Quick Start Guide to Social Media



"We don't have a choice on whether we DO social media, the question is how well we DO it." – Erik Qualman



Change, as they say, is inevitable. But it's also happening faster to us than at any time in recent memory. The advent of the Internet, social media, and mobile technologies has forever changed how we communicate and how we do business—but many of us are still struggling with these new technologies. Plus, the social evolution is still happening, shifting the landscape under our feet.

This guide is meant to help those of you who haven't gotten started with a social-media strategy and those who have started but are looking for a way to be more effective, to plan and execute a social-media program.

How did we get here?

It used to be that the sales funnel was very linear – looked like a funnel – and started with awareness and ended with a decision, and salespeople were the gatekeepers of information. It's no longer that way; in fact, it's widely accepted that over 70% of the decision-making process is done before the prospect even engages with a company – and the first place people go is online.

In a recent study on the social selling anatomy of the b2b decision-maker: upward of 81% use community blogs; 74% use LinkedIn; and 42% use Twitter to get information. Another driver of this change is how technology companies sell their products: it's no longer a one-time purchase or upgrades to mass licenses every few years. Monthly recurring-revenue business models, while more profitable in the long run, take time to build momentum and scale. It's not selling new things to the same customers. In order to reach revenue goals, companies need to sell to more customers, and you can't do that simply by hiring more salespeople. Marketers are no longer the "top of the funnel" people; they need to drive the conversation, meeting the buyer at every phase in the journey with relevant content, posts, and engagement. According to Quick Sprout, social media's "lead to close" chances are higher by 100 percent when compared to traditional outbound marketing and sales methods.

Who, What, Why, and How of Social Media

To be successful in any marketing or sales endeavor, you need a good roadmap on how you are going to achieve your ultimate goals. With social marketing and selling, it's even more critical to plan to be effective. Yes, social-media networks (for the most part) are free, but your time and efforts are not. To be successful and achieve your goals on social media, you need to be focused and consistent. Most companies in the tech space don't have the time or money to hire multiple people to manage their social media. The best way to be effective is to choose one or two networks to focus on. The best way to develop a plan is to focus on the who, why, what, and how of social media.

WHO

The first thing we want to cover is the WHO - who is your target audience? One of the greatest things about social media is the ability to laser-target your audience. You can speak directly to people rather than dealing in broad demographics. In the old days of advertising the "target market" was spoken of in terms of broad demographics such as "men 25-54," etc. Now we can actually seek out individuals or groups of individuals with targeted messages - but we need to define them and the groups of people they hang out with to devise a strategy. One of the best tools to use in defining your market is personas. Building a strong persona is the key to a successful strategy. In building a persona it's helpful to give your prospect a name, face, and personal characteristics. Define who are they and where they "live" online.

So if you were coming up with your own persona, what would it look like? Perhaps you have several, especially if you target small businesses. Let's use a couple of examples:



Bruce, Baker



Christine, CIO

Bruce, Baker: what keeps him up at night? He needs to pay his staff and run his business; he worries a lot about the bottom line and is quite busy. He's probably not concerned about spending time on scorecards and detailed spreadsheets comparing your product to your competitors' – he's too busy baking! He wants something that works and saves him time and money. He is probably connected (through a LinkedIn group or Twitter) to other small-business owners from whom he can get trusted recommendations.

Christine, CIO: Perhaps you're targeting mid market CIOs: what characteristics do they have? Where do they hang out online?

These people care about the costs (but don't necessarily want discounts), are risk-averse, and don't want to look bad, but are in charge of the bottom line. They know that cheaper doesn't always mean better, but what is the total cost of ownership? What is the business case? How will your technology positively impact the running of their business?

Take some time to map this out for your products and services. Many find it easier to create and curate content by pretending they are speaking directly to a person. If you don't have these personas at all, an easy way to start to figure it out is to profile your current customers: Who are they? What kinds of content are they likely to consume? What blogs, news sources etc. do they frequent? What are their objectives?

Create a free survey using Google Forms or Survey Monkey and gather information on the clients you already have, and that will give you a good start.

WHY

Once you've completed the exercise of who it is you're going to target, now take the time to figure out WHY: what are your goals? It's important to start out any strategy with the ideas of what you want to achieve. Write the goals down so you can measure against them.

