Social media is more than just marketing.
Social has a big place in marketing but it also is an important part of customer service, research & development, sales and ultimately customer satisfaction.

The purpose of this Playbook is to help you put together a social media strategy that best fits your goals and objectives.

Look for this symbol.
This directive icon is used throughout this Playbook to point out helpful tips and other important information.

Table of Contents

3 Introduction
4 Diagramming Your Social Media Strategy
10 Your Facebook Play
17 Your Twitter Play
21 Your YouTube Play
25 Your Blogging Play
28 Your Pinterest Play
31 The “Other” Social Media Platforms
33 Analyzing Your Plays
35 Social Media Terminology
36 Conclusion
Introduction

"The goal isn’t to be good at social media. The goal is to be good at business because of social media.”

JAY BAER, SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST AND AUTHOR

It’s time to recognize social media for what it is – a tool.

It’s like a phone or a computer or a website; it’s simply a means to an end. And just as you wouldn’t try to run your swim team without a computer, neither should you run it without social media. We integrated websites into our businesses in the 90s, and we’re integrating social into our businesses today. It’s as simple as that.

But for many, it’s really not that simple.

Maybe your organization is stretched too thin across too many social media platforms, wondering if your time is well spent. Or you’re overwhelmed with the hundreds of platforms and have barely gotten started. Perhaps you’re happy with your social position, but can’t figure out if it’s moving your team forward.

We can help.

With this Playbook, we’d like to help you review (and perhaps retool) your social strategy, find the platforms most suitable for your swim team and learn how others are implementing social into their operations. For those with a successful social presence, we’ll present advanced concepts and best practices, and highlight how ACTIVE Hy-Tek can help integrate social into all your activities.

It’s important, as well, to look ahead. Many would agree that social initiatives will have a deeper penetration into your organization in the very near future. “People often use the general term ‘social media’ to represent ‘social media marketing,’ but there is so much more to it than that,” says Justin Ramers, Director of Digital and Social Media for ACTIVE. “Social has a big place in marketing, to be sure, but it also is an important part of customer service, research & development, sales and ultimately customer satisfaction. It can do more than just market your swim team.”

THINK ABOUT THIS

– Social is about the individual. Your customer, or swim parent, is in the center with his/her interests. Your swim team becomes a part of the ongoing conversation between the brand and that individual.

– Social is about continued engagement, better understanding and better intelligence.

– Social allows you to provide better value with more relevant and targeted content – which drives a more valued, deeper relationship with your customers.

“At its core, social is about building relationships with your customers and prospective customers.”
Diagramming Your Social Media Strategy

Only 34% of companies surveyed felt their social strategy was connected to business outcomes.

That leaves 66% active in social media without their efforts being grounded in business goals.

More than a century ago, Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker famously quipped, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don’t know which half.”

The same could be said today about the resources spent on social media – much of it is wasted. (And often, more than half.)

Like most, you’ve probably got a Facebook page, and maybe a Twitter account. Could be you’re part of a LinkedIn Group or have your own Pinterest Board. And maybe you’re feeling pretty good about your 3,000 “likes” and 500 followers.

But what are you accomplishing with your likes? Have they converted to more swimmer registrations? Which of your followers are using their own networks to evangelize on your behalf? And, most importantly, do you even know how to find the answers to these questions?

The sad fact is most of us in the swim industry are using social media without a strategy, without goals and without measurement. We’re wasting much of our time.

Without a strategy, goals and well-planned tactics, you could be spending all your time on Twitter, while potential customers are on Facebook – having a wonderful conversation with your competitor.

“Social media is simply a tool to solve old business problems in new ways,” explains Ramers. “The tools themselves shouldn’t be the focus since they can change constantly. What’s important are the foundational strategies of your business and how you can leverage social media to achieve success.”
Know your goals and identify them because different social media tools will work best for each one.

Social starts with awareness, builds to trust, loyalty and, finally, conversions.

**STRATEGY TIP**

**KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE**

**Business Goals**

Before you can write your social media strategy, you need a clear understanding of your business goals. What is your organization trying to accomplish this year?

- Are you launching a new program?
- Do you want your swim team to be seen as a leader?
- Do you want 50 new swimmers this year?

These are the goals that will drive your social media strategy. And it’s important to identify them because different social media tools will work best for each one.

It’s also essential to recognize that creating social strategies is about building long-term relationships with your customers. It’s a slower process than many recognize. Results will not be immediate. Social starts with awareness, builds to trust, loyalty and, finally, conversions.

**Swim Goals**

Although you may certainly have separate program goals – increase swimmer registrations by 10 percent, grow sponsor investment 20 percent, etc. – your program goals should also tie to your organization’s business strategy. For instance, if your business goal is to get 50 new swimmers this year, what will you do to help make that happen? And how can social media support you?

Be aware, too, that social media is not just about marketing. You can also use social media to improve the experience of swim parents during swim season.

“That’s the biggest misnomer about social media – that it’s just for marketing,” says Ramers. “Yes, social media marketing is important, but social media can also create better engagement with parents.”

Customer service is another key social media function. It’s not uncommon for social-enabled swim teams to get messages from parents on a social media platform about swim meets, team activities, etc. And parents expect fast replies and action.
Social Media Strategy

Armed with your business goals, you can now start to write your social media strategy – but keep your objectives realistic and measurable. And don’t bite off more than you can chew – one or two goals will do it. These are typical – and reasonable – types of goals swim teams set for themselves:

- Establish your team as a leader in your community.
- Establish your team as an education expert.
- Increase your team’s visibility in search results.
- Increase the number of new swimmers.
- Increase the rate of return swimmers.
- Increase the spend of returning swimmers.
- Gather more information about swimmers/parents – needs, spending plans, etc.
- Expand the reach of the team through the advocacy of swimmers/parents.
- Expand awareness of the team to niche audiences.
- Build a stronger presence in your local community.
- Drive more registrations to specific swim programs.

Social Media Tactics

The most important thing to remember as you ramp up your social media efforts is that you’re trying to build relationships. You’re talking with people, not at them. Think ping pong, rather than archery!

- Build your profile on your chosen platform.
- Make sure your social channels are integrated with your website.
- Start following the people who are talking about swimming.
- Start commenting on blogs, LinkedIn posts, Facebook, etc. Just add your two cents.
- Start making posts of your own. Your voice should be authentic, transparent and engaging. Don’t push your goals too hard yet. You’re trying to build a following.
- Share your content. Why hide it behind member-only walls? Could it do more good shared?
- Don’t over-post – or under-post.
- If your platform supports it, schedule “chats” or start a discussion group.
- Know when to get out of the way. If your audience wants to move a conversation in a specific direction, let them.
- Always respond to negative comments. Tell them how you’re addressing the issue.

- Think collaboration. What could your audience help with? Socializing topics? Features for a new program? Social media is like having a free focus group.
- Help swim parents engage. Launch a game. Introduce people. Connect parents with coaches or other parents.
- Make a point to meet your followers at industry or community events. Plan a “meet up” for everyone.
- Congratulations, you’ve started building a community!
Social media author, speaker and consultant Jay Baer says it doesn’t matter who you are, or what you sell, your product or service offerings aren’t enough to ignite passion in anyone other than you. He urges organizations to appeal to the heart of their audience, rather than the head. “Disney isn’t about movies, it’s about magic. Apple isn’t about technology, it’s about innovation. What are you about?”

