



The America's SBDC Marketing & Communications Committee strongly encourages all SBDCs to have a presence in social media. Social media is free and since many SBDC offices are run like small business it makes sense to use social media to market your center. Many SBDCs have access to interns who can create social media profiles and content for you very quickly. The SBDC message has a much stronger impact if the thousands of SBDC professionals around the country are unified and active online.

## Did you know?

- Over 80% of all Americans use a social network.
- Americans spend more time on Facebook than any other U.S. website.
- Approximately 40% of social media users access their accounts through mobile devices.
- Nearly 23% of online time is spent on social networks.
- One out of 5 social network users is likely to visit another social site after leaving one.
- The 3 most important reasons small businesses leverage social media are:
  - Connecting with customers
  - Visibility
  - Self-promotion
- 44% of SMB decision-makers use social media.
- Of those SMB decision-makers who use social media, 86% use Facebook vs. 41% LinkedIn and 33% Twitter.
- Small businesses don't have to spend much to get results: Zoomerang.com found that nearly 60% of all small business decision-makers spend less than \$100 on social media and 74% of businesses don't employ anyone to manage their social media marketing.
- Ning.com has found it only takes 20 people to create meaningful many-to-many interactions and bring an online community to a significant level of activity. That's something almost any business can achieve.

*\*Information collected from SocialMediaExaminer.com*

## Social Media Best Practices

Here are some best practices to follow when using social media, which should be broadly understood to include blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.

**Members of the America's SBDC network (the network) should remember that any and all posts, publications, etc. may have long lasting effects—both of a positive and negative nature.**

1. Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of social media conduct that should be avoided include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, libelous, or that can create a hostile work environment.
2. Network members are prohibited from publishing, posting or otherwise releasing information considered as confidential, especially with regard to client information.
3. Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. All inquiries of this type should be referred to authorized network spokespersons.
4. If a network member encounters a potentially antagonistic situation, s/he should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of a supervisor.
5. A network member should get appropriate permission before referring to or posting images of current or former SBDC staff and clients.
6. Social media use shouldn't interfere with network members' responsibilities with their SBDC.
7. Network members should keep SBDC-related social media accounts separate from personal accounts.

#### **Publicity Releases and Client Confidentiality**

1. All clients mentioned in social media by the network must have a publicity release prior to posting about them.
2. If a client tags the network or mentions the network specifically, "liking" or "commenting" is acceptable since the post was client-initiated. Similarly, when a client is mentioned in a news story where the network is also mentioned as providing assistance, this posting is acceptable since the client disclosed the relationship.
3. If a potential client posts a question online or requests business assistance, suggest an offline meeting/contact for further assistance.
4. In the event that affiliation with a client could be damaging to the network's reputation, it is advisable to delete all postings related to the client.

#### **Branding**

The America's SBDC logo should be clear and consistent to further promote brand awareness.

#### **Cover Page Photos**

Cover page photos on social media can be reused across multiple social media accounts and should be changed frequently. Cover photos could include, but should not be limited to:

- Upcoming events
- Center award/recognition
- Network or SBDC Services
- Client testimonials
- Center staff (consultant of the month)

## Content Ideas

It is recommended that posts are made twice a day to your Facebook page and Twitter account. It is highly recommended to synchronize your center's Facebook page to the center's Twitter account so what you post on Facebook automatically posts to the Twitter account. To sync the accounts go to [Facebook.com/twitter](https://www.facebook.com/twitter) and connect the pages accordingly

