



## Organizing Your Agency for Social

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### Social Media Team Frameworks, Staffing & Future-Proofing

Prepared by the 4A's Social Media Committee  
May 2018

## **4A's Digital Horizons Series**

Volume 2, No. 1

A publication of the 4A's (American Association of Advertising Agencies), the 4A's Digital Horizons Series explores the current and near future landscape of digital technology and innovation in the advertising industry.

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**4A'S BULLETIN NO. 7940**



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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Social marketing has matured to become a robust and integral part of the modern marketing mix. It is table stakes for almost any agency—with or without traditional roots—and is demanded by today's always-on consumer.

Most mature agencies have been through different iterations of social media marketing teams over the past few years as they have reacted to a changing landscape. These have usually begun with one or two hand-raisers, evolved to become a small group, and then expanded to integrate into existing departments, including strategy, creative, analytics and production.

Digital agencies have struggled with implementing a social offering: Lack of centralized knowledge, failure to integrate with other channels and siloed vision against a broader marketing mission have hampered even the most cutting-edge digital outfits. This is often exacerbated by client-side evolutions, such as communications management moving in-house, leaving agencies floundering.

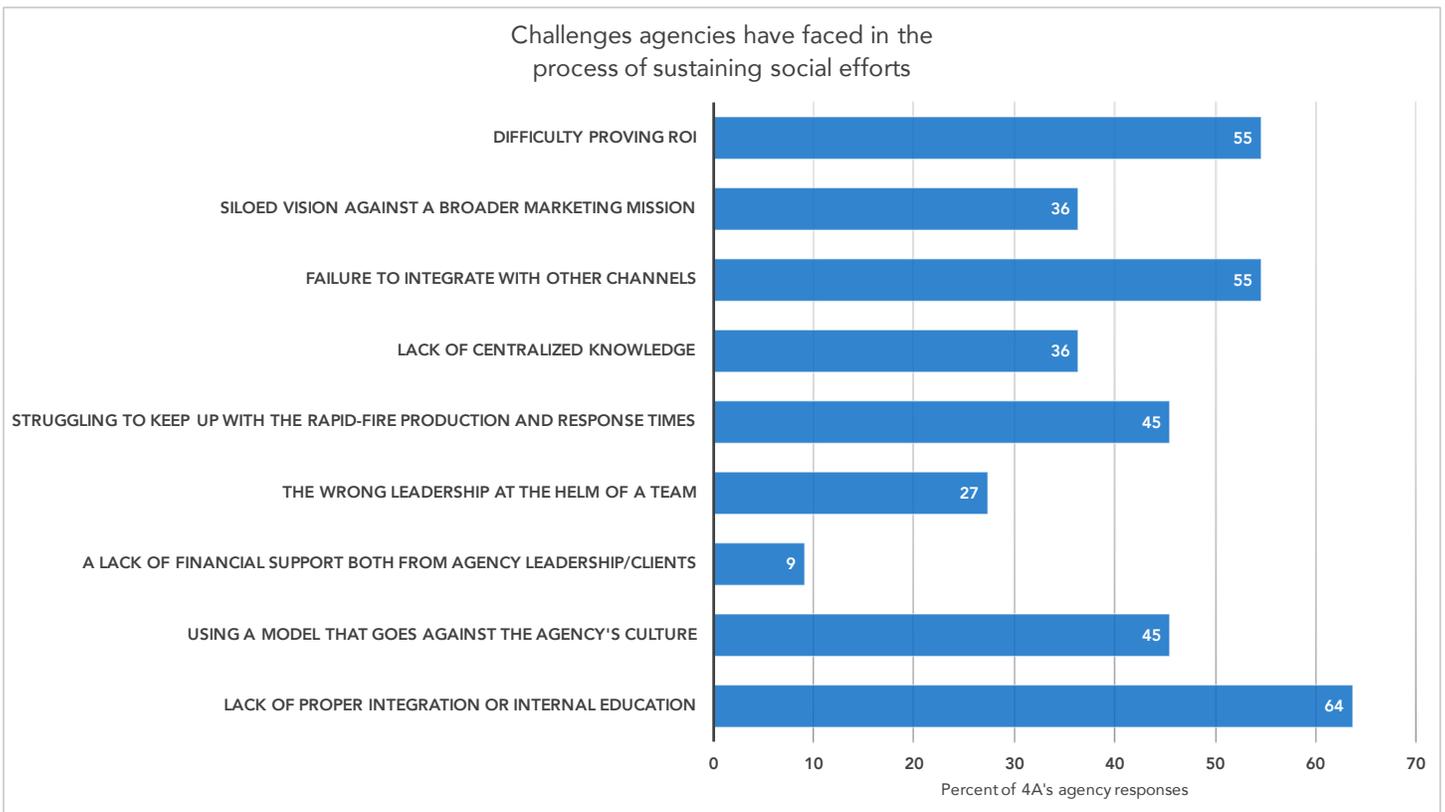
Traditional agencies have also experienced challenges when it comes to sustaining social efforts. Often these efforts have died on the vine for a variety of reasons: lack of proper integration or internal education; using a model that goes against the agency's culture or structure; a lack of financial support both from agency leadership/clients; or the wrong leadership at the helm of a team.

