Social Media for eCommerce:

Go from Novice to Expert in Ten Steps

LYONSCG

eCommerce Realized!

# Social Media for eCommerce: Go from Novice to Expert in Ten Steps

For online retailers and brands, it's no secret social media can attract, engage, and convert shoppers. Along with your promotional and marketing campaigns, social media is a powerful tool for influencing consumer purchase decisions and transforming browsers into buyers.

But driving social engagement and traffic is easier said than done. What platforms should you use and what content should you post? How can you integrate social media with your marketing activities? And perhaps most importantly, how do you measure success?

Questions like these are endless, and they likely will be unless you have a social media strategy that progresses you to social maturity. An effective social strategy not only gives you the answers you need but also helps you make decisions faster and with less guesswork. When you approach social media strategically, your path to maturity is shorter, clearer, and easier to measure.

What do you need to reach social media maturity, and what's involved along the way? Our easy-to-follow guide gets you there in ten simple steps. You'll learn about platforms, tactics, measurement, and content, plus key signs you're ready to move on to the next step.

To make your path to social maturity easy, we've broken down the ten steps into four phases:

Plan   Engage   Build   Optimize
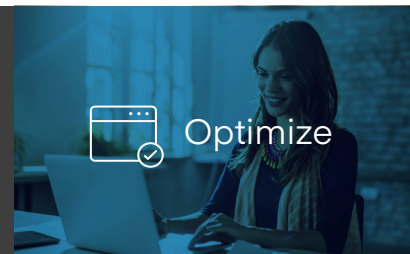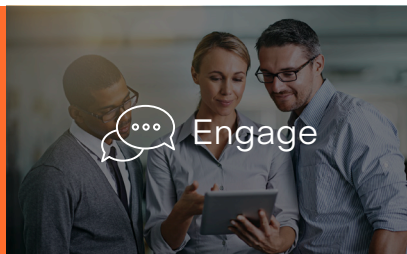
Social Media Maturity Model

These ten steps will help guide your social media strategy, from initial planning to achieving real results.

PLAN

Signs of maturity: Social strategy developed based on goals, branding and audience research

1. Listen: find out what your target audince is saying on social media.

2. Define: Develop brand voice, tone and key messages using traits you want to highlight in content.

3. Establish: Set social media goals and create profiles on platforms where target audince is most engaged.

ENGAGE

Signs of maturity: Social content aligned with goals; posted, shared and tested regularly

4. Interact: Engage audiences in discussion on topics like FAQ and customer service.

5. Share: Encourage people to share user-generated content. Repost and re-purpose for later use in campaigns.

6. Create: Develop brand content aligned with marketing initiatives. Optimize content with A/B testing, then test and measure it again.

BUILD

Signs of maturity: Social KPIs continually improved through engagement, testing and measurement

7. Reach: Increase awareness using best practices for posting. Use strong CTAs that encourage sharing to tap into new audiences.

8. Convert: Increase visibility of posts using paid social ads. Work toward social KPIs with campaigns that drive conversion, engagement, and leads.

9. Analyze: Use platform analytics and tools that evaluate your social media's contribution to overall marketing success.

OPTIMIZE

Signs of maturity: Ongoing review, testing, and optimization of your social content and KPIs for each phase

10. Rinse and Repeat: Focus on social platform and tactics that deliver the most return. Achieve greater visibility with valuable, shareable content that converts fans and followers into loyal customers.

PLAN

Any strategy starts with a plan, and social media is no different. A crucial first step is to document your strategy so you and your team are on the same page. It doesn't matter if you write down your strategy in a document, spreadsheet, or presentation. The medium isn't as important as making sure you document your strategy in the first place.

Step 1: Listen

The first step in the Plan phase is to listen to your target audience on social media. What conversations are they having about your brand and products? What are they saying about your brand category and competitors? What platforms do they use and what conversations do they have on each?

Monitoring social conversations tells you what traits your audience values in a brand and what people love (and don't love) about your brand and products.

Listen for Your Brand

To listen for conversations about your brand, search for hashtags and mentions of your brand on different social platforms, such as your brand name, slogan, or recent marketing campaigns. Take note of what's being said. Are people speaking positively about your brand and products? Do they mention specific products or talk generally about your industry? Learn what words they use and try to identify common themes.