1. Post upcoming events and training workshops your center is hosting. Go to your center's webpage and copy the link to the upcoming event and post the entire link to Facebook
2. Post an interesting fact or quote about small business development
3. Video posts always get a good response as well
4. Post links to news outlets that have featured your SBDC
5. Focus on inspirational messages about business ownership, small business statistics, or tips for small business owners.
6. Repost or share posts from other network members.
7. Images are great content to share and can be easily "liked" or shared quickly.
8. Source reputable infographics from the Census Bureau or other information gathering organizations.
9. Remember to "tag" a client, the network, or a network member in any post about them. This increases the likelihood of it being shared further.
10. Commenting and liking other posts are a very important part of social media outreach. For every post or tweet about the network or a network member, there should be 5 retweets or posts about others.
11. Follow and like all of your network's local and regional economic partners. Use their posts as feed for good information to "like" or repost.
12. Follow national partners and supporters of small business (SBA, Inc., Fast Company, Kauffman Foundation, etc.). These stakeholders offer relevant, trusted content to share, especially when resources are limited.
13. Share grand openings or other client events located within a legislator's (national, state, county, local) respective district but refrain from showing political party favoritism.
14. Pull information off the Association website, [www.AmericasSBDC.org](http://www.AmericasSBDC.org). There is great content in the blog, on the news and "what's happening", history, impact, and about us pages.

*Note: Check out the Marketing Samples file in the 2015 Toolkit for samples of social media graphics, banners, etc.*

## Post Composition Suggestions

- Avoid negativity; stay positive.
- Avoid using "I"; use "we" instead.
- Shorten URLs to track clicks.
- For more clicks, place the link in the first part of the post.
- Use action words in the post such as see, watch, check out, look.

- Tweet later in the day and later in the week; experiment with timing (ideally Friday afternoon).
- Do not send more than one or two tweets an hour.
- Consider adding “Please RT” (re-tweet) to see if your message spreads further.
- Check grammar and punctuation; avoid ALL CAPS and always start with a capital letter.
- Avoid using “txt spk”.

### **Hashtags**

The Hashtag is used to connect searches. It is required that for every post you use #LSBDC [or whatever your center acronym is]. What does that do? Whenever a user on a social media platform types in LSBDC our center [or your center] comes up first.

Suggested hashtags: #LSBDC

#SmallBusiness #GrowSmallBusiness #SBDC #SupportSmallBusiness #SBA

Example:

#LSBDC to host workshop on Entrepreneurship! Register now at  
<https://www2.lsbdc.org/workshop.aspx?ekey=7350086>

Hashtags can be useful in connecting with others, especially younger entrepreneurs. They should be included in posts as appropriate, depending on your message. Here are some sample hashtags; feel free to search for other useful hashtags.

#SmallBiz

#Business

#EconomicGrowth

#Biz

#StartUp

#BusinessDevelopment

#LocalBiz

#BusinessAssistance

#Entrepreneur

*The national Association uses the hashtag #SBDC every time it posts something about/for the SBDC Network. Simply adding the numeric sign before you say “SBDC” in your post will connect you to everyone else talking about SBDCs. The Association also uses the hashtag #2015SBDC to promote it’s annual conference. To join the conversation simply add the year before SBDC .*

**How to grow followers:**

Quickest and easiest way to grow followers is to invite your personal Facebook account friends to like the center's page. That opens the center's page visibility to those in your area and once a few people like it, it will trend in that area. Mention businesses, newspapers, chambers, and economic development groups in your posts. By using the @ sign before a business that notifies that entity they are being mentioned on Facebook.

When announcing upcoming workshops always use:

@TheNatchitochesTimes

@TheShreveportTime

@GreaterShreveportChamberofCommerce @NatchitochesAreaChamberofCommerce

Let those entities and/or others similar to be included in the post and conversation. It is likely they have a high number of followers and that allows their audience to see your page as well, which grows your followers and makes you post reach a larger audience.

*Example:*

#SBDC and @GreaterShreveportChamberofCommerce partner to host #BusinessExpo

@TheNatchitochesTimes featured the #SBDC in its #business section of the paper today, read about it here: (attach link)

#### **Best Times to Schedule Posts:**

- The best times to schedule social media posts are early morning and late evenings.
- Our target audience usually wakes up to check their social media before going to work, and again in the evening when they are off work.
- Aim to schedule posts around 6 a.m. and after 6 p.m.