The fast-changing nature of the space has also meant larger agencies have, at times, struggled to keep up with the rapid-fire production and response times required, again hampering social efforts. Some agencies have abandoned social altogether. Others have dusted off and started again.

In a 4A's survey distributed among its Social Media Committee members for the purposes of this paper, the greatest challenges to sustaining social efforts across a range of agency types were lack of proper

integration or education (cited by 64% of respondents), failure to integrate with other channels (55%) and difficulty proving return on investment (55%).

Whether traditional or digital, large or small, PR or creative, organic or media, agencies must take a holistic approach to building social marketing teams by creating relevant, practical organizational structures for the status quo as well as a workforce that can flex as the industry changes.



## II. HOW TO APPROACH CREATING A SOCIAL MARKETING TEAM

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Some agencies are just now contemplating building a social media team. Others have had a social team in existence for years, but must for whatever reason rethink how that team is structured. This latter scenario is not uncommon, considering the constant shift in the social media landscape and marketplace, and speaks to the constant need for agility in social team frameworks. In either case, there is a “build it” or “buy it” opportunity.

In the first, agencies gain control over a custom-built team structure but may sacrifice time to do so. In the second, agencies may gain efficiency and speed by acquiring another company with a foundation in social but might pay a high price for it. Whatever the baseline, there are certain factors to consider when building or reorganizing a social team.

### A. Service offering

When first introducing social media to an agency, stakeholders must decide where social “fits.” This is frequently PR, creative, strategy or a stand-alone social department. Like any other new venture or service offering, the most important question to ask is, “What are the goals?”

Conducting an exercise invoking both current and potential client needs can direct the service bundles an agency wishes to offer, which guides the staffing structure needed to fulfill those services. The agency should define the core capabilities on which to focus,

such as social listening, user experience and design, content strategy and development, community management, influencer marketing, paid social, analytics and reporting.

For example, an agency could choose to provide any of the following contractual options for clients:

### 1. Full social management:

- a) Social strategy creation
- b) Content plan/calendar creation
- c) Content creation
- d) Content management (schedule and posting)
- e) Community management
- f) Influencer marketing
- g) Paid social
- h) Social intelligence
- i) Analysis and reporting

### 2. Content planning and creation:

- a) Social strategy creation
- b) Content plan/calendar creation
- c) Content creation
- d) Analysis and reporting

### 3. Paid social:

- a) Social strategy creation
- b) Paid social execution
- c) Analysis and reporting

Tools to support social strategy are also critical to a capabilities assessment. Social listening software, data management platforms, and creative software are just a few of the considerations when it comes to ensuring teams have the resources they need to succeed.

Once tools have been properly assessed and addressed, agencies can use qualifications with those tools to hire (e.g., those with Brandwatch experience for a social analyst position). (For an in-depth assessment of social listening services and tools, [view the 4A's whitepaper.](#))

Once agencies have determined the model to offer clients and have the tools in their toolbox, they must then decide how much production to do in-house and how much to outsource. More than half of agencies outsource social work in order to balance resources, according to 4A's Social Media Committee members surveyed. This can be done, in part, by drilling down into specifics of the scope to identify tools or resource gaps. For smaller agencies in particular, local vendors and services can be a good option to provide original content creation to allow an agency a bench of content creators without much overhead.

