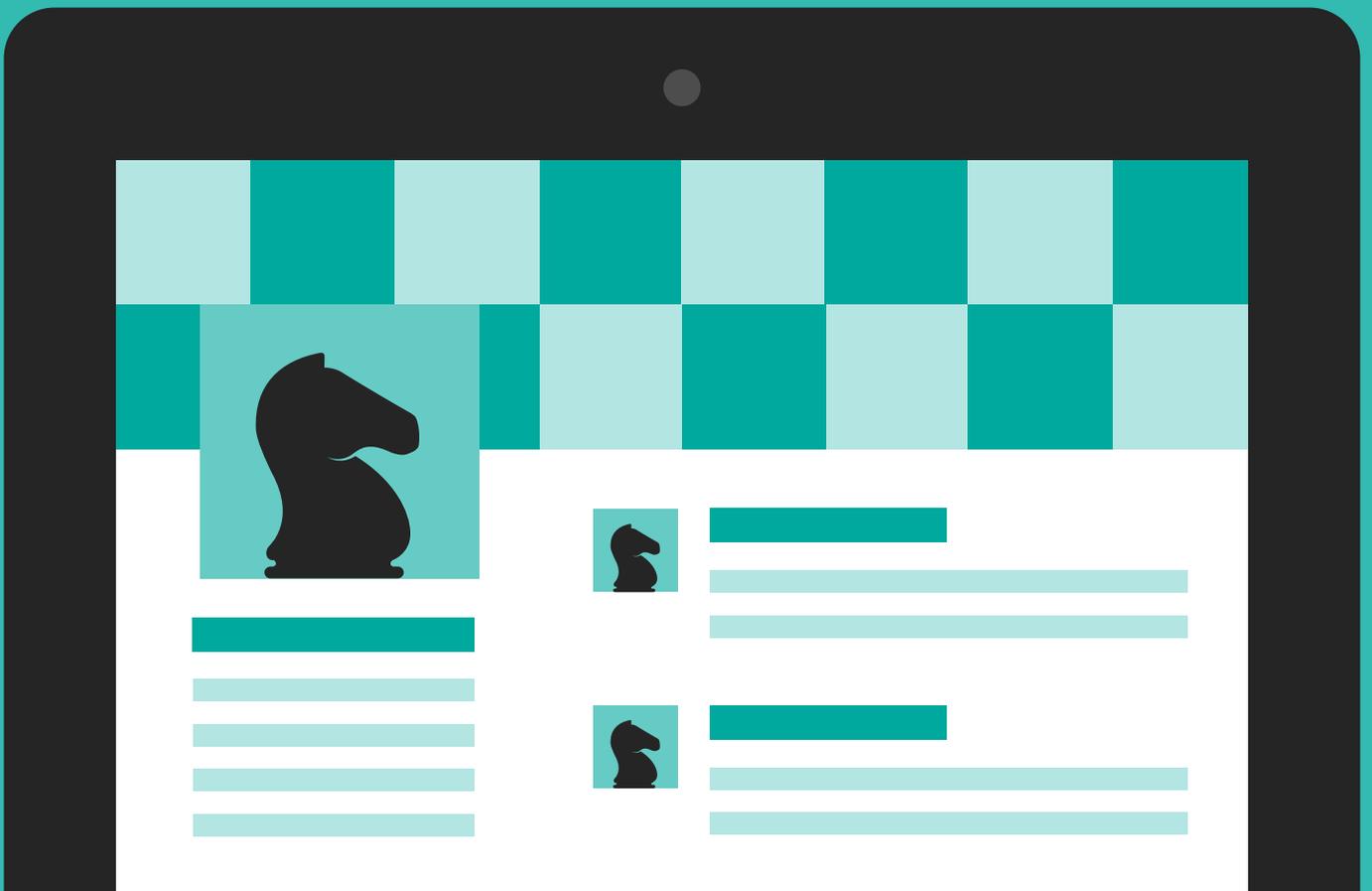


7 STEPS TO CREATE A

# Winning Social Media Marketing Strategy

A GUIDE BY

**sprout**social



# Introduction

Social media was often seen as the wild child of the marketing department—the place where interns started their careers and brands could say random things with little to no repercussions. But times have changed, and the industry has matured.

