

## SOCIAL MEDIA & NETWORKING SKILLS IN TEACHER EDUCATION



### Education

**KEYWORDS:**

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### Introduction

#### Impact of Social Media on Education

In today's world of connected learning, the impact of social media on education is becoming a driving factor. The world is getting smaller and through the use of technology such as social media the way we deliver instruction is changing. The technology referred to here really transpires just social media technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat. The technologies that allow these platforms to function are also one of the driving forces behind the impact of this technology on education.

For example, video presentation platforms, such as Skype, Google Hangouts, or Web video conferencing have allowed instruction to be delivered across great distances. No longer is it necessary for a faculty member to be in the same room as the students. These technologies have given rise to the flipped classroom model and changed the way knowledge is conveyed to students. Faculty today must be more technical savvy than any generation previously as the students not only prefer communication through these mediums they expect it. The adoption of social media in everyday life is one of the driving forces behind these changing expectations and how social media is changing education.

The impact of these technologies on education can be considered positive but also has some negative consequences.

#### What is the impact of social media on students

Advantages:

- Increase student collaboration
- Improved Participation
- Content Rich Resources
- Useful for team projects

Disadvantages:

- Student distraction can become issue

- Lack of control for inappropriate content
- Relying on Social Media for all contact

Negative impact of Social Media on Education

#### Some of the adverse impacts of social media on education include:

- Students are not accustomed as much to having face to face conversations. Body language is a huge part of communication between humans and when people primarily communicate through technology, then body language clues can be missed or students do not learn to use body language as a queue for understanding the context of what the person is trying to convey.
- Students do not develop the same accuracy in the written word. With the increase in text messages and social media tweets as a communication, students are used to not utilizing proper spelling and grammar when communicating. This makes it hard for others to understand the actual context of the discussion, especially when they are talking with individuals who did not grow up using technology as the primary means for communicating. With technologies that connect to a browser such as Grammarly students can just use the technology to correct grammar, but sometimes this comes at the cost of the not knowing why a particular word or phrase is incorrect.
- Retention can also suffer as a result of social media and the technologies employed to deliver content. There is a lot of noise on these platforms, and therefore, information is not retained as

well as it may when you are ready a book. This is one of the primary drawbacks with using these technologies in education as it's difficult to present the needed information in a manner that allows it to stand out from the noise. Use of video can be a good way to help combat this, but the noise is still there

- As you can see the adoption of social media has created some challenges in education. Whether these items are entirely detrimental to society is still to be seen, but there are also some advantages of social media that positively affect student outcomes.

#### Positive Impact of Social Media

Some of the positive impacts of social media on education.

- The world is smaller and thus, students are more diverse in their thinking. You may wonder if it's too diverse with the
- many protests going on college campuses lately, but it does show the students are thinking about more than the single viewpoint to what they were born into. Of course, you could argue that some students have taken their demands for inclusivism to the point where they are promoting divisiveness and biases towards other people's viewpoints, but that is a topic for another post.
- The noise that is a negative listed above can also be a positive. Because there is so much noise on the net, some students have become better at weeding out the unimportant stuff and absorbing what is truly important. This does show that in this connected world there is a place for librarians and instruction on how to effectively do research using search engines and evaluating resources for validity.
- Students now have the ability to reach out to industry experts across disciplines, and this can help the students locate more authoritative sources of information. This is a tricky endeavor
- and students must be taught how to evaluate the source of information even when it may come from a supposed expert.
- It is easy for students to collaborate on various team project using social media. They can create Facebook groups or even just use twitter hashtags to communicate about a project and share ideas. This can also be done in mediums such as email, but social media give the promise of keeping the conversations open and even easy for the educator to view threads and determine if everyone on the team is participating.

These are just a few of the many impacts social media and technology have had on education and society as a whole. Technology is moving at an ever increasing pace so no list will even be entirely complete and as mentioned above, any documents even this one must be evaluated as to whether it makes sense in this connected world of increasing noise.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS

What are the ingredients of an ideal social media manager? If you were to ask this question 10 years ago, it would probably be a fairly short list. But as social media marketing evolved over the years with new technology and a wider audience, we've been able to see certain skills and traits that separate the top marketers from the rest.

