



Best Practices for Creating an Effective Social Media Team Structure

Establishing a strong social media presence is crucial. However, building an efficient team structure can be challenging.

In this two-part guide, we explore best practices shared by SocialMedia.org members to help you create an effective social media team. From reviewing your strategy and roles to fostering collaboration and accountability, these insights will guide you in developing a team structure that supports your goals.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

1 YOUR TEAM STRUCTURE WON'T BE EFFECTIVE IF IT'S NOT ALIGNED WITH OVERALL BUSINESS GOALS

Before defining the roles and responsibilities of your social media team, it is essential to review your company's overall business goals and drive alignment.

In a private leadership discussion, SocialMedia.org members emphasized the significance of effective social media structures and processes to enhance business goals.

They stressed the importance of maintaining a regular feedback loop to ensure consistent brand guidelines and performance, and to understand where to prioritize their efforts. Members found initiatives such as standing meetings, combined reporting, team chats, and cross-represented discussions help improve alignment.

Members also highlighted the importance of having a well-documented social strategy with predefined KPIs that are agreed upon by senior leadership. One member said their strategy is reviewed with stakeholders at the beginning of the year and refreshed periodically. They even added an additional section to explain the concept of being "social first" for clarity.

Other social media leaders agreed reviewing your strategy with stakeholders should be a crucial component of your process.

Define your social media team's value to help mitigate burnout

Once you have the objectives of your company in place, you should ensure your social media goals are tied to them to create alignment.

During a [SocialMedia.org panel discussion on future-proofing team structures](#), Vanguard Head of Social Media [Temeka Easter Rice](#) explained one of the most crucial factors for alignment is demonstrating the strategic value of the social media team.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

She shared how you can achieve this by listening to your company's annual reports, keeping up to date with business initiatives and upcoming plans, and linking social media goals to these critical priorities.



Temeka Easter Rice, Head of Social Media at Vanguard

"Then, it's important to get buy-in from your senior leader and say, 'This is what I'm hearing throughout the organization,'" Temeka said. "'This is what I believe my priorities to be and where we should spend 80% of our time. Are you in agreement with that? Are there any changes that I need to make to my plan?'"

This approach provides support when it becomes necessary to decline requests that fall outside the agreed priorities. In doing so, Temeka said social media teams can avoid the risk of misalignment and burnout.

"Our job is to proactively anticipate additional requests and to make sure we have the appropriate support from the right people to execute the priorities we have established," she added.

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Temeka Easter Rice, Vanguard

Social media teams require constant adjustments to keep up with evolving trends

SocialMedia.org members noted that regardless of the structure chosen, you should regularly evaluate and adjust your team more frequently than other business units.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

In a members-only discussion on re-evaluating social media team structures, members suggested re-assessing your structure every three to five years to ensure social media roles keep up with the changing social landscape and evolving business needs.

Members also discussed how you should reorganize your team structure for evolving social channels, particularly for teams with smaller headcounts responsible for managing all content creation.

One SocialMedia.org member shared that over the past few years, they've moved more of their team in-house -- including strategy, videography, animation, and copywriting -- to keep their initiatives aligned with changing organizational goals.



And while structures vary, members expressed the need to reorganize yours by focusing on specific goals: increasing cohesion and breaking down silos to achieve more integrated, end-to-end social practices across your enterprise.

2 BUILDING FUTURE-READY SOCIAL MEDIA TEAMS: EVOLVING ROLES, INTEGRATION, AND COLLABORATION STRATEGIES

In a private leadership discussion on hiring roles for future strategies, SocialMedia.org members shared the evolving roles they're creating to prepare for the next phase of their social media team structures.

Members contemplated the effectiveness of hiring social media specialists versus generalists. Some members said they were leaning toward hiring specialists, but they are facing difficulties in finding candidates with specific technical skills.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

One member suggested prioritizing soft skills over trainable skills, which showed success in finding qualified candidates. They found candidates with a journalism background, previous agency experience, and creative abilities have been a good fit for their teams.

