

5 Ways to Engagement through Social Media

By **Pete Codella**, Accredited in Public Relations

Program Director of the Social Media Club of Salt Lake City, owner of Codella Marketing and NewsCactus, co-host of the Online PR Podcast

We've heard the call: Social Media, Social Media, Social Media!

And we've heard the response: What's the return on investment for my business if we use social media?

Regardless of where you fall on the scale of how useful social media is for business, perhaps you can glean some value out of these suggestions for ways to utilize social media for business.

One : Listen

Every effective piece of communication has at its core a message relative to its receiver. How do you know what your constituents are thinking unless you listen to them?

Social media provides never before seen opportunities to glean sentiment and awareness from your constituents. Even if you choose not to engage through social media, you have access to the same free tools everyone's using to speak their mind.

Your constituents will be surprised at how smart you are if you communicate with them based on their individual expressions (you should use the same channel they used for your communication). This is a great way to endear them to your brand and to develop an even stronger relationship.

An example of this I experienced personally was when I had telephone troubles and talked about it on Twitter (follow me at [Twitter.com/Codella](https://twitter.com/Codella)). Within a few minutes I received a response from my telephone service provider offering to help me resolve my problem.

Two : Share

Make it easy to share your content. Use a tool like [ShareThis.com](https://www.sharethis.com) on all your Web pages, blogs, etc.

The easier you make it for others to share your content with their social networks, the more you capitalize on the Internet Press — the ability to have your content taken from your central hub and then re-published on others' hubs and among their networks.

People trust their social networks much more than advertising or what a company itself says.

Three : Content

Content is king. Period.

The best way to engage your constituents is to produce content in various forms — text, audio, video and every combination of the three — that is not only original but worthy of their attention.

Generally speaking, corporate-speak isn't passed along like jokes and tips are via e-mail, or viral videos on YouTube. At least people are entertained by jokes and tips. Are they entertained by what you publish?

Be creative. Use a genuine, honest tone. And be human.

People are interested in having a relationship with your brand. They don't want to be told why you're so great (Did that work when you were dating?). They want to hear from real people who have experienced something outstanding as a result of your brand.

Four : Employees

If you're worth your salt, your employees are your best advocates.

When it comes to social media participation, companies and organizations can overlook their most prized asset — their team members. And not just their communications team, but everyone on the payroll.

Who else fundamentally understands your business? Who would be better at representing you or your interests?

For an example of this principle, take a look at Zappos ([Twitter.com/Zappos](https://twitter.com/Zappos)).

Five : Participate

Social media is all about earned reputation. It's like public relations, not advertising.

Build relationships by participating in your space. Comment on blogs. Answer LinkedIn Polls and join and participate in LinkedIn groups. Reply to tweets with your own perspective or to compliment or thank others.

If you're respectful, you'll earn respect. If you're a valuable member of the community, you'll be considered a thought leader.

In Summary

It's a misconception to believe social media is *free*.

It takes a great deal of time to become networked online and to gain value from those relationships. It takes time to create content that people will subscribe to and share. It takes time to develop influence and secure engagement.

But once you've accomplished those things, the value gained, in my opinion, is . . . well, in the words of MasterCard, *priceless*.

Pete Codella, Accredited in Public Relations is a social media evangelist. In addition to serving as the Social Media Club of Salt Lake City's first program director and chair of the Utah Social Media Awards, he is the owner and operator of Codella Marketing and NewsCactus, a hosted online newsroom solution. He has received numerous awards and always enjoys a good communication challenge. See PeteCodella.com for more information, and check out his social media song music video at YouTube.com/CodellaMarketing.