Learning and sharpening these skills can help propel your social media efforts into elite status, and avoid being one of the many brands that can't seem to make any progress. Whether you're looking to hire a new social media manager or simply want to improve your own strategy, focus on building up these 13 social media skills:

### 1. Community Management

When you look at the top brands on social media, you'll notice something they all have in common is a community aspect. Social media marketing is all about connecting with your audience. Once you're able to build that connection and grow a community, your audience will start creating user generated content (UGC) and your reach will spread organically.

Start by acknowledging your top sharers. These are the people who are consistently engaging with you and your content on social media. You can find this in the Sprout Social Trends report.

### 2. Relationship Building

Not only is it important to connect with your audience, but you also have to connect with influencers. That's why relationship building is a crucial social media skill that you have to develop. Unfortunately, this is a skill that a lot of company's lack, resulting in spammy direct messages on Twitter and Instagram comments begging for follows.

In our influencer outreach guide, we break down a simple process to identify and connect with influencers in your industry without spamming them. It boils down to being genuine and thinking of ways you can add value to them rather than asking for favors. If you can master the skill of relationship building, you'll have a significant advantage on social media.

### 3. Creativity

A study from Fractl and Buzzstream found 21% of social media users would unfollow a brand if the content shared was too repetitive or boring. In order to keep your followers engaged and to be an effective social media manager, you have to consistently come up with new and creative initiatives and campaigns. Whether it's a fun Facebook contest, brand partnerships or entertaining videos, think of ways to stand apart from the millions of other users on social media.

Take a look at what some of your competitors are doing to get ideas for how you can amplify your brand's social media presence and stand out.

### 4. Organization

Creating a publishing schedule, tracking all of your contacts and maintaining multiple social media profiles requires some level of organization. The best social media managers know when content is supposed to be published, which special holidays and occasions to plan ahead for, and have a way to keep track of the different social media conversations they have going on.

Luckily, staying organized is much easier today than it was when social media marketing first started out thanks to social media dashboards like Sprout Social. You have the ability to track all of your scheduled social media posts on a calendar, keep a history of your interactions with other users and manage all of your profiles from a single app.

### 5. The Ability to Learn New Technology Quickly

New social media platforms are constantly popping up. You don't have to be active on all of them, but if your audience starts gravitating to Periscope or Snapchat, you should be able to quickly adapt and learn the ins and outs. This is one social media skill that tends to come natural to millennials and social natives since they grew up on social media. But that doesn't mean it's not possible for everyone else! The key is to become an early adopter and spot emerging social media platforms before they're mainstream. By the time everyone else jumps on board, you'll already have an established presence and won't have to fight for a piece of the pie. Brands like GrubHub,

Karmaloop and Taco Bell were some of the first businesses on Snapchat and each have led the charge on the social media app.

And of course, you can follow our posts for tips and tactics to be successful on all of the latest social media platforms.

### 6. Writing

Whether it's creating a blog post to be shared on social media or crafting the perfect Tweet, writing is a must-have social media skill. If your headlines aren't captivating and magnetic, people aren't going to be motivated to click-through. Writing isn't just important for headlines, it'll also come in handy for other social media related tasks like creating blog posts.

It's also important you have the ability to write for the Web in particular. Writing a blog post or Tweet is different than writing a newspaper column or college essay. Web content needs to be easy to skim and visually appealing by using headings, bullet lists and shorter paragraphs.

### 7. Analytical Skills

Is your social media strategy working for your business? A good social media manager should not only be able to answer that question, but also provide data to prove it. In the early stages of social media marketing, your options for tracking your activities and progress were limited to say the least. But today, tools like Sprout Social provide you with plenty of data to improve your social media marketing efforts and make informed decisions instead of relying on assumptions.

