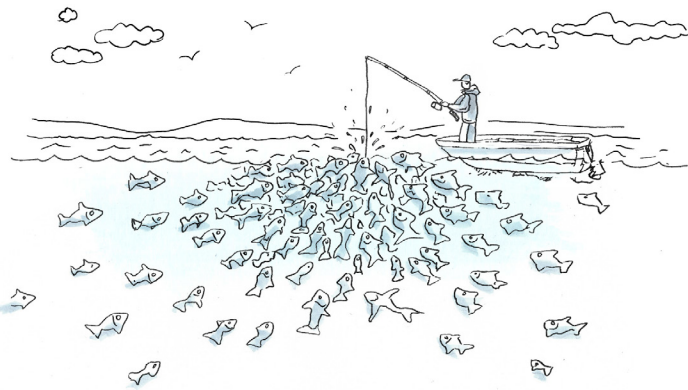


Content Marketing Dos and Donts: how to position yourself as a subject matter expert



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PART I SHOWING YOUR EXPERTISE

The rise of “The Expert” in 2018

In January 2018, Richard Edelman kicked off the year, as he always does, with the Edelman Trust Barometer, an annual report analyzing the state of public trust for government, business, NGOs and media. For the first time since Edelman began publishing his reports back in 2000, media was cited as “the least trusted institution globally”, and, yet, the credibility of journalists rose 12 percent over 2017. So, what gives?

Edelman explained this paradox saying, trust in the platforms where people get their news (like Facebook) was down, but when Edelman controlled for platforms, trust in journalism was up. The report concluded that the slow response of social platforms and search engines to root out fake news had led to an increased demand for expert analysis based on verifiable facts.

A good example of this is the dogged fact checking by *Toronto Star* and *New York Times* reporters Daniel Dale and Maggie Haberman. Both have made calling out rumours and falsehoods a regular beat during Trump’s campaign and his first year in office. This commitment to printing reliable information resulted in a 10 percent rise in subscriptions for *The New York Times* (the so-called “Trump Bump”) in 2017. *The Star* was not so lucky, reasons for which are beyond the scope of this report.

What’s important to note here is that the general public’s heightened appetite for credible experts has expanded to include moral leadership. Because so many political leaders aren’t delivering on those fronts, many citizens are turning to the corporate world to fill the void. The latest Trust Barometer found that interest in CEO’s as subject matter experts saw a seven percent rise over 2017, while technical experts, financial industry analysts, and successful entrepreneurs registered credibility levels 50 percent or higher.

Meanwhile, trust in a broad range of subject matter experts rose as the trust in peer-to-peer opinions on social declined. The latter will only keep declining as we learn the extent of Facebook's privacy breaches and their role in enabling data manipulation through psychographic targeting. CEO Richard Edelman concluded that "it's incumbent upon every institution to fill the void." Quality information, he said, will help everyone make proper decisions about their brands and leaders. (You can watch the full interview with Richard Edelman [here](#)).

Establishing your expertise starts "at home"

Leaders and brands should view the public's desire for experts as an opportunity to develop a content marketing strategy that is focused on giving valuable information that serves, but doesn't sell to, their target audience. It starts with a renewed commitment to a regular schedule of posting to your company website, i.e. media you own.

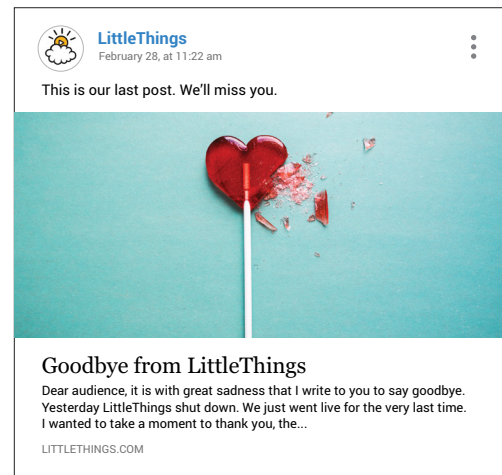
In a scattered publishing landscape, establishing and building your expertise on a URL you own and manage is the first step to positioning yourself as a subject matter expert. The energy you subsequently put into syndicating your content across shared media channels, like LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, SnapChat, etc., should be an outgrowth from that.

