

HANDBOOK.

How to Create a  
**Social Content  
Strategy** for Your  
Business.

 FALCON.IO



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According to **recent research** from the Content Marketing Institute,

56% of content marketers struggle with producing engaging content, and 50% struggle to measure its effectiveness.

One of the ways you can mitigate this challenge is by creating a strategy for your team, with a series of carefully planned out content efforts to ensure that you reach your objectives for social.

When content is created on an ad-hoc basis, you risk communicating content that's off-brand, or off target for your long-term objectives.

Planned content promotes regular posting, and allows for a consistent workflow to maintain the quality of the content that you create. Most people working in social media have busy schedules, and benefit from routines and established workflows; great content flourishes from this consistency.

I hope this handbook supports you in planning your own social content strategy.

**Jillian Falconi**, VP of Marketing, Falcon.io

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# Benefits of Creating a Strategy

Planning a social content strategy guarantees a consistent brand voice across social channels.

Determining your strategy will allow you to benchmark, make progress and uncover any pitfalls.

## Other benefits include:



Optimize time spent



Post content regularly



Ensure on-brand communication & content



Increase the amount of interactions and consumptions



Keep daily execution in line with your objectives for social media



Track performance and improve content



Build a narrative around your brand

## GET STARTED:

# Define Your **Brand Story**

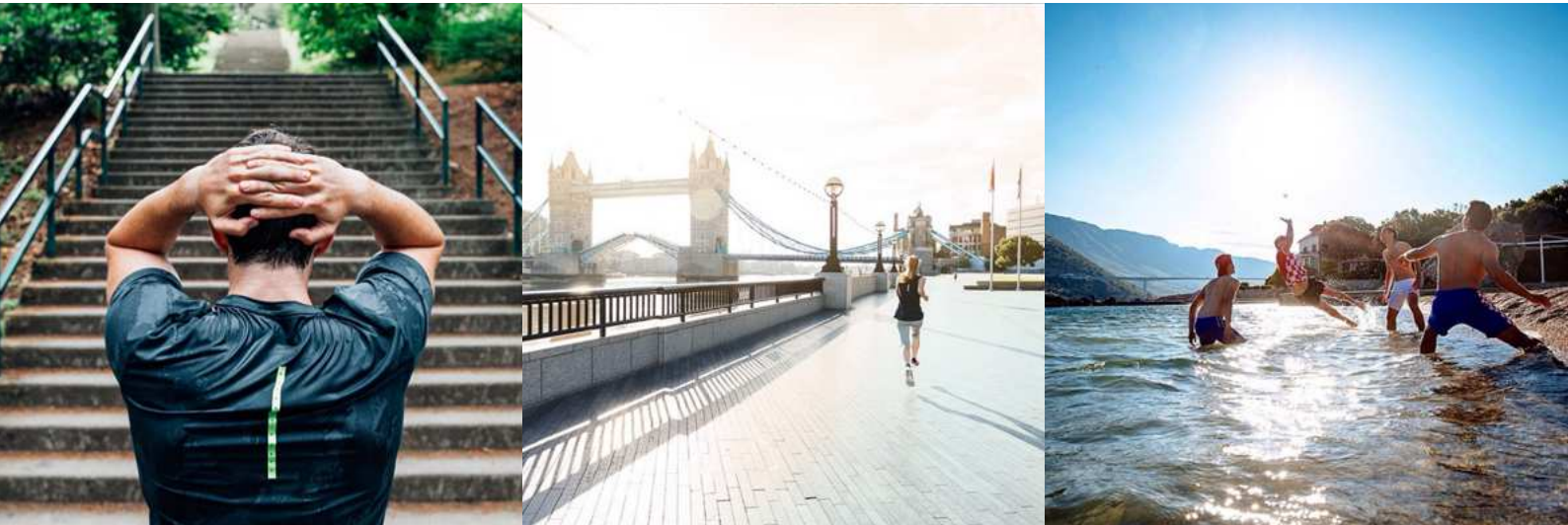
Start by defining the overarching story surrounding your brand.