**You should be able to access and interpret data about any of these metrics:**

- Your audience demographics
- The growth of your account
- Engagement
- Your posting habits

### 8. Detail Oriented

The devil is in the details. One accidental typo or an oversight in a Tweet can result in negative press and flat out embarrassment. Britain's Got Talent contestant Susan Boyle found this out the hard way. In order to promote her album release party, Susan's marketing team came up with the hashtag #susanalbumparty. Unfortunately, that hashtag can be misread as something else entirely and a huge fiasco ensued as a result.

Burger King also fell victim to an unfortunate oversight when they promoted the hashtag #WTF, which was supposed to be an acronym for "What the French Fry." Unfortunately, that acronym is internet slang for something else, which Burger King apparently didn't know about. As a result, conversations with both Burger King's meaning and the more inappropriate meaning were all funneled together for the trending hashtag.

Remember, what happens on social media is forever. Even if you delete an accidental Tweet or Facebook post, there's always the chance that a screenshot was saved or a blog picked it up before you were able to delete it. Be careful and make sure you dot your i's and cross your t's.

### 9. SEO

As search engine optimization and social media marketing become more intertwined, SEO is quickly becoming a must-have social media skill. You may not need in depth technical knowledge like knowing what URL canonicalization is, but you do need to understand keywords, link building and content marketing.

Matt Cutts, head of Google's Webspam team, stated in a video that Google doesn't include social signals such as followers or Likes in its ranking algorithm. However, one study found 50% of companies struggling with SEO aren't integrating social media. While things are

still a bit unclear, keeping SEO best practices in mind with your social media strategy seems like the safest bet.

Read our Social Media Optimization post to learn more about how you can use SEO and social media marketing together.

### 10. Decision Making

Research published on Search Engine Watch found 53% of users expect brands to respond back to them within an hour on Twitter. And that number increases to 72% if the user is Tweeting to a company about an issue or complaint. Social media moves so quickly that you won't always have time to have a round-table discussion before deciding how to reply to people. You need confidence and the ability to make decisions quickly.

### 11. Time Management

Spending time on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram can quickly become a time drain. Aside from the distractions of looking through other peoples' content, it's also easy to fall into the trap of spending an hour doing menial tasks with nothing to show for it. In order to avoid wasting your time on social media, you need to be able to manage your time efficiently.

You'll have to divide your schedule among several different tasks, including:

- Monitoring social media for trending topics and events
- Scheduling posts
- Creating new content to share
- Engaging with other users
- Responding to your followers and customers

And that's only a handful of the daily activities you'll be responsible for. If you're unable to juggle everything, you could end up wasting your time and energy.

How do your social media skills stack up with our list? And what skills are important to you? Leave a comment and let us know!

### NETWORKING SKILLS

When it comes to most advice on networking, many business publications place too much emphasis on "what's easy" rather than "what works".

This has only been amplified by the recent dominant presence of social media.

With useless "tips" like:

- 'Set up a LinkedIn profile!'
- 'Get active on Twitter!'
- 'And...um, email people I guess!'

...it's no wonder people get frustrated when they look for information on how to *properly* network with others.

Networking also has a somewhat 'sleazy' association to it: people picture the grease-ball haircut on the really loud guy with 800 business cards who's all talk and no action.

The thing is, **good networking does not have to be this way**, not at all.

So set aside your bias against networking, and step into 'natural networking' for building real relationships with people who can help you get where you want to be.

### Networking Skills that Work

If you've struggled with sincere networking in the past (as I have), definitely give this list a run-through and take notes when you notice an area where you can improve your own networking habits.

As a last bit of advice before we get into the list, be sure to network

outside of your industry from time to time!

We often get so focused with business related networking that we never reach out to people who may be doing cool stuff in other fields of work... and you never know what may come of it.