Jay Baer

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH YOUR STRATEGY

1. Emotional Appeal.

Social media author, speaker and consultant Jay Baer says it doesn’t matter who you are, or what you sell, your product or service offerings aren’t enough to ignite passion in anyone other than you. He urges organizations to appeal to the heart of their audience, rather than the head. “Disney isn’t about movies, it’s about magic. Apple isn’t about technology, it’s about innovation. What are you about?”

2. Audience Definition.

What does your audience look like? Look at its sociographic, demographic and technographic make up. Where do they live socially?


Find out what’s being said about your swim team and industry. What are the hot topics? What are people fired up about? What types of things do they “share” or forward to others? Learn to use keyword research tools such as Google AdWords Keyword Tool, to identify the words and phrases people are using to find content in your industry – and on social channels.

Social listening will also tell you who the major social influencers are in your community or swim target market. Listen to what they say and consider involving them as guest bloggers or contributors to your newsletter.


It’s always a good idea to see what the competition is doing – even with social media. Does your competitor dominate a specific channel? Have they left the door wide open on another? Can you identify their “one thing?”
Making it Work

Be realistic, too, about your scheduling and resource management. Though having just one or two social media platforms to work on will help, there's still more to do than one person can handle. "Gone are the days when a social 'person' was hired to manage the social networking," says Ramers. "Today, social media is a cross-functional team working from, and for, different parts of the organization."

Many of your efforts will likely be marketing – promoting upcoming swim seasons or engaging with swim parents before, during and after.

If you have staff who cover customer service or administration, they should help monitor and engage on your social platforms. Automation tools can help, too. Setting editorial calendars and programming your posts weeks in advance can put your social media on auto pilot. But you need to be nimble, as well – able to respond to changes and comments. (We have more on these tools in another chapter.)

Measurement

Because you've set very specific social media goals, measuring your progress toward them will be easier.

But you'll have to decide what to measure – what has value for you. For instance, the number of followers you have on any social platform isn't really a good metric against a goal of increasing the number of new swimmers. For that, you'll need to measure followers who converted to registrants. (We've got more on measurement in another chapter, too – including information on how ACTIVE Hy-Tek can help!)

SO...
NOW WHAT?

Now that you know what you want to do and where your audience is, you can choose your platform. But again, be reasonable. Pick one or two, at most, and focus. "It's easy to get overwhelmed," says Ramers. "Especially with new platforms and tools coming online daily. But you have to think about your resources and stack rank your priorities. Better to have a solid plan for two channels, than to work across all platforms with no strategy."
Which Platform Works Best?

Though it’s more important that you determine where your potential swim parents already live online, here’s a brief rundown on what works well on the various platforms.

Facebook
Facebook is like a mini-website. It’s great for:
- Keeping followers up-to-date on news, special updates, etc.
- Building loyalty and brand awareness
- Letting others promote you through “shares”
- Linking to articles, posing questions

Facebook also has ads and analytics.

Twitter
Arguably the best customer service tool. Great for:
- Disseminating news and special offers
- Linking to articles, blogs, websites and special landing pages
- Quick, real-time conversations with follows
- Monitoring the pulse of your audience

LinkedIn
One of the best professional platforms for showing thought leadership. This platform will be useful if you want to network with other swim organizations but it is likely not the best one to use for engaging with your swim parents.

YouTube
Video marketing is hot. Plus, you get the added benefit that YouTube is the #2 search engine in the world behind Google.

Google +
Not yet a dominant tool, but growing in popularity. Mostly tech savvy, early adopters.

- Niche and target marketing, with its “circles”
- Getting preferential treatment on search engines

Pinterest
Ideal platform for camps, as women outnumber men 5-to-1. Great if you have lots of images.

- Strong loyalty and advocacy among followers

Blogging
All about thought leadership and brand awareness. A good place to:
- Use industry influencers as guest bloggers
- Expand promotion via other social media channels
- Build a following

Which Platform Works Best?
Facebook is often the first social media stop for most organizations—probably because it has the largest base of personal users (somewhere between 890 million and 1.11 billion, depending on whom you believe).

Facebook is all about relationships—whether you’re finding new customers, or deepening and continuing relationships with old ones. Your Facebook community can foster strong and loyal advocates, helping to improve your swim team, crowdsource content and spread the word about your initiatives.

Facebook is also one of the more complicated social media platforms.
There are a lot of moving parts and various depths of activities. Not to mention the fact that Facebook makes wholesale changes rather frequently. But don’t worry. Setting up your organization on Facebook is actually pretty straightforward. You can save the more complex work for later.

Pages

**Your presence on Facebook starts with your “Page”**—once referred to as a “Fan page.” (Organizations build Pages; individuals build “profiles.”) Your page is the heart of your Facebook strategy.

Customers “follow” your page by “Liking” it, thereby seeing all your public “Posts” in their news feed, which they can then share, like or comment on. All three of these activities cause your original post to then be seen in the News Feeds of your fans (depending on everyone’s settings).

Once someone has liked your Page, it’s doubtful they’ll come back to it unless they’re pulled back through a special promotion. Everything seen about your swim team or organization will be on the News Feeds of your fans. So each post needs to count!

Many organizations become overly concerned about negative posts made by customers on their Page. While they are publicly viewable on your Wall, only posts by you go into the News Feeds of your followers. Instead of worrying about the negative feedback, welcome these as an opportunity to turn critics into evangelists with some prompt customer support.

**Facebook is a highly visual medium.** Choose Cover Photos and Profile Pictures to represent your team and engage your audience.

Think outside the box. Just because you’re in the swim industry doesn’t mean you have to show swim pictures all the time. Change your visuals regularly. (Every change you make is a “post” to your followers).

**TIP:** Make sure you’ve turned on the message feature of your Page so people can private message you. This is becoming a more common customer service channel, and people want to reach you. No one else can see these messages. You cannot private message people who have liked your Page, but you can respond.

For more information on building your Page, visit: facebook.com/business/build
According to Facebook, successful posts are:

**Short:** Those between 100 and 250 characters get about 60 percent more likes, comments and shares.

**Visual:** Photo albums, pictures and videos get 180 percent, 120 percent and 100 percent more engagement, respectively.

**Optimized:** Facebook has analytics that can help you learn things such as what times people engage most with your content so you can post during those hours.

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**Posts**

Post at least two to five times per week to create a nice cadence and stay top-of-mind with your customers. That doesn’t mean you should feel pressured to create lots of professionally produced content. “Content” in the social media world has a much looser definition. Posting photos, asking questions, profiling swim parents or swimmers (with their parents’ permission) and giving behind-the-scenes details of a day at practice or a meet all make for great content.

Facebook also has tools to help you manage your posts, highlight important content through “pinning” and “starring,” and report on the engagement your posts are creating.

**Building your Facebook Community**

Mari Smith, author, speaker and a noted Facebook marketing expert, finds the tipping point in social media to be between 500-1,000 fans/followers/friends/email subscribers. She says you’ll start to see measurable results with this size group.

