



Social Media for Magazines

Magazine publishers are working hard to figure out exactly how to harness the branding and marketing power of social media platforms. It is unlike anything else they have ever done to build their brand. In order to benefit the most from these social media platforms, magazine publishers must relinquish some control of the relationship with social site participants.

So how do successful magazines operate their social media?

First, they start with a strategic plan. Some of the things to consider when you build your magazine's social media plan:

What are your goals? Here are some typical goals, but each magazine is unique and yours may have completely different goals than these:

- To “keep up” with the latest forms of media. They want to learn as much as possible first, then figure out how to use it.
- To get feedback from customers about the topics the magazine covers or about the magazine itself.
- To lead conversations, or present a viewpoint to a special interest.
- To establish a new vehicle for connecting with subscribers.
- To improve website traffic.
- To have enthusiasts refer or direct their social contacts to the magazine.
- To find like-minded enthusiasts. Some special interest magazines find it hard to reach them through other traditional media because there are very limited mailing lists.

Whatever the goals, it's important for magazines that use social media to form a plan. Some of the things the plan should include are:

- A clear definition of the goals.



- The way you will measure how successful you are in reaching your goals.
- A staffing plan. For example, will there be specialists in magazine social media platforms who do most of the work? Who approves and takes responsibility for what gets posted on the sites? Who will answer any customer complaints that come through social media sites? Who will monitor the sites? Who can post promotional messages?
- The social media platforms your magazine will use
- The technology tools will you need to be successful, such as analytics, monitoring, etc.
- A training plan for staff. Should you hire freelance help?
- The number of sites you need. For example, do you set up separate micro-sites for events that you run?

When it comes to choosing which social media platforms your magazine will use, try to understand which sites your customers and prospects use. For example, if you are a special interest business magazine, LinkedIn might make sense for you. If you publish a gardening magazine read primarily by women, Pinterest could be one of the platforms you research. You don't need to be in every social media platform to be successful. Pick and choose the best ones for your title. It is perfectly acceptable to decide that Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, for examples, are the best way to reach the largest numbers of social followers for the resources you have.

It is far more beneficial to use a few social media platforms well than to have many that are ineffective.

So how do social media sell magazines and other products? Social media are best thought of as marketing tools, not vehicles for sales. While each social media platform has unique ways to put forward sales and offers, don't count on product / subscription sales / conference registrations sold through social media to be their primary use. You should think of social media as the way you engage with the public. For example, you can include a subscription order form as part of your Facebook site (but don't expect a lot of orders to come pouring in!), but it can be more successful as a way to engage your audience—and be a powerful way for your existing customers to recommend you to their networks. You can certainly offer special deals, but don't make that the focus of your magazine's social media plan.

Here are some examples of how magazines are using social media:

- Voting on magazine cover design and blurbs before the issue goes to press to predict in advance which would sell best on the newsstand
- Opinion polls, surveys
- Product giveaways for advertisers
- Posting meaty comments from presenters at magazine conferences on Twitter
- Posting videos shot by editors on YouTube. I have seen everything from drumming demonstrations to napkin folding to snowmobile race results posted by magazine publishers.
- Magazine story ideas
- Building pre-publication excitement for a new book
- Promotional offers

Your magazine's social media activities will require scrutiny of results to inform your ongoing activities, and constant tweaking. And, to be successful, you need the support of the leadership of the company. For help with social media, [contact me](#).

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