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How to Hire a Social Media Manager

By [Shadi Ghani](#)

Over the past couple years, social media has really taken off and companies are quickly realizing that monitoring and participating in the conversations happening around their brand online is a full time job. For the first time, many companies are finding themselves in a position where they need to hire a Social Media Manager.

So how do you hire for a role you've never had to hire for before? To make things even more difficult, because the space is still fairly new, people who have years and years of social media experience just aren't out there. In this article, we'll discuss how to assess candidates who may not have much direct experience, and how you can qualify them even with little social media knowledge yourself.

Start With a Strategy

First, the type of person you're looking to hire could differ significantly depending on what you're looking for that person to do, and what you foresee their core activities being. Decide what business goals you want your social media activity to accomplish, and then from there determine the skill set that the right person needs to have. If you're looking for one of your core activities to be blogging for instance, then target people with excellent writing skills.

What to Look For

In terms of talent, the social media landscape today is similar to that of the mobile space a few years back. It too was a new sector growing quickly, but one where few people had many years of direct experience. So when hiring, you have to think of what types of skills and experience are related and transferable – and what types of things indicate that someone could be successful in the role. The following are all good important skills and characteristics for a Social Media Manager to have:

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Problem Solving Skills & the Ability to React Quickly

Social media is different from most other marketing activities in that it's very interactive and takes place in real-time - and in a way, you're relinquishing some of the communication around your brand to your audience. Most feel the opportunity to engage and interact with your customers is worth the risk of not always being able to control what gets said about you.

Because of this, situations can arise where things don't go exactly as planned - whether it be negative comments, a hi-jacked initiative, or a tactic not playing out as you had hoped. In these instances you need a person who can assess the situation and act quickly and decisively.

A Customer Service Approach

In many ways, the person leading your social media activities is similar to the person at a physical customer service desk. While your social media person needs to be proactive with the various marketing activities they initiate, they also have to be able to react appropriately to comments, inquiries, and the inevitable complaints from people.

The person you hire is going to be the face and voice of your company online - ensure you find someone that understands the "customer first" mentality and is able to communicate in a pleasant and calm manner no matter what the situation.

Enthusiasm for the Space & a Commitment to Learning

Because social media is so new, people are constantly discovering new and innovative uses of the tools that exist. Even the tools themselves are constantly changing and evolving. The core social media tools that are most popular today might not necessarily be the same a year from now.

For that reason, it's important that someone be passionate about the social media space - always eager to find out what that "next thing" might be, and constantly reading up on how others are using the various tools in a marketing capacity.

A Willingness to Experiment

Again because the space is so new, different ways that the various social media tools can be used are being discovered every day. And the best uses of these tools have probably still yet to be discovered. The person you choose to head up your social media activities needs to be someone who is able to think of new uses of the tools - ideally in a way that makes your company stand out from the pack. Most companies now have a Facebook page and a Twitter account, but it's those that have been able to come up with innovative uses of these tools that have been able to really generate attention.

One caveat with this is that with experimentation comes risk. Strategies and initiatives need to be well thought out or you may find yourself with PR issues on your hands as many others have.

Soft Skills vs. Numbers

In terms of assessing potential candidates, social media roles are a little different for a couple reasons. While social media obviously has metrics attached to it, many of the qualities that make up a good social media person are qualitative in nature. It's critical to look past the numbers so you can see what type of person someone is, how they interact with people online, and what type of ambassador they'd be for your brand.

Resist the urge to look solely at numbers since they can often be misleading – especially for the purpose of evaluating potential candidates. For example, there are lots of people with 1000+ followers who do nothing more than spam others and game the system to accumulate even more followers. So at quick glance they look good, but is this really the type of activity you want someone engaging in on behalf of your brand? How valuable do you think those types of followers are? Conversely there are people with fewer than 100 followers, but the people in their network are engaged and they regularly interact with them. Which would you prefer?

Use Social Media to Assess Candidates

Even if you're not an expert in social media yourself, a quick and easy way to gauge a candidates' social media credentials is to do a search of their presence on the various popular social media sites. If a person claims to be a social media expert, then searching them on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc. should yield evidence of such.

Anyone who claims to be the right person to head up your social media activities should at least have a visible presence on the sites listed above. If they don't then it's an immediate red flag and should make you question how they'll be able to promote your brand online if they're not already doing it for themselves.

When you do turn up candidates' profiles online, look at the quality of their posts and activity, and how they engage with other people on the site. Would you trust this person to represent your brand?

The Core Attributes Aren't All That Different

While the whole world of social media is still very new and in many ways quite different than other marketing activities, the core attributes of someone likely to succeed in a social media role aren't all that different from people who are top performers in other marketing positions.

Look for people who are driven, show initiative, and committed to succeeding. There's

a certain amount of training and ramp-up time required in almost every position, but core competencies can't be taught – people either have them or they don't. It's good to ensure people have the technical skills needed for the online space, but don't forget to also look for the inherent characteristics that are common in top talent.

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