For example, do people express frustration about a specific product, or do they feel satisfaction or excitement? When listening for your brand, pay attention to the tone of the conversation. Is the tone sarcastic or angry? Enthusiastic or formal?

Monitoring both positive and negative conversations provides feedback on your products and services so you can make quick improvements. You'll also learn about your core audience and understand what matters to them.
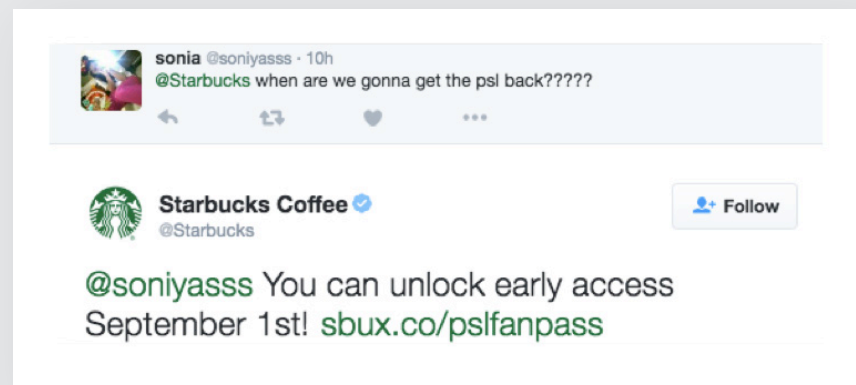
Listen for Your Industry and Competitors

Apply the same technique when listening for conversations about your brand category and competitors. For example, if you're a home goods eCommerce company, search Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other social platforms for hashtags like #homedecor or #homedesign.

Search and track hashtags and mentions for your competitors, too, using their brand names, slogans, and marketing campaigns. Again, take note of what's being said. Are people speaking positively or negatively? Are they seeking information or expressing an emotion? What tone do they use in these conversations?

Listen Up!

› Set up keyword and hashtags streams in Hootsuite or other social media management tools to monitor conversations about your brand, brand category, and competitors.

› Write down what users are saying about your brand, products, and industry. Understand how they express themselves and take note of recurring themes.

› Determine what traits your audience values in a brand and see if there are any immediate improvements you can make.

Starbucks uses Twitter as a listening platform to answer users' questions. The user's excited tone demonstrates anticipation about a specific Starbucks product.

> **sonia** @soniyasss · 10h
> @Starbucks when are we gonna get the psl back?????
>
> **Starbucks Coffee** ✓ @Starbucks   👤+ Follow
>
> @soniyasss You can unlock early access September 1st! sbux.co/pslfanpass

> With so many voices on social media, it's best to develop a single voice that aligns with your brand and audience. **"**

Step 2: Define

The second step in the Plan phase is to define your brand's voice, tone, and key messages. Based on your listening activities, you should now know what traits your audience values in a brand. Further define these traits and work them into your brand messages.

Discover Your Brand Voice

What does your audience value? Quirkiness, passion, quality, authenticity? Do these traits match your own brand ethos? If so, how will you blend them into your social content? Will you crack jokes? Speak authoritatively? Use casual language?

Here are examples of brand voices and traits:

Brand Voice	Trait 1	Trait 2	Trait 3
Helpful	Knowledgeable	Attentive	Warm
Passionate	Expressive	Enthusiastic	Heartfelt
Quirky	Irreverent	Unexpected	Contrarian
Authentic	Trustworthy	Engaging	Direct

With so many brand voices on social media, it's best to develop a single voice that aligns with your brand and audience. An inconsistent voice will dilute your brand, confuse audiences, and create mistrust, so it's important to communicate consistently across platforms and content types.

Refine Your Brand Voice and Maintain Consistency

To further develop your brand voice, join online groups, review sites, and forums relevant to your industry to learn even more about what people are saying about your brand—and how they say it. Reddit, Yelp, and Consumer Reports are good places to start.

Next, create a chart of brand voice Dos and Don'ts as a reference tool. Share it with your team to keep everyone's voice consistent across social media.

Here's an example of brand voice Dos and Don'ts:

- **Brand voice:** Authentic
- **Do:** Speak authoritatively and honestly about products and services
- **Don't:** Talk down to people or act like a know-it-all

Hone Your Voice!

