

A large, thick pink outline of a quarter-circle with a rectangular notch cut out of its center, positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page.

Everything you need to know about...

# Social Media for B2B

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# Why Social?

**For B2B, social media is seemingly all about LinkedIn. In fact, 94% of B2B organisations rely on the platform for content marketing or distribution<sup>1</sup>**

It's easy to see why, with over 250 million active monthly users and a plethora of ways to reach them personally, it has to be core to every B2B marketing strategy. LinkedIn is also leveraging pre-populated web forms with its Lead Gen product and in 2019 released video content as an option for sponsored posts too. But a robust social media strategy for business also needs to move beyond the B2B heartland of LinkedIn and take a multi-channel approach.

**In this guide, we explain how to apply six best practice principles to social media marketing, so you can...**



## Reach

out to new and existing audiences



## Improve

the perception of your brand in the market



## Target

potential leads when they are active online

## So what else?

**Businesses need to consider opportunities to broaden their social media marketing strategy. After all, B2B prospects are people too. They are just as inclined to buy into a brand as consumers are.**

While commentators point to some fundamental differences between B2B and B2C social strategies, there are lessons that B2B marketers can learn from their B2C counterparts. In particular, using a variety of social media platforms to build a strong brand presence, engage in meaningful conversations and gain insight – not just to target potential leads.

<sup>1</sup> [tbt.to/61soc5f319](https://tbt.to/61soc5f319)

# Social media at a glance

## Popularity with marketers

**+234%**

Budget spent on social media marketing had a huge uplift between 2009-2017<sup>2</sup>, with marketers making it a key element of their strategies.

**11.3%**

As expenditure increases, so has the percentage of marketing budgets spent on social media<sup>3</sup>, further highlighting its importance in the marketing mix.

**9 in 10 marketers**

89% of marketers with 100 or more employees use social networks for marketing purposes<sup>4</sup>.

## Popularity with audience

**7 accounts**

In 2012, the average internet user had three social media accounts. Now it's closer to seven<sup>5</sup>, which means marketers have to consider more touchpoints when developing engagement strategies.

**2 years**

Instagram reached 100 million users twice as fast as Facebook<sup>6</sup>. This proves how swiftly the landscape changes, and how quickly people are ready to embrace new platforms that meet their needs.

**30%**

Nearly a third of millennials (and Gen Xers) interact with brands at least once a month<sup>7</sup>. You need customer service policies that can handle enquiries quickly and effectively.

## Do you recognise these common issues?



### Metrics

4 in 5 marketers lack ROI proof. With so few of them saying they can prove the impact of social media quantitatively<sup>8</sup>, there is a clear demand for measuring ROI through more detailed metrics.



### Objectives

Only 34% of organisations feel their social strategy is connected to business outcomes<sup>9</sup> – hence the need to focus on end goals, such as brand awareness or lead generation.



### Engagement

Almost nine in 10 social media messages from brands go ignored<sup>10</sup>, so those brands which excel at one-to-one engagement and personalisation are likely to succeed better.

<sup>2</sup> [tbt.to/acompbcc8c](http://tbt.to/acompbcc8c)

<sup>3</sup> [tbt.to/acompbcc8c](http://tbt.to/acompbcc8c)

<sup>4</sup> [tbt.to/2018se7c2d](http://tbt.to/2018se7c2d)

<sup>5</sup> [tbt.to/61socf9689](http://tbt.to/61socf9689)

<sup>6</sup> [tbt.to/cndy1f31](http://tbt.to/cndy1f31)

<sup>7</sup> [tbt.to/61socf9689](http://tbt.to/61socf9689)

<sup>8</sup> [tbt.to/acompbcc8c](http://tbt.to/acompbcc8c)

<sup>9</sup> [tbt.to/acompbcc8c](http://tbt.to/acompbcc8c)

<sup>10</sup> [tbt.to/61socf9689](http://tbt.to/61socf9689)

