GUIDE FOR
SOCIAL MEDIA

MAIN STREET SOLUTION CENTER

ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

The Main Street Solution Center is a free access portal to resources for communities and organizations working to revitalize and strengthen their local economies. The Solution Center's curated resources are designed to help guide and inspire local leaders and advocates as they navigate the complexities of downtown and neighborhood business district revitalization and economic growth.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

This Main Street Solution Center publication was underwritten by Michigan Main Street and Main Street Iowa. Their generous support demonstrates a shared vision and ongoing commitment to freely share knowledge, experience, tools, and best practices to fuel revitalization and economic growth in their own communities, and in locales spanning the nation.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

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Ben Muldrow is a partner at Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a consultancy renowned for its creative approach to economic development, branding, and marketing strategies for small towns and cities across the nation. He brings an innovative mindset and a deep understanding of the unique dynamics of community branding to each engagement, blending traditional community values with modern marketing techniques to help communities and districts unlock their potential.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Introduction

Purpose of the Guide: To empower organizations to effectively utilize social media to engage community members, promote local businesses, and foster a vibrant downtown.

Scope: This guide covers key social media platforms, content strategies, engagement tactics, and measurement of social media success.

Understanding Your Audience

Community Demographics: Know the age, interests, and habits of the community you're engaging with.

Audience Segmentation: Tailor content to different groups within your community (e.g., residents, business owners, tourists).

Choosing the Right Platforms

Platform Overview: See descriptions of the most popular social media platforms on page 3.

Platform Selection: Choose platforms that best reach your target audience and fit your content style.

Content Strategy

Content Calendar: Plan and schedule posts for consistency.

Content Mix: Use a variety of post types—events, spotlights on local businesses, historic trivia, and user-generated content.

Storytelling: Share the unique stories of your organization and district —this could include history, success stories, slices of data that help illustrate growth and progress, and behind-the-scenes looks at local businesses.

Visuals: Use high-quality images, data highlights from Impact Reports, and videos to catch attention. User-generated content can be a goldmine for authenticity.

Engagement Tactics

Community Interaction: Respond to comments and messages promptly.

Hashtags and Tagging: Use relevant hashtags and tag appropriate accounts to increase visibility.

User-Generated Content: Encourage the community to share their own content with a branded hashtag.

Events and Livestreams: Host and promote events, sales, and celebrations through live video and event pages.

Building Relationships

Collaborations: Partner with local influencers, businesses, and civic organizations to expand your reach.

Cross-Promotion: Share content from local businesses and reciprocate to build community.

Analytics and Adjusting Strategy

Metrics to Track: Engagement rates, follower growth, website traffic from social media, and conversion rates.

Evaluation: Regularly review analytics to understand what's working and to adjust your strategy accordingly.

Crisis Communication

Planning: Have a plan in place for managing and responding to negative situations or comments online.

Response Strategy: Create clear guidelines on how to respond to different types of crises or negative feedback.

COLLECTING DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

A downtown or district organization can gather demographic information and develop an audience segmentation strategy through a variety of methods. Here's how the process typically unfolds:

Surveys and Feedback Forms:
Conduct surveys through social media, email newsletters, or during events to collect demographic information from your audience.

Include questions about age, gender, income level, education, occupation, and interests.

Social Media Analytics:
Use the demographic data provided by the analytics tools of social media platforms like Facebook Insights, Instagram, and X (Twitter) Analytics. These tools provide insights into the age, gender, location, and language of your followers.

Website Analytics:
Tools like Google Analytics can give demographic information about the visitors to your Main Street website.

Partnership Data Sharing:
Work with local businesses, schools, and organizations to share non-sensitive demographic data that can help in understanding the local population.

Point of Sale Data:
If your organization sells merchandise or tickets to events, demographic information can often be collected at the point of sale.

Community Interactions:
Engage with the community through forums, local events, and public meetings to gather anecdotal demographic information.

