

GETTING SMART ON



SOCIAL
MEDIA 2.0

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



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Introduction

Getting Smart Staff



Thanks to technology, the communication world as we know it is changing quickly. In fact, the first bundle we published, **Getting Smart on Social Media**, was already due for an update!

Traditional communication efforts are being amplified, and often replaced, by the use of new media and social media. With resources like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and now Snapchat, companies have the ability to reach a wide audience quickly and differentiate messages across several platforms.

Today's social media channels are also creating opportunities for two-way communication, rather than the one-way communication of traditional media in the past. Allowing schools, districts and companies to reach their audience and create meaningful communication online has revolutionized how communication departments view social media.

"Getting Smart on Social Media and Strategic Communication" is a guide to help you use all the social media channels effectively and strategically. You will learn how to use Twitter, Twitter Chats, Pinterest, Facebook and LinkedIn like a pro. As you read this guide, share your feedback, thoughts and contributions using #SmartBundle across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

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Social Media and Strategic Communications

Getting Smart Staff

LET'S START WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook isn't dead. Contrary to what many people may be saying about how Facebook is dying, it is still a great tool for the right audience. It still has the largest social media audience. Why would you turn your back on that? Figure out who you are trying to reach, see if they are present on the platform and then Facebook away. Teachers, for example, are still a large audience on Facebook.

To Tweet or Not to Tweet? There really is NO question. Twitter is the KING (or Queen) PR channel! 140 characters can open up a whole world. Here's how to use it:

- **Leverage Twitter chats.** So you're on Twitter, now what? Join a Twitter chat. Twitter chats are a great place to start learning who is who, what people are talking about and how they like to be spoken to. Once you are comfortable with how a Twitter chat is run, start your own. Check out this great resource to get started. For more on what Twitter chats to join check out the [most popular daily chats](#).
- **Instagram?** Only if you have something to show. Don't just have a social media account for the sake of having one. To really make it worth it, you have to be active, and remain consistently active. Instagram is a great example of this. Instagram is fabulous if you have images to share that are relevant to your brand. So many people fall into the trap of starting an account on the "hot" new social platform without the content or audience to back it up. Review the platform and find out if it is really worth your time. If not, stop and revisit it again in six months.
- **Content is no longer king.** The king has been dethroned and been replaced by images and video. Our brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than text so it is not surprising that platforms like Instagram, Pinterest and Vine have exploded. We have even seen the Facebook newsfeed taken over by images and video. A picture is worth a thousand words and in the world of social media, can be worth much, much more.

AND NOW, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Integrated, integrated, integrated. The other day I was driving down the road and was listening to an advertisement on the radio. As I heard the final tag line, I looked up and saw a billboard for the same company with the same tag line and later I saw it again on Twitter. Why is this important? Because I remember this product. I am not even in the market for this product, but here I am talking about it; remembering it. When creating a marketing communications campaign, it is crucial to ensure all channels are saying the same thing. Marketing pioneer Dr. Jeffrey Lant says it takes seven touches for someone to make the decision to act on a message, don't spend time and money on multiple messages, when one great message can do all you need.

Transparency will make or break you. We are in a 24/7 news cycle and, with a large percentage of the world using some sort of social media, being truthful and open has never been more important. Ever notice a company on the nightly news when they admit fault immediately? Rarely. Be honest immediately and any crisis can be managed.

Blog about it. Gone are the days when we required media outlets to tell our story. Brand journalism has taken on a new form and it isn't content marketing, nor is it sponsored content. In fact, it's quite the opposite. It is meaningful, quality storytelling. Own your brand and tell the story you want to tell on your website through a blog. Share your blog on social media and watch your brand, followers, and customers grow.

Mobile and more. Sixty percent of all Internet traffic is mobile and is rapidly increasing. Smart phones and tablets have revolutionized how content is accessed and consumed. So, if you do not have a mobile site, you need one. If your mobile site doesn't have a lot of traffic, you're not doing it right. Consider including dollars for mobile in your annual budgets, because it will make a STRONG impact.