TOP REASONS

The top 4 reasons people get involved in a socialmedia strategy are generally:

- 1. Brand awareness
- 2. Driving traffic to their blogs or websites
- 3. Customer service
- 4. Client acquisition

If you're not active on social media, your first goal will most likely be brand awareness or, if you are active and have a good brand presence, it could be customer service. Whatever it is for you, write it down and start measuring success. Sales need to be the result of activities, not the main goal. Why? Because the content you create will reflect that. Sending out "Buy my product! Here's a discount!" messages are not effective. One of the main things to think about in terms of goals is how to get customers to buy in the digital age. They don't want to be sold to; they want to be wooed with great content and do business with people they like, know, and trust, so one of your main goals should be to ensure you are driving traffic to your blog/website. Using the blog as the hub, you can create or share content that your prospects are interested in and with "By the way, we offer this great product; fill out this form to find out more...."

This brings us to the next topic. Blogging. Why is it important to blog?

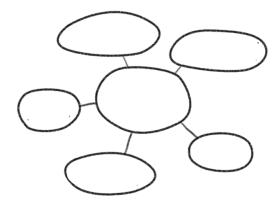
- Establish yourself as an expert. Your prospects are consuming a lot of content; have it be yours.
- 2. If you're going to create a presence on social networks, you need content to share. Once the blog post is created, you can repurpose it over and over to gain more reach.
- 3. Keep people engaged and begin to establish relationships.

It is sometimes a challenge, however, to come up with topics to write about. Blank-page syndrome can be overwhelming. Seeing the blank screen makes it hard to just start writing.

There are several ways to get you started. First, Google your competition and see what content they are creating and sharing. Even if your topic has already been covered by someone else, it shouldn't stop you from covering it, too. People like repetition and information that is positioned as "new." Just look at any magazine. The headlines say the same thing, but you still buy the magazine hoping for new information.

One of the tools you can use is called a "spinoff" diagram. Simply take some circles, place the main topic ("Keeping data secure in small businesses") in the center, and then come up with

spin-off topics: "Top 5 ways to test and see if your data is secure;" "7 ways to protect yourself from being a victim of ransomware;" "The truth about keeping your data secure;" "How to evaluate your data protection solution;" "Small Business Data Security Buyer's Guide;" etc. Here is a blank diagram you can use to practice:



SOME BLOG IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

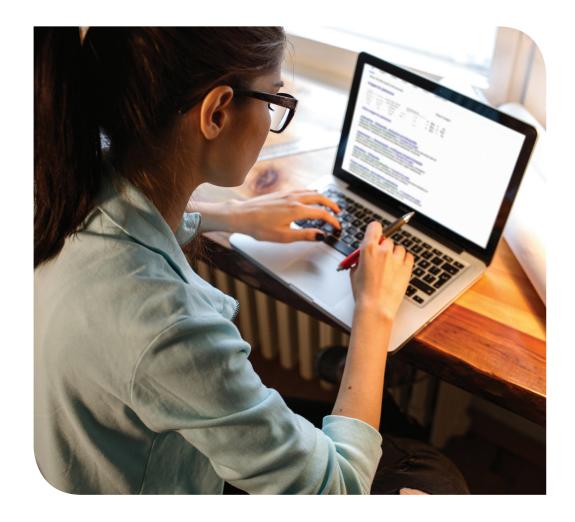
- 1. **Make a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs)** or the top 10, 20+ questions you get about your products or services, and answer one each in a blog post. Write down the top 10, and create one blog post every day answering those questions. If you're having trouble coming up with questions, a survey to your clients is always a good option.
- 2. **Create a list post** Top 10, Top 7, etc. Things with a number are easy for people to consume, and it also gives the potential reader the idea that it will be a quick read.
- 3. **Interview industry experts.** Find experts that specialize in your industry and interview them. You don't have to talk on the phone or conduct an interview in person; simply write five or 10 questions and ask your expert to answer them via email. Post the Q&As on your blog.
- 4. **Solve problems.** Let your readers know what to be afraid of and then provide the solution. Example: "Top Five Things That Can Destroy Your Data Forever". Cite recent case studies about clients who have implemented your solution: why they needed your help and how you helped them.
- 5. **Write a "How-to."** How to benefit from your products; what product/service is the best fit for different verticals; how to manage the ins and outs of your product, etc.
- 6. **Comment on an industry article.** Was there a recent relevant article about your industry? Reference the article (link back to it), and then add your opinion.
- 7. **Talk about the future.** Choose topics such as "What is the Future of Cloud Computing?" or "The Future of Data Security in Healthcare," and talk about what others are saying. Focus on a product, service, or vertical.
- 8. **Report on a conference where you will be a speaker or a meeting you're attending.** It looks good to your clients that you attend industry-related conferences to keep up on current trends. Provide a pre- and post-event wrap-up report including trends and tips you gained. You will now have three posts!
- 9. **Guest posts:** Invite your colleagues and clients to write a weekly or monthly post for your blog. Develop criteria for these submissions, so people know exactly what kind of content you will accept.
- 10. **Work current events or celebrities into your topic.** Example: "What the recent election can teach us about data security." It will serve two purposes: getting your message out, and also feeding search engines and social networks as an article relevant to a current event.

