



## **Paid. Owned. Earned.**

What it is and how brands can harness the model for social media endeavors

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Guiding a brand through social media requires a structured approach. The paid, owned, earned model is an acknowledgment that a one-dimensional communications strategy cannot move the needle. Instead, disseminating the message relies on the convergence of paid, owned, and earned media tactics.

The whole of the paid, owned, and earned communications model is greater than the sum of its parts. A holistic approach can help marketers consolidate the ROI, so that they can confidently answer what the return of time and investment is on the social channels.

This document aims to simplify a very subjective process that each brand must go through to effectively engage in social media channels. Highlighted below are consideration points that executives and marketing professionals should discuss to ensure there is alignment on the brand's side.

## **P.O.E. Defined**

### **Paid**

#### **Definition:**

The paid component is the use of paid advertising channels to deliver a brand's message and/or to drive traffic to owned or controlled properties. This includes all agency work, social platform ads, and any other type of support surrounding advertising, including offline initiatives.

#### **Role:**

The role of the paid component is to create awareness, drive traffic and jumpstart the owned, earned and shared components. Paid media extends the reach of the brand message to new networks of people.

#### **Tactics:**

Engagement ads, display ads, paid search, email, paid content integration/advertorials, blogger partnerships, TV, print, radio, out of home (OOH), experiential, PR.

## Consideration Points for Paid Media:

- Define objectives for the paid media. Analytics & tracking should be in place to measure against these objectives.
- Secure media budget to support the social media activities.
- Ensure any landing pages consumers will be brought to are created or updated with recent content.
- Creative messaging should be aligned to the objectives and represents the brand appropriately. Comply with the [media standards](#) for online advertisement that IAB Canada issues.
- Harvest senior level support to assist with opportunities that could support social activities, such as in-store/POS activities, TV, etc.

## Owned

### Definition:

The owned component represents the media, content, assets and community platforms partially or wholly owned and controlled by the brand. This includes everything from websites, to the time spent monitoring social channels, to in-store activities.

### Role:

The role of the owned component is to house robust brand content and to create long-term relationships and engagement with customers. Owned communications reach those who indicate an affinity to the brand. They have a general idea of who the brand is and what they do, and thus the role for the marketing here is to increase knowledge of the brand without being too repetitive.

### Tactics:

Pre-existing social properties, social links embedded on websites and in emails and signatures, email databases.

## Consideration Points for Owned Media:

- Create social media specific brand guidelines; do so by leveraging any existing brand guidelines.
- User experiences will differ depending on device type. See “The Multi-Screen Experience” section later in this document for more information.

- Community management resources are an absolute necessity. Social media is not a “set it and forget it” type of channel. These managers need to be given guidance and have expectations set related to response times, FAQ’s and escalation procedures; all of which should be outlined in the social media guidelines mentioned earlier.
- Social media is always-on, therefore weekends and holidays should be considered.

## **Earned**

### **Definition:**

The earned component represents unique brand presence on established social channels gained through editorial influence other than advertising. It involves tapping into the influence of social media users to spread the message.

### **Role:**

Earned media represents the consumer interactions and expanded reach received by getting the brand’s messages out there. Having someone’s friend deliver the brand message changes the context of the message. Positive/negative/neutral, the message has been spread and how a brand harnesses that earned media is key.

### **Tactics:**

Social engagement (e.g. sharing, liking, re-tweeting, pinning, etc.), reviews, memes, word of mouth.

### **Consideration Points for Earned Media:**

- Identify and get to know who the key influencers are in the networks the brand is on
- Reach out to influencers to help spread the word and share content

## Other Important Considerations

Use this handy checklist when launching a new social media program.

### Pre-Launch:

- Define the short and long term objectives in social media for the brand.
- Align the social strategy with the overall business goals & brand purpose.
- Ensure the brand's social voice is properly defined, authentic and relevant.
- Develop and update the brand guidelines with social media brand standards.
- Study what competitors are doing on social media; brainstorm what could be done differently; find a unique perspective.
- Look at the brand's current audience and discover what social platforms they may be on.
- Social media is not free. Be sure to earmark budget to test new platforms and initiatives in the social space. This includes community management, content creation, paid media, and the time it takes to manage all these things.
- Consider who will work on social media initiatives on the marketing team; having a clear lead is important.
- Success depends on having solid key performance indicators (KPIs); ensure they are defined. KPIs demonstrate whether activities are working or not. Stakeholders will need to understand the objectives and their KPIs in order to tailor their work to the brand's needs. Stakeholders can assist with finding these KPIs as needed. Some examples of KPI are: sales revenue, click-through rate, cost per lead, page views, landing page conversion rates, social media reach, online share of voice, Klout score, and more.

