

Hi I'm Russell Ellis, the Global Social Media Manager for Aviva plc

Social Media is people chatting online. That could be on loads of different platforms. In terms of people using it and the age ranges, it's from teenagers, up to pensioners and retirees. Both males and females use it, predominantly use to be used for personal life, but now because of all the latest platforms, in terms of your Facebooks, your Twitters, your LinkedIns, your blogs and forums, people use it both for business to customer and business to business, on platforms more predominantly like Twitter and LinkedIn.

Twitter. It's probably one of the most popular platforms out there at the moment, it's instant messaging, it's limited to around 140 characters, a lot of people use it to join debates and conversations. This is normally done via hashtag, maybe even watching a TV programme, you can follow everyone talking about that programme.

In terms of business, it's great for brokers to use as additional information and resource about what their customers are doing.

So for example, the environment agency use Twitter in a great way, they proactively send out tweets to areas of the country with hashtags for those typical areas where floods are going to happen. As a broker you can easily follow the environmental agency and use that information to proactively send to your customer, pre-warn them about potential flooding, make contact say here's my number, get hold of me if you have any problems. That's just one example of how you can use Twitter really well.

LinkedIn is the most popular business to business social media platform. It's great for putting down what skills you have, for networking with potential clients. You can join industry groups such as BIBA, either before an event or after an event, network with people you saw there and also discuss how the event went.

You can also use it to proactively look up clients, look up businesses before you go in to attend meetings. It's great for insight for what skills they have, what their companies currently doing and also understand what products and services they do.

The first thing you should do before you go on to social media is decide what tool is right for you and your business. Is it going to be Twitter, is it going to be LinkedIn, where are most of your potential clients? Once you've decided that, it's worth building a profile up and understanding how you're going to use it.

Once you have a social media presence, have a look at what competitors and industry are doing today. Type in some key words associated with your business, think about how they're using that content, see what is trending, because whatever's trending will be potential communications for you tomorrow.

To support you and your social media presence across all of these different platforms there's a lot of free tools available on the internet. These tools allow you to monitor, take part, follow topics of interest and join the conversation.

When communicating on social media platforms, it's good practice to have a content plan in place. The content plan allows you to organise what you're going to say to your customer, and when. The type of content people normally have is fixed content and ad hoc content. Fixed content allows you to put out industry news, industry updates and product and service messages to your customer and these can normally be pencilled throughout the week.

In terms of ad hoc content, it's content that comes up in the moment, weather alerts, news updates that you think are important to your customer.

Now that you understand more about social media the first thing you can do after this video is Google search your name. Are you happy with what you see? Make sure your profiles that are currently on these social platforms are professional and up to date.

Do your research, listen to what customers are currently saying.

Start looking at a content plan, have a think about what you want to message to your customers tomorrow.

For further guidance, templates and information on social media, remember to check out Broker Mentor.