The key to growing your Facebook community is to increase the number of people who “like” your Page — and then to increase the number of people interacting with your Page. (Remember that when they like it, share it or comment on it, all their friends see that action.) Some simple first steps include:

- Ask all your partners, vendors, staff, volunteers and swim parents to like your Page.
- Invite appropriate friends from your personal profile page.
- Click on “Invite Email Contacts” under “Build Audience” on your Facebook Admin Page to upload email lists and send messages of invitation.
- Promote your Page everywhere — on your website, printed materials, emails, etc.
Promoted Posts

"Promoting" your post is a paid method of making posts appear higher in News Feeds so there’s a better chance people will see them. Facebook users can get dozens upon dozens of posts per day, pushing yours to the bottom. And, a little known fact: Facebook’s algorithms will only show your post to 15 to 20 percent of your followers. Due to the sheer volume of content on the platform, Facebook is continually guessing what’s most relevant to users, and filtering out the rest. So it’s completely possible that some of your followers aren’t seeing your posts at all. Using paid promotions can increase visibility and maximize exposure for important posts. And again, if your followers see it, and interact with it, all their friends see that interaction.

For more information on promoting your posts, visit: facebook.com/business/promoted-posts

Sponsored Stories

According to Facebook stats, 80 percent of consumers say they’re more likely to try new things based on a suggestion from a friend on social media.

Sponsored stories are a way for you to pay to have your follower’s activities with your Page promoted to their friends. You’ve no doubt seen these if you have a personal Facebook page: “X person and X person like the XYZ show.” Sponsored stories are messages coming from friends about them engaging with your business. You must have a minimum of 100 likes to use the sponsored stories feature.

Advertising

In June 2013, Facebook announced it will be simplifying its advertising process during the next six months. At present, you can create ads; promote posts (as above); and promote your Facebook Event Pages, among other things.

You choose the audience for your ad based on location, gender, interests, age, etc., and set a budget. Typically, you pay based on impressions, and prices vary based on a number of factors.

There is much more to learn about Facebook advertising, including such things as Ad Exchanges and Search Retargeting, but let’s stick with the basics for now.

For a deeper dive, visit: facebook.com/business/connect

Facebook Offers

If you have more than 100 likes, you can create special offers and promote them to your audience – which they can claim and share with their friends. Maybe an early bird discount, or a coupon. Anything likely to get them to share.

For more information Facebook offers, visit: facebook.com/help/41045192330456/
TIPS FOR USING FACEBOOK

– Set a specific goal. How many likes this month? Do you want to drive registrations or generate interest? Make sure you have a system in place to measure that goal.

– Respond to people immediately. More people are using Facebook as a customer service tool, and according to Edison Research, 42 percent of them expect a response within an hour!

– Be human. Tell stories; be entertaining.

– Have a content plan. Plan activities, events, contests, polls, surveys, etc.

– Comment on other pages through your team’s Page. Like other industry pages and watch for their news in your feed. Be where your audience already is and let them hear from you.

– Use Facebook to crowdsource content. Ask followers what topics or speakers they want, or throw some ideas out and ask for votes.

– Introduce staff – especially coaches and team-facing people.

– Lots and lots of pictures! People share photos.

– Be different.

– Be educational. Teach something relevant and it will be shared.

– Don’t just post. Have conversations.

– Use calls to action.

– Use trackable URLs like bit.ly.

– Tease. Give enough information, but make someone want to click the link.

– Do your research. Review your Insights pages and competitor’s Facebook pages to see what they’re doing.

– Add social share buttons everywhere – especially above the fold.

– Make your Page design reflect your objective.

– Cross-promote your social media channels.

– Think mobile.

– Rotate your cover and profile photos often.

– Keep your end goal in mind with every post. Make offers, lead people to your registration page, etc.

– Always measure your progress against your goals.

– Experiment.

– Always provide a link to your website.

– Take the time to learn about Facebook and how it works.

– Stay on top of Facebook changes.

– Like the Facebook Marketing page so you get new tips all the time.

– Address people by name by typing @ before their name.
Measuring your Results

As with any endeavor, it’s critical you measure the results of your Facebook activities so you know which ones resonate with your specific audience. Through your Admin panel, you get a snapshot of activity on your page – all likes, comments, messages, etc. But there’s a deeper source, as well.

“Page Insights” is Facebook’s analytic tool. From here you can understand the total performance of your Page:

- **Total Likes** – All the people who have liked your page and how it’s growing.
- **Friends of Fans** – The number of unique people who are friends with your fans. Your potential audience if all your fans were interacting with you (and thereby exposing your posts to all their followers).
- **People Talking About This** – The number of unique people who have taken one of the following actions in the last 7 days:
  - Liked your Page
  - Liked, commented on or shared one of your posts
  - Answered a question you asked
  - Responded to your Facebook Event
  - Mentioned your Page
- **Weekly Total Reach** – The number of unique people who have had any content associated with your Page delivered to their News Feeds in the last 7 days. This includes sponsored and promoted posts.

In addition to monitoring Page activity, you can also analyze each post so as to begin to learn what your audience responds to.

Then you can sponsor these types of posts to encourage even more engagement.

You can also:
- Determine what percentage of your reach came from Organic, Paid or Viral reach.
- What engagement took place with your posts.
- Determine the demographics of your fans – sex, age, country, city, etc.
- Understand the source of your likes – like buttons, search results, third-party apps, etc.

An Ads Manager tool is also available to measure the results of paid programs.

For more on marketing with Facebook, visit: [facebook.com/marketing](http://facebook.com/marketing)

There are also many third-party tools for more sophisticated measurement/analysis, scheduling, page management and social ad spend management, and we’ll cover those in a future chapter.

FACEBOOK NEXT STEPS

Believe it or not, we’ve barely scratched the surface of using Facebook for your swim team. Entire books are written on the subject. Here are the next steps you might want to take:

**Apps**

Once called “tabs,” those little thumbnail boxes under your cover photo are apps. By default, all business pages come with “photos” and a “like” counter, but you can add others to customize your Page. You can have a YouTube app for your channel, or a Pinterest or Twitter app. You can also have contest, poll and survey apps.

You can visit the App Center to see available apps, but many of them are games. Most business apps will come from approved third-party developers.

**Interest Lists**

You can create interest lists of all the major pages and great thinkers in your industry, and have others follow that list. When you follow a list, only the best posts from that list appear in your newsfeed. (If you want to see everything from that list, go to your bookmarks.) People don’t have to like all these pages to see the best posts – they’ll get them from your list. Make sure to set the subscribe function to “public” so anyone can follow your list.
Get people excited about your team. The aim here is to drum up excitement – and registrations – for your upcoming swim season.

- Post photos of the staff.
- Start a conversation on a hot industry topic; if it picks up steam, ask followers if they’d like to hear more about this topic.
- Make special registration offers. “First ten people to register today get 10% off,” for instance.
- Host an event – have a speaker come answer questions for an hour on Friday – promote it all week.
- Share tips and best practices – or ask for them.