› Use Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, online forums, and review sites to learn how people talk about your brand and what tones they use.

› Write down your brand voice and its defining traits. Remember: a brand has only one voice, but many tones (for example, a brand voice that is "helpful" can have both sympathetic and sarcastic tones).

› Create a chart of brand voice Dos and Don'ts. Use it as your guiding star for communicating consistently across platforms and content.

Starbucks has a humble brand voice that uses cheerful and grateful tones to encourage users to get involved and share ideas with the brand.

starbucks Follow

233k likes 2w

starbucks Just one more week to share your Iced Coffee + Nature photos using #StarbucksOnIce! Thanks to @contagious_babe for brightening our day.

view all 206 comments

looneysonya @starbucks coffee spa day?
sypher.sarah @markymark_fromindianpeaks
aphs.relic @starbucks Do you still have the 'Cotton candy Frappe'¿
z_m_r7
ldlw9459
kathec_04 Mmmm @starbucks
girlwiththebigeyes One of my favorites! #Girlwiththebigeyes
xxgraciethecoolkidxx I want it
misara0215 @daychou 图片美

Log in to like or comment.

> Choose social platforms that best align with your goals and audience.

Step 3: Establish

By now you know your audience, the brand traits they value, their opinions of your brand and products, and the voice and tones you're going to use. Now it's time to establish a social footprint and create profiles on different social platforms.

Before you choose your social platforms, first understand what goals you want to achieve with social media. Your social goals will influence what platforms you use and who you'll reach on each platform.

Develop Your Social Media Goals

A good way to determine your social goals is to first understand your marketing goals. What does your marketing team want to achieve? Brand awareness? Customer loyalty? From there, choose social media goals that drive your overall marketing goals.

Here are common social media goals to consider:

- Engagement rate
- Web traffic
- Number of followers
- Follower growth
- Number of leads
- Conversion rate
- Customer service and satisfaction

Based on your social goals, choose the platforms that will drive marketing goals and reach your targeted audience. For example, if your goal is to improve customer service, use Twitter to answer customer questions and resolve issues.

Choose Your Social Media Platforms

Once you've defined your goals and know where your audience is most engaged, choose the platforms that best align with your goals and audience.

Here are common social media platforms to consider:

Platform	Strengths
Facebook	• Driving web traffic through targeted reach • Increasing shares and likes through inspirational and educational content • Improving conversion through special offers and promotions
Twitter	• Improving customer service through direct communication with audiences • Increasing customer satisfaction through real-time engagement • Researching audiences and competitors through listening and monitoring
Instagram	• Increasing brand awareness through inspirational images and videos • Growing followers with influencer marketing and curated content • Encouraging future purchases through high engagement rates
Pinterest	• Driving sales using pins and re-pins • Increasing engagement through tutorials • Driving traffic using major lifestyle themes like weddings and graduations

Make Your Mark!

› Establish social media goals by looking at your marketing goals first. Write down a list of goals like web traffic, conversion, and engagement rate.

› Choose platforms that drive your social goals and where your audience is most engaged. Start small with just one or two platforms rather than create profiles on every platform imaginable.

› Always refer back to your social media goals and audience research to understand the best platform for you.

Starbucks builds a positive brand personality across social media by taking advantage of each platform's unique strengths: Twitter for customer service, Facebook for contests, and Instagram for sharing user-generated content.

Phase 1 Signs of Maturity

Are you ready to move on to the next phase of social media maturity? Read the checklist below to find out if you've mastered Phase 1:

✓ You've listened to and documented what your audience says, thinks, and feels about your brand, products, industry, and competitors.

✓ You've tracked and monitored social platforms to learn where your audience is most engaged.

✓ You've defined the voice, tone, traits, and key messages of your brand.

✓ You've developed social media goals based on your marketing goals and activities.

