CHAPTER

2

Goals and Strategies

The single most important action a social media marketer can take to increase SMM success is to create a well-thought out SMM plan with carefully crafted objectives. A major reason for the failure of SMM programs is lack of a good plan.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, students will be able to:

- Define a social media plan
- Explain the SMM planning cycle
- Describe each step in the SMM planning cycle
- Identify ways to listen and observe the social web
- Describe the Valid Metrics Framework and its role in setting SMM objectives
- Explain how to create social media strategies

(*Continued*)

Beginning with this chapter, the remainder of the book will focus on the steps necessary to create an effective SMM plan. Two of the most important steps in this planning process are goal setting and strategy determination. Before moving forward with SMM activities, an organization should first determine what it wants to accomplish and then how best to do it. Without goals, it will be unclear in which direction to go or how to ultimately measure success. With a well-defined destination in mind, appropriate strategies can be designed to achieve these goals. As such, the process of setting goals and determining strategies is crucial for success in the field of SMM.

What Is a SMM Plan?

A SMM plan details an organization's social media goals and the actions necessary to achieve them. Key among these actions is the understanding of corporate and marketing strategies and the creation of promotional strategies. Without integrated strategies and solid SMM plans there is little chance of successfully executing SMM.

- Detail how to link social media goals to actions
- Explain the importance of word of mouth as advocacy in SMM
- Identify best practices in developing social media strategies

SMM Planning Cycle

Creating a social media plan is a continuous process, as illustrated by the SMM Planning Cycle in Figure 2.1. Skilled social media marketers constantly monitor the progress of the plan's action elements, modify them to improve results, and test alternative approaches. It is important to methodically carry out all of the steps in Figure 2.1 when constructing a social media plan (Chapter 15 will demonstrate how to use these steps to build a SMM plan).
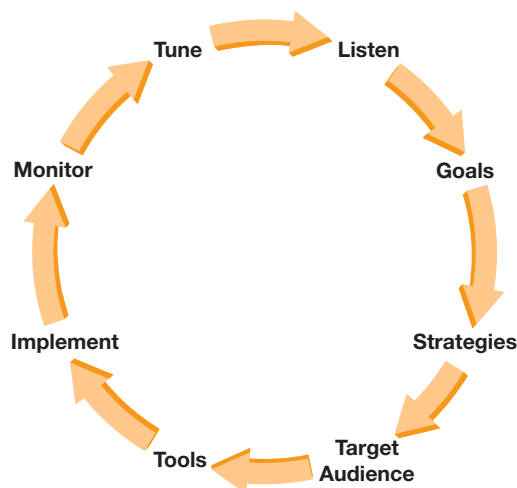
Figure 2.1 Social Media Planning Cycle

THE SMM PLANNING CYCLE

- **Listening** to what people are saying about a company or brand enables the organization to determine its current social media presence, which in turn guides the setting of social media goals and strategies to achieve them. Another important reason to listen to the social web is for competitive intelligence (i.e., information about what people are saying about competitors and what the competitors are saying about themselves). Listening also reveals the way in which people talk about products and brands, including specific words that are used. It is critical to find out what people are already talking about before becoming part of the conversation.

- **Setting goals** involves conducting an analysis to determine an organization's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats in the competitive environment (SWOT). Often a competitive analysis is performed of the strengths and weaknesses of key competitors. By performing these appraisals, marketers

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can then choose the social media goals that satisfy unmet needs of consumers, capitalize on the strengths of the company and seize opportunities, while minimizing organizational weaknesses and external threats. Threats come not only from competitors but also from advances in technology, industry trends, and general economic conditions.

- **Defining strategies** must be done on a case-by-case basis, using all available pertinent information. The "8 Cs of Strategy Development" (covered later in this chapter) provide guidelines to help an organization reach its marketing goals. These suggestions are intended as broad guidance for marketers and must be adjusted to each organization's unique strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

- **Identifying the target audience (market)** is done by pinpointing the location, behavior, tastes, and needs of the target audience. Choosing the appropriate target audience requires an understanding of the market segments served. In most cases the SMM plan will target one or more of the available segments, not all. Careful choice of target audience for a SMM campaign enables a company to organize its marketing strategies to efficiently reach those most receptive and likely to become customers and even brand advocates.

- **Selecting tools** Social media marketing has spawned a plethora of tools to assist with virtually every other activity in the planning cycle. There are tools to schedule posts on various social networks, tools to track brand mentions or hashtag usage, tools to help prepare images for posting, tools to assist with search engine optimization (SEO), tools to shorten links—and so on. Some are single purpose tools—shortening links, for example. Others incorporate multiple activities as when a tool to shorten links is incorporated into a tool for posting on multiple networks. Tools have become essential to navigate the complex world of SMM and Chapter 14 is devoted to a discussion of tools and their uses.

- **Selecting platforms and channels** identifies the paths on the web by which content will be transmitted to the target audience. Social media platforms are generally understood to be the websites on which social media communications take place. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter and blog publishing sites like Blogger and WordPress are only a few of the many examples. Channels are broader entities, composed of multiple platforms and other technologies. For example, mobile is generally considered to be a channel made up of various elements like mobile websites, apps, and telecommunications services.

- **Implementing** is the process whereby the goals, strategies, target market, and platforms are taken into consideration in creating actionable social media platform-specific marketing tactics. Executing well-defined tactics makes it possible for an organization to implement its general social media strategies across multiple social media platforms and realize the company's marketing goals.

- **Monitoring** is the process of tracking, measuring, and evaluating an organization's SMM initiatives. Monitoring the enormous number of communications—daily, hourly, and minute-by-minute—is a formidable task. Monitoring is the subject of Chapter 13 and tools are the subject of Chapter 14.

- **Tuning** is the constant and continuous process of adjusting and improving the elements of the plan and its implementation to maximize the chances of success.

