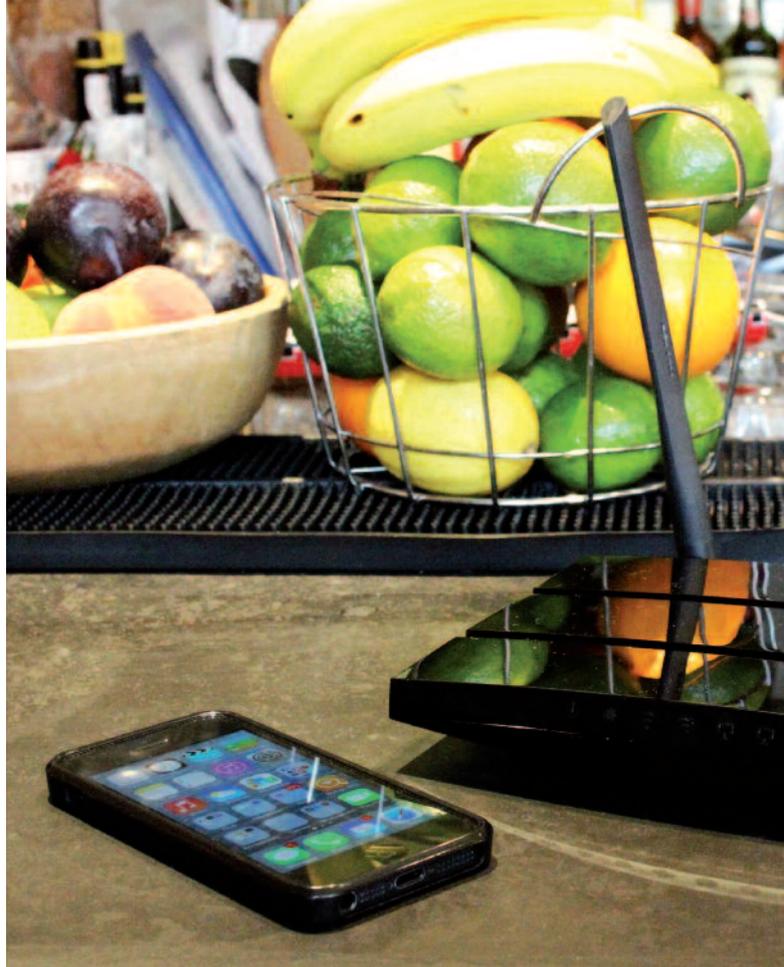


Locally Social

The global, high street coffee chains have been putting major effort into being 'locally relevant', perhaps in recognition that many independent operators are already more than connected and in tune with their immediate customer base. So how can social media and an online presence help out?



Creating a Social Media Success Plan

Whether you're selling an ultra-hip, cold-filtered coffee elixir or your offering tea and cream cakes for the local mums, there is sure to be a social media channel that can help you reach out and stay in touch with your particular band of customers. But where do you start, and how do you stay interesting and engaging for the longer term?

To help you get to grips with the latest opportunities offered by social media, digital marketing expert and author, Susanne Currid (who can be found at her marketing blog at www.the-loop.com/blog or followed on twitter @susanne_currid, and is the author of *Build Your Tribe* – a new marketing manifesto for restaurants, bars and cafés), proposes her own Social Media Success Plan for cafés.

Start with your business objectives

Before you launch head first onto facebook or twitter, consider how many of your business objectives could be supported by the use of social media. Write a list of everything you think it could help you with over and above the obvious objective of selling more teas, coffee and food. For example, could you use it to promote events, find new employees, keep an eye on the competition or to encourage customer feedback? Then keep your list close at hand as a reminder of how to make more of your social media communications for the future.



As with other marketing techniques, it's important to set out your business objectives before using social media, advises Susanne Currid.

Choose the best channels for your business

Now we have an increasingly wide range of channels to choose from, it makes sense to focus on the ones that will be most popular with your customers. Facebook may have prematurely received the death knell across the UK media when it lost about 1.5 million users last year, however, one in three users still log in daily and it is especially popular with people who have children and who are working full time.

Interest in twitter continues to grow with account numbers highest in the UK

amongst 18–24 year and 25–34 year old groups. Twitter is also the channel of choice for alpha males and females, so it works especially well if you are looking to attract high octane caffeine lovers!

