

12
STEPS TO
PLANNING SOCIAL CAMPAIGNS

Building active conversations with your audience, driving traffic to your site, collecting useful content with broad appeal... each of these objectives can be supported through social media. But achieving them takes some planning and forethought. What is the best channel to reach your viewers for a particular piece of news content? Which visual elements will be most compelling? How much should you give up in the headline? And finally, how do you know if you were successful?

To help you get the most from your social campaigns, CNN has developed a 12-step planning checklist. Use it each and every time you plan a new social media campaign, and watch the results roll in.

01

Decide on measurable social media goal(s) for your project:

- Page views/referrals
- Engagement/visibility (retweets, shares, comments, followers)
- Generate conversation/build buzz
- User participation (collect UGC, or user-generated content)
- Innovation/try something new

04

Define what kinds of posts you will include, and what accounts will use which kinds of posts:

Best for page views/referrals:

- Links to stories, blog posts, photo galleries and videos (teases)
- Live blogs

Best for engagement/ visibility/ generating conversation/ building buzz:

- News updates/facts
- Live discussion with guests and/or audience
- Posing questions
- Infographics, photos and Vine videos
- Posting 3rd party material *"This can win you points with users and existing communities, and also establish your credibility through curation – but, of course, at the expense of immediate page views."*
- If you decide to do it, you should generally aim for 1-2 posts out of 10 to be 3rd party, and always try to add value and context whenever possible.

Best for user participation:

- Soliciting UGC
- Re-posting of UGC (motivates posting/sharing)

07

Choose your hashtag:

Things to consider:

- Is there already an established, trending hashtag built around a community or topic? If you're focusing on building page views or engagement, go with a hashtag related to your project that's already trending.
- If you're focusing on user participation or building buzz, your hashtag should:
 - be specific (ideally something that no one else or very few people have already used)
 - be personal if possible (#mychicagoland > #chicagoland)
 - be easily used in a sentence
 - be as short as possible
 - include your station identifier if possible, for branding, legitimacy and rights purposes (but don't force it)

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Write your posts! Remember a few of the golden rules:

- Trending stories draw new audiences
- Tweet like you talk
- If it works, do it twice
- Shorter = more
- If you want engagement, ask a question
- Design your posts to elicit an emotion from your audience
- Keep hashtags specific, inviting and branded if possible
- Use images and/or Vine videos

02

Choose your social network(s) of focus:

Twitter and Facebook are the two biggest players by far, and should usually be included in every plan.

Twitter:
Network of choice for influencers; multiple established, interest-based communities; easy to target influencers and communities

Facebook:
Huge, general audience

Google+:
Slightly older; loves technology and science stories

Reddit:
Multiple well-established communities; skews male; no tolerance for self-promotion

Instagram:
All about beautiful images and photography rather than news; engagement-focused

Tumblr:
Higher taste level/more intellectual; image-focused (big on GIFs); multiple interest-based communities; more college-educated users

LinkedIn:
Topic-driven (business/industry content does especially well); many more college-educated users; skews older

Pinterest:
Beautiful imagery; focus on features/lifestyle rather than news; engagement-focused

05

Think about the best visual elements for your posts:

- What are the best photos from your project? How will they translate into strong tease images? What will make them shareable?
- Will there be any strong quotes that could be turned into graphics?
- What about infographics? Will your stories include any charts or graphs? These typically do well on social.
- Is there an opportunity to use video/Vine?

08

Make a rough posting schedule:

Date to start promoting project:
Consider: Do you want to tease to it ahead of time to build buzz, or release at the same time the content releases?

- How often can you commit to posting?
- What time of day will you aim to post?
 - News works well in mornings and evenings
 - Features do well in the afternoon
 - Late night is good for crime, mysteries, and random/WTF content
 - Lunchtime and evenings are best for soliciting UGC (when people are home/free)

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Anticipate your follow-up plan:

Are any of your stories or posts likely to generate enough response for a follow-up story?

- Which stories or posts could potentially run twice on social?
- What's evergreen and compelling enough to rerun on a weekend?

12

Measure your success! And learn for next time:

- How many referrals did you get from social?
- What percent of total page views did social referrals make up?
- How much engagement did your posts get on social? Which ones did best/worst?
- How many times was your hashtag used?
- How many users participated in chats or comments or submitted UGC?
- If you tried something brand new, how did it go? What did we learn?
- Would we do it again?

03

Determine the most important message you're trying to get out there:

Is it a tune-in? Push to a website? Is there a tagline you're trying to drive home? Are you trying to start a conversation?

06

If you're soliciting UGC, decide how you'll get the word out and how you'll use the content that comes in.

One of the best ways to drum up interest for UGC is to promote it on air – shout it from the rooftops! You'll likely be happily surprised at the content that flows in after you use one on-air promotion or placement in a prominent spot online.

- Be detailed in your request, and include:
 - deadline for submissions
 - specific instructions, like file format, length, etc.
 - if possible, share a past example similar to what you need
- Follow-up is crucial, so make sure to take the time to vet and use what you get. It's a powerful way to build loyalty and community with your audience.

09

List other accounts you could tag in your posts and/or ask to re-post content, and for each one, think about the different angles they could focus on in their posts:

- Internal partners
 - Other shows, anchors and personalities
 - Station flagship accounts
- Guests on your show/sources for your story
- Experts or influential people in the field
- Advocacy groups
- Existing online communities (fan groups, dedicated sites)

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