**O**ften, inspiration can be taken from the mission defined in your business plan and/or social media strategy. What's at the heart of your brand, and how are you trying to make a difference? For example, motivation, animals, food, inspiration, etc.

For Nike, their mission is "To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete". This statement acts as a guiding rule for all their activity, including the content they distribute on social media.

After defining a mission, you can determine what type of content supports your narrative. Next, determine 4-5 themes to serve as the pillars of your content. These themes will guide your content creation and form your content calendar.

Looking at Nike's content, a few of their themes could be defined as **You vs. You, Across the Globe,** and **Play Anywhere.**



Nike crafts a powerful on brand story that combines striking images and motivational copy. Note how all themes support the overall mission.

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“Good content always has an objective, it is created with intent.”

**Ann Handley**

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## **Purpose** of Your Content

Content, advertising, community management and internal alignment are all necessary to achieve social goals.

**C**raft content with your goals in mind. If you want to increase awareness and engagement, create shareable content that amplifies your message. When creating content, focus on what action you want a user to take. Do you want a user to download your white paper? Use the call to action “Download our White Paper Here!” Don’t expect a user to interact with your content how you intended, spell it out. It can be that easy!

### Examples of content purposes:

- **Reach** - typically, these are messages designed for paid distribution
- **Engagement** - actions like comments, likes, shares, retweets, repins, favorites etc.
- **Consumption** - photo views, video plays, Twitter's detail expands, Facebook's "other post clicks"
- **Insight** - for instance, product feedback or asking your users which kind of content they would like to see from you
- **Conversion** - whether it be converting to fan/follower, event sign ups, offer and promo code claims, or newsletter sign ups
- **Traffic** to website, App Store and/ Google Play
- **Awareness** - For example, a product release or corporate campaign

## Written Tone of Voice

Attention on social media isn't a given.

**E**stablish a unique and identifiable presence that grabs the attention of your target audience. Tone of voice is a crucial. You need to define the guidelines for how you communicate on social media. To get you started, here are a few tips. Think about the values and brand image you want to project. Which type of language supports that image? Write down a short description of how your brand communicates. This could be an example: "our brand provides down-to-earth expertise and accessible inspiration on cooking and food. Our brand is not about

fine dining, but the quality everyday meal that you enjoy with family and friends...."

Write a list of rules to guide your content creation. These are typically a mix of general best practices and company-specific issues. For instance, we communicate in short and simple sentences, we don't use slang or jargon, we don't use these particular words when talking about our products.

Provide examples of do's and don'ts for all content themes and all rules of thumb.

# Visual Tone of Voice

In our work, we often find that tone of voice is taken to mean verbal tone of voice. But, visual tone is more important than voice because most social networks and our brains focus on visual content.

- Think of the **brand image** that you want to cultivate on social. Which values or attributes do you want to project? Quality, Scandinavian design, retro feel? Then create visual imagery associated with these qualities. For example, if you're a packaged food product and want to project freshness and quality, create images featuring your product next to fresh ingredients.
- Use the **design manual** of your company to pin down details surrounding the use of fonts/weights, logo and color palette (use RGB codes, so everybody gets it right). Specify how to use these aspects on social.
- With a written tone of voice, it's also important to provide examples of **do's and don't's** for all content themes (more about content themes later).
- **Speak the language** of the platform. On social, it is important to be authentic and human, so be cautious with the use of commercially loaded material like stock imagery (polished photo studio feel) or Point Of Sale material -- it usually doesn't translate well. Focus on real people and situations, and authentic photos.
- Keep your visual tone of voice **consistent**. Don't let your workload compromise the quality of your imagery. Social media is a fragmented narrative, so you need a clear profile to stand out.
- User-generated content often won't meet the standards you've defined. If you **curate content** and post it on your page, determine what you are OK with, and what doesn't meet standards and shouldn't be widely distributed (note: this doesn't mean you should remove pictures that users upload to your page or profile. It refers only to whether you should repost it or not). Make sure to provide appropriate credit to the creator.

