

What Do YOU Want From Your Audience?

We focus a lot on what your readers want. (Rightly so.) However, let's take a look at what you get out of the deal. How does having this site help you? Many agencies don't really consider what they could expect to gain from their readership.

Fill in the blank:

We want our audience to...

Because...

Read our FAQs	It will reduce the amount of phone calls to support.
Use our forms	It's the most efficient way to get their information into our database.
Sign up for our newsletter	We can sell upcoming events.
Give us feedback	We want to improve our services.
Ask Ed a question (Consumer Ed)	We want useful content on our site that can help others.

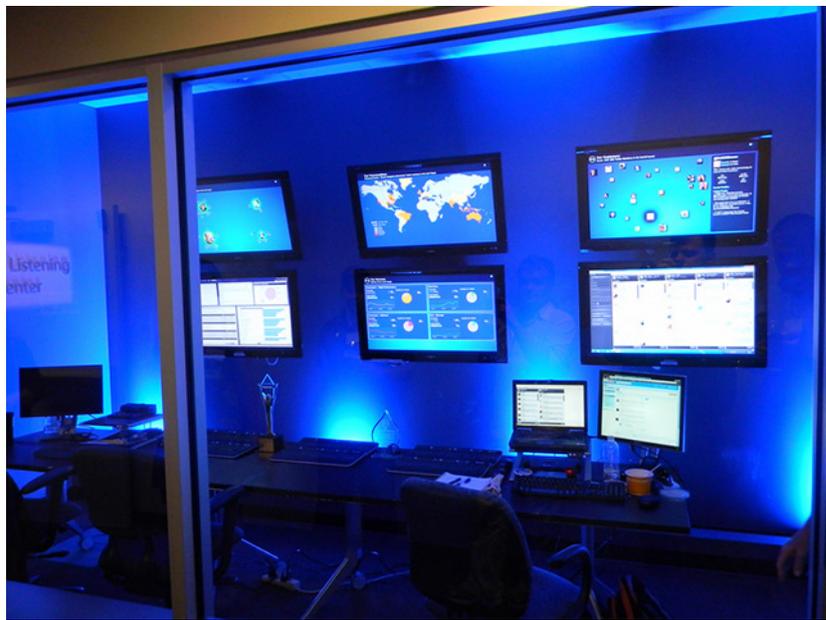
User Engagement

Engagement is important because it promotes familiarity, trust and is a sign of effective content. Take advantage of any opportunity for interaction. Whether it's a comment, poll, contest or even a feedback form. Find creative ways to engage your audience and get them to ask questions on the site.

Social Media

Social media is part of your editorial calendar. You should include a social media plan as well. Keep in mind: not everyone needs Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or Snapchat as part of their content strategy, especially if you are only going to do it "halfway." If you have a lot to share, go for it - but only if you plan on devoting time in producing content and being consistent with it.

Social media isn't just a place to post links to your latest blog article. It's a tool for listening - the most important thing in any relationship. In fact, in large marketing agencies, social listening and social monitoring is a whole department of researchers. Based on what people are buzzing about, large companies analyze the social data and use the research to create, enhance or change products and services.



Dell's Social Media Listening Center. (Photo by Mackcollier on Flickr)

You don't have to hire a social monitoring staff for your agency in order to pay attention to user engagement. Let's take a look at some tips you can use to leverage or improve your presence on two of the most popular channels in social media:

Twitter

The cool thing about Twitter is you can have a brief conversation with anyone you normally don't have access to. As a state agency, it's nice to give people a venue where they can reach out to you.

- **Follow people**

The more people you follow, the more followers you get back. Be relevant in who you follow. For state agencies, it makes sense to follow your federal agency counterparts or other businesses and professionals related to your industry.

- **Use proper hashtags**

Taking any random phrase and putting # in front of it doesn't do anything (unless you are creating hashtags for people to interact with.) If you're posting a link to a blog article about a large topic like identity theft, a) make sure the hashtag [#IdentityTheft](#)[1] is a thing? (and it is.) b) be sure to use #IdentityTheft in your tweet. Also, it's best to use Pascal case (separating words with capital letters) for readability and accessibility.

