



SOCIAL MEDIA IS ALL ABOUT TIMING ... *OR IS IT?*

Dedication and focus are important, but don't forget to have some fun, too.

BY CHRIS HEILER

Provided you've been paying attention for the past couple of years, you know the marketing landscape has changed pretty drastically — and continues to change by the day. If you haven't been paying attention, prepare to have the rug pulled out from under you very, very soon.

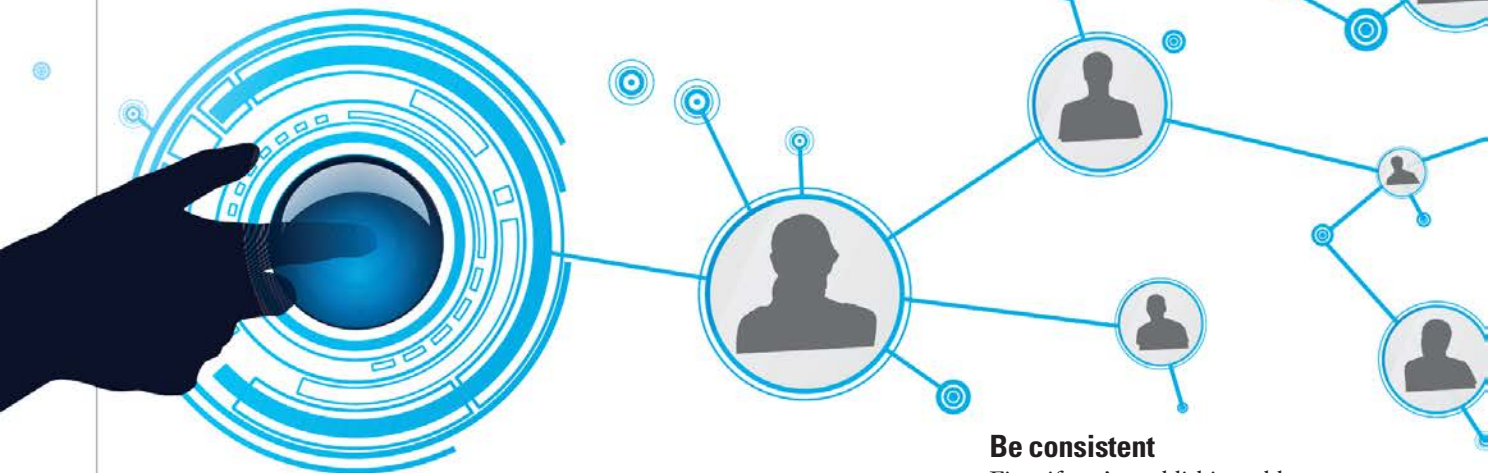
Social media has turned the focus of marketing away from the hard sell, and centers instead on building relationships

between you and your customers. So when you're planning your strategy, you should be thinking of yourself less as a business selling your service and more of an expert (or even a friend) sharing information. To be successful with social media now, people must trust you enough to invite you into their networks and their lives — and that means being a consistent, constant presence in their lives.

That presence doesn't have to be huge, and it shouldn't be disruptive. But

it should be noticeable and enriching.

Because you're not just pushing advertising and marketing copy to customers now, there's a different set of rules that apply to timing your social media, too. Before, your strategy was likely dictated by newspaper deadlines, advertising rate cards and seasonal selling. But relationships don't have a hard and fast timeline, so your strategy probably won't, either. Here are a few tips for timing your social media.



TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH SOCIAL MEDIA NOW, PEOPLE MUST TRUST YOU ENOUGH TO INVITE YOU INTO THEIR NETWORKS AND THEIR LIVES – AND THAT MEANS BEING A CONSISTENT, CONSTANT PRESENCE IN THEIR LIVES.

Be consistent

First, if you're publishing a blog or newsletter, remember that it's not about frequency so much as it's about consistency: Clients are not going to be angry with you for not updating your blog every day ... unless they look forward and have become accustomed to reading your posts every day before breakfast and the content suddenly stops arriving. Your brand might start slipping out of people's good graces

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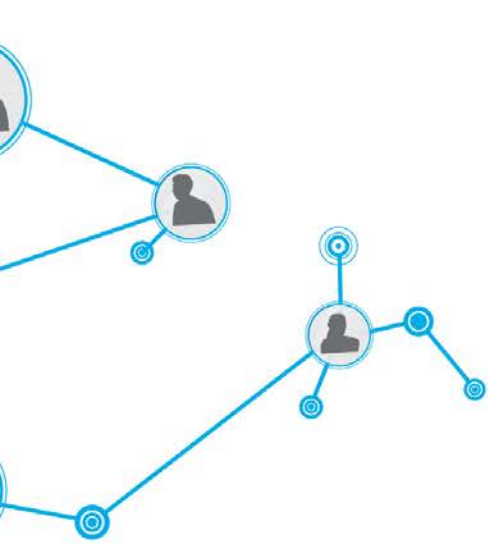
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without them even knowing it.

Set reasonable expectations for yourself, whether you've committed to writing a monthly newsletter, weekly blogs or daily tips. Then, stick to them.

Be constant

Many businesses in our industry are highly seasonal, and in the past, it was commonplace for owners to take the winter off. But in the 24/7 world of social media marketing, you'll lose momentum and credibility if you disappear for any prolonged amount of time.

There are ways to stay engaged, even if you can't be at your computer every day. Several services allow you to schedule tweets and Facebook posts, and most blogging platforms have features that publish pre-authored posts on dates you've specified. Be transparent about scheduling your posts in advance, and make sure your friends know you'll be responding personally to their messages when you return.

Be in the moment

There has been much debate over the science of timing — on how to strike at the very moment people are getting bored at their desks mid-morning, checking their e-mail before going home at the end of the day, or looking at their phones as they wait for their kids to finish at soccer practice.

But there are always people online, and if you have something to say, you should just say it. If you've got a great tip, share it. If you took a fantastic picture that could brighten someone's day, post it. Comment on your customers' Facebook pages, and encourage

them to interact with you. Retweet with abandon, as long as it has a purpose.

As long as you're consistent with your formal posting timeline and consistent in the levels at which you're engaging with people online, the rest can fall in line however you'd like.

Think about your strategy, follow through with your plans and above all,

enjoy it. If you're patient and take time to establish your network of friends and followers, you'll be rewarded with loyal customers who trust you more than ever — both online and off. **LM**

Heiler is a social media consultant for the Green Industry. Get his e-newsletter at www.LandscapeLeadership.com.



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