At the same time, this approach can sometimes result in non-strategic content or longer production times, so agencies must weigh their partners carefully and consider the trade-offs involved.

This detailed analysis will provide guidance when determining a staffing structure. For example, a community manager is very different from a social content producer, in terms of both skill set and bandwidth, but an agency will not be able to determine staffing needs until its core capabilities are defined.

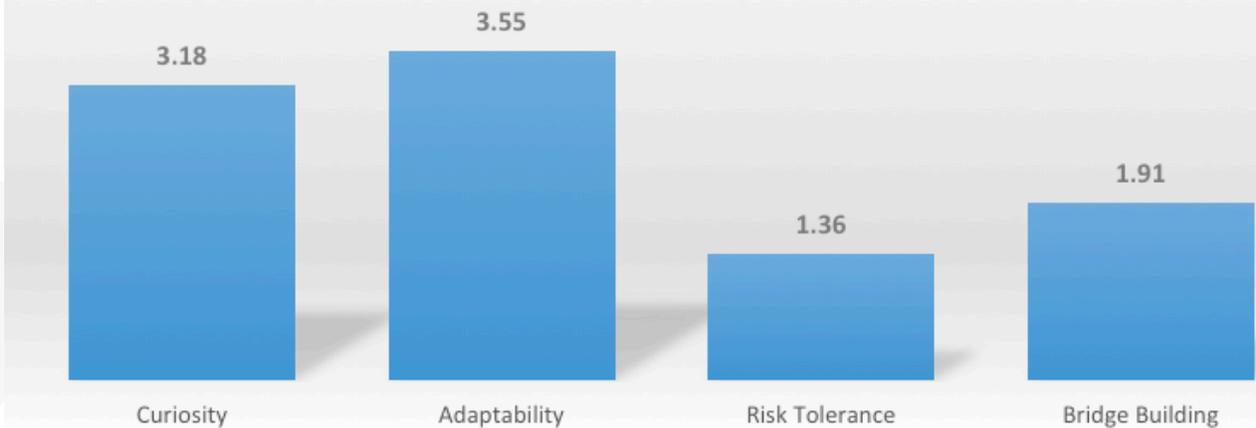
## B. Roles and staffing

One of the most important things to consider when building a social team is that the nature of the service evolves constantly. Indeed, 4A's Social Media Committee members ranked "adaptability" as the most important trait to seek out in new hires. This means there are two absolutely crucial factors when building a social media team:

- 1) flexibility in organizational design, and the willingness to adapt and adjust every six to 12 months
- 2) hiring not just for past experience but also for the necessary soft skills such as curiosity, adaptability, risk tolerance and bridge building.

The workforce needs to grow not only in size but also in skills to ensure a healthy team. Agencies might initially hire those with a broad range of skills but grow to hire social specialists as teams and clients become larger and more complex.

### CHARACTERISTICS AGENCIES LOOK FOR IN POTENTIAL HIRES



*“Our social team structure has morphed and evolved consistently about every six to 12 months over the years. Our most successful social employees have been those who are not just comfortable with change, but for whom change acts as a catalyst to learn, grow, and improve.”*

—Orli LeWinter, SVP Social, 360i

In reality, most agencies will wait for a signed statement of work and then staff appropriately, but ideally they will think about how to staff not only for specific projects, but also in order to align with the vision for growth at the agency. Keeping the full suite of offered services in mind can help agencies plan for the future and reduce growing pains.