### 1. Make Networking a Regular Activity

This is my solution to one of the most common questions about networking: *how do I get started?*<sup>1</sup>

If you're worried about jumping in to networking or how you can keep it as a habit, just follow this one simple strategy — every other day (or every day, or twice a week, etc.), reach out to one person who's work you find interesting.<sup>6</sup>

That's it!

Don't ask for anything (more on that in a minute), just reach out with an email that shows your mutual respect/interest in what they do, and that you just wanted to say "Hey" to a person doing cool things.

That way, you have no fear of coming off as sleazy/begging, will consistently reach out to new people (not just for a week before you quit), and you'll likely come across a lot of interesting folks in your industry, which is always a plus.

No more excuses!

### 2. Stop Being an Internet Panhandler

As a guy who loves studying behavioral psychology, one of the most interesting topics to me is what exactly changes in people's personalities when they interact with others online. Not much has been published on the subject, but the *online disinhibition effect* is one that we all probably recognize in one way or another.

**The point is this:** People on the internet tend to lack diplomacy & tact, and one of the ways that this rears its ugly head is that people will ask for things on the internet that they'd never expect someone to give them in "real life."

While most people on the street would be hesitant to ask a stranger for \$10, on the internet people will ask for THE WORLD and then get upset when you don't deliver!

As an example... when I recently wrote a huge article on productivity, I got a lot of **good** emails after it was published from people who enjoyed it (more on that in a bit).<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, I got a lot of TERRIBLE intro emails from people essentially demanding that I help them with their productivity problems. One guy even told me that he wanted a "quick" analysis of his productivity problems over an hour long Skype call!

"Sure thing, my time is apparently worth nothing to you so let me drop everything I'm doing and call you up!"

As freelancers, many of us know this feeling all too well, yet a lot of us still suffer from "internet pandhandler syndrome" when trying to network with people. I wrote in my previous post on freelance marketing about how I was able to land features on big publications through email, and I included a single tip that can help you avoid this annoying habit...

Don't ask for anything in the first email!

Genuine networking doesn't start with your hands out during the first contact.

### 3. Know Who You're Reaching Out To

This should be a no-brainer, but if you've ever gotten an unsolicited email that *felt* like a spam message but actually wasn't, you know what I mean here.

The most important thing to remember here is that if you are trying to connect with an **influential** person, this becomes even more important — not because they are inherently more important, but because they probably have people trying to reach out all the time.

You can stand out by *doing your homework* and actually getting to know some facts about the person you're about to reach out to, beyond the "surface level" stuff that everybody already knows.

People reach out to me a lot of discuss content strategy, and I'm flattered when they bring up some work of mine that they saw on Help Scout, Bidsketch, or any other place I regularly appear.

As basic as that may seem, remember point #2... on the internet, everyone comes across as: "*Blah blah blah enough about you, let's get back to me!*"

Separate yourself from the pack and actually come prepared knowing about the person's passion projects, and I guarantee you'll get remembered.

#### 4. Use *Positive Language*

I actually talked about this in my list of customer service skills, and this is true for building proposals (as described in this example eBook about software development proposals), but it goes far beyond dealing with customers — it's great for networking too.

This is especially true when you consider that so much communication today is done via text, and it's hard to display emotions and other subtle cues without the other person's face being in sight.

For instance, compare these two similar requests...

"Hey, I want to do an interview with you on your new project by this Friday, we have very similar audiences."

vs.

"Hey, I'd love it if we could do a quick interview sometime soon on your new project, my audience loves your work."

While "saying" the same thing, you likely immediately realized that #2 was far more inviting and using *positive language* to get the same message across, but without the bluntness (which can be misinterpreted for rudeness via text) of the first example.

When in doubt about the tone of your message, it is best to keep this rule in mind and evaluate whether or not you are using positive language, there is essentially no downside (just don't be overly chipper or "Whoo hoo!" for every single message) and it is a great way to avoid communication problems that stem from using harsher language.

#### 5. Cultivate Your "Power" Contacts

As much as many people may not like to hear it, "*All contacts are equal, but some are more equal than others.*"

You're going to come across people who become **power contacts** as you become more connected with those in your industry. These people will be the ones who are constantly introducing you to new/interesting contacts, referring you to others for more work, and just generally pushing your business forward.

