

# Social presence: It takes a strategy to build a community

- Part 1 of 2 -

If you haven't heard, we are all now content marketers, brand journalists. We all have [social media policies](#), ideally, and we all see the value in today's communication invasion.

If you have a website, blog, Facebook page, Google+ account or LinkedIn account, or if you tweet, you must be a content marketer. In some regards, you are – you have a platform and a message – but why? What value do you see in having a digital carbon footprint? How are you organizing and managing your audiences, communities and the rich analytical data you pull from your communication platforms?

Make *strategy* the infrastructure that supports your content marketing platform, instead of posting just because you think you "have-to-be-there." Without a platform strategy, you just have a bunch of undirected activity – content flying around with little purpose, meaning, trust or interest, and analytics with no value in planning and measuring your marketing and business development activities.

The value in storytelling, the power of content marketing, and the ability to leverage narrative and visual content with measurable and informative analytics all begin with building the proper platforms.

Your social presence is your platform, but several tools can be used to launch communications efforts like websites, blog posts, social media posts, email and texting. All are like channels or sub-platforms with different audiences. The most important platform tool – the one that I think deserves at least 70% of your marketing attention and budget – is your own networking station, newspaper, annual report, magazine and social media launch platform: *your website*.

My dad always told me to use the right tool to get the job done right. My friends, your website is the right tool/platform to drive a successful marketing program. To start off building relationships, audiences and communities, you need to go back to the website and rethink its value, purpose and function, and how it relates to the instant gratification demands of having a social presence.

Understand that there is no quick fix for creating a content-driven platform. To tell the story, you need the storyteller. Your website allows you to tell lots of stories, and chapter, and Cliff Notes. It is your library, newsroom, and entertainment and education center; your most important social platform tool.

A well-executed, strategic website plan is actually easy to break down, with just a few basic things to think through.



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1. Know what you want from the tool/platform. Set goals and determine the results you want to achieve.
2. Build the tool/platform that will enable you to reach the goals. Don't let budget determine the success of the website or platform – create a budget that will produce the tool that will achieve results.
3. Begin by choosing a reliable content management system (CMS). Content marketing demands a user-friendly CMS: one that allows you the full control to quickly add content to your website, manage your story, and leverage data and analytical information about your site to improve on your marketing investment. Be sure the CMS product has the capability to grow by adding modules like video or blogging without having to start over.
4. Align your content marketing strategy with your website's look and functionality. Think about how you will present information and how you will want to foster relationships by sharing that information.
5. Responsive design is no longer a "sounds cool" option; it's a must. Your content marketing success is based on how people receive, view and interact with your brand marketing. You can guarantee that your audiences are checking you out on their smart phones, tablets, laptops or desktops; whichever is closest to their fingertips. Strategic planning will assure that all your resources communicate well on all devices.
6. Search engine optimization (SEO) is more important now than ever. Be sure to include SEO in the design and content development stage, and create an ongoing SEO strategy to keep the website optimized so it will continue to help you reach your goals in a environment that never stops changing.
7. Design, presentation, exposure – all are essential. Strategy is a major part of the creative and design stage. How will you present your brand identity, your firm stories? How will you interact with your visitors, and share to other platforms? In what format will they be viewed? How will the visual aspects and calls to action display in a multitude of display tools?
8. Content is key. Curate content that, educates, entertains and engages, and then do it again and again and again.
9. Leverage and share your content through other platforms/channels and drive specific audiences to important information, breaking news or resources that position you as a thought leader.
10. Understand the analytical information that is available to you. Your platforms can produce a lot of helpful data to measure the success of your website and content marketing activities, letting you improve as needed or build on positive activities that produce great results.

Next week, in Part 2, I will discuss other platforms and their importance in a united purposeful and strategic social presence.