When it comes to the smaller channels, Instagram and Pinterest are key ones to watch as they are especially popular with food and drink lovers. Did you know that 45% of 18-24 year olds now have an Instagram account and that 20% of people with children and 20% of those who work part time are also Instagram fans? Pinterest - the image pinning network - is also shooting up in popularity with higher spend, educated women in the 25–34 year old age bracket. It's especially great, for example, for followers of fashion and food trends, yummy mummies, brides-to-be and cupcake lovers.

Know your audience

Too many businesses come a cropper on social media when they fail to consider what their customers would like to hear about. If you simply stick to posts that promote your regular offer, you are missing an opportunity to connect on a more emotional level with your audience. The most engaging businesses on social media talk passionately about the things they care about, or simply share their sense of humour.

It's important to remember that it's 'social' media, so get chatting about your local area and the big events that matter to your customers. Question posts also work



Hally's - a Californian-inspired café in Fulham, London – has installed a Widify in a Box, supplied by Widify.

well with younger audiences, but often fall on deaf ears with older, more time poor customers. Whatever content route you take, keep it consistent in tone and you could end up creating an online brand personality that adds fantastic value to your business.

Build awareness of your social media accounts

Once you're up and running with your accounts, make sure to let everyone know where to find you in the social media sphere. Permanently mention your social media accounts on your blackboards, street A boards, on menus, newsletters, toilet doors and on or close to your front entrance. Increase the potential for people to like and share your posts to a wider audience by running ReTweet competitions or asking your customers to like your page or like a post in order to win a special prize.

You can also use hashtags in your posts to help increase the chances of your posts been seen in shared public conversations about the latest trending topics. For example, if you've created an eye-catching cup-cake, include #cupcake as a hashtag within your message. This is especially important on Instagram and Pinterest where food and drink lovers often search for content that includes a particular hashtag.

Make your posts eye-catching

Images definitely rule on social media. Wherever possible always include an eye-catching image to sit alongside your message. If you have something really important to say, you can also include the text within the post image to give it more prominence. Research has indicated that image posts on Facebook get up to 180% more interaction than those without

images. Text length also matters. Shorter posts generally work better across the board. For example, on facebook posts of between 100 and 250 characters (less than three lines of text) see about 60% more likes, comments and shares than longer posts.

Be proactive about customer complaints

Customer complaints have always been part and parcel of the café business. Unfortunately, they become more public and enduring when they find their way onto Facebook, TripAdvisor and all the rest. The most important advice I would offer is that you don't ignore negative comments. Research indicates that most customers have a more positive view of businesses that are proactive about dealing with customer complaints. So don't just hit the delete or hide button, or worse still argue the case online. Instead,

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SOCIAL MEDIA

answer complaints quickly and courteously and look for a win/win outcome wherever possible.

Use social media management tools to save time and effort

If you do decide to promote your café across two or more channels, you can save valuable time and effort using a tool like Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com) to view, schedule and monitor all your social media posts from one computer dashboard or smartphone app. This online tool is free for businesses who want to manage up to five social media accounts, which makes it an absolute winner for cash strapped small businesses. You can also improve the impact of your tweets by making sure you tweet when your Twitter audience is most likely to be online (check out free tools like www.tweriod.com and the AutoSchedule option in Hootsuite to help you work out the best times to tweet. Facebook Insights for Facebook page administrators will also tell you when your Facebook followers are most likely to be online).

Social media in action

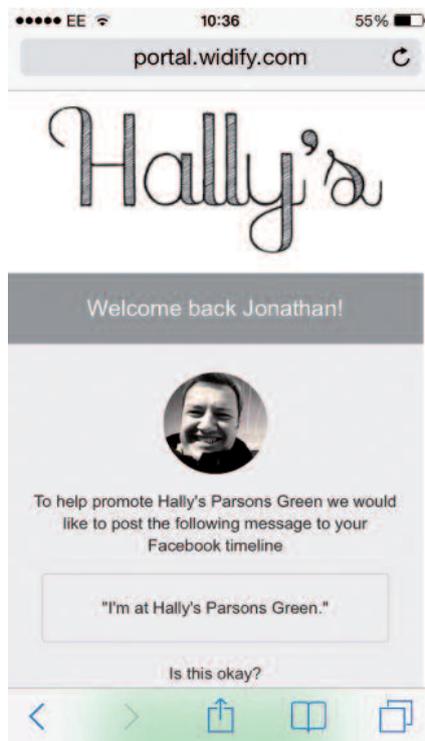
"We were very dubious about social media and had to be persuaded to give it a go," says Steve Jones of Whitstable Produce in Kent

(www.whitstableproduce.co.uk).