# Decide on your objectives



**Before you decide on the right social strategy you need to look at what you want the outcomes to be. What does success look like for your business?**

**Is it 50,000 followers by next week?  
500 leads from a £500 spend?**

**Without a realistic approach, backed up by some social benchmarks, you won't be able to declare your social campaign a success, and that can mean reduced spend next time, or your follow up plans are consigned to the dustbin.**

Often social media objectives are aligned with wider business objectives. Social media can cover a whole gamut of objectives from lead generating business conversions, brand awareness, customer experience, and even online reputation or crisis management. As with all types of marketing the key lies in relevancy. If the message doesn't resonate it will be ignored, and when social networks see low engagement early on, their algorithms will start ignoring it too, leading to a low reach. Once you've decided on objectives, conduct a social media audit to help shape your strategy.

And objectives are just part of the early planning. You need to choose the right metrics on which to measure your success by. What is an engagement rate? What is a good click through rate for my industry on Facebook? Nail down some benchmarks.

**To get you started here's some guidelines to help shape your social strategy and how to achieve the results you need.**

## Social media metrics you need to know



### Engagement rate

Usually shown as a percentage, which typically combines Likes, Comments & Shares divided by post reach.



**0.9%**

Around one percent of a Facebook post is considered a good engagement rate.



### Reach vs. Impressions

Reach is the number of people who see a post, while impressions are the number of times the ad was seen.



**0.5%**

A good engagement rate on LinkedIn is just half of one percent.

# Select a strategy

## 2

### Organic vs. Paid

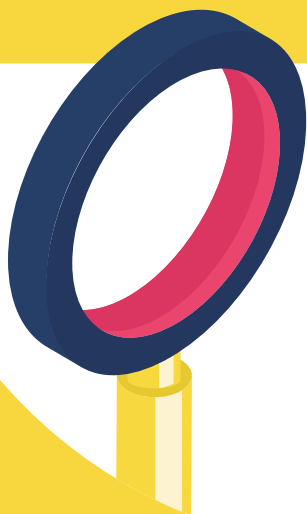
**Put simply, an organic strategy encourages your audiences to come to you. A paid strategy targets those audiences directly.**

Organic may be cheaper because you don't have to buy social ads. It's also more likely to result in a fully engaged audience over time. However, it's more time-consuming and requires a good understanding of your audiences as well as a constant content stream to supply a newsfeed and real-time response.

**The hard truth is that organic reach is declining on the big social media platforms.**

As a result, marketers cannot simply share content on social media and expect it to generate higher web traffic. Organic messages today must be 'bang on' to get audiences to take action in a space that's hard to get noticed in.

A paid strategy fits the bill when your message needs to be delivered quickly. Often, this is when lead generation or maintaining brand awareness is the main goal, rather than community building. (Although, done well, paid can help here too.) Through targeted ads and content, a paid strategy allows you to grow followers while still speaking to those you have already gained.



### **Key takeaway:**

It's a myth that you can't use organic and paid strategies together. The success of both lies in listening, learning and responding. Remember – even paid doesn't mean 'set and forget'

# Create your content

## 3

Everyone knows that ‘content is king’. But content can also be the court jester if left alone to ‘work its magic’.

So it’s worth asking some content-related questions before you start:



What type(s) of content will be well received by our audience?



What profiling data can we use to form a robust content strategy?



Are people technically minded and happy to read the details, or are they time-poor and need a shorter, more specific message?

Using the answers to these questions, the next step is to decide what type of content is most appropriate.

### Long-form content

- White paper
- Editorial
- Infographic
- Case study
- Video (over 1 minute)
- Company news
- Press release
- Webinar
- How-to guide
- Podcast
- Blog

### Short-form content

- Image
- Video (under 1 minute)
- Listicle
- Tip Hero
- Gifographics
- Poll or quiz
- Slideshare presentation
- Employee posts and comments



## Think images as well as words

If it's simpler, shorter messaging you're looking to promote, then videos and photo content are proven to be more compelling and deliver greater reach<sup>11</sup>.