Personalization—Not just a teaching model. Consumers increasingly demand a more personalized experience both online and in person. The millennial generation is a fast-moving group who embrace change. As they take hold as the target sales market, we must be more **flexible in our outreach efforts**. Reach them on their level, how and when they want to be reached. Provide a true experience, even in your storytelling. Connect them with your messages and they will follow and engage with you.

5 Tips for Managing Social Media Before It Manages You

Catherine Wedgwood, *Getting Smart*

If you are responsible for multiple social media channels, then you know exactly what it means to feel like social media is managing your life. There is so much out there, rapidly changing every second—how are you supposed to keep up with it all? Between tweeting, retweeting, favoriting, posting, reposting, pinning, liking, sharing, blogging, friending, unfriending, boosting, following and unfollowing, when will you be able to not stare at a screen?

When I was first starting out in social media management and trying to keep my company's channels organized and up-to-date, a mentor gave me an excellent piece of advice: Keep It Simple, Silly. (now I know that the last "S" usually stands for "Stupid," so thanks for keeping it kind, Kristin.) So KISS—what does that mean? Basically it means that systems perform best with simple designs rather than complex ones. Applied to social media, it means focusing on what works for you and doing a few things really well rather than trying to be everywhere at once.

It also means this: take a deep breath and relax. You are allowed to have a life outside of social media that doesn't involve checking your phone for updates every minute. Unless there is a crisis situation (and believe me, you'll know when that happens on social media) you can eat dinner or see a movie with your family. It will keep, I promise.

So in the spirit of keeping it simple, here are five social media management tips to help you feel more in control:

BE REALISTIC.

The Internet is on 24/7, but you are not. You will crash and burn if you think you have to be on social media all day, every day, monitoring and responding. You absolutely have to disconnect sometimes. Luckily, most organizations understand social media better now than even a few years ago. There is no need to give your company online shout-outs every five minutes or constantly scour the world for any mentions so you can react within seconds.

Plus there are now great social media tools to manage things while you get your required sleep—you can have tweets and posts scheduled all through the night to go out automatically without lifting a finger. Which is something else to remember: unless you're an international brand, is the majority of your audience really checking out your posts at 1:00 a.m.? Is there any reason your posts can't wait until business hours? Probably not. So while it's strategic to start early with posts, especially if you have

audience members a few time zones ahead of yours, there is no reason to have something posting every hour. Social media analytics tools can also show you the times when your audience is most responsive. So plan to send the majority of your messages out during their most active hours.

BE STRATEGIC.

This goes hand-in-hand with being realistic—find what works for your brand and own it. You'll see a better result from focusing on growing Twitter followers, if that's where your audience hangs out, than spending hours on Pinterest trying your hardest to connect with a few. A little online research will help you figure out where your audience participates. It doesn't hurt to have a presence on several platforms, especially the bigger ones, but make sure you are constantly active or just don't use them.

BE INFORMED.

Watch for the latest trends, but don't buy into every new item introduced. Social media tools are a dime a dozen, and they live and die quickly. You don't have to make each of them work for you. Take time to research tools and see if they're a good fit. Look at what others are doing on there, and brainstorm with your team to develop ideas for your presence. In the end, if it seems like a lot of work for little payoff, it probably is. Also, sign up for some sort of social media update so you can stay in the know as much as possible. I enjoy the [Social Media Examiner](#)—I learn something new every time I read the email blast.

BE COLLABORATIVE.