Falcon's **Content Pool** helps you streamline your tone of voice. The Content Pool enables you to upload stock content for future usage and to keep track of content posted in various geographic markets or on various pages. Basically, it's assets management for your social presence. It acts as an archive for previous content, and stock hub for future content. As a bonus, you can also see which posts performed best on a given period and even repurpose that content with a simple click.



**Top Tip**



# Curated vs In-house Content

Content planning: Time to Listen to Your Audience

**W**e know that finding new and relevant content is one of the key challenges for content marketers in 2016, but you don't have time to sit in long content brainstorming sessions every week; you need a way to refresh your content on a daily basis in five minutes.

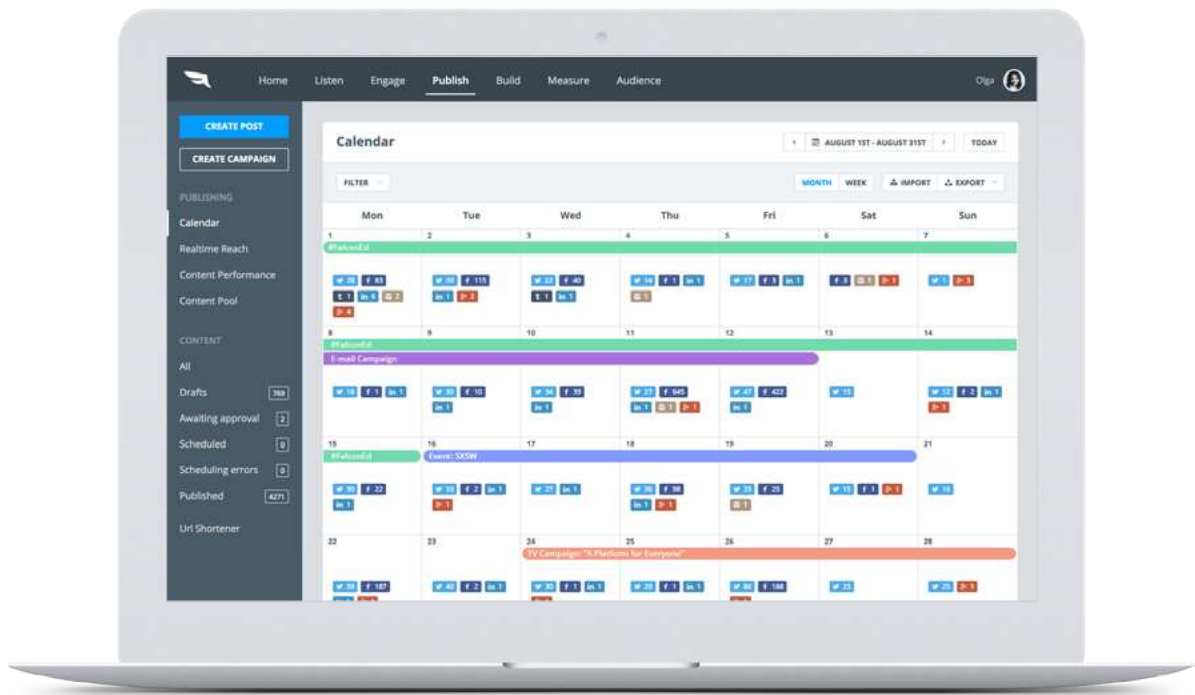
A good listening tool can help here. By effectively tapping into core keywords and hashtags through a listening tool you can curate the best content in real-time based on what your audience has already shown interest in, and you can create or refresh content around themes that have recently grown in popularity. But don't stop here. Go a step forward and try to match this data with other popular topics within your audience. Let's say you are monitoring the people that are talking about your brand, but what if the same audience is looking forward

to an event or chatting about specific recent news? This can manifest in a great opportunity for you to create topical content that is highly relevant to your fans, and that has the advantage of already established popularity.

