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On Ideas, Execution, and Social Networks

Google the phrase “starting a business”, and you’ll stumble across thousands of people telling you what an excellent idea it is. And you know what, it actually is a good idea! However, just like in the case of every good idea out there, what really counts is execution.

Point is, even if your business concept isn’t exactly groundbreaking, execution is what’s going to set you apart. Here’s what the guys from an awesome startup called Crew have to say about this:

And these days, if you’re planning your new business, it makes sense to consider how that business will flourish in the online world, and, in particular, how it’ll be represented on social media. After all, there are approximately 2.8 billion users flocking social networks. That’s a lot of people, and a lot of potential revenue.

Besides, in 2015 alone, social networks garnered over 8.3 billion dollars from advertising. This is to show how many companies are investing money into social platforms like Facebook or Twitter.

Now execution is what counts, and a good deal of your potential buyers are on social media — along with a long list of bad moves that can ruin your chances of expanding your business. That list is what we’ve got for you right here.

We’re going to start by pointing out some of the mistakes beginners tend to make, and how you can avoid them. Let’s get into it!
Here are some of the most widespread mistakes characteristic of social media newbies. Have a look at this list, and learn from other people's errors instead of repeating them.

1. Failing to Know the Difference Between Business and Personal Profiles

Most social media platforms have different versions meant for business and personal purposes. Google+ and Facebook for instance, have a pretty straightforward procedure through which you can get started. Here's Google+ for business and Facebook Business page.

These platforms require you to first have a personal profile, as your business page will be connected to it. While the business page is for promoting your website/company, you can also share relevant third-party materials on your personal profile.
2. Not Targeting Your Audience

When it comes to social media, locating your target audience doesn’t have to be a guessing game. Before getting started, you should define a clear vision of who your ideal client is.

But what do we mean by ‘defining’ them? Find a detailed answer to this question in this guide to building buyer personas. In the meantime, here are some points to consider, to better understand your potential customers:

- Do your customers perceive your product as expensive or affordable?
- Do your products appeal more to men or women?
- How old is your typical customer?
- Where do your customers live? What are they interested in?
- What kind of lifestyle and values do your “ideal customers” have?

3. Concentrating on One Social Media Platform

Facebook (as popular as it is) may seem like the ultimate social media platform. This is pretty far from reality. For personal purposes, Facebook may be all you need, but you’re going to need a bit more than that for driving traffic to your website.

Branching out to other social media networks is super useful for SEO purposes. What’s more, this makes finding you online a much smoother process for potential clients.

4. Working with Too Many Social Media Platforms at the Same Time

Yes, sticking to only one social media platform isn’t ideal. However, you should be careful of overexerting yourself. Trying to build your presence on Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Youtube, Instagram AND your StumbleUpon at the same time won’t get you the best results.
This may lead to frustration — chances are you'll end up believing social media marketing is a waste of time. Well it isn't. Just focus on 1 or 2 platforms in the very beginning, and expand your social media strategy to include no more than 3–4. Once those start making progress, try adding a new channel to your SMM mix.

5. Not Following Back

While it's unwise to follow every last user who follows you, there is value in following back — especially in the early stages of your business on social media. Namely on Twitter, this allows for you to better communicate with your clients via direct messages.

What's more important, some of your new followers will unfollow you if you don't follow them back. For this reason, try to follow each and every user whose interests and follower base are relevant to your business. This tactic will also provide you with tons of relevant user-generated content that you can like and share thus engaging with your audience.

6. Blindly Following Back

This mistake is on the other side of the follow-back spectrum. Remember that while your social media presence is growing, only relevant audiences matter. For this reason, the follower bases of your business profile need to mainly consist of people who may be potentially interested in what your business has to offer.

7. Ignoring Negative Comments (and Not Responding to Positive Ones)

Regardless of how a client reaches out to you on social media, what they have to say can be of value for your company’s growth. Basically, it all depends on your ability to respond to their comments in a positive and timely manner.

Here's an awesome example of a company doing an awesome job of maintaining healthy communication with clients:
One more thing — never leave negative comments unanswered! Whenever you see a frustrated commenter reaching out to you, try to find out if (and how) you can solve their problem. If you succeed in doing so, your brand will get a more positive public image which is always a huge plus:
8. Your Social Media Content Isn’t SEO Optimized

If you still don’t know what SEO is, that needs to change right now. Having your website, or Facebook, even your Twitter profile search engine optimized can work wonders for your online presence.

