

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

**SOCIAL
MEDIA
AUTOMATION
FOR
STARTUPS**

BY KEVIN T. PAYNE

Social media today has significantly revolutionized the way consumers interact with brands across every stage of the buyer's journey.

According to [a study done by Global Index](#), 40% of social media users use the internet to learn more about different products and services. More important, 30% of social media users base their buying decision on the feedback and reviews they find here.

No doubt, running successful social media marketing campaigns is crucial for startup owners like you to promote your brand and product as well as scale quickly.

One of the most significant challenges about social media marketing is that it can be overwhelming to do. Each social media channels follows their own set of rules and algorithms that change very frequently. On top of this, social media users expect brands to listen and engage with them on a personal level quickly. After all, this is one of the characteristics of social media that makes it so appealing.



Source: [Social Media Examiner](#)

Streamlining specific tasks involved in running a social media marketing campaign can help get the job done, free you to attend to other essential duties, and still deliver results. One way to do this is through social media marketing automation.

What is Social Media Automation?

Social media automation is the process of [using software and other tools to automate specific tasks](#) involved in running a social media campaign. It aims to serve one primary purpose. That is, to continuously provide your prospects with personalized and useful content while freeing you to increase your level of engagement with them to nurture and delight.

Why is social media marketing automation so popular among marketers?

Accounts are consistently active

Social media marketing automation not only lets you schedule posts but also help you kickstart the [buyer's journey](#) by sending out instant replies whenever someone includes a chosen hashtag or mentions your account handle in their posts.

Higher engagement levels

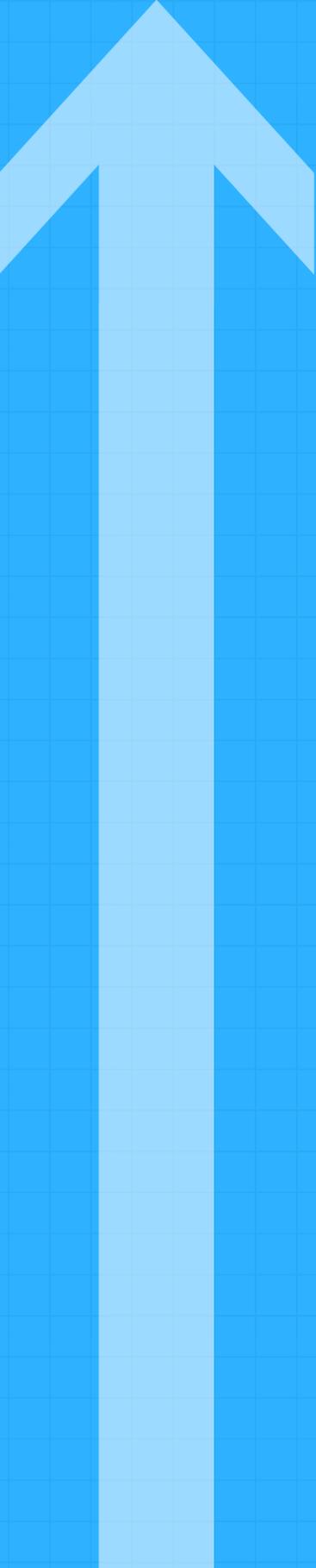
Social media users love connecting with people and brands on social media, and that means being able to receive prompt responses from brands at a personal level. So how you interact with your target market in social can make or break your startup's reputation.

Automating specific processes in your social media marketing campaign gives you **more time to focus on engaging with visitors** and nurturing leads, increasing your conversion rate.

Work smarter

According to the [Pareto principle](#), only 20% of all the tasks you do in your business require your attention because they're critical to your startup's success.

Social media automation **streamlines your workflow** by taking care of repetitive tasks you still need to complete. That way, you're able to focus on those core processes essential to build and scale your business.



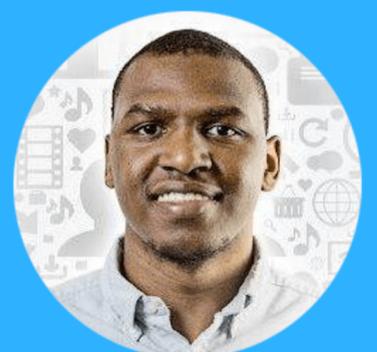
STEPS TO AUTOMATING SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING THE RIGHT WAY

"It's very tempting to automate as much as you can possibly automate because of the freedom that it gives you and your team.