(For example, hiring employees with extensive social listening experience, even with no current contracts for social listening, would provide an agency with a deeper pool of resources should a new contract inclusive of social intelligence walk in the door.) Core competencies to consider include:

- Social media insights/research
- Social media channel strategy
- Social media content creation
- Influencer marketing
- Social media community engagement
- Paid social
- Social data and performance
- Social commerce
- Social crisis/reputation management

<b>Sample agency social media marketing positions</b>	
<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Overall Social Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides strategic input and issue area expertise</li> <li>• Social account management; ensures all social operations are coordinated with earned media, paid, creative activities</li> <li>• Oversees creative, editorial, paid digital, measurement and reporting for social team</li> <li>• Contributes to development of creative and content strategy</li> </ul>
Editorial Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directs overall social editorial, content and engagement strategy</li> <li>• Coordinates closely with creative and paid teams</li> <li>• Maintains editorial calendar, facilitates day-to-day content approvals</li> <li>• Maps out activations strategy and ensures coordination with content strategy</li> <li>• Provides counsel on campaign strategy and optimization</li> </ul>
Creative Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as overall creative director for social workstream</li> <li>• Approves copy and creative concepts and finalizes list of pieces for recommendation</li> <li>• Generates creative concepts for content</li> </ul>

Community Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversees social media communities</li> <li>• Works with community support staff to closely monitor news/conversations and evaluate opportunities for engagement</li> </ul>
Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracks campaign KPIs across platforms</li> <li>• Manages social listening and measurement program</li> </ul>
Design Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designs content pieces and action graphics</li> <li>• Video editing</li> <li>• Participates in development of creative concepts for content</li> </ul>
Copywriter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works with creative director and design lead to concept content</li> <li>• Writes all social media content</li> </ul>
Community Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweeps communities for potential content creation and/or response opportunities and engages based on agreed-upon response protocol</li> </ul>
Paid Social Media Planner and Buyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides ongoing counsel on paid media strategy and optimization</li> <li>• Works with vendors on execution of paid media strategy</li> <li>• Works with analyst lead on regular campaign reports</li> </ul>
Influencer Marketing Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implements social media and influencer marketing strategies</li> <li>• Develops relationships with influencers and media outlets to pitch collaborative content ideas</li> </ul>

Agencies, of course, are not limited to the traditional roles outlined in this paper. Designing one or two unique positions around agency pain points can ease process tension as well as provide unique value for clients. "Linchpin" positions may vary from agency to agency but should be incorporated as needed to ensure streamlined workflows according to scope. These employees could be client- and team-specific or could support the entire social practice.

They also tend to be more senior roles, although junior positions might also prove to be imperative in filling gaps that arise as the landscape changes.

*“Most of the social positions here are ad-hoc. For example, early last year we combined some paid social and content management people into one position to specifically address the organic reach challenges in Facebook and Instagram. Our clients like the fact that they can get more holistic content strategies and frameworks that have both the paid and organic thinking built in up front (instead of from two different people/areas of the team). It also has proven to be a win from a reporting standpoint, since that same person is responsible for the performance of both.”*

—Todd LaBeau, SVP, Digital Media & Analytics, Lindsay, Stone & Briggs

This sample list of roles can extend both horizontally as other specialties are needed and vertically to directors, vice presidents and other senior leadership positions, and current compensation can range from \$30K to in excess of \$200K. (Each year the 4A's produces a compensation guide to assist agencies in staying current and identifying proper compensation for their staffs. [Click here to order the full guide, available to 4A's members only.](#))

Of course, it's a prerequisite to seek out employees with a deep passion for and experience using and working in the social space. This is especially true for creative concepting and content production.

Ensuring the creative team (or those producing the ideas, if they're not the same as those concepting the ideas) is passionate about the changing landscape and understands how to align with best practices in social, such as vertical video, overhead shots, etc. is the difference between a mediocre effort and an award-winning effort.

Concurrent with this passion, when possible, should be technical rigor. Paid social especially has evolved to mirror TV, search, and other channels that require a technical skill set. Cross-channel practice is valuable in the digital realm but won't mask a lack of experience when it comes to disciplines like creative strategy or media buying. True hybridization, however, is a benefit, as social media crosses so many discipline boundaries, and it allows team members to flex into other roles.

The smaller the team, the more hybrid each person's skills should be. The larger the team, the more specialized a person's skills can be; however, larger teams might still find usefulness in creating hybrid positions in order to deliver integrated learnings to clients. It's ideal to balance skill sets, whether specialized or robust, across the lineup. Maintaining a running team capabilities matrix (or skills inventory) can assist as teams ebb and flow to identify both gaps and overflows in knowledge.