The book is structured around this social media planning model. Listening, setting goals, and defining strategies are explained in detail later in this chapter. Chapter 3 covers

identifying the target audience. Chapters 5 through 12 discuss platforms and implementation, providing guidance regarding the execution of strategies and social media platform-specific marketing tactics. However, it is first necessary to lay a foundation for learning how to successfully execute these platform-specific marketing tactics, which is why Chapter 4 presents the Rules of Engagement for participating on the social web.[1] Chapter 14 discusses the importance of social media tools and gives examples of currently-popular ones. Monitoring the progress of SMM is explored in Chapter 13. Finally, Chapter 15 puts it all together, by presenting an example of a SMM plan, with special emphasis on the constant and continuous need to tune, adjust, and improve the plan and its implementation.

Listen and Observe: Five Stages

Before jumping into SMM, it is important to observe the surroundings, and consider the target audience as well as the social landscape in general. During the listening and observing stage, marketers should follow conversations about a particular brand and company, its competitors, and the relevant industry on as many social media platforms as possible. This procedure will not only gauge the overall tone of the communities, but more important, it will identify where the organization's target audience hangs out and what they are doing there.

STAGE #1: LISTEN TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT A BRAND OR COMPANY

The first stage is listening to and observing conversations about a particular company. As advised by Brian Solis in a post for the Harvard Business Review blog, "[l]isten to the conversations that are already taking place" and "[p]ay attention to the nuances of these conversations."[2] What are people saying about this brand? What good and bad comments have been made? How do people feel about the company? Listen to the conversations taking place on blogs, Twitter, discussion forums, website, LinkedIn, Facebook, and so on, to understand how the company is perceived. Both positive and negative remarks can show where opportunities may lie. In addition, knowing what consumers are already saying will help in preparing responses for common questions or problems. Anticipating areas to address, and understanding the way consumers talk about them, will provide an advantage when entering into SMM.

STAGE #2: LISTEN TO WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE COMPETITORS

Next, listen to what people say about a company's competitors, and what those competitors are saying about themselves. How do people perceive the pros and cons of the competitors in the social space? How do these comments influence business opportunities? In addition to listening to how people feel about competitors, it is helpful to identify the most *competitive areas* of the social media landscape. What are the competitors doing on social media? Who are they targeting? What seems to work? Assessing the competitive landscape on social media sites will show how buyers are meeting sellers on social media and may provide insights that can be leveraged when later building a strategy. Learning from others' social media approaches will help build a powerful strategy quickly while refining it to suit different needs.

STAGE #3: LISTENING TO WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE INDUSTRY OR CATEGORY

After observing the competition, begin listening on a broader scale: the overall industry. What are consumers (or potential consumers or members of the target audience) saying about the industry? Is the sentiment strongly positive or negative surrounding certain issues? What conversations occur between firms in the industry? Does this create opportunities? Understanding the conversations taking place around a certain industry will help gauge what people are interested in and frequently talk about. We will discuss content in Chapters 7 and 11, but it is important to remember that social media content must connect with consumers on an issue they are passionate about (which typically is not a particular brand). Listening at the category or industry level will help one understand what the consumers in that industry are really interested in talking about.

Blake Chandlee, Vice President of Global Partnerships at Facebook calls this "chatter data" to distinguish it from quantitative data. In an interview with the *Sloan Management Review* he says, "Chatter data is what people are talking about when they're watching television or when they're watching a sporting event," he continued. "What kind of reaction are they having? Are brand mentions included? How are brands representing themselves in that kind of chatter? What kind of, say, hair color? That might affect a hair care company." The data can be used to help brands like Procter & Gamble and Unilever better understand their hair care customers. However, he warns that "privacy will always be the primary underlying consideration, which everybody has to consider because the consumer backlash if they find you using their data inappropriately is significant and quick."[3]

STAGE #4: LISTENING FOR THE TONE OF THE COMMUNITY

The next stage is to observe the tone of the community. Essentially, this means observing how your consumers naturally interact with each other on social sites. What technical jargon, acronyms, or slang do they use? How do they interact with each other? What words are most often used to describe specific brands, competitors, or industries? How are brands participating, and who is getting the most attention? What are the unwritten rules of participation? How do they talk, and what are they interested in? When engaging in social media, it is good to fit in and sound like other consumers. To accomplish this, it is essential to first know how relevant social media users communicate with each other and the etiquette of communicating on different social sites. This knowledge will facilitate integration and participation in the community.

STAGE #5: LISTENING TO DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND CHANNELS

Finally, when listening to social media, be sure to access multiple social media channels to identify where target audiences hang out and what they do there. The participants on Facebook may be dramatically different from those on Twitter, LinkedIn, or blogs. Each social media channel has a distinctive audience (target market) with unique interests, behaviors, and characteristics (Chapter 3 explores this topic in depth). For example, according to the Pew Foundation in 2014 more than half of all online users 65 and over used Facebook while half of young adult Internet users (18–29) used Instagram. Pinterest was dominated by women and half of all users of LinkedIn had college educations.[4] Since the users on each site and the social networking structure are different, it is important to listen to conversations across a variety of social media channels.

Listening and observing is the key first step in the social media planning stage. Time spent observing will pay off when planning the rest of the social media strategy and will help avoid an embarrassing faux pas along the way. Like all the rest of SMM listening has become a complex task and an organizational entity called either a listening center or a command post is often used to manage the complexity.

Listening as Part of Personal Branding Strategy

Personal branding experts agree that, just as listening is the first step in developing a corporate brand, it is equally important as you go about developing your personal brand. It is especially important to listen to relevant conversations, to understand the tone of the community, and to understand which social media platforms and channels are being used.

This comparison, though, begs an important question. How do you know what is relevant, how do you identify the appropriate community?

The answer is that your brand is YOU! It is up to you to decide how you want to be perceived as your career develops. Put another way, you have to define the outcome before you create the process of getting there. That outcome is your personal branding statement.[1]

Consultant Megan Marrs shows the way to develop what she calls an outcome statement to guide your personal branding efforts.

