



Planning Social Media
Campaigns for the New Year





14 Tips for 2014: Planning Social Media Campaigns for the New Year

The holidays are fast approaching, which means the New Year is right around the corner. A new year means new opportunities – and new chances to test social media campaigns and kick the competition to the curb. Don't wait until the last minute to put a plan in place for how you'll kick off 2014 on social. Start strong with these 14 tips to plan social media campaigns so you can hit the ground running in **2014**.

1. Start with a 2013 summary

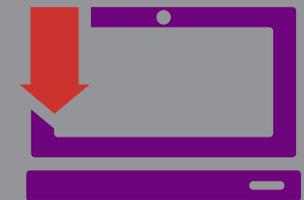
Take time to review your activities and performance over the past year. What was your baseline in terms of followers, reach, engagement and growth? Where did you see the biggest gains and losses? Which promotions were particularly successful, and which ones could have done better? Don't forget to compare your performance with your competitors'. Doing so will give you a better idea of the landscape, and point out opportunities for standing out from the pack. [Want to see how your 2013 campaigns performed? Try a FREE Simply Measured report.](#)

2. Have a plan

This may seem obvious, but many social media engagements tend to veer off plan, becoming reactive and opportunistic. While it's very important to remain flexible, there are benefits to sticking to a long-term strategy. Meeting yearly, quarterly and monthly goals requires a degree of pre-planning. Planning will also help make sure your social media fits your overall brand image and help you manage your workflow so you'll have time to react when necessary.



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3. Set SMART goals

When it's time to lay down objectives, remember the SMART acronym, and make them **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound. The clearer your parameters, the easier it will be to develop strategies and tactics that will help you achieve them, as well as come up with a manageable timeline. Making sure they can be tracked and measured will help you determine your level of success, and their eventual return on investment (ROI).

4. Spy on the competition

Checking on what your competition is up to is a great way to set a benchmark for your own campaigns, and possibly steal an idea or two. We're not saying you should copy them verbatim, but knowing what they're doing allows you to do it better. And don't just benefit from the things they've done well – pay attention to campaigns your competitors have run that haven't performed well or didn't resonate with your audience, and avoid similar tactics. **Need to track your competitors' campaigns and compare your own? Try some of our competitive analysis reports free for 14 days.**

5. Create an editorial calendar

One of the best ways to plan is through a smart and well-designed editorial calendar. Begin by mapping out the year: adding such things as company and industry events, holidays, events in entertainment and pop culture (the 2014 Winter Olympics, for example) and other noteworthy dates. Then, incorporate your marketing campaigns and other promotional activities. This way, you'll be able to plan for upcoming opportunities, and start creating a timeline for executing on your plan. Need some help? Find out about some useful tools in tip #7.



Specific

Goals should be simplistically written and clearly define what you are going to do.

Measurable

You need tangible evidence that you've accomplished your goals.

Attainable

Your goals should stretch you slightly so you feel challenged, but defined well enough so that you can achieve them.

Relevant

Goals should be instrumental to the mission of the entire marketing team and/or organization.

Time-bound

Set a definite target date for completion as well as frequencies for specific action steps.



6. Align with your marketing goals

Social media should complement your company's overall branding and marketing presence. Consider designing a cool social media promotion around a big ad campaign. Remember, social media users will also be paying attention to traditional media. To work best, your goals should be synchronized – whether they're leads generated, impressions, audience growth or otherwise.

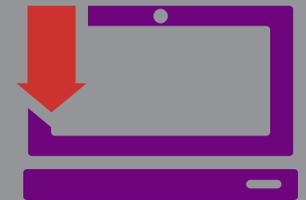
8. Develop a strategy for execution

Google offers several tools to help you keep things on track. Google Docs provides Editorial Calendar templates for blogs and websites, and Google Drive lets you share items with the entire team and work off the same document, so you can better maintain version control. Conduct weekly meetings and send out reports keep everyone abreast on work in progress. And make sure to allow enough time for content review, fact checking and proofreading. [Track all of your social media campaigns with Simply Measured's powerful social media analytics. Start a free 14-day trial.](#)

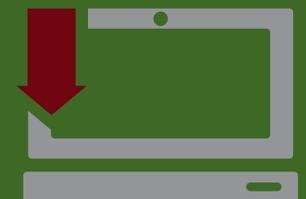
7. Marshal your resources

Start recruiting writers and designers for your social channels; maybe even try out new people in case someone becomes unexpectedly unavailable. You want to have time to generate some well-thought-out, high-quality content. Keeping things fresh is important. Having a “deep bench” of creative talent will allow you to mix things up, so your content doesn't always look and sound the same. [Want tips on how to keep content fresh over the holidays, even while you're on vacation? Download our Social Media Manager's Guide to the Holidays.](#)