Other roles members said you should establish include associate managers, social media strategists, content marketers, brand engagement leads, social listening leads, and social care, among others.

In our SocialMedia.org [panel discussion](#), Prudential Financial Director of Social Media Strategy [April Virhuez](#) proposed considering gig roles, where individuals who are not primarily focused on social media can learn and contribute to social media efforts alongside their current responsibilities.



April Virhuez, Director of Social Media Strategy at Prudential Financial

"There's a ton of people who are interested in social media who do not necessarily have that as their full-time role," April said. "Is there an opportunity for them to learn social media on the job while in their current role? Is there an opportunity for them to use 10% of their time to learn social media?"

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April Virhuez, Prudential Financial

April said the gig economy allows for social media leaders to explore individuals open to projects as a potential solution for limited bandwidth.



BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

Integrating social media across your organization creates more collaboration for ideas and cultures

During the panel discussion, Temeka at Vanguard discussed the integration of social media within different departments and teams.

She mentioned social media can be managed by various teams such as PR, brand, and marketing, as well as international teams.

"What you'll find is there are additional resources and people who are interested in doing social media in those areas," Temeka said. "They will be more familiar with their markets, the product, and the culture. So, you might have to use a matrix-type, organizational structure and leverage people and other departments."

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She also mentioned the establishment of a Social Media Committee within one of their global teams, which consists of members from HR, product, brand, and marketing, who collaborate on their regional social media strategy.

Temeka noted the need for flexibility in assigning and providing resources to effectively manage social media across different areas.

During a private SocialMedia.org leadership discussion on re-evaluating team structures, members shared how many of their teams operate under the marketing department or closely collaborate with other business lines for community management. They also make use of creative and paid agency services.

In cases where teams are not directly under marketing, members said they work with marketing departments and creative directors to align with product recommendations, business priorities, brand design, and voice.

Considering the many options to structure a team, SocialMedia.org members advised starting by defining your company's goals and then expanding your team accordingly to support those goals.



BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

At Lenovo, dedicated roles for specific platforms have helped increase their social media footprint

In the [panel discussion on future-proofing team structures](#), Lenovo Global Social Media Governance and Alignment Manager [Brandy Mann](#) explained her team has individuals dedicated to specific platforms, a recent development in the past few years.



Brandy Mann, Global Social Media Governance and Alignment Manager at Lenovo

Previously, one person handled publishing while a team worked on strategy, but this was deemed too much for one person. As a result, they now have team members dedicated to specific platforms.

She shared her team has members who work in-house to create their Center of Excellence. They handle various tasks such as paid media, video production, and content creation to support the rest of the company.

Although they have different roles, Brandy and her team try to find ways to work together and learn from each other.

"We came up with the idea to have a deep dive project where we split everybody out per platform, and then we all did deep dives on the newest trends," Brandy said.

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BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

For example, if a video producer was unfamiliar with a platform like LinkedIn, her team assigned that person to learn more about the optimal video performances on the channel.

"Then we all gave presentations to each other and had key takeaways on what our competition was doing on that platform. It was beneficial, and I highly recommend it," Brandy added.

3 STRETCHING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA DOLLARS: HOW TEAMS ARE ACHIEVING MORE WITH LESS RESOURCES

Many social media teams face challenges with decreased budgets and increased expectations, causing them to increase efforts to achieve goals with fewer resources.

During another members-only leadership discussion on stretching your social media dollars, members benchmarked their cost-saving measures, including consolidating technologies and agencies across their enterprises.

In the discussion, SocialMedia.org members shared how they're streamlining workflows to temper the impact of a decreased or stagnant budget.

Rather than dedicating headcount to data and analytics, some members are automating and templating reports so internal teams can pull their data. Others are trying things like hiring freelancers or experimenting with AI technologies such as [ChatGPT](#) and [Dalle2](#) to support other business lines more rapidly.

Use a resource library to provide context to your team's responsibilities, strengths, and weaknesses

During the [panel discussion](#), Brandy emphasized creating an established resource library to provide guidelines around each person's role and the tools to help them achieve their goals.