WHAT

Now we've covered the who (who are you targeting?), the why (your reasons/goals for using social media). The next thing we want to talk about is the WHAT: What networks are the best for reaching your target audience?

For B2B in general, the top three networks are LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube. While Facebook usage could be used for B2B it is not the primary network for sales and marketing of business products and services.

As you read through this information, make a commitment to learn as much as you can about your chosen network, and for the next 60 days chose one network and focus on it. Learn it, engage, and get going. Then, when you are comfortable, add another, or if not, just stay with the one that works. You don't have to be everywhere!





LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the premier business social-media network, with over 450 million users worldwide.

Here are some tips for getting the most out of LinkedIn:

- Don't collect connections; build relationships.
 It's easy to get caught up in the numbers. If you aren't connecting with the right people, the numbers are irrelevant. Don't accept every connection that comes in, take a look at their profile, and if you're not sure, send a note to that person asking why they'd like to connect.
- Design a "buyer-centric" headline. Don't simply put your title in the headline area. Give your prospects an idea of why they should do business with you. For example, instead of "CEO," use something like "Providing data security for Fortune 500 companies" or "Keeping small business data secure since 1995."
- Use the summary section to reinforce your value proposition. Don't use it like a resume; use it to show your prospects why they should do business with you and your company.
- Search for connections and request an introduction. Think about all the people you've ever worked with on implementing a technology solution. Are you connected to all of them?
- Check who has viewed your profile. Make it a habit to check who has viewed your profile on LinkedIn. You can take it one step further and message them to see if you can help them with anything. This is a great way to start a conversation and create a new connection.

Here's an example: "Joe, thank you for viewing my profile. I'd be pleased to set up a time to walk you through our solutions and see how we might be able to help you or your organization with [whatever solution you provide]." Or "Joe, I noticed you visited my profile. If you're interested in how to [fill in your solution here], I've got a great resource for you: [put in a link to an eBook or blog post you've written]."

- Use InMail sparingly, don't spam people, and don't go for the sale right away. Instad of "Thanks for connecting; let's meet and discuss my solution," a better response is: "Joe, thank you for connecting. I noticed you handle the technology solutions for [XYZ company]; here's a great resource that I think you might like [link to eBook or blog post]. Let me know if I can be of any further assistance."
- Stay active and relevant. Staying active on LinkedIn doesn't mean adding people every day. Nurture potential leads by publishing relevant, timely, and informative content. This will remind people why they connected with you in the first place. Use an editorial calendar to help ensure that your LinkedIn campaign is at the top of its game. Don't forget to reach out again to your connections if you have relevant content to share. If your company comes out with a new eBook or infographic and you truly believe it will be helpful to certain people, share it through the message area when relevant.

 Ask for recommendations. People do business with people they trust. One way of building that trust factor is by having others say nice things about you. Ask clients, colleagues, and industry partners to write you recommendations about your industry expertise, a positive customer experience, etc.

BLOGGING ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn added the ability to do long-form posts or articles as part of the platform. Use these to write or repurpose your blog content. Long-form posts are very similar to a traditional blog; you can also add images and video. The advantage to publishing or republishing content here is that it goes out to your connections and they can like, comment on, and share it. You can also take the link and send private messages to prospects to inform them of your new article or post into relevant groups. You can also share the post on your other social network(s) of choice to get additional reach.