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9. Build in some backup

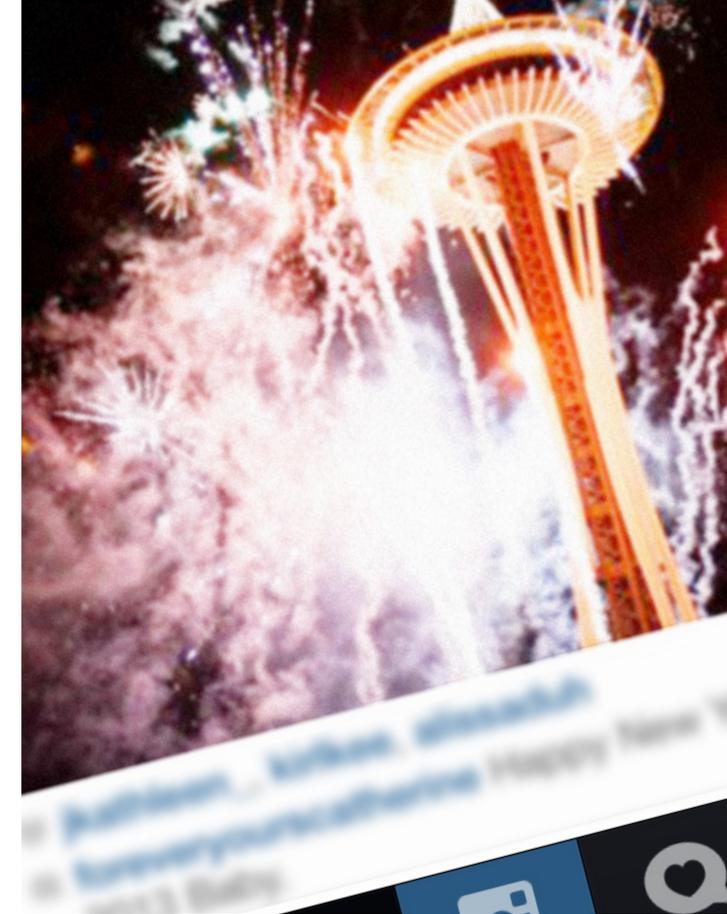
No matter how well you plan, social media has a way of throwing curve balls. So build flexibility into your schedule. Plan to create more content than you need in case something becomes irrelevant or something turns out to be unusable for whatever reason. You'll also want to be able to react in the event of an opportunity, and having backup will free up your time to do so. While you want your content to look and feel professional, at no time do you want to appear to be on autopilot.

10. Give yourself some wiggle room

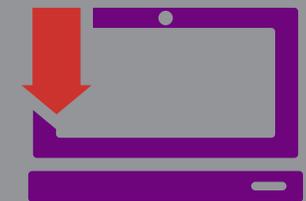
If a crisis occurs, it may throw your entire editorial calendar out of whack. Make sure you have bandwidth, time and budget to develop content and promotions, if necessary, in conjunction with the crisis. For example, if a flood or earthquake hits your geographical area, it could be nice if you could run a charitable promotion, or at least gather volunteers or donations to help out. It's one thing to have social media resources free to respond, but it's even better to be able to “walk the walk” – and put money or time toward a solution.

11. Consider more visual content

According to Forbes predictions for 2014, image-centric content will rule. Infographics, charts, videos and images can attract your brand more attention than traditional text-based content. Just make sure you have time and resources to get these items produced and approved. Visual campaigns are where the editorial planning comes in handy, because it's useful to create a backlog of images and interactive content so when you're ready to launch campaigns, you're not waiting on a designer to get you what you need. [Want tips on how to drive engagement on your brand's Instagram? Download our free white paper.](#)