I can name one supernetworker of mine in Leo Widrich, co-founder of the BufferApp.

Although we're both busy, I try to stay in regular contact with Leo, make contributing to the Buffer blog a monthly priority, and constantly make mentions of Leo wherever I post (hint hint).

These are simply the contacts you'll form where the "give and take" has reached a fairly high level, and you're both willing to support the other where possible.

Be sure to keep an eye on these people, networking isn't *always* Pareto principle in practice, but in many instances your most frequent contacts will be the ones that really matter.

*You don't need to know the most people, just the right people!*

#### 6. Learn How to Email

Real business gets done over email.

A tweet may get someone's attention, but when it comes to establishing real relationships, the conversation *truly* begins when you start the reciprocity via email.

That said, you should know how to write a good email, both during the "outreach" stages of networking and when you've already established a connection.

Let's break some advice down for each stage...

##### #1 — Outreach

When you're looking to initially get someone's attention, you need to tread carefully.

Here are 3 good pieces of advice for outreach emails:

**1. KISS:** Keep it *short*, stupid. I wrote about this in my guide on How to Email Busy People, but the #1 killer in outreach emails is sending people a book when all they want is a paragraph. You're the one reaching out, so don't waste their time with a wall-o-text, 3 short paragraphs ought to do it.

**2. Make it about them:** You can give a quick spiel as to why you're an interesting guy/gal to connect with, but since you're hitting *their* inbox first, make the first email mostly about them.

**3. Find a mutual connection:** This could either be a mutual friend *or* a mutual interest, but one of the best ways to personalize an outreach email is to find a legitimate thing in common that you and receiving party have.

##### #2 — Established connections

Once you've established contact, the conversation begins to shift quite a bit (obviously). It's similar to when you make a new friend vs. talking to a friend you've had for 2 years, you're familiarity changes what you talk about.

That said, don't let your good connections go to waste over a bad email.

Here's how you can improve the next stage...

**1. NO CONSTANT PANHANDLING!** That's right, this is making another appearance. If the only time you contact this person is to get something out of them, you're doing it wrong.

**2. Send them interesting emails:** What should you be emailing them then? Interesting content that they may enjoy, mentions that you've given them, insightful questions or thoughts that appeal to both of your businesses/interests, etc.

Pretty simple right?

Use email to stay in touch with those important people in your networks, staying connected is often much more important than getting connected.

#### 7. Don't Expect Anything

This "*skill*" is actually one of the most important of all, because with the right mindset you can usually avoid many of the big networking mistakes out there.

When you are **always** out to get something, you are not truly networking with people, you're just running a long-term manipulation game.

The RIGHT mindset is to know that creating a big network is the

smart thing to do, but also understanding that whatever comes should just come, you don't need to actively be pestering your connections for everything.

It's great when a new connection works out from a professional standpoint, but it's hard to measure some other things that having a large network can bring, like...

1. More information & great conversation with smart people
2. Introductions to others
3. Creating a presence of being "that guy that everybody knows and likes"

Just because a connection doesn't result in more direct dollars in your bank account doesn't mean it was fruitless, and you shouldn't be pursuing connections with people just to wring something out of them.

Speaking of which...

#### **8. Burn Useless Bridges**

Yikes, somewhat of a controversial point to place on a post about networking, no?

The thing is, **this skill is an absolute must to learn.**

Eventually, you're going to come across "leeches," people who you've connected with but don't see the relationship as give-and-take, more like, "*How much can I get out of you?*"

Networking is supposed to help you grow your business by meeting genuinely awesome people, not create a network of vultures who only reach out to you when they need something.

Cut these people off, and fast, you don't need anyone holding you back.

Note that this isn't the same as people who want to help you, but can't and don't ask much from you. This advice is for the greedy, those hitting your inbox with favor after favor that never gets returned.