*“Each client has different needs. It's most important to have team members with different skill sets so you can most easily build teams that meet their needs*

*successfully. Hybrid team members with media, creative and brand experience allow us to create strategies and creative executions with scale and flexibility. There's no one-size-fits-all for our various client assignments."*

—Dave Surgan, Strategy Director, R/GA

4A's Social Media Committee members identified social channel strategy, paid social, and social media insights/research as the most critical skill sets for agency success.

Beyond these, agencies should look for employees who are creative, are experts in identifying broader industry trends and who have a deep understanding of the consumer. It's important to cultivate an environment that champions the consumer from end to end, starting with the strategy and ending with analysis. Excellent candidates will already possess a "test and learn" mentality. The drive to meticulously test new platforms, features, ad units and buying methods is necessary in the world of social.

Consider the client base (or potential client base) to analyze whether trade-offs are necessary at the agency level (e.g., specific platforms, social listening, video creation). The approach to staffing should then reflect any intentional trade-offs. Even for large teams, an "all-encompassing" social division will need to prioritize team models (see Section III) and what to scale when, as the business grows and the social landscape changes.

Smaller teams (one to five employees) can easily become consumed with

community management and creative execution alone. With these responsibilities, it can be beneficial to silo them accordingly. For example, allowing one person to concentrate on content and one person to focus on community management is more efficient than trying to have two employees do both. If strategy, analytics or media buying are an important piece of the client's puzzle, then agencies should thoughtfully consider and assign a specific allocation or output in order to set expectations.

### III. SOCIAL TEAM MODELS

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It is worthwhile to assess current social teams to decide appropriate next steps at the agency level. Agency growth goals, as well as client needs at the current time, will most likely guide these assessments. Outfits offering a variety of social media marketing services and models will need to ensure resources are in line with client demand on an annual basis.

For agencies that have been in the social space for a number of years, it is worth an open-minded valuation of how the current team's skill set has evolved within the space. Many organizations have been caught off-guard by the rapidly changing landscape, resulting in discovering that employees hired three years ago aren't necessarily equipped to deal with the unique challenges and opportunities social affords today.

Creative or PR agencies may want to evaluate how savvy social creatives or strategists are at the media aspects of the job. Because

paid advertising now largely drives social, if they aren't fluent in the role media plays or how to properly strategize and buy media, they won't be effective social creatives. On the flip side, media agencies and their social planners and buyers should have a creative mindset and understand both how to use the social ad products creatively and also what creative assets will work in particular spaces.

Whether an agency keeps organic social combined with social advertising is often a point of concern. Benefits to incorporation might include integrated messaging, data and strategy. Detriments might include a lack of visibility into ROAS per channel. Conversely, benefits to separation might include a clear line of sight into performance while detriments might include a lack of message, data and strategic integration. Often this decision will be dictated by industry climate or current client need.

There are various types of models to consider, depending on the maturity of social within the agency and its offerings, and depending on the size and scope of the agency itself. Often agency structure is the result of client add-ons over time, resulting in a functional but not necessarily efficient framework. It's difficult to predict which model will be appropriate for any agency, but typically models fall into one of the following three categories, all of which assume a head of social.

## A. Centralized

Many agencies choose to keep social specialists linked together as a team or as larger “pools” of talent that can act as a shared resource across accounts. Benefits to a centralized model can include a deep and broad understanding of social, which can effectively improve social strategy (e.g., employees understand how to deploy social listening to inform the strategy, which informs the creative, which supports paid media, which uses social listening to iterate).

**Example:** Standalone/hub and spoke.

This is the early-stage, consolidated model of a social team within more traditional agencies, often acting like an agency within an agency. This team “sells” into the other departments across the agency, has its own headcount, and may well have a separate P&L. In this model, the social team handles all things related to social: social listening, social strategy, social creative, and paid social outside the remit of the larger insights, strategy, creative and media agency teams (if applicable). Key roles within this team structure span all parts of the social process.

**Pros:** A flexible model allows the team to grow on a project-by-project basis and remain nimble as social is seeded throughout the agency.