Twitter

Twitter is the second most popular network used for business. It boasts over 350 million users across the globe. You might be surprised to know that the U.S. isn't the largest user of Twitter; in fact, Indonesia is, and many others like Mexico, Brazil, and Italy have higher usage than the U.S. and the U.K. So if you're in a country outside the U.S. or have clients outside the U.S., Twitter is a good place to be.

An incredible <u>82 percent</u> of social mediagenerated leads come from Twitter, so if your goal is to generate leads, Twitter might be for you!

GET A "HANDLE" ON YOUR HANDLE

How do you get started on Twitter? It starts with your user name or "handle." First, keep it as short as possible. There have been news reports that Twitter will take things like handles and links out of the character count, but as of this writing that's not the case. You have only 140 characters, so keep it brief.

WHAT IF MY HANDLE IS TAKEN?

Since there are millions of people on Twitter, the likelihood that your name will be available (or even your business name, for that matter) is low. There are a number of ways to put together a good handle:

- 1. Use an underscore: susan_smith
- 2. Put "the" in front: thesusansmith
- 3. Or get creative: thereal susans mith

The point is to find something that works for you. If you are setting up a personal Twitter account, the recommendation is not to add your company, i.e., susanXYZnet. Statistics show that the average worker stays in their job for 2.6 years. You could be changing your handle often or including your company name may be against your company's social-media policy.

If you are the owner of the company, you might consider both a personal and a business handle.

FINDING FOLLOWERS

There are several easy ways to start building a good network of followers on Twitter:

- Make a list of your current clients and go
 to their LinkedIn profiles see if they have a
 Twitter handle; if so, follow them. Or see if their
 websites list Twitter as a way to keep in touch
 and follow them through that link.
- 2. Check out the competition. Unlike LinkedIn or other social networks, Twitter is a public social network. There are no privacy settings beyond the ability to "protect your tweets," which is not recommended since the reason you're there is so people can see your information.

Since all information on Twitter is public, you can't hide who you're following or who's following you. Simply go to your competitors' Twitter profiles and click on "followers," and you can see exactly who is following them and their bios. Twitter has a "follow" button for you to click and "follow" the person instantly.

- 3. Go to handles of industry experts, industry publications, etc. and use the same formula.
- 4. Type someone's name, company, etc. in the Twitter search bar.

You can follow up to 1,000 people per day without anyone following you back, but if you're just starting out, stick to 50 per day. Twitter doesn't like "spam" and most people don't need to amass followers. Remember: don't collect connections; establish relationships!

If you're already active on Twitter, do you have the RIGHT followers? You might want to take a look at who is following YOU on Twitter and compare it to your target persona. Is it your mother or sister who are following you or potential business prospects, thought leaders, etc.?

Using Hashtags

One way to get attention, specifically on Twitter (LinkedIn users rarely use them) is to use hashtags. People even speak in hashtags; but it can be intimidating if you don't understand why or how to use them. Hashtags are simply a way for people to aggregate and follow conversations around a specific topic. Because there are so many people using social networks, it can be very noisy. To make sure you're keeping track of content around a specific industry, event, or topic, you use a hashtag (#).

For example, if you were tweeting about the "Internet of things," you'd probably use #iot. By following relevant influencers, content publishers, and others in your industry, you can see what hashtags are being used and then use them as you jump into the conversation. Do be careful, however, not to overuse hashtags. No one wants to read a tweet that says "#howto use #hashtags in your #twitter #socialmedia #posts." A good rule is one or two hashtags per post.

Social Posting: Curate vs. Create

It's easier than you think to come up with things to post about. You can either create content, or curate content. Curating can take many forms:

- Share/retweet content from others in your industry that your audience might find useful.
- Read industry blogs and online newspapers and post/tweet that content to your connections or followers.
- Set a "Google alert" for your industry's top keywords, your competition – anything that will help you get content.
- 4. Find a blog aggregator like <u>Feedly</u> to organize blogs around a specific topic to make it easy to curate and read. There are a number of other tools out there, and new ones pop up every day, so if you simply use a search engine and type in "RSS blog reader," "blog content aggregator" or "content curation tool," you'll find alternatives.