In short: never focus on social posts first if you are trying to build your cred as a subject matter expert. Why? You've heard the saying, "If it's free, you are the product." If you sign up for social, you are locked in a renter/landlord relationship with the platforms. As renters who use these sites for free in exchange for your data, you will always have to surrender control over how you reach and retain your audience.

Take this recent example: when Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg yanked brand pages and news from user feeds in January 2018, over night the rules of engagement changed and all those years of following his advice on how to best to reach and retain our audiences — first through image-centric posts, then through videos, and then through live streaming — suddenly no longer applied.

Even when your strategy includes paid content (ads and sponsored or boosted posts) to target and achieve better reach, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn still control the show. Take [Little Things](#), the digital news platform that built their business model on sand by focusing all their

content marketing on Facebook. The company was [wiped out by the last algorithm change](#) in January. Their final post is a note on their wall that reads: "This is our last post, we will miss you."



PART II CONTENT SHARING — THINK "PESO"

Anchoring and syndicating your content

The strategy of using social media platforms as syndication channels for content you anchor and own on your company URL even has a name: POSSE (publish to your own site and syndicate elsewhere). Jonah Peretti, CEO at BuzzFeed, has a slightly different term, calling it "[distributed publishing](#)."

Regardless of which name you choose — POSSE or distributed publishing — your content marketing plan should integrate the four kinds of media relevant to today's publishing landscape: owned, earned, shared, and paid. Think of an integrated distribution plan — one that taps into blog posts, media mentions, social posts and paid ads — like a diversified financial portfolio. Diversification ensures the least amount of damage to your business outcomes when algorithms and things you have no control over unexpectedly change.

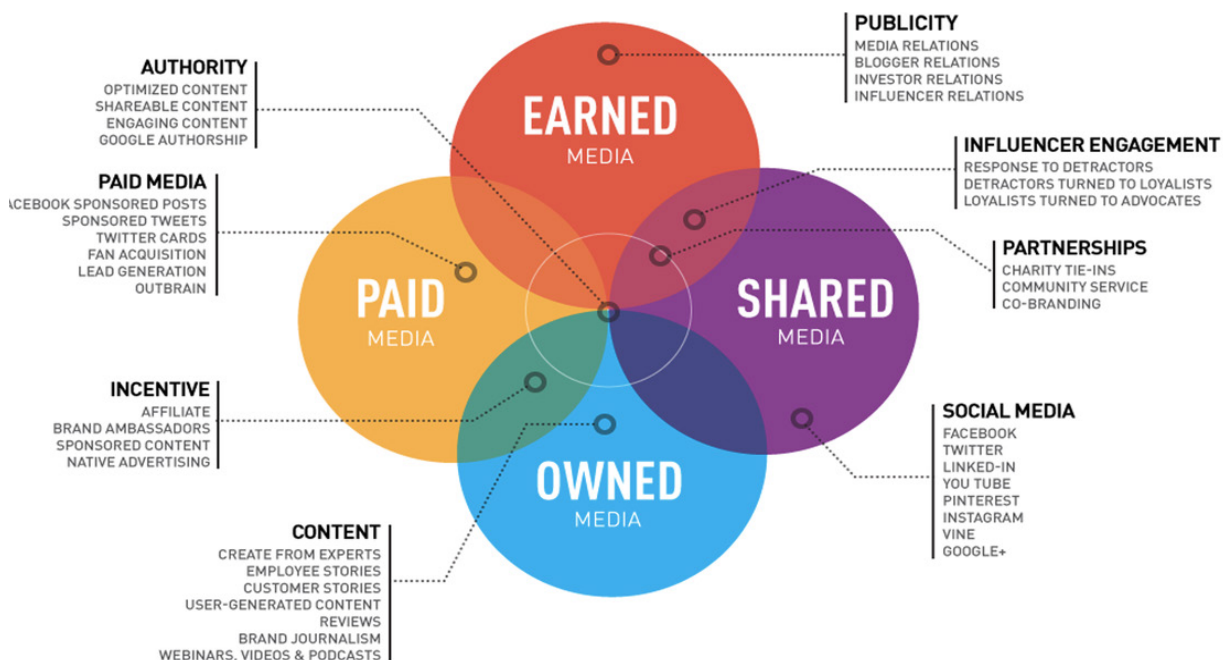
The strategy of posting teasers of our blog posts on social feeds and hoping people will come back to our sites to read the entire story stopped being effective with the rise of mobile. You'll learn more about that in the section below called, "Choosing your channels: Fish where the fish are" But now that you know that your efforts on social should always be an outgrowth of the work you are doing on your