Yes, social media is still a wonderful place for brands to have a little fun, but it also has a real and measurable impact on a business' bottom line. Thus, social media can no longer live in a silo; it must be work in tandem with the rest of your business strategy.

To ensure that your social media marketing campaigns contribute to your brand's greater business objectives, we've put together this guide to coach you through the process. We've also incorporated a checklist you can use to make sure you've done it all right. Here are your seven steps to success:

- 01** Ensure Social Goals Solve Challenges
- 02** Extend Efforts Throughout Your Organization
- 03** Focus on Networks That Add Value
- 04** Create Engaging Content
- 05** Identify Business Opportunities Through Social
- 06** Engage Instead of Ignore
- 07** Track, Improve & Market Your Efforts

# 01 Ensure Social Goals Solve Challenges

Goal setting is a staple of all marketing and business strategies. Social media is no exception. Of course, with a range of social capabilities, it can be difficult to determine exactly what your objectives should be. For guidance, look to the challenges before you.

- Has website traffic dipped?
- Is customer loyalty low?
- Do you need to do a better job of building a positive brand reputation?
- Do you just need to make people aware that your product exists?

A smart social media marketing campaign can answer each of these questions. Prove your team's worth by tackling them head on. To get you started, we pulled together a few common business obstacles and social objectives that can help brands overcome them.

## **CHALLENGE: LOW WEBSITE TRAFFIC**

The world is online. A brand's website, therefore, is one of its most important marketing tools. Low website traffic can mean fewer customers and lower profits.

To combat this challenge, your social team should focus its goals on creating links directly to the website (whether they're from your own social posts or influencers'). Link to useful content, subpages and company images to position your website and your brand as a resource rather than just another cog in the corporate wheel. This traffic should increase leads and, in the long run, revenues.

### CHALLENGE: DECREASING CUSTOMER RETENTION

According to [The Chartered Institute of Marketing](#), it costs four to 10 times more to acquire a customer than to retain one. To keep your customers around, use social as a tool to support, communicate and engage. A good social relationship with your customers should translate into a better perception and offline relationship with your brand. By developing a strong social bond, customers will be more likely to stick with your brand time and time again.

### CHALLENGE: POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

People turn to social to engage with businesses. Therefore, it is important for your brand to be ready to help customers on any channel they can contact you through. Arm your social media team with the materials, education and authority to respond to customer questions and issues. When you do so, you'll be equipped to respond to your customers in a timely and accurate way, regardless of how they reach out to you.

### CHALLENGE: WEAK BRAND AWARENESS

Social allows you to reach a broad audience. But honing and perfecting that message takes brain power and time. To create authentic and lasting brand awareness, avoid a slew of promotional messages; instead, focus on creating meaningful content and a strong brand personality through your social channels. Determine relevant hashtags and industry influencers you can engage with, and tap into those resources to extend your brand's overall awareness.

## What Are Your Social Media Goals?

- Increase brand awareness.
- Drive website traffic.
- Improve customer service and retention.
- Gather quality leads.
- Source job candidates.

# 02 Extend Efforts Throughout Your Organization

Social has long lived within the marketing department, but that doesn't mean it can't (and shouldn't) have a hand in nearly every business function, from human resources to research and development. To create a fully integrated social media marketing campaign, you'll need to involve and integrate multiple departments, especially if your goals have a direct impact on them. Work with all your teams to determine how you can best support their goals and what key performance indicators are important to them (we've outlined some ideas on both below).

## SALES

Social selling is a term that has grown in popularity since the rise of social marketing. By searching for sales opportunities and then engaging in a helpful and authentic manner, social media can be a great way to prime the sales funnel and find new leads.

For example, someone started a LinkedIn chat, asking about social media tools. Sarah Nagel, Sprout Social's Community Manager, jumped in to provide insight and offer a recommendation.



