

# Finding success in social media means strategic thinking

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By [Nico Roesler](#)



Robin Blakely, CEO of the Creative Center of America

A bakery production line requires strategic planning, and so does effective social media management.

That was the message presented at the recent American Society of Baking (ASB) BakingTech 2017 in Chicago by Robin Blakely, CEO of the Creative Center of America. Ms. Blakely spoke during the "Recipe for Social Media Success" educational session and provided strategies for bakeries, suppliers and associations alike.

Results, she said, require preparation and resources.

"Social media is very much like the world that you are working in," Ms. Blakely said, comparing social media to a bread production line.

Companies must consider their business goals, timeline, target market, various social media platforms and establish measuring tool. "It's not just about likes, clicks and shares," she said. "It's about sales." The starting point needs to be establishing an audience, Ms. Blakely said, and the smaller the better. The more targeted a message is, the more likely a company is to find success. "The more narrow you can define your audience, the richer your content will be," she said.

By defining an audience, a company can "cut through the fog," Ms. Blakely said. Part of that process is identifying which social media platform an audience most frequently uses. For the business-to-business marketers in the baking industry, over 80% of leads are generated through LinkedIn. Less than 13% come from Twitter and 6.7% come from Facebook. Age and demographics play a big part in which channel is best for a given message. For example, Ms. Blakely said young professionals are using Instagram the most out of all social media platforms.

Once a target market is established, Ms. Blakely said there are three steps that lead a company to success. The first is creating awareness by using the various social media platforms. Second is creating a connection through brand recognition, professional development, education and leadership. Ms. Blakely said every company needs to establish itself as an expert reference for whatever subject it is posting about. The third is creating engagement. Engagement leads to enhanced goals, sales and external outreach. Once those three steps are achieved, companies can measure their success.

"If you can dominate a specific niche market, if you can create that go-to specialist status, and you can engage with customers who are less sensitive to pricing and more interested in who you are and what you do, the better the results you will see," she said.

The final point Ms. Blakely made was that by putting the right resources behind a comprehensive social media strategy, companies in any area of baking can see an impact on their bottom line.