Always assume that social media platforms will leave you at the altar, and plan your future accordingly.

destination URL, think of taking an integrated approach to your content marketing communications strategy.

Gini Dietrich's PESO model (pictured below) is the current industry standard. Dietrich is a Chicago-based PR and digital marketing expert and CEO of Arment Dietrich. As she explains, after you create, post and optimize your content on your website (owned media), "you'll use shared media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, SnapChat, etc.) to distribute your content, paid media (paid social, email marketing, and sponsored content) to

amplify it, and earned media (influencers and legacy media mentions) to rubber-stamp it." If you are concerned about the SEO ramifications of duplicating content across multiple channels — whether you're posting to LinkedIn Publisher, Medium.com or Facebook Notes — go into the admin panel of your blog and create a canonical link for all your posts. That tells Google the original source for your content marketing, and positions it higher in search than the syndicated versions.



Gini Dietrich's PESO content distribution model from SpinSucks.com

PART III DEFINING WHAT MAKES YOU RELEVANT

It's about them, not you

Defining what makes you relevant all depends on the interests, questions and concerns your target audience has about your product or industry. All of this intel is available through Google search. Google's ability to reveal customer questions and intent really is the holy grail of marketing. Take full advantage of it, like Marcus Sheridan has.

Sheridan, the CEO of The Sales Lion and author of They Ask, You Answer, describes the importance of a content marketing plan that focuses on attending to customer questions. His methodology is considered the gold standard by the PR and digital marketing communities in 2018, and is easily adaptable to the rise of voice search. "When people have questions, they ask a search engine," Sheridan explains.

Because you have the answers, you should design your content strategy around answering every single question customers have ever asked you and your sales team – whether it's through blog posts, videos, podcasts and customer service chatbots. Then

he gets to the real point: "Drop the marketing speak, stop selling and start answering. Be seen as an authority, not just another advertisement." ([source](#))

Marcus's insights are hard won. Listen to this video to learn how he developed an inbound marketing strategy for River Pools and Spas, a business he pulled by from the brink of bankruptcy in 2009 by applying the "They Ask, You Answer" content marketing strategy. Then think of ways you can apply Sheridan's methodology to your own industry.

As Marcus found, the Google search bar is the first place you can determine the kinds of questions your audience has around a given topic. (see video thumbnail above). If you want to stay relevant, your job is answer each of those questions in separate blog posts.

PART IV CONTENT MARKETING BEST PRACTICES

Resisting the urge to sell

Resisting the urge to sell is hard for brands, especially big brands used to decades of push marketing on TV and in print. But if you learn anything from this white paper, let it be this:

push marketing makes for lousy storytelling. What's more, it discourages engagement and will actually lower your Google ranking.