**Cons:** The team is separate from other groups and can be seen as an afterthought rather than an integrated piece of business. A separate P&L can cause conflicts with other departments internally. It’s worth noting that even with large, centralized social teams, processes should be put in place (with creative, paid media, etc.) to foster integrated work.

## B. Decentralized

A decentralized social model features paid social media sitting within the media team, social creative within the creative team, social strategy within the strategy team, etc. In this version, there may be some kind of “social center of excellence” that provides platform expertise and community management functions.

**Example: Social Operating System + Integrated Teams.** Achieving integration is a more complex state of social in an agency. This is done by creating and widely sharing a social methodology, or “operating system.” Social staff work to this methodology while integrating into agency departments. Furthermore, integrated teams are built out for clients, with social staff fully allocated to dedicated accounts to ensure social is at the heart of all client work.

**Pros:** Benefits in this model may include employees who are more holistically informed cross-channel and savvy about how social fits into the larger marketing picture. This allows for fully integrated work and delivers social at scale.

**Cons:** It is important to ensure that social methodologies—along with a focus on future innovation—are nurtured, maintained and used by all social-first staff.

**Example: Ladder model.** This model assumes the entire team is competent in all things social and that all team members can execute on all aspects or, alternately, that the client scope is limited to particular offerings, such as paid social or creative. In this

configuration, the team is attached to a particular client, and the client funnels projects to the account team. The social team takes over from there and executes. In this way, the account manager is a conduit to the client and re-engages in the process only if needed. This model allows for full transparency into the social plan but also benefits from an agency social lead for standardization. A common structure for this plan is as follows:

- Associate
- Manager
- Director
- Account manager

...where half-step roles or full roles are added as needed for larger accounts.

## C. Hybrid

This model features a balance of centralized and decentralized characteristics and is the most common across 4A's-represented agencies—almost three out of four agencies use this model.

**Example: Modular pods.** Groups of socially focused staff working together, in a consultant-like model, are attached to pieces of client business. This model may be limited to specific offerings, such as paid social or creative, with the team soliciting content or other services from outside vendors as needed.

**Pros:** Highly modular groups enable the integration of social into places it is most needed. Pods can be resourced at 50 or 100% so they can work across pieces of business.

**Cons:** It is important to get pods properly resourced on staff plans, and they can still remain outside of the traditional departments within the agency. These employees might be focused on specific work, which limits their perspective into the rest of the marketing plan.

While these are formal structures after which one may choose to model social implementation, underlying informal structures also exist from agency to agency and can be imperative in motivating employees, fostering company culture and creating dynamic environments.

For smaller agencies, any model might necessitate hybrid personnel across channels; if there is flexibility to pair channels, paid media like SEM tends to pair better with paid social than, say, SEO does due to the accelerated pace of social, media buying experience and parallel processes. Similarly, “organic leads” could facilitate all things SEO and organic social.

Agencies with cross-functional teams can leverage easily obtainable insights for clients that aren't readily available with larger teams. Regardless of size or level of hybridization, agencies should plan to integrate with external teams that run other pieces of the client's business.

*“I believe we are at another inflection point in terms of how we structure social teams. The space continues to evolve and I think we will see a move towards pods of specialists (analytics, media, creative, platform) working with broader teams. We need more specialists as well as hybrids who understand the space*

*and can sell it in. I believe our existing structures are about to be upturned again."*

—Gemma Craven, Director of Social and Mobile, McCann

#### IV. HOW TO SCALE A SOCIAL TEAM

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Scaling can be one of the most complicated tasks for social teams. While agencies typically hire for each additional piece of business won, factors such as client size or scope can affect the ability to properly staff. In fact, according to the 4A's survey, 91% of agencies evolved to their current states not because of a client push, but because of internal agency direction. Additionally, 91% also evolved from one model to another when scaling.

Agencies should keep focus areas and planning for expansion in mind as social continues to grow more and more important to overall strategy. This can pave the way for larger, streamlined teams in the future and lessen growing pains as well as optimize current resources.

Agencies are usually ready to scale under one of two conditions:

1. At the client's request. As clients ask for more output, agencies must staff for more input.
2. At the agency's behest. Great leadership will recognize the need for overhead personnel as well as scoped personnel before it becomes apparent to clients.