According to Curata, the most effective types of video content are customer testimonials (51%), tutorial videos (50%) and demos (49%).<sup>12</sup>



## Invite others to contribute

Organic user generated content (UGC) is a useful way of maintaining engagement. UGC helps build credibility and trust, as well as removing pressure to create all content in-house. Instagram is popular with B2B marketers used to curating content from people, events or celebrity advocates. It's also a useful visual tool for highlighting what inspires the brand.



## Rely on sophisticated advertising

Paid advertising will quickly promote your content. So it's no surprise that social media ad spend is on the rise, especially now that platforms offer sales features such as Lead Gen Forms on LinkedIn and now Facebook. Added to sponsored content, these tools provide you with easy ways to capture audience information as well as track campaigns to prove ROI.



## Key takeaway:

Only 28% of marketers say LinkedIn is an effective platform for video marketing (compared with YouTube at 79%).<sup>13</sup> This highlights how the right choice of content must be matched with the right choice of channel.

<sup>11</sup> <http://tbt.to/2018se7c2d>

<sup>12</sup> [tbt.to/cntefd08](http://tbt.to/cntefd08)

<sup>13</sup> [tbt.to/61so85St](http://tbt.to/61so85St)



# Choose which channels to use

# 4

**If you're using a paid strategy, you may want to limit the number of networks on which you spend your hard-won marketing budget.**

However, with the average social media user holding accounts on seven different platforms<sup>14</sup>, a multi-platform approach is likely to reap more rewards. Maintaining a social media marketing campaign can be time-consuming. The good news is there are plenty of social media tools and external apps to support you.

## Finding your audience

**Social networks are driven by data.**

**And much of it is available to marketers in the form of platform or performance analytics.**

Platform analytics tell you whether the site has a critical mass of users that fits your target profile (e.g. IT managers in the UK). Performance analytics help you decide whether your efforts are paying off, and which sites you should focus on in the future.

**It's worth tracking what your competitors are doing too, to determine what you might need to do to turn heads in your direction.**

<sup>14</sup> [tbt.to/61socf9689](https://tbt.to/61socf9689)

## Opting for advertising

**Almost every social networking site offers paid ways to get your messages out there.**

But there are subtle differences.



**Twitter**

### Promoted Accounts

Twitter suggests that users follow your account. A Promoted Account boosts followers by appearing in the Home timeline, Who To Follow and search results.

### Promoted Trends

Promote a subject by pushing a specific hashtag to the top of the list of Trending Topics. When people click on the hashtag, they see an organic list of search results.

### Promoted Tweet

Increase the reach of an individual tweet through algorithms that determine whether the post will be interesting to the user.



**LinkedIn**

### Sponsored Content

LinkedIn allows you to amplify anything from company news to Slideshare presentations via users' homepage feeds.

### Text Ads

This is a simpler, desktop-only option that is quick and easy to set up. Ads show on the right and under "Ads you may be interested in".

### Sponsored InMail

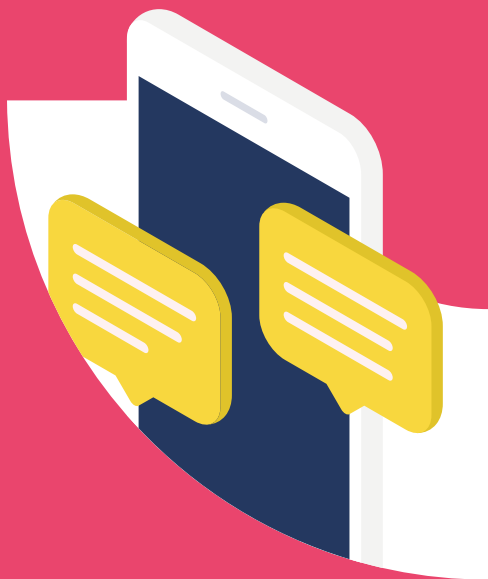
These are personalised messages you can send to targeted LinkedIn users. They are only received when a user is active and offer a much more direct approach to drive conversion rates.

