



# AOK Marketing

*An Opportunity Knocks*



# PLANNING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR 2016



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# INTRODUCTION

Gone are the days when social media was just a quick thing to check off your marketing to-do list. Today, social media is a major component to any successful marketing plan. In fact, many businesses rise and fall on their social media presence alone, so it's absolutely crucial to have a solid strategy and to plan ahead.



“Fail to plan, plan to fail” is an adage attributed most often to Ben Franklin, and it couldn't be more accurate when it comes to digital marketing. Instinctively, business owners know this, but when it comes to social media, it's easy to brush this concept off.

Why? Because there are so many aspects of social media that feel, well, just plain fun. Games, cute pictures of babies, and hilarious YouTube videos dominate the social networking scene. Most of us spend at least a little mindless time lurking around on Facebook or scrolling down Instagram each and every day.

However, that's what makes these sites so incredibly powerful. We all use them, and though our friends and interests differ, the things that go viral get viewed by a large chunk of us regardless of how varied our backgrounds.

Creating a strategy that leverages this power takes careful thought and planning. If you are hoping that 2016 is your year, it's time to buckle down and make it happen.

Within this white paper we will show you how to develop a 12-month plan to dominate the social media scene.





# FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

In the ever-changing social media sphere, there's a site for everyone, but that doesn't mean a brand has to be everywhere and in front of everyone. For one, that's nearly impossible without a large staff running your social media, and two, you don't need it!

Just as a successful business works carefully to carve out its unique niche, so too should this strategy apply to social media.

Your target market isn't everyone, and they aren't digitally hanging out everywhere.

Choose to focus your energy and attention on a small handful of sites where your customers spend the most time, ideally this will be three to five maximum.

Focusing on only a few sites allows you to really develop an authentic social media presence and cultivate a following.

If you are trying to spread yourself too thin, you probably won't be able to engage with any of your followers at all.

*Decide upfront what sites you will focus your strategy on.*

*Social media sites to explore and consider for your 2016 strategy:*

- ◆ *Twitter*
- ◆ *Facebook*
- ◆ *LinkedIn*
- ◆ *Snapchat*
- ◆ *Pinterest*
- ◆ *Tumblr*
- ◆ *Instagram*
- ◆ *YouTube*
- ◆ *Reddit*
- ◆ *Periscope*



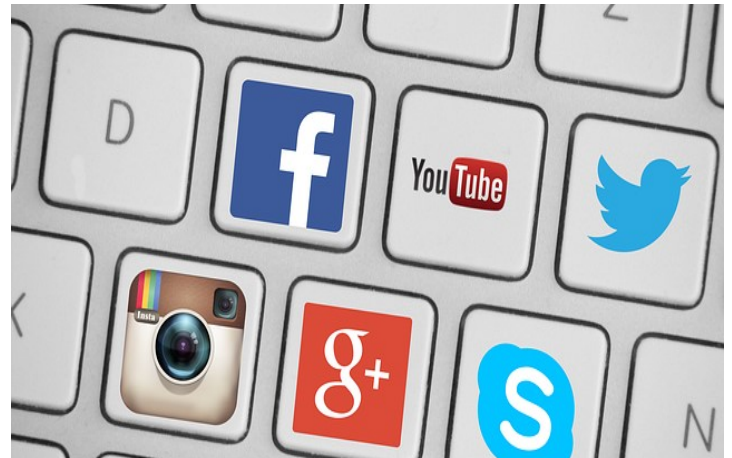


# PUT SOCIAL MEDIA TO WORK FOR YOU

Are you a writer? Do you find it easier to talk and be on video than to write? Do you enjoy taking and sharing photos? What type of social media sharing really reflects your business and your customer base? These questions are important to ask to help you develop or redirect the social media strategy for the upcoming year.

Make sure that whatever site you plan to focus on actually lines up with the type of business you want to run.

If you are a photographer who hates writing and you choose to take your business in a content-heavy direction, you are probably going to fail at being consistent with your social media strategy.