To ensure the best chance of success overall, agencies need to embed social media thinkers, strategy and services at the heart of their structures. For larger agencies, building an effective unit is tantamount to change management and should be approached as such. For smaller companies, creating a structure that prioritizes both scale and depth of knowledge can be a challenge.

To accomplish either agenda, begin by creating urgency for change. Start an open, honest and convincing dialogue about what's happening in the marketplace, what the competition across the spectrum is doing, and how a modern agency needs to integrate social thinking to compete. This dialog should happen with leadership across internal departments, as these stakeholders will be instrumental to a social team's success. Look at models and learnings from other agencies of all types, and decide on an overall approach to social that best fits the agency client base and culture.

Consider whether the social team will manage its own projects, or if an integration/project management function from another team can support account management at the onset of the team's development (billing, vendor relationships, client services, etc.).

Also contemplate the experience balance inherent in the current structure. For example, bringing in someone with automotive direct response experience could round out a team that is largely experienced in CPG branding and gives the team more breadth should future

opportunities arise. Other young staff from across the agency can be trained in some of the areas until resources allow for the hiring of more social specialists or those with complementary experience.

## V. PREDICTION AND TRENDS

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### A. 1:1 and artificial intelligence

Direct messaging and 1:1 conversations present opportunities for agencies to strengthen clients' relationships with customers. Digital platforms have enhanced capabilities such as chatbot functionality in the past year, opening up new doors to offer consumers utility, entertainment and information.

Those consumers have become "on-demanding," reaching out to connect with brands in their preferred method of communication (tweeting, emailing, calling or messaging). Customers have unprecedented choice and power, requesting what they want, when they want it and how they want it. Consider the following:

*"There is a plethora of social content created by brands every day that is never seen by the general public. It lives in direct messages and individual replies, reaching out to customers about their comments, questions, and raised hands. We call this "1:1" social content, and as any social media team can tell you, it's a huge piece of how they reach out to customers each and every day...The wide majority of social content in our study—over*

*93% of Tweets in 2015—was not meant for the general public to see. Most Tweets were 1:1 communications between a brand and a person....”*

—Spredfast, The Smart Social Report, Volume 4

The promise of more convenient ways to have a 1:1 interaction must be met with a positive user experience, which more and more is led with artificial intelligence. How consumers interact with brands will further enrich CRM approaches and data profiles via agency solutions, giving brands more knowledge to deliver better experiences.

As 1:1 communication rapidly increases, it will continue to underscore the need for strong subject matter experts to manage communities, and agencies will do well to provide these resources. More than 70% of those polled had already activated AI/messaging for client campaigns.

In tandem, as AI becomes ubiquitous and more brands capitalize on the technology within social media, the space will have SEO implications for optimizing metadata and SEM implications as paid listings begin to appear. Agencies that instill strong cross-functionality of channels and/or hire employees with hybrid backgrounds will reap benefits as the AI world continues to blur channel boundaries. While a technical background isn't necessary for chatbot execution as agencies work with specialized vendors, employees who are “conversational” in the tech components can prove to be assets over time.

*“AI allows brands to take some of the customer service and community engagement back into their own hands through creative thought and insightful contact. The level of service for customers has been elevated beyond that of any other communication channel through chatbots on Facebook Messenger. At the same time, chatbots have also opened the door for playful knowledge gathering and creative execution in conversation with existing and potential consumers.”*

—Negeen Ghaisar, Head of Digital Strategy, Bigbuzz

## B. Immersive video

Video is evolving from the traditional, passive TV viewing experience to the active, immersive and engaged experiences available via social media and beyond. Even standard video, for example, is more immersive when the viewing occurs in the palm of a person's hand via a mobile device. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube now all offer a 360-degree video or photo unit, and Snapchat was the first platform to offer a vertical version of video. Whether it be a novel way to present a new product, a way to excite consumers about in-store events or a personalized visualization for brand loyalists, 360-degree video is a strong precursor to VR and has the potential to deliver more information to a qualified and receptive audience.

