

Social media for entrepreneurs - top tips for establishing a solid, positive online presence

 By [Zubair Timol](#), issued by [Meltwater](#)

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According to World Wide Worx and Fuseware's South African Social Media Landscape 2016 study, a quarter of all South Africans - 13 million people - now use Facebook. This means that if businesses want to continue to build their brand and capture the attention of their customers they need an online presence. It also means that people are turning to their favourite social media platform to find new products, to engage with ones they already use and to find out what is going on in the world around them. Now, more than ever, maintaining a competitive edge, getting new customers and staying current is dependent on your online presence.

Here are my eight tips to help you establish a solid social media presence:

1. Make the commitment

Maintaining a social media profile takes time and planning. From the outset it's important to commit to maintaining it regularly. It doesn't have to be daily, even once a week is fine as long as it's regular. An outdated account which hasn't been updated for ages creates a negative perception. Especially if people comment or send questions that go unanswered.

2. Formulate a plan and a calendar

Set out a clear strategy that outlines exactly how you intend to use your profile, who will manage it and the types of things you will share on it. Then formulate a calendar accordingly. It's impossible to predict the news but you can predict what people will be talking about. Special occasions and holidays are a great way to start a conversation.

3. Good content

Less is more when it comes to social media. It is better to post fewer things that you know your audience will enjoy, rather than posting loads of uninteresting content that will leave your audience feeling irritated and may ultimately lead them to unfollow or unlike you online.

4. A picture is worth a thousand words

Choose good quality, interesting images to accompany your posts to grab your audience's attention. Studies have shown that posts that include images have a greater impact and have a greater reach.

5. How to know when you are onto a good thing

A good social media strategy should not only drive traffic to your website, it should engage your audience. Make sure that you encourage engagement with your messaging and by keeping up-to-date with what people are talking about to ensure your messaging is topical.

6. Measurement is key

Having a system in place to measure your social media activity, track your competition so that you can manage your online reputation is crucial to having a successful social media strategy and managing what people say about your

products. Using [social media monitoring tools](#) is the ideal way to monitor activity.

7. Boost your reach with online advertising

Your social media strategy must include social media advertising to create more awareness about your products and expand your reach. This will help to capture customers who might be shopping for alternatives or at risk of being distracted by competitors.

8. Get your website ready

A good website goes hand in hand with a successful social media strategy. Once you drive people to your website you want to be sure that they find what they need and engage with your business. Having an outdated and uninspiring website will undo all your social media efforts.

Social media can be daunting, but it needn't be. In many cases businesses don't reap all the benefits that it offers simply, because of they aren't managing it properly. Once you have a clear plan in place and have successfully implemented these tips, you'll soon reap the rewards and find that your online presence is one of your greatest assets.

ABOUT ZUBAIR TIMOL

Zubair Timol is the Partner and Area Director of India, Middle East & Africa at Meltwater. He joined the company during its startup phase, being trained in Oslo, Norway, under the tutelage of the CEO.

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