The goal is to engage the parents whose children are swimming, and show non-returning swim parents what they’re missing. Someone needs to be monitoring Facebook continuously, as this will be a customer service channel for some parents.

- Create a photo album.
- Pose questions. But make them conversation starters. “Who’s going to cut back on swim spending this year and why?”
- Share links to interesting stories in the news that affect your industry.
- Play games, host contests and giveaways.
- Showcase a cause if your swim team is aligned with a charitable project.
- Connect with all your partners – staff, volunteers, donors, sponsors, vendors. Share, like, do things together.

The goal here is to continue the conversations started during swim season. Ideally, your website should be a year-round community, dealing with industry issues and helping to shape your next season.

- Launch a post-season survey, when the swim experience is still fresh in their mind.
- Load more video snippets from after-season or “behind the scenes” parent or swimmer interviews.

FACEBOOK BEFORE SWIM SEASON

FACEBOOK DURING SWIM SEASON

FACEBOOK AFTER SWIM SEASON
While nearly all social media is like electronic word-of-mouth, Twitter may be closest to the real thing. Twitter is authentic, conversational, informal, spontaneous and, thankfully, easy.

At its heart, Twitter is simply a public forum where anyone can read, write and share messages (tweets). Messages on Twitter are limited to 140 characters, and can be categorized by keyword or topic by placing a hashtag symbol (#) in front of a word or phrase (with no spaces). These hashtags allow similar tweets to be grouped around a common conversation topic (e.g., #USASwimming or #TheFutureOfSwim). All messages on Twitter happen in real time, so you can post a question and get back immediate responses. (There are automation tools that also allow you to schedule tweets in advance.)

**Twitter is great for getting other people to talk about your team.**

You can start the conversation, and others will take it and run. And, if you can involve some Twitter super users in the conversation, you can broaden your reach to thousands of new prospects.

**As with all social media, you need a strategy for Twitter.**

Why is this your social media platform of choice? Is it highly valued in your industry? Are all the movers and shakers using it? Though it’s easy, it still does take work.

### TIPS FOR TWEETING

- Every tweet should have a purpose.
- What action do you want people to take?
- Tie in a link to your registration page when and where appropriate.
- Use less of a business voice and more of a personal voice.
- Be yourself.
- Be relevant.
- Be conversational.
- Provide something your followers can’t find elsewhere – links to behind-the-scenes interviews or sneak peeks.
- Make it shareable.
- People will frequently retweet questions and facts. Use them in your strategy.
- Quotes are always popular and shareable.
The best way to build followers on Twitter is to **regularly engage and contribute.**

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### Find, Follow, Listen

**As you open your Twitter account, it’s important to completely fill out your profile page and prepare a strong swim team bio.**

This is the first place people look, and what they read will determine whether or not they choose to follow you.

Now you can begin to search for the people and organizations you want to follow. “Following” someone means you’ll see their tweets, and, if they follow you back, they will, likewise, see yours.

**Start by searching for your industry’s key influencers.**

Follow others in your organization, or on your Board. Follow parents, volunteers, staff, sponsors, journalists in your industry, vendors, etc.

You can also search topics of interest, companies or hashtags, and then follow the people who converse on those subjects.

**Once you’ve followed a few dozen people, sit back and listen.** What does your industry talk about? What’s the tone? What are your competitors or partners tweeting? This is an easy way to get insight that will inform your own strategy.

### Start Tweeting

**Before you start tweeting, start with a few “retweets” and replies.**

According to Twitter, new users get more exposure this way. Retweeting means you’re taking someone else’s message and forwarding it to your followers. Replying is commenting back to the original writer.

**The best way to build followers on Twitter is to regularly engage and contribute.** As people begin to see and retweet your content, others will begin to find and follow you. Publicize your Twitter user name with a link to your Twitter page on your website, in your email signature, in e-newsletters, on printed materials, etc.

### Twitter is not a competition to see who has the most followers. What matters is how many relevant followers you have.

Many people adopt an “if-you-follow-me-I’ll-follow-you” rule, but not everyone. Getting the industry influencers to follow you will increase your exposure if they retweet you. But you have to be saying or doing something of interest. They’re not just going to relay your marketing posts.

**Be sure to reply when people tweet about your team, and “favorite” and retweet positive messages.**

Remember, too, that for many, Twitter is a customer service channel. Some parents may complain or criticize you. How you respond – as well as how fast you respond – will project an image to all your other followers.

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### Explore Advanced Features

- Lists, which allow you to separate people you follow into either public or private groups. (You can also go through other people’s public lists to find followers.)
- Direct private messages between you and a follower.
- Using photos and videos in your tweets.
- Connecting your Twitter account to your blog, Facebook or website.
- Tweet chats – scheduled, weekly or bi-weekly live chats with a group of others interested in the same topic.
TWITTER BEFORE SWIM SEASON

– Use Twitter before sessions to build excitement among parents who’ve already registered their children.
– Research the hashtag you’re choosing. Make sure it’s not one common typo away from a hashtag you wouldn’t want to drive people to.
– While several people can tweet on behalf of your team, assign one person to “own” twitter outreach and create conversations.
– Define your goal and ensure it’s something that can be measured. If you want to drive registrations for instance, tweet out a unique coupon code and see how many register with it.
– If you have a Twitter-savvy crowd, consider paid advertising on Twitter.
– Host competitions – best tweet of the day gets a discount or free swim merchandise, for instance.
– Post video interviews with any mommy bloggers whose children swim for your team, with links to a sponsored blog post they have written for you.
– Share industry news so you’re seen as a resource.
– Retweet your staff and volunteers to get them and your followers excited about their expertise.
– Don’t put the year as part of your hashtag so you can use it again next year.

TWITTER DURING SWIM SEASON

– Now you have a strategy shift. Instead of building excitement for your upcoming swim season, you want to engage your audience, drive behavior and let those who didn’t register this year get a taste of what’s happening at your pool.
– Consider Twitter as part of your customer service, and monitor it throughout your swim season.
– If your audience is Twitter-savvy, you might consider a sub-hashtag strategy with multiple hashtags for various topics.
– Put the event hashtag on everything – signs, handouts, printed materials, etc.

TWITTER AFTER SWIM SEASON

– Your strategy shifts again to become a content channel using material from the swim season that just ended, thereby keeping interest high and keeping your camp top of mind. You want your Twitter followers to bring you new followers who can turn into registrants for your upcoming season.
– Take your content and slice and dice it into tiny pieces:
  – Post photos and videos.
  – Post links to articles and newsletters.
  – Post highlights from a particular activity.
  – Extract still photos from videos and post links to the video.
– Put the Twitter stream onto your team website. An active Twitter stream indicates a live and vibrant community. Others will want to join the conversation.
– Measure your goals. Did you achieve what you wanted?
– Organize your twitter stream. Consider using Storify or other applications to organize the stream – and put it into a blog post or newsletter.
– Use the Twitter stream as an analytics tool to understand trends, popular topics, customer support, and other operational items. Moreover, you can understand how your marketing is received by your audience, in terms of topic trending, retweets and mentions.
– Identify your super users and make sure you’re following them.
– Tweet a link to your post-season survey to drive participation.
– Send thanks.
YOUR YOUTUBE PLAY
REMINDER

Make sure you have written permission from parents before publicly posting any video or photo of their children.