Sarah

**Sarah Nagel**  
Social Marketing at Sprout Social, Inc.

A good tool will save you time and energy in monitoring, scheduling and pulling reports to benchmark your efforts (and show clients all the engagement the posts are receiving).

Check out Sprout Social. (Full disclosure: I work there) Sprout integrates with Twitter, Facebook, Google+ pages and LinkedIn profiles (LI pages coming by the end of 2014). Users can connect their social profiles, add relevant brand keywords, schedule content, catch up on industry news via the Feedly integration, keep tabs on social chatter through the Discovery tab, and view reports such as engagement on sent messages, compare efforts to industry averages, check in on response rates and times and much more.

We offer a free 30 day trial to see if we're a good fit and can help cut down the time and effort needed to manage clients' social media. You can check it out here: <http://bit.ly/1yYOhRN>

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

Social media is quickly becoming one of the most important channels through which companies interact with their current customers. Social is an easy and very public way for customers to air their grievances with your brand. If you aren't responding, it can hurt your reputation and customer relationship.

GrubHub is an example of a company that is really succeeding in social customer care. By taking the time to engage with a dissatisfied customer, GrubHub was able to turn a negative experience into a favorited Tweet!



## HUMAN RESOURCES

While the HR team probably spends a good amount of its time on social media looking through the profiles of applicants, it can also use social as a way to increase overall application numbers. Showcase job postings on social media and encourage your employees to share them to their networks as well. Beyond just job postings, social is a useful tool in showcasing your company culture to the world. Highlight some behind-the-scenes images of what it is like to work for your company so you can improve the perception of your brand among candidates.

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Your brand's social audience represents a group that is highly engaged, invested and interested in your product or service. Why not leverage that to serve as an online focus group for your company? Asking for and listening to customer feedback on social media is a nimble and easy way to get instant feedback. Additionally, social media can help expose gaps in a product or service.

## MARKETING

The marketing department, specifically advertising and PR, traditionally has a strong role in the social media strategy. But there are always new ways to ensure people are aware of and excited about your brand through social. Whether you're debuting a product, ad campaign or initiative, ensure that social has a strong hand in spreading the word.

## What Teams Are Active on Social?



- Sales
- Marketing
- Advertising
- Public relations
- Customer service
- Human resources
- Research and development

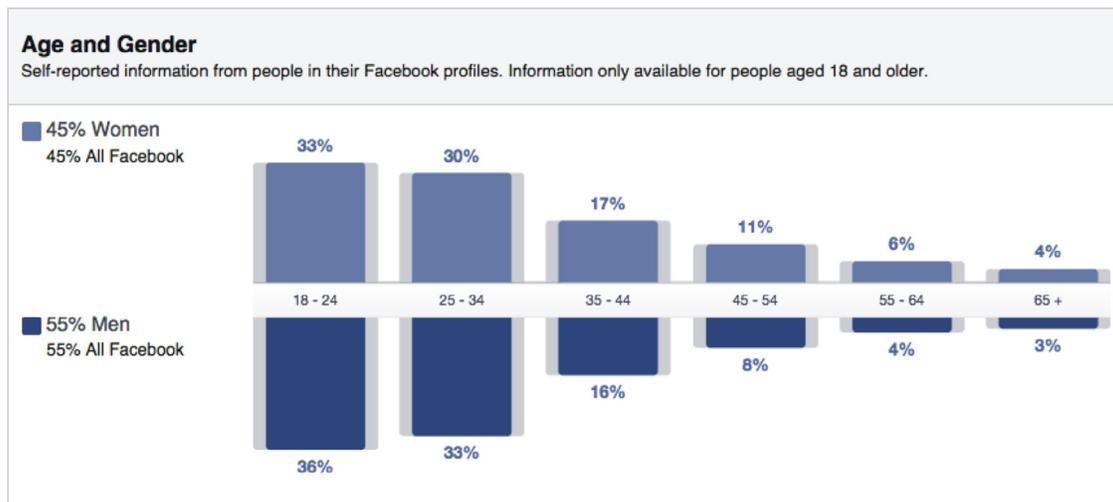
# 03 Focus on Networks That Add Value

Just because a network has billions of users doesn't mean it will have a direct contribution to your brand's objectives. Instead of trying to be everything to everybody, focus your efforts on networks that hold the key to your target audience and objectives.