Lesson #1. Be honest about the nature of your appeal to others. How does your personality impact the experience others have with you? What sort of emotional reactions do you arouse in others?

Lesson #2. You must condense your offering into a sentence or a phrase that captures its essence. That is hard to do; even harder to do well. You may be surprised at these personal mission statements published by Fast Company:

- Denise Morrison, CEO of Campbell Soup Company

  "To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference."

- Sir Richard Branson, founder of The Virgin Group

  "To have fun in [my] journey through life and learn from [my] mistakes."

- Oprah Winfrey, founder of OWN, the Oprah Winfrey Network

  "To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be."[2]

Lesson #3. Be clear about your personal goals in the industry or in your chosen profession. Do you intend to be the CEO of a financial services company? Do you aspire to be a recognized leader in SMM who has several respected publishing channels? What is it that you really want to be or do?

Lesson #4. Make this all come together into a personal mantra. Oprah Winfrey might say, for example, "to inspire people to be more than they thought they could be."

Lesson #5. Your personal brand cannot describe some mythical creature. It must be authentically you. It must be capable of inspiring trust and credibility. If your personal brand is not authentic, nothing else you do matters.

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[1]Schawbel, Dan (September 23, 2014), "Why You Need to Start With the End in Mind." Retrieved on January 22, 2015 from http://danschawbel.com/blog/why-you-need-to-start-with-the-end-in-mind/

[2](February 25, 2014), "Why You Should Write a Personal Mission Statement and 5 CEOs Who Did." Retrieved on May 9, 2015 from http://www.fastcompany.com/3026791/dialed/personal-mission-statements-of-5-famous-ceos-and-why-you-should-write-one-too#1

PR guru Chris Penn puts the issue more succinctly. He says that you must "distill your essential quality," the quality that makes you and your work unique.[3]

However you develop it, your personal branding statement tells you where to begin listening. What subjects would you identify as keywords for the "inspiring others" example? If you want to become a CEO in financial services, what keywords would you pick? In either case, how would you identify a few people to follow, say on Twitter? In fact, how would you determine the best social platforms on which to follow your role models? How would you understand the tone of the conversations you are following?

In personal branding, as in all other aspects of SMM, thoughtful listening is the first step!

[3]Penn, Cristopher S. (n.d.), "The Reason Why Your Personal Brand Sucks." Retrieved on January 22, 2015 from http://www.christopherspenn.com/2010/02/the-reason-why-your-personal-brand-sucks/

Listen and Observe: Listening Centers

Facebook and Twitter are generally one and two on the list of social media networks most used by marketers. In late 2014 Facebook had 1.35 *billion* active accounts.[5] Those Facebook users shared almost 2.5 million pieces of content per *minute.* During that same minute Twitter users tweeted almost 300,000 times.[6] Obviously these are only two networks so the total number of communications per minute, hour, day, and so on simply boggles the mind.

How does a marketer even find the relevant messages, much less identify the important ones and respond if necessary? Many tools have been developed just to aid in the gargantuan task of listening and responding. The tools themselves are the subject of Chapter 14. While we are on the subject of strategic listening, however, we should introduce the concept of listening centers. Dell established one of the first permanent social media command posts in 2010. Since then many other corporations have done the same. Social media listening centers have also become an important part of major events.

THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE LISTENS TO SUPER BOWL CONVERSATIONS

The National Football League (NFL) established an early social media listening center for Super Bowl XLVI in 2012. The contenders in that game were the New York Giants with 1.5 million Facebook fans and the New England Patriots with almost 3 million. That insured a high volume of social media activity, which was monitored by a team of over 20 "strategists, analysts and techies", according to Mashable. The team began monitoring fan conversations on the Monday before the game and served the 150,000 attendees by tweeting everything from parking directions to information about Indianapolis' attractions.[7] Host committee communications manager Taulbee Jackson declared the activity an "enormous success." He says, "It had a direct reach of about 49,000 people in the Indianapolis area over Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and YouTube. Overall, the command center delivered some 1.8 million online impressions each day for the Indianapolis host committee."[8,9]

Fast forward to February 2015 and a bigger-than-ever social media presence for Super Bowl XLIX. The NFL again had a social media command center and many brands
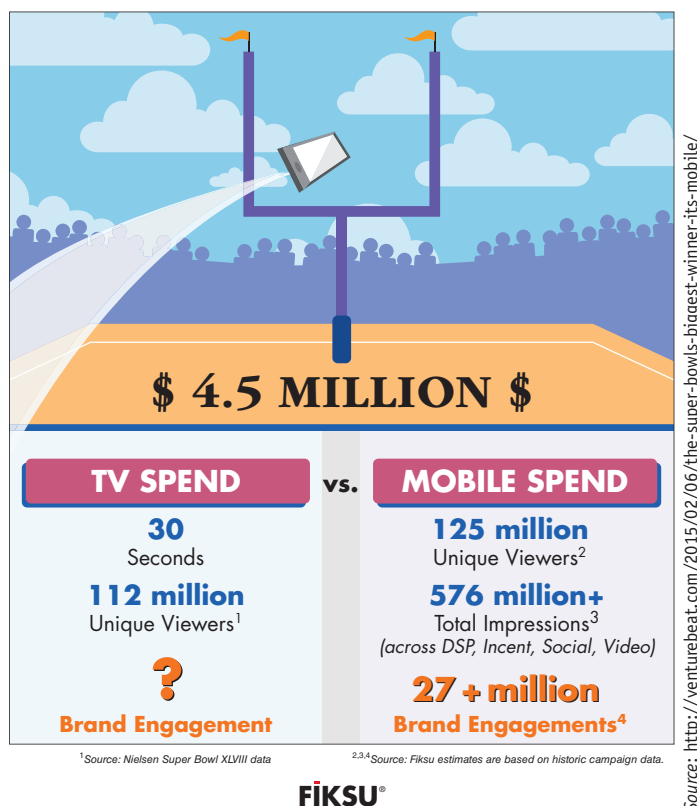
had their own. In fact, Budweiser, a perennial Super Bowl ad favorite, had four listening centers spread across the country. Nissan, who was returning after a long Super Bowl hiatus, had two.[10] The listening centers must have been busy, because it was the most social Super Bowl thus far and the traffic was huge.[11]