Let’s take a look at an example of a Twitter profile that’s NOT optimized in a proper way. Here’s what Tom Hanks’ Twitter looks like (yeah, we know, everyone loves Tom Hanks).

Being Tom Hanks, his fan base may be the only search engine optimization factor he will ever need.

That aside, there are things to admire about his Twitter profile: It’s personable, and relatable — Mr. Hanks was also keen enough to include keywords like ‘actor’ and ‘movies’.

But from a technical standpoint, there’s still quite a bit of optimizing that can be done here. What we mean is, if Mr. Hanks weren’t world famous, he would want to increase the probability of his page being discovered on Google. To do this, he would have to resort to keywords describing his profession, skills, etc.

In the event that you’re not a super-famous person with millions of fans, you may want your profile to look a bit more like this:

Notice how the latter example consists of a title and description. Both are using keywords specific to the niche and services offered. This increases the chances of search engine users stumbling upon a profile when looking for specific products or services. What’s more, Kristi Hines even managed to throw in some extra information about her hobbies — this way her profile appears a lot friendlier.
9. Not Placing Social Media Buttons on Your Website

Making each of your social media platforms easily accessible is beyond useful. But many beginners aren't likely to realize the importance of this seemingly small detail. It's not safe to assume that readers who stumble upon your site are going to scour the Web to find your Facebook business page.

Linking to your social media profiles from your website can be a breeze. Especially if you’re using a professionally designed website where most of the work is already done for you. If your current website lacks this functionality, chances are you can add it via a plugin.

10. Not Aiming for Long-Term Relationships

There are at least two obvious reasons why you should engage in long-term communication with your social media audience.

• First, online shoppers will research your products or services, your prices, and your company before they decide if they're going to buy from you or from your competitor. Your social media channels are among the sources of information that many of your prospects are going to use to make this decision.

• Second, social media are essential for maintaining contact with your current customers. By proving them that you value their opinions or share their tastes, you will increase your chances of turning one-time buyers into long-term customers and brand advocates.

So how do you engage in those long-term relationships? Start with liking and sharing their content (obviously, this only includes content that is relevant to your business). Contests and surveys can also help you interact with your audience.
11. Undermining the Value of Free Products

Products given to your followers for free are sometimes more useful than products you sell. How does that make sense? Simple, it just takes some patience.

In case you can afford using occasional giveaways, you can exchange free offers for reposts or shares. What’s more, you can set up contests to attract user-generated content. For instance, how about awarding your brand’s followers for the most popular Instagram post featuring a photo of your product or your logo? The value that you may get from promotions of this sort is often a lot more than the price of a single product item.

12. Buying Fake Fans

Having a bunch of fake fans/followers may look neat to viewers who can’t see through the façade.

While this may sound like a semi-valid reason to actually pay for fake likes or followers, this tactic has zero value. Most of the fake traffic originates from so-called click farms—huge networks of accounts that have little to no contact with real audiences. This means fake fans never share your content with real people.

In fact, buying fake fans is detrimental to your engagement rates, and it is sure to deteriorate your analytics. As a result, your social media campaigns will be extremely difficult to manage.

13. Not Using Hashtags

Hashtags aren’t exactly a new feature to the social media game. Still, for some unknown reason, relatively few people understand their true value:

- First, hashtags provide you with an opportunity to target active social users by their interest.
- Second, they give your social media post a chance to spread beyond your network. When you use a relevant tag for your post, anyone searching for that same tag will be able to see your content.

These two factors should provide you with a good reason to get down to hashtag research.

- Think of the hashtags that are relevant to their business (this includes the main keywords that they use)
- Check (and double-check) if these hashtags work the way people expect them to (by looking at what people post under these hashtags)
14. Not Including Images in Your Posts

You can’t always expect followers to read through your text to get the message. That’s where images come in. They’re a lot more straightforward (when used correctly), and they can communicate a point much faster.

Moreover, posts with images can get up to 39% more engagement on platforms like Facebook. Even though images might get less traction on other platforms, you can count on it that they still outperform plain text — be it a tweet, a pin, or any other platform-specific content.

15. Thinking Blatant Self Promotion Is Okay

This one is particularly relevant for smaller businesses with little to no experience with social media. Some entrepreneurs and companies view Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms merely as an advertising channel — which is obviously unwise.