### Post-Launch:

- Is the brand providing followers with what they want? Are they creating great content, exclusive deals, or solid customer service? Focus in on what the brand wants to achieve.

- Look at who is interacting with the brand; are there insights to be gleaned there?

## The Multi-Screen Experience

Audiences will engage with content over a range of devices. Some demographics have a higher affinity for certain devices over others.

For example, 93% of adults 18-24 are online and spend over 1,000 minutes a week accessing the internet on a computer<sup>1</sup>. Estimates show that mobile weekly minutes are just as high, if not higher than that.

Increasingly, Canadians are accessing social media on the go, so ensure brand programs are accessible to the target audience they are intended for by considering a multi-screen strategy. Think about the mobile environment specifically, and how brands can tap into the photo and GPS capabilities that phones provide. Many social channels exist that can link marketers to users who like to engage in such a way.

Not sure where to start? IAB Canada recommends learning more about HTML5 and the responsive capabilities new website templates offer, to ensure all landing pages show beautifully on all devices.

## Create Content

Content is the most important part of any social media activities. Creating content that resonates with the target audience, that is in line with brand guidelines, and reinforces business objectives can be challenging. Without content, though, audiences can't engage with the brand in a meaningful way. Content helps get people talking and can have an effect on people and be entertaining.

Social platforms are not created equal; audiences are different and each platform boasts different ways to create and publish content. Every platform also aggregates content differently, which present unique implications for the reach of brand messaging. Consider using social media aggregation tools to assist with managing several channels at once.

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<sup>1</sup> "Unearthing Internet Time" CMUST study, IAB Canada & PHD Canada, December 2013

Use multiple social platforms, blogs/microblogs, pictures, audio and video content. If creating new content is a challenge, do a content audit and see if content from the brand's archives can be repurposed online. Always try to keep content unique to the brand and differ from standard website content. Consider adding internal resources, or external support, to help create and manage this unique content.

Search engine optimization (SEO) implications may result in the content created. Ensure content is tagged properly.

And finally, it is incredibly important to develop an editorial calendar to ensure updates are pushed out regularly and on brand.

## **Encourage Engagement**

Action that is taken on a brand's content is called engagement. When users engage with a brand's content, their friends and connections on that social network are then able to see that content. Thus, engagement can increase the reach of a brand's communications.

Before making any post, brands should understand what it is they are trying to accomplish. There should be reasoning for every post made. Similarly, the timing of posts is relevant. Considering the lifestyle of a brand's followers, consider when are they most likely to see messages posted by the brand. Consumer insights into who followers are can be gleaned from analytics and data found within most social networks.

Prompt action by entertaining and delivering messaging that supports the overall brand voice.

Balance your content between telling the brand story, promoting product benefits and relating to events/news that you know are of interest to your audience. A good benchmark for balancing the story is limiting 20% of your content to selling and 80% engaging type posts.

One strong way to test that your social media posts/content are truly brand relevant is to see if a post/content piece can still clearly relate to your brand without your brand name visible (in the handle/page name).

A barrier for many brands to harnessing social media is how to respond to negative types of engagement. Sentiment should be actively measured towards a brand before and during social activities.

Finally, closing the loop on consumer action can be observed through measurement. Test coupons, special offers, contests, and polling on social channels and measure the results to see what works.

## **Piecing It All Together**

Once a brand knows what efforts, time and benefits they are receiving from each of the paid, owned, and earned elements of social media, calculating a return on investment becomes a lot easier to do. Agencies, consultants, and tools can certainly help with aggregating the data into an easy-to-read report that marketing managers and executives alike can take action on.

Similar to other media channels, social requires testing and more testing. See what content is favoured over other content and increase those types of activities for higher engagement. Sometimes less is more, especially with fans. Fans that truly “like” a brand will engage with the brand, so ensure that engagements levels are watched.

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