Super Bowl XLIX was the most-watched game ever with 114.4 million viewers. As many as 1.3 million viewers were streaming the game during crucial moments. It was also the most-tweeted game ever, with 28.4 million game-related tweets sent during the telecast.[12]

In fact, one blog declared mobile the big winner in the game. That verdict was partly based on the fact that the three game apps that bought TV ads experienced a huge increase in download activity after their ad was broadcast. It also reflects the traditional skepticism of digital marketers, who have measures of engagement, about traditional broadcast advertising. Traditional advertising finds it hard to demonstrate advertising return on investment (ROI) or even the type of audience engagement documented in Figure 2.2. Traditional advertising also lacks a mechanism for listening.

Facebook offered advertisers a targeted Super Bowl audience based on listening data. According to Ad Age, "People who post something Super Bowl-related will be added to an audience pool—and the aggregated data will be anonymized—alongside the more than 50 million people who interacted with Super Bowl-related content on Facebook last year. Advertisers will be able to buy ads against Facebook's Super Bowl audience leading up to and during the Super Bowl." The targeting data was expected to be updated in almost real time during the game.[13]

The performance of the targeted ads was not disclosed. However, Facebook reported that over 65 million worldwide "joined the conversation," posting, commenting, and

$ 4.5 MILLION $

TV SPEND	**vs.**	**MOBILE SPEND**
30 Seconds		125 million Unique Viewers[2]
112 million Unique Viewers[1]		576 million+ Total Impressions[3] (across DSP, Incent, Social, Video)
? Brand Engagement		27 + million Brand Engagements[4]

[1]Source: Nielsen Super Bowl XLVIII data   [2,3,4]Source: Fiksu estimates are based on historic campaign data.

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Source: http://venturebeat.com/2015/02/06/the-super-bowls-biggest-winner-its-mobile/

Figure 2.2 Traditional versus Social Media in the 2015 Super Bowl

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liking game-related content while it was going on. They posted an animated timeline that showed activity by state at some key moments and revealed that the top three audience categories for game-related content were all women![14]

CISCO DEMONSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING IN B2B MARKETING

Corporate listening centers are permanent installations that can have an important impact on the corporate brand or brands. The center introduced by B2B marketer Cisco in 2012 was described as state of the art and used Cisco's own technology plus an outside supplier for analytics services. The heart of the center is 6 touch screens as shown in Figure 2.3. According to the Cisco Digital and Social Blog they are listening to:

- "Social Media Customer Engagement. Highlighting CiscoLive conversations and engagement

- Twitter-based global heat map. Where? Real-time global tweets are displayed

- Social Media Influencers. Who? What influencers are tweeting about Cisco

- Product Family Landscape. What conversations are happening around both Collaboration and the Data Center and Virtualization architectures

- Social Media Word Cloud Highlighting current trending topics"[15]

Blogs are an important part of the conversation for many marketers. An examination of the Cisco site in 2014 shows around 50 blogs arranged by subjects including technology, industries, and countries and regions. The U.S. blogs feature the Cisco Social Rewards box shown in Figure 2.3. Viewers are invited to become guest bloggers in areas of their expertise and to earn a variety of badges for their participation. It takes a lot of content to keep all those blogs vibrant and Cisco customers and partners are important content creators for them. And clearly, Cisco listens to what the bloggers say.

Charlie Treadwell, Social and Digital Marketing Manager at Cisco says, "The foundation of a strong social media strategy starts with listening. Social listening with Radian6 [a supplier of analytics services] has allowed us to get closer to our customers and focus on how we monitor, respond, and triage conversations as they happen across our organization." Cisco stated that it had achieved a 281% return on its investment

Source: http://blogs.cisco.com/
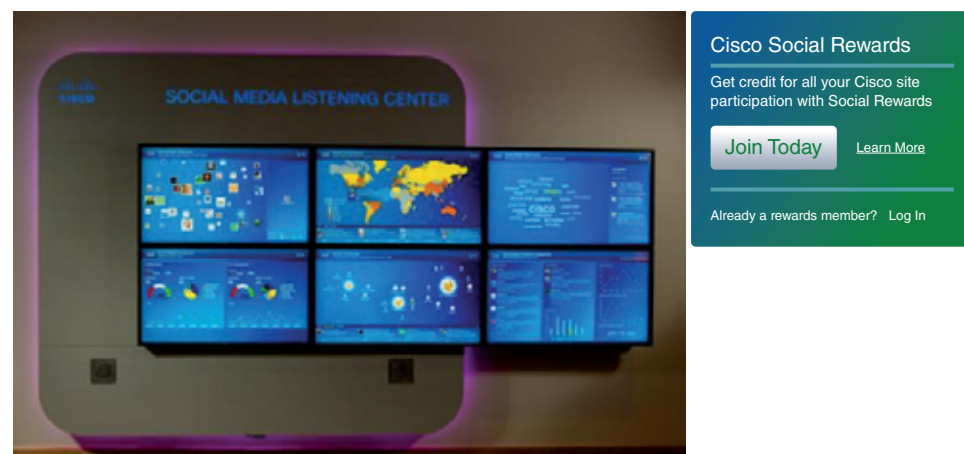
Figue 2.3 Touch Screens in Cisco Listening Center and the Social Rewards Invitation