And, thankfully, you can capture enough video during one swim season to feed your channel for the next year.

So once you get your channel built and can learn to quickly tag, annotate and upload videos, it can become routine.

Owned by Google, YouTube is also an SEO dream. After all, it’s the second largest search engine in the world behind Google. Tagging videos with the right keywords can leapfrog them ahead of other websites, articles and online resources. YouTube itself has multiple guides and resources to teach you to create and best use its services, so we won’t go into all the details here. But let’s hit the highlights.

There are two ways to look at videos on YouTube.

You can create an account, upload a video, link it to your website and call it a day. Or you can create your own branded YouTube channel that engages and informs your audience and presents your organization and event as a go-to resource for all things related to your industry. If you’re not quite ready for the latter, you can always start with the former and build.

YouTube is probably the most time-intensive of all social media, but in today’s video-obsessed environment, a good YouTube channel can pay big dividends in branding your swim team.

What’s your Strategy?

At the first level, your YouTube strategy is about growing subscribers.

But what will help that cause and how does it fit into your larger social media strategy? Do you want to be seen as an educational resource? Or do you prefer an advocacy role? Think of your channel just like a broadcast station on TV. What does your audience (parents, staff, etc) need enough that they will tune in regularly?

You should also have a plan and a strategy for promoting your videos through email, social channels, newsletters and on your website to drive views of your videos.

Production Values

Good video quality is important, but you don’t necessarily have to be Steven Spielberg.

Viewers will accept homemade quality videos as long as the content is relevant and engaging. But don’t confuse “homemade” quality with “poor” quality. Today, any kid with an HD phone camera can probably get a decent video. If you have someone on staff who can edit video and add audio, even better.

What viewers won’t accept, however, is poor audio. Make sure your sound quality is excellent – no background noise, with clear, intelligible voices.

Content

Your YouTube channel will live and die on the quality of its content.

What are you going to do to make your videos extraordinary? It’s not just the content, but the delivery that counts.
TIPS FOR USING YOUTUBE

– Keep videos short. Shorter videos get more views. The most watched videos on YouTube are under five minutes.

– Learn to use clickable annotations and call-to-action overlays. A key purpose of these videos is to drive action—presumably swimmer registrations.

– Put your keywords in your video titles, write good video descriptions with keywords and include them in the “tags” field. Tags also play a role in helping your videos appear in the “related channels” section of other YouTube channels. (Include your organization and camp name in your tags.)

– Create a custom thumbnail graphic for your video to increase views. Learn how at: support.google.com/youtube/answer/72431?hl=en

– Create playlists to categorize your videos

– Customize your channel page to reflect your brand.

– Ask people to subscribe to your page during the video and in annotations.

– Embed your videos into your website, in blogs, etc. and include a subscribe button.

– Always promote each video through your other social channels.

– Be consistent in your posting. You need to become a channel people tune into regularly.

– Use the “featured channels” function with customers, partners and others to further drive engagement.

– Comment, like and subscribe to other related industry YouTube channels.

– Consider using the “prevent ads from showing on this page” feature.

– Don’t be overly promotional—it will turn away viewers.

– Interview local community organizations or parenting bloggers or other influencers in your market and ask them to cross-promote the videos on their sites. Make sure there’s a subscribe button embedded.

– Ensure your like, share and subscribe buttons are prominently placed.
Upload or create a highlight reel from last year’s season.

Interview key staff members about something important or new that will be happening at your pool.

Run contests with user-generated content – best video gets a registration discount.

If you are partnering with a charitable initiative, get some footage of the locale and discuss the project.

Record a 10-20-second “commercial” and precede each video with it in the months leading up to swim season.

If you have a larger marketing budget, conduct an advertising campaign on YouTube - pre-rolls, display ads and competitive placements.

Either assign a staff member or hire a videographer to capture key swim moments.

Post a highlight reel each day.

Create a “top ten” list of the day video.

Hire a graphic illustrator to illustrate an important swim process and play it back through time lapse.

You can also livestream through YouTube, but that’s a whole different article!

Start dripping out video snippets from the season.

Let those who didn’t swim see what they missed.

Break the season into a series of videos.

Use Youtube Analytics to evaluate key metrics about your videos. With the in-depth analytics, you can review and adjust your video strategy for increased engagement, including what content is driving subscriptions and views, how long viewers are watching your videos, and where your viewers are located.
YOUR BLOGGING PLAY
Content is king in social media and a good blog can create a lot of great content that you can distribute through your social channels.

“A good content marketing strategy would involve a blog once a week,” says Jenise Fryatt, Social Media Strategist and prolific blogger at Smarter Shift.

Though some might argue that blogging isn’t truly a social media, it’s an important part of your social strategy.

Content is king in social media and a good blog can create a lot of great content that you can distribute through your social channels.

There are three key reasons to blog, according to Fryatt. First, with the right content, you’ll be driving interest from potential customers. Second, you’re building your reputation as a resource and your thought-leadership position within your community. But the final, and crucial reason for blogging, says Fryatt, is to increase your ability to be found in online searches.

“Google loves blogs,” she explains. “And the company has been leading the charge toward shaping the kind of content that’s online today by creating algorithms in their searches that reward fresh, quality content. So if you’re posting fresh, quality content on your site, you’ll rank higher on Google for your chosen keywords.”

Fryatt recommends blogging on your website, first and foremost. Guest blog as often as you can on sites within your niche, too. Guest blogging expands your audience and builds valuable backlinks that help improve your search engine optimization.

Promote all your blog posts on Twitter, Google+, Facebook and LinkedIn – with special emphasis on the platforms where you’ve identified communities that might be interested in your team.

Fryatt doesn’t recommend separate season blogs if there are higher-level organization blogs. In fact, she prefers consolidation. “The more traffic that lands on one site, the higher you’ll rank for keywords,” she says. “Dividing blogs dilutes your traffic.”

Determining the keywords for which you want to be found is an important first step.

“Google looks at three types of words – those you use in your blog, those you tag the blog with and those people use to find you,” she explains. “So choose your words carefully and use them in text, subheads, headlines, tags, even photo descriptions.”

You definitely want to promote your new posts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., but they will not improve your search engine optimization. Only blogging can do that.

“My most important advice is to humanize your blog,” says Fryatt. “Brands that can humanize themselves have the advantage.”

3 KEY REASONS TO BLOG

1. With the right content, you’ll be driving interest from potential swim parents.

2. You’re building your reputation as a resource and your thought-leadership position within your community.

3. To increase your ability to be found in online searches.
Define your objective. Are you trying to build registrations?
- Identify the keywords you want to be found by and use them throughout.
- As soon as you set your swim programs and schedule, start blogging. And don’t forget that link to your registration page.
- Post guest blogs on other sites.
- Release news about your team through your blog.
- Make people want to share your blog because they learned something. Nothing speaks higher than third-party recommendations. “The beauty of blogging is that it’s not a hard sales message,” says Fryatt. “It’s a useful tidbit of information followed by a registration link. It’s more of a pull than a push.”