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

For example, when expanding your team or adding new roles, Brandy said inventorying available resources is crucial to identify duplications and ensure optimal responsibilities.

[Inventorying available resources] is an easy way to consolidate the budget and get to know the team to understand everybody's strengths/weaknesses and reforming roles when you need to.

Brandy Mann, Lenovo

"That was an easy way to consolidate the budget and get to know the team to understand everybody's strengths and weaknesses and reforming roles when you need to," Brandy said. "It depends on where you're at in that journey. If you're a well-established team, that will look a little different."

Prioritize your efforts to keep a clear focus

During the panel, April at Prudential Financial shared the same sentiment about optimizing platforms and responsibilities and added how creating specific priorities helps your team stay focused and aligned to larger goals.

"When you have a lean team, it's important to be laser-focused on priorities," April explained when discussing doing more with less. "To do that, you have to have a list of all those requests and figure out how to lean into individual skills and then prioritize what needs to be done and when."

4 DEFINE YOUR TEAM'S BOUNDARIES, LEVERAGE YOUR EXPERTISE, AND HARNESS DATA TO ALIGN YOUR COMPANY

April explained the importance of collaboration for social media teams and suggested defining your boundaries of support to other business lines.

"I think defining what that looks like and drawing the lines in the sand, so to speak, is important to explain how we can amplify or support these goals that you're trying to achieve," April said.



BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

She recommended brainstorming sessions and discussions to gain buy-in from all lines of business to collaborate on different ideas. She also suggested identifying what each party hopes to achieve and how it can align with the larger organizational strategies.

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April Virhuez, Prudential Financial

Use your expertise and clear examples to gain more support

Brandy added how going into meetings with other business lines with a proposal or case study is more effective than simply asking for input or collaboration. Demonstrating expertise and confidence in the proposal and highlighting the benefits of the proposed approach can be vital in gaining more support for your social strategy.

"Being able to go in with that confidence has been helpful, and that expertise to say, 'We've been studying this for the past year in this market, and here's what we believe you should be doing.'" Brandy said.

She also mentioned how a Center of Excellence allows them more freedom to experiment and gain expertise, which you can leverage in proposals. Brandy said people appreciate having something concrete to work with and that this approach has been more successful than simply asking to work together without a clear plan.

Leverage data to inform the business about how your efforts are helping achieve larger goals

Temeka Easter Rice at Vanguard gave insight into how using data has helped her collaborate with other business lines. For example, she used a report of their top 10 worst-performing social media posts to explain which efforts may not be the best use of time.

She emphasized the importance of being comfortable with data and allowing it to tell a story while bringing stakeholders along in the process of understanding the data.





BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

"It always comes back to the data," Temeka said. "I never want my team to go back and say we don't want to post this, or we don't like the content you put together without evidence. Our strategy is to be informed by the data and the insights, and we need to let that tell a story."

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April also noted how data could help others know where to prioritize their efforts. In her example, she said analyzing video performances can give insights to drive your campaigns.

"Look at how long people watch the videos when you're collaborating with a team," April said. "It's important to know that because it helps them and enables them to potentially work differently. So it's more effective, and you get a better product."

ABOUT SOCIALMEDIA.ORG

[SocialMedia.org](https://socialmedia.org) delivers unbiased peer insights from a trusted community -- led by expert advisors -- that help social media leaders and their teams at big companies quickly make informed strategic decisions.

Leaders from more than 300 large enterprises have relied on SocialMedia.org for more than a decade to discuss paid and organic social strategy, crisis communications and planning, social listening, social customer care, employee advocacy, influencers, platforms, vendors, tools, and more. With no vendors and no selling allowed, members get honest answers from true peers -- who don't have an agenda. And because we enforce strict confidentiality rules, members get information they can't get anywhere else.

Our service is fast, unlimited, and on-demand -- with dedicated, full-time advisors who don't stop until members have the answers they need. All members have to do is ask, we take care of everything else.

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