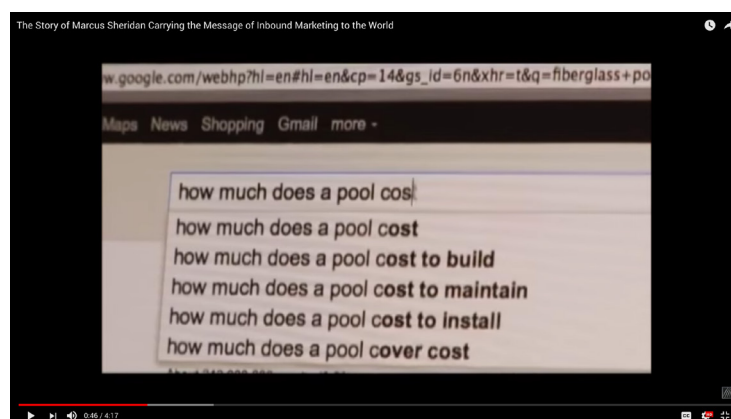
The point of content marketing – whether through blogging, podcasting, video or newsletters – is to connect with people even if they aren't in the market to buy from you at a particular moment. Toronto-based digital marketer, Tara Hunt offers lively and strategic take on the dos and don'ts of content marketing on her YouTube channel, Truly Social.

Cited as one of the most influential women in tech by *Fast Company*, Hunt reinforces the notion that content marketing is not a direct sales tool, but "a relationship-building, awareness-making, loyalty boosting tool." Done well, it's about creating and publishing something useful, actionable, relevant that keeps audiences wanting to come back to stay informed.

Tone of voice

Tara Hunt may be a tech industry veteran – penning the first bestseller about how to use blogs and social media channels to build your network with 2009's The Whuffie Factor – but she didn't go all professorial or "geek speak" on us in her videos. Instead, she determined that the best way to teach a distracted audience is with fast-paced, candy-coloured, Giff-infused vlogs that defy you to hit pause.

Every piece of content Tara creates is designed to be, as she calls it, "your daily distraction" – i.e. content that catches you with colour, quick transitions, sound effects, and silliness, but holds you with its actionable tips on strategy and content marketing. In every format she produces, whether



Click on image to play video, or go [here](#)

blogs, videos or social updates, her voice is consistently helpful, inspiring, entertaining and empathetic (as in, I feel your pain with this latest algorithm change!)

For advice on how to determine your company's brand voice, search your competition on YouTube to see how they are presenting themselves and contrast that with your own brand's characteristics. Pick 3-5 brand values that define who you are to inform how you write. (If you're struggling, CWG's Editorial Strategy process is designed to help firms with uncover their unique voice.) Then check out this article on the importance of an [Editorial Style Guide](#). It demonstrates, step-by-step, how to determine ensure your voice is clear, compelling and consistent way in everything you speak, write and design.

Using a content calendar

Organizing how you will answer your customer questions in blog posts, video, or podcast episodes means creating a content calendar that organizes the rollout of your answers. The calendar template you chose will depend on what you assign to your columns. Most calendars include:

- The topic you will cover
- The author
- When the story is due
- What channels you will publish on as well as publishing times
- What hashtags you will use to surface your content in social and Google searches
- What calls to action (CTAs) you will use to encourage leads and conversions

HubSpot has a range of [downloadable PDFs](#) of content calendar templates. Here are [some more](#).

Push marketing makes for lousy storytelling. What's more, it discourages engagement and will actually lower your Google ranking.

Some calendars include word counts as well as video or podcast lengths. The advice on ideal lengths differs depending on who you ask. Ann Handley, Chief Marketing Officer of MarketingProfs, a training and education company that boasts the largest community of marketers in its category, offers this handy guide:

Ideal Length Guidelines for Everything in Your Marketing	
Blog Posts (for ranking)	1,500 words
Email Subject Lines (for open rates)	50 characters or less
Line of Text	12 words
Paragraph	4 lines or less
YouTube video (for views)	3 to 3.5 minutes
Podcast	22 minutes
Title Tags	55 characters
Meta Description	155 characters (maximum)
Facebook Post (for likes & shares)	100-140 characters
Tweets (for retweets)	120-130 characters
Domain Name	8 characters or less

Source: Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content. By Ann Handley (John Wiley and Sons, 2014) p. 184.