If you don’t want to repeat the same mistake, try to focus more on how you can engage people or help them solve their problems, as opposed to highlighting how awesome your company or products are. Also, share interesting posts that spark conversation while getting the message of your company to the relevant crowd.
16. Only Sharing Content From Your Blog or Website

It's called social media for a reason. Sharing your material alone is not only a bit self-absorbed — it's counterproductive. Remember that you want to engage users — namely the prominent figures in your niche.

To do this, identify your thought leaders and start responding to their posts, or mentioning them in conversations to get things going. Have a look at this short guide to learn more about how you can get your business noticed by social media thought leaders.

17. Believing That All Your Followers Read Your Posts

Just because someone dropped you a like on Facebook or Twitter doesn't always mean they read your content. If it’s a case where you didn’t put much into the presentation of that content (say images or actionable copy) — there’s a good chance they didn’t read it.

When posting to social media, it’s wise to take a few things into account. For one, different social media platforms have specific peak hours. Have a look at this awesome infographic from QuickSprout, and learn about the optimal timing on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and G+:

The third thing you should keep in mind is advertising. When paired with active work on your social media marketing, advertising can work wonders.
While unwise, it’s not hard to see why some small companies may want to put all their efforts into social media. It’s easy to sign up, and it’s absolutely free. Advertising costs a little, and the biggest investment needed is time. Oh, and did we mention there are other numerous **benefits**?

Still, social media is just one way to engage with your potential clients. **Email marketing** and **pay-per-click advertising** are two alternatives that aren’t only tested and proven, but they may even get you faster results!

When trying to make your online business a success, it’s best to try different methods. No success story is identical.
While beginners tend to make bad calls when implementing SMM tactics, they’re not the only ones. SMM specialists are also guilty of hurting a brand as opposed to building it as well.

Here are a few common mistakes small businesses make when marketing on social media:

1. Not Using Campaign Management Tools and Platforms

Here’s the thing, trying to use all social media platforms by your lonesome is going to be a taxing experience. By ‘taxing’ I mean virtually impossible. There’s no way you’re going to efficiently manage all your social media accounts and not have a meltdown.

That’s where social media management tools like Hootsuite, and Buffer come into the fold. Using these tools, you can schedule posts, and more easily spread useful and relevant content among your followers.

2. Not Having a Plan

Beginners are likely to wing their SMM tactics — pros, on the other hand, need to have clearly defined goals. Brand awareness and a clear vision of achieving your goals are paramount to achieving success on social media platforms. All SMM specialists are also expected to understand the distinction between marketing and branding.
3. Ignoring the Risk of Hashtag Hijacking

Another thing pros should be aware of is the risk of Hashtag Hijacking. This one occurs when someone uses a hashtag a way that is different from what its creator has intended — therefore 'hijacking' it.

Here are some examples of hashtags that have been hijacked (to the detriment of the companies) on Twitter:

This guy likes his coffee but he isn’t particularly fond of Starbucks is he?

Here’re a few more:

Luckily, there are precautions you can take to avoid this. Be sure that the purpose of your hashtag is clear and that it gets to the appropriate audience. Admittedly, users like the one who called out Starbucks might give quite the challenge. Sarcasm is a powerful tool regularly used in the world of social media.

There are also ways in which Hashtag Hijacking can be done productively and with a clear marketing goal.
Just as the internet is vast and diverse, so are the ways in which you can make social media work for you. There are a few pitfalls out there that you’d best steer away from. But there are also a plethora of social media tactics that can help you propel your business to the next level.

Sure, getting started can be intimidating. But once you’re willing to do the research, things will fall into place.

**Articles for further reading:**

- 3 Ways To Showcase Your Product’s Quality Online
- 4 Basic Elements of Successful Social Media Strategies
- Facebook Marketing: A Comprehensive Guide For Beginners
- 16 Reasons Why Your Business Needs Social Media Marketing
If you’ve just finished reading this short guide, congrats — you’ve made an important step towards building an awesome SMM strategy for your website! However, in case you’re just thinking about creating your first website, take a look at the readymade designs available at templatemonster.com.

Our online catalogue has more than 26,000 products crafted by professional designers and web developers. TemplateMonster offers solutions for online businesses of various types — from personal blogs and portfolios, to large e-stores and corporate portals.

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