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Don't be too quick to look for ROI when you commit to social media strategy

When a business engages in marketing and advertising, they look for a return on investment. How is that measured in social media? Can it be measured? Pam Heikel of Ella Said Communications and Style, (Twitter [@pamellalee](#)), says you shouldn't engage in social media to sell tickets to your next event. It has to be a long-term commitment. Considerations before committing to a social media strategy include:

Decide who will lead the effort:

Who will post, monitor and engage? Decide if you are going to outsource your social media efforts, or if you are going to hone the skills of your team. "Social media exercises the soft skills," says Ms. Heikel. "Find the natural conversationalists in your organization." People want an inside look at how your organization operates; how are you an extension of your community?

Have a schedule:

Taking part in social media, like many marketing efforts, often does not take the priority in business operations. Schedule tweets or posts in a calendar to ensure a consistent presence that you audience can count on. "If you have an event coming up, set milestones to post and stimulate conversation and build anticipation in the months before your event happens," says Ms. Heikel. "Create a buzz and 'get real' with people. Give consumers and your Twitter followers a 'live' version of your organization."

Know what is relevant to your audience:

One place to look for relevant content is in your organization's FAQs. What are common concerns of your audience? Address some of the answers by posting articles and comments that can help lead your audience to a decision. If you are a hair salon, back to school, New Year's parties, and latest fashion in hair design might be relevant topics. "It is best to stay away from political commentary," says Ms. Heikel, "unless you exist in that sphere."

Set goals for your social media presence:

Many people base their decision to buy a product or service on what their friends and family say about it. Some decide based on mass advertising, what they observe about the company, or their own personal experience with that company on social media. There are multiple goals you can set with your social media efforts. Some might include:

- Driving people to your website.
- Aiming to have your articles and comments retweeted.
- Finding ambassadors to discuss your new product, and share their experience with that product.



- Establish and evolve your online presence outside of your website.

What does a successful social media campaign look like?

Ms. Heikel says, “Social media is an opportunity to establish trust and loyalty with your audience. It’s not about numbers. It’s great if you can attract followers, but the success of a social media campaign is seen when your tweets (the information you are sending out) are being favoured and retweeted, or if you and your business is mentioned in a conversation. That means you have been able to cut through all the online clutter. It is like getting a recommendation.”

Social media is another channel where you can attract attention, even if a small percentage of your audience is engaged. With Twitter, Facebook, and blogging, you move beyond the four walls of your business.