in social media listening in four key business areas: more creative use of services to achieve industry thought leadership, increased productivity for employees who are able to access relevant content wherever they are, reduced expenditure on marketing research, and increased profit by uncovering sales opportunities that might have otherwise been missed.[16]
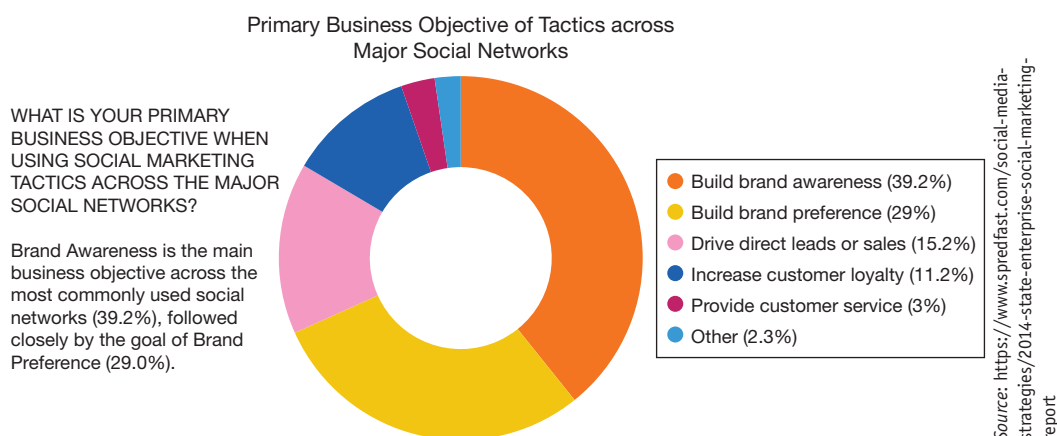
Setting Goals and Objectives

The Cisco example shows that listening to a wide range of social media sites and observing the location, behavior, tastes, and needs of the target audience is key to successful SMM. It helps marketers set optimal goals and determine the most suitable strategies to achieve them.

It is important to keep in mind that goals must be flexible in the light of new developments while engaging in social media. Sometimes, unintended benefits from social media engagement are discovered. For example, after Vistaprint, an online printing company, got started on social media, they noticed that many people were seeking customer support through Twitter. In reaction the company engaged its customer service department, connecting that department to questions from Twitter so that service professionals could respond directly to the tweets. This recognition of customer needs allowed faster service for customers needing assistance and also resulted in cost savings to the firm through reduced phone time spent on customer support.

Customer service is one of a handful of key objectives that marketers often adopt. According to a Forrester survey, the most popular business objectives for social media include brand awareness, building brand preference, acquisition of new customer leads or sales, loyalty programs to retain current customers, and providing customer service (Figure 2.4).[17] Social Media Examiner's 2014 industry survey adds that marketers find that their social media activities also resulted in increased market insight, improved search rankings, better business partnerships, and lower marketing costs.[18]

Accomplishments like increased market insight, improving business partnerships, and even lower marketing costs may seem to be reasonable outcomes of SMM. You may, however, question what search ranking is doing in that list and wonder if there are other potential benefits that are not listed.

Primary Business Objective of Tactics across
Major Social Networks

WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY BUSINESS OBJECTIVE WHEN USING SOCIAL MARKETING TACTICS ACROSS THE MAJOR SOCIAL NETWORKS?

Brand Awareness is the main business objective across the most commonly used social networks (39.2%), followed closely by the goal of Brand Preference (29.0%).

- Build brand awareness (39.2%)
- Build brand preference (29%)
- Drive direct leads or sales (15.2%)
- Increase customer loyalty (11.2%)
- Provide customer service (3%)
- Other (2.3%)

Figure 2.4 **Why Marketers Use Social Media Marketing**

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Search ranking has changed significantly since the early days of the Internet. Gone are the days when a few well-chosen keywords and a large number of inbound links would guarantee a high ranking on search engine results pages (SERPs). What has caused the change? Social media!

The myriad details of SEO are beyond the scope of this discussion, but the oft-repeated slogan that "content is king" sums it up. The 2014 SearchMetrics study found that two new content-related ranking factors, relevant terms (first) and proof terms (twelfth) were high on their list of the factors most highly correlated with a high search rank. Links remain important in terms of quantity and especially in terms of quality. Of the ten most important ranking factors *seven* were social signals. They ranged from Google +1s (second) to Tweets (tenth).[19]
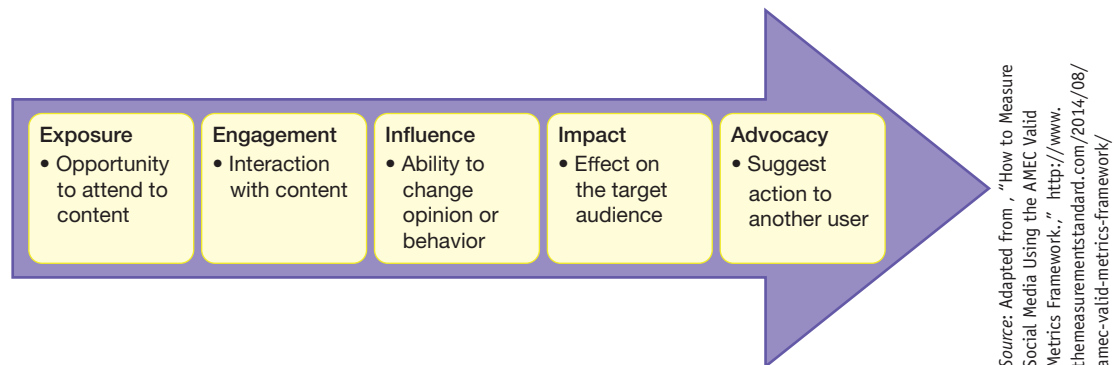
In addition to the primary SMM objectives shown in Figure 2.4 there are other objectives that can be secondary in SMM campaigns. Some that are frequently alluded to include:

- Achieving a desired brand positioning

- Producing new product ideas

- Being prepared to handle reputation management in a crisis

- Supporting public relations and advertising campaigns.

