

What to Do from Start to Finish

Let's take everything we have learned previously and use it in a practical way. Let's pretend that there's a new, popular social media channel that has gained traction in your community in the last year. Doves of people are using it, which means that you need to be there.

What do you need to do to turn that good idea into a powerful tool to help the library achieve its strategic initiatives?

Try these six steps:

1. Set up the channel.
2. Create goals.
3. Listen.
4. Create a team.
5. Create content.
6. Use analytics to measure success.

Let's look at each step in more detail.

Step 1. Set Up the Channel

Before anything else can be done, someone needs to set up the channel. Name it the same thing you name your other library social media channels (my library would use "topekalibrary"). You will need a small square badge image to represent your library in the new social media channel. My library uses our logo, but some libraries use a recognizable image of the building, or smiling staff.

You might need another larger image for the background of the social media channel's main library page. Twitter, Facebook, and Google Plus all include background images in their social media channels. Have fun with this image. It can be fun, or it can further represent what your library does or how it serves customers.

You might also need to create some links back to your library's website, connect the new social media channel to other social media tools the library uses, and write a short sentence or paragraph describing the library and what you hope to accomplish with the social media channel.

Step 2. Create Goals

The next step in setting up your new social media channel is to create some goals for it. Go back and read the goals sections in the last chapter. Think about who uses the tool. Do you know any basic customer demographics for the tool (e.g., lots of teens use it)? Also consider the types of content that can be posted on the channel—text, photos, video, etc.

Let's create three starter goals for our new social media channel:

1. Gain local followers. One goal should be to attract library customers and advocates to your new channel.
2. Engage with young business owners and entrepreneurs. You've done some research and have

discovered that young professionals ages 25–45 are using this new social media tool. Focusing on that user group helps narrow and focus your content appropriately.

3. Attract that demographic to library events and materials. Why interact with this group? Hopefully, your library has some interesting content and events that this demographic would find useful. So one of your ROI metric goals will be to successfully point customers to these events and materials by using the new social media channel.

Step 3. Listen

The next step is to *stop*. Don't post anything yet. You have set up the channel. You have some beginning goals, and you are starting to gain some followers and friends. Before you start posting, take some time to listen in on the conversation already happening on the social media channel.

You're listening for several things, including:

How the tool works. Watch for the social media tool's quirks to make sure you understand how it works. For example, if you were setting up a new Twitter account, you would need to understand how functions like Retweets, mentions, and hashtags work. You might also want to explore how to use a URL shortener and add an image or a video to a post.

Does the new tool have a posting limit in terms of words or characters? Does it have other limiting features? You will need to know these things before you start posting.

Learn what people are saying. Start Friending and following your customers and community members, and listen to the conversations they start and participate in using the tool. See how they interact, and pay attention to the subjects discussed. Poke around and do some searches. Watch for locally based hashtags, and start listening to the things your community discusses. Make sure to Friend some of your customers.

Library mentions. Also listen to find out what people say about your library. Are their comments accurate? Do they have questions? Can you answer them or fill in the blanks? If so, then you're ready for the next step!

Step 4. Create a Team

As we discussed previously, you need to figure out who is going to post. If possible, create a small social media team for your new social media channel. Assign team members one or more days each week to monitor and post to the channel.

This shouldn't be a huge burden. After all, it's social media, so it comes and goes pretty fast. If a

helpful desktop software tool exists, set it up. Check out TweetDeck or Hootsuite (or use e-mail) to monitor the channel, library mentions, and your saved searches. Are you at a smaller library, where only one or two people can work on the social media channel? Have one person watch in the morning, the other in the afternoon. If you only have one person to monitor social media, schedule specific times of the day to tune in for fifteen to twenty minutes to see what's happening.

If you do have a team, make sure this team holds regular meetings to discuss social media channel goals and improvements.

Step 5. Create Content

Your new social media channel is set up. You have a team, and you have some goals. You have Friended some people and organizations. You've listened to conversations and have discovered that you can add to the conversation and fill in the blanks about the library, too.

Now it's time to start creating and posting content to your new channel. One way to do this is to set up a content calendar for posting. Your social media team is already assigned a day or a time to monitor the channel. Have team members post during that time, too.

Also, remember the goals created for this social media channel, and post only content related to those goals.

Step 6. Use Analytics to Measure Success

Now that you are doing everything needed for the social media channel to thrive, you have one final step. You need to measure your success to see if you're achieving the goals you set and to see where improvements might be needed.

Remember the three goals that were created for this new social media channel? They were:

1. Gain local followers.
2. Engage with young business owners and entrepreneurs.
3. Attract that demographic to library events and materials.

How would you use social media to achieve those goals? Here are some ideas for each goal:

1. Gain Local Followers

This one's easy. Count total followers at the beginning of each month, and see if you are gaining new

followers. If you are—great! If not, see if there are areas that can be improved.

Use the social media channel's analytics to help. Look at individual post impressions. Are people reading your posts? If not, consider posting at a different time of the day. Look at post engagement. If people aren't engaged, a change might be needed in your team's posting style. Make sure to include next steps in each post so people have something to do once they read your post.

2. Engage with Young Business Owners and Entrepreneurs

This is a larger strategic goal of the library and not something that can be achieved simply by posting content related to the demographic. Before you post, your library needs to plan events and purchase materials that might attract that demographic. Once this is done, your social media team can create posts emphasizing those events and programs.

Your team can post articles that this demographic might find interesting. You can also post a question that asks what types of content would be helpful to small business owners in your service area. Ask how you can help them succeed and meet their goals. Readers will continue that conversation—in the library and on social media—if you start it and are persistent in continuing it.

3. Attract That Demographic to Library Events and Materials

When you are engaged with your demographic, this step should happen automatically. You can easily measure success by taking a simple survey asking where people heard about an event.

For materials, see if the items mentioned were checked out. Even better—compare those checkout dates with the date your social media post was published. If the two dates coincide, that means that you met this goal.

Again, It's Conversation

The goal of this report has been to help your library and your social media teams manage social media channels in a library setting. We focused on why social media is good for the library, how to set up a social media team, how to create goals for the social media channel, and how to use that channel to meet the library's strategic plans. We explored how to use analytics to measure your success at meeting goals, and finally, we looked at an example of putting all of these concepts into practice.

If you don't get anything else out of this report, remember this: when it's all said and done, social media channels are a way to hold conversations—it's just good ol' communication. They provide a unique way to start and continue conversations, a way to add pertinent information to a conversation, a way to correct wrong information, and a way to connect to your customers.

Thankfully, each of us knows how to start, hold, and finish conversations! So just start using social media channels to do what you already do well—hold conversations with your customers. Then adapt and grow the social media tool as needed. Sometimes, “just starting already” is the best way to discover a tool's usefulness. Use it daily for a month—post to it, Friend people, and interact with them. At the end of the month, take a step back and see if you gained followers, helped people out, and added to the conversation. If you did, then it's probably a useful social media channel for your community and for your library.

Keep in mind that posting to social media is fun! Social media isn't popular because it's medicine, after all. It's fun to connect with friends, celebrities, and organizations that you like. It's fun to add your thoughts to a conversation. People like using social media, and libraries can jump right in and join the fun. Your customers are already there, so your library can invite customers to Friend the library. And they most likely will, because they already like the library, and they like using social media.

Find out where your customers are, and set up a social media channel in that space. Put some of the tips and ideas presented here into practice.

Start posting . . . and have fun!