

## The Social Media Marketing Map (Part 1): A Tool to Empower the Digital Leaders of Extension

### Abstract

To date, Extension still lacks a strong social media presence. By now the majority of Extension professionals understand the importance of social media in advertising their programs, but don't know where to start. The Social Media Marketing Map (SMMM) provides guidance, helping busy Extension professionals design and implement a social media strategy to engage audiences and connect them to online or face-to-face Extension events.

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### Introduction

Extension professionals are recognized as trusted experts in their local communities. In order to "bring the university to the people," Extension must know how to strategically market programs to engage and maintain relationships with specific audiences (Doyle & Briggeman, 2014). Social media can help reach these audiences; however, many Extension professionals do not know where to start (Gharis, Bardon, Evans, Hubbard, & Taylor, 2014; Hill, 2014). Make no mistake, engaging audiences and marketing events via social media takes dedicated effort and long-term commitment, but the Social Media Marketing Map (SMMM) is a tool that can ease the transition and improve digital relationships with Extension audiences.

### What Is the Social Media Marketing Map?

The SMMM is a tool for marketing Extension programs and events while guiding interactions with Extension audiences to build relationships through social media. The SMMM is a simple chart with rows and columns (Figure 1). The row across the top lists various social and traditional media platforms: Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter, Website, Blog, and Newspaper. The first column down the left side of the map is a timeline of dates; 5-3 weeks before, 2 weeks before, 1 week before, week of, day before, during, day after, and after series is complete. Beginning your SMMM strategy 5-3 weeks before the event is critical to success. Impact takes long-term planning, and marketing Extension events using the SMMM is less effective at the last minute. This structure provides a clear picture of

where and when to post in order to maximize program outreach efforts and build relationships through social media.

**Figure 1.**

An Example of the Social Media Marketing Map for Marketing a 4-H Sewing Camp



## Marketing Extension Events Using the SMMM

To develop a social media strategy for marketing Extension events, fill in the top row of the SMMM with the social and traditional media outlets you currently use. If you are just starting out using social media, pick one or two platforms to begin with. Next, audit yourself by asking this question, "Am I delivering information to the demographic I am seeking through the appropriate platform?" If you do not currently use a social media platform where your primary target audience resides, take steps to increase your reach, and try a social platform as it applies to your situation (Robideau & Santl, 2011). If you are using a network not listed, Periscope, for example, add an extra column. Make it your own.

To develop content, start with a great image depicting your event. This could be a photo from last year's event or a professional stock photo depicting activities at your event, etc. Once you have the image, write up a description of your event detailing the following: why it's important, activities involved, cost, location, time, supplies needed, etc. You can share this post across multiple outlets. Publish the photo with the event information as a blog post. Post on Instagram using the same image. Post on Facebook linking to the blog post or Eventbrite for more detailed information about registering for the event. Create a Pinterest board, and pin the image with a direct link to registration. The rows of the map provide an easy timeline of when to post, beginning with 5-3 weeks before the event

through the day of the event and what to share after the event is complete.

Involving support staff and Extension personnel will help you in your efforts to sustain social media marketing success using the SMMM. Gathering and creating content for posts can be delegated to make the load lighter on everyone. This involvement will also help motivate Extension personnel as they feel more connected to the process. While it's great to involve everyone with vested interest in the event, it's smart to limit posting access on social media sites to one or two people. This helps keep the voice consistent throughout and will prevent misinformation from being posted.

Quick Tips:

- Always include a link back to registration in your posts.
- When publishing a "reminder post" with the event information, include an engaging question or a fill-in-the-blank so your audience can respond.
- Don't skip posting after your event is complete. Sharing the success is a great way to tell your story and help develop impacts to share with stakeholders.

## Focus on Relationships

The best way to instigate social media relationships is to start by listening. Extension cannot treat social media as another broadcasting platform like direct mail, email, outdoor media, TV, and radio commercials. Individuals have a voice, and they can now respond in real time to whatever is presented to them. One "listens" in social networks by engaging in online conversation and providing opportunities for individuals to respond back by—replying, retweeting, commenting, sharing, and asking questions. This type of communication allows your audience to feel their Extension professional wants to hear what they have to say. When online relationships between Extension professionals and their clientele are established and maintained, clientele will start showing up to events and programs.

Quick Tips:

- Be mindful in only sharing useful content that your audience will appreciate. They will engage after you take the lead.
- Get started marketing an event early enough to build relationships with potential attendees.

## Conclusion

The Social Media Marketing Map will hasten the efforts of Extension professionals as they seek to become digital leaders in the 21st century. This tool will help professionals manage time spent on social media and map out a clear plan of when and where to post content that builds relationships and engages Extension audiences. Extension will fulfill its mandate to "bring the university to the people" as new and established professionals learn and incorporate social media strategy for their educational programs. This not only expands reach, but also sustains Extension's relevance. To download an example and a fillable SMMM, visit [socialmediamarketingmap.usu.edu](http://socialmediamarketingmap.usu.edu).

## References

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