This discussion suggests that there are more "benefits" from SMM than just the primary objectives would suggest. If there are many objectives that are possible in SMM campaigns, how does the marketer go about choosing a relatively small set for a specific SMM campaign? The answer, of course, is to think about what the business needs to accomplish. While true, that still does not provide specific guidance for developing campaign objectives.

WHERE DO ACTUAL OBJECTIVES COME FROM?

Setting Social Media Marketing Objectives. There is beginning to be some agreement about the types of objectives that are appropriate for SMM although many marketers still have their own favorite variant of the ones shown in Figure 2.5. This concept was developed by AMEC, an international communications association, after a review of the many conceptual frameworks currently found in SMM.[20] It represents a strong framework for understanding SMM objectives and the metrics associated with them, which will be discussed in Chapter 13.

Exposure	Engagement	Influence	Impact	Advocacy
• Opportunity to attend to content	• Interaction with content	• Ability to change opinion or behavior	• Effect on the target audience	• Suggest action to another user

Source: Adapted from , "How to Measure Social Media Using the AMEC Valid Metrics Framework.," http://www.themeasurementstandard.com/2014/08/amec-valid-metrics-framework/

Figure 2.5 The Valid Metrics Framework

Some of the generic terms are familiar in advertising or other communications disciplines. Some have gained prominence as we attempt to understand the workings of SMM. The generic concepts are:

- **Exposure** is the opportunity to see and/or hear a piece of content in any channel. This is the broad definition of exposure. It does not mean that a viewer has paid any attention to or has comprehended any part of the content. It simply means he had the opportunity to do so. Exposure is a term long used in advertising.

- **Engagement** is a term popularized by social media marketers and its exact definition is hotly debated. It is most often measured as some variant of time spent on the piece of content. However, definitions vary widely so you are advised to look for the definition any time you use an engagement statistic.

- **Influence** is a reasonably intuitive term that describes the ability to affect attitudes and behavior. The topic influence in social media is so important that special tools have been developed to measure it. Klout is one well-known tool, but there are others that also have their adherents.

- **Impact** is also used in a reasonably common manner: how does a SMM activity affect business results? Specifically, how does it affect the attainment of goals? The impact marketers would most like to measure is the Return on Promotional Investment (ROPI). That is difficult to do, as we will discuss in Chapter 14.

- **Advocacy** is a term long used in traditional promotion, especially in the attempt to understand the effect of word of mouth (WOM). Communications studies have long demonstrated that various topics have identifiable opinion leaders and that these opinion leaders do have an influence on followers. The topic of advocacy has become especially important in SMM where marketers can make specific attempts to locate or to create advocates and can measure the extent of their success.

This is a progression that may parallel the purchase journey itself. A person must first be exposed to a communication before she can become in any way involved with it or be affected by it. If the communication has an effect, it may result in a behavior. If a person engages in a behavior and the results are satisfactory, the person may choose to share it with others. That describes the chain of events that social media marketers are trying to stimulate.

The terms that make up the Valid Metrics Framework, however, are not necessarily used in the objectives themselves. The framework represents a useful way of thinking about the type of objectives that are appropriate for a given stage in SMM efforts, but marketers must dig deeper to come up with the specific objectives for a campaign.

Campaign-Specific and Platform-Specific Social Media Marketing Objectives. It helps to understand objectives as a cascade (Figure 2.6). Overall business goals are the basis for objective setting at any level of the organization. Corporate business goals, however, are broad—driven by the vision and mission of the business. After the vision and mission statements have been created, actual objectives are generally financial in nature. They cover at least a year; in some instances longer time frames are used. Corporate goals allow all business functions, including marketing, to understand what they need to accomplish in order to fulfill their role in achieving the business objectives.

In a similar fashion marketing objectives, usually stated in terms of sales or market share, point the way for all marketing functions including SMM. Marketing objectives are generally part of an annual marketing plan and consequently have a time frame of 1 year.

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Business Objectives	• Financial in Nature • Achieve a NPbT of 15% of Gross Sales
Marketing Objectives	• Often Stated in Terms of Market Share • Achieve 20% SOM for Brand A
Social Media Marketing Objectives	• Stated as Measurable Social Media Metrics • Improve Customer Satisfaction Score by 10%
Campaign-Specific, Platform-Specific Objectives	• Make 20% of Customers Aware of New Rewards Program • Achieve 7% CT on Announcement on Blog • Achieve 60% Registrations from CTs • Increase Sharing of Blog Content by 10% • Increase Sharing on Twitter by 25%

Figure 2.6 The Objectives Cascade for Social Media Marketing Objectives

Social media marketing objectives can be stated as goals to be achieved over a similar planning period of perhaps a year. Often, however, they are stated for a specific campaign, for example, one to introduce a new loyalty program or another to increase sharing of content on one of the business' platforms. Within a campaign more than one platform is often used and there should be specific communications objectives for each platform. For example, a campaign to increase sharing of blog posts might want to encourage sharing posts via Twitter and have an objective of increasing retweets of blog material by 25%.

Notice that none of the objectives have any information about how they are to be accomplished. They are goals only. The "how to" is the topic of the Action Plan section which follows in the formal marketing plan.

There is something missing, however—the issue of time frame that should be explicitly stated as part of the objective. A brand may choose to run a new customer acquisition program during one time frame or on a particular platform and a customer loyalty and retention campaign during another time frame or on another platform. The two campaigns need to be planned and evaluated separately. That is one reason why it is wise to choose a limited number of goals for a single campaign. For example, it is hard to see how customer acquisition and customer loyalty goals could receive equal attention in a single campaign. Regardless of how many objectives are chosen for a specific campaign, having a clear idea of the goal is critical to the success of a social media campaign.