- **Create hashtags**

Looking for people to interact with you? Jimmy Fallon is a great example of someone creating hashtags every week to invite audience engagement.

You don't have to be in entertainment to do something similar. For example; Tweet a photo of the state bird and use the hashtag, #BrownThrasherGA and get your photo on our blog!? Speaking of animals, Have you spotted an endangered species in Georgia? Tweet #ThrivingInGA to let us know we are doing a good job with wildlife recovery.?

- **Look at trends**

Twitter has some valuable information about what's trending on the left-hand column of their homepage. You can also take a look at what's in the news. Not only does it give your blog article ideas, but you can use the hashtags to leverage the heated interest your way. [Hashtags.org](#)[2]and [Hashtagify](#)[3] are both unbiased resources to see trends and activity on various hashtags. They offer a free membership and you don't even have to sign up to see a trend list on the homepage.

- **Use links**

Tweets have a better chance of getting retweeted if you include a link with relevant information. Tweet your own blog articles, but also share articles or info from other sites pertaining to your industry.

- **Use tools to schedule tweets**

If you'd like to schedule your tweets, use an app like [Hootsuite](#) [4] or [Sprout Social](#) [5]. Twitter even has a built-in post-scheduler called [TweetDeck](#) [6]. Whether you're a planner, you have a serious editorial calendar to stick to or you just want to give yourself ample time to look back and proofread, scheduling tweets ahead of time can be immensely helpful.

Facebook

Unlike Twitter, which uses short bursts of info in a time-sensitive conversation, Facebook is ideal for storytelling. Use Facebook for evergreen content to prolong the conversation.

- **Embrace the intimacy**

Facebook is more conducive to friendships. (After all, that's the way it was originally designed.) You're not just influencing strangers. It's important to remember that people who like your page are now part of your little group.

- **Create unique and valuable content**

On Twitter, you can get away with a clever one-liner and share a link. Facebook's audience, however, requires more unique content. This is a great platform to share videos and images.

- **Use video and images**

People respond to videos and images on Facebook. Use images of faces and lifestyle that play on emotion and encourage comments. You can use "albums" to organize images by topic.

- **Host Facebook Contests**

If there is one way to create audience engagement, it's giving away free stuff. Give away an agency t-shirt or water bottle as a prize. There are many benefits to getting Facebook fans involved on your page. You can produce user-generated content, increase social shares and increase your fan base.

- **Seek insight from your audience**

People are on Facebook to talk about themselves. You're on Facebook to listen. It doesn't make much sense to disable comments. Ask questions. Get opinions. Use polls to get them to vote on different topics and leverage the community aspect of social media to engage.

Just remember, if you are going to incorporate any kind of social media in your content strategy, it's important to be:

Authentic

Above all, be yourself. When you share what genuinely makes you excited about your job or industry, people will sense that and get excited too.

Consistent

Treat social media like any other piece of content that you publish. Incorporate it into your editorial calendar.

Responsive

Social media is a conversation. Show you are listening and that you care about followers' comments or engagement. Since many people are already used to interacting on social media, they may choose to reach out to you via direct messages. Replying to other people's activity — especially those who may have had a bad experience — is the responsible thing to do. See our [Guide to Negativity](#) [7] for more on how to handle sticky situations.

Call to Actions

Call to actions (CTAs) are the opportunities for your audience to do something. This comes back to your wishlist and what you want people to do on your site. Always, always, always have this big picture in mind when arranging or adding content to your site.

CTAs, also known as the conversion element, are usually in the form of buttons or links. This is the final goal, the last step in the proven copywriting formula: AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action.) "Sign up for our newsletter," "Add to cart" and "Contact us" are the most common CTAs online. There is an art to crafting the perfect CTA. Here are a couple of basics:

- **Use an active voice**

"Our newsletter" is not that interesting. "Get monthly tips" is an active voice. It's telling them what to do exactly (and also promising value).

- **Focus on value not the action**

"Sign up for?" or "Buy?" are definitely actions. But they're dull. Focus on what's in it for them instead.

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