

Social Media Should Be a Top Priority for Construction Industry

By Shanna Crigger, Director of Communications, Graniterock

WATSONVILLE – Most business owners believe social media is their Facebook page. Or Twitter feed and LinkedIn. Maybe Instagram and YouTube. The truth is social media is none of those things. A savvy social media presence is your brand and values mingling among your communities – employees, customers, vendors, competitors, partners, media and general public – in the digital world.

Those specific platforms, all wildly popular for different reasons, are just tools to launch you into the digital space as a thought leader and business that does great work and takes care of its employees and customers. With 3.5 billion internet users worldwide, it is mission critical

to have your company's information easily accessible to anyone searching for you online. Your website and sharp social media content allow you to stand out in the hectic, competitive digital landscape, not buried in 1998.

Socially active businesses have more loyal customers by a margin of 77 percent, and employees of socially active companies are more likely to believe their company is competitive and more loyal to the business. Social media done well provides insight into a company otherwise not available for the outside world.

It means putting a human face on your brand, and building trust with your audience.

Nearly 80 percent of Americans have at least one social media profile.

It's not a question of whether your company should jump into the social world. Rather, you should ask yourself: What are the steps I can take right now for my construction business to move from sitting on the sidelines to dominating digital?

The construction industry, generally speaking, has been slow to embrace social.

Many industry leaders think websites, Facebook pages and videos don't matter since construction projects are won primarily in a low-bid public environment. That's the wrong mindset. Building online

BEFORE JUMPING IN



- 1. PLAN:** Map out a plan before putting your business on any social media site. Determine your audience(s) or communities. Spell out goals and objectives in detail so that you're not shooting from the hip. Define your message. Any meaningful social strategy means planning out your content for the month and week with an editorial calendar. This can be as simple as an Excel spreadsheet or Google doc.
- 2. PICK ONE OR TWO PLATFORMS:** It's very challenging to manage and perform well on all social media channels, especially as each channel needs its own mini strategy to be most effective. Start small.
- 3. DEDICATED PERSON:** Quality content takes a significant amount of time to plan and create. Don't slap it together! Having one designated person to manage your social media is critical. Make sure this person has a storytelling mindset and is keen on good grammar.
- 4. SAFETY CHECK:** Be sure your photos and videos don't capture a subcontractor not following your safety procedures. PPE should be in place.
- 5. RALLY YOUR TROOPS:** Identify key team members who are already active on social and tap them to help create new content and share your business content. This is super important! Without social advocates on the inside, your strategy will get stuck in neutral.
- 6. BE PATIENT AND PERSISTENT:** Robust social media with an engaged audience doesn't happen overnight. It takes constant time and attention, and is always a work in progress.
- 7. MEASURE:** Pay attention to the data on which posts perform the best. Track the numbers on how many people are viewing your posts, number of followers, comments and likes.
- 8. PAY TO PLAY:** Social media is free, but social marketing is not. Invest a certain amount of money each month in digital ads. At the moment, you get a good ROI, but prices are going up to get your message in front of the intended audience.

communities and conversation is the future of all business, construction included.

Graniterock in the Social World

Social media was brand new for Graniterock in 2014. A few team members were doing their own thing and none of the company's leadership was on LinkedIn, much less Facebook.

Graniterock had a handful of followers on a Facebook page that hadn't been touched or updated in years. There was no plan or strategy, and no one was assigned the task of making it happen. We realized a huge opportunity was being missed, and in early 2014 started on a new track to showcase our construction projects, dedication to customers, community involvement and employee camaraderie – some of Graniterock's core values.

We did some things right, and immediately started to see growth on Facebook and Twitter.

Small growth back then, but still increasing our audience size week to week.

Our social strategy and planning process have evolved over the past few years, and the content has shifted in a way that's demonstrated Graniterock's industry leadership and attracted more eyeballs.

Instagram was added to the mix in late 2015, and has proven to fulfill a great demand for dynamic photos and videos of construction equipment and job sites.

Video has become a priority in our content planning. We use social to share the Graniterock culture, talk about important issues facing the construction industry such as the workforce shortage, and, hopefully, attract qualified people to join the company. Nothing is thrown together as we have a well thought out editorial plan.

While the management of the company's social media is in the hands of our communications

EVEN MORE FACTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUALS

- Visual content is 40X more likely to get shared on social media than other types of content. (Buffer, 2014)
- Articles with an image once every 75-100 words got double the number of social shares than articles with fewer images. (Buzzsumo, 2015)
- 71% of online marketers use visual assets in their social media marketing. (Social Media Examiner, 2015)
- Researchers found that colored visuals increase people's willingness to read a piece of content by 80%. (Xerox, 2014)
- Research has shown that when people hear information, they are likely to remember only 10% of that information three days later. However, if a relevant image is paired with that same information, people retained 65% of the information three days later. (LifeLearn, 2015)
- Infographics are liked and shared on social media 3X more than any other type of content. (Mass Planner, 2015)

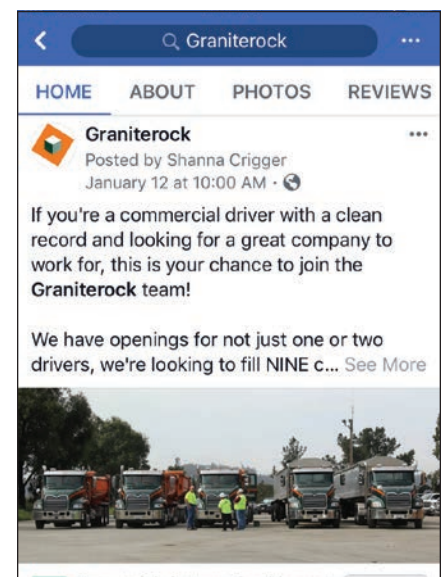
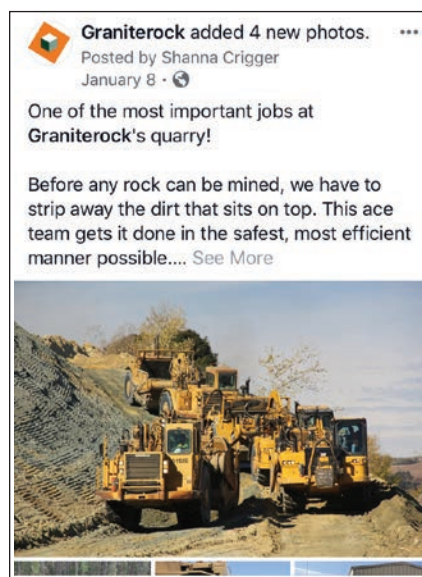
Check out simple dos and don'ts and the CALCIMA video at <http://www.calcima.org/imagesmatter>

director, the real success has come from the buy in of our team members. If there is one key to Graniterock's success on social, it's the involvement of our people from all areas of the company. It is their sharing of photos and stories, and willingness to post on their own social profiles that Graniterock has elevated its digital game. A certain buzz comes from seeing yourself, teammate or your project on the Company's Facebook page. Another important

thing to remember is that one or two great posts don't make a social powerhouse. This is work that is forever ongoing if you want to make an impact.

Graniterock continues to experiment with content, measure how the different pieces perform and post more of what's popular and impactful.

We realize there's still a long way to go and are committed for the long haul. ■



(Above) Examples of social media posted by Graniterock to share their culture, recruit, and talk about important issues facing the construction industry.