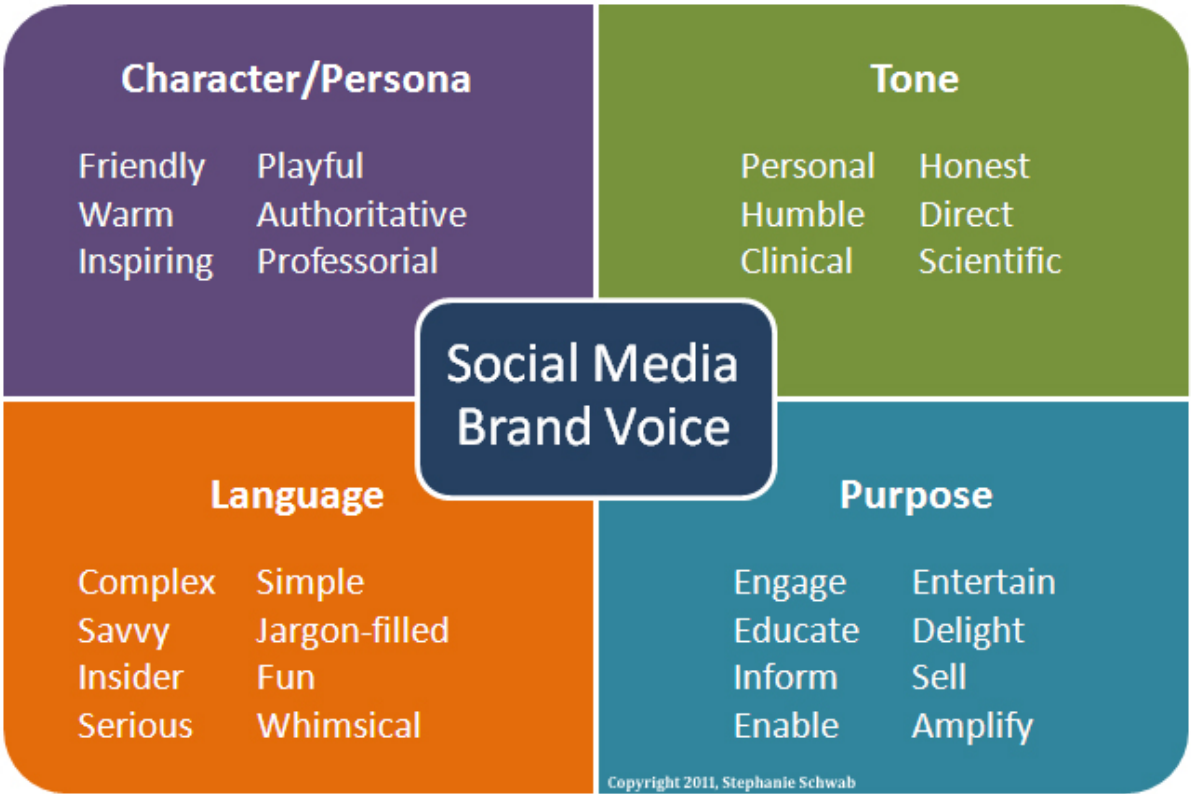
Chances are very good that your coworkers are on social media in their personal lives. So make them your allies—their friends and family are a completely new audience that they have a better chance of reaching. That audience also has a vested interest in what their loved one is posting, so they'll pay attention and probably re-share if asked. Their participation will make your social media results grow with very little effort on your part.

Collaboration doesn't just stop with your coworkers. It's easy to share resources you find online as well. Education leaders, other teachers, thought leaders, social media gurus—there are millions of people to connect to depending on what you are interested in. You can re-share their posts, retweet their tweets and generally collaborate to spread good content over the Internet. What you'll notice with this type of activity is your friends and followers growing as people begin to see you as an excellent source of information.

BE AUTHENTIC.

Definitely avoid being silly here, but do have "professional fun" with your company's voice. Think of posts you've enjoyed reading—they probably weren't formal and stiff sounding, but rather a nice mix of important information coming from an actual human being. An exception to this would be if your company's voice is a very serious one, such as a breaking news feed for natural catastrophes, in which case you really should just stick to the who, what, when, why and how.

However, more often than not, companies, schools and organizations find they attract more followers if they find the right brand voice. I really like the way this table from [Stephanie Schwab](#) of Social Media Explorer breaks down the parts of brand voice into four simple areas:



Hopefully at least one of these tips will help you KISS your frantic social media management style goodbye and start enjoying being online again.