## Listening allows you to:

- Tap into conversations and hear the discussion around key issues for your brand
- Conduct market research
- Discover influencers and unknown sites for relevant conversations
- Identify popular trends for content themes in real-time
- Discover user-generated content





## Content Calendar

Planning ahead is crucial for being successful on social media. Those responsible for social media are often short on time and wear many hats. To ensure a steady and consistent flow of quality content across social networks, you need to create a content calendar.

At the most basic level, your social media content calendar is a plan that maps out deadlines and important dates relevant to your business and its customers. Your calendar needs to serve

two masters, taking into account the subjects that interest your customers and the content your team is willing and able to deliver.

The calendar is a shared resource that gives everyone involved in content production and marketing an at-a-glance timetable of how (and when!) content is to be produced and distributed.

By making every date and deliverable available for scrutiny, it becomes much easier to keep production on schedule and to

provide a constant stream of valuable content to your brand fans.

If you work in a tool like Falcon, you can create your content calendar there and use that tool as a place to collaborate on planning. This makes it easy to work with your team on content and to hone content over time (edit and adjust). You can create drafts, send them for approval or proofreading by a team member and once they're finished, schedule them for posting. →

### A content calendar can consist of the following:

- Creative: Image, text, link, video
- Date and time of posting
- Purpose of content
- Content theme
- Tags or labels to filter and track performance
- Planned campaigns and promotional activities

When working with content, try mapping out the year in content: think campaign-level first, then post-level. What are the major campaigns that you are planning to put out throughout the year? Next step is to consider what content best reflects your message - do you already have that content or will there be a need to produce it? Estimate how many pieces of content would be necessary to bring most awareness and interest to your campaign, then create a plan for your posts. Remember to think outside of the box and repurpose your content in various shapes and formats, to fit the audience on each channel. Most companies underestimate the time and resources necessary to keep up a steady flow of content throughout the year, so think about what you're able to do and your dry spells throughout the year - what do you do then?

By using Falcon's Campaign Planner you can ensure a consistent brand experience across channels. In the campaign brief associated, you can include descriptions of the specific campaigns, add dedicated teams, create image stock with specific design and graphics, and use labels for better tracking of campaign performance and benchmarking with similar past efforts.

Planning your content in advance will also free up your time to react to unexpected, real-time events. Social media is an ever-evolving environment so your content calendar should always allow for flexibility and quick changes, to keep up with new developments in social

## Curated content

You can't plan ahead to the same extent when working with curated content, it requires more ad hoc work. But if you've covered your creative and commercial content in advance, you have more time to spend sourcing content. Remember your content themes and overall narrative when sourcing content. All content must fit into a content theme and support the overarching narrative, or it's a no-go. Tone of voice is also important, but less so than your own content because it's obvious that the original creator is someone else.

**Mapping** out the year in content can be a good way to illustrate the need for extra resources to management or other parts of the organization. If you're supposed to post four times per week per channel, you need to have a proper plan for where that content will come from.



**Top Tip**

networks. Also, what your audience finds irresistible today might become irrelevant in a matter of months, so your content strategy should be quick to adapt.

Here is where a unified social media platform can prove to be invaluable. With a highly-accurate listening tool, one can constantly monitor for the latest developments in the industry and the relevant business areas. You should also constantly keep an eye on how your audience evolves over time, how it interacts with your brand, and if there is a change in sentiment or engagement. Bring this data into your strategy planning, then adapt your posts and content calendar to it.



# Promoting Content

In recent years, promoted posts and social ads have overtaken print and offline tactics as the methods most used by B2C marketers.

**S**ocial marketing has transitioned from organic reach to focus on engaging audiences with the right message. Social media managers and buyers now work together to create optimized and engaging content. Ogilvy research shows that organic reach dropped from 16% to 6% between 2012 and 2014. Organic social marketing still has its place, but it's only with paid advertising that brands can ensure the right content goes out to the right audience at the most effective time.

Don't tie yourself to advertising on one channel. While Facebook remains the top marketing channel currently, Instagram continues to gain momentum. Experiment promoting content on various social channels and gauge your audience's response. Select content to promote that will be helpful to your audience.