✓ You've created profiles based on platform strength, social goals, and audience.
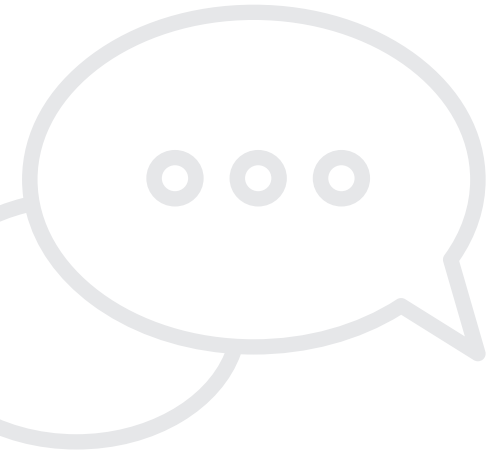
ENGAGE

With your initial social media planning complete, now it's time to talk the talk. You're in a great position to start engaging with users because you now know what your audience thinks, what they want, and how to talk to them about your brand. Let's get started with the first step in the Engage phase: Interact.

Step 4: Interact

Millions of social media users, thousands of brands. Where do you begin your conversations? And with whom? With your social media research in hand, it's not as difficult as it seems.

Ask and Answer

The best way to get started is to interact with users who are talking about your brand and products. Respond to questions they have, issues they're dealing with, or problems they need solved. For example, if you see a Facebook post complaining about a late shipment, post an initial public response to the user and then work with them offline until the issue is resolved.

Many consumers are turning to social media to vent about their problems with a brand. Companies are now dedicating customer service reps to social media to monitor and respond to these conversations. Social media is a great way to head off negative digital sentiments at the pass.

Target Your Competitors' Followers

Start interacting with users who you think would benefit from your brand, even if they aren't currently following you. A simple way to do this is to target the followers of your competitors. Look at how they react to your competitors' social content to find out what they like.

If your target audience loves tutorials, for example, and your competitors post them regularly, consider posting your own branded how-tos. Whether you're a cosmetics company or home improvement website, if your desired customers respond well to competitors' content, there's a good chance they'll respond similarly to yours.

Here are more ways you can join and start social media conversations:

- Respond to customer service questions
- Answer questions about pricing, shipping, and returns
- Address frequently asked questions about store hours or locations
- Alert users to sales, promotions, and offers
- Post announcements about new merchandise that just hit stores

Ready, Set, Engage!

› Join social media conversations by answering users' questions and addressing their concerns.

› Use Twitter as a real-time listening tool. Monitor relevant hashtags, keywords, and trending topics to identify conversations you can join.

› Take note of content that performs well with your competitors' followers. Consider posting similar content for your own brand and products.

› Use a call to action (CTA) in your posts to encourage sharing, tagging, and commenting.

Starbucks drives web traffic by posting brand-relevant content on Twitter using trending hashtags.

Starbucks Coffee @Starbucks · 23h
2 ways of making ☕, 2 distinctive flavors.
#Espresso #BrewedCoffee

Espresso vs. Brewed Coffee
1912pike.com

↩   ↻ 87   ♥ 446   •••

> Brand engagement increases by 28% when you expose users to a mix of professional and user-generated content.

Step 5: Share

You've dipped your toes into the social media waters by asking and answering questions. Before you start posting your own branded content, create brand awareness and fill your social media calendar with user-generated content.

User-generated content gives you a nearly endless supply of social media content because your audience generates the posts for you. You still have control over content themes and messages by using brand-associated hashtags and campaigns.

Ask Users to Submit Images and Hashtags

One of the simplest ways to get started with user-generated content is to ask people to submit images of themselves using your products. Provide them with a hashtag to include and tell them where and how to submit content.

For example, if you're an apparel and accessories eCommerce brand, choose a hashtag like #yourbrandstyle (#nastygalstyle, for example). Ask people to submit images of themselves on Instagram wearing your clothes, and include the relevant hashtags and CTAs to encourage sharing.

Once users start posting images using your hashtags, share the posts on your own social platforms and feature them on your website. Potential customers will see how others choose to style your products and feel excited, inspired, and a sense of community.