Build Your Brand: How a Positive Social Media Presence Can Lead to a Career

Haley Osborn, Contributing blogger for EssayTigers.com

Social media is an ever-changing entity, but we're finding there are a few things about it that stay constant. This includes the importance of making an effort to maintain a positive online personal brand. Very few people can stay completely off the grid, especially Generation Do-It-Yourself (GenDIY) members who grew up in and embrace the digital world. You are out there whether you like it or not. But if you Google your name, will it produce a link to an embarrassing picture or an article you're proud to have authored?

In the following blog, author Haley Osborn discusses how to not only create the best personal brand possible, but how to use it for your career advantage as well.

When most people think of building their personal brand, they assume it has something to do with being in the media or some sort of "in the limelight" kind of job. While this was true at the dawn of personal branding, today many people, especially those in Generation Do-it-Yourself, build their personal brand in order to pave a way to a career. Building a personal brand isn't about how flashy or gimmicky you can be, it's about revealing to the world who you really are and showing how seriously you take your personal calling.

WHY IS PERSONAL BRAND IMPORTANT?

Positive social media presence is not only your doorway to existing opportunities, but the way to create more of them in the future. A great example of building a brand to create opportunities and become a leader in the industry is Red Bull. The company claims, "Red Bull isn't a drink, it's a way of life." This concept was reached by aiming content and social media presence at brand recognition, as well as promoting specific philosophy, which makes the brand stand out and win against the competition. This is the same as with personal branding.

GenDIY should not try to sell themselves and tell everyone how good they are. They should actually show it with social media activity, advertising their own philosophy and promoting creative ways of thinking. Social media allows you to become a leader, not just a follower, and make your ideas heard by entrepreneurs, journalists, business owners, employers, educators and whole communities.

After deciding on your career path, you can build your professional learning network to interact with people and exchange experience. Participation in Twitter chats is a great opportunity for collaborative thinking. It helps in building a network of confederates to solve problems and generate new ideas. Social media thus becomes a foundation of lifelong learning and establishes new ways of thinking.

Social media presence can be aimed at achieving certain goals—anything from organizing a volunteering project to funding a startup. Involving the influencers and bringing attention to the issue not only helps you achieve your current objectives, it also makes your professional profile more attractive. Eventually, “[w]hat you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals” (Henry David Thoreau).

WAYS TO BUILD PERSONAL BRAND

According to [Jan H. Kietzmann and Kristopher Hermkens](#), social media uses seven functional blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. You can consider these blocks the building materials for personal brand and learn to use them for your benefit:

- **Identity.** To build a personal brand you should represent your identity so that employers understand who you really are, what your goals and professional skills are, and the expertise and relevant knowledge you bring. There are several ways to introduce and promote your identity.
 - » *Website:* Use a website as the central location you want to drive traffic from your social media accounts to. Include your bio, resume, work samples and contact information. There are several free services available such as Blogger or WordPress.
 - » *Blog:* There are several reasons [why we should encourage students to blog](#). What’s equally important is to show what you know and demonstrate understanding in a field. Post regularly, and use your blog space to explore new ideas and information as you progress on your career journey. Here’s a list of [10 free blog sites](#).
 - » *Social Accounts:* These should be polished and professional in appearance, and should reflect what you are doing to pursue your personal calling.
- **Conversations.** It is important to quickly respond to messages or comments on your blog to keep the conversation going. Commenting on other blog entries in your industry or field is also a way to communicate.
- **Sharing.** Social media is a great tool to share anything within several clicks, and is an opportunity for you to get maximum exposure. There are different ways you can do this:
 - » Review best practices shared by social media marketers. Many continually research the potential of each kind of social media and publish free, helpful tips for maximizing exposure.
 - » Make sure you post relevant content with clear and well-written headlines.
 - » Add visual content to attract the attention of the audience.
 - » Consider the specificity of each social network and tailor your posts accordingly.
 - » Make sure you are sharing the right content with the target audience and respond to each and every comment and suggestion you receive.
 - » Become a group leader by creating an industry or field related group on LinkedIn or Facebook. Begin relevant conversations, discuss news and answer questions to keep the conversations active and your account will get maximum exposure within and beyond your network.

