

Getting the Most out of Social Media: Successfully Using Social Media¹

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Introduction

This EDIS publication, which focuses on describing successful ways in which an organization can use social media, is the third in a four-part publication series on getting the most out of social media usage. The series includes additional publications:

- *What is Social Media?*
- *Creating a Social Media Plan*
- *Good Practices When Using Social Media*

Background

As the go-to place for information, the Internet is a crucial tool for those in the agricultural industry trying to spread information to consumers. As information found on the Internet is seen as reliable, it has become imperative for agriculturalists and other industry members to become present on the Internet through an easy and convenient way – social media (Cockerill, 2013).

What Does Using Social Media Achieve?

Social media's primary purpose is to exchange information with a target audience—the individuals you want your information to reach—for example, consumers. On all social media platforms, information is uploaded, commented on,

and shared. In sharing information, agriculturalists should focus on four areas (Figure 1):

- 1. Influencing:** Is the information you are posting on your social media platform(s) encouraging members of your target audience to seek correct and accurate information so that they make more informed decisions when purchasing agricultural product(s)?
- 2. Educating:** Is the information you are posting on your social media platform(s) teaching and informing the target audience about agricultural commodities, industry, or history?
- 3. Branding:** Is the information you are posting on your social media platform(s) promoting your brand or the agricultural industry as a whole in an open and honest manner that will prompt your target audience to seek out your products?
- 4. Presence:** Are you present on social media? Are you utilizing social media as a cost effective and savvy way of marketing your agricultural business and industry to the public?

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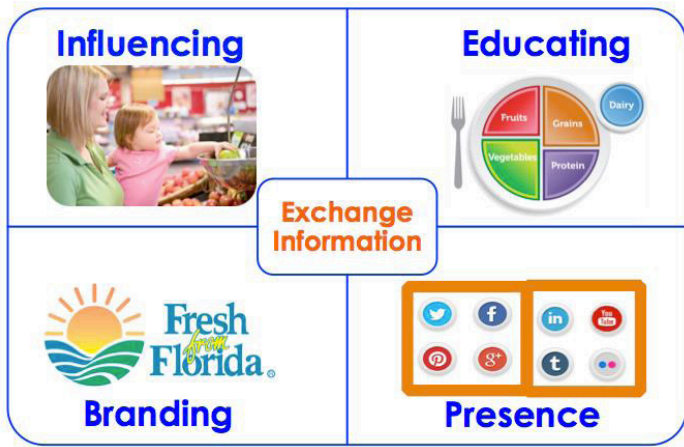


Figure 1. Social media platforms can allow agriculturalists to: **influence** young children and their parents to purchase fresh in season produce when they visit the grocery store; **educate** children about nutritional value of foods and how to keep a balanced and healthy diet; promote one's **brand** so that it may be trusted and looked for in the grocery store; and ultimately represent the **presence** of the industry on the Internet.

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How Do You Achieve Success in These Four Areas?

As an agriculturalist and information provider, you have the power to influence consumer behavior. You are able to prompt awareness, spread information, influence opinions, attitudes, and purchasing behavior, through the information you provide to consumers. Social media also lets agricultural businesses listen to, interact with, and seek feedback from customers (Cockerill, 2013). These interactions result in beneficial relations between agricultural businesses and consumers alike (Cockerill, 2013).

In order to be successful on social media, an agricultural business must evaluate and determine who, what, where, and how it wants to share information with consumers. Asking the following question can help:

1. Who is/are the target audience(s)?
2. Which traditional and social media platforms does/do the target audience(s) use?
3. What marketing content (story) does the farm want to tell?
4. How can marketing through social media promote or connect this content previously used marketing techniques (if applicable)?

These questions can help lay out a plan that agriculturalists can use to connect with their consumers and embrace the

transformation social media has had on the Internet and the spread of information.



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Are You Using Social Media Successfully?

Agriculturalists who use social media successfully should eventually observe a higher level of public trust and loyalty between industry and consumers. At the moment, however, there are a few ways you can measure if you are being successful on social media, including (DeStefano, 2015):

1. **Reach:** How many people did you impact with the content you have shared? You can track this, for example, by the number of **followers** you have on Twitter, the number of **likes** your Facebook page has, or number of **views** and **subscribers** to your YouTube channel.
2. **Engagement:** How many people interacted with the content you shared? You can track this, for example, by the number of clicks on your social media posts; retweets, mentions, and direct messages on Twitter; shares on Facebook; and ratings on YouTube channels.
3. **Conversion:** How many people took action because of the content that you shared? You can track this, for example, by the number of online sales, attendance to events promoted through social media, or increase of in-store sales.

Summary

As audiences become more dependent on the Internet for information, it is becoming more and more important for all business, including agricultural businesses, to have a strong presence online. Interacting on social media platforms is a significant way in which this can occur.

Further Reading

For more information on tools you can use to measure your success on social media, visit the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources' [Tools You Can Use](#).

References

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