Offer “behind the scenes” information.
- Provide touching stories of swimmers, or “a day in the life of a swimmer.”
- Embed videos as a separate blog posting that you’re capturing and uploading online to your blog.

Repurpose your content for months – use video clips or text summaries of the season.
- Repurpose the content to make it easy to digest. Edit video down to less than three minutes, for instance.
- Create blogs from comments in the Twitter stream.
- Interview swimmers and parents for “key takeaways” from the swim season.
- Interview first-time campers for their take on the session.
- Use lots of pictures from the swim season.
- Analyze your results against your goal. Did you achieve your objective?
- When it’s time for next year’s call for registrations, make sure to use your blog to recruit suggestions.
YOUR PINTEREST PLAY
Pinterest is one of the newer social media platforms to appear in the event industry, and you may or may not decide it’s worth your time. More than 80 percent of the current users are women. This is obviously mostly personal use, so Pinterest is a fantastic new tool for swim teams to reach their most influential audience: moms. Pinterest is also incredibly visual. Industries with lots of visuals can easily adapt to Pinterest. But, as you’ll see, that’s not a requirement. Great images can come from lots of places.

If you still haven’t seen it, think of Pinterest as a wall of bulletin boards.

A single user might have one for recipes and one for pets and one for children’s activities. On each board the user “pins” pictures or videos. Next time they’re looking for a new recipe, they call up that board and see which one looks good. It’s an organization tool. But here comes the social part — your images can be shared and repinned, and your boards (and you) can be followed.

Pinterest is more than just collections of images — it’s an aspiration platform. People pin things they want to buy, places they want to go, things they want to learn to make, and things that motivate them to become the people they want to be. Keep this aspirational aspect in mind as you create your boards and pin content that taps into that.

Inspiration

Pinterest has another use for swim coaches — program inspiration and ideas. There are already many of boards with swim ideas – everything from workouts and activities to team management technology and counselor training. You can pin ideas all year long, then share the boards with your team.

- Be compelling. No one’s going to follow or repin boring images. Spend some time looking at what the most successful Pinners in your industry are doing.
- Think about what your audience wants and needs and aspires to be.
- Use your keywords in Pinterest image names and descriptions for search engine optimization.
- Contests – from lotteries and raffles to “best boards” and “most shares” are big on Pinterest. Think of a contest for your audience.
- A key goal is to get traffic from Pinterest to your blog or website. Embed pins into your blog and link your pins to your website.
- Repin, Like and Comment on pins from others in your industry.
- Include a call to action in your pins.
- Make sure your logo or team name is on your images.
- Tie in a link to your registration page when and where appropriate.
- 80 percent of pins are repins – so the key is to create good original content that people will repin.
- Credit the sources of your pins.
- Don’t be too promotional.
- Overlay a message on your image.
- Be sure to add a “Pin It” button to all your web pages.
- Add the Pinterest bookmarklet to your browser for easy pinning when you’re online.
- Vertical images work best.
- Use Pinterest analytics to learn the types of pins your audience responds to.
– Create a board to tell the story of your swim team. Find old photos from the early days.
– Get people excited about the swim season by creating a destination board.
– Create an agenda board with the names of meets or activities over photos – can you find a theme to tie them together?
– Create a staff board, but do something fun with it – use their baby photos and turn it into a contest.

**PINTEREST BEFORE SWIM SEASON**

**PINTEREST DURING SWIM SEASON**

– Create a board documenting all aspects of the swim season, acting as an archive and inspiration for others, including:
  - First practice
  - Training activities
  - Special guest visits
  - Meets

**PINTEREST AFTER SWIM SEASON**

– Pinterest could be a lot of fun at team fundraisers with user-generated content. Create Pinterest Contributor Boards and get a group of active Pinners to upload to a board throughout the event.
– Create a video board with the best clips from the season.
– Build a “highlight” board from the swim season, activities, fundraising events, etc.
The “Other” Social Media Platforms

Though the majority of your audience will be covered by the previous social media channels, there are others – and they’re all vying to be the next Facebook. Here’s enough information about the others to make you sound hip at a party.

**Bebo:** Once a rising star in social media, Bebo has spent more of 2013 in court than in development. Similar to Facebook with its profiles, photos, updates and videos, the company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in May, 2013, after shareholders filed a motion in February, 2013, to remove the CEO and appoint a receiver.

**Branch:** Branch is about bringing people together for a conversation. “People” could be customers, attendees, co-workers, a community, subject matter experts, journalists, etc. You pull in content, such as a tweet or a video, and start a conversation – adding people via email or Twitter. You can publish the results by sharing a link or embedding the Branch in a website or other online location. An activity feed keeps you alerted to changes in your “branches.”

**Delicious:** A social bookmarking service that lets you save anything from the Web – videos, pictures, blog posts, articles, music – and share them with others, while also allowing you to browse content curated from the community or friends.

**Fancy:** A social recommendation tool, Fancy is a crowd curated catalog of goods, places and stores. It’s described as part store, part photo sharing and part wish list.

**Flickr:** An online photo management and sharing application, Flickr allows you to form a “group” for your event and invite attendees to post their own photos to your Flickr event album. Share the link for the album with everyone. Flickr was acquired by Yahoo in 2005 and has been its primary photo platform ever since.

**Foursquare:** Location-based social networking for mobile devices. Users “check-in” to share and save the places they visit. Foursquare can also make recommendations and offer deals based on where you, your friends and others like you have been.

**Instagram:** A photo sharing social media, Instagram allows you to take pictures, apply fun filters and share them with your followers, with other Instagramers or through a number of social channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. After being acquired by Facebook in April, 2012, Instagram added the ability to share 15-second videos in June, 2013. Deeper Facebook integrations are expected in the future.

**Kumbuya:** Create or join themed communities and post media and user-generated content. With the community manager’s approval, members can also sell products to one another. Your community can be embedded into your website.

**Meetup:** A social network for local groups to find each other and organize face-to-face meetings.

**My life:** An ambitious social media, helping users find personal and professional contacts, and manage and interface with all their other social media and email, all in once place.

**Myspace:** Back from the brink, Myspace was relaunched in January, 2013, after being partially purchased by Justin Timberlake. Primarily a vehicle for artists and musicians to showcase their work, Myspace promises to let you collect, curate and share music, photos and mixes.

**Path:** A private messaging and photo sharing social network for mobile devices, Path allows you to send one-on-one or group messages with your voice, text, photos, location or “stickers” created by famous artists. Your Path messages can also be shared to Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest. Path limits your social network to 150 friends to encourage you to select only high-quality connections.

**Perfspot:** In addition to the standard find-communicate-share social functions, Perfspot also allows users to watch over 200 million videos, TV shows and sports games.

**Reddit:** An online community (and many sub communities) where users post stories, vote them higher or lower in importance and comment on them. Everything from humorous memes to serious political discussions.

**Sgrouples:** Launched in 2012, Sgrouples was founded on the premise of privacy – no sharing of personal data, no profiling to serve you ads, etc. You create groups which can be invitation only or public. You can have different groups for work, family, friends, etc. Share what you want, with whom you want. You own your content.
Sharetize: Not so much a social media, as a way to get paid for sending advertising messages on your social feeds. You browse campaigns, find one you like and post it to your social networks. The advertisers provide the messaging, but you pick the version that sounds most like your voice. You get paid to post, and also per click.

