

UPGRADE YOUR APPROACH TO SOCIAL-MEDIA MARKETING

The one social-media tool every storeowner needs **BY BASIA HELLWIG**

Dance storeowners don't have to be told how important it is to post regularly to social media to reach and engage their customers. But keeping up with timely posts when a busy sales floor calls isn't always easy. And with new social platforms popping up all the time, it can be overwhelming. There is a solution, though. It's a tool social-marketing pros call the editorial, or social-content, calendar. "When you look ahead and make a plan, you save time day-to-day," says Jill Tirone, owner of DanceFit Marketing in Williamsville, NY, who uses one herself and helps her small-business clients set them up. "Having a calendar also holds you to a posting schedule, forcing you to be more consistent. And the more consistent you are, the more engagement you get."

Basically, an editorial calendar for social media maps out the posts you'll be doing, to which platforms, with dates and times attached. You could use an Excel spreadsheet, Google calendar or an app like Podio, a task and project management tool that Tirone likes because it can be easily customized and works on mobile.

Having an editorial calendar still leaves room for spontaneous posts reacting to live events, of course. But by organizing regular posting, it frees up time for real engagement: interacting with customers online, answering their questions and monitoring analytics so you're not wasting time on posts that never bring customers to your store.

Here's how to use an editorial calendar to get the best return on investment for the time you spend on social-media marketing.

1 Start with a big-picture look at your store's year.

On a 12-month calendar, fill in all the store's promotions—back-to-school,

holidays, recital and specific sales—with their lead-up times, plus in-store or community events (street fair, book signing, studio visits, for instance), any new product arrivals you know about and so on. It helps to have the big picture before you get down to planning specific posts in one- or two-week chunks. For instance, you'll see well ahead of time that you need to gather photos if you want to tweet your *Nutcracker* event next month.

2 Decide which platforms are most important to your store's customers.

Here's how Tirone differentiates them, with her recommendations for frequency.

- **Facebook**—dance moms, 1–2 posts a day
- **Twitter**—dance moms and young dancers, 3–5 posts a day
- **Pinterest**—dance moms, 3–5 times a week. (Post original photos with a link back to your store.)
- **Instagram**—tween and teenage dancers, 1–2 posts a day

Gasping at the number of posts? Remember, not every post needs to be completely different for each platform, although you always need to keep your audience in mind. (Different photo maybe? Message to mom vs. teen dancer?) Also, you don't have to do all the posting yourself. With a calendar, it's easier to delegate (and yet still maintain control over) your social media.

3 Schedule the time to create and update the calendar.

Tirone says to expect to take an hour or so to establish the yearly calendar of promotions, and then about an hour a week for the weekly posting plan. Schedule that weekly hour into your calendar as if it were a staff meeting, she suggests. "If something's not on our calendar, we tend not to do it," she says.

4 Make your weekly social-media calendar template.

You'll devise the headings that are right for your store, but it could be something like this: Divide your weekly chart vertically into sections—Monday, Tuesday, etc. If you're using spreadsheets, Hootsuite, the popular platform for managing social-media

	FACEBOOK	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM	PINTEREST
MONDAY				
9 AM	E: Dance Video	E: Dance Video	E: Dance Video	-
noon	S: Flash Sale: Tights	S: Flash Sale: Tights	S: Flash Sale: Tights	-
3 PM	-	E: Bun Tip	-	-
6 PM	-	E: Share article from dancespirit.com	-	E: Create "Ballet Wish List" Board
TUESDAY				
9 AM	E: Stretching Tip	E: Stretching Tip	E: Stretching Tip	-
noon	-	E: Dance Quote	-	-
3 PM	-	E: Tutu Tuesday	E: Tutu Tuesday	E: Create "Tutu Tuesday" Board
6 PM	S: Event Reminder:	S: Event Reminder	-	-

A social-content calendar can make it easy to plan posts across several platforms.

posts, recommends using a sheet for each week. Across the top, you might want column headers such as:

- **Time** For each day, list the platform with posting times below it. Tirone color-codes the platforms; that way, you can see at a glance whether you're spamming one channel and ignoring another.
- **Topic and type of post** To help stick to the 80/20 rule—80 percent engagement posts about community events, educational tips, passion for dance; 20 percent selling: specific sale, product info. Tirone suggests labeling posts E or S. That way you can quickly see whether the balance is right.

- **Author** Who's responsible: you or a staff member?

- **Draft/Notes** Jot down ideas here, leave notes for staff or start to draft the actual post anytime.

- **Photo** Do you need to shoot one?
- **Link** URL to include in the post

With programs like Podio or Google Calendar, you can upload photos and videos right into your calendar, so that everything's handy when it comes time to post.

5 Construct your first weekly or biweekly plan.

Thinking two weeks ahead, what's happening in your dance community, at the store (new products arriving, special sale, trunk show)? Brainstorm with staff, and start populating two weeks with ideas. "Draft posts right into the calendar," says Tirone. "You'll see 'we

need a graphic or a photo,' and you can upload that image right away." You might also have a staff member draft this outline, or, following your outline, draft posts for your approval. If one week you have a store event you'll want to cover live, you can plan to go easy on scheduled posts that day.

6 Schedule posts.

"You can push out the posts using a program like Hootsuite or Buffer (which includes Pinterest) or even the native Facebook app," says Tirone. No one platform does it all, she says; find what works best for your mix of channels.

Like any business planning tool, an editorial calendar takes a bit of time up front, but the investment is worth it. Once it's in place, allocating 10 or 15 minutes twice a day should be enough for a staff member to monitor the various platforms, answer any customer questions and generally engage with people online (which is the point, after all). For you, the calendar becomes the place to write down all your good posting ideas and save photos so they don't get lost. At a glance, it highlights whether you're publishing the right mix of posts to the best channels for your audience. And by freeing up time for monitoring how various posts do, it makes you a smarter (and less frazzled) social-media marketer. "Probably the biggest benefit of all," says Tirone, "is that storeowners can save themselves time and stress." ■

RESOURCES

Buffer buffer.com

Google Calendar google.com/calendar

Hootsuite hootsuite.com

Podio podio.com