Developing an Audience Segmentation Strategy

Once demographic data is collected, the next step is to segment the audience. Here's how you can approach this:

Identify Segmentation Criteria:
Based on the demographic data, identify relevant criteria for segmenting your audience. This could be age groups, interests, spending habits, location, etc.

Create Personas:
Develop detailed personas for each segment of your audience. Personas are fictional characters that represent the different user types within a targeted demographic.

Behavioral Analysis:
Look at behavioral data from your website and social media platforms to understand how different segments interact with your content.

Engagement Levels:
Segment your audience based on their level of engagement. Identify your most active members, occasional interactors, and those who rarely engage.

Needs and Preferences:
Analyze survey feedback and interaction patterns to determine the needs and preferences of each segment.

Geographic Location:
Segment your audience by location to tailor your strategies to local preferences and cultural nuances.

Implementing Segmentation in Strategy

Tailored Content: Create content that is specifically designed to appeal to each segment.

Targeted Campaigns: Use demographic data to run targeted campaigns on social media and other advertising platforms.

Personalized Communication: Address the unique interests and needs of each segment in your email marketing, social media interactions, and community outreach.

Resource Allocation: Allocate your resources more effectively by focusing on the segments that offer the most engagement and return on investment.

Community Programs: Develop community programs or events that cater to the interests of specific demographic groups.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Privacy Laws: Ensure compliance with data protection and privacy laws such as GDPR or CCPA when collecting and using demographic information.

Ethical Use: Use demographic data ethically, ensuring that it is not used to discriminate or exclude.

Transparency: Be transparent with your community about how data is collected and used.

By gathering comprehensive demographic data and developing a segmentation strategy, an organization can better understand and serve its community, leading to more effective and efficient operations.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

The selection of social media channels for an organization should be strategic and based on the organization's goals, the content type they are most prepared to create, and where their audience is most active. Here's a rundown of various platforms and what they offer:

Facebook
Audience: Broad, with a significant number of users across many demographics.
Content: Supports a variety of content, including text, photos, videos, events, and live broadcasts.
Best for: Community engagement, event promotion, local business support, and targeted advertising.

Instagram
Audience: Skews younger than Facebook, popular among Millennials and Gen Z.
Content: Photo and video-focused, with options for stories, live videos, and IGTV for longer content.
Best for: Visual storytelling, showcasing the vibrancy of the Main Street area, and interactive polls/stories.

X (Twitter)
Audience: Wide-ranging, with real-time information seekers.
Content: Short text updates, images, videos, links, polls, and GIFs.
Best for: News updates, real-time event coverage, and conversations with community members and local businesses.

LinkedIn
Audience: Professionals and business-focused individuals.
Content: Professional content, articles, company updates, volunteer opportunities and job postings.
Best for: Networking with local businesses, sharing professional news, and attracting volunteers or staff.

YouTube
Audience: Broad and diverse, with a lean towards younger users.
Content: Video content, from short clips to longer-form videos.
Best for: Educational content, event recaps, and promotional videos showcasing the community and its businesses.

Pinterest
Audience: Predominantly female, ideal for niche audiences.
Content: Image and idea sharing, how-tos, and guides.
Best for: Sharing inspiration related to local businesses, such as home decor, DIY, and event planning.

TikTok
Audience: Predominantly younger users, but growing in other demographics.
Content: Short-form, engaging video content.
Best for: Viral challenges, behind-the-scenes looks at local events, and fun, engaging promotional content.

Nextdoor
Audience: Local residents and neighbors.
Content: Local updates, event announcements, and neighborhood discussions.
Best for: Direct engagement with the local community, local event promotions, and neighborhood safety information.

Snapchat
Audience: Younger demographics, primarily Gen Z.
Content: Ephemeral photo and video content, filters, and lenses.
Best for: Real-time event sharing, engaging with a younger audience with location-based filters.

Google My Business
Audience: Local and visiting customers searching for businesses or services.
Content: Business listings, updates, posts, and customer reviews.
Best for: Ensuring visibility in local search results, sharing timely updates, and gathering customer reviews.

