

# Get ready for the 24/7 South African social media role

 By Leigh Andrews

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Very few jobs actually involve 24/7 input - even hard news is usually covered in shorter shifts, with smaller companies choosing not to man their newsfeeds in slower times. But this can't continue to be the case for those who work in social media...



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When I chatted to Jodene Shaer, Social Twit of the Chat Factory a few weeks ago, she [spoke about](#) whether social media interaction is really relevant for every business. She said it most definitely is the case. So if your customer is using Twitter instead of customer services or Facebook to find out about your service offering, best you be there and respond to their needs. Many businesses spend hours creating content and working on ways to generate likes or make sales from a tweet, while an individual is waiting for someone to notice that they tweeted for assistance hours or, worse, days ago.

That's the crux of it - many South African companies simply don't see social media as a 24/7 responsibility.

## Should social media management be a 24/7 job?

I've noticed most of the big SA brands are not actually active on Twitter over weekends. They'll deal with all their weekend comments and complaints in a mass clump on a Monday morning, so if you follow them, your feeds are filled with 'We're sorry to hear that, please DM us your details' type interactions for hours on end. But is this the optimal way to you things?

When I asked on Twitter whether anyone working in the local social media space was still working this week, Chris Hadjiyannis, Technical Writer at Adept Internet, responded. He says the key here lies in understanding the true nature of social media. To be sure, there aren't many jobs that run 24/7, and those that are usually make use of shifts, automation or some other time- and load-sharing methods. This is all fine, provided you do something - social media is an online entity, and what is online doesn't sleep or even stop in the connected digital age.

## Importance of the +1 support role

Hadjiyannis likes to think of it like this: in ICT, there's a main individual or team that's responsible for a task at a certain time, and there's also a back-up person or group called the plus-one or +1. In the event the main person or group is unable to perform their designated task, the +1 takes over and makes sure it gets accomplished. This works very well in situations where one is managing critical resources, and he feels the +1 principle should also be applied to social media. In an ideal scenario, there should be one person or team always available to deal with social media tasks at any given time of day, even if it's just to respond, acknowledge the contact, and offer a path to resolution.

## Why people tweet after hours...

If we're taking a hard but fair look at it, Hadjiyannis says if someone is tweeting at your company at 9pm, there are only two reasons they're doing so: either they're happy and want to mention it, or they're unhappy and don't know who else to contact to have their issue sorted out. Either case warrants a little extra attention, to either say 'thank you, we're glad you're pleased with us', or to receive the complaint and suggest a further course of action and take it up on their behalf with the correct people - this usually involves taking the complaint offline.

Shaer adds that she often asks if businesses only answer a certain number of phone calls a day or if they have a sign on their door that says no more than 20 people are allowed in at one time. They all look astounded, yet a large number of South African brands are simply not following their customers' back and responding to their online engagement, which is as important as responding to that phone call.

Hadjiyannis agrees that giving a customer more than they expect makes a bigger impact, and says that while it may lead to the bar being raised, it's also an easier way to promote customer loyalty and retention.

Seems it's time to wake up and adapt our strategies, before the always-active consumer ruins our best-intended marketing missions by posting comments on social media that go unanswered and leave a bad taste in many mouths...

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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