In the time since Ann wrote this guide (2014), Twitter has since expanded its character limit to 280. Meanwhile, with the rise of mobile and videos, our tolerance for reading blocks of text on our phones has diminished. The author recommends reducing 1500 word blog posts to 300-500 word stories. Start serializing, like Charles Dickens. The rest of the recommendations still stand.

Finally, planning the rollout of your content will keep you accountable and your company on track to meeting its measurable objective, whether it is to create greater brand awareness, X more qualified leads per month, X number conversions per month, etc. Sticking to a calendar also creates an expectation for your audience which, when consistently met, builds trust with your customers.

Choosing your channels: Fish where the fish are

Pick and choose your channels based on where your audience is most engaged, and fish where the fish are. If you produce a vlog on car repairs, and your metrics indicate that your audience is largely male, posting teasers

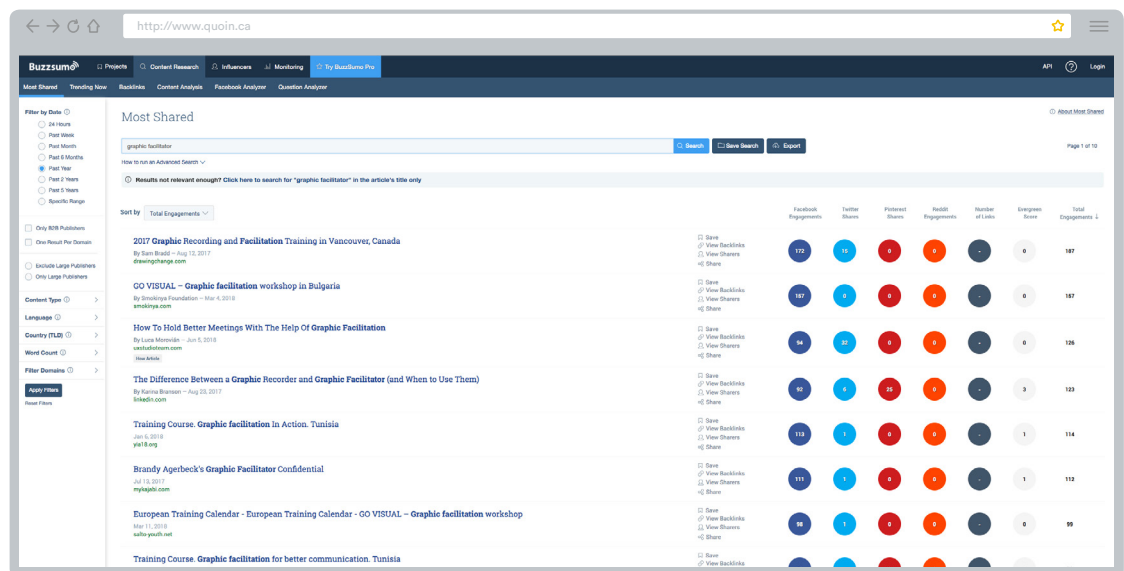
to a female-dominated platform, like Pinterest might not make sense. YouTube and Reddit would be a better fit for your content. Buzzsumo is an excellent tool for determining where engagement and shares are highest on the topics and keywords for which you want to rank. More on that shortly in our case study.