Here are more hashtag ideas for user-generated content:

- **Lifestyle hashtags:** yoga fanatics, foodies, and DIY enthusiasts
- **Seasonal hashtags:** holidays, seasons, and sports
- **Time-sensitive hashtags:** events, news, and trends
- **Crowdsourced hashtags:** product ideas, designs, and names
- **Utilitarian hashtags:** tips, tricks, and how-tos

Leverage User-Generated Content in Social Media Campaigns

After you've gained steam with user-generated content, create campaigns around the content users have submitted. For example, if you sell flowers and gifts, create a campaign that encourages users to post videos of their loved ones' reactions to receiving flowers or opening gifts. Provide them with a hashtag to include and use CTAs to encourage sharing. To sweeten the deal, offer an incentive for sharing such as discounts, free giveaways, or even cash.

Sharing Is Caring!

› Ask users to submit images of themselves using or wearing your products. Provide them with a branded hashtag to include to increase brand visibility and awareness.

› Feature user-generated content on your website, especially when it showcases your products in use. Brand engagement increases by 28 percent when users are exposed to a mix of professional and user-generated content.

› Incorporate user-generated content into your social media and marketing campaigns. Consider campaigns around holidays, crowdsourcing, and major events.

Starbucks aligns its user-generated content with marketing initiatives by running a hashtag contest on Instagram that boosts social engagement.

> Post, test, measure, and adjust content untill you know how each type performs across audiences and platforms. "

Step 6: Create

You've listened, you've asked, you've answered, and now you've got a stream of user-generated content. What's next? Start posting your own brand-relevant content and use A/B testing to learn what performs best.

Decide What to Post on Social Media

Remember those social media goals you developed in Phase 1, Step 3? These will help you determine what content to post on different platforms.

Do you want to improve customer satisfaction? Tweet at users with information, answers, and links. Are you trying to grow your followers? Post inspiring videos and images on Instagram. Don't forget those all-important CTAs, and make sure to test your content to learn what performs best.

Post and Test Social Media Content

Here's what to test on social media:

- **Images and videos:** user-generated content, lifestyle content, product images and videos, images with text, tips and tutorials, videos with and without music
- **Links:** links to curated content, category and product pages, blogs, customer service and FAQs pages
- **Calls to action:** tag a friend, share this post, comment below, social sharing buttons
- **Volume:** likes, shares, comments, retweets, and mentions

For all of the above, use A/B testing to see what works and what doesn't. What garners the most likes? Instagram pictures of specific products? Facebook videos of user-generated content? Links to curated blog posts? Consider posting more of these, if so. To obtain the best data, start small by only testing one thing at a time.

Create, Test, Measure, Adjust!

› Write down a list of content types to test based on your social media goals. Include a mix of content like videos, images, and text.

› Test one thing at a time, such as traffic, CTA copy, or likes.

› Adjust your content based on the test results. For example, if video tutorials perform better than written ones, consider making more videos.

› After you adjust and post new content, start the cycle over again with new A/B tests. Keep posting, testing, measuring, and adjusting content until you know how each type performs across audiences and platforms.

Starbucks appeals to a broad range of visitors by displaying both user-generated and professional photography on its website.
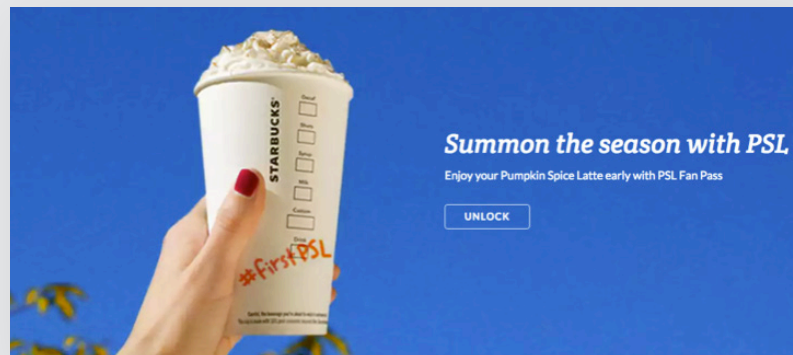
Phase 2 Signs of Maturity

Ready for the next phase of social media maturity? Read the checklist below to find out.

✓ You've joined social media conversations by answering users' questions and asking questions your own.

✓ You've identified new audiences that would benefit from your products and determined what content they like to see.

✓ You've encouraged user-generated content with CTAs, hashtags, contests, and campaigns.

✓ You've A/B tested content to learn what performs best.