Of course, you want to get in front of as many potential customers as possible, but creating a consistent, trustworthy brand image is more important than that.

In fact, it's absolutely crucial for creating customer loyalty among the followers and buyers you already have. Loyalty depends heavily on your ability to regularly engage in what appears to be an effortless, authentic way.

*Selecting social media platforms that you actually enjoy using and thoroughly understand is going to make your job a whole lot easier.*





# SET UP A MANAGEMENT TOOL

It takes a lot of time and effort to create the kind of social media content your followers will want to engage with. Even then, you still have to ensure that it's posted on all the sites you've decided to use for your business. The latter issue is easily addressed if you use a social media management tool.

*Social media management tools, such as HootSuite or CoSchedule, reduce the busy work associated with posting, so you can focus instead on content and strategy. That's the fun part anyway!*



These tools work like a bridge between your editorial calendar and the sites themselves. Instead of wasting time posting each status, image, or video manually, you can effectively “set it and forget it” using the scheduling and cross-posting functions.

Most social media management tools out there are user friendly and easy to setup. They often offer how-to tutorials on their sites that will have you up and running like a pro in no time.





# DECIDE HOW YOU WANT TO ENGAGE

Social media managers will tell you there are a dozen (or more!) types of engagement, and they all have their pluses and minuses depending on your business niche and your personal comfort level with your customer base.

For the sake of simplicity, however, you can generally break your engagement down into a few main categories.

- Informational
- Promotional
- Contests
- Polls and Questions
- Images/Videos

## The Informational Status

An informational status almost always includes a link to some type of content. This could be an article or blog post you've written or content written by someone else.

As long as the information is useful to your followers, it works. Plus, sharing content written by others with the proper attribution is a great way to support fellow businesses and

potentially establish a friendly affiliation or partnership.

## The Promotional Status

A promotional status is perfect for when you are offering sales, launching a new product line, or just simply want to remind your followers to purchase.

For most businesses, this is the most obvious use for social media, but that thinking tends to result in its overuse.

Too much promotion can backfire. Your customers don't want to be sold at.

Rather, they want to engage in a relationship with your business, so be sure to balance promotion with other types of statuses.





## Social Media Contests

Contests can be a great way to increase fan engagement and even to up your follower numbers. Of any type of social media engagement, contests are the best way to gain new followers quickly.

Whether or not a contest makes sense for your business depends largely on the type of brand you have built and on your target niche.

If you have the type of target market that likes to engage and share, you are likely a good candidate for running a contest.

Giving away one of your products or offering a great gift package that would be of interest to your customer base is a nice way to thank your followers.

It also has the added benefit of encouraging loyalty toward your brand, which is a pretty nice trade-off.

## Poll the Audience

This is another type of status that really depends on your particular audience.

Taking a poll or simply asking your followers a question is a simple, straightforward way to engage and show your customer base that you are interested and invested in them.

It's also a useful way to gather information about your customers that can help you improve the way you engage, your products, and your overall brand. It's a win-win.

## The Visual Status

Images and videos are high leverage ways to use social media, and your use of them can fit into any one of the above categories.

You can offer tips, advice, how-tos, pictures of your products, and much more. You can use videos and pictures to entertain, inform, and pique the interest of your customers.

The options are endless. Again, your unique business and brand will heavily impact whether using these makes sense and also how you implement them into your strategy.





# SKETCH OUT AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR

An editorial calendar is simply a broad stroke plan for the content you will post and share throughout the year. This step is far too often overlooked. Without a solid schedule, your social media engagement can become reactionary and inconsistent, buzzkills for solid brand promotion.

*If you want to be an influencer, there's no way around it: you have to be proactive.*

For simplicity's sake, it's a good idea to establish a calendar that isn't cluttered with appointments and meetings and will be used only for your social media planning.

Once you've set your calendar up, it's time to begin filling it in. Here are three steps to make easy work of designing your editorial calendar.