Each network has its own strengths and weaknesses, and each social media marketer should carefully pick and choose which networks they want to take advantage of. Here are some of the most popular networks as well as what they're best at.

## FACEBOOK

With an audience of 1.23 billion monthly active users, Facebook offers an opportunity to reach a broad range of customers and potential customers. The chart below breaks down Facebook's demographic representation—your target audience is most likely represented in some way.



But how can Facebook contribute to your overall goals? Because Facebook's News Feed is a very visible place for social posts, it's one of the best places for you to distribute your content in order to increase brand awareness, drive website traffic and distinguish yourself as a thought leader. This strategy is even more effective when you take advantage of Facebook's targeting capabilities that allow you to tailor your messages to users with certain interests.

## TWITTER

Where Facebook has the volume of users, Twitter has the volume of messages. In fact, there are over 500 million Tweets sent every day. With all those social messages, there is a great chance that someone is either mentioning your company or starting a conversation that you would be interested in joining.

That's why Twitter is best to use as a customer service and business development channel. Monitor the network for inbound messages from dissatisfied customers, and quickly turn them into happy interactions. At the same time, look for prospective customers.

## LINKEDIN

LinkedIn has a robust network of over 332 million users, most of whom frequent the site with a "working" mindset. The advantage with this is that LinkedIn is an amazing network for B2B social media marketers. Whereas sites like Twitter and Facebook catch users more or less on their personal time, LinkedIn gives you access to customers when they're at their professional best. Use this to build relationships with future customers.

## GOOGLE+

One of the great things about Google+ is that if you have a strong presence on the site and someone searches for your company through Google, a snippet of your profile will appear on the results page.



**Sprout Social**  
22,483 followers on Google+

**Recent posts**



3 Ways to Optimize Your Content for Google +Post Ads in January, we looked closely at what Google +Post Ads are and how you can create your own. Designed ... 2 hours ago

Another great feature of Google+ is the ability to hyper-target your potential customers by Communities. Communities are groups of people who get together to discuss specific topics, so if you can find one that your customers are likely to be in, you can post content there that might interest them.

## Which Networks Align With Your Business Strategy?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google+
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Snapchat

# 04 Create Engaging Content

Once you've involved the right stakeholders, department and networks, it's time to start building engaging content for your social channels. This content—whether a video, tip sheet or simple Tweet—should all ladder up into your business objectives. Below are just a few examples of good content for social and how to use that to support your goals.

## VIDEOS

- How-to videos can be a proactive approach to social customer care—answer your customers' questions before they're asked.
- Behind-the-scenes videos give your audience a sense of your company culture and brand personality.

## GUIDES

- Position your organization as a thought leader and elevate your brand by developing engaging content that speaks to your customers.
- Guides should cater to your target audience, ensuring you're actually adding value.

MailChimp's guides are so successful, this Tweet garnered 300 Retweets.



## INFOGRAPHICS

- Internal or external data can be turned into a beautiful, insightful infographic.
- When done right, infographics can be some of the most socially shared pieces of content, so make them engaging and resourceful.

The image shows a tweet from Sprout Social (@SproutSocial) posted on April 13, 2015, at 10:41 PM. The tweet text states: "Tweets with images average a 35% increase in retweets. [sproutsocial.com/insights](http://sproutsocial.com/insights)". Below the text is an infographic titled "INCREASE IN RETWEETS" with a blue background and a grid pattern. The infographic features five bars representing different content types with their respective percentage increases: a photo icon (35%), a play button icon (28%), a quote icon (19%), a percentage sign icon (17%), and a hashtag icon (16%). Each bar has a white callout box with the percentage and an upward arrow. Below the infographic, the tweet shows 21 retweets and 12 favorites, with a row of profile pictures for the users who interacted. A "Follow" button is visible in the top right corner of the tweet interface.