There is a standard for judging the quality of goals and objectives at any level. It is the SMART acronym, popular in many aspects of the quality management discipline. All objectives should be judged by the following criteria:

S pecific
M easurable
A chieveable
R ealistic
T ime delimited

Social media marketing campaigns vary in duration, so it is especially important to specify the time frame for each objective.

This discussion shows that SMM has very specific objectives that are part of the marketing, and hence of the business, goals of the organization. The implication is that

strategy is a vague term when used in the context of promotion, including SMM. It does not imply the creation of economic value like it does when discussing corporate strategy. Marketing campaigns, however, can be said to have strategies that give them direction.

Determining Strategies

There are some key considerations when setting SMM strategies.

WHAT ARE THE OVERALL GOALS?

Look at the mission and general marketing goals of the organization when creating SMM strategies. Social media marketing should not be an isolated part of the marketing strategy; rather, it should link into a broader marketing plan. The building of SMM strategies that support the overall strategic goals of a company will also make it easier for the strategies to win support within the company.

WHAT WAS LEARNED FROM LISTENING?

The listening stage should have unearthed information about the company, its target audience, competitors, and the industry as a whole. Marketers should be able to answer the following questions:

- How do people feel about a company, product, service, person, or issue?
- How are competitors using social media platforms?
- Which media platforms appear to be the most viable in order to achieve SMM goals?
- Where does a company's target audience hang out, and what do they do there?
- How can this information be used to identify strategic opportunities?

WHAT BEST PRACTICES CAN BE APPLIED?

This book offers a variety of best practices and case studies showing how to apply SMM for the building and expanding of an organization's presence. Best-in-class examples of SMM can inspire future SMM plans. Look to best-in-class examples, even from firms outside the specific industry you are interested in, to help shape marketing goals and strategies.

GOALS MAY CHANGE . . . BE FLEXIBLE

The social media planning model is a fluid circle; it is flexible and adaptive. After gaining experience in social media, measuring the results may lead to a change in goals or strategies. For example, customers may primarily want to use Twitter for customer service, or perhaps most existing customers are only active on Facebook. Be open to adaptation, as social media may work in unanticipated ways.

Whatever the specific platforms and tactics used, social media strategy can best be described as a broad statement of what marketers want to achieve for the brand in social media. When SMM is described as strategic it implies that all actions are taken with a goal in mind. They are not simply random tweets or use of a platform because it is currently popular.

Not For Sale

THE EIGHT C'S OF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

1. **Categorize** social media platforms by target market relevancy.

2. **Comprehend** the rules of the road on the platform by listening and learning how to behave, successfully spark conversation, and engage the participants.

3. **Converse** by acknowledging and responding to other users of the platform, always remembering to be a contributor, not a promoter.

4. **Collaborate** with platform members as a means of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with the platform participants.

5. **Contribute** content to build reputation and become a valued member, helping to improve the community.

6. **Connect** with the influencers so that you can enlist them to help shape opinions about your product or service.

7. **Community** participation (and creation) can elicit valuable consumer suggestions for improving products and services.

8. **Convert** relationships built in social media to the behaviors specified in the objectives.

Linking Goals with a Call to Action

Once clear marketing goals are established, it is important to link those goals to a call to action. This process will help design and measure social media campaigns more effectively. In order to measure success, you need to clearly define what someone's desired action would be—your "call to action." With a clear and measurable call to action, it's possible to measure actual conversions due to a SMM campaign.

A call to action is simply the behavior you want the potential customer to exhibit at each stage of your marketing campaign. There may be different calls to action for each aspect of an Internet marketing or social media strategy. For example, the goal may be to get blog readers subscribed to an email newsletter or webinar, so the call to action for webinar listeners may be for them to sign up. Following this, there may be a series of calls to action that increase the engagement level with the consumer, earning the right to ask for more information and eventually to close a sale.

Your call to action should flow naturally from your marketing goals. Table 2.1 shows some examples of calls to action based on different marketing strategies.

Marketing goal	Call to action
Lead generation	Sign up for webinar
	Call for consultation
	Complete form for consultation
Brand building	Watch video
	Click on links
	Read content
	Fan/friend/follow brand
	Sign up for newsletter

Table 2.1 Marketing Goals and Lead Generation

Getting to the sale is the final step in a chain of actions. For example, one chain of actions leading to a sale may be:

- Click on blog post from Twitter or Facebook

- Sign up for email newsletter

- Sign up for webinar (collect lead scoring and contact information)

- Have salesperson call

- Purchase

- Convert the customer to a brand advocate

In each instance, the goal is to increase the level of interaction and engagement through small, incremental steps. Although the ultimate desired action is probably to generate a sale, the best way to get there involves intermediate steps that *end* in selling the product. It is also important that the call to action be integrated firmly with the actual content being provided. A call to action that seems artificial, forced, or overly aggressive is less likely to be successful. As author and CEO Sunita Biddu notes, "[b]eginning and nonprofessional writers often think that throwing in a few standard selling phrases will accomplish the call to action. The truth is that the call to action must be an extension and continuation of the entire marketing piece. If you have not convinced the potential buyer of the value of your product or service before they get to the call to action, it will not work."[21]

At every stage, the call to action must implicitly answer the consumer's question, "what's in it for me?"

Why should someone click on a link, give an email address, or sign up for a consultation? Having an effective call to action at every stage means answering these questions in advance. As one online entrepreneur claims, "[t]he whole point of using this very specific marketing design is to make sure that wherever on your site your visitor is, you are getting them closer to do what you want them to do."[22] Effective social media marketers should already have some idea what their audience's goals, motivations, and communication preferences are (through the listening process). A strong call to action will put that knowledge to work, by designing a compelling message that keeps consumers engaged and coming back for more.

Self-Promotion vs. Building an Army of Advocates

A final strategy point to consider when building a social media plan is the value of building an "army" of passionate brand defenders, advocates, and enthusiasts. Creating advocates is the final element in the Valid Metrics Framework. Advocacy goes beyond focusing social media efforts around brands themselves and simply publishing content about the brand. It is a more complex concept than simply measuring social media "success" based on the number of followers or mentions.

