands on social media ([ContentPlus UK](#)), consequently, 87 percent of B2B marketers are using social media to distribute content ([Content Marketing Institute](#)). Using Twitter and LinkedIn, you can reach potential customers and stay top of mind through a consistent drip of highly valuable information. The types of content that lends itself to social media posting include:

- Blog posts
- Videos
- White papers
- Case studies (read our recent white paper "[How to Create a Killer Case Study Program](#)")
- eBooks
- Infographics
- Press releases
- [Newsletters](#)
- Articles
- Photos
- SlideShares (check out our SlideShare on...you guessed it...[how to use SlideShare](#))
- Research reports
- Microsites

#### STEP 6:

## Set Performance Measures

Today, having people follow you is not enough. B2B marketers must go beyond likes and shout outs, forging a deeper connection with key audiences. Unfortunately, measurement isn't always easy and it's certainly done much differently than you're used to when using more traditional marketing methods. Subsequently, 53 percent of social media marketers don't measure their success

([Awareness, Inc.](#)) and 52 percent of marketers cite difficulties in accurately measuring ROI as their biggest source of frustration in social marketing ([Chief Marketer](#)).

The goals you laid out in step one will determine how you measure performance. If your top concern is increasing web traffic, figuring that out is easy enough with Google Analytics. (Hint: you need to make sure in your goals that you state your specific goal, i.e., increase web traffic by 10 percent each month, otherwise, how will you know if you're making the level of progress you expected?) Measuring things like sentiment can be a little more complicated but can be accomplished with many social media monitoring tools on the market today. However, more abstract goals like positioning yourself as a thought leader and gaining market insights may be harder to quantify but can be accomplished through creative problem solving and stepping outside of the traditional box of marketing analytics.

## Wrapping Up

All B2B marketers want to know more about their customers. Social can act as a digital goldmine, offering a wealth of customer data that goes far beyond their business interests, including buying patterns and personal interests that can be used to forge deeper connections with your customers. Of course, this user data is worthless unless you enter it into your CRM system and resolve to utilize it in your future sales and marketing campaigns.

In the world of B2B social media marketing, patience is key. Don't expect to see a return on your investment within a month or even after a full 90-day campaign. A tribe of loyal followers is cultivated over time, with a consistent flow of relevant posts that solve their problems and keep them coming back for more. The B2B environment is less immediate and less transactional in nature. You're dealing with a longer, more complex sales cycle than B2C companies. Often, more money is on the line, more people are involved in making the decisions and more time has gone into researching you, your product/service and competitors. Therefore, an effective social media strategy must be long term, not just when you're in the startup phase or when you are launching a new product or when your sales pipeline is dwindling, but all the time.

### FOR MORE IDEAS AND MORE INFORMATION ON CALYSTO, CONTACT:

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