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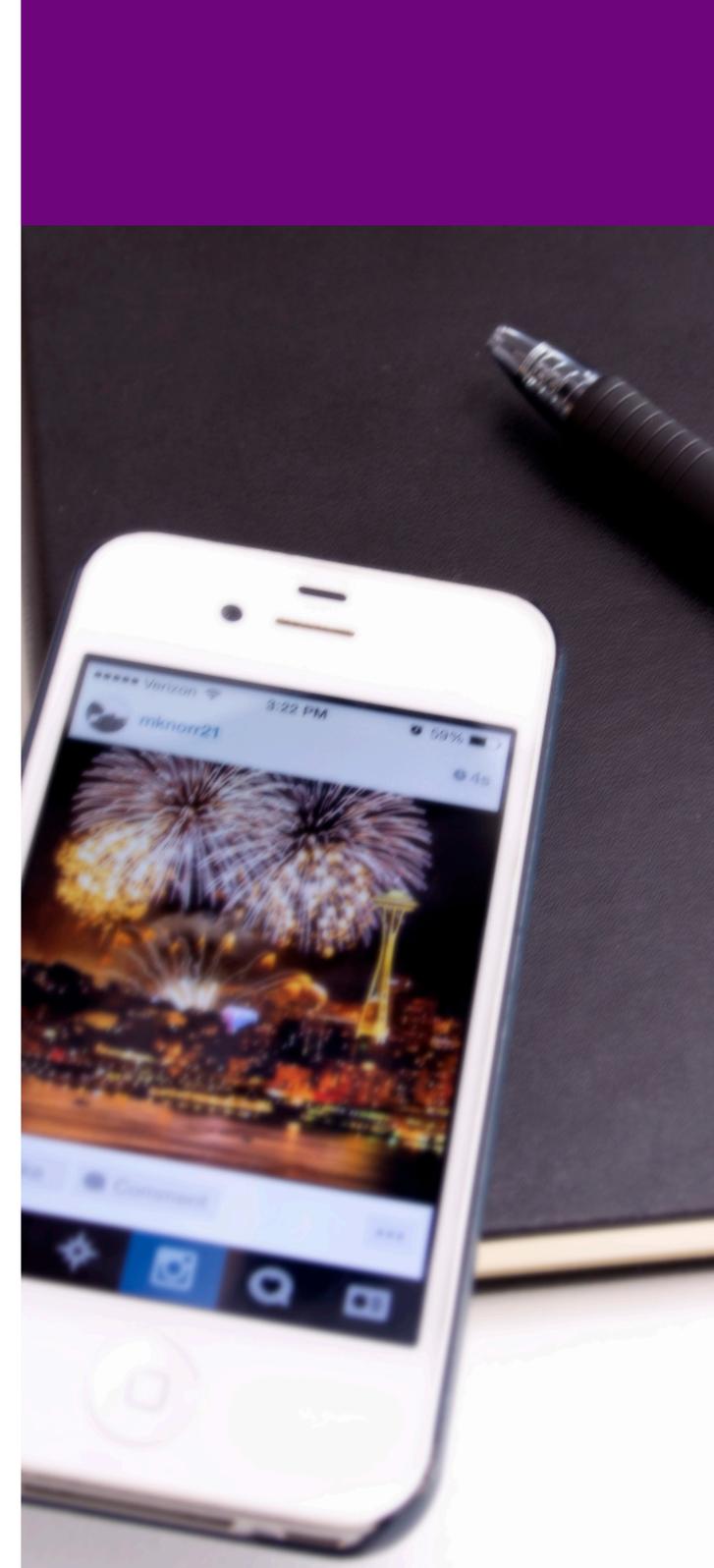
12. Optimize for mobile

It's no secret that users are increasingly using mobile devices to access social media. Forbes predicts that by 2017, 87% of connected devices will be smartphones. Be sure your content and landing pages work for a mobile audience, and consider mobile-specific campaigns like location-based targeting and check-in promotions. Additionally, be strategic about users accessing your content via mobile devices when planning campaigns. For example, users are less likely to consume heavier pieces of content on their tiny mobile phones, so be careful with campaign targeting when promoting eBooks and white papers. On most networks you can segment your audiences by which device they're using – take advantage of this. The knee-jerk reaction is to target all devices so you can reach the biggest audience, but that doesn't always benefit your end goal. Campaigns that require little to no work on the user's end are likely to perform better on mobile.

13. Embrace diversity

Where is your audience congregating on social? Pinterest is 72% female, while Google+ is 70% male. Older, more affluent people use LinkedIn, and if you're trying to capture the youth market, look into Tumblr (which has a greater percentage of teens and young adults than Facebook) or Vine. The better you can match your social media activity to your target audience, the greater your potential ROI.

Keep in mind that the same audience can behave differently depending on the social network they're on at the time. For example, a user may be more likely to consume business-related content while he is on LinkedIn than he is when he's on Twitter. Find the overlap between audience and channel and tailor your content to that happy medium.





14. Track and measure everything

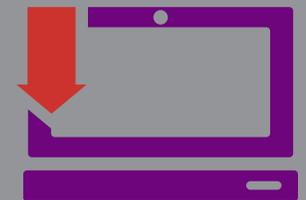
Make sure everything is trackable: add tracking parameters to any URLs driving to your website, use unique hashtags and/or Twitter handles for specific campaigns and promotions, Facebook apps and plugins, unique landing pages – you name it. At the end of the campaign, you'll want to be able to attribute every like, every visit and every conversion to the proper channel so you can figure out what worked best and what flopped. This will enable you to continuously run successful campaigns and kick the underwhelming campaigns to the curb. Additionally, attributing success appropriately will aid in budget allocations and measuring ROI. **Track, analyze and report on all of your social media campaigns so you can make better decisions and beat the competition. Get started now.**

Remember: start early, develop a workable plan, stay flexible and whatever you do, measure everything. If you need assistance with monitoring, reporting or data visualization on your campaigns, Simply Measured is happy to help.

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