But as we all know, too much of a good thing can be harmful, even disastrous, to your startup.

That's why in this section, I will be teaching you the four specific steps to do so that you can adequately automate your social media marketing campaign, and get the results you're looking for."

- Kevin T. Payne



STEP 1: KNOW WHAT AND WHEN TO AUTOMATE

Not all tasks and processes involved in social media marketing can be automated. This is something that American Airlines learned the hard way.

To show to their would-be and existing customers, American Airlines decided to automate a thank you message in their Twitter account each time that their handle was mentioned. It may have worked with their satisfied customers. But, they totally missed the mark when [this unhappy customer tweeted his frustration](#) about the airline.



Source: [Business Insider](#)

That said, make sure only to automate processes and tasks that don't require any level of engagement from your followers. Here are some examples:

Links to your original content:

- Curated content
- Status updates
- Quotes
- General inquiries about your brand or product

STEP 2: CHOOSING THE RIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION TOOLS

Even though social media channels like Facebook and Youtube let you schedule your posts directly on their respective platforms, I recommend using a separate social media management software like [eClincher](#) for your social media marketing automation.

One reason is that you can **schedule your posts in batches** for all of your social media accounts in one place. Not only is this quicker, but also minimizes the risk of getting tempted to take just a quick peek at your personal news feed. I know, because that's happened to me more than once.

Another reason to use third-party social media management tools is that it lets you know when someone is reaching out to you in one of your social media channels or if you've been mentioned by someone in their post. That way, you can reach back with them, and **begin the lead nurturing process**.

What I really like about eClincher is that it integrates very well with [Pocket](#). Since I use this app for **content curation**, it's a convenient way for me to collect and share curated content on my different social media accounts.

It also stores all the posts you've uploaded, making it easy for you to **recycle your previously published posts**. This is great if you're planning to launch again a campaign you've done in the past.

Here are other social media automation tools that I found to be very helpful:



[Viral Content Buzz](#) is a social sharing platform that gives you the opportunity to connect with influencers within your niche and get them to share their posts with their followers on Facebook and Twitter.

What's great about this is that the only thing that they'll ask you in return is to share their content in your accounts.



[Zapier](#) is an automation tool that lets different apps you own work with each other to complete a specific task.

What's great about this is that it's not only limited to social media marketing apps. Zapier integrates with over [750 different apps](#) that you can use in various aspects of your business. These include Google Docs, Asana, Gmail, and Dropbox.



As its name suggests, [Google Alerts](#) notifies you of the latest articles based on a specific keyword. Not only is this great to find quality content that you can create, but also give you topics that you can use to start a conversation with your followers, increasing your profile's engagement rate.

STEP 3: SCHEDULE YOUR POSTS AT THE RIGHT TIME

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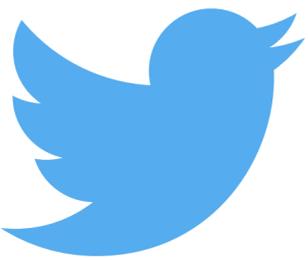
Since each social media is different, it's not surprising that they the best days and times to upload your posts so that it gets the most views and engagement differs. Posting during these recommended days and times will increase your chances that your posts are immediately seen by your target audience.

Here are the ideal days and times to publish your posts on the top social media channels used by startups.



[Posts published on Facebook](#) on Thursday and Friday get an 18% higher than average engagement rate while posts published on Saturdays and Sundays get a 32% than average engagement rate. That said, I'd recommend posting your original content twice on Facebook: the first is during the weekend, and second on either Thursday or Friday to get the most eyeballs on it.

As for the times, spread out your posts so that you have one scheduled at 9:00 AM, another at 1:00 PM, and then one more at 3:00 PM.



Wednesday is the best time to tweet your most valuable content to your followers. Since Twitter feeds update very quickly, make sure that you tweet the same content at different times during the day to get the most reach and engagement. The best times for this are 12:00 PM, 3:00 PM, and between 5:00 and 6:00 PM.