One of the other ways to start getting a lot of engagement is to post quotations. This strategy is more for those using Twitter, because while quotes do seem to get engagement on LinkedIn, users of that network tend to dislike "fluff" filling up their feeds. So if you are looking to find things to tweet about, quotations are a good option.

Why? Quotations not only get great engagement, but can boost your likeability factor. By tweeting quotations that are inspirational, you can set yourself up as someone who wants to do more than just sell something; you believe in inspiring and positive messages. Just search the Internet for "business quotes" or "leadership quotes" and you can find them easily.

It is important to note that you want to make sure the content you are sharing is content that your target audience will find useful. Tweeting or posting content for the sake of it is not a best practice.

CREATING CONTENT

Creating content of your own can fast-track you to becoming a thought leader and trusted advisor by highlighting your own knowledge and opinions and getting others to engage. However, you'll need a good content-marketing strategy to be able to give your company the best exposure. Again, think back to your persona: what kinds of content would they care about? What's in it for them? Here are some other content types (aside from blogs/posts) that you can create for easy promotion on social media:

- Whitepapers: Whitepapers are in-depth, authoritative reports. These are the academic version of a company's marketing content.
 Unlike eBooks and guides, whitepapers are meant to be educational. If you are a company that works with third-party suppliers, perhaps they have content you can co-brand and comarket with them
- eBooks: eBooks are generally meant to be much shorter than whitepapers but should provide a mix of educational and promotion. When creating eBooks, think of a short brochure rather than an academic paper. eBooks generally contain more colors and images than whitepapers.
- Infographics: Because people engage the most with visual content, infographics can be a good way to provide useful information in a striking visual format.

CREATING CONTENT BY REPURPOSING

One of the easiest ways to create content is by repurposing past blog posts, videos, press releases, and tweeting or posting them to your followers. You can even create a number of posts or tweets for one article!

For example, if you created a blog post called "The top 10 ways to protect yourself from ransomware," you can create several pieces of content to share from that one post:

- Use the title: The top 10 ways to protect yourself from ransomware [add the link to the original post]
- 2. Scare them: Are you worried about ransomware? You should be! [link]
- 3. Educate them: How to protect yourself from ransomware [link]

Don't be concerned about your followers seeing your blog post several times; with most social networks there is an immense amount of activity, so your followers will see your posts only if they are sitting in front of their social network accounts and looking at them all day. It often takes a few tries to get the attention of your prospects, depending upon where they are in the buyer's journey. As long as the content is relevant, keep sharing it periodically to fill in when you need it.

Think about when you go to an in-person networking event; you wouldn't walk up and say, "Hi! I'm so-and-so; here's a discount, so you'll buy my products, right?" Think about that as you create content.



YouTube

YouTube is the second-largest search engine and as such it can be a very powerful tool in your social-marketing toolbox. Statistics show that as many as 74 percent of B2B marketers use YouTube as part of their content strategy.¹

Videos are the fastest-growing type of content on the Web. In fact, it is predicted that by 2019, approximately 80 percent of all consumer Internet traffic will be generated by Internet video traffic. IT and software companies can harness the conversion powers of video content by producing a good mix of useful content for their prospects.

Here are some ideas on how to harness the power of YouTube for your business:

- Create a YouTube channel. If you're serious about using YouTube as a marketing/lead-generating strategy, you will want to create a channel to host all of your videos.
- Worry about the quality, not quantity, of the content. Many people get hung up on the time and expense of creating professional videos. Remember, there are plenty of businesspeople that have large followings on YouTube and are simply using their iPhones or iPads. The most important things when you are creating videos are lighting and sound. There are plenty of goodquality lighting and sound options available for little money.
- Shorter is better. Keep your videos short, informative, and if possible, entertaining.
 There are many sites where you can create your

own "explainer" videos and white-board type animations.

- Be sure to use keywords in the video title. Using the blog topic from above you can create a video that features businesses who've been hit by ransomware and then put in your own spin on how your company could solve that problem before it even starts.
- Adding links (embedding a URL that leads to your company's landing page or LinkedIn company page) is a good way to lead your audience from one social- media platform to another. If a prospect wants to learn more, don't make it hard for them to find you.

