

Before diving into Social Media, make sure your time is well spent.
Create a Social Media plan by answering the following questions:

Responsible People:

Who will have the responsibility for populating, maintaining and monitoring your Social Media presence? Do they have the necessary skills and time? List the team members. How much time per week can the team / individual realistically commit to the management of Social Media. AVOID relying on non-permanent members of your team. More than one staff member must have administrative privileges to all accounts, they will be responsible for controlling permissions to (and the security of) the accounts.

Before you speak, listen:

What are people saying in similar spots? What are people saying about you? Who is talking? List who's talking, about what, and where?

Being a consumer of Social Media is essential to your ability to be a successful producer of Social Media content. "Listen" to online conversations on your preferred tools – be they blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Google or anything else – to maintain a clear and current understanding of what is relevant and of interest to the community.

Are you listening but hearing nothing? Are you sure there is really a demand for the sort of page you are looking to set up? Perhaps reconsider jumping into Social Media.

Main Goals & Strategies:

What do you hope to achieve? Launch a campaign, promote your department, communicate externally? With alumni, media or existing students? Internal communications? Define your goal and list your promotions tactics; *"We will list our Facebook URL on all print materials"* etc.

Define & Measure Your Success:

What do you hope to gain? How will you know when you have achieved it? Do you want increased traffic to your website? Provide a service to existing students? More energetic give and take with prospective students? You want to reach out to new colleagues around the world? Define success, how you'll measure it, and the tools you need to measure it (Google Analytics, Facebook insights, Klout, Hootsuite, Bit.ly etc)

Your Audiences:

Targeting specific groups, like prospective students, English faculty members, the 'class of 2010' will help you tailor your content and conversation. List your primary audiences. Do you also have secondary / tertiary audiences? How will you reach out to them initially? Remember simply setting up a Facebook page isn't enough. You have to invite people there and then keep them interested with useful, engaging content. Why would they be interested in what you have to say?

Engagement and Conversations:

Nobody likes it when you talk constantly about yourself – it shows bad social skills. In Social Media, you need to be a good conversationalist. Sometimes small talk can be more valuable than messaging. How will you engage informally with your audience? Your social presence should be full of questions. It is, after all, **Social Media**.

Content Planning:

What services do you provide and what content will you share? Is it news or engagement-based? Images? Video? List the content you will be sharing via Social Media and the kinds of things you think are successful. Remember, it's social, so it shouldn't always be about you. Sometimes, it should be about your users. What will they get from you that they can't get elsewhere? Will you solicit input from them? How will you foster their loyalty?

It's always a useful exercise to develop a content plan for your Social Media. This is a schedule of activity which might breakdown your social activity by semester, by month or by week over a period of time. Is there seasonal activity that you can plan around? Freshers? Graduation? Exams? Are there competitions you can run? Social surveys you can share? Support you can offer?

Evaluation:

Schedule an evaluation of your effort's success based on the plan you outlined by answering these questions. Be ready to rethink your Social Media's content and strategy. Regular evaluation should also be part of your effort. Is your page well used? Is your following growing steadily? Which content is working? Which has not been as successful? It's OK to fail on some things. Set out your timeline, this is not a one off project – it's a long term effort.

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