Social media as

a business tool for the design industry

eng. Nico de Corato, Dubai**Blog**

Quick presentation of the speaker

Beside being owner and founder of the network DubaiBlog, Nico de Corato is also a Professional Speaker and contributor of many magazines (in UAE, US and Italy). The professional speaking industry operates on two tracks: the celebrities, like Olympic medal winners or famous politicians, who can come in and immediately command top dollar because of their name recognition; and regular people, who have "built their clientele out over years of learning how to market themselves and provide good content. Nico has strong expertise and more than 15 years experience in the following areas:

- computer science
- professional blogging
- social media
- web marketing & web communication
- web & media in general (integration online vs offline for example)

Small Bio: A graduate in telecommunication engineering with >10 experience in computer science teaching, web and social media marketing and IT consultancy and strong communication and organizational skills. Owner and web-administrator at DubaiBlog – a network of websites and social pages, not only about Dubai – since 2009 I'm involved in managing websites and social media pages, both for the technical aspect and the content, becoming WordPress Specialist and expert in Social Media Marketing. I'm also lifeguard & heli rescue diver, desert runner, black belt kick boxing.

Professional speaker and freelance contributor of the following magazines: OutdoorUAE, Divers for the Environment, ArabAfroTrade, The Underwater Journal. Occasional cooperation with other magazines.

Specialties: social media marketing, web communication, writing, teaching, public speaking.

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Born as blog and later evolved into a site and then a real portal, **DubaiBlog** is a network of websites and social pages, not only about UAE. In our network you find also AbuDhabiBlog, ToBeTravelAgent and other websites. Founded in 2007 with a different name, the first portal got the current name in 2009; our organization is mainly involved in PR, Social Media and Web Communication projects, helping businessmen & companies in having a correct social approach with the Arab Culture and to manage their key web-aspects by:

• developing their advertising, communication strategy and mottos on the web

• overseeing the creation of websites (in English, Arabic, and other languages)

• promoting their brand with ads on our web and social channels

• ensuring media coverage during events

• support our customers to develop / strengthen public relations in the area

• overseeing lead generation and Direct Email Marketing (DEM) strategies

• putting a positive spin on the promotion of offered products/services

Many freelances contribute to our network writing articles, publishing photos, helping the organization with the support of entrepreneurs.

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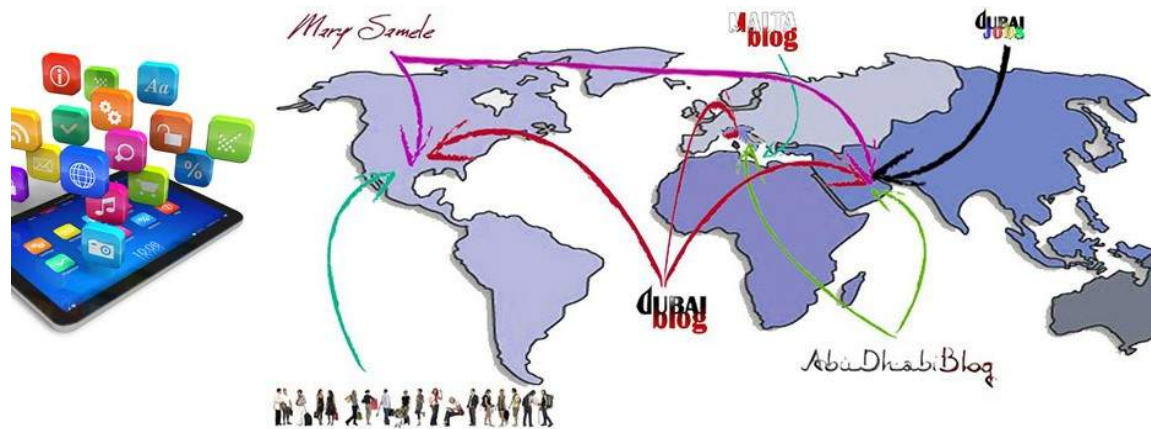
Introduction to Social Media & Communication Strategies and Tactics for GCC

Social media is changing the face of our personal interactions, with an unprecedented rate of adoption that outpaces previous innovations such as the radio, telephone, television, and even the iPod. So now you need to create a social media marketing plan. That means every Tweet, reply, like and comment should all be guided by a plan and driving towards pre-determined goals.

A social media marketing plan is the summary of everything you plan to do and hope to achieve for your business using social networks. This plan should comprise an audit of where your accounts are today, goals for where you want them to be in the near future, and all the tools you want to use to get there.

Should I use English for my page or better to have it - for example - in Arabic?

English of course is the most popular language, but at the same time do not forget

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

Nelson Mandela

There are around 22 countries in which Arabic language is the official language and many varieties of the Arabic language (dialects or otherwise) in existence within five regional forms. Arabic itself is a Semitic language that originated on the Arabian peninsula. The largest divisions occur between the spoken languages of different regions. Some varieties of Arabic in North Africa, for example, are incomprehensible to an Arabic speaker from the Levant or the Persian Gulf. Within these broad regions further and considerable geographic distinctions exist, within countries, across country borders, even between cities and villages. There are more than 300 million Arabic speakers in the world. Also, The Arabic language is one of the six main official languages in UNISCO since 1997. Modern Standard Arabic is the most descendant form of the classical Arabic. The modern classical Arabic is used in many formal occasions like news broadcasts, political speeches and most importantly in schools and university education. Basically, it is the language of writing and formal speaking.

