

How to build a great social media team



By [Daniel Pinch](#)

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A question I've asked myself personally - the Society team started as two people in 2011, it's now 12, so we ask this in one way or another pretty regularly. This is also a question clients wanting to build their own teams have regularly asked us.

This is what I've learned, quite often the hard way. If you want a social media team that can do things professionally and at scale, this is who I recommend you hire.

Note: for smaller teams some of these jobs may be done by the same person or by someone who also has another role in the organisation. That's fine as long as they have the skills and time to deliver good work.

A content designer

Without a content designer you are pretty much dead in the water if you want to take social media seriously these days (given how visually orientated the platforms are becoming).

- You need a designer who produces great work quickly without losing quality (they will be producing a lot of work in a short space of time)
- They need to have the skill to simplify content into a message that can be absorbed in the time it takes someone's thumb to scroll through a post on their Facebook newsfeed
- Your designer will need to design not only posts but also create visual content systems / templates and image libraries that ensure consistency across the many pieces of content you will produce
- They will need to be fast learners: social media platforms and the devices that view them change rapidly
- They'll need to know how to create something that looks good both on a large desktop screen and a feature phone (and the devices in between)
- Having someone who can take good photographs as well is very helpful indeed

Questions to ask in the interview:

- Where can I find you on Pinterest?
- Do you really want a job in advertising rather than social media?
- What publications do you think have great design?
- What side projects are you doing at the moment?

A community manager

It's 4am; do you know where your brand's reputation on social media is right now? A good community manager does. And trust me on this, good community managers are hard to find - so when you have a good one keep hold of him/her.

- Very important: your community manager needs to be available to community manage; they cannot be stuck in meetings or driving around on errands regularly
- This is the person who, in a worst case scenario, will stand between your company and a stock price plummet or reputation trashing; from personal experience it takes about 40 minutes for an issue to go super-viral on Twitter
- A good community manager is part diplomat, part customer service assistant, part copywriter and part researcher
- They will need to understand how social media platforms work (and as they change something almost every week this requires constant homework and playing with new features)
- This person needs to be able to write accurately, quickly and often without anyone proofing his/her work
- A fragile, sensitive nature is not much use to a community manager (they are going to be abused regularly by trolls so they need to keep their cool)

Questions to ask in the interview:

- Before you do an interview give the candidate a tough writing and proofing test with a time limit
- What do you think of Facebook's latest change to their newsfeed / promoted posts / mobile app?
- How do you handle a troll?
- It's 5:30pm and you're about to go home, 20 serious complaints arrive in rapid succession, how do you choose which one to answer?

A copywriter

Your copywriter may be your Community Manager but there are some good reasons why you may need a dedicated writer: for a start, if you are taking your time to craft considered copy you are not checking what the trolls are saying on your channels.

- Writing at least 30 odd posts a month (most of the time more) for each brand they work on is tough. Month 1 is easy but Month 6, 13 and 26, when all the easy obvious things have been said, requires being able to dig deep to maintain creativity and enthusiasm. This is hard work!
- Copy is closely aligned with visuals in social media; it will really help if they also have a good eye and can work with a designer as a team to come up with content ideas.
- Rather like a good journalist they need to be able to nail the simplest, punchiest way of saying something (most of the time they have about 140 characters for any message, at best)
- They need to think creatively at speed: in a tactical situation where posting first counts, they will have a couple of minutes at best to come up with a content idea and execute it

Questions to ask in the interview:

- Start with a writing test and a portfolio view
- What are your eight favourite blogs to follow?
- What magazines do you read?
- Which brands are getting content right on social media and why?

A chief evangelist / strategist

If you look at the brands that are truly successful at social media they have bought into it right at the top of the organisation. You need someone senior who can talk the language of boardrooms to go and get the execs excited about what you're doing.

- This person also needs to be adept at taking complicated technology and making it simply understood.
- They need to know how to wander the halls and win people over.
- They need to know where the budgets are and how to coax them into social media.

- When things go right they need to make sure everyone knows about it; and when they go wrong they need to explain calmly that its part of the learning process.
- A good understanding of not only social media strategy but also bigger picture business strategy is also essential.

Questions to ask in the interview:

- Why should a B2B business get excited about social media?
- What should a company use social media for besides marketing?
- What's the best way of proving ROI for social media?
- Should a CEO be on Twitter?
- What are the five reasons most brands fail at social media?
- I have a social media budget of R500,000 for the year ... how do I decide what to spend it on?

A project manager

Even a relatively simple social media presence or project can have a lot of moving parts given the amount of content put out in the typical month. Without someone to make sure the team is working efficiently things can quickly drift/plummet out of control.

- Although it's great to have a project manager who knows how to use all the latest fancy project management tools, you're really after a good people person.
- They will need to manage a team and this takes diplomacy, adaptability, and organisational skills.
- The project manager should have a good understanding of each of the other roles; they should know the pressure points and working processes but also what motivates each member of the team.
- They should be able to switch between a big picture view of the project and the tiniest of details.

Questions to ask in the interview:

- Who can we phone for a reference? (the only real test of a good project manager is to look at what they've project managed)
- What do you wish you'd done differently about the last project you worked on?
- How do you handle a creative team that has lost enthusiasm for a project?
- What systems or tools do you use to stay organised?
- Show me your "To Do" list for this week. (If the applicant doesn't have one close at hand then they're probably not that hot.)

I'd be interested to know if you think I've missed any role or if you have any additional suggestions. Leave a comment / send me a tweet and let me know.

ABOUT DANIEL PINCH

Dan is the founder and creative director of Society, one of the fastest growing social media and content agencies in South Africa (and part of the King James Group). Since moving to Cape Town from London in 2004 he has worked on award winning social media and PR campaigns for the likes of kulula.com, Santam, Johnnie Walker and Steri Stumpie among others. Dan was previously creative director at Atmosphere (also part of the King James Group). Follow [@workofsociety](#).

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