Slideshare: A slide hosting service allowing users to upload slide decks privately or publicly. Slideshare also supports documents, videos, PDFs and webinars. Others in the community can “favorite,” comment or download the presentations. They can also be embedded on blogs and websites.

Tagged: Dubbed “the social network for meeting new people,” Tagged focuses not on existing social relationships, but the social discovery of like-minded people. Dating, social games, interests, passions, hobbies.

Thumb: A mobile community providing opinions to brands and each other. Pick your target demographic, ask a question and get hundreds of responses in seconds. “Do I look good in these red sunglasses?” You get thumbs up, thumbs down and comments. You can also engage with responders one-on-one, if you want. Business can pay for Thumb to test messaging, creative, etc.

Tumblr: Purchased by Yahoo in June 2013, users post multimedia content to short-form blogs.

Vine: A mobile app that lets you post six-second videos to social networking services. Owned by Twitter.

Yammer: Private enterprise social networks. Similar to consumer social networking, but more for company collaboration, file sharing, knowledge exchange and team efficiency. Used for private communications within organizations, members or groups.

Yelp: Local business search with online reviews. You can also use Yelp to find events, and to talk with other Yelpers.

SoLoMo Apps

These are probably the best examples of a new type of social media called social-local-mobile (SoLoMo) networks/apps.

Banjo: A mobile app that lets you explore places and activities across your social networks. There is a specific-location-based target within the app for events. A SXSW button within Banjo, for instance, will provide users a feed of content being published from the event – whether it’s Tweets, Facebook statuses, or Foursquare check-ins.

Highlight: Highlight is a social app that runs in the background on your mobile device, popping up profiles of other Highlight users if they’re in your physical vicinity. You see their name, photo, mutual friends and anything else they’ve chosen to share.

Roamz: A location-based mobile app that “discovers” restaurants, bars, shops and events where you are. Search for a type of food and see what people are talking about. Bored and looking for something to do? Find out what those near you are doing.
Analyzing Your Plays

It really doesn’t matter which method you choose to measure your results. What matters is that you do.

There are as many ways to measure the success of your social media endeavors as there are articles on the subject in a Google search. Seriously. Everyone has a theory on what and how you should be measuring.

Many encourage the Conversation-Amplification-Applause-Economic Value system championed by Google’s Digital Marketing Evangelist, Avinash Kaushik, whereby you measure four key metrics in order to learn what your audience is most interested in, and assess your social ROI.

Others will recommend point systems to quantify likes and share, or measuring impressions, trackbacks and conversions. There’s also those who advocate “share of voice” and social listening.

It really doesn’t matter which method you choose to measure your results. What matters is that you do. Social media is too time-intensive an effort not to know if you’re getting more out of it than you’re putting into it. And if you ever hope to get more of an investment in social media, you will need proof that you’re either generating revenue or saving money.
There are hundreds of tools to help you analyze your social media success. Some are designed specific to a social platform, while others are cross-platform. Many are free. Here are some well-known cross-platform tools:

**Argyle Social**: Categorizes content to determine its effectiveness; analyzes the relationship of social engagement to closed/won opportunities; and helps design marketing campaigns by incorporating social data.

**Beevolve**: Social media monitoring and ROI measurement software. Monitor your brand mentions, schedule and launch social media campaigns, and measure resulting sales and engagement from those campaigns.

**BlitzMetrics**: A social media dashboard that monitors your activity, tracks your content performance so you can improve your reach and engagement, and monitors your feedback rates.

**Bottlenose**: Social media listening that analyzes activity across all the major social networks. Use it to search, monitor, analyze, target and engage in real-time.

**Brand chats**: A social media monitoring tool that tracks brand mentions, your competition and keywords related to your industry.

**Brandwatch**: A social CRM, marketing and reputation management service. You can segment social data by mention-type — complaint, review, referral, buying signal; or by author-type — customer, competitor, prospect, advocate, detractor, etc.

**Crowdbooster**: Social media analytics with suggestions and tools to help optimize your social media marketing.

**CustomScoop**: An online “news clipping” service covering both traditional and social media. Features on-demand analytics, daily news briefings, crisis monitoring and social media buzz reports.

**Google Analytics**: Track your social posts as easily as you do your website. Google analytics will identify where your traffic comes from, what keywords are used and which are your most popular posts.

**Hootsuite**: A social media dashboard to manage social networks, schedule messages and tweets, track brand mentions and analyze social media traffic.

**Klout**: A free service that scores the influence you have on your audience through social media.

**Marketing Grader**: A free tool from Hubspot that grades your social media reach, how engaging your posts are and how well your website is optimized for social media sharing.

**NetBase**: A social media management and publishing system that provides analysis of campaigns, competitors, categories, brands, partners and more.

**Netvibes**: A social media dashboard and reader synched across desktop, mobile and tablet devices. Free version with the basics; premium version adds social analytics and real-time alerts.

**NutshellMail (from Constant Contact)**: Tracks your activity on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and delivers you an email summary.

**NUVI**: A social media command center for customer support, public relations, lead generation and competitive insights.

**Oracle Social Relationship Management (formerly Collective Intellect)**: For the social enabled enterprise. Monitor social conversations; uncover trends, topics and insights; create, execute, measure, and fine-tune campaigns.

**Radian6**: Identifies and analyzes online conversations about your organization, your product (event) and competitors; evaluates reactions to your campaigns and lets you see which content is connecting.

**SDL (formerly Alterian)**: Blends marketing analytics, campaign management and social media capabilities, and analyzes social data to identify your competitive position, brand reputation, customer profiles and more.

**Shoutlet**: Enterprise community management and moderation platform with design tools, publishing capabilities, social contests and promotions, social ads, social listening and analytics.

**Simply Measured**: Enterprise level social media analytics and reporting from more than a dozen social media platforms in Excel reports or online.

**Social Mention**: Social media search and analysis platform that aggregates user-generated content from more than 100 social media platforms.

**Socialbakers Analytics Pro**: Competitive monitoring for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Measures fan growth, social interactions, engagement rates and question response rates and times.

**SocialMotus**: Social media management, monitoring and publishing for Facebook and Twitter.

**Spredfast**: Enterprise level social measurement for identifying which of your content and engagement strategies worked.

**Compare channels, accounts, regions, brands, campaigns, content and more.**

**Sprout Social**: Social media monitoring with analytics, scheduled publishing and integration with CRM systems — all with mobile access.

**Synthesio**: A global listening platform monitoring over 100 countries and 50 languages.

** Sysmoms**: A real-time monitoring dashboard that collects relevant online conversations, detailed metrics, demographics, influencers and historical analysis across all major social platforms.

**Trackr**: Monitors your online reputation, measures social media trends and analyzes social media mentions for your organization or event.

**TwentyFeet**: An “egotracking” service that keeps track of your social media activities and monitors your results.

**UberVU**: An analytics platform monitoring trending stories and conversation influencers. Includes a publishing dashboard for scheduling posts, and conversation maps for regularly used words and phrases.

