

7 Simple Steps to Planning Your Next Social Media Campaign

Written by [Aaron Charlie](#)– Wed 25 Feb 2015

Are you thinking of using social media campaigns to engage with your customers?

Looking for advice on how to create a successful social media campaign?

Social media campaigns have evolved from simple Facebook contests and Twitter competitions into fully integrated promotional campaigns spanning several social networks. Think [Chipotle's Scarecrow campaign](#) or [Dove's hugely shared viral video campaigns](#). Of course much of these campaigns have come from big brands with resources that a small business would be hard pressed to match. Some campaigns like the ice bucket challenge evolve virally, but with a little planning there is no reason why your social media campaign can't reach audiences beyond your demographic.

Creating your Social Media Campaign Plan

So you've been tasked to develop a social media campaign.

You use Facebook to connect with your friends but not much more than that. You follow celebrities on Twitter but you don't have a clue about promoted tweets or the best hashtags to use. Your boss says "we need to get on [Ello](#), Instagram is hot and we just have to be on [Bubbly](#) don't we?" Would you know how to get started?

A planned campaign is a successful campaign. A plan keeps you focused on the number of steps you'll need to take along the way.

So how do you actually plan an engaging social media campaign with very little resources and not much time? Good question - one that we can help you answer in 7 simple steps to planning a social media campaign.

1 Define Realistic Objectives



Think about what you want to achieve. Why did you embark on this campaign in the first place? Write it down. Goals and objectives help guide your social media strategy. Is your goal to raise awareness about a new attraction, product an event or offer? To begin, identify your objectives for your Facebook/LinkedIn/Twitter/Instagram/Pinterest and other social media efforts. Do you want to:-

- Drive more traffic to your website
- Build your email list
- Sell more products/services
- Announce special offers and promotions
- Share news
- Share educational content like webinars
- Improve search engine rankings
- Facilitate client/customer engagement

Start with setting out some specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed objectives (That's SMART for the initiated). If you can manage this, it eases the planning process hugely. We love PR Smith's/ CIM's SOSTAC framework for communications planning:-

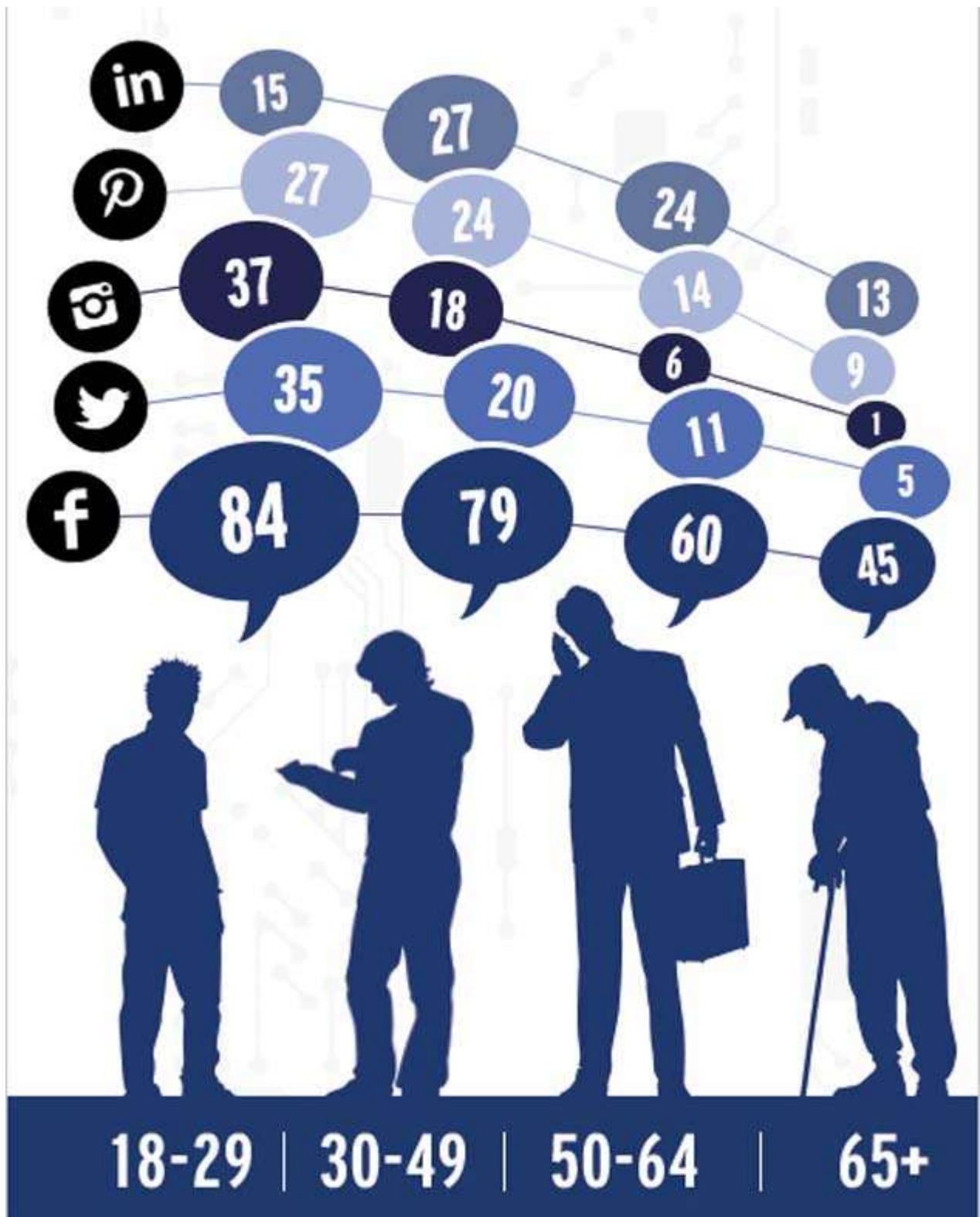
- Situation
- Objectives
- Strategy
- Tactics
- Actions
- Control