## What Content Can You Create With Full Force & Frequency?

- Videos
- Photos
- Ebooks
- Webinars
- Blog posts
- Infographics
- White papers
- Case studies

# 05 Identify Business Opportunities Through Social

With millions of messages being sent across social channels every day, there is no doubt conversation happening around your brand. Social media monitoring, therefore, should be an essential part of your social media marketing strategy. Below are some ways you can monitor social media to identify larger business opportunities for your brand.

## **BRAND MENTIONS**

People who are mentioning your brand on social are some of the highest quality leads you can drive. They've already proved they know your product/service and have an interest in reaching out to you. Engage with them, foster that relationship and potentially create a brand advocate. If the mention was less than positive, use the opportunity to showcase your stellar social customer care and prove that you are listening.

## **INDUSTRY TERMS**

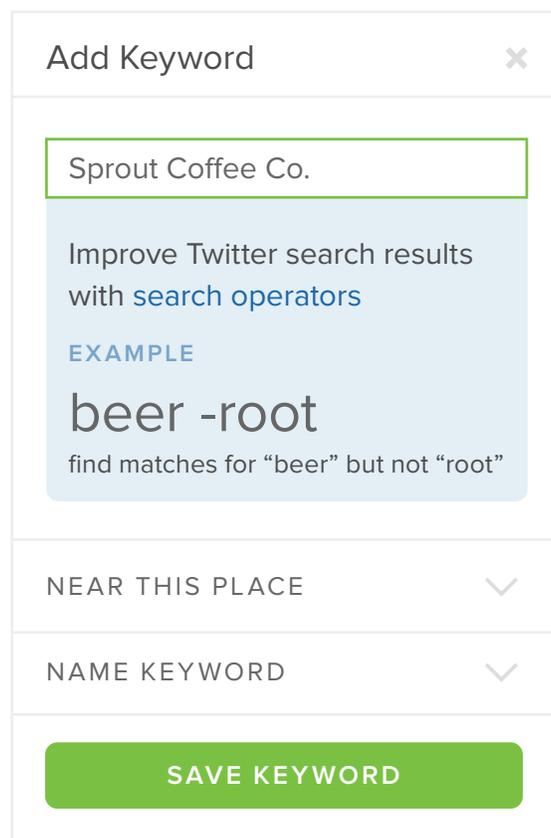
Think of some of the words you use when discussing your brand, and look out for them on social. By monitoring these terms, you can identify relevant hashtags you should be using, conversations you should be having and influencers with whom you should be engaging.

## **COMPETITOR INFO**

Keep a pulse on the competition. Social media can give you insights into your competitors' marketing plans and help you identify gaps in your product or service.

## WORK SMARTER

For a clearer picture of what people are saying around your brand and product category, look to Sprout's Smart Inbox. This powerful tool saves Twitter search operators so you can monitor keywords in real time through a centralized stream. From there, you can reply to your customers, assign tasks to your team and mark messages as complete.



Add Keyword ×

Sprout Coffee Co.

Improve Twitter search results with [search operators](#)

EXAMPLE

**beer -root**

find matches for "beer" but not "root"

NEAR THIS PLACE ∨

NAME KEYWORD ∨

SAVE KEYWORD

Plus, your efforts will integrate with Sprout's Reporting feature so you can see how well you are doing—both at listening and engaging.

## How Are You Finding Your Audience?

- Hashtags
- @mentions
- Indirect mentions
- Industry keywords
- Competitive listening

# 06 Engage Instead of Ignore

We can't say it enough: Whether someone is commenting on a post you've made, writing on your wall or mentioning you on Twitter, it's important to always stay engaged. Shockingly, our [social study](#) shows that five in six messages on social requiring response are not answered by brands. If customers are consistently ignored, they'll eventually ditch your brand all together and look for an alternative.

Be sure to respond to customers who have left negative feedback about your brand as well. Too many companies have lost favor with their fans by trying to delete the message and sweep it under the rug.

Here's an example of how Jimmy John's social team handled one such situation.