"However, a couple of years down the line, we find it works brilliantly for us. We focus on twitter (@whitproduce) and facebook (/Whitproduce), and with more time we would do more with Google+."

In fact, the store have found various suppliers as a direct result - their bread supplier (@HBaySourDough), croissant supplier (@flourarranger) and @royalbarkbisc (a purveyor of hand-made, wheat-free dog biscuits who they came across via Twitter).

"Twitter has brought us new suppliers, keeps us in touch with like-minded independents locally and further afield,



and brings us customers who like the sound of our specials or want to know when the bread has arrived!" explains Steve Jones.

"I think our favourite independent coffee voice on twitter has to be @willowscoffee and their mobile companion @blksheepcoffee - both in Canterbury, and both tweeting with attitude! Facebook is much more about customers than business, but both have a sense of community, helpfulness and sharing that adds to what we do."

Hally's - a Californian-inspired café in Fulham, London - is using Wi-Fi to grow its social media and to collect more customer data. The Wi-Fi is linked to Hally's social media accounts such as facebook and twitter, and instead of asking for a Wi-Fi password, customers find "Hally's Free Wi-Fi" and log on with their email or social media account. For customers using their social media account, they can

automatically 'like' or 'follow' Hally's on facebook or twitter (in return, this increases the café's social media reach and grows their local marketing).

The Wi-Fi is also developing loyalty and driving footfall as customers know they can access the free Wi-Fi, and when a customer returns they are automatically logged on and asked to post a message to their social media account. Later this year Hally's say that they plan to use the Wi-Fi to setup loyalty promotions for top customers who visit.

Their Wi-Fi (Widify in a Box, and supplied by Widify - an independent media company connecting communities with Wi-Fi, apps and web sites and publishers of Kingsroad.co.uk), only required an Internet connection and took 15 minutes for Hally's to set up and is a complete and legally compliant solution that enables cafés to provide safe and secure Wi-Fi linked to their social media profiles. Cafés simply plug it into their Internet connection.

Widify in a Box is a much more beneficial way of providing customers with Wi-Fi access rather than password, charging or form access, feel Widify. A café can capture more data and grow their social media presence and by offering free Wi-Fi. It can also drive more footfall, increase sales, loyalty and traffic to their web site.

"Wi-Fi is a must have for a coffee shop because customers expect Internet access. With Widify in a Box, a café can actively market free Wi-Fi and capture opt-in customer data. Customers no longer have to ask for a password or pay for access. Widify in a Box enables the café to provide a Wi-Fi hotspot by simply plugging in the router that we configure and maintain," says Jonathan Lloyd, director at Widify.

"Using Widify in a Box, a café can then view rich analytical data on customers using their Wi-Fi. They can use it to send promotions and targeted offers. We have seen a customer venue capture nearly 1000 emails in a month and total reach on Facebook increase by 41%."

Widify in a Box is a brand from Widify and Widify in a Box for Cafés is currently available to buy order online (<http://widify.com>), say its creators, or by calling 0203 393 7190 (a year's subscription is £400 +VAT, or £40 +VAT a month).

Other features include of the system include Wi-Fi analytics on guests, Wi-Fi marketing using social media, presence analytics to target customers are and send them real-time marketing opportunities, secure and legal Wi-Fi which adheres to current legislation on public wireless usage and content filtering.

Marimba Mug Shot Competition

The chocolatier and producer of the Hot Chocolate Melt drinks, Marimba, has launched a competition to help support its 350+ outlets boost their hot chocolate sales throughout 2014. The Marimba Mug Shot competition encourages outlet's customers to share a photo of themselves enjoying a Marimba Hot Chocolate Melt on twitter or facebook, mentioning the café or coffee shop that served the drink, for a chance to win a luxury chocolate hamper. The photo with the most likes or re-tweets wins, and the café also wins a box of Marimba's handmade truffles.

The competition will run throughout 2014, with a draw taking place at the end of every month, up until the end of December (more details on the competition can be found at <http://www.marimbaworld.com/mugshot.html>).