# Organizing Your Team

Creating good content requires streamlining your company to prepare for the pace and nature of social media communication.

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Social media is one of the fastest forms of communication and transcends departments. For this reason, social media cannot be the sole responsibility of one department; all parts of the organization must carry a part of the load.

## Create a basic internal structure for social media success:



Define roles within your organization. Know who is responsible for producing content, publishing posts, approving content, and who serves as first responders in a crisis.



Within each department, appoint contact people to expedite social media requests and problems.



Set up back up contacts for illness, time off, and time zone differences, and clearly communicate the designated parties.

## The reasons for setting up this basic structure are straightforward:



### 1. Facilitating a fast response

Social shouldn't be siloed in Marketing. Consider collaborating with key people in different departments around the company, that can help provide more specialized knowledge. The results of this flow can lead to faster response times, increase in the quality of answers, and, most importantly higher customer satisfaction.



### 2. Source content

Social media runs on storytelling, and the most telling content are usually those small, captured moments that show your company's human side and personal success stories. They may not reach the Marketing, PR, or Social Media departments, or headquarters. These are customer-facing roles such as store personnel, technicians, and other people "in the trenches" -- your ambassadors.



### 3. Communicate that social media success is a company-wide achievement

If the company's social presence is not universally and continually communicated as valuable, your organization, especially those furthest from your marketing teams, may be slow to support or contribute to your efforts. Send the message that an open and healthy company presence is useful and appreciated, by having a process for capturing staff information.



## **Nurture and establish internal ambassadors in each department**

Success in social media requires planning, a clear structure, and cross-departmental collaboration. Open your social media processes and expertise to the entire company, in order to source ideas, obtain valuable feedback and turn your employees into social advocates. Reinforce it all with clear guidelines and a social media policy, that will both empower and offer a solid direction for your employees.

An extremely important step here is to still take the time to personally nurture connections with each department in the organization. These relationships can prove to be extremely valuable to your efforts on social media. Through their varied networks, your internal brand ambassadors can extend the reach and trust of your brand, and go where your company's organic or paid efforts don't.

## Tips for nurturing and establishing relationships in each department:

- **Look for people** who are eager to share and preferably have an interest in social. Ambassadors don't have to be managers, in fact, you're better off with someone closer to the everyday action.
- **Make a habit of talking to your ambassadors and stakeholders** frequently to find out what's going on in their world. Call them or speak to them in person, don't email. Most people don't have time to jot down stories or long-winded info in an email. And you'll often find that the parts of the story that work well on social are not the version they would write.
- **Keep your ambassadors constantly in the loop** with the latest developments, and try to involve them or ask for their opinions when the situation allows. In this way you'll ensure a fresh source of creativity and feedback, while establishing a closer connection with them. This collaboration can also be a great motivator for other employees, that might be keen to bring their own inputs and ideas, and help elevate your brand.
- **Share success** and good experiences with your ambassadors. "Hi Sandra, check out the post we did. They loved your story about the petting zoo. Great stuff :)". Also celebrate their contribution internally, it will drive ownership and excitement around social. You know, give to get.
- **Make sure that ambassadors understand and agree** to take on this role. Tell them what you need and how things work, so they know what to expect and can act on your behalf.
- **For stakeholders, make sure that you have a clear agreement** on them being your go-to person. You need the green light to contact them at odd hours of the day or demand quick answers. Also, make sure that this person has the ability to approve communication going out on social, if necessary.

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# Tracking **Performance**

There are two sides to tracking and analytics on social media. One is to track progress and prove value (ROI), the other is to understand and learn more about your content and your community, all with the purpose of revising your approach to improve performance.

## **Content Performance: Analyse, Learn, Revise...and repeat**

**S**ocial media changes constantly, so what worked 6 months ago when you created your social content strategy may not work today. Also, target groups are people of flesh and blood and they will defy your preconceptions of what they might and might not like.

So, make sure you're regularly looking at data to determine if you need to tweak your approach. To do so, use actionable insights and data displaying the details of content performance. Here, you're looking at the micro level view, whereas measuring performance and value deals with the macro, big picture of your social media activity.