## **Automating and managing your posts**

With multiple platforms and posts to manage, a DIY approach will mean giving over much of your day to social media management.

**Instead, scheduling campaigns will help you plan ahead, while freeing up time to react to real-time events.**

Automating posts gives you insights from your own analytics and lets you integrate extra channels with minimal effort. The best-known tools (e.g. Buffer, Hootsuite, Sprout Social) offer services for social automation and management, with different features and pricing plans. There are reasonable free options too.



### **Key takeaway:**

Promoting your content on social media gives you direct access to your target audiences. It's likely you'll need to select more than one channel so you'll need tools that help you manage your campaigns more effectively.

# Build a network of influencers

5

**Influencer marketing amplifies your message through people with their own extensive networks.**

These influencers could be subject matter experts, journalists or people who are more active on social media than your in-house marketing team.

## Benefits of influencer marketing



It's less expensive than other forms of digital marketing



It's a good way to encourage interest with authenticity



It allows the brand to go to places it might struggle to reach



It inspires others to take action

## Leading B2B influencers command a significant following and can be hard to convince to support your cause.

As a result, B2B marketers are turning to micro-influencers. These are people who are respected in specialist areas. This approach leads to hyper-engaged audiences without sacrificing ROI in pursuit of big-name influencers.

And don't forget internal influencers too, there may be very influential people in your organisation with a significant following.

### Micro-influencer engagement<sup>15</sup>

**60%**

more effective than ordinary influencer campaigns

**6.7x**

more cost-efficient than influencers with large followings

**74%**

more direct in encouraging followers to try/buy

## So how do you influence the influencers?

Some seasoned influencers will make it easy to get in touch. They'll publicly disclose their contact details and may even set out some terms upfront – such as what they expect to be paid to promote your content, product or service.

For micro-influencers, you may find them in specific community hubs – such as LinkedIn groups or on Google+. In this case, your best chance of influencing them is to become active in their discussions and reach out when appropriate.

### Four things every marketer should take into account when engaging influencers



#### 1. It's all about relationship-building

Be patient. Give them something they need or like.



#### 2. Don't be afraid to engage, when the time is right

Start by liking, commenting on or sharing their posts, build up trust and then start a conversation.



#### 3. Intelligently contribute to group discussions

Instead of listening in, actively participate by asking a clever question or sharing your expertise.



#### 4. Be ready for the long-haul

Stay motivated and focus your attention on a few relationships to start with. When they pay off, they pay off big time!

### ...and three things to be wary of



#### Are they broadcasters?

These are people who spout 20 tweets a day, but never seem to respond to their followers.



#### What's their follower ratio?

An 'influencer' following more people than they are followed by is probably just a PR or marketing machine.



#### Did they make contact first?

If you're looking at a profile on LinkedIn and they quickly reach out to connect, they're probably not a true influencer.

### Key takeaway:

Identifying influencers who can extend your reach is a cost-effective approach. Taking the time to find, engage and build trust with these people will pay dividends.

# Case in point: HPE Synergy

## The mission

HPE wanted to raise awareness of its HPE Synergy portfolio within the end user community.

It needed a social media influencer campaign that would target the right people across multiple European markets within a short timeframe.



**1866**

Tweets and retweets

**2300**

Engagements

**311**

Tweets

**48**

Country mentions

## The TBT approach

TBT set about recruiting 10 social media micro-influencers with a loyal following to attend a Synergy Tech Day event held at HPE's Customer Innovation Centre in Geneva. The Tech Day was an opportunity for influencers to learn about the Synergy portfolio, meet with HPE stakeholders and other influencers and, most importantly, share hybrid IT best practices with their followers.