The screenshot shows a Twitter thread. At the top, Taylor Evans (@TaylorYEvans) posts: "I am forever frustrated with the Columbus Jimmy John's". Jimmy John's (@jimmyjohns) replies: "@TaylorYEvans Taylor I'm sorry, that's not how I roll sistuh! What happened?". Taylor Evans replies back: "@jimmyjohns They aren't open as late as I want them to be! Nothing big. Haha". Below this is a separate tweet from Jimmy John's (@jimmyjohns) that says "@TaylorYEvans I feel your pain Tay, sammies makers gotta sleep too!". The tweet has one favorite and is dated 6:31 AM - 23 Feb 2015.

**Taylor Evans** @TaylorYEvans · Feb 23  
I am forever frustrated with the Columbus Jimmy John's

**Jimmy John's** @jimmyjohns · Feb 23  
@TaylorYEvans Taylor I'm sorry, that's not how I roll sistuh! What happened?

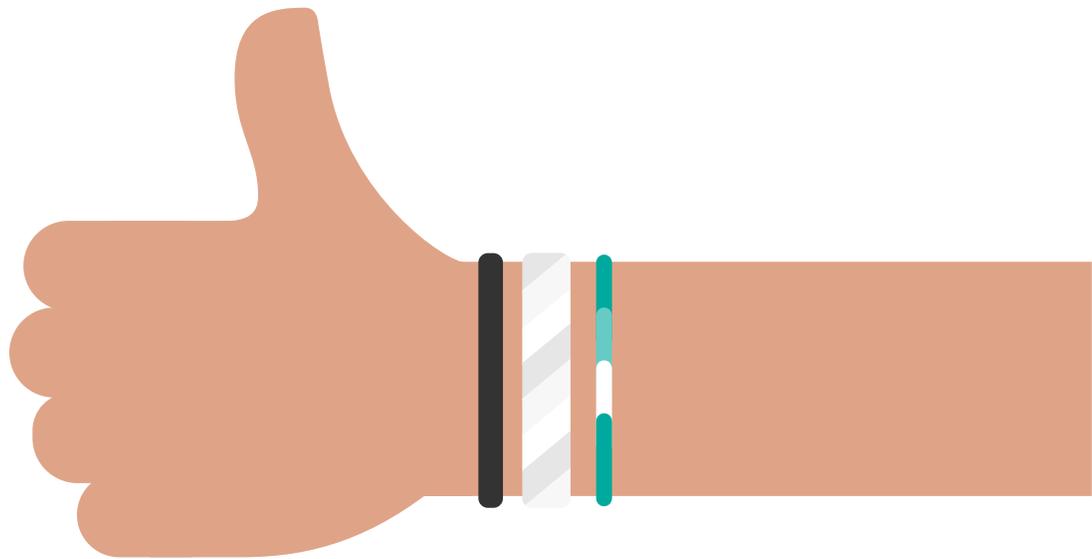
**Taylor Evans** @TaylorYEvans · Feb 23  
@jimmyjohns They aren't open as late as I want them to be! Nothing big. Haha

**Jimmy John's** @jimmyjohns  
@TaylorYEvans I feel your pain Tay, sammies makers gotta sleep too!

FAVORITE  
1

6:31 AM - 23 Feb 2015

This was a situation where Jimmy John's reached out to someone a bit frustrated with the store's hours and turned it into a positive experience. Taylor even favorited the final Tweet from Jimmy John's!



## How Are You Responding to Your Followers?

- Dedicated social team
- Shared social responsibility across departments
- Social tools with built-in customer relationship management capabilities

# 07 Track, Improve & Market Your Efforts

You won't be able to really begin analyzing and improving your efforts until you've successfully got steps 1-6 operational. This final step is actually a step back, letting you figure out what's working and what's not.

## USE A TOOL TO TRACK SUCCESS

Sprout was created with social media marketing in mind. Sprout offers a full suite of social media analytics, which help you pinpoint exactly which of your messages perform best. You also can use tools like Google Analytics, which integrates with Sprout, to see which of your posts are driving traffic, conversions and overall revenue.

The screenshot displays the Sprout Social interface for a user named 'Sprout Coffee Co.'. The main content area shows a list of tweets with columns for 'Date Sent', 'Clicks', 'Responses', and 'Reach'. The 'Last Week' filter is selected, showing data for Dec 07, 2014 - Dec 13, 2014.