**Start with events or holidays:** Go through the year and mark all the holidays or events you already know will

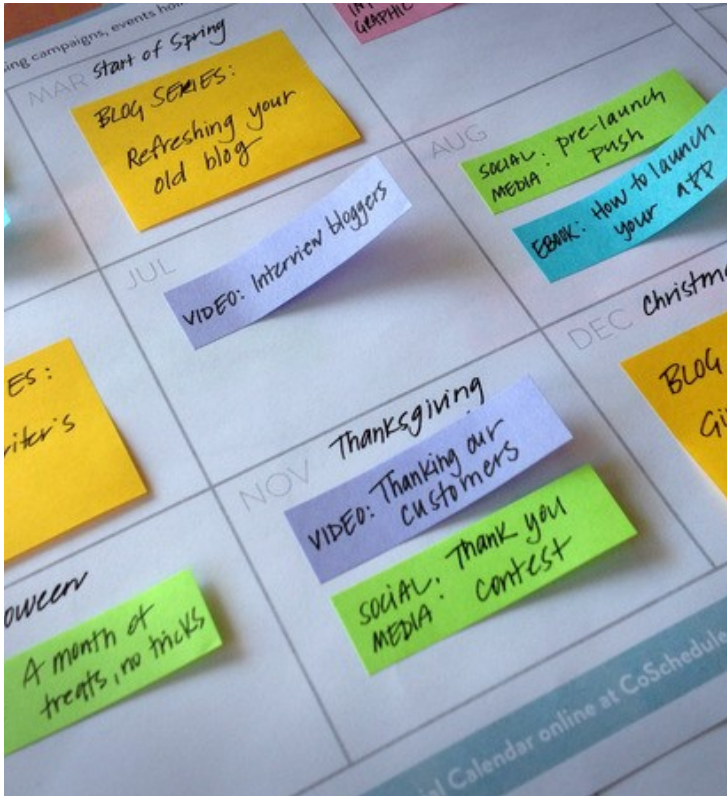
be happening and that you want to be sure to mention in social media.

Sometimes, this will just be a single status on the day of the holiday or event, but for others, it might be an all month affair complete with sales and promotions.

You'll want to flesh out these details later, but for now, simply make note of holidays and important events you'll want to use as jumping off points for customer engagement.

If it helps, go ahead and set reminders for the start of major events, such as promotions or initiatives that you want to make sure not to miss.





**Assign a theme to each month:** Filling out 12 months of social media content can be a daunting task if you don't break it up into bite-sized chunks.

A good way to do this is to assign an overall theme to each month. Statuses in November, for example, might follow a theme of gratitude with inspirational quotes, moving stories, and simple messages of thanks to your customers for their support.

**Establish an update template:** Once you've decided what type of status updates best suit your business and target base, you can choose a pattern that will give you a template to follow for each social media site you choose.

For example, on Mondays, you might share a new blog post (informational), on Wednesdays, you could post a link to that week's best-selling product (promotional), on Fridays, you might post a how-to video for using one of your products (informational and promotional), and on the third Thursday of every month, you host a giveaway (contest).

Don't overthink. Keep it simple and straightforward.

*These three steps make up the framework you'll need to create a solid social media plan.*





# CREATE YOUR CONTENT

Creating your content is the bread and butter of your social media strategy. This is where your brand can shine. Through the lens of social media, you can introduce your followers to your brand in an authentic, engaging manner. You can inform, entertain, and entice your customers in their own space.

Once you've done the work of creating your strategy and editorial calendar, the content portion of your work comes down to filling in the content you can.

Simply start with January and moving forward with creating content that can be done in advance, leaving room for flexibility. You want the ability to update your social media as you go.

As you move forward through your editorial calendar, take time each week

to review the upcoming week's updates. Are there holes? Do you want to acknowledge certain current events or share links to articles that have recently been published?

Having a detailed plan doesn't mean you can't add in a little spontaneity. It just ensures that your social media strategy maintains a level of continuity that is crucial for staying fresh and relevant.