✓ You're regularly posting branded and user-generated content optimized for social goals, platforms, audiences, brand voice, and marketing goals.

BUILD

You're no social novice anymore. You've got fans, followers, likes, and shares. Your social media goals are integrated with your marketing goals. Now it's time to grow, increase your reach, and convert fans into loyal customers. It all begins with Step 7 in the Build phase: Reach.

Step 7: Reach

Increasing your reach means connecting with new audiences to steadily improve on your social KPIs. Using the tactics and best practices we've covered so far, a great way to get started is to promote your social media posts.

Promote Your Social Posts

A promoted post lets you target highly specific audiences. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook offer a wide range of filtering criteria, such as age, interests, location, lifestyle, and keywords to identify and reach a targeted demographic.

Looking to reach young men interested in dress shoes? Promote a Facebook post that includes brand-relevant keywords and hashtags. Add a strong CTA that tells them what action they should take next. Anyone who's used those keywords and hashtags in the past and meets your criteria will see your promoted post.

Collaborate with Influencers

Another tactic for increasing reach is to collaborate with influencers in your industry. Influencers already have robust audiences of their own, so connecting with influencers can expose your brand to thousands or millions of new people.

An influencer could be a celebrity associated with your industry, a non-celebrity who has a large following, or a prominent lifestyle figure. For example, if you're a sporting goods brand, collaborate with a snowboard-obsessed Instagram user who's amassed a huge following.

Promoted posts let you precisely target the audience you want, and along with user-generated content, CTAs, and A/B testing, they increase your reach and improve on your social media goals.

Reach Out!

› Promote your social media posts based on criteria like gender, location, interest, and products. Include hashtags and keywords relevant to your brand, industry, and products.

› Use Facebook Insights and other analytics tools to learn optimal posting times, days, and frequency.

› Identify and build relationships with influencers to leverage their social audiences. Consider social media users, celebrities, prominent bloggers, and even your own customers.

› Use keywords and hashtags in your social profiles to increase brand and product visibility.

Starbucks promotes its new seasonal drinks with strong CTAs that encourage fans to share posts and discover products.

> To incease conversion, direct your social traffic to landing pages during sales and offers. "

Step 8: Convert

What should you do with all your new fans and followers? Convert them into paying customers, of course—and loyal ones, at that. Step 8 in the Build phase is all about optimizing the path to conversion.

The path to conversion is different for every consumer, depending on where they are in the buying journey. Some shoppers are just beginning their journey by researching products and brands. Others might be close to a purchase but haven't made a final decision yet. Some shoppers are ready to buy, credit card in hand.

To optimize the path to conversion, learn the different stages of your audience's buying journey, how long it is, and what you need to do to advance them to the next stage.

Optimize Conversion with Facebook Lead Ads

Lead generation is a great way to learn more about potential customers, what interests them, and what stage of the buying journey they're in. Like promoted posts, Facebook lead ads target users with specified criteria but go a step further to collect users' personal information.

When users click a CTA in a lead ad, a form pops up that autofills their information. In just two taps, users can sign up for your marketing emails and opt-in to receive regular communications from your brand.

Send Your Social Traffic to Landing Pages

Another way to optimize the path to conversion is to send your social traffic to website landing pages. This works especially well when you're running promotions and offers. For example, during a major sale, promote a Tweet or Facebook post that includes a link to the sale category page.

Both lead ads and landing pages take into consideration different stages of the buyer's journey: a shopper who's not ready to buy can sign up for your emails through lead ads, and someone who's closer to purchasing can click right over to your website from a landing page link and start browsing.

Seal the Deal!

› Generate leads, grow subscribers, and optimize conversion with Facebook lead ads.

› During sales and offers, direct your social traffic to landing pages using promoted posts. Include links and CTAs that describe the offer clearly.

› Integrate lead ads and promoted posts with your marketing activities. Continually optimize for conversion by A/B testing your content.

Starbucks drives sales by using clear CTAs in its Facebook ads to promote in-store offers.

Step 9: Analyze

By now you know how important it is to measure social media performance. Back in the Plan phase you set social media goals and learned what types of content to test. Let's dive into the next step of the Build phase and tackle social measurement and analysis.