While social media can be a platform for businesses to share their content, it can become even more valuable by building the number of people who are passionate about a business and requesting them to create content or to share it. These brand advocates will talk to their friends—not because of a contest or prize—but because they are truly passionate about a business and want to tell the world. The customers and business partners Cisco recruits to be guest bloggers fall into that category.
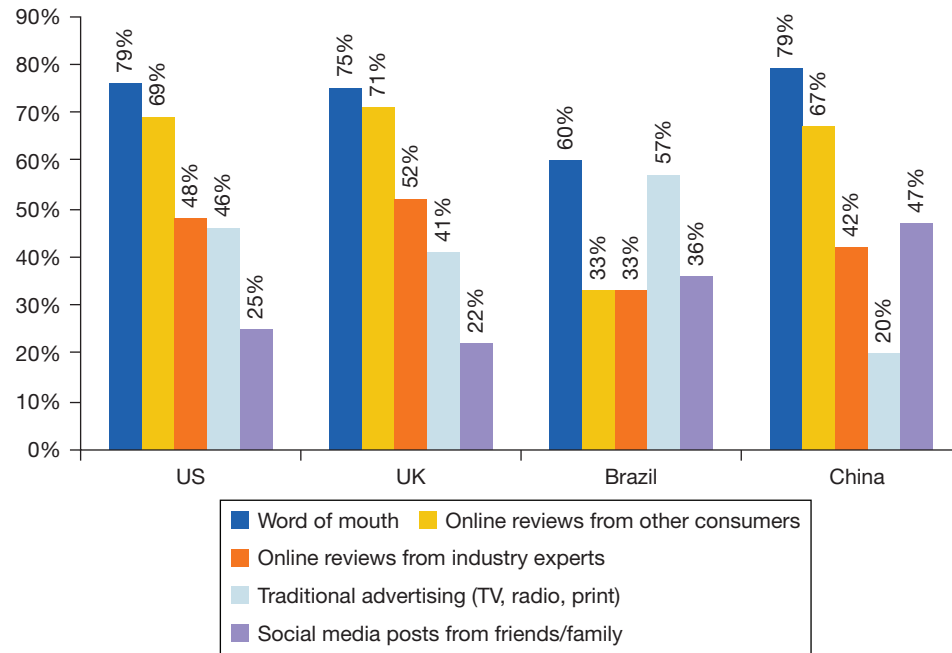
Building and cultivating these relationships can deliver direct value for a firm. First, this is basic word-of-mouth marketing that we previously discussed. Building

Consumers' Purchase Decision Influencers
based on a survey of 1,680 individuals with internet access in the United States,
United Kingdom, Brazil, and China
November 2014

Legend:
- Word of mouth
- Online reviews from other consumers
- Online reviews from industry experts
- Traditional advertising (TV, radio, print)
- Social media posts from friends/family

US: 79%, 69%, 48%, 46%, 25%
UK: 75%, 71%, 52%, 41%, 22%
Brazil: 60%, 33%, 33%, 57%, 36%
China: 79%, 67%, 42%, 20%, 47%

Figure 2.7 Factors That Influence Purchase Decisions

relationships and rewarding or giving attention to your fans are key drivers of WOM. Word of mouth, in turn, is key to consumer purchasing behavior.

Figure 2.7 shows WOM to be the leading purchase influence in four different countries. Word of mouth far surpasses the influence of traditional advertising in all except Brazil where the difference is small. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that consumer online reviews and expert online reviews are consistently second and third as purchase influencers. The importance of posts from friends and family varies across the four nations and the different cultures they represent.[23]

In addition to influencing purchasing behavior, customer advocates are the people most likely to come to the brand's defense if needed. As a result of circumstance or human error, eventually a business will offend or upset someone. Having honest, regular people who are not employed by the company defend the brand can turn an entire conversation around. These unpaid advocates can be one of the greatest assets to a social media campaign. In the next chapter, we discuss targeting and market segmentation to aid in finding these valuable brand advocates.

Some very passionate brand advocates can start off as disgruntled customers or skeptical purchasers. Many customers are flattered when businesses take time to respond personally to problems. If a company responds quickly to negative comments and resolves the situation professionally, it can change an initial bad impression into a lasting positive one. An angry customer may initially be hostile, but after the situation is resolved, this person feels relief and gratitude. People whose input has been taken seriously or who have been assisted in resolving a difficult problem know that the company respects them and values their time. In return, these people will be more likely to speak positively about the brand.

Building these positive relationships can result in natural positive recommendations from people who never need to be compensated; these relationships also pay dividends of goodwill and increased sales well into the future.

Best Practices for Developing a Social Media Strategy

There are many important aspects of developing a good social media strategy as we have discussed in this chapter. Most experts would agree that these best practices are essential in the strategy development process.

1. Start with a road map. That is your SMM plan. At a minimum it should specify:

a. Who your target audience is and the audience characteristics

b. How you plan to interact with the audience

c. How you will measure the success or failure of your activities

d. How you will adjust to stay on track to meet your objectives.

2. Listen before you start interacting. Just as you would not walk up to a group of people at a party and start talking (even worse, start talking about yourself), you must listen strategically before you engage with your audience. Then offer respect, empathy, and content of value before you ask anything of them.

3. Welcome audience participation, feedback and collaboration, and use these conversations to locate and nurture brand advocates.

4. A successful social media strategy or execution is not built overnight. Give it an adequate amount of time and, not incidentally, resources to become successful.

5. Be flexible. Social media itself is constantly evolving. Audience tastes and behaviors also evolve over time. Competitors adopt and change strategies. A social media strategy cannot be cast in stone. It must have the capacity to adjust to change in a way that furthers the achievement of business and marketing goals.

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