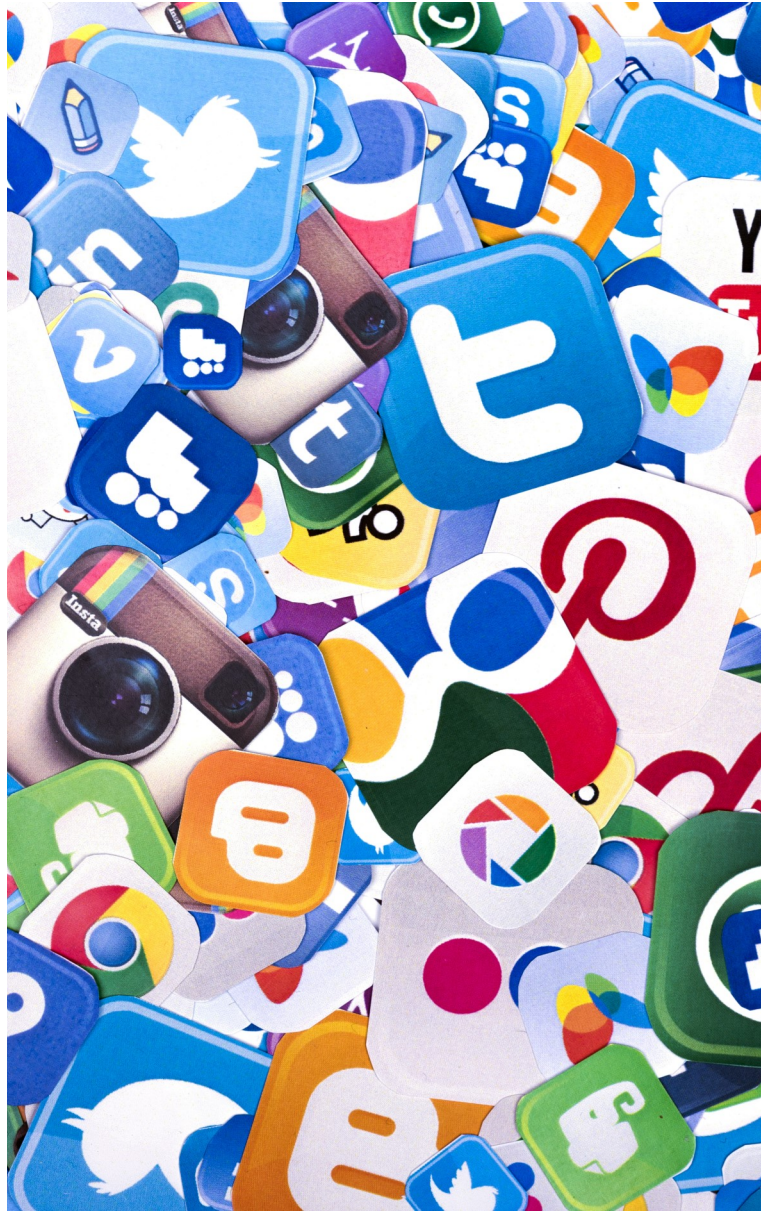
# PAY-TO-PROMOTE

As you finalize your editorial calendar and fill in what content you can, it's a good idea to consider how and if you'd like to incorporate paid opportunities.

Like you, the very social media sites you're using to promote and engage followers are trying to grow and thrive. They've done this, of course, through monetization.

Paid opportunities abound on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and more. Pay-to-promote is a way to amp up your leverage, ensuring your very best content is seen by the most targeted of followers.

If you're planning a social media campaign for the very first time, it makes sense to familiarize yourself with the platforms you plan to use and how they allow you to promote. Even if you choose to start your 2016 without them, the paid opportunities are easy to add (and remove!) at any time.



# PLANNING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR 2016

It might be hard to believe so much should go into your social media strategy.

From the outside looking in, it seems easy. Big brands effortlessly put out content and stay on the cutting edge of current events with just a few well-placed statuses or links. None of that, however, happens by accident.



*The best companies with the most effective social media reach and gobs of followers have become successful with purposeful, well-planned strategies. The ability to appear effortlessly engaged, as it turns out, takes quite a bit of effort.*

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