Date Sent	Clicks	Responses	Reach
4 Twitter Features Every Marketer Should Be Using - <a href="http://bit.ly/1uWBqCr">bit.ly/1uWBqCr</a> #socialmedia SproutSocial (Tweet) 12/11/2014 1:33 pm by Darryl V.	172	17	198.6k
Twitter Stats that Can Help Boost Engagement > <a href="http://bit.ly/1vx3mgw">bit.ly/1vx3mgw</a> #socialmedia SproutSocial (Tweet) Last Friday at 04:39 pm by Darryl V.	21	17	186.7k
How Journalists Decide What to Share on Social => <a href="http://bit.ly/1D013WH">bit.ly/1D013WH</a> #socialmedia <a href="http://pic.twitter.com/NOH9Pv7AI...">pic.twitter.com/NOH9Pv7AI...</a> SproutSocial (Tweet) 12/09/2014 12:14 am by Darryl V.	30	13	127.5k
How To Grow Your Following And Increase Engagement In 2015 > <a href="http://bit.ly/1ywQVn6">bit.ly/1ywQVn6</a> by @ZOGDigital SproutSocial (Tweet) 12/10/2014 10:47 am by Darryl V.	19	5	91.5k
How to Create Social Media Images That Support Your Brand > <a href="http://bit.ly/1AB4g0w">bit.ly/1AB4g0w</a> via @SMExaminer SproutSocial (Tweet) 12/09/2014 4:03 am by Darryl V.	37	13	81.6k

Summary for Last Week (Dec 07, 2014 - Dec 13, 2014):

Metric	Value
Clicks	3.4k
Responses	526
Reach	5.9m

Additional features visible in the interface include a sidebar with reports (Group Report, Engagement Report, Team Report, Facebook Pages, Twitter Profiles, Trends Report, Twitter Comparison, Sent Messages), a top navigation bar (MESSAGES, TASKS, FEEDS, PUBLISHING, DISCOVERY, REPORTS), and a 'Last Week' summary panel with an 'Export to CSV...' button.

### BUILD ON SUCCESS

Once you have a good understanding of which content is driving the most engagement, site visits and conversions, you can use that knowledge to increase your success. Write content and social media posts that are similar to the ones that have worked in the past. This is an ongoing process that will help you hone your unique social voice.

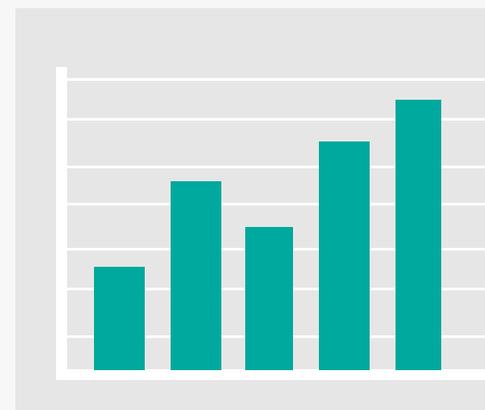
### SHARE YOUR SUCCESS

The last step is to let the company know about the successes you're finding—especially those who have a stake in the strategy. This allows you to prove the worth of social media and showcase its broader implications across your entire enterprise.

Plus, it doesn't hurt to show off how hard you've been working.

## Are Your Efforts Metrics Driven?

- ANALYSIS:** Assess which posts were successful and which were not—and why.
- REPORTING:** Showcase your results with streamlined, visual presentations.
- IMPROVEMENT:** Optimize what works and scrap what doesn't.





Sprout Social is a social media management platform for businesses. Sprout powers smart social communication for leading brands, including Anthropologie, GrubHub, Hyatt, MailChimp, Spotify and Zipcar. A powerful platform for business, Sprout enables brands to communicate more effectively, collaborate across teams and provide an exceptional customer experience. Headquartered in Chicago, Sprout is a Twitter Certified Product, Facebook Preferred Marketing Developer and Google+ Pages API Partner.

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