Analyze Social KPIs against Business and Marketing Goals

When measuring social KPIs, start with your company's overall business goals first, like generating revenue or expanding global footprint. From there, learn how your marketing team's goals contribute to those business goals.

Choose KPIs that are concrete, measurable, and align to business goals. "

For instance, to expand global footprint (business goal), your company needs to generate brand awareness in new markets (marketing goal), and uses social media to increase reach and engagement in those new markets (social KPI). Here's a quick breakdown:

- **Business goal:** expand global footprint
- **Marketing goal:** generate brand awareness in desired new market
- **Social KPI:** increase reach and engagement on social platforms in the new market

Start from the top down like this for every social KPI. Ask yourself: what is my company trying to achieve? How does our marketing team contribute to this goal? How can social media drive our marketing goals, ultimately driving our business goals?

Here are common social media KPIs to consider:

- Likes
- Shares
- Brand mentions
- Engagement rate
- Traffic data
- Subscribers
- Comments
- Customer service issues resolved
- Conversion rate
- Sales

What these KPIs all have in common is that they're concrete and measurable. You might find it difficult to measure brand awareness, but find it easier to measure likes, shares, and comments, which are concrete, measurable indicators of brand awareness.

Analyze This!

› Set your social media KPIs based on company goals first, then your marketing goals.

› As much as possible, choose concrete KPIs you can measure with numbers.

› Use a combination of platform analytics and third-party tools to obtain the best data for later monitoring and analysis.

› Optimize your paid social media efforts with weekly and monthly reviews of social KPIs.

Phase 3 Signs of Maturity

Ready for the final step in social media maturity and success? Find out using the checklist below:

✓ You've optimized the path to conversion by sending social traffic to landing pages.

✓ You've use third-party and platform analytics to learn what content performs best .

✓ You've researched and built relationships with social media influencers.

✓ You've gained subscribers and generated leads using Facebook lead ads.

✓ You've set social KPIs based on business and marketing goals and continually work to improve performance.
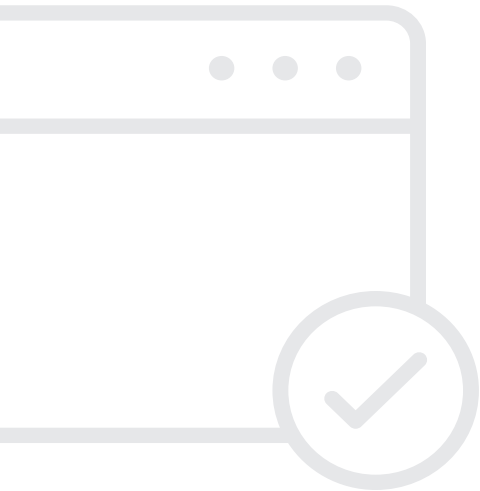
OPTIMIZE

Step 10: Rinse and Repeat

Congratulations! You're now socially mature. Your planning, research, testing, and measurement have finally paid off.

To ensure social media continues to generate traffic, sales, and revenue (or whatever your social goals may be), continue with ongoing review, testing, and optimization of your social content and KPIs for each phase.

Here's what to focus on:

- Focus on the platforms where your audience is most engaged and where you see the most growth. Twitter not working for you? Pinterest more effective? Ditch the microblogging site and focus your efforts somewhere else.

- Focus on the tactics that give you the best results. For example, if posting influencer content on Facebook works best, stick to this tactic and continually optimize the experience.

- Focus on social KPIs that drive both marketing and business goals. If your company values web traffic over social shares, for example, set social KPIs that drive toward this goal.

- Focus on measuring KPIs using factual information. In today's data-driven world, there's little guesswork needed, so focus on facts instead of opinions as much as possible.

About LYONSCG

LYONSCG is the premier digital agency for eCommerce, combining proven methodologies, deep technical expertise and award-winning design to create immersive brand experiences that engage and convert consumers. Hundreds of leading B2C and B2B brands trust LYONSCG to realize their eCommerce vision and continually optimize it to drive revenue and profitable growth. LYONSCG is a strategic partner of Salesforce Commerce Cloud, SAP Hybris and Magento and is the recipient of Salesforce Commerce Cloud Delivery Partner of the Year, Magento Partner Excellence and Magento Innovator of the Year awards.

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