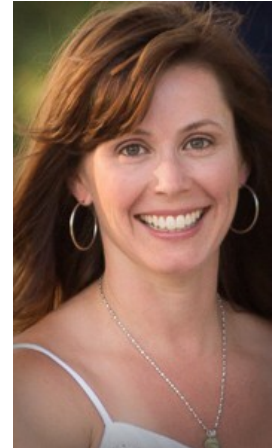


# 5 Things You Must Do to Be Successful on Social Media



*By Melissa Vidito*

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Do you remember when “word-of-mouth” still meant: verbally passing information from one person to the next? In 2017 “word-of-mouth” is a digital experience. Today, our online conversations leave very loud impressions on our list of “friends.” If you want to be seen and heard in 2017 you must participate in the growing landscape of the new word of mouth: social media. Unsure where to get started or think you need to revamp social media and create a real strategy? Try these 5 simple steps!

## **Who is your audience?**

Determining your audience is an important step when entering the social media waters. Effective social media strategy is designed to target groups of people and draw them into your brands message. If you know who you are speaking to, you will know where you should be speaking. A cowboy wouldn’t recruit additional cowboys at a beauty pageant, right? He would need to select the right location for his recruiting efforts. The same applies to social media. Your brand’s audience typically spends more time on one social platform than on another. Your brands audience responds to specific messages and content than more than others. For facilities like YMCAs this research is within reach.

Who makes up your membership? Look at the statistics and demographics of your facilities membership. Often large facilities have wide audiences, while smaller studios have very specific niche markets. It is very likely you already have the information about who does or will follow you on social media.

If you have already begun using social media, the tools themselves will provide you with a wealth of information about your audience. For instance, on Facebook look at your businesses Insights (along the top of the page for administrators) to see exact details about your audience: where they live, their gender, their age, and what type of device they use.

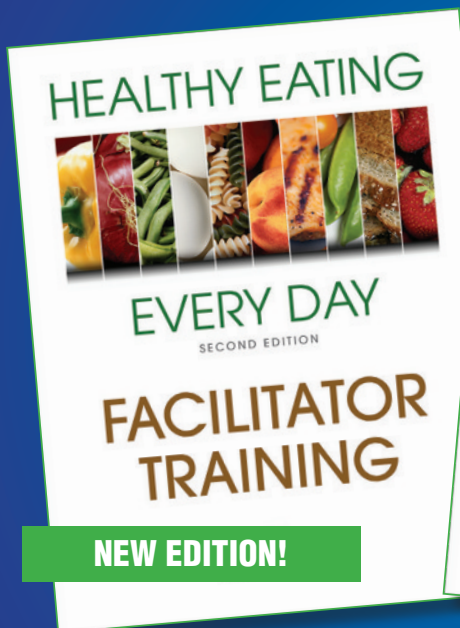
When you have details about the demographics of your audience, it is essential to go where they are online. To gain a general idea of who is on what social platform, try an online resource like Sprout Social's [analytical demographic report](#). If you learn that your audience spends their time on Pinterest, you need to become proficient in all things Pinterest. Do not be the cowboy at the beauty pageant! Go to where your audience is and you will find more social media success!

## Goals!

The next important step in creating a killer social media plan is to determine the goals. Consider the facility as a whole, consider what each department brings to the table, and then formulate how together the goals can be met. Social media is fantastic because it can be low-cost advertising for your programs; it can inform the community about events; and it can bolster the existing community that live within your facility, rally the troops so to speak.

In many situations though, businesses overwhelm their followers with advertisements and promotions about their facility without addressing the customer's needs. The key to drawing your audience closer to you, and to gaining a larger audience, is to solve their problems. Survey your membership to determine what they want from you – what aren't you giving them? Ask them about their challenges and then, and this is KEY,

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create (or share) content on your social media platform that will address all of those issues.

It is easy work to advertise the latest membership special, the deadline for flag football sign ups, and the upcoming Senior Dinner. Imagine, though, that some of your members are afraid to attend a class because they think it will be too hard for them or the instructor seems intimidating. Interview the instructor, go live from the class! Give them the experience without the fear. Maybe your survey will indicate that the senior programs are losing numbers because of transportation. This is a perfect opportunity to create a ride-share event for members to communicate with each other and make sure everyone has a ride! (If some seniors are resistant to social media, host a few classes on using the facilities primary social platform to help them connect inside and outside the facility).