Because most of those that are active on LinkedIn are executives, don't schedule your posts during business hours because they'll be busy. Instead, plan that your posts get published during their commute to work (7:00 – 8:00 AM), their lunch break (12:00 PM), and after office hours (5:00 – 6:00 PM).

Avoid Mondays and Fridays when you post your content. These are the days when they are the busiest. Fridays are when they try to complete their most critical tasks so that they don't have to work on them during the weekend. Mondays are when they are working on tasks that were not finished the previous Friday plus all the new assignments they'll need to work on that week.



Mondays and Thursdays are the best days to promote your post on Instagram. That's because Mondays are when lots of Instagram users look to catch up on what their friends did over the weekend. On the other hand, Thursdays are when they start looking for ideas and making plans for the upcoming weekend.

The best times to post on Instagram are 8:00 – 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM.



Weekdays between 2:00 and 4:00 PM are the best days and times to upload your videos.

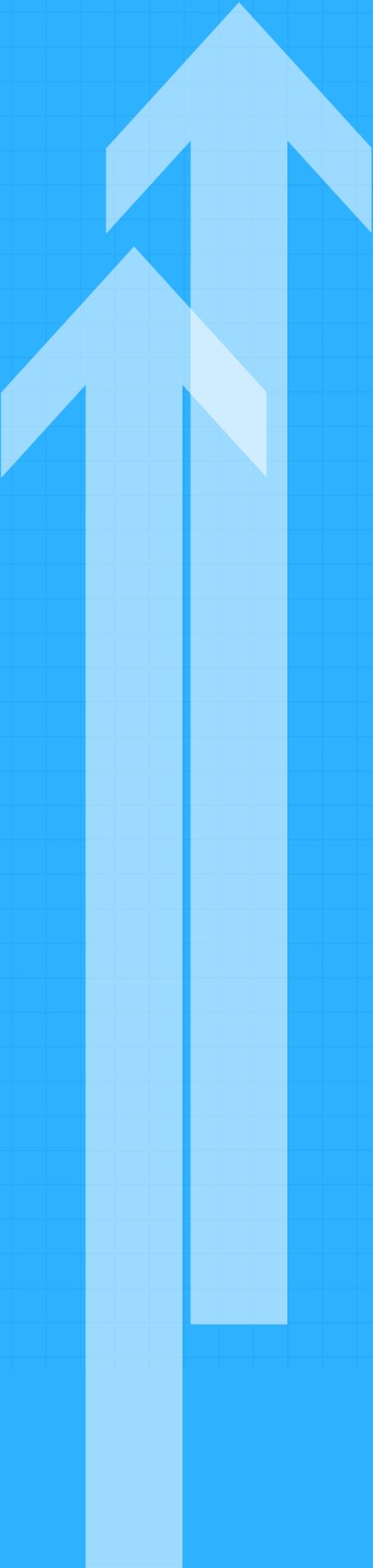
Now, you may be wondering why this is the case since the [peak hours in YouTube](#) is between 7:00 and 10:00 PM. That's because YouTube needs time to index your videos so that they show up on your followers Recommended Videos feed and in search results. Uploading your videos a few hours before will ensure that your current and would-be followers will be able to find the videos you've just uploaded during YouTube's peak hours.

STEP 4: KEEPING YOUR RADAR ON

Even if you got most of the tasks in social media marketing on autopilot, you still need to make sure that you're able to respond and address your target audience appropriately, especially when someone leaves a negative comment or messages you a complaint.

Remember, the whole world can see what's happening in your social media accounts. Just like in the case with American Airlines you saw earlier, your ability to take action quickly to resolve will make or break your brand on social media.

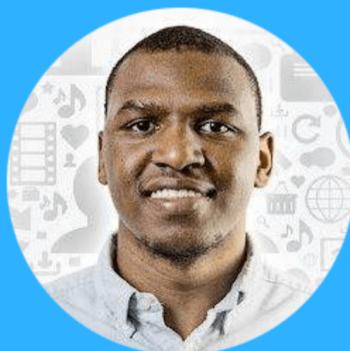
Investing in tools like [Mention](#) can help you here. It not only alerts you whenever someone mentions your brand in different social media channels, but in other places on the Internet like blogs, websites, and review forums. That way, you get a more cohesive picture of your brand's reputation. If it's positive, you can build on it. If it's not, you can take the proper actions to turn things around.