All of these activities will create a positive image in any community, garner followers and encourage them to share your messages in their network. More sharing means more exposure, more recognition and more possibilities.

Success story: When [Kinsey Schofield](#) sent out a tweet extolling the virtues of a Banjo app, she simply wanted to spread the word about how it helped to give her social life a boost. Instead, she received an offer from the start-up and is now their social media strategist and a spokesperson for the company. That’s how content shared with the right audience can work for you.

- **Presence.** This is the extent of your personal activity and availability online, as well your knowledge of the presence of potential employers or industry influencers. Do your research to learn more about your industry influencers and ways to contact them.

Success story: **Geoff Brownell** wanted to prepare for an upcoming interview with the company Mullen, so he took some time to check out the social media feeds of the people with whom he was to speak. He followed them, read their tweets and tried to get into their mindset. He was able to go in armed with a list of conversation starters, speaking to one manager about his favorite soccer team and another's preferred soft drink. This set him apart from the pack and landed him the job.

- **Relationships.** Positive social media presence means building reputation, and that is not possible without establishing relationships. Use social media to build networks. LinkedIn is the best known platform for building professional relationships, however other social platforms can bring the desired results. Just make sure you change the conversation style according to the platform.
- **Groups:** The way you participate in different online communities also counts. It is easy to find active groups in the field of your interest—there are plenty of them on social media! Create a list of the most popular and influential communities and join them. Contribute to the conversations, ask and answer questions and leave meaningful comments so that other group participants notice you.

FINAL TIP: BE CREATIVE!

No matter what you do and what media platforms you use to build your brand, don't forget that one of your main goals is to represent yourself from an original angle and stand out. So being creative should be applied to any action you take when building your brand.

Success story: Combining personal branding with a bit of humor wound up landing **Chris Putnam** a dream job. Putnam and some friends wrote a "worm program" that wiggled through Facebook profiles and set them to look like MySpace. The stunt attracted plenty of attention, particularly from the Facebook team. Facebook cofounder Dustin Moskovitz contacted him and, after some back and forth, offered Putnam a job.

Building your personal brand may sound like a bit of marketing hype but it's actually the chance for you, as a Generation DIY representative, to create your image of a reliable employee and young industry expert, to show what you have to offer, and to change the job market situation to your benefit.

5 Ways to Use Social Media in the Classroom

David Grover, Timeo

One of the most important parts of an educator's job is to prepare students for the real world. So while you obviously can't take them on field trips every day, you can still provide them with similar access through a virtual medium.

This is where social media comes into play. Most students already have an affinity for social media—incorporating it into your classroom provides an experience your students can connect to while increasing the number of ways in which you can expose them to information crucial to your curriculum. Plus it can just be really fun.

Here are five ways you can connect your classroom and social media:

Write With Blogs

If you're the only person who is going to be reviewing your student's writing, they may feel inclined to create something that they feel would be "good enough" rather than excellent. Having an audience encourages students to do their best. If they know how many people are going to see it, they'll be more likely to present their best work.

Rather than the usual pen-and-paper writing assignments, have your students blog on a subject. Allow students to tastefully read and comment on each other's blogs, providing constructive feedback. Platforms like WordPress allow users to create and manage closed-blog systems, keeping the visibility limited to peers.

Brainstorm With Pinterest

Successful collaboration and compromise are the roots of a successful group project. Sometimes students may face obstacles in communicating their unique visions, and this means most of the collaboration goes right out the window. When assigning a group project, encourage students to create a board on Pinterest to collect their ideas. Everyone will be presented with a clear representation of their teammates' visions, allowing them to work together with ease.

Skype Around the World

Since a trip to a specific location (such as a different country) probably isn't feasible, you can always bring the location into the classroom with Skype. Through video chat, your class can speak with other classes in different parts of the world. Some educational destinations may also provide lectures or tours through Skype, allowing your students to experience a culture in real time with full interactivity.