Creating a video blog (vlog) is something you can consider. A simple PowerPoint with a voiceover can be a good way to get started in the video world. You can use the content created for YouTube and repurpose it on Twitter and LinkedIn to have a well-rounded social-media strategy. Videos can even be embedded into your LinkedIn profile for maximum exposure.



How

Now that you know who you are targeting, why, and which networks you are going to join, we figure out the how: How are you going to manage all of this?

Of course, you can't spend all day on social networks. Even if you are the marketing person and that is your entire job, you will need to take your eye off of it at some point.

Social media can be a black hole – you can easily get caught up reading posts about the hot-button issue of the day, or "Look! Johnny and Suzy had a baby!" – but if it doesn't make you money, you need to move on. The best way to do this is to plan your day around your social interactions. Bottom line? You need to get a plan that works for you.

Typically, there are three ways people manage social media.

 You do it yourself. Many people, by design or by circumstance, decide they want to manage all of their social profiles. If you are going to endeavor to do this, you will need to plan time. Time to learn (make sure you understand the nuances of each network you are planning to use) and be sure to keep up with the latest changes. Make time to post and engage.

- You hire others to do it for you. If you have a budget or staff that can be assigned to this task, you may want to "outsource" your social marketing. If you are doing it in-house, you will want to make sure it's not just someone you hand this to as their "other duties as assigned." The person handling your public-facing social presence is very important. You will want to give them time to learn it as well. Also, outsourcing does not absolve you from responsibility. If the person you assign makes an error in judgment by what they post, it can have far-reaching effects on your business.
- A combination of the two. Most companies will work through a combination formula: Hire out someone to manage the corporate handles and manage their own personal accounts themselves.

Managing Social Using the 3x15 Formula

The 3x15 formula is very simple. Focus on social marketing 3 times per day for 15 minutes each. First thing in the morning, at midday, and before you leave for the day is a great way to start getting used to being active. Set a timer on your smartphone or download one to your computer and set it for 15 minutes. In that time, perform a number of tasks:

- Check each network you are focusing on for comments, shares, and retweets of your content. Respond or thank people for sharing.
- Look at your social feeds and see what others are sharing. Like, comment, and share on other people's content.
- Scroll through your Google alerts or blog aggregation tool to see what content seems a fit for your personas. Share it with your networks.

Once the timer goes off, turn it off and focus on other things.

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

There are myriad choices for social-network management tools. Many free and paid options will help you manage your social presence. Many of them will even allow you to autopost or schedule content out so you can be active even when you're not live on the particular network.

Even if you have a small budget, there are tools out there to make your life easier. If you are serious about getting active on social media, a management tool is highly recommended.

MEASURING SUCCESS AND TWEAKING STRATEGY

Business leaders often wonder what the ROI is from social media. It is often difficult to draw a dotted line from a tweet to a sale, but a number of social selling surveys tell a very positive story for you to consider.

- 84% of C-level/vice-president executives use social media to support purchase decisions. (IDC)
- Salespeople who rely on social selling platforms are 51% more likely to hit their quotas. (LinkedIn)
- 55% of B2B buyers search for information on social media.

However, the only way you're going to know if you've hit your mark is by measuring. Go back to the "why" section. Why did you embark on a social-media journey? If it was for brand awareness, have you seen engagement in and reach of your posts and tweets increase? If your goal was to increase visits to your blog or website, have you reached the goal?

And last, social media is fluid – no one thought that Instagram or Snapchat were going to be around 5 years ago. Tweak your strategy if a new network comes up or a current network falls out of favor and think about how you will course-correct.

Key takeaways:

1. Create a plan

- a. Make sure you know WHO it is you're targeting (personas)
- b. Make sure you know WHY: what your goals are
- c. Choose WHAT (which network(s) choosing ONE network to focus on, get proficient in, and become engaged with, then move on to others
- d. HOW choose how you are going to manage social media, how often, and begin sharing
- 2. Share and engage in your chosen network(s); consistency is key!
- 3. Monitor your engagement measure your effectiveness against your goals and

The most important takeaway? Get started! You're not going to "break" it; you will likely find it enjoyable and profitable!

About CompTIA

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Advance the IT industry

Technology is infrastructure, just like roads and bridges. Our economic growth, national security and quality of life depend on it. When we help tech businesses grow and help build a skilled tech workforce, we make that infrastructure stronger.

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