



Social Media Roles: Hiring and Getting Hired

If this is the year you're going to dedicate some serious resources to social media, you may need to consider dedicated people to manage your efforts.

Whether those are marketing or PR roles with a heavier social media focus, customer service roles with a community twist, or purer social media and community positions dedicated to driving strategy as well as execution, there's lots to consider.

If you're the business doing the hiring, what should you consider when creating that role? If you're the person who dreams of having a social element to your role or landing a job in the social media industry, what skills might you need? Read on.

Hiring For Social Roles: The Dos

If you're creating positions that are all or partially dedicated to social media strategy and execution, you'll want first to determine whether your focus is on communications, customer service, internal communication, community development, or some combination of all of those things.

Not all social media roles and responsibilities are created equal, and there are many disciplines within social media that can have value: strategy, execution, integration and management, measurement and analysis, to name a few. That might mean you need one person, or that might mean you need a team of specialists that can employ social media specifically for their area of expertise.

But when you're considering these aspects in general, do be sure to:

- Emphasize integration of social media strategy with larger business goals.
- Look for professionals with solid communication skills, period. That includes writing and speaking.
- Seek out minds that embrace precedent, but that are willing to challenge thinking and create new solutions
- Facilitate a culture and empower your team to put the customer needs at the forefront of their work, and find people passionate about doing just that
- Specify the need to not only understand measurement as it's been, but understand how to evolve and implement new measurements to apply to new initiatives
- Find people who have the skills to communicate and work on cross-functional teams internally, too. That means someone good at teamwork and collaboration.

Hiring For Social Roles: The Don'ts

First of all, resist the urge to run out and get a community manager or a social media director just because someone else has one. The only reason to hire a role specific to this in your company is if you've made a long-term, strategic commitment to making social media capabilities a part of your business.



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Also, please consider breaking out of your “typical” job description format. Don’t be bound by templates, and don’t assume that someone else’s job description for a community manager will suit your needs. Write down what you need out of this role and what you don’t, and build a role description from there.

As you build out the role and recruit, keep in mind some of these typical stumbling blocks:

- Don’t focus too much on the specific tools like Twitter and Facebook. Familiarity with them is good, but the tools will change, and they’re much easier to learn than the mindset.
- Think carefully before making your primary social media roles junior or entry level ones. The culture and operational implications of a social shift might mean you need someone a bit more experienced with strategy and project management.
- When looking at deliverables and expectations, don’t forget engagement strategy. Links, fans, followers, and eyeballs aren’t enough in social media.
- Remember that content is the means, not the end. The goal of content creation should be an improvement in some aspect of customer relationships beyond just delivering messages, and you need someone who understands that.
- Don’t lump SEO, content, traffic generation and social media all in the same bucket. They’re different skills and different strategies. Not all “online” roles are alike.
- One social media or community manager isn’t going to create social media brilliance for your company. They might be able to get you on the path, but if you’re committed, you’ll need to have them help infuse social media into lots of different roles.
- Don’t limit yourself to parking social media in the marketing department. Maybe it’s better suited to a customer service role in your company.

Getting Hired

If you’re the one looking for a job in social media, there are several things to keep in mind when you’re searching. You’ll need to focus on both your applied skills and your relevant, contextual knowledge.

When you’re applying for social media roles, many of them are new, so you’ll have to learn to translate the kind of work you’ve been doing into a new perspective.

Here are a few things you should be able to think about, work on, or demonstrate to get yourself in shape for the next generation of social and community roles:

- If you’re not already using social media or participating, you’ve got to do that first. You’ve got no street cred as a social media pro if you don’t have a blog, or profiles and some immersion in existing social networks, forums, or communities. Show that you’ve got some experience with content creation, too.
- Be ready to demonstrate business acumen beyond your discipline, and translate it into other areas of the organization. If you’re a marketing person, you should understand and be able to articulate how that work impacts sales, customer service, PR, and product management, to name a few.



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- Sharpen those communication skills. Written and verbal. They're absolutely critical.
- Demonstrate a customer focus and mindset, and how that drives your decisions. Remember, customers are internal, too,
- Understand that your role will include a lot of teaching, both externally and internally. Show how you've successfully done that in the past through collaboration and teamwork.
- Be curious. About your company. About social media as an industry. About what's happening in your profession.
- Showcase your ability to find clear pathways through disparate ideas. Lots of this stuff is still finding footing in business, and you need to take the bull by the horns and create order from chaos.
- Illustrate your project management skills. You'll need them.
- Patience, diplomacy, and negotiation skills. Telling your company they "don't get it" isn't constructive. You've got to help find solutions to meet them halfway.

Reinvention Rules

These types of roles are still new and shiny, and they're going to change several times over. The right community manager for your company will likely look a lot different than the one for the business next door, and the type of social media management you'll need will be heavily dependent on what, exactly, you endeavor to use social media for.

In all cases, it's okay to create new ideas. Roles that bridge different silos, or that are hybrids of a couple of disciplines. It's a new era. New rules mean new roles. Keep your eye on the big picture, and find the people and skills that are ultimately right for you.