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*White Paper*

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## **20 tips to get to know your online audience**

Social media provides the opportunity to connect with millions of people. But what do you really know about your audiences? Have you taken the time to know them, understand them or connect with them?

We talk about social media being a relationship, a conversation. However, we often don't take the time required to build a meaningful conversation, let alone a real relationship. Here are some tips to get you started.

## **20 tips to get to know your audience**

- 1. Listen to them.** This one sounds simple because it is. However, many don't take advantage of this simple and first critical phase of social media. Listening should be the first step when engaging in social media. It should also be something you do on a regular basis. Listen with an intent to understand. Listen to the meaning of what your audience is saying. How are they engaging with others? How are they engaging with you? What is the tone? What questions are they asking?
- 2. Join the conversation.** The best way to learn how your audience will respond to you is well, of course, seeing how they respond to you. Don't sit on the sidelines for months while you learn about social media tools. Engage. Join conversation. You don't always have to be the initiator of a conversation. Comment on other blogs, respond to other tweets and comments.
- 3. Ask questions.** Don't be afraid to ask questions, no matter how simple they are. You will be amazed at how many answers you receive.
- 4. Create a poll.** Creating a poll is easy. Use Poll Daddy to create a simple poll. You will be provided with a link that you can share on any social or web platform. Poll Daddy also has a widget for WordPress websites as well as Facebook.
- 5. Implement an email program.** If you do not currently have an email program you are missing out. Subscribe to an email program such as aWeber, iContact, Constant Contact, MailChimp or Infusionsoft. If you are just getting started, you might want to try an email program that offers basic standard features. More advanced programs like Infusionsoft offer special features that include an integrated shopping cart, affiliate program, and advanced nurturing.

- 6. Create call to actions on a regular basis.** Action is the social currency of social media. Create meaningful ways for your audience to take action. This needs to be more than just clicking on a link you place in a tweet to someone else's website. Give your audience a reason to engage with you. Create something that they want and need. Then place this content or the action they need to take on a social platform or website. Encourage them to move from an email program to your website or from your website to one of your social platforms. A call to action could be an invitation to buy something, answer a poll, answer a question, share something about themselves. Anything that will get them to take action.
- 7. Integrate a fun call to action with an email communication and an online platform.** Integration of marketing across mediums is key to return on investment (ROI). Don't be afraid to have fun with your audience. Ask questions at the bottom of your email newsletters and updates. You can use this to measure how many people are actually reading your emails all the way through. These questions do not have to be formal or professional and can be funny or off the wall, as long as they create interaction with your audience.
- 8. Follow them.** This sounds simple but it's more than just a simple follow. For example if you find an interesting follower on Twitter or on your Facebook fan page then check them out online. Follow their tweets. Follow where they are sending people via links, announcements, blog posts. Where do they comment? What social platforms do they hang out on? How are they engaging on each platform differently? What can you learn from their online behaviors that will help you better provide them with useful information to draw them closer into your tribe?
- 9. Check out their following.** Check out who is following your audience. This is basically who are your followers' followers? Is it the same or different audience who follows you? Are there new people, new demographics maybe you should also check out and possibly target? How is their following responding to them? What can you learn from their engagement with other audiences?

- 10. Check out their Twitter lists.** This is a great way to learn what interests the user has as well as how people view them. You can often tap into new audiences from taking time to build and view other people's lists. When joining a new market niche, other people's lists can save you weeks of time.
- 11. Run a Tweet Reach report.** This is a simple measurement tool that will tell you how far your most recent tweets travel. You can see total reach of your last 50 tweets. It also details the reach of your tweets via the people who retweeted your tweets. For each Twitter user who retweeted you it provides the reach of that user with your tweet. It's a great way to see what influential followers and supporters you have.
- 12. Run a Klout report.** Klout is a great measurement tool to measure your influence. It looks at your following, who you follow, the ratio of followers to the number you are following. It provides you pointers to influential people you could be following but aren't. It will show you tweeters who influence you and also who you influence. It measures the amplification of your message and the depth to which your brand and content is being shared online. It recently even incorporated Facebook into the measurement. Remember social media is not just about numbers. The key is to have a loyal following who is engaged with you. You want a tribe that loves your content, loves you and at the end of the day takes action.
- 13. Read their blogs.** This one is also simple. Read other people's blogs. Not rocket science. Read them with a goal to learn and understand. Not just scan them to cross this item off a list.
- 14. Read the comments they leave on other blogs.** This is another great way to see how they engage with others. What comments are they leaving for others? Are they leaving as thoughtful comments on your blog? If not, why? Why are they engaging on other blogs? What is different than yours?
- 15. Encourage them to share and comment on your blog.** Invite people to comment. Don't be afraid of comments and opinions that differ from yours. When people start to listen to what you have to say you will hear differing opinions. Opinions are good. You should welcome them. You can also include WordPress plug-ins that encourage engagement via comments.
- 16. Set you favorite social friends comments to be automatically approved.** This is a great way to encourage commenting and engagement. This way they don't have to wait for any approval. They simply are live the minute they hit submit.

- 17. Engage them on your Facebook page.** Ask questions. Share content. Encourage them to share their urls, Facebook Fan pages, information about what they do and how they can help your audience. Include polls, trivia and simple questions to get them to engage. Be inspiring, real and have fun. Chances are if you only speak in business talk you will get little to no engagement.
- 18. Start a group on Facebook.** Start a group around your business or one of your favorite topics. Invite people you would like to know better in combination with people you already do know.
- 19. Start a group on LinkedIn.** Start a group around your business or favorite topic. Similar to Facebook, this encourages others to engage. Ask questions. Ask people to introduce themselves. Make it a place for sharing of self and business.
- 20. Start a question and answer session on LinkedIn.** Asking questions on LinkedIn is a great way to get to know your following in a deep way. You can learn what they are thinking about a certain topic you are struggling with. It's a great tool to meet new people with common interests as well.

The more we know about our audience the better we can inspire and connect with them.

Source: Social Media Today

