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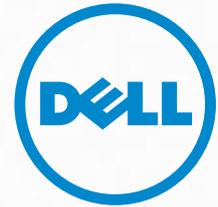
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# FORMULATING AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOR YOUR STARTUP

Now that you've created a brand, you need to let the word out about it. Amongst all the mediums, one of the most fascinating ones is Social Media. The barrier to entry in this medium is non-existent. All you need is an Internet connection to create your profiles on your preferred social networks.

Is startup social media strategy so simple? Not really, otherwise brands won't have been pondering on what new they can do.

**There've been many stories already written about which tools you should use, which networks you can choose but what they don't talk about is the strategy i.e. the heart of all the action.**

Here are some steps to help you get started -

## Ask Questions, The right ones:

One of the first questions that you need to ask yourself is whether social media is right for you? Quite often, people jump onto the bandwagon with high expectations in terms of building large fan communities and follower base. Simply said, just because social networks exist doesn't mean they are meant for your startup. It's because your startup's focus audience is not necessarily present in those social networks.

## Selection of Networks:

Every network has a purpose and a reason for existence. While Facebook and Twitter are the preferred choices of networks in any social media strategy, Pinterest/Instagram and few others have added variety of options. A well-defined social media strategy should map each channel and your expectations from that channel. For instance, you can use geographically targeted Facebook

ads for your newly opened restaurant business. On the other hand, Instagram can be a great resource to collect user-generated pictures from visitors to your restaurant. Every network should tie in with your business objective.

## What Message?

Now that you've decided that social media is right for you, take a moment to answer what you are going to do out here? What reasons are you giving to your fans to join your community? Is your product/service unique? If not, can you create some difference in your content? At a larger level, answer, "What message should I give to my fans" for joining my community.

For instance an e-commerce startup can have the message "Join us for exclusive discounts on merchandise you love, brands you adore."

## Likes or Customers:

It's a popular myth on social media that in-order to be successful one should have a bare minimum number of fans. Numbers such as half a million fans have become a common requirement among brands. Having said that, your startup should be looking at building a community of fans that actually engages with them. There's no point in building a dead community of fans where people who like you, don't even understand what your brand is about.

## Knowing the Right Tools/Tricks:

Considering that new social networks are growing every single day, there're a bunch of tools out there which can make job little easier for you. For instance, weekend is a great time for you to generate engagement with your target group. Since weekend is also a holiday, social media tools that enable content scheduling can make life easier for you. You can explore many options from Hootsuite to the scheduling feature within Facebook itself. Similarly for twitter, there are many free tools with which you can track your performance, follower



growth, historical data and reach of tweets etc. A few of them are [topsy.com](http://topsy.com) and [tweetarchivist.com](http://tweetarchivist.com) etc.

## Join Communities:

While you would be building your own communities, there're many existing groups and networks relevant to your startup. Monitoring and participating in conversations across such networks & adding value can position you/your startup as an expert firm. Imagine some one asking about options to try the best black coffee in town and you give him the recipe to make the finest americano coffee with an invitation to try it out in your nearby shop.

## Monitor Competition/Industry Trends:

How different or how unique you should be can be answered easily by looking at your competitor's social media activities. Sometimes, they would write a killer post that would have gone viral. Likewise, a customer's complaint on your competitor's page for bad service or missing feature might be the window of opportunity for your startup. In a nutshell, keep an active tab on your competition, what they are doing and the strategy they are employing etc.

**Daksh Sharma** is the Director at Iffort and has been driving all initiatives in digital marketing projects in both traditional internet marketing as well as social media marketing.



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