Connect Students on Facebook

What was that homework assignment? Who has the notes from today? What did I miss while I was sick? Can anyone help me figure out how to do this? Think of all the questions you could save time answering if you create a closed group on Facebook for you and your students to touch base. Set a clear list of rules

for what is and is not allowed in the group, and of course be certain to moderate it. They'll be able to help each other, building valuable social and teamwork skills. You can always step in if they can't figure things out amongst themselves.

Create a Class Wiki

Your students are familiar with Wikipedia and probably use it more than you think. Wikipedia is a great tool for finding comprehensive information on a subject, so try putting your students on the other end of the screen. Create a Wiki as a class subject. Choose one lesson as an umbrella, and write a stem article. Have your students write the supplementary articles to demonstrate what they know. It's a great way to showcase knowledge and promote teamwork.

Social media and learning blend better than you may have imagined. Utilizing social media in your classroom creates an innovative, fun way for students to work together. They're already familiar with how social media works, and now they'll have a reason to post things in addition to all of those memes and selfies.

8 Ways to Integrate Instagram into the Classroom

Catherine Wedgwood, *Getting Smart*

Everybody has their go-to social media platform when they want to share something with the world. So where do **millennials** currently go?

According to a Facebook **survey** of 13-24 year olds in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the UK and the US, they have been quietly fleeing Facebook for **Instagram**. (They aren't getting all that far from it, because Facebook actually acquired Instagram in 2012, but far enough.) In the past five years, Instagram has become the **fastest growing** major social network, no doubt because of its quickly expanding millennial army.

Why Instagram? Partially because millennials don't want to share Facebook or Twitter with their parents—those people are seriously embarrassing! But also because this generation has grown up in a world of constant connectivity, bombarded with messages since they visited their first website. Images are a fast way to pass along a message that almost instantly connects the user to a feeling, and many brands have found they can successfully connect these feelings to their product or service. Which gives new meaning to the adage: people may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

So if a picture really is worth a thousand words, millennials have found a way to adapt to our world's rapid fire messaging pace and absorb more information at once than any generation before. With more than 30 billion pictures shared, Instagram is the happening place for the quick and direct **visual literacy** the current generation enjoys. What does this mean for teachers? It means you should definitely check out this platform as a way to engage students because they might just be pretty excited about it and really pay attention (plus it will make you look totally cool).

Instagram is an excellent choice to incorporate into your lesson plans, and if you choose to do so, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Of course you'll need to lay down some basic ground rules about appropriateness and consequences, but hopefully the idea will be fun enough for all involved that no one will want to be excluded. This is an excellent way to incorporate lessons on digital citizenship (see this **great post** for more on that).
- It might be best to create a classroom Instagram account that you **set to "private"** so you can monitor posts and vet all potential followers.
- Definitely check out your school's technology policies before you begin.

Knowing that (unfortunately) not every classroom has the same access to devices and wifi yet, here are eight ideas to help get your brain fired up about what could work best for where you are:

- **Pop Quiz:** Hold “Instagram quizzes” during class. Designate team captains willing to use their smartphones and Instagram accounts for their teams (this will help include anyone in class who might not have either one of these). The teams must work together for answers (challenge them to do so without speaking) to comment on a picture or multiple pictures you post to Instagram with one of the following:
 - » Ask a question about the picture and how it relates to what you are studying, with points awarded for using key vocabulary and concepts discussed.
 - » Reveal just a piece of a picture or an extreme close-up and ask teams to identify what it is and why you chose it.
 - » As admin on the account, you can hold all comments until the end of class to ensure no cheating between teams.
- **Where In the World?:** Host a photo campaign asking your students to post Instagram images to their own accounts while they’re out in the world that tie into what you are studying. Make sure they include the hashtag you create to ensure your search brings their photos up. Selfies can be encouraged for authenticity.
 - » Bonus Tip: To keep almost real-time track of this hashtag, enter the following into your favorite feed reader to follow new posts easily: [http://instagr.am/tags/\[hashtag name\]/feed/recent.rss](http://instagr.am/tags/[hashtag name]/feed/recent.rss) (where [hashtag name] is the name of the hashtag without the leading #).
- **Student of the Week:** Invite students to alternate “taking over” your classroom Instagram account and sharing photos from their daily lives. Encourage all students to participate by liking and commenting.
- **What Would Honest Abe Say?:** Have students create pretend Instagram posts from famous historical figures on the class account—what would Abe Lincoln post if he’d had Instagram in his day?
- **I Spy:** Have students post a photo of something they see every day on the way to school—such as an old house or an interesting tree—and then have them choose someone else’s photo for a creative writing assignment.
- **Showcase Showdown:** Post pictures of student work throughout the year, from the first assignment to the last, to show them (and their parents) their progress.
- **Schoolwide School Pride:** Instagram doesn’t have to be kept within just one classroom. Hold a photo contest throughout the year that challenges students to show their school pride. Students can submit photos to you via email or text, from group events or individual efforts, to be posted to Instagram to show how they represent and celebrate their school. At the end of the year, a select group of teachers will judge the top three photos to be included in the school yearbook.
- **Join an Instagram Community:** Hashtags and weekly photo challenges keep Instagram going. Use the “Discover” feature to find trending or popular hashtags, and join the fun to push the boundaries outside of traditional classroom walls:
 - » Head outside to collect materials to make a #MondayMandala nature collage.
 - » Get down close to capture a #MobileMacro view of the world then head back into the classroom to find out more about what you’ve discovered.

We encourage you to experiment and find what works best for your students and classroom, then share it with us below in the comments. Have any additional Instagram projects you’ve completed, additional ideas for Instagram learning fun or favorite education hashtags you follow on this platform? We’d love to hear more!

9 Tips for Next-Gen Public Relations

Jessica Slusser, *Getting Smart*

The days of traditional public relations (PR) as we knew it are quickly coming to a close. With the fast paced information world we now live in, you can get news in real time rather than waiting for the evening news or next day's newspaper. This constant supply of information also means media outlets aren't as reactive to traditional press releases and email blasts as they used to be. However, we have found that a personalized email or thoughtful outreach connecting an announcement to a journalist's particular focus or passion can lead to at least a reply back thanking you for your pitch.

This is great, right? It means the most meaningful work and announcements are being shared, adding even more value to any earned media you land. Correct! Except that many schools, organizations and EdTech companies are still using traditional bulk email blasts, press releases and other "old school" methods for pitching in the hopes that someone picks up their news. At *Getting Smart*, we get at least a dozen generic email pitches a day that lack creativity and personalization. But when we see a customized email that connects back to recent content or themes we've been writing about, we almost always find a way to incorporate whatever's being pitched. It's also a bonus if the email includes social media messages, images and a personal story.

Here are nine best practices for next-gen public relations our team tries to practice:

Keep It Short and Sweet

Media outlets and blogs want content that's easy to digest, and often won't spend more than a few seconds reading it, especially if they scroll down and see that you've sent them a lengthy email. If you or your PR firm is sending out long pitches to hundreds of outlets, your story may not be getting the spotlight it deserves.

Go Wire-less

To use the wire or not—that is a very good question. Wire services have been around for decades, but definitely aren't used the same way today. Today's wire service is more of a paid media opportunity than earned media. You pay a fee that guarantees your release will automatically be picked up by the news feeds programmed to do so, but there is no guarantee an actual living, breathing journalist will ever see it. That's not to say they don't have any use at all, because wire services can still be useful in certain situations.

Write a Next-Gen Release

Traditional press releases are rather long and bulky, with many quotes and detailed descriptions. We prefer a more digestible version: short, concise and informative, almost like a media advisory that also tells a story. Personalize your introduction email, cut and paste the release to the bottom of the email (don't attach anything to a pitch—most journalists admit they don't open attachments) and you've got a pitch that is more likely to be read.

Make it Easy to Share

In addition to the new release style, it's imperative that you send a link to wherever your media advisory or press release lives online. Even if your pitch doesn't get turned into a story, including a live link and even some sample Tweets and a Facebook post will help increase your chances of getting a share on social media. How can someone share your news if it doesn't live anywhere online? We suggest not sending a release unless you also send a link.

