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## Social Media Rules of Engagement

### **SOCIAL MEDIA, PERSONAL BRANDING, AND THE NEW AGE OF COMMUNICATION**

Social networking sites allow people to communicate with colleagues from around the corner or across the globe as these tools provide new sites of collaboration, coordination, and community

- Social media has become a staple in our daily lives. In February of this year, Digital Consumer found that 64% of social media users say they use social media sites at least once a day whether on their computer or mobile devices.
- Social media has become a staple in business.
- 87% of all small businesses say social media helps their business, (Vocus)
- 76% of potential clients use legal blogs to assess a law firm's capabilities (yet only 34% of law firms actually have blogs) (Research Intelligence Group)

What is social media?

- A two-way form of communication
- A platform for building new or enhancing current relationships
- An opportunity to build relationships and communicate with customers and prospects

You are your brand, especially in a service-based business.

My clients often struggle with creating a personal brand on the web. I advise them to share their personality a little and allow people to get to know them. There's a balance. People need to know you to like you and trust you (and eventually buy from you), but you don't have to share every detail about your life.

### **BEST PRACTICES**

Education is key to entering the social sphere. First and foremost, it's important to know the rules – these include industry legalities as well as company policies. This is often gray area so the best advice I can offer is to make client privacy your top priority. There are common sense areas to avoid such as sharing bank account numbers or client names. But there are also times when the rules aren't always black and white. For example, is it OK to share information about a client if you do not use their name? We'll touch on this with specific examples in the do's and don'ts section.

It's critical to establish a solid social media game plan. It's even more important for regulated industries because there are more layers to consider. A proactive approach to content, monitoring and responding is vital. Consider who will create the content? Who will approve it and who will post it? Once your content is posted, you'll want to monitor your social media channels for interaction.

This is where it's important to develop a policy that clearly outlines expectations and procedures for those who are posting to your company sites. For businesses, it's critical that you respond to comments. It gets complicated, however, when comments are in the form of negative feedback. If you haven't done so yet, I highly recommend that you sign up for Google alerts (at [google.com/alerts](http://google.com/alerts)) and social mentions (through [socialmention.com](http://socialmention.com)) so you're aware of what's being said about your company online.

## DO'S and DON'Ts

### Do Not

- Don't ignore your audience. The next example is a tweet sent to Bank of America earlier this year. It mentions an oversight on the part of the bank with this mailing. Within in an hour, this tweet had received over 1,000 retweets.
- What made it worse was that the tweet went unanswered for several hours before a response was posted. This example demonstrates the importance of knowing what's being said about your brand.
- Also remain cautious of mentioning personal stories, even if you don't specifically mention a patient or client name. The next example is a screenshot of a Facebook post from an OB/GYN who referenced a patient. While the name wasn't mentioned, this behavior is equally questionable because third parties may put 2 and 2 together – and the patient themselves may even see it. Be cautious of talking about patients or clients, even in general terms.
- Don't relentlessly sell. This is a screenshot of a local business who posts nothing but sales, hours, and items in the store. No value. Sharing relevant, helpful content is key. What do people want to see? What do they consider important? If you own a wedding planning business, you'll need content that speaks to engaged women. And remember, it's only relevant if the audience agrees!
- Don't use the default message to connect with others on LinkedIn. Once you've found someone you want to add to your network, remember that first impressions are lasting impressions. Be sure to personalize your connection message and tell them how you know them or why you want to connect.
- Don't include fido or animated characters in your LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn is a professional medium and should be treated as such.

### Do

- Now, there are certain things any business can do on social media – regardless of their industry. At the forefront is posting internal company news and information. I'm going to share with you some examples using posts from our clients. Humanize your business by sharing information about the people behind the scenes whenever you can. This picture is a screenshot of a Facebook post from our client, The Victory Bank. They're inviting the audience for a cookout in the middle of winter. Talk about fun!
- Sharing helpful information is always welcome. In both pictures, our clients share information relevant to their industry and helpful to their audience.
- Going behind the scenes of a business, in an appropriate and relevant way, can do leaps and boundaries for businesses social media efforts. This is another example from the Victory Bank. Last month, the Victory Bank offered free ice cream in their lobby courtesy of a local business. They made the ice cream available for those who also used the drive thru-window. This photo is an ice cream bar in one of the drive-thru tubes. It was extremely popular when we shared on both Facebook and LinkedIn.
- This same client is an example of the relevancy of sharing events. This is a screenshot of a YouTube video from a local baseball game. Our client sponsored the event and had a booth outside. Snapping a photo or video and sharing the footage is a fun way to engage the audience with a visual of the event.
- A benefit of social media is the opportunity to communicate with people in real time, so use this to your advantage when it comes to weather delays or other time sensitive company announcements.
- Remember, company news and updates – especially when showcasing the people who work for a company - are great credibility boosters.
- Include a profile photo on LI. It should be a head shot, but depending on your niche, you can get a little creative.

## CREATING A PLAN WITH ZEST

There are a few basic components to building a social media presence. For many, that includes establishing themselves on the networks and completing their profiles. This is a starting point. However, many neglect the bigger picture, which is what networks to establish themselves on. And the way to determine that is by knowing who your target audience is and what channels they are on.

But the other piece of the pie is to know your goals! I tell my prospects and clients is that you **MUST** have a plan and you must have goals. This is the most overlooked element and the one that causes people to spin their wheels. What is it you want to achieve?

To start, it's important to know your purpose. What is it you want to achieve with social media? Many will respond to that question by saying, "get more clients and get more money." I typically respond to that statement by saying "that's an outcome, not a goal." Strong marketing goals include things like driving website traffic, increased visibility, or better communication with clients. I typically recommend that a business selects two or three goals for a 90 day period.

Once you've determined your goals, it's time to select the best channels.

- I have two suggestions for choosing your outlets. The first is to play to your strengths by leveraging the social media channels that fit what you or your company representatives do best. For example, if you're a strong speaker, YouTube may be an outlet that you can embrace without having to do much more work. If you're a writer, perhaps a blog would be well-suited for you.
- My next suggestion is to determine your target or ideal audience. It's important to identify exactly who you want to reach in order to develop a solid plan of action. Be as specific as possible. Consider industry, gender, age, income level, education, etc. Then, you can determine the channels for reaching them.

The remainder of this presentation showcases examples from our clients. Each slide shares a goal, set by the client, and how we used social media to meet them.

For more information about these goals - and more - go to: [bit.ly/strellagoals](http://bit.ly/strellagoals)