When deciding on the right mix, consider the following:

Resource Allocation: How much time and manpower can be dedicated to maintaining each platform?

Content Creation: What type of content can be consistently produced?

Audience Engagement: Where does the target audience spend their time online?

Measurement and Analytics: Can the impact on each platform be measured effectively?

Local Relevance: Which platforms are most used by the local community and businesses?

An organization doesn't need to be on every platform but should prioritize those that align with their goals and audience. It's better to have a strong presence on a few platforms than a weak presence on many.

SAMPLE WEEKLY SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CALENDAR

Creating a social media content calendar is a strategic approach to organize the way you curate and distribute content across your social media channels over a specific time period. Here's a sample weekly content calendar for a Main Street organization that focuses on promoting local businesses, community events, and historical awareness.

Content Calendar

Monday
Morning Post (9 AM): Inspirational quote to start the week, overlaid on a photo of Main Street at sunrise.
Afternoon Post (2 PM): Highlight a local business of the week with a brief story, products/services, and a call-to-action (CTA) to visit.

Tuesday
Morning Post (10 AM): Share a "Did You Know?" historical fact about Main Street with an engaging photo or infographic.
Evening Post (7 PM): Post a teaser for an upcoming weekend event, encouraging followers to save the date.

Wednesday
Morning Post (11 AM): Share a customer testimonial or a positive review of a Main Street business.
Afternoon Post (1 PM): "Behind the Scenes" feature of a local business or organization.

Thursday
Morning Post (8 AM): Share an old Throwback Thursday (TBT) photo of the district and encourage followers to share memories.
Evening Post (6 PM): Showcase a local artist or musician with a short video or interview snippet.

Friday
Morning Post (9 AM): Feature a local homeowner or business with a well-maintained property in a "Main Street Beautification" spotlight.
Afternoon Post (4 PM): Promote weekend specials from local businesses, happy hour events, or sales.

Saturday
Morning Post (10 AM): Share a schedule of the day's events and activities on Main Street.
Evening Post (5 PM): Go live from an event, or share a story update to capture real-time engagement.

Sunday
Morning Post (10 AM): Post a community question or poll to encourage interaction and gather feedback about Main Street.
Evening Post (8 PM): Weekly wrap-up with highlights from the week and a CTA to get ready for the upcoming week.

NOTES FOR THE CALENDAR:

Visual Consistency: Ensure all posts have a cohesive look that aligns with the Main Street brand.

Interactivity: Encourage comments and shares by asking questions and inviting stories from the community.

Timing: Adjust times for posts based on when your audience is most active. Use analytics to find optimal times.

Flexibility: Be ready to swap out content for timely news, urgent announcements, or trending topics as needed.

Cross-Promotion: Always look for opportunities to cross-promote posts on various social media platforms.

Remember, this calendar should be adapted based on the specific events, promotions, and content relevant to your organization and community. Always analyze performance data to refine your content and posting schedule for the best engagement.

MEASURING SUCCESS

An organization can measure its efforts on social media by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics. These metrics help assess the performance of social media strategies, determine return on investment (ROI), and guide future marketing efforts.

Quantitative Metrics

Likes, Shares, Comments: Measure how much interaction each post receives to gauge audience interest.

Click-Through Rate (CTR): Tracks how many people clicked on the links included in your posts.

Conversion Rate: The percentage of social media interactions that lead to a desired action, such as event attendance, sign-ups, or purchases.

Reach: The number of unique users who have seen your post.

Impressions: The total number of times your post has been displayed, regardless of clicks or engagement.

Follower Growth: Track the rate at which your Main Street organization gains new followers to measure brand awareness and appeal.

Website Traffic: Use tools like Google Analytics to track the number of visitors to your Main Street website that come from social media platforms.

Audience Growth Rate: Assess how quickly your audience is growing over time and how effective your content is at attracting new followers.