Here are a few things to keep your eye on:

### **Negative feedback**

Facebook in particular provides excellent data on how your content is being received. People tend to focus on "positive" metrics like Likes, Comments and Shares, but this one tells it to you straight. If a substantial part of your audience chose to hide your posts, unlike your page or report your content as spam, you need to take a closer look at that piece of content. Highly popular content will always generate some negative feedback.

### **Consumptions**

Instead of placing all emphasis on interactions like comment/like/shares, you should look at consumptions. The best content doesn't necessarily generate a lot of interactions. Often, you'd rather have them click a link to your website than like the post. Consumptions include photo view, clicks and video plays. Facebook has recently introduced detailed stats for videos (uploaded directly to Facebook), so now you can measure how long users have been watching your video, which parts of your video are particularly popular. Even more insight for you to drive action on refining your content.

### **Engagement**

This one is hardly a surprise, metrics such as favorites, likes, comments/replies, retweets, shares are still a key way to gauge performance of your content - if engagement is a key component of your social media strategy, that is.

### **Type/composition of update**

When are you seeing the best response to your content? Images, hashtags, videos, plain text or link posts? What about the length of your text? There are rules of thumb for this, but your community might be different, so track and revise and keep doing so.

## Tracking top-level objectives: Measure performance and value

**T**aking a top level look at the performance of your social media presence is key when proving the value (ROI) of social media and to track progress with your long-term social media objectives. Many companies find this to be a very elusive thing, but it doesn't have to be. Look beyond social metrics when trying to prove the value of social. Broader digital metrics like page visits and dwell time on your website make excellent KPIs for determining volume and quality of your social media efforts.

The actual metrics you want to focus on depend on your objectives and social media strategy.

### Here are some of our favorites:



**Conversions** - Define the various conversion targets along the sales cycle. Don't simply think of the end goal in terms of direct revenue, but determine the value of softer targets such as event sign ups, brochure downloads, campaign offer claims or submission of "find out more" forms.



**Reach** - this directly translates to the good old awareness or exposure factor.



**Traffic to website or other off-social destinations** - Google Analytics already gives you data on traffic referral, but you can go much further than that. With Falcon's URL Builder to create custom URLs with tracking (UTM tags or similar). This way, you can track amount of clicks and connect traffic to your website.



**Quality and value of traffic** - For traffic generated by social media, use a tool such as Google Analytics to determine the value and quality of this traffic. How do social users compare to other types of users in terms of page views, bounce rate, session duration? What's the conversion, the revenue generated? That's hard ROI right there. One thing that's particularly interesting is to see the conversion rate for social vs. other digital activities. You may be able to convince your boss to allocate more budget to social if s/he sees that conversion rates for social are twice what they are for display advertising.



**Development of community** - Is your fan/following count increasing, declining or remaining steady? Focus on the composition and general health of the fan group, not mere numbers acting as a vanity metric. A constant increase in fans is not necessarily the best for your brand. Make sure you have the right type of fans. That is, people who have an actual interest in your brand and whom you can nurture a relationship with instead of prize hunters who are only engaging with you to join a competition.



**Mentions** - Using monitoring tools like Falcon's listening module you can track your share of voice on social as well as the wider internet. Tracking mentions of your brand, your competitors and key topics on social media puts a tangible face to something as abstract as word of mouth.



**Response rate** - Social media are not just marketing channels, they are two-way platforms of communication. Don't forget that customer service is a key component of social media. Tracking your response rate and message volume gives you hard facts on how social is improving customer relations and earning ROI (shifting customer queries from man-intensive telephone calls to more cost-effective online communication). Also, tracking team performance enables you to forecast bottlenecks to shift manpower to peak hours of the week or month.



# Summary

Embrace the language of your customers. When in doubt, review your content and consider if it sounds more like a human or more like a brand. Sticking to human-speak will keep your message genuine.

So go forth and create content confidently! We hope this playbook helps shape and inspire your organization's social content strategy.

Thanks for reading!



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