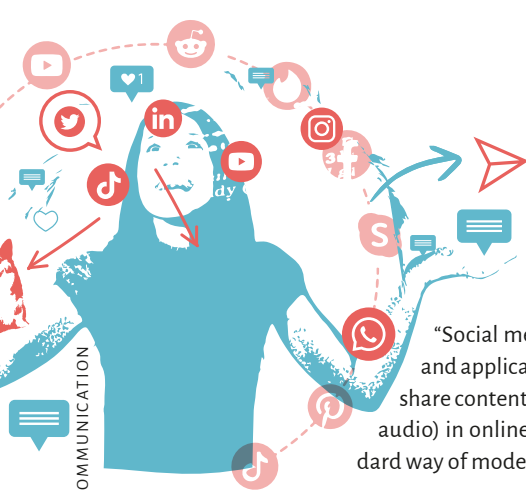




Social media

“Social media” refers to digital platforms, tools and applications that enable people to create and share content in various formats (text, image, video, audio) in online communities. It has become a standard way of modern communication.

What makes social media different from traditional media is the social aspect. Compared to traditional media (TV, radio, newspaper), social media offers interactivity, providing instant and continuous feedback over time. This makes it both powerful and frightening. The more engagement a publication gets, the more it will reach a wider audience.

There is an additional layer of work as you become your own content distributor. Cutting out intermediaries may sound exciting and easy. But it is harder than you might think. You will quickly hit a wall that will prevent your content from achieving the success you expect. It takes a few minutes to create an account, but way more time to build a community and keep their attention.

Social media is a marathon. To get the results you want, you need to acquire the skills that intermediaries have: the editorial skills to create and distribute the relevant content to the desired audience and to build a bridge between what you want to share and what, how, when and where your audience wants to hear it. Not everyone can devote that level of energy to making it a success. Do you want to spend more time doing your research, or communicating about it on social media? The example of dating fits well when talking about social media. Imagine going on a first date with someone. Imagine that person telling you every single detail about themselves. If you get too much information in one go, you might quickly get annoyed. Would you go on another date? Probably not.

Social media publishing is like a first date for your content. You want to attract the attention of your audience, get them to click on a link, watch the full video, like, share, repost or comment. You will then have to monitor so that you don't miss anything, seize an opportunity to engage in a conversation, right a wrong or provide additional information. Failure to do this can be harmful to your image and lead to a bad buzz.

In a world of infobesity (information overload), where a dancing cat gets more attention than almost anything else, you need to stand out by adding value with quality content. To start off, develop a social media strategy before creating social media channels.

Consistency will help you retain the attention of your audience. Quality content will keep your audience engaged. Posting regularly, but not too often, will maintain the relationship with them without boring them (making them feel spammed). Ask yourself the 5Ws to create a social media strategy: *Why, Who, What, Where & When?*

Get inspiration from others. Is it best to have your own new social media channels, or to use your organisation's existing channels? Multiplying channels can lead to a dilution of content distribution. Some keys to social media success are: investing time, investing more in visual content, building your community, identifying ambassadors and letting your channels breathe.



Recommended reads:

- ♦ Cinelli et al. (2022), *Promoting engagement with quality communication in social media*. PLoS ONE 17(10): e0275534. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275534>
- ♦ National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (2018), *What Works Engaging the public through social media*. https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/what_works_engaging_the_public_through_social_media_november_2018.pdf
- ♦ European Commission (2020), *Social Media Guide for EU funded R&I projects*. https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/grants_manual/amga/soc-med-guide_en.pdf