While it is important for your SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to anchor and optimize your content on property you own, you may have noticed that the comments on your blog have dried up to nothing. It's crickets over there! Engagement (comments, shares, likes) has shifted over to social media platforms. Why? Because most people are

watching your videos and reading your posts on mobile from inside their social media feeds (that is, if you were smart enough to syndicate to social). Folks don't have the time or patience wait for your website links to open on their phones. So, don't post teasers with links, publish the whole post or video if the platform format allows. LinkedIn Publisher and Facebook Notes are blogging interfaces nested inside within social platforms. Use them! And use the tagging features in LinkedIn, plus the hashtag feature on Facebook so that readers looking for your content will surface it.

CASE STUDY

In addition to writing white papers like this, I am also an illustrator for hire. One way I generate leads is by optimizing my website and social feeds to rank for the keyword phrases “graphic facilitator” and “graphic recorder” (both terms refer to an illustrator who draws conference talks on white boards with Sharpie markers). A Buzzsumo keyword search confirmed what I already suspected: that writing blog posts for LinkedIn about the benefits of hiring a graphic facilitator or graphic recorder was something that users were searching for in much larger numbers compared to Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest:



Keyword search for “graphic facilitator” on Buzzsumo.com

Now it's your turn. Set up a free trial on Buzzsumo.com, and search the keyword topics that describe your expertise to find out where audiences are engaging the most on your topic. Then write posts that address their questions on concerns on those platforms, and wait for the leads. If your “Referral Traffic” in Google Analytics shows LinkedIn is sending you the most traffic of all the social platforms, you'll know your content marketing PESO strategy is working.

All eyes are on LinkedIn

LinkedIn has always been the best place to reach business professionals. And ever since the January 2018 Facebook algorithm change (the one that deprioritized news and brand page posts), more thought leaders and companies, including the UK news titles *The Times*, *Sunday Times* and *HuffPost UK*, are turning to LinkedIn to distribute their written longform and native video content.

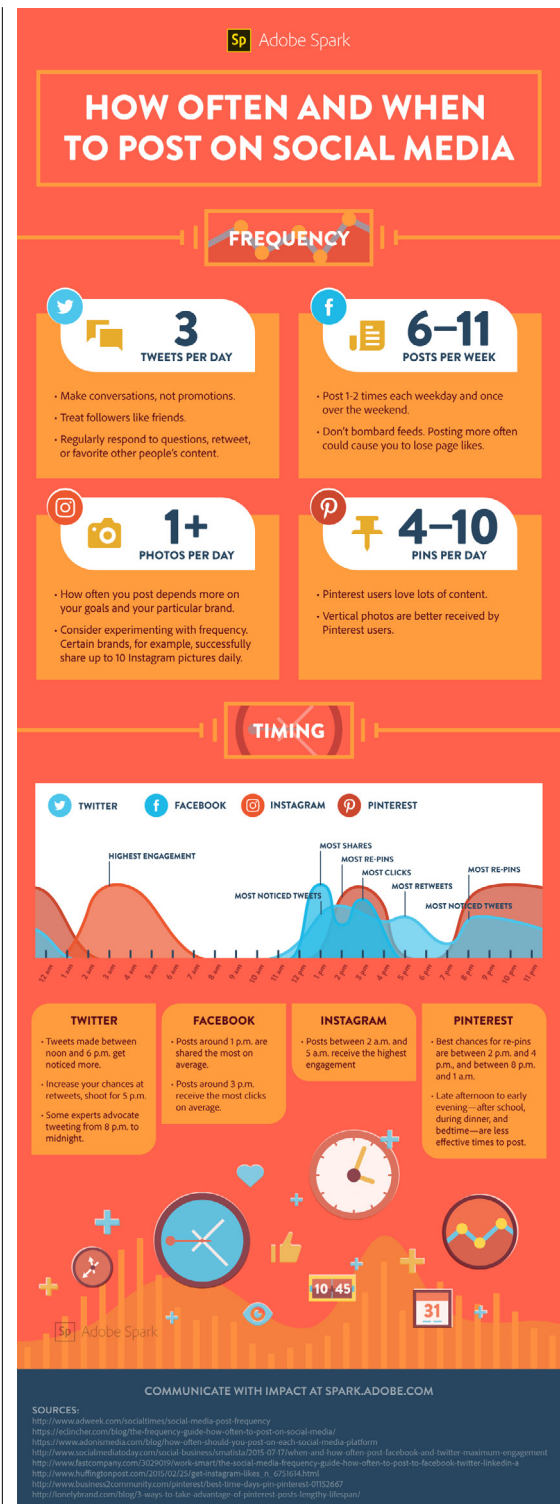
A recent *Digiday* article noted that LinkedIn has partnered with several news organizations, including *The Economist* and *The Financial Times*, to beta test several new native video features. Feedback, so far, suggests that participants are seeing increased views and sharing of their videos, as well as increased follower counts. In a related story, BBC and Forbes have reported that their engagement on LinkedIn is four times higher in 2018 than it was in 2016.