All problems, challenges, or needs have a solution. After surveying your membership, pull together your creativity dream-team and create those solutions. If your facility can provide free, online content that helps its members you will be ahead of the social media game. The primary goal is for the business to grow, real growth comes on social media, by informing folks about your services and creating solutions for their lives.

### **Creativity Dream-Team**

Incorporate multiple voices to create a rich, high quality social media presence. It is a good idea to create a position, if one doesn't already exist, for a Marketing and Social Media Coordinator. This role facilitates communication between traditional styles of marketing and social media marketing. That person cannot also be the only creator of content.

You want to create blog posts, video posts, graphics or images, and impromptu messages. Let's say your facilities pool is shut down unexpectedly. You cannot rely on the one person in marketing to quickly create the post to notify members of the pool closing, nor do they want to be bothered at 6:30 am with this news flash. Most social media platforms allow for multiple users to participate on a variety of levels in social media. One feature I love on Facebook is the ability to set up "Live Contributors." For facilities like the YMCA this is an incredible social advantage. The Coordinator doesn't have to be everywhere all of the time and live video is hugely successful. Set up a schedule of "Live Contributors" to talk about various topics, go live from an executive meeting just to say "Hello" to the people and let them see you in action, pop in on a fitness class.

The Coordinator will need to have a well-organized plan, and the live video should be part of the plan. Drive viewers to a Live Video a few moments before or after a promotional post so more eyes see the promotion. The Coordinator will also edit blogs,

shoot video, and maintain the editorial calendar to manage all of the moving parts. But don't expect that person to be solely responsible for the content.

While a Social Media Coordinator should be participating in content creation and planning, incorporating multiple creators will broaden the voice of your brand and reach more people. If your facility has a particularly popular fitness instructor, ask him to pitch in. Getting more heads in the game will be a benefit, as long as the calendar is organized.

### **How Does It Come Together?**

Do not try to reinvent the wheel. The internet offers a wealth of social media support. From CRM software to free online tools – there is really no need to go it alone, no matter what your budget is. There are several free tools that help social media marketers do more with their time. My two very favorite, must have, online tools are easy to use and free or low cost

*Canva* helps marketers design awesome posts! With an incredible selection of free templates, images, and fonts your social media posts will grab the attention of those scrolling eyes.

*Buffer* is a social media scheduling product that allows users to schedule posts in advance. I love the calendar view on this tool because I can clearly see what days have content scheduled for the entire month. *Buffer* will also shorten any URL that is incorporated in the post so you can avoid long URLs clogging up the copy box.

### **Assess & Measure**

The final essential piece of a solid social media strategy is assessment and measuring the plan. Is it working? If you can, create quarterly plans or calendars and assess those plans near the end of each quarter before finalizing content for the next. How are people responding to the posts? Which ones seem to draw more attention? Which posts get the most reaction or create the most conversation? Have you begun making a dent in your goals?

After you measure the results of how your plan is working – make any necessary adjustments and keep plugging along. Keep in mind a few essential points:

- Consistency is key. If you don't see interaction after a few weeks – keep working at it. Don't give up!
- Insights and analytics are available within the social platform administrative tools so assessment is fairly simple. You needn't look at each post every day. Use the tools!

- As you analyze the results there is one simple rule: do more of what works and cut out the fluff. If you notice your video posts generate more online action, increase how often you incorporate video and cut out the posts that are duds.

If you feel like you don't know what you are doing on social media – DO IT ANYWAY. You will learn as you go, it might not be perfect, but participation counts! If you start with these 5 simple steps you'll be heading in the right direction.

Beyond these steps, consider this tip that has always resonated with me. Social media is very much like a standard cocktail party. Nobody wants to visit with you if you only talk about yourself. Create conversation, get to know your audience, and contribute to their lives with content that meets their needs. This process will make reaching your goals easier and it will feel like fun!

### **Author Bio**

*For 8 years, Melissa Vidito, has been a FiTOUR®, AFAA, and TRX Certified Group Fitness Instructor and Personal Trainer at the C.W. Avery Family YMCA in Plainfield, IL. Melissa recently joined the FiTOUR® team as the Marketing & Social Media Coordinator, she is passionate about providing quality, affordable fitness instruction and sharing her love for health and well-being with others.*

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