

Eight Social Media Resolutions for 2011

Keep your marketing on social networks meaningful in the New Year by being original and authentic, says Steve McKee

By [Steve McKee](#)

A few years back I wrote a [column](#) offering a dozen New Year's resolutions I wish advertisers would make. Given the season, and the suitability of the topic, I thought it might be time for a handful of resolutions dealing with social media.

Below are eight resolutions I developed with the help of some of my social media friends. They're more focused on the professional than the personal, but if the shoe fits for your personal interactions, feel free to wear it. Some are things to start doing; others are things to stop doing. Some are resolutions I need to make for myself; others I wish everyone would adopt. See if you agree.

I will be original. Plagiarism has always been a crime, but the Internet has made it much easier to commit. The ease and speed with which we can share things through social media makes it even more tempting. While most people wouldn't plagiarize an entire article, column, or white paper (although I've seen it done, even to me), they think much less of plagiarizing a Facebook or Twitter post. @MWCemily says if you like what other people say, give them their due for having said it first. She's right.

I will not "auto" anything. Don't auto-follow. Don't auto-DM. Don't auto-tweet. Don't do anything that shortcuts the already less-than-personal nature of social media. As @BartCleveland says, "Give the same consideration to social media you would to a live conversation among friends and peers. Stimulating conversation occurs when people are listening and contributing to the topic of the moment." Nobody likes being on the receiving end of auto-generated messages; why would we think it's O.K. to send them?

I will unfollow. This came up a lot in my informal poll of friends. @stephfierman says she's sensing a "blowback" in social media, as people dial back the search for "more" and realize "what we've known all along—that value comes from genuine relationships, and that a person in your network whom you barely know and never speak to is not a relationship." In that spirit, don't be afraid to trim back the list of people you follow. Similarly, @SusanHartPR resolves to focus more on "quality, not quantity," and @lesmckeown says he will "concentrate on content, not numbers." [@deniseleeyohn may have said it most succinctly of all: "Treat 'friends' like friends."](#)

I will integrate. PR pro @AbbieF says she's going to continue to stress to her clients the importance of social media as a crucial tool in an overall communications strategy. She's correct in doing so. Social media constitute neither a fad nor a sidelight. In the coming year we all should look for more ways to integrate social media into our big-picture marketing plans. Many good things can come from exploring the links between offline and online media, social media included. If you respect each tool and use it appropriately in your overall marketing mix (rather than seeing it as another blunt instrument with which to bludgeon someone into a sale—see below), you'll be a lot happier. And so will your followers.

I will not be a narcissist. Remember the feeling you got back in the day when you heard those three magic words, "You've got mail"? It was so exciting to think that somebody cared enough to reach out, even if it did turn out to be a perfunctory notification from your ISP. We all like getting attention, but fishing for it is never a good idea. People who post and tweet incessantly about themselves are no different than those who do so face-to-face—annoying. Corporations can be the worst offenders in this arena, viewing social media as just another platform on which to make a pitch. That's as bad an idea online as it is offline (see [The Cocktail Party Test for Advertising](#)). I appreciate the honesty of @girlmeetsgeek, who has resolved to "stop caring about recognition and focus on doing my job." Amen, sister.

I will not be a boor. Peering through a computer monitor can be a bit like sitting behind a two-way mirror at a focus group, tempting you to draw conclusions and make wisecracks about people in ways that you never would face-to-face. Being a boor is never a good idea, and the network multiplies the effect of boorish behavior. The same goes for profanity. Post and tweet only what you would say to someone's face in polite company. If you can't do that, zip it.

I will continue to explore. This may seem obvious to social media veterans, but we all have our limits. You, like me, may have settled into a comfort zone with a handful of social media tools, but we all should resolve to expand, as @ckburgess puts it, our "social media footprints." @ginidietrich encourages others "to open their minds to trying new technologies" rather than reflexively dismissing them, and @JustInTheSouth believes we should listen more than we tweet and connect more with those who think differently.

I will not LOL. Or ROTFL, provide TMI, or say OMG or JK. I know acronyms like these are meant to serve as shorthand to save precious character space, but a cliché is a cliché. And in the social media world, clichés get tired fast. Say something original.

Happy New Year. TTYL ;-)

Steve McKee is president of [McKee Wallwork Cleveland](#) and author of [When Growth Stalls: How It Happens, Why You're Stuck, and What to Do About It](#). Find him on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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