Develop Relationships

Creating strong relationships with media outlets will help you pitch tailored stories directly to the blogs and channels that will be of high interest to their audiences. So take the time to read the outlets you are pitching, and comment on articles when appropriate. You'll better understand the stories the outlet accepts and which journalist will be most interested in your pitch, which means a better chance for a hit.

Know Your Audience

Are you trying to reach educators and school leaders or policy makers and parents? Do you want this to be published by a national media outlet or an education blog? The pitch for each of these will involve different messages and different outlets. A pitch to a media outlet like GettingSmart.com should be different than one you might send to the New York Times. So take the time to prepare—pitching is 90% research and prep and 10% the actual pitch.

Create Social Buzz

Before I discovered Twitter, I checked news websites in the morning to stay current on news. Now I head straight to Twitter, where I probably get 75% of my news and other updates. So in other words, if you're not publishing content on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), you're missing out on a huge audience. Frequent social media participation should be one of your biggest communication and PR strategies. If it's not, it's time to press pause and check on where the majority of your target audience gets their information. Chances are very good that they are utilizing one if not multiple social media platforms.

Tell a Story

Think about the last compelling article you read. Why did it speak to you? What made it effective? It likely included a story—a firsthand experience with a new product, a life that was changed, a school that saw great student gains. Identify someone who can tell your story and include their contact information in your pitch or write up a brief version of their story for the journalist.

Add Multimedia

Gone are the days of traditional story pitching and sharing your news with just a press release. In fact, depending on your audience (see #6 above) you can reach more folks and share a more compelling story with a blog post, [Smart Bundle](#) or [podcast](#). Shameless plug—if you haven't listened to the [Getting Smart podcast](#), download it today and listen to it on your next commute or while you're cooking dinner. It unpacks everything EdTech and explores the latest innovations in learning!

Conclusion

Jessica Slusser, Getting Smart

Social media channels are a great way not only to learn but also to share resources and amplify your impact as a teacher, school leader, or edupreneur. With whatever social media channel you choose it's important to be clear, concise, consistent and credible. Our team has a focused quality over quantity strategy when it comes to building a plan for the use of social media. We urge organizations to choose a couple of social media channels and develop a strong strategy that reflects your organization's existing communication and marketing plans. Each channel should share a consistent branding presence but have a differentiated message (or image) based on the type of platform you are using.

Once each channel has met your (or your organization's) desired outcomes, explore other channels and continue to refine your strategy to meet your audience's needs. It is better to have a few well-managed channels than try to participate in every channel infrequently. Your audience will appreciate consistency and the depth of resources you can provide.

Now it's time to dive into your own social media strategic plan. Pick a few channels, build a strategy, test out messaging and stay flexible. Your audience, the channel and your branding will constantly need adjustment, so your plan should allow for adjustment too! As we've mentioned throughout this resource, remember to be clear, concise and credible. When used correctly, social media can give any teacher, school leader or edupreneur the opportunity to make an impact, be relevant, build a network and communicate with their audience. Ready to share your tips or ask a few questions? Use #SmartBundle to join the conversation online!

Getting Smart is a learning design firm that provides advisory and advocacy services for impact oriented partners. We design customized partnerships to amplify and extend the work of those dedicated to impacting the way the world learns. We help organizations tell their story to a targeted audience of educators, policy makers, and thought leaders. Interested in learning more? Visit GettingSmartServices.com and shoot us an email or Tweet!

For more:

[Kids, Smart Phones, and Social Media: 6 Rules for Success and Safety](#)

Drawing from experience as a mother, educator and administrator, Janice Wyatt-Ross shares some of the dangers she's experienced due to social media and also shares six rules for electronic devices and social media usage that have worked for her family.

[Teaching Kids to Navigate Social Media? It's a Matter of Principle](#)

The current generation looks at social media differently than those in previous generations. In fact, they often don't differentiate between their true identity and their online world, which makes it even more important that they're practicing good digital citizenship. Author Sarah Maraniss Vander Schaaf shares four practical strategies and sites to help parents and educators navigate the world of social media.



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