Social Share of Voice (SSoV): Measure the number of mentions your Main Street organization has on social media compared to competitors.

Qualitative Metrics

Sentiment Analysis: Evaluate the sentiment of the comments and messages you receive (positive, negative, neutral).

Polls and Surveys: Gain direct feedback on what your community thinks about your Main Street organization and initiatives.

Content Analysis: Assess the quality and relevance of the content you post. Determine which types of content resonate most with your audience.

Brand Health: Monitor discussions about your Main Street brand to see how it's perceived by the community.

Customer Service Interactions: Evaluate how effectively and promptly your organization responds to inquiries and comments on social media.

Built-in Analytics: Platforms like Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics, and Instagram Insights provide a wealth of data on performance metrics.

Third-Party Tools: Services like Hootsuite, Sprout Social, and Buffer offer advanced analytics and data aggregation from multiple social media platforms.

Google Analytics: For tracking website traffic, user behavior, and conversions from social media referrals.

Establishing KPIs

To effectively measure efforts, organizations should establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with their social media goals. Examples include:

Awareness KPIs: Number of impressions, reach, and follower count.
Engagement KPIs: Likes, shares, comments, and average engagement rate.
Conversion KPIs: Click-through rates, conversion rates, and ROI for social media advertising.
Community KPIs: New community initiatives adopted, local business partnerships formed, and community event attendance rates.

Regular Review and Adjustment

By regularly tracking these metrics, an organization can gauge the effectiveness of its social media campaigns, make data-driven decisions, and continuously improve its engagement with the community.

Monthly or Quarterly Reviews: Regularly scheduled reviews of these metrics can help Main Street organizations adjust their strategies in real-time to optimize their social media presence.
Annual Reports: A yearly analysis can help understand long-term trends, ROI, and inform the strategic direction for the upcoming year.

[Organization Name]
Social Media Policy

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of social media within [Organization Name]. This policy aims to protect our brand, comply with legal standards, and govern the publication of and commentary on social media by employees and volunteers of [Organization Name].

Scope
This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and affiliated individuals of [Organization Name], including all forms of social media platforms, both existing and future, used for professional and personal purposes.

Policy Guidelines

Professional Use
Brand Representation: When posting as, or on behalf of, the organization, all communications should be professional, accurate, and in line with our values and mission.

Approval Process: Content must be reviewed and approved by the designated Social Media Manager prior to posting.

Personal Use
Identification: If you identify yourself as an employee or volunteer of [Organization Name], please clarify that your views do not represent those of the organization.

Discretion: Employees and volunteers should not disclose information that is confidential or proprietary to [Organization Name] or to any third-party affiliates.

Content Creation
Authenticity: Content should be factual and free from false, misleading, or deceptive statements. Respect: Posts should not contain language that is defamatory, harassing, or discriminatory.

Engagement
Interaction: Engage with the community in a respectful and positive manner. Address negative comments professionally and according to the response plan developed by the Social Media Manager.

Moderation: Monitor social media accounts to ensure that interactions comply with this policy.

Legal Compliance
Copyright: Do not post copyrighted material without proper authorization or credit.

Confidentiality: Respect privacy laws and confidentiality agreements.

Transparency
Honesty: Be honest about your identity and do not create "fake" profiles for the purpose of misleading or spying on competitors.

Social Media Advertising
Advertisements and Promotions: All sponsored content and advertising must be clearly identified and in compliance with the social media platform's guidelines.

Training:
Education: Employees and volunteers should receive training on these policies to ensure understanding and compliance.

Policy Violations
Reporting: Any suspected violations of this policy should be reported to the Social Media Manager or a supervisor.

Consequences: Violations may result in a response ranging from a warning to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer status.

Policy Updates
Review: This policy shall be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure continued compliance with legal standards and best practices. This social media policy is a living document and should reflect the changing nature of social media and [Organization Name]'s commitment to responsible social media use. Adherence to this policy will help safeguard the reputation of [Organization Name], protect our community members, and ensure the integrity of our online presence.