Know your starting point. Establish a baseline so you can measure progress against your SMART goals.

2 Identify your Audience

Identify your audience and where they hang out online. Older social networks like Facebook and Twitter are reaching maturity, while newer social messaging apps are gaining younger users fast. Snapchat is the youngest social network of all. More than six out of 10 Snapchat users are in the 18-to-24 age group. [Pew Research](#) publishes up to date statistics on social media demographics. Think about your audience and do some research into where they might be online. (See diagram)





Credit: Pew Research Center



3 Choose the Right Platforms

It's all social media. Google+ and Twitter might be right for bigger brands, Pinterest on the other hand usually is better for fashion or creative businesses. Each network is unique, with its own best practices, own style, and own audience so what to do? Well, it's easy - you choose the social networks that best fit your strategy and the goals you want to achieve on social media.

Top Tip: You don't have to be on them all—just the ones that matter to you and your audience.

If you have a budget and you really want to hone into your target audience most social platforms now have highly targeted advertising options.

4 Choose the Right Tactics

A Facebook competition or poll may work well if you want people to vote for a particular cause or brand. Twitter is great for brand awareness and engagement. Your tactics for each social channel rely on your goals and objectives, as well as the best practices of each platform. Are you writing a blog post to explain the campaign? If so mention it in social media updates and your newsletter. Think about having influencers on your side to help the virality of your social campaign. Research them at [Buzzsumo](#) or [Klout](#).

5 Create a Content Strategy

Start by doing [keyword research](#) to help search engines find your campaign's offer.

Identify the type of content that your audience is likely to share. Then think about what format that content is best presented in for your audience. Creating content on a budget is tough but if you haven't got the budget you don't really need to fork out for cutting edge material. For example, bookings soared at Scottish travel agent Thorne Travel after a cringe worthy [spoof Virgin Airways video](#) went viral.

Think about content that is timely, relevant, unique and visual. Quality, sharable content is often focused on timely, seasonal or 'trending' topics. They should also be relevant to your audience, there's no use posting about new search engine algorithms if you're a knitwear company!

Original content is especially important for search engine optimisation and something unique is far more likely to be shared. Finally content that's presented visually often has a greater impact. Images on social media tend to get more engagement than links or text.



Also, check out Hubspot's article '[What Types of Content Perform Best on Social Media](#)' and the [Content Marketing Institute](#) to get ideas on creating great content.

6 Think about Success Factors

What factors make a social media campaign successful?

One of the most celebrated campaigns of 2013 came from Oreo. Their social media team was constantly monitoring for any activity that they could capitalise on during the US's largest annual sporting event. When the Super Bowl experienced a black out they knew that the herd would flock to social media. They distributed the (now famous) 'You Can Still Dunk in the Dark' ad across each social network and caught the attention of millions.

Much like your content, your campaigns need to be timely and aim to provoke a user response.

Take a look at the [best social media campaigns in 2014](#) according to Mashable. What can you learn from them?

7 Measure Your Results

There are many ways to measure the results of your social media campaign. Google Analytics can report most anything about your website and traffic, including social referrals. Create tracking URLs in Google Analytics' so you can see where traffic is coming from. Your social media dashboards will also have some useful reporting functions see [Hootsuite](#) and [Simply Measured](#). Here are some simple metrics you can measure:-

- Conversions = the number of people who achieved a desired result such as paying for a product, signing up for a trial or completing a form.
- Engagement = the total number of likes, shares, and comments on a post.
- Reach = measures of the size of audience you are communicating with.
- Impressions = how many people saw your post.

Report success at the end of the campaign and look at lessons learnt from to improve the next one!