At the same time there are more than 100 Nationalities living in Dubai. You will find a lot of expatriates who speak Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Tagalog, Persian, Chinese, Malayalam, in addition to many other languages. This mix favors the spread of visual social media platforms. A picture speaks a 1000 words. Oh yes! Whether you are blogging for hobby or business, creating beautiful visuals will always help your blog stand out amongst the big sea of other blogs.

How using new tools and techniques of Social Media & Communication Strategies delivers the ROI of better things in the Design industry

Although the usefulness of any social media platform will depend on the corporate goals of the company, social media doesn't have to be worthless time suck. There's a reason why companies invest so many man-hours and so much money into 'new media' – it can help to grow your business. **Create valuable page content**.

Why Bother With Social Media?

Because social media networks are where our customers spend time as they get ideas about transforming their spaces with tile and stone products. As they explore online, they will come across visual inspiration on social networks especially since online and social media content have become increasingly visual.

According to A Complete Guide to Visual Content,

"Content with relevant images gets 94 percent more views than content without. This oft-cited visual content stat is evidence that visuals have been vital to online success for some time. The original study from content platform Skyword came out in 2011… [Our brain simply] processes visuals 60,000 times faster than it does text."

Do keyword research

Remember that your customers search for you online, using words – even for visual content. That means that you will need to use words to describe your images and those words need to make sense to the people searching. In other words, banish industry lingo! Look for relevant #hashtags, too, to associate with your content. You may notice different themes depending on the day of the week. Perhaps it's #TileTuesday or #MosaicMonday; consider piggy-backing off of those themes. Be specific when using hashtags, come up with relevant, unbranded hashtags. Don't go too long or too clever, don't have more hashtags than words, don't hashtag everything. We may suggest to have no more than 10 / 20 hashtags.

Choose your social networks

Ask questions and include calls to action to boost the amount of feedback you receive and therefore the amount of exposure your content gets. Get engagement from your users. That's why is also useless to buy followers, cause in such a case you get numbers but no engagement..

Post at the right time. If you post according to when your fans are active, then more users—especially those on mobile devices—will see your content and be driven to your page.

That means: try not to post where people are potentially unactive (sleeping or at work.). but it can be useful to choose a time when - for example - people are waiting for the underground or relaxing (lunch break..) according to your ideal audience.

And **post regularly**: be consistent, whether that means blogging 10 times a day, three times a week or once a month. Important thing is to have a regular schedule. Avoid blogging 10 times in one day and then to be inactive for a whole month. Nowadays there are also lots of tools helping you in scheduling posting and sharing times.

Another important step is so.. **know your target**! And studying its habit.

Facebook is often the first thing that comes to mind when discussing social media. And while it may not be the top option for some photographers, Facebook is a great tool for customer engagement. While there's no single formula for success, you can take a look at what has worked for other photographers and test strategies out for yourself.

- Post photos of recent shoots
- Hold contests
- Show what goes on behind the scenes
- Give tips for customers & amateur photographers
- Share content that inspires you or about equipment you tested

Instagram has consistently been one of the most popular mobile apps over last 2 years, and there's good reason for that. It's easily integrated into Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and it provides users with the visual stimulation that Facebook and Twitter lack. It's particularly important especially in places (as Dubai) where there is a mix of spoken languages. For an Italian, an Arab or an Indian person living Dubai, English should not be a problem, but an image can be more comfortable than reading a post in a language different from your mother tongue.

High-quality pictures are essential for a social media strategy if you are a photographer. The higher an image's quality, the more attention it gets. And since you're in the Design Industry, it's even more imperative that you ensure that your photo/video content is of the highest quality possible. Use cutouts, overlays, etc., to make your content leap out from the page, but make sure everything is tasteful and aesthetically pleasing.

Google+ has yet to see the mainstream success that Facebook and Twitter have, but it's worth a look for a number of reasons. Similar to YouTube, participation in Google+ can influence your Google search engine results. One of the most noticeable advantages is the inclusion of an avatar photo in search results when the user is logged into any Google service.

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Do not forget about videos.

Instagram videos are tough to produce, partially because of the mobile recording concept. Smartphones have yet to be truly optimized for video, but the whole web is moving towards a video mindset.

For the same reason... **be a YouTuber!**

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What is **YouTube**? Try to give a definition of YouTube.. just know YouTube is the second most used search engine! You might not think of YouTube as social media, but that should change. As the second largest search engine in the world (first one in the Arab World), YouTube can be a valuable component to building a photographer's reach and reputation. And considering that YouTube is owned by Google, your activity on the site can help influence your search engine rankings.

What types of videos can we create? Think of topics your clients would be interested in. Tutorials, applications, promo video.

Case Histories

&

Question and answers

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