**Viral Heat**: A unified suite of social services allowing you to monitor online conversations, analyze your social results, manage your accounts, publish pre-scheduled posts and identify your advocates.

**Visible**: A social media monitoring, analytics and engagement platform allowing for brand and competitive analysis, trend spotting, PR and crisis identification and influencer marketing.

**Wildfire (from Google)**: A social marketing suite for social promotion and advertising, mobile and desktop page management, messaging and real-time analytics.
Social Media Terminology

Aggregate: The process of gathering (and sometimes redistributing) like information from a variety of online sources.

Alerts: Emails delivered to you when specific words or phrases you want to monitor are mentioned online — such as your event, your organization, your competitors or topics of interest. Can also be viewed in RSS readers or dashboards of social monitoring tools.

Backchannel: Real-time online conversations taking place behind the official conversation — such as a Twitter conversation going on between attendees during a conference session.

Bit.ly/ Tinyurl.com/ Ow.ly: Free link shortening services that condense long URLs to make them easier to share through social media. Also a method for tracking and organizing your links.

Blogosphere: The universe of all blogs, or all blogs within a specific community.

Blogroll: A list of blogs a specific blogger follows.

Chat: Communication between two or more users on a website, social platform or instant messaging application, happening in real time.

Collaboration: Considered by many to be the highest form of social — the ability to work together across departments, organizations, countries and time. Requires the ability to share and store files, annotate and comment, meet online, create master calendars, project plans, etc.

Community: Sometimes emerging organically around a specific topic, but often organized through recruitment processes, a community serves the shared interests for a group of people. It usually exists so participants can share ideas and find solutions to specific issues. Can be loosely organized on public social media, or be more complex, private entities on proprietary social platforms.

Crowdsourcing: Using the collective voice of members of a social platform to source content, make decisions and solve problems. In the event industry, crowdsourcing speakers and session topics is becoming more commonplace.

Curate: The process of aggregating and filtering the masses of content on the Internet to redistribute to your audience only the best and most pertinent.

Embed: The process of using a piece of HTML code to place a video — or even a live stream — into a website or blog, while the original content is hosted on another site.

Engagement: The holy grail for social media. Getting people to actively interact with your brand or event by commenting, sharing, posting, etc.

Facilitator: A person who manages an online conversation, keeping people on target, asking for clarification, etc.

Geolocation: Used for certain social media, the process of identifying the real-world geographic location of an object (especially a mobile device).

Geotagging: Adding geographic identification data to photos, videos, etc., which allows other content from the same geographic location to be found.

Groups: A looser configuration of people than a community, but still organized around a specific topic or interest.

Hashtag: Once the domain of Twitter, but now used by Facebook and other social media. A symbol (#) used to precede a word or phrase in order to group and search for all posts around a similar topic or conversation stream (e.g. #SuperBowl, #WhiteHouse).

Instant messaging or IM: Real-time chatting, usually between two people, using the same instant messaging tool or social media. Considered a quicker alternative to email.

Lurkers: A person who views social media, but rarely or never participates.

Meet-up: Face-to-face meetings of people who belong to specific groups or share a common interest. Meet-ups often happen at industry events.

Meme: A concept (often humorous) that spreads rapidly through social media. Often a photo with text.

Newsfeed: A news feed is literally a feed full of news or status updates. On Facebook, for instance, the News Feed is the homepage where users can see all the latest updates from their friends.

Outposts: Places where you have an online presence but you do not own. (As opposed to your “home base,” which might be your website or blog.)

Participatory Culture: The social media culture of sharing and collaborating.

Permalink: The link to a specific entry on a blog or page on a website — as opposed to the main URL’s.

Photosharing: Sharing your photos on social media sites, and allowing others to then share them again.

Post: An entry on a social media site, such as a status update, a share, a blog post etc.

Profile: The personal and/or professional information you provide about yourself, by which like-minded people on social media can find you.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication): A process allowing content creators to offer subscriptions to their content, which is then viewed by users in “readers” as it’s published, rather than on the original website when they search for it.

Share: The backbone of social media. To post or repost content is to share it. Text, images and videos are offered to others to encourage further sharing — which can lead back to you through tagging.

Social Bookmarking: Services that help users organize, search and share social and Web content.

Social Listening (or Monitoring): The act of listening (and hopefully responding) to customers over social media as they discuss your brand, your event or industry topics, as a means to improve the brand or event.

Social Media: Sharing content with others via social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Social Media Channel: The various social media platforms on which we interact with one another online, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Social Media Marketing: Leveraging social media to generate awareness or drive demand of a product, brand, event or organization.

Social Media Optimization: Using many social media outposts and communities to increase awareness of your brand or event.

Social Mention: The mentioning of your brand, organization or event on social media.

Social Networks: Another term for “social media channel.”

Social Reach: Describing how wide a net an organization or event has cast online. Expanding social reach is often accomplished through multiple accounts for different audiences, products, topics, etc.

Tagging: Attaching keywords to content to describe the item and allow it to be easily found through searches and aggregation.

Threads: A series of comments and/or conversations stemming from an original post.

Trackbacks: A linking mechanism allowing bloggers to mention an item on another blog, and thereby leave a link on the original post, back to the second blog.

Transparency: Refers to the importance of being genuine on social media, and making your social interactions authentic, rather than veiled, or even outright, sales messages.

User Generated Content: Material on your website or social site, created by your customers or partners — photos, videos, blogs, etc.

Web 2.0: The term used to describe the use of the World Wide Web as something more than static pages. The Social Web.
Our goal with this Social Media Playbook was to help you review (and perhaps retool) your social strategy, find the platforms best for your team and learn how others are implementing social.

As stated by Justin Ramers, Director of Digital and Social Media for ACTIVE, “Social has a big place in marketing, to be sure, but it also is an important part of Customer Service, Research & Development, Sales and ultimately customer satisfaction. It can do more than just market your team. At its core, social is about building relationships with your current and prospective swim parents.”

At ACTIVE, we strive to provide not only the technology solutions to power your swim teams, but the practical applications and “how-to” education to make your team programs successful – whether success is measured by increasing revenue, deepening community engagement, gaining back-end efficiencies or all of these measures.

We would like to thank those who took part in creating this Playbook, including:

Justin Ramers
Director of Digital and Social Media, ACTIVE Network

Jenise Fryatt
Social Media Strategist and Blogger, Smarter Shift

We look forward to continuing this dialogue, and hope you’ll share your thoughts and personal experiences with us:

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 ACTIVE Hy-Tek
We Power Swimming

With over 25 years of industry experience, we understand what you need to be successful. ACTIVE Hy-Tek swim software offers a powerful suite of products that fully integrate with one another for the most accurate data and most accessible information. We offer an all-in-one solution for every level of competition and every group, from summer leagues to year round clubs to Masters.

Our swim software has been built to free up hours of your time with simplified team registration, meet entries, payment submission, communications, results reporting and other administrative functions. We help you manage your teams and meets more efficiently while ultimately helping you build stronger programs.

For more information on how ACTIVE Network can help you take your swim team to the next level, contact us:

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For more information on ACTIVE Hy-Tek please visit ACTIVEswim.com.