You may be noticing similar upticks in your own profile stats that you can directly tie to consistent posting of videos or longform content to the LinkedIn newsfeed and the blog-style Publisher page. Be sure to take advantage of the three-keyword tags option on LinkedIn Publisher. It can help surface your posts when people are searching for help on a specific topic. It's also a good way to get way to get selected for LinkedIn's pulse channel as a featured expert. ([source](#))

PART V WHEN TO PUBLISH

Once you have established the channels where your audience is most engaged, determine the best times to post. Ragan.com, the news and ideas site for communicators, published an updated infographic for 2018 with suggestions on sharing practices and the best times to post social media content.

LinkedIn: LinkedIn was not mentioned in the Ragan infographic (right), but a recent *HubSpot* study showed that 7:30-8:30 am, noon and 5:00 to 6:00 pm were the optimal times to post to the newsfeed and LinkedIn Publisher. The latter is social media's best native blogging platform for B:B networking, engagement and leads. *Gini Dietrich* suggests posting once a day to your personal LinkedIn account, your company page, then your showcase page, and finally to the groups you belong to. Publish blog posts in their entirety. You may have to adjust your titles (from the original post on your site) to best catch the attention of a business audience. And use the tagging feature before you hit publish.



Source

Twitter: If you were standing at the side of a highway waiting to see a friend's car zoom past, you might miss it. That friend would have to make the trip more than once to ensure you caught sight of him. The same goes for Twitter. Tweet the link to your content at least four times a day (three hours apart) on the day you publish, says Dietrich. On day two, tweet once at noon and again at around 5 pm.

Facebook: With organic reach on brand pages down to almost zero, Facebook has turned into a pay to play space. Post once a day, and only boost the content that inspires the most engagement (comments, shares and likes), and ignore what fell flat.

Google+: Google plus has been on life support for years due to low social engagement. But consider publishing your blog posts to it once a day and wait for the SEO benefits on Google.

PART VI MONITORING TOOLS

If you have committed to a content marketing strategy that puts helping above selling, part of that helping spirit includes this final step: monitoring, listening and responding to feedback on all the social feeds where you publish.

Monitoring tools range in power and price, but Hootsuite Pro is a good place to start. It lays all of your social accounts side-by-side in a cockpit-like dashboard that make tracking engagement easy. Other popular monitoring tools are TweetDeck, HubSpot, SproutSocial and Buffer. Things to monitor include:

- Specific mentions of your brand, products, people, competitors, etc.
- Trends in sentiment, etc.
- The compliment, complaint, crisis, problem, point of need etc. (Amber Naslund)
- Leads to action, e.g., reporting to key stakeholders, laying foundation for benchmarking and metrics, warning for potential crisis.

CONCLUSION

Becoming a trusted expert takes time. You must commit to publishing content that is helpful and compelling, and never salesy or glaringly self-interested. A contemporary content marketing strategy calls for a disciplined and focused content calendar and a distribution plan that integrates owned, earned, shared and paid media tactics you can measure in real time.