# Manage the process

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**If you work for a large organisation, it can be challenging to push social media marketing campaigns without running everything past corporate HQ.**

**To smooth the process internally while still delivering an effective social strategy, it pays to address a few key questions.**

## **How will you measure ROI?**

If you're going to run a social media campaign (especially paid), can you back up your objectives with meaningful KPIs and social return on investment (SROI)? The ability to do so may help you secure funds to run more social activity in the future.

You could calculate revenue per investment in social. Or you could focus on brand awareness through numbers of likes or shares. However, social media objectives that are aligned with existing business or departmental goals are much clearer. These might be customer acquisitions or new leads, but they could just as well be brand perception, customer satisfaction or risk mitigation indicators.

## **How will you stakeholder gain buy-in?**

Who are the real budget-holders? Who needs to be informed? Who do you need to run approvals past? It might seem obvious but imagine the impact when you're about to launch your next LinkedIn campaign and suddenly the brand police step in and stop everything. Keeping everyone in the loop will ensure all that hard work doesn't go to waste because you forgot to inform someone of what you were doing.



## How will you get things done?

### **Busy marketing departments won't have time to do all the social media marketing work themselves.**

If you're running your campaigns through an agency, you'll need to check they have the right access. Both LinkedIn and Facebook will allow third-party advertisers but you've got to ensure that your agency is set up correctly first.

For example, if you're running a sponsored LinkedIn campaign, has your agency got a separate ad account set up? Are they approved as a direct sponsored poster on your company account? Have they got Campaign Manager access? Is the billing access sorted?



### **Key takeaway:**

No matter how creative and engaging your campaign, you'll need a strategy, buy-in and management tools in place first so the process is as simple as possible.

# 5 things to look out for in 2020 and beyond



## Ephemeral content will keep gaining

This is your Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat stories. Short snippets of content that the consumer can access quickly and instantly. For us at TBT, sponsored Facebook stories are a definite to be considered social media campaigns targeted at end users. If not for your main campaign, they compliment campaigns perfectly.



## The difficulty with dark social

Dark social is a term used to describe the ‘invisible’ sharing of links. The issue for marketers when tracking these URLs is that they are classed as direct, even though they were shared. That makes it difficult to identify the source of the traffic and apportion ROI or social media marketing budget accordingly. There are ways around this – from using link shorteners for better tracking to ‘sticky’ share buttons or dark social tracking services.



## More regulatory control

While there are numerous benefits of social media, there are certain negatives that have come to light in recent years. Data privacy and security are two such issues that have made the headlines for social networks like Facebook. There are allegations that certain social networks even sell their user data to other companies. In light of this, social networks and regulatory bodies will tighten their norms and put more policies in place.

# 4

## The emergence of 'new social'

For those disillusioned with the pervasiveness of traditional platforms (or keen to seek new places to hang out), there are plenty of new social media networks to explore. Vero is a platform growing quickly thanks to its focus on user privacy and trust.<sup>16</sup> Facebook's recent media furore has caused a real backlash amongst its users who are questioning the use of their data with 'traditional' networks.

# 5

## More Social Media communities

Social communities are basically social groups that are created by brands to provide a networking platform for their customers. These are usually private groups that like-minded people can join to talk about their shared interests. Facebook Groups and LinkedIn Communities are brilliant examples of such social communities. Many brands utilise such groups to bring all of their existing and prospective customers together and engage with them in a meaningful way. Group members can discuss various topics, share their experiences, and seek solutions to their challenges.

**If you're a bit baffled  
by the process,  
don't worry.**

We've helped clients such as  
Lenovo, HPE, Dell EMC, IBM,  
Deloitte and NVIDIA get their  
social media campaigns off  
the ground and working hard.

**We'd be happy  
to help you too.  
Get in touch.**

<sup>16</sup> [tbt.to/VeV0socL](http://tbt.to/VeV0socL)