



A Beginners' Guide to B2B Social Media Marketing

These are tough times for B2B marketers. Faced with industry disruption and an increasingly skeptical audience, they have to be at the top of their game to compete. Just look at all the challenges:

- **A discerning & savvy audience.** The target market can detect inauthentic marketing messages instantly. Trust levels can be low.
- **A saturated audience.** There's so much content already being aimed at this target audience.
- **A fragmented audience.** The target audience receives its information from multiple sources, not just trade magazines like in the old days. It's a challenge to hit all the channels. Plus, you have to send the right message to the right people at the right time.

All this makes for a very tough existence for B2B marketers!

Social Media Can Solve All Those B2B Problems



There's a solution to these challenges, but too many B2B players can't see it. That's because they still feel awkward about being on social media for B2B and therefore avoid it. Why? Two reasons:

1. They are still under the impression that B2B players are not on social media.
2. They think social media is too casual and unprofessional so they're not sure whether it's appropriate for them.

Both ideas are baloney.

A 2016 survey shows [88% of B2B marketers are using social media](#). Not only are B2B businesses on social media in full force, they're finding ROI from it as well. That's in spite of finding themselves marketing in a far less formal setting than their forebears. Advertising in the trade magazines of yesteryear? Sure, but they're no longer the only options.

What are the Options?

Just like in B2C marketing, what works for one target audience may not work so well for another. Know your customer before you select a course of action. Sounds familiar, right?

This brings up the comforting fact that B2B social media marketing isn't all that different from B2C social media marketing. That is, the strategies are similar. It's just that the techniques may sometimes be a little different.

So, what are the most popular options for B2B social media marketing?



There is B2B action on Facebook but by far the more popular platforms are Twitter and LinkedIn. Most B2B marketers use a combination, hand-picked for their business, from the following platforms:

- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Instagram

There are lots of players but those are the Big Four. Don't forget to reach out to your buyer personas on industry forums, too. Forums are considered a form of social media. They're interactive, so get on the horn and start answering some questions.

From here on, you'll be reading about how to leverage the power of the Big Four networks to achieve your marketing goals. Consider it your primer for getting started on social media to promote your B2B business.

Strategy #1: Study Your Buyer Personas

Again, just like in B2C social media marketing, you can't go far without first knowing exactly who you're targeting.

You'll need a pretty solid understanding of the customers you're trying to target with social media. Once that's achieved, you can begin figuring out where they hang out – on social media, that is.



Don't make assumptions about which social platforms your customers and prospects prefer. Do the research. Poke around in all of them and look for evidence of active groups, lots of engagement, and truly great content being posted.

Cisco Security sells cybersecurity systems to businesses so studying what they're doing on social media is one way to see how B2B marketing is done by the big B2B players.

They've obviously studied their buyer personas. Here's an image from their Twitter feed, showing an actual buyer prototype in action (he's the guy on the left):



Cisco Security @CiscoSecurity · May 8

See what customers say about Stealthwatch for improved network visibility & sign up for a free Visibility Assessment cs.co/60118gS0l pic.twitter.com/iXERXuOnJ0



Apparently, this persona is male, young-ish, aware of trends (beard), and neither conservative nor ultra hip (polo shirt with vest). He's in charge of security at a large company (vast resources at his fingertips) and he may be able to make buying decisions.

Strategy #2: Prepare to Track Everything



One of your goals may be sending traffic to your company's website to increase sales. You won't know whether it's working unless you install tracking code. The time to do that is now, so you have a benchmark measurement of traffic.

You'll also want to know whether all your hard work on social is worth your efforts, too. Measuring ROI requires tracking everything. Google Analytics will tell you where your traffic is coming from and how your visitors behave once they're on your site.

Install it at the beginning of your venture into social media marketing. Once your campaigns are underway, it's too late because you've already lost important data if you haven't been tracking everything from the beginning.

Strategy #3: Don't Fear Creativity

Now that you've got your target customers pinned down and you've installed tracking code on your website, it's time to develop a content marketing strategy.

Just because you're B2B, don't think creativity is off limits in your campaigns. Social media users view most of the social media platforms as entertainment, even when it's B2B.

Don't be afraid to show some corporate personality and initiate real conversations.

In fact, being creative with your social accounts is a great way to harness social media for B2B. Move beyond thinking that a PDF lead magnet is the only type of asset that attracts B2B customers. B2B customers appreciate creativity, too, just like their B2C counterparts.



So, be creative but keep in mind that to be effective you must have a strong sense of branding in place. It also helps to have a solid sense of your company's values and mission. That way, your 'creativity' can align with your target audience.

Just take a look at what Cisco Security does with their Twitter feed. They Tweet their own *comic!*



Strategy #4: Post a Diverse Mix of Content

People want to be entertained on social media – that goes for B2B buyers, too. It's pretty effortless to Tweet a quote or a snippet from an article you enjoy, but let's face it: visuals work better.



Images, videos, Infographics, and animated GIFs all catch the eye about a million times better than text. Plus, [more than half of people actually consume an entire video](#). That's more than any other type of content.

Video is just one form of media to post, however. In addition, consider:

- Animated GIFs
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Custom Images
- Branded Images

Here's another example of great social content from Cisco Security. It's not a comic this time, but a custom image of some real-life employees.



Strategy #5: Coordinate Your Posts With a Content Marketing Strategy

Posting should be informed by a larger content marketing strategy that extends beyond the realm of social media. That will allow you to be consistent across all your channels, but also to be diverse with your posts.



Cisco posts a pleasing array of content on Twitter. In addition to the creative comic Tweets and the custom images showing their employees, they also post branded images.



Note that this is an ad for their training program. It's OK to promote your company once in a while but for the most part, keep it engaging and useful or entertaining.

Strategy #6: Use Automation Tools

Just like in B2C, winning with social media marketing takes frequent posting of great content coordinated under a well-planned strategy that targets your customer personas.

If that sounds like a lot of work to you, you're right.



Some of that work is homework (knowing your buyer persona, for example). Much of it is ongoing, however, and you'll want to automate what you can.

Tools like Buffer allow you to line up multiple posts at once and schedule them for later posting. That frees you up if you can get, let's say, a month's worth of posting done in one day.

Strategy #7: Learn the Best Practices

Automated scheduling tools like Buffer force you to think about when to post on social media. You'll definitely need to learn the best days of the week and best times of day for your industry.

Later on, after you've been running your account(s) for some months, you'll also get to drill down further into the behavior of people in your network. You'll find the best times to post for your specific set of followers and tweak your scheduling accordingly.

In general, however, we have a handy guideline, [thanks to the folks at Buffer](#):



PINTEREST

Top brands on Pinterest have experienced rapid growth by posting multiple times per day.



TWITTER

Engagement slightly decreases after the third tweet.



GOOGLE+

Post consistently. Some users have experienced drops in traffic of up to 50% when posting less than normal.



FACEBOOK

You can post twice per day before likes and comments begin to drop off.

Looking Forward



Normally, we'd segue into some techniques at this point. You've got a lot to work on, however, just with the strategies we've outlined so far. Your job, now that you understand social media can be an important part of your B2B marketing strategy, is to do a lot of thinking.

How you incorporate social into your grand plan will depend on the outcome of following these strategies you've learned today. Now it's time to put these strategies to work so your business can leverage the awesome power of social media.