TOP 9

SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION BEST PRACTICES

"While I did mention earlier that each social media channel is different, there are a few best practices that are applicable regardless on which social media channel you choose, especially when it comes to automating your social media campaigns."



- Kevin T. Payne
Inbound Marketing Consultant

1. ALWAYS USE A CUSTOMIZED HEADLINE

It's very tempting just to schedule a post across different social media channels using only one headline. After all, it's the same piece of content.

However, it's these little details that your target audience appreciates most. Taking a few seconds to tweak your posts' headlines and message to match the style in a specific social media makes these even more appealing, encouraging your target audience in each social media channel to engage with you.

Also, if you're planning to promote one post several times within the day or week, tweaking the headline and customizing the message helps keep your content fresh to your target audience.

2. UNDERSTAND THE STYLES AND FEATURES OF EACH SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK

Different social media sites cater to a specific segment of your target audience. For example, LinkedIn caters to executives while those that prefer visual content use Instagram. The different features that each of these social media offers for you to use are those designed to delight their subscribers.

Learning these features and understanding the style of each social media channels you use can help you develop the right content and message so that you get the best results.

3. USE CST OR EST TIME ZONES



Regardless of what part of the world you're from, make it a point to follow any of these two time zones when you're scheduling your posts on social media. That's because of the different time zones, these are the time zones where you [get the most people active](#) on the Internet.

4. FOLLOW THE 5-3-2 PRINCIPLE FOR BRAND AWARENESS

Simply put, the 5-3-2 principle teaches that out of every 10 posts you upload on your social media accounts:

- 5 must be relevant material from influencers and reputable sites,
- 3 are original content you've published that are not promoting anything, and
- 2 are funny or personal posts.

Now, you may be wondering how does share more content from other sources help promote your brand?

Well, for starters, providing curated content means that you're able to populate your accounts with valuable content while you're still building up your site's blog with your own original content.

Second, it follows the old adage, "tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are." By curating valuable content from key influencers in your niche, you're indirectly showing your target audience the quality and value your brand and product can provide them.

Last, but not the least, is that it opens the door for you to connect and engage with influencers in your niche. Mentioning them in the message you include in your curated post will alert them to you. Eventually, they'll take notice, and may even drop by your account.

5. PROMOTE PRODUCTS WITH THE 4-1-1 PRINCIPLE

This is the principle you'll need to follow to make sure that you don't turn off your followers by looking too salesy with your posts.

Initially, this principle was [designed for Twitter](#). However, I found that this works as well on other social media sites.

To use this principle, make sure that for every 6 social media posts:

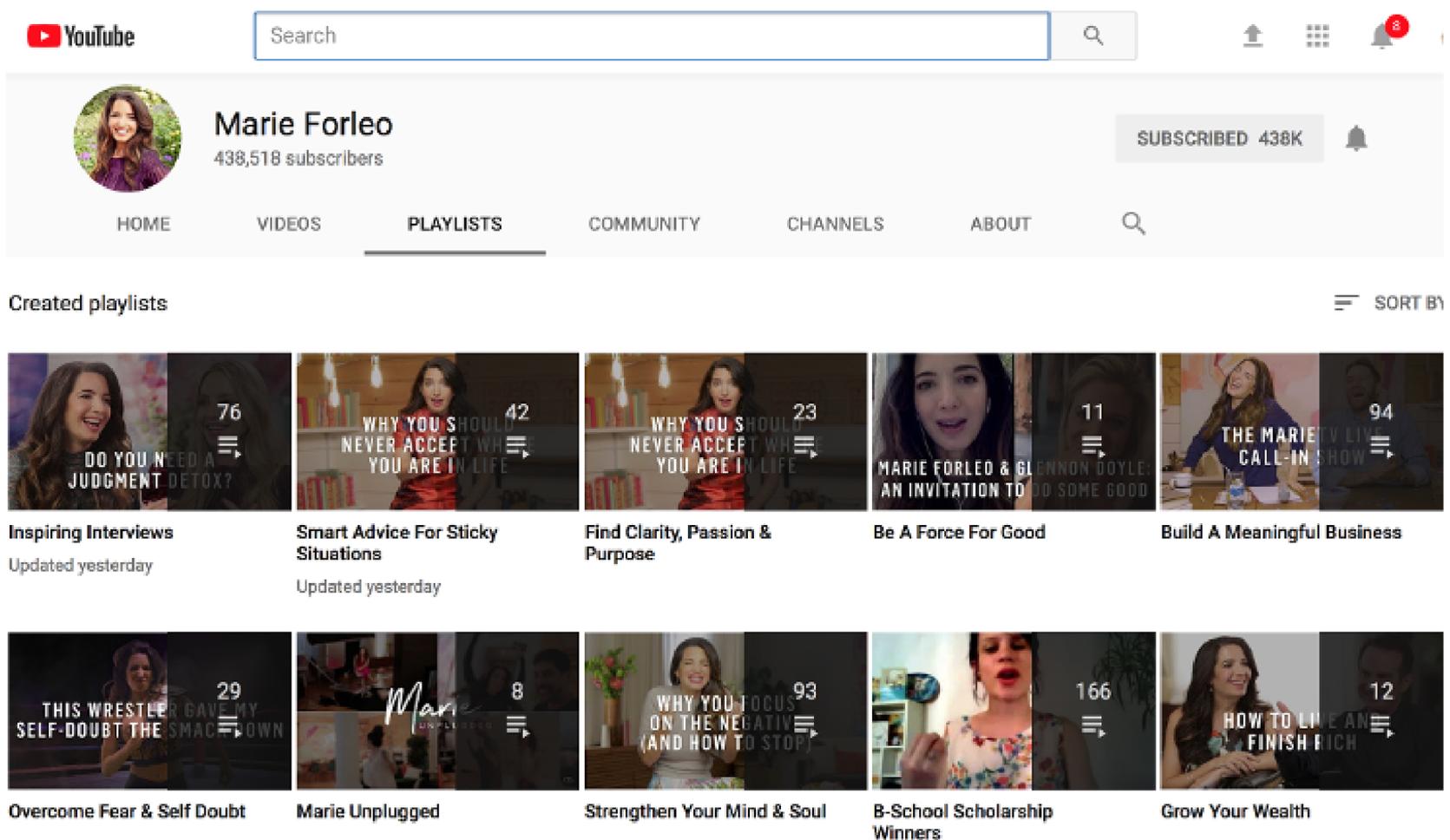
- 4 should be fresh and original content you've published
- 1 post will be a curated post, and
- 1 will be a self-promoting post.

6. DIVERSIFY YOUR CONTENT

Even if you're focusing on sites like Youtube that only allows video uploads, you still need to diversify your content. That way, you're always offering something fresh and different to your target audience.

Successful entrepreneur and influencer Marie Forleo does this exceptionally well on [her YouTube account](#). While most of her videos focus on interviews with other influencers and successful entrepreneurs, she also features a series of videos she calls "Q&A Tuesday" where the video focuses on answering a question sent to her.

Recently, she added a playlist she titled "Marie Unplugged." Unlike her two videos that focus on business tips and insights, this series shows her sharing her life outside of her business.



The image shows a screenshot of Marie Forleo's YouTube channel page. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation icons. Below that is her profile picture, name "Marie Forleo", and subscriber count "438,518 subscribers". A "SUBSCRIBED 438K" button is visible. The navigation menu includes HOME, VIDEOS, PLAYLISTS (which is selected), COMMUNITY, CHANNELS, and ABOUT. Below the navigation, there's a section for "Created playlists" with a "SORT BY" dropdown. The playlists are displayed in a grid of 10 items, each with a video thumbnail, a title, and a subscriber count:

- Inspiring Interviews** (76 videos, Updated yesterday): DO YOU NEED A JUDGMENT DETOX?
- Smart Advice For Sticky Situations** (42 videos, Updated yesterday): WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE IN LIFE
- Find Clarity, Passion & Purpose** (23 videos): WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER ACCEPT WHO YOU ARE IN LIFE
- Be A Force For Good** (11 videos): MARIE FORLEO & GLENNON DOYLE: AN INVITATION TO DO SOME GOOD
- Build A Meaningful Business** (94 videos): THE MARIE TV LIVE CALL-IN SHOW
- Overcome Fear & Self Doubt** (29 videos): THIS WRESTLER GAVE MY SELF-DOUBT THE SMACK DOWN
- Marie Unplugged** (8 videos): Marie Unplugged
- Strengthen Your Mind & Soul** (93 videos): WHY YOU FOCUS ON THE NEGATIVE (AND HOW TO STOP)
- B-School Scholarship Winners** (166 videos): B-School Scholarship Winners
- Grow Your Wealth** (12 videos): HOW TO LIVE AND FINISH RICH

7. SET A TIME TO ENGAGE

As you learned earlier, engagement is one of the things you **MUST NEVER AUTOMATE**. That said, you'll also need to strike a balance here to make sure that you don't spend too much time engaging with your audience that you don't do anything else.

Set aside no more than an hour each day to respond to comments and messages left by followers and visitors, even if you have someone from your marketing team doing this. This is one way to get them stay loyal to your startup because they feel appreciated.

8. ALWAYS CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Just like any marketing strategy, you need to keep a close eye still to see how your campaign is going even if it's running on automatic pilot. Are getting closer to your set goals? If not, stop the automated tasks you've scheduled and programmed, evaluate, and make the necessary improvements.

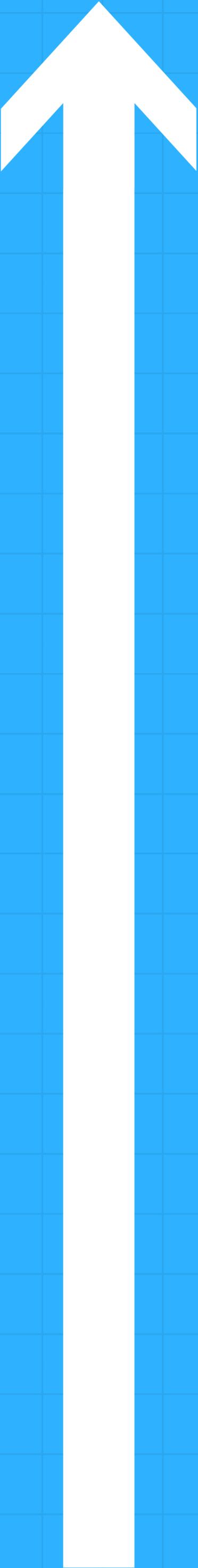
9. DON'T SCHEDULE TOO FAR IN ADVANCE

One of the biggest mistakes I've seen among marketers using social media marketing automation is that they tend to schedule things too far in advance.

While it may look like a good idea because you get more time to focus on other aspects of your business, it can also eventually cause several problems. First, breaking news and studies released between now and the time a piece of content is scheduled to get published can cause it to become untimely, even outdated.

Also, setting things too far in advance can cause you and your team to forget which posts have you already shared. That means that you're running the risk of duplicating recently published posts.

As a rule of thumb, schedule your posts and other automated tasks on a weekly basis. This gives you enough time to focus on other tasks, make sure that all your posts are timely and up to date.



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

In this guide, I've shared with you how automation offers many benefits to startups looking for an efficient way to promote their brand and products on social media.

One thing that you may have noticed is that although social media automation takes off a lot of repetitive tasks from your hands, you'll still need to do a bit of legwork to make sure that your social media campaign and inbound marketing strategy, in general, are thriving.

What makes social media an extremely efficient is its ability for your audience to engage with you and vice-versa directly. If you do it just right, you can guide a prospect through your buyer's journey more quickly than other marketing strategies.

This, I believe, is where the real value of social media marketing automation lies. By taking care of those tasks that require no engagement, you now have more time to focus your efforts on the two most important tasks: building relationships and sales conversion.

I know that I discussed quite a lot here, and it can be a lot to take in one seating, which is why I created a downloadable version for you to use as a resource and guide you can go back to as you incorporate automation to your social media marketing strategy.

To your succes,



Kevin T. Payne
Inbound Marketing Consultant