Additionally, live video addresses consumers who are hungry for exclusive content and has the potential to unlock even more utility for them when executed well. “Behind the scenes,” “A day with...” and how-tos all lend themselves to live experiences for brands. BMW was one of the first to capitalize on 360-degree video capabilities with its “Eyes on Gigi” interactive campaign, a cinematic game in which users attempted to tilt their phones to keep their eyes on Gigi Hadid and her ride. The campaign highlights users’ expectation for greater entertainment with immersive video developments.

On the business side, production costs will continue to climb as immersive video grows. Balancing the “wow” factor for users with ROI for clients will be paramount for agencies who desire to innovate and iterate in this space.

Immersive video continues to evolve, and it will be critical to keep current staff members up to speed on creative possibilities, as well as hiring new employees who have a penchant for experimentation. Bringing in those who provide internal thought leadership and can develop communicative relationships with vendors can go a long way in presenting the newest and most relevant opportunities for clients. Similarly, hiring employees with production and/or entertainment experience will prove more important as the space matures.

*“It’s no wonder video has become more and more immersive—it speaks to consumers’ desire to have more engaged experiences with brands instead of disruptive, canned*

*attempts at communication. Immersive video has paved the way for things like AI and augmented/virtual reality as users demand more utility, entertainment, and value.”*

—Lauren de Vlaming, Vice President,  
TogoRun D.C.

### C. Augmented reality/virtual reality

As technology has pushed forward to a state where altered environments are not only feasible but also relatively affordable, augmented and virtual reality systems have dominated major shows including CES and SXSW in recent years. Headsets such as Oculus Rift (wired) and Samsung Gear VR (wireless) seem ubiquitous in these environments, as innovators continue to drive toward new opportunities. Early adopter NASA is using VR to train mission planners via its “Journey to Mars” simulation, to test vehicles and equipment in a simulated deep-space environment. For brands, the relevant opportunity is that VR has the potential to make products more pervasive and to give consumers a unique brand experience. But, for the most part, virtual reality is still limited to gaming and pop-ups (such as at trade booths or customer experience installations), while issues of both cost and implementation continue to be addressed.

VR’s sister AR has proved a much easier technology to adopt, with many of the same opportunities for enhanced storytelling in a merging of the physical and digital worlds. For example, in 2016, location-based augmented reality game Pokémon Go quickly became a global phenomenon with 500 million downloads and was one of the most used

and profitable mobile apps, with the unintentional side effect of helping local businesses grow due to increased foot traffic.

In the social media space, front-runner Snapchat and its copycats Instagram Stories/Facebook Camera Effects have all capitalized on AR delivery in order to provide an engaging experience previously nonexistent in social media, including the native overlay of information (e.g., adding text and stickers), addition of objects (e.g., lenses on Snapchat) and enhancement of existing objects by making the user’s camera the center of the experience.

Advances in the precise mapping of objects and recognition of objects will have implications for brands to deliver information or shoppable experiences and discovery of items. Early adopter retailers with physical stores may soon be able to use AR to deliver specialized information pinned to specific locations for users in those areas. Building social teams that have both e-commerce and location-based experience will prove fruitful as clients begin to explore the possibilities. Even with VR/AR in its infancy, 80% of 4A’s Social Media Committee agencies have incorporated the technology in a client campaign. While not necessary, seeking social employees who have a background in VR/AR is a bonus that can streamline processes with both client teams and vendors.

*“AR is super exciting when you look at the power of the devices we each own, and how placing objects in the world around us is a truly untapped frontier. We are still a ways off in terms of broader-based consumer*

*adoption, but we as an industry can help push that forward. AI is now coming of age and is powering more than we even know; it's a must rather than a nice to have."*

—Gemma Craven, Director of Social and Mobile, McCann

## VI. END NOTES

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By no means an exhaustive guide, this framework provides direction for agencies large and small, traditional and digital, content and media to start building social media marketing teams or to address restructuring the current architecture. Either process is an enormous undertaking and must be approached with thoughtfulness and an eye toward the future. Ultimately, agency leaders should aim to build in flexibility with agnostic regard for the structure